

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal



HENRY WALTON – ‘THE CHERRY BARROW’
(by kind permission of Sir Reresby Sitwell, Bt)

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At times these stories of culinary and cultural elision become more dizzying. One of the oddest stories in the book concerns Sadaat Ali Khan, an early 19th-century princeling who was so enamoured of all things British that he not only imported the best English china on which to serve meat and two veg every evening, but also became the proud owner of a British admiral's uniform and, even odder, a clergyman's outfit. Collingham ends the anecdote there, and so we never know if the Nawab of Lucknow preferred to eat his boiled beef and carrots while dressed as Nelson or Parson Woodforde.

(Kathryn Hughes – review of Lizzie
Collingham: *Curry: A Biography*
in Guardian Review, 27/08/05)

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EDITORIAL

Recently, returning home from Norwich and before tackling the assorted horrors of the A17, I stopped off at All Saints', Weston Longville. As ever the effect was entirely beneficent. The ancient stones still impart their calm and Parson Woodforde himself, gazing down from his portrait with what Max Beerbohm called 'his large expressionless eyes' blesses the casual visitor and regular worshipper alike. 'Expressionless'? I think we must agree . . . although, look again, is that not just a glint of surprise (the Tree of Jesse had not been revealed in his day), a twinkle of approval (for Mrs le Grice is expertly arranging the flowers in the chancel)? Much has changed but the Peace of God remains.

In the Summer Journal I wrote about Aunt Anne Woodforde's association with the Campbells of Stackpole in Pembrokeshire. I have subsequently spent some time in that county walking the coastal footpath including Carregwastad Point where the half-hearted French expeditionary force landed in 1797 and Stackpole Quay built by John Campbells' grandson, Lord Cawdor, whose militia mopped up the invaders. St David's looked more prosperous than it must have done when visited by the Chancellor Canon – Mr Du Quesne – in 1789. On 26 July of that year he had written to his friend Parson Woodforde 'at Mr Pounset's at Cole near Bruton Sommerset' to announce his arrival in the cathedral-village:

I steal a few minutes to acquaint you that, After numberless Disappointments, Dangers, Distresses & Vexations, I arrived here on Friday at 2 o'clock with dislocated Joints, sore Bones, Bruises & black & blue arms & sides, & concussions of the Brains from the most rough and disagreeably Hill Roads that ever were passed . . .

The trout fishing was less good than he had been led to expect:

– one of my Lay Vicars . . . catches, as he tells me, a *dozen or two* at a time, 14, 15 & 16 Inches long, & never goes out without catching some, & yet when I went with him we never had a Bite, & I increased my Cold!

The cold got worse and he dreaded the return journey 'and am not clear but that I was laid in damp sheets the last stage at a most vile inn at Haverford'. Could the 'vile inn', we wondered, be the County

Arms which today advertises itself, with modest allurements, as 'quiet and respectable'? Surely not.

I am not aware of any link between the town of Milford Haven and Parson Woodforde but in two respects it might be of interest to readers of this Journal. Firstly, it was founded by Sir William Hamilton, husband of Emma, and the church contains various items of Nelsoniana. Second, the town is unusual – indeed, so far as I know, unique – in the United Kingdom, in that the earliest inhabitants were nearly all Americans – loyalist Quaker whalers from Nantucket.

Finally, a word of thanks to Mollie Matthews who, having been at the centre of the Society's activities since the 1970s, decided not to seek re-election at the recent AGM in King's Lynn. Mollie announced her intention to stand down last Autumn, recalling the Society's earlier days in a delightful Journal Endpiece. Her friendliness, vitality and organising ability will be much missed on the Committee where the part she played, together with George Bunting, in making arrangements for the Somerset Frolics was greatly appreciated and much admired. Mollie's contribution has been immense – we give her our thanks and warmest best wishes.

MARTIN BRAYNE

PARSON WOODFORDE AND ADMIRAL NELSON

"Honour as long as the waves shall break . . ."

Nelson was, famously, proud of his Norfolk origins and, especially as the son of a Norfolk clergyman, it is unsurprising that the patriotic Woodforde made a point of recording his triumphs. The earliest Diary reference to an action in which Nelson, Commodore Nelson as he then was, played a significant part, was that which first won him national fame. In February 1797 Sir John Jervis in command of the Mediterranean fleet was patrolling off Cape St Vincent on the coast of Portugal to prevent a junction of the French and Spanish Mediterranean fleets with the French Atlantic fleet based at Brest. Such a combined fleet would have provided more than adequate cover for a French invasion of England. During the ensuing battle, fought on St Valentine's Day, it was Nelson's order which prevented a Spanish escape, he himself leading boarding parties onto two of the Spanish warships. Their actions that day earned Jervis an earldom and Nelson a knighthood.

News of the victory off Cape St Vincent reached Weston Parsonage on 4 March. Dr Thorne had arrived in the morning and was doubtless pleased – and perhaps secretly surprised – to learn that the treatment he had prescribed for Nancy's 'indifferent knee' had done the trick. Earlier in the day Briton had set off to Norwich 'with the little Cart after News & other little Jobbs'. At four in the afternoon he returned

bringing great News with him, of Admiral S^r John Jervis having had an Engagement with the Spanish Fleet (who were going to join the French Fleet) and had obtained a complete & glorious Victory over them – four very large Men of War taken &c – two of them of 110 Guns –

* * *

Woven through this part of the Nelson story there is another, more personal one connecting the Diarist to the great sailor. On 8 January 1797 who should turn up at the Parsonage kitchen but Billy Downing who had been Woodforde's 'servant Lad' some years before. He had left Weston Parsonage for a job with Press Custance

at Lyng but by now he was employed by 'the Revd Mr Suckling of Aylsham'. As Beresford points out, this was Benjamin Suckling who, although he lived at Aylsham, was Rector of Matlaske, some seven or eight miles further north. He was the first cousin of Horatio Nelson whose mother, Catherine Suckling, had died as long ago as 1767 when the future sailor was just nine. Catherine's brother and Benjamin's father was William Suckling of Banham Haugh, Norfolk. Another of Catherine's brothers, Maurice, was himself a naval captain and hero of an action against the French in 1759. It was Maurice who the young Horatio sought to emulate and who first took him to sea as a midshipman. Famously, when approached by his brother-in-law, the Revd Edmund Nelson, to provide a place for his son, Suckling replied, 'What has poor Horace done who is so weak: that he above all the rest should be sent to rough it at sea? But let him come: and the first time we go into action, a cannon-ball may knock off his head and provide for him at once.' Later, as Comptroller of the Navy, Maurice was influential in securing his young relative's rapid promotion.

By the time Billy Downing turned up at Weston Parsonage the rector was already beginning to think of a replacement for Mr Corbould, his curate who was due to leave at Michaelmas. It seems likely that Billy conveyed this intelligence to Aylsham for the following Saturday –

Betty Cary brought our News to day and also a Letter for me, from a Rev^d Benj. Suckling of Aylsham and which, on being read, I found that it was application to me for the Curacy of Weston when M^r Corbould leaves it, having a Brother that would be glad to have the same.

A week later Woodforde replied and, although he does not say so, his letter must have contained an offer of the post for some weeks later, on 2 March, we read –

A M^r Suckling, first Lieutenant of a Man of War, called on me this Morning to know if I wanted a Curate, as he has a Brother who wished to be in orders, but could not get ordained with^t having a Title – there are two livings in the Family Gift – *I could not promise him* [my italics] – He behaved very

much as a Gentleman – He gave us a
Book relating to Naval Officers to Feb: 1797

This was the Lieutenant Maurice Suckling who, according to Beresford, served with Nelson in the *Agamemnon*. With them on board that ship was another Norfolk rector's son – William (later Sir William) Hoste, whose fine memorial can be seen in St Margaret's church, King's Lynn.

This abundance of Sucklings is at first rather confusing but all is made clear on 14 March when –

A M^r Suckling, a young Clergyman, Brother to Captain [sic] Suckling who called on me last Week waited on me about Noon concerning the Curacy of Weston which he would be glad to take. I told him that a Cousin of his had already applied for it and if he does not take it, that he should have first refusal – He seemed a very good kind of Man, had a blemish in his right eye, I believe he cannot see at all with it –

The following month Mr Suckling of Aylsham himself appeared – 'very neat, sensible, free & polite' –

respecting Hungate Lodge and the Curacy of Weston for a Brother of his by name Horace now with his father in London. He is going to be married and would be glad of a House & a Curacy in Norfolk near his Brother

We then twice read (15 and 17 April) of Mr Suckling, having 'partly promised', failing to turn up for dinner but then on 27 April both Suckling brothers

... came to my house
in a Post-Chaise and a Servant on Horseback
and they stopped and dined & spent the Afternoon
with us ...

They are fashionable young men and Horace
who is to be my Curate, appears to be a good
natured, sensible, easy Man – rather fat & short
He is to enter on my Curacy & Hungate Lodge at Mich^{lms}

The brothers continued to make arrangements for Horace's move to Weston but on 21 July Woodforde was visited by 'a M^r Cotman ... concerning the Curacy of Weston in case M^r Suckling does not

take it after M^r Corbould'. This was as well because on 29th –

M^r Ben Suckling with his Brother Horace both Clergymen from Aylsham came here this Morning in a Post-Chaise & they dined & spent the Afternoon with us – They came to inform me that Horace Suckling had been presented with a good Living near Beccles by name Basham [sic] vacated lately by M^r Holden and therefore was obliged to decline taking upon him the Curacy of Weston at Michaelmas next – It is a very good Piece of preferment & an excellent House

'After tea', we are told, 'the Sucklings left us about 7 o'clock' never to be seen again to the distress, perhaps, of Nancy for following her first meeting with the bachelor Benjamin, the diarist noted she 'likes M^r Suckling very much'.

It is not, however, the last that Weston Parsonage was to see of the Suckling family because on 23 November – just two days before Woodforde's new curate, Mr Cotman, was to take his first service –

... Captain Suckling's Brother and Wife from Norwich, a Clergyman & lately married called on us but did not stay long, he never said what he called for but I apprehend it was about the Curacy of Weston – I told him I was engaged to a M^r Cotman but if I could get a resident Curate I should prefer it.

The following week, on 1 December –

M^r Suckling who called on me the other Day, called again upon me this Morning concerning Weston Curacy, he went from my House to Weston House concerning Hungate Lodge – His Father was with him but did not come in.

This, however, really is the last of what Beresford calls 'the elegant and agreeable Sucklings'.

The tale of the Sucklings takes us a long way from the heroics of their cousin but it is interesting to note that Catherine Suckling – Horatio's mother – had been born at Barsham – not 'Basham' – Rectory on 9 May 1725; the 'excellent house' into which Horace Suckling was to move.

* * *

Nelson's name does not appear in the Diary until the following year; in Beresford's edition of the Diary in the entry for 29 November 1798:

Great Rejoicings at Norwich to day on Lord Nelson's late great & noble Victory over the French near Alexandria in Egypt. An Ox roasted whole in the Market-Place &c. This being a day of general Thanksgiving M^r Cotman read Prayers this Morning at Weston Church, proper on the Occasion. Dinner to-day Leg of Mutton roasted &c. I gave my Servants this Evening some strong Beer and some Punch to drink Admiral Lord Nelson's Health on his late great Victory and also all the other Officers with him and all the brave sailors with them, and also all those brave Admirals, Officers and sailors that have gained such great & noble Victories of late over the French &c &c.

Revealingly he added 'No rejoicings at all at Weston. I should have been very glad to have contributed towards same, if M^r Custance had come forward.'

Beresford suggested that it is probable that earlier reference was made to the battle of the Nile, which was fought on 1 August and news of which reached London on 2 October, but Woodforde was at that time writing on loose pages and those for the 1-22 October were missing. On 25 October the diarist makes what we are entitled to assume is an oblique reference to Nelson –

Great News almost every Week from the signal Victories of our Fleets over the French, Spaniards and Dutch –

Beresford was right. We know this because the missing loose pages – like those for 5-16 December 1797 – are now there with the rest of the set in the Bodleian. Thanks to Peter Jameson, who is currently editing Volume 16 of the Society's edition of the Diary which will contain the whole of the 'missing' three week period, I am able to publish here for the first time, Woodforde's reaction to the news of Nelson's victory at Aboukir Bay.

According to Beresford, news of the remarkable British success did not reach London until 2 October but this was precisely the day on which it reached Woodforde in the depths of the hero's native county for we now know that on that day –

M^r Custance called on us this Afternoon about 5 o'clock and stayed with us an Hour, did not drink Tea with us.

M^r Custance this Evening sent us an Account of Admiral Nelson having defeated the French Fleet off Egypt

Four days later, despite being 'Very faint & weak . . . & very feverish', Woodforde was able to celebrate 'Great News from our Admiral [sic] Nelson & Bridport' who 'beat the French in every Quarter of the Globe almost'. Viscount Bridport was Alexander of the distinguished naval family of Hood and, like Nelson, the son of a country parson. By this time he was in the fifty-seventh year of his service in the Royal Navy and was in command of the squadron blockading Brest.

On 11 October, by which time the Parson was 'finely . . . and upon my Legs almost the whole Morning in shewing my people the way to make Cyder', there were, he writes, 'great doings said to be at Honingham on Nelson's Victory'. As we have already seen, Mr Custance chose not to follow the example set by Lord Bayning, as Mr Townshend by now was.

By the Spring of 1801 Woodforde's illness was made worse by the severity of the unseasonal weather. On 12 April he recorded 'A very cold Day indeed with Snow about the whole Day long – It affected me much'. Two days later his spirits must have been lifted by a visit from Mrs Custance and her daughters and the news they bought,

that Lord Nelson had taken several Men of War from the Danes, had demolished Copenhagen, a great Part of it at least. The Danes defied him. They have of late behaved very shabby towards us.

This, of course, was the famous encounter in which Nelson had turned a blind eye to the order of his relatively cautious commander Sir Hyde Parker. It was a desperately bloody affair – 'warm work' Nelson called it – but in the end the Danish fleet had been destroyed. The 'shabby' behaviour of Denmark refers to its membership – together with Sweden, Prussia and Russia – of the Northern League which aimed to deny British shipping access to the Baltic. Nelson's victory led to the League's collapse.

Only one further reference to Nelson is to be found in the Diary. It reveals Woodforde as the victim – or at least the recipient – of the

kind of propaganda which accompanies most wars. After Copenhagen, Nelson, now a viscount, was appointed to command the patrolling of the still-vulnerable south-east coast between Orfordness and Beachy Head. On 6 August 1801, having received information respecting the possibility of an invasion which had alarmed him – ‘hurried and affected me a great deal indeed’ – the Diarist, was no doubt, only too pleased to report two days later –

Great feats done again by Admiral Nelson over the French and also the Spaniards, also of besieging Bologne in France &c.

In fact, the planned attack on the invasion vessels moored at Boulogne was repulsed with heavy British losses, mainly as a consequence of the French use of chain rather than hemp anchor cables.

No further opportunity for active service presented itself to Nelson before, to Woodforde’s and most of the nation’s great relief, the Peace of Amiens was declared. By the end of the following year the poorly-made treaty had broken down but by that time the last Diary entry had been written and James Woodforde was in the throes of his final illness.

BOOK REVIEW

Simon Garfield (editor): *Our Hidden Lives – The Everyday Diaries of a Forgotten Britain 1945-1948* (536pp, Ebury Press, 2004, £19.99, ISBN 0 091 896959)

In the late 1930s, the “Mass-Observation Project” was set up to record the lives of ordinary people. Many hundreds of volunteers kept diaries which they posted off to the Mass-Observation headquarters. For this book, five of those volunteer diarists have been selected to give us a fascinating glimpse into the years 1945-1948.

This book, *Our Hidden Lives*, is arranged chronologically. The five diarists’ entries are interwoven, so that events of those post-war years are presented from different points of view. Issues of

importance to everyone, such as the introduction of bread-rationing in July 1946, are intermingled with those which affected only the individual diarists.

The five diarists become familiar friends; each reader will have their own favourite. Some will choose Edie Rutherford, South African-born, living in Sheffield with her husband, and managing to combine an office job with the need to queue for basic provisions and run a home. Holding strongly left-wing views, she was thrilled by the Labour victory in 1945. When one of her colleagues at work thought she ought to withdraw all her savings from the Bank to prevent the new Labour Government from appropriating them, Edie was quick to explain that would not be necessary.

Other diarists include George Taylor, heavily involved with organising WEA classes and a follower of the Esperanto movement; B. Charles, a gay antiques dealer living in Edinburgh; and Maggie Joy Blunt, living in Burnham, Bucks with her cats, so frustrated with her job that she gives it up and takes in holidaymakers as paying guests instead.

The fifth diarist is Herbert Brush, and members of the Parson Woodforde Society may find that he is the diarist who bears most resemblance to Woodforde, both in his artless style and in his ability to record his daily life directly as he experienced it. Brush was a retired electrical engineer in his seventies who lived in South London. Like Woodforde, Brush recorded his meetings with his neighbours:

I met Miss Hudson, the ninety-three-year-old nurse, in the road yesterday as she was coming up the hill and she said that she did not feel very well and had been to the doctor for medicine; so I offered to take her some spinach from the plot. She is a remarkable old lady, with a voice like a foghorn. (11/7/1945)

On another occasion he was able to assist a neighbour:

When walking along Thorpewood Avenue this morning a woman showed me a large hedgehog which was lying near the steps which lead up to her house. She was afraid to touch it so I put it in her front garden, saying that it would be a useful pet. Its spikes were so sharp that I felt them on my fingers for half an hour afterwards. The animal had evidently tired itself out trying to

escape from the pavement under its feet, but the only way was up the steps and I don't think that hedgehogs can climb steps.

(5/6/1945)

Herbert Brush had an allotment and spent a good deal of time on it. It brought back recent memories of the war:

I have fixed up another seat at the end of the plot close to the hedge so that I can sit in the shelter during showers. This was the spot where I pressed myself into the hedge with the bucket over my head when a rocket burst overhead and bits of it came down all round me.

(9/5/1945)

As well as his regular vegetable crops, he grew vegetables like celeriac which were new to him just to see what they would look like. He was regularly disappointed that the Allotment Committee did not award him as high a place as he felt he deserved in their annual awards.

Herbert Brush was an active and enquiring man who made the most of London's public transport system. During the years 1945-48, he visited the Royal Academy, the British Museum, the V&A, the Tate Gallery, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, and many special exhibitions. In the autumn of 1946, a major exhibition, "Britain Can Make It", was held in London, showing new consumer products and fashions. It attracted huge crowds and the inevitable queues. Brush was interested in a new design of bicycle, but he was sceptical about the exhibit which featured a spaceship landing on the moon: "I am not one of those who firmly believe that in a few years time we shall be able to travel to the moon and come back alive." (16/10/1946) Altogether four of the five diarists visited "Britain Can Make It"; Edie Rutherford was infuriated by the discrepancy between the products on show and what was actually available in the shops, sarcastically renaming the exhibition "Britain Can't Get It".

Some readers may even have visited this exhibition in their youth: many more will remember the early months of 1947, when continual snow and freezing temperatures lasted from January until March. "By some oversight it is not snowing", remarked Edie Rutherford on 8 February. It was particularly trying because the winter weather was accompanied by a shortage of fuel and frequent

power cuts. If the wireless was not out of action because of a power cut, it was forecasting more snow.

For most of the five diarists, the wireless was a well-established and important part of their lives, and new models were purchased in these post-war years. Broadcasts which the diarists enjoyed included adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Forsyte Saga*, the Brains Trust, and *Have a Go* with Wilfrid Pickles. The Third Programme (Radio 3) started in September 1946 and was much appreciated by at least one diarist. On New Year's Eve 1947, Herbert Brush went round to a neighbour's house to see a Cinderella pantomime on television, but he was disappointed with the small screen and poor lighting. He also visited the theatre to see "Blithe Spirit", and the cinema many times.

W and I went to the State Cinema this afternoon. The picture was *The Birth of a Baby*. All details were shown pretty clearly even to the actual appearance of the child and I learnt how to deal with the umbilical cord.
(30/8/1947)

One of the absorbing features of this book is that the five diarists record their immediate reactions to events which have become part of history: the news of Hitler's death and VE Day; the use of the A bomb and VJ Day; the Victory Parade in June 1946; the Nuremberg Trials; troubles in Palestine; the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Philip of Greece; strikes and yet more rationing. In 1948, Herbert Brush was wary of the coming of the NHS:

I hope that the doctors won't give in to Bevan, as I don't believe that a state-controlled medical service would ever be of benefit to the public as a whole; no patient would get individual service from a doctor who was not paid by the patient to the same extent as they do now.
(19/2/1948)

The five people whose diaries appear in this book all had "hidden lives"; they were not important national figures, but their diaries are no less fascinating for that. The editor of this book, Simon Garfield, has performed a great service to anyone interested in the 1940s. A century and a half earlier, Parson Woodforde lived a hidden life, which would have been forgotten but for the rediscovery of his diaries by John Beresford. One of the pleasures of reading Woodforde's diary is in being transported back into a

very different world, the world of our ancestors many generations ago, but the appeal of *Our Hidden Lives* lies in its comparative closeness to our own time. For some readers, it will bring back their own memories, while for others it takes us back to our parents' generation and allows us to imagine their experiences.

HENRY WALTON AND THE CUSTANCE PORTRAITS

When the portrait of John Custance by Henry Walton came up for sale, a wonderful opportunity arose for the Parson Woodforde Society and its members, Friends of Norwich Museums and the National Art Collection Fund to ensure that a fine portrait of a Norfolk squire by a Norfolk artist came home for public exhibition. We are familiar with black and white reproductions of Custance family portraits which appear in the Beresford 5-volume edition of Woodforde's diary and the Society's Journals¹ and, of course, have read with interest James' diary entry of 4 October 1781 when he met Henry Walton the artist and Thomas Rawlins the architect of Weston House,² dining with the Custances in their newly-built home. So it came as a surprise to learn that John Custance's portrait "said to be by Henry Walton" was in the possession of the Custance family and not for sale.

There is expert opinion that the newly acquired portrait, now hanging in the English Paintings Gallery at Norwich Castle Museum, is by Henry Walton. The fine colour reproduction on the cover of the Spring Journal cannot convey the exceptional beauty of this picture, hanging in its original square gold frame. It seems likely that the portrait in its oval frame, matching those of Mrs Custance, Press Custance and Edmund Bacon, is a copy, possibly by Charles Grignon³ and known by the family to be so. There is documentary evidence among the Foster papers deposited in the Norfolk Record Office.⁴ In 1921 Colonel Frederic Hambleton Custance, the last of the family to live in Weston Longville, let

Weston House and lived in Weston Old Hall. An inventory, for insurance purposes, was prepared, which included a list of family portraits. On the first-floor landing hung four portraits, valued at £300, by Grignion:

Edward Bacon as a young boy

Mrs Custance (née Frances Beauchamp Proctor)

John Custance in a grey coat

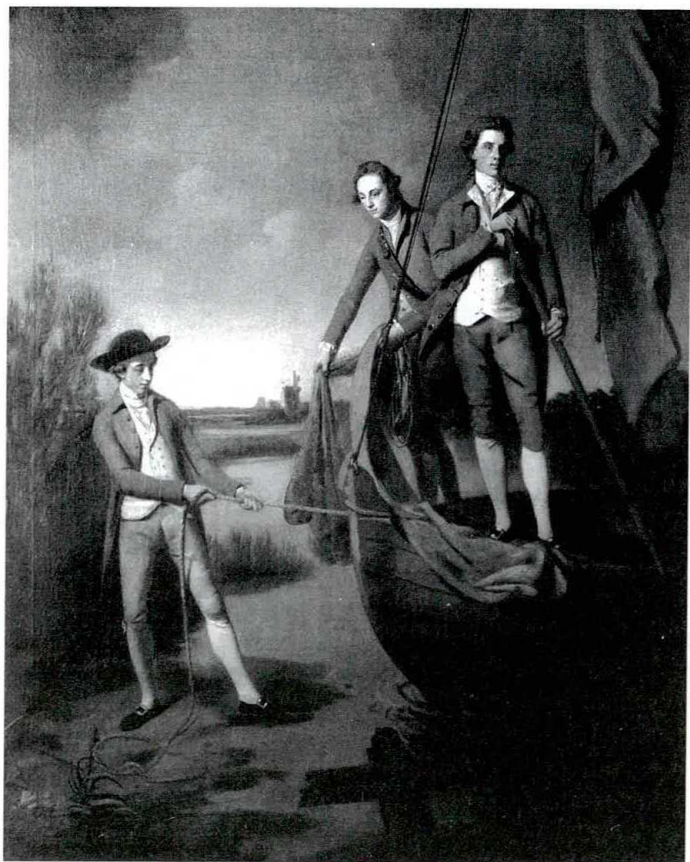
- - - Custance in a slate coloured coat and embroidered waistcoat

(? Press)

No doubt the family informed the valuer the pictures were by Charles Grignion, confirmed by notes on the portraits of John Custance: "Charles Grignion – fecit" and Mrs Custance: "Charles Grignion – pinxit"; that is, Mr Custance "made or copied", Mrs Custance "painted".⁵ The family portraits did not appear in the sale catalogue prepared at the disposal of the contents of Weston House in 1927.

The Society's Spring 1988 Journal contained a special illustrated article by Tom Custance on the Custance family portraits and in this he says "... the portrait collection [was] recorded in its entirety by Prince Frederick Duleep Singh for his *Portraits in Norfolk Houses* published in 1927 [which] describes some forty portraits, the majority of which are still retained by the family." Of the two portraits of Mr and Mrs Custance which appear in Beresford's second volume, Tom Custance says, "Although their size and frames are identical, their artists are apparently not. Beresford describes them both as being "probably" by Henry Walton. Prince Frederick, however, states without any reservation that the Squire is painted by Henry Walton and Mrs Custance by Charles Grignion. Confusing matters further, an engraving taken from Mr Custance's portrait for an edition of *Norfolk Portraits*⁶ asserts that the original is by Grignion. Woodforde provides clarification, mentioning that among his fellow dinner guests at Weston House on 4 October 1781 was a "M^r Walton who is a Portrait Painter from London and is drawing M^r Custance's Picture".

When in 1989 the Society reprinted Mrs L. H. M. Hill's 1970 article 'The Custances and their Family Circle' Tom Custance made amendments and additions, adding 65 helpful explanatory notes. Again the portraits of John Custance and Mrs John Custance were



Henry Walton – Three Young Gentlemen boating on the River Waveney (by kind permission of Sir Reresby Sitwell, Bt)

The picture shows three young surgeons who have just qualified and are celebrating with a boating holiday on the Waveney. Each has paid £10 to the artist and they afterwards draw lots: Mr Lethbridge, in the middle and slightly behind his friends, draws the winning lot and keeps the painting which was eventually sold by his descendant, a surgeon of the same name, to Sir Osbert Sitwell.

The Cover Illustration – is of Henry Walton's 'The Cherry Barrow', originally exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1779, the last year in which Walton worked as an artist in London. According to a contemporary commentator, the figures in the scene are a Miss Carr, the artist and the artist's nephews and niece.

reproduced with the captions “By Henry Walton” and “Probably by Charles Grignion”. The portrait “- - - Custance in a slate coloured coat and embroidered waistcoat (? Press)” is also included and bears the caption “Press Custance – probably by Charles Grignion”. Talking of Mrs Custance’s portrait Mrs Hill says: “... her portrait shows her to possess a far from provincial elegance. Dressed in pale grey muslin, a rope of pearls hanging to her waist, her brown hair dressed high with feathers – as it must have been when she and Nancy visited the ‘Frisseur’ – she looks pensively out of Walton’s painting.” But Tom Custance adds in his Note 24 “The artist is in fact probably Charles Grignion.”

It has been difficult to discover the true details of Walton’s life. The note which was reprinted in the Society’s Spring 2005 Journal by permission of Mallett Antiques of New Bond Street, the gallery selling the portrait, states that he was born at Dickleburgh in North Norfolk (the village is actually a few miles from Diss in the south of the county) the son of Samuel Walton and his wife Ann (née Newstead). His father was a yeoman tenant farmer and served his parish as Churchwarden and Overseer of the Poor. In 1771 Henry married Elizabeth Rust from Wortham, a neighbouring village. She was a painter in her own right, exhibiting miniatures at the Royal Academy. Soon after completing John Custance’s portrait they left Norfolk for Lincolnshire and then on to the East Riding of Yorkshire, Elizabeth’s native county, where Henry enjoyed a prosperous stay, painting members of the local gentry and aristocracy.

Tom Custance contented himself by saying⁷ that Walton was “... fortunate in having private means all his life” and “... he could afford to be selective in his work ... he is noted for a number of conversation and small scale portraits of refinement and charm.”

Roy Winstanley, the late Editor of the Society’s Journal and transcriber of Woodforde’s diary, quoting the reference Thieme-Becker, *Künstler-Lexicon* 1942, 35, 136/7 says in Note 4, October 1781: “... Henry Walton (1746-1813) who painted the two portraits of Mr and Mrs Custance now so familiar through their reproduction in the Beresford edition ... was a pupil of Zoffany. Supposed to have come from a greengrocer’s family and to have originally followed that trade himself.”⁸

However, the Gainsborough's House Society in their Review of 1998/9 published *The Life and Work of Henry Walton* by their member Evelyne Bell,⁹ together with a 30 page catalogue of his paintings both identified and unidentified, his will dated 29 March 1812, a note of the artist's posthumous sale held on 27 September 1813 and the sale of his widow's household goods on 19 May 1828. Here we have the correct version of his life and work!

Henry Walton was born in 1745 at Dickleburgh, a village 6 miles NE of Diss on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. His parents, Samuel and Ann had two other children, Samuel (1741-1783) and Elizabeth (1752-1843) and it was their children in turn who appear in Henry's paintings, for he and his wife had no direct descendants. At the age of 19 he left home for London and eventually a place in Johann Zoffany's studio. In Necton Hall, Norfolk, visited by Sir Frederick Duleep Singh in 1908, there hung a painting of William and John Mason with Mr Ambrose Humphreys which bore a note that it was "Painted by Henry Walton. He was placed by Mr Humphreys under Zoffany".¹⁰ By 1771, living in Great Chandos Street, Covent Garden, the centre of London portrait painting, Walton took an apprentice, Edward Miles from Great Yarmouth, who went on to produce many fine miniatures of Norfolk folk. In September of that year Henry Walton married Elizabeth Rust of Wortham, another village near Diss. Elizabeth too was a miniature painter and exhibited at the Royal Academy as an honorary member. There exists, but location unknown, a miniature of Henry and Elizabeth. The Revd Richard Cobbold, Rector of Wortham (where Henry lived and farmed at the end of his life) left memories of the couple.¹¹ "The house was called 'Waltons' from the fact that a gentleman of that name, who was really a very good painter and a good judge of paintings, resided there. He painted several very pleasing portraits of gentlemen in the neighbourhood. An old servant of his gave me a good miniature portrait of this Mr Walton and his wife – quite in the old style." However, there is, in a private collection, a water colour miniature of Henry, painted c.1770.¹²

Thanks to the diary entries for 1781 we know that in October Henry was at Weston House "drawing M^r Custance's Picture". Earlier in the year he was at Langley Park painting Sir Thomas Beauchamp Proctor, Mrs Custance's brother, with his gamekeeper and dogs.

This picture was exhibited in Norwich Castle Museum in 1992 during the "Family and Friends" event and a reproduction appears in the book by Andrew Moore and Charlotte Crawley which accompanied the exhibition. Sir Thomas reclines on a grassy bank with his dogs at his feet¹³ and, during his lifetime, the painting was displayed over the entrance door to his dressing room. It was sold at Christie's in 1988 into a private collection. Sir Thomas and his brother George appear in another Walton painting c.1785 of "Robert Palmer with Companions – The Holme Park Hunt". Its present location is unknown.

So Henry Walton's reputation as a portrait painter would have been well-known to the Custances. Edward Gibbon, the celebrated historian, who had several portraits painted by Walton, voiced the opinion that they were "unquestionably the best" because he had an exceptional ability to catch the likeness of a sitter. They were "a representation which is said to be very like a person". Whether John Custance took advantage of his other activities as a buyer at auctions and adviser to private collectors we do not know but Sir Thomas Beauchamp Proctor certainly relied on him in finding pictures for his collection and, as Dawson Turner¹⁴ reported in 1840: "there was scarcely a picture of note in this country with the history of which he was unacquainted".

Another customer for Walton's expertise was Sir Robert Buxton of Shadwell Lodge, Norfolk and MP for Thetford in 1790, whose wife was the daughter of Sir Thomas Beevor. They were painted in 1786 with their daughter Anne and this picture now belongs to Norwich Castle Museum.¹⁵ According to Sir Robert's account book, £31. 10. 0d was paid for this picture: "To Mr Walton for painting a family piece of three figures at 10G[uineas] a figure". Walton also sold Sir Robert a number of paintings and drawings, including a Poussin and a Claude.¹⁶

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Walton spent the majority of his time on his estate at Burgate, near Wortham, which he had purchased shortly after his marriage. He had rebuilt the house and added a studio which boasted a large window, lighting the room, from the NW. The house and studio still exist, facing a field known as "Painting Room Field" and a wooded area, which delighted the painter so much he stipulated the trees should be kept

after his death. Walton owned a working farm with animals, a grain store and a large barn, which is still standing. Isaac Fake was his “Ben Leggett” and it was he who owned the miniature of Henry and Elizabeth and passed it on to the Revd Richard Cobbold. In these idyllic surroundings Walton enjoyed local society and a record of his meetings with James Oakes and Mr Rayner, who married Henry’s niece, can be found in a local diary.¹⁷

At the end of his life Walton was in London, lodging in a house in Bond Street. After dining with a friend on 19 May 1813 and feeling unwell, he retired to bed with a drink of brandy and water and the next morning was found dead. According to Dawson Turner he died of pleurisy and his body was returned to Suffolk, where he was buried in the churchyard at Brome near his parents.¹⁸ His widow lived on a further 15 years on their Burgate estate.

It remains to be discovered who commissioned Charles Grignion to copy the Henry Walton painting of John Custance to match the portrait of Mrs Custance and who took possession of the original. It is known that Frances, the youngest daughter of Sir Edmund Bacon¹⁹ (the Master Edmund Bacon of the Grignion group of four which in 1921 hung on the first-floor landing of Weston House) who, as the widow of the Revd W. H. Neville, married in 1840 Hambleton Francis Custance, the Squire’s grandson, and brought to Weston House many Bacon pictures. That family (mentioned so often in the diary as Mrs Custance’s sister Anne, Lady Bacon, stayed at Weston House and entertained the Custances at Raveningham) patronized Charles Grignion and it may have been at that time that the Grignion portraits came to the Custance family and the Walton went elsewhere – possibly back to the Beauchamp Proctor family who collected his work. Were it not for James Woodforde meticulously recording the names of fellow diners at the Custance table, this portrait might never have been correctly identified. Mallett Antiques tell us of a recently published catalogue of Walton’s work²⁰ in which it is listed as “present location unknown”. But now we know where it is and warmly welcome it back to the county where it was created.

It has been a pleasure to meet Mr Walton, who gave us this likeness of Mr Custance and “played a Pool of Commerce of one Shilling Apiece” with James, Nancy and the Custance family. James lost

6d, Nancy lost 1/6d and Henry Walton also lost his money for “Mrs Custance won the Pool – in all neat – 4/6d.”

My thanks to Norma Watt of the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service who pointed out the importance of the Gainsborough’s House Society Review 1998/9 and our Chairman/Editor who searched the internet for Walton and Grignon information.

NOTES

1. Volume XXI No. 1, Spring 1988 and Supplement No. 8, 1989.
2. Thomas Rawlins was a stonemason and Weston House was his only venture into country house building. *Creating Paradise*, Wilson and Mackley (1999).
3. There were two Charles Grignions – father and son. Presumably it was the son who painted the Custance family at the end of the eighteenth century. He was a painter, copyist and engraver and is known to have engraved the illustration of Smollett’s *The Adventures of Roderick Randon*, after Francis Hayman. In 1794 he painted the portrait of Sir William Hamilton, then British Minister to the Bourbon Court in Naples. (Emma preferred to be painted by Romney.) Charles Grignon died in Italy and is buried at Leghorn.
4. Foster and Unthank, solicitors to the Custance family. NRO, FOS. 586.
5. This information comes from *Portraits in Norfolk Houses* (1927) by Sir Frederick Duleep Singh (2 volumes).
6. *Norfolk Portraits*, compiled by local historian Walter Rye, who states that a Mr Edwards was responsible for the etching.
7. Journal XXI, No. 1, Spring 1988, page 21, ‘Custance Family Portraits’, Tom Custance.
8. This impression was no doubt gained from a picture exhibited in 1779 (now in the collection of Sir Resesby Sitwell) entitled “The Fruit Barrow”. A contemporary commentator noted that he had been informed the figures in the scene were the artist (Henry Walton), Miss Carr and the artist’s nephews and niece. The picture is also known as “The Walton Family”.
9. Evelyne Bell studied at L’Ecole des Langues Orientales in Paris, the Université de Dijon, the University of Essex, and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Education.
10. This painting is illustrated in the Gainsborough’s House Society Review 1998/9, page 86, fig. 4.
11. The Revd Richard Cobbold (1797-1877), *Parochial Associations* and drawings in 4 volumes, edited by Ronald Fletcher in 1977. He compares Cobbold’s life with that of James Woodforde a century earlier.
12. G.H.S. Review 1998/9, page 40, fig. 1.
13. This picture, together with that of “Portrait of a Gentleman with saddled grey Hunter”, illustrates Walton’s ability to execute paintings of animals, although in a larger canvas Sawrey Gilpin and George Barrett painted the horse and dogs.
14. Banker, collector and art connoisseur of Great Yarmouth, patron of John Sell Cotman and, incidentally, uncle of the Revd Thomas Dade. Woodforde’s curate. His mother was Dawson Turner’s sister.

15. This picture mirrors Sir William Beechey's painting of Mr and Mrs Custance and their daughter Anne. The date is in dispute and it was possibly executed at Bath where the family lived from 1792-1797. The picture now belongs to Norwich Castle Museum.
16. G.H.S. Review 1998/9, page 53.
17. *The Oakes Diaries*, Ed. J. Fiske, Suffolk Record Society, XXXII and XXXIII, Woodbridge 1990/1, page 149.
18. *A short guide to the memorials in Brome Church, Diss* (1938), Revd C. F. Cory Elvin.
19. Sir Edmund Bacon, 8th Bt (1749-1829) was twice painted by Walton – in 1780 (now in a private collection) and 1788 (owned by Emmanuel College, Cambridge).
20. *Catalogue of portraits by Henry Walton*, G.H.S. Review 1998/9 where unfortunately Mrs John Custance, née Frances Beauchamp Proctor, is included "present location unknown" mistakenly quoting Singh (1927), Vol. II, page 388, where it states "Charles Grignon – Pinxit". This Review is available from Gainsborough's House, 46 Gainsborough Street, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2EU. A copy of this publication is held in the Society's archives.

AUNT ANNE – THE MISSING YEARS: POST-SCRIPT

In writing the article on Woodforde's Aunt Anne in the Summer 2005 edition of the Journal I neglected to make reference to a letter which appeared under Notes & Queries in the Spring 1990 Journal (Vol. XXIII, 1). It was from the Very Revd J. C. Hughes, former Vicar of Great Easton, Market Harborough, Leicestershire. It ran as follows:

"My Aunt Anne called here in her
road to M^r Morris's at Loddington
in Leicestershire, & dined, supped & laid here toge=
=ther with my Cousin Tomy, who goes with her
Painter Clark lent me his Spinet *Ansford Diary I, 23/7/1760*

Captain Robert Morris of the City of London married Margaret Annables, Hertfordshire. Their eldest son, Charles, inherited the manor of Loddington from his father in 1676, a certain John Morris having bought it in 1670.

Charles Morris married in 1685. His wife was the third daughter and co-heir of Sir Edmund Bacon, the fourth baronet of Redgrave, Suffolk. Charles was buried at Loddington 15 March

1710 and Susannah [his wife] died on 28 March 1711 and was buried at Loddington.

There were three sons from the marriage. The eldest son, Edmund, was born in 1687 and in 1720 he married Ann, the second daughter of Sir Alexander Campbell of Calder. Edmund was MP for Leicestershire in 1722 and high Sheriff in 1746. He was buried on 30 July 1759 at Loddington. Ann died in Greenwich but was buried near her husband on 14 September 1775.

Edmund and Ann had five children and one son, Charles, must be the Mr Morris of the Diary. His descendant Charles Henry Morris sold the hall estate.”

Thus the ‘Mr Morris’ of Loddington visited by Anne in 1760 was not, as I had assumed, Edmund Morris for he had died the previous year but his son Charles. Anne, made homeless by the death of her brother, the Revd John Woodforde of North Curry, went to Loddington to be with her friend the recently-widowed Mrs Ann Morris. Anne may well have stayed at Loddington until she took up residence at Ansford in 1769. Perhaps it was at this point that Ann Morris moved to Greenwich.

The suggestion made in the Summer article that Ann Morris (née Campbell) may have been related to another of Anne Woodforde’s friends, John Campbell of Stackpole Court, Pembrokeshire would appear to have been accurate for he was indeed also a child, the eldest son, of Sir Alexander Campbell of Calder, head of a cadet branch of the Campbells of Argyll.

There is another interesting connection between the Campbells of Stackpole and the Morris family of Loddington. Edmund Morris’s maternal grandfather was, it appears from the letter, Sir Edmund Bacon of Redgrave, Suffolk and, as I pointed out in the earlier piece, John Campbell’s eldest son, Pryse, married the daughter of a later Sir Edmund Bacon of Redgrave. Clearly these three families were closely connected; a reminder, if such were needed, as to how restricted in size the landowning classes of eighteenth century England were. What we still need to know, of course, is how exactly Anne Woodforde fits into this fascinating jig-saw.

THE VISITATION DINNER

[Chapter LVIII of Oliver Goldsmith's 'The Citizen of the World', reproduced at the suggestion of Mr Roy Creamer.]

From Lien Chi Altangi, to Fum Hoam, first president of the Ceremonial Academy at Peking, in China.

As the man in black takes every opportunity of introducing me to such company as may serve to indulge my speculative temper, or gratify my curiosity; I was by his influence lately invited to a visitation dinner. To understand this term, you must know, that it was formerly the custom here for the principal priests to go about the country once a year, and examine upon the spot whether those of subordinate orders did their duty, or were qualified for the task; whether their temples were kept in proper repair, or the laity pleased with their administration.

Though a visitation of this nature was very useful, yet it was found to be extremely troublesome; and for many reasons utterly inconvenient; for as the principal priests were obliged to attend at court, in order to solicit preferment, it was impossible they could at the same time attend in the country, which was quite out of the road to promotion: if we add to this the gout, which has been time immemorial a clerical disorder here, together with the bad wine, and ill dressed provisions that must infallibly be served up by the way, it was not strange that the custom has been long discontinued. At present, therefore, every head of the church, instead of going about to visit his priests, is satisfied if his priests come in a body once a year to visit him; by this means the duty of half a year is dispatched in a day. When assembled, he asks each in his turn how they have behaved, and are liked; upon which those who have neglected their duty, or are disagreeable to their congregation, no doubt accuse themselves, and tell him all their faults; for which he reprimands them most severely.

The thoughts of being introduced into a company of philosophers and learned men, (for as such I conceived them) gave me no small pleasure; I expected our entertainment would resemble those sentimental banquets so finely described by Xenophon and Plato; I was hoping some Socrates would be brought in from the door, in

order to harangue upon divine love; but as for eating and drinking I had prepared myself to be disappointed in that particular. I was apprized, that fasting and temperance were tenets strongly recommended to the professors of Christianity, and I had seen the frugality and mortification of the priests of the east; so that I expected an entertainment where we should have much reasoning, and little meat.

Upon being introduced, I confess I found no great signs of mortification in the faces or persons of the company. However, I imputed their florid looks to temperance, and their corpulence to a sedentary way of living. I saw several preparations indeed for dinner, but none for philosophy. The company seemed to gaze upon the table with silent expectation; but this I easily excused. Men of wisdom, thought I, are ever slow of speech; they deliver nothing inadvisedly. *Silence, says Confucius, is a friend that will never betray.* They are now probably inventing maxims, or hard sayings, for their mutual instruction, when some one shall think proper to begin.

My curiosity was now wrought up to the highest pitch; I impatiently looked round to see if any were going to interrupt the mighty pause; when, at last, one of the company declared, that there was a sow in his neighbourhood that farrowed fifteen pigs at a litter. This I thought a very preposterous beginning: but just as another was going to second the remark, dinner was served, which interrupted the conversation for that time.

The appearance of dinner, which consisted of a variety of dishes, seemed to diffuse new cheerfulness upon every face; so that I now expected the philosophical conversation to begin, as they improved in good humour. The principal priest, however, opened his mouth, with only observing that the venison had not been kept enough, though he had given strict orders for having it killed ten days before. *I fear, continues he, it will be found to want the true healthy flavour, you will find nothing of the original wildness in it.* A priest who sate next him having smelt it, and wiped his nose; ah, my good Lord, cries he, you are too modest, it is perfectly fine; every body knows that no body understands keeping venison with your Lordship. Ay, and partridges too, interrupted another; I never find them right any where else. His Lordship was going to reply, when

a third took off the attention of the company by recommending the pig as inimitable. I fancy, my Lord, continues he, it has been smothered in its own blood? If it has been smothered in its blood, cried a facetious member, helping himself, we'll now smother it in egg sauce. This poignant piece of humour produced a long loud laugh, which the facetious brother observing, and now that he was in luck, willing to second his blow, assured the company he would tell them a good story about that; as good a story, cries he, bursting into a violent fit of laughter himself, as ever you heard in your lives: there was a farmer of my parish, who used to sup upon wild ducks and flummery; so this farmer—*Doctor Marrowfat, cries his Lordship, interrupting him, give me leave to drink your health;*—so being fond of wild ducks and flummery—*Doctor, adds a gentleman who sate next him, let me advise you to a wing of this turkey;*—so this farmer being fond—*Hob nob Doctor which do you chuse, white or red?*—So being fond of wild ducks and flummery,—*take care of your band, Sir, it may dip in the gravy.* The Doctor now looking round, found not a single eye disposed to listen; wherefore calling for a glass of wine, he gulped down the disappointment, and the tale in a bumper.

The conversation now began to be little more than a rhapsody of exclamations; as each had pretty well satisfied his own appetite, he now found sufficient time to press others. *Excellent, the very thing; let me recommend the pig, do but taste the bacon; never eat a better thing in my life; exquisite, delicious.* This edifying discourse continued thro' three courses which lasted as many hours, till every one of the company was unable to swallow or utter any thing more.

It is very natural for men who are abridged in one excess, to break into some other. The clergy here, particularly those who are advanced in years, think if they are abstemious with regard to women and wine, they may indulge their other appetites without censure. Thus some are found to rise in the morning only to a consultation with their cook about dinner, and when that has been swallowed, make no other use of their faculties (if they have any) but to ruminate on the succeeding meal.

A debauch in wine is even more pardonable than this, since one glass insensibly leads on to another, and instead of sateing whets the appetite. The progressive steps to it are chearful, and seducing;

the grave are animated, the melancholy relieved, and there is even classic authority to countenance the excess. But in eating after nature is once satisfied every additional morsel brings stupidity and distempers with it, and as one of their own poets expresses it,

*The soul subsides, and wickedly inclines,
To seem but mortal, even in sound divines.*

Let me suppose, after such a meal as this I have been describing, while all the company are sitting in lethargic silence round the table, grunting under a load of soup, pig, pork and bacon, let me suppose I say, some hungry beggar with looks of want peeping thro' one of the windows, and thus addressing the assembly, *Prithee pluck those napkins from your chins; after nature is satisfied all that you eat extraordinary is my property, and I claim it as mine. It was given to you in order to relieve me, and not to oppress yourselves. How can they comfort or instruct others, who can scarce feel their own existence, except from the unsavoury returns of an ill digested meal. But tho' neither you nor the cushions you sit upon will hear me, yet the world regards the excesses of its teachers with a prying eye, and notes their conduct with double severity.* I know no other answer any one of the company could make to such an expostulation, but this, 'Friend you talk of our losing a character, and being disliked by the world; well, and supposing all this to be true, what then! who cares for the world? We'll preach for the world, and the world shall pay us for preaching, whether we like each other or not.'

THE DUNNELL FAMILY

Wouldst thou know nature in her better parte,
Goe, serche the logges and bordels of the hynde;
Gyfe theye have anie itte ys roughemade arte,
Inne hem you see the blakied form of kynde.

— Thomas Chatterton: 'Eclogue the
Third', May 1769 — 'Complete Works',
ed. Taylor (1971), I, 312.

He don't plant taters,
He don't pick cotton,
An' them as does it
Am soon forgotten . . .

— Song: 'Ol' Man River', from
'Show Boat'.

Successive generations of readers and students will differ widely as to the kind of questions each may wish to ask about the history of a given period. One of the more serious drawbacks of the Beresford Woodforde, to us, is that the editor had plainly little interest in the social ramifications, at parish level, of the communities he was dealing with. As a result, a great deal of what the diarist wrote about village people was either discarded, or if given a place among the printed selections, had no word of explanation appended, although this is often necessary if the entry is to be fully intelligible. We must not, however, unfairly blame him for being a man of his own time. The importance of that particular kind of social and domestic history, for which the diary is so eminent and unsurpassed a source, was only just beginning to be comprehended in the 1920s. By and large, Beresford gave contemporary readers what they wanted, a fact proved by the great popularity of his edition. Neither he nor they guessed that there was far more to Woodforde's diary than simply those trivial or comic facets of eighteenth century rural life which he chose principally to include. By contrast, we have a much clearer notion of what we should be looking for in this kind of social document; hence the obligation laid upon those who are producing the Society's own

editions, to widen and extend our knowledge of the diarist's world, and of himself.

If we were to take a very simplistic view of the parish of Weston Longville, as it was in the diarist's time, it might be thought that to analyse the social structure of the village presented no great problem. There was a resident squire, who lived in the great house he had just built, and whose estate took in most of the farmland, a majority of those who cultivated it being his tenants. There were one or two lesser landowners, people like the squire's brother whose social position is easier to assess than his material standing, or like the "gentlemen farmers", a term actually used by Woodforde. There was only one real professional man, Woodforde himself, for the local doctor, who was in any case in no very exalted position on the social ladder, did not reside in the village. Then there were the working farmers, many of them members of families long established there, and a few tradesmen and craftsmen to serve the needs of a village community still to a great extent self-supporting. These too were often farmers, but in a small way. The better-off householders kept servants: footmen, coachmen, housemaids and cooks. Finally, at the bottom of the pyramid as always, came the labourers. Some of these were in full-time employment, some casual workers, and a few no doubt existed mainly upon parish out-relief, in particular the elderly, for whom there was often no other means of support at all.

All this may be gleaned from the most superficial browsing in the diary. But as soon as the reader begins to examine the evidence with a little care, the picture becomes much more complex. It is clear that some of the farmers operated on a bigger scale, and were far more prosperous, than others. These village notables were also the executants, under the JPs, of the vestry system, by which law and order was maintained and the ordinary affairs of the parish kept in motion. At the other end of the spectrum the smallest and least successful of the farmers merged imperceptibly into the body of the labouring class.

Although in the diary Weston often gives an impression of great remoteness, at least in the winter months and the seasons of bad weather, it is in fact no more than eight miles from Norwich, the county town. There is evidence of quite considerable social

mobility. Many of the people we come to know well from the diary turn out not to have been natives of the parish. Conversely, some of these characters leave Weston and are not heard of again. There are even people who, like Sukey Boxley's famous vanishing lover "Humphrey", are nowhere found in the extant parish records and would be quite unknown if it were not that the diary proves their existence.

On the other hand, some of the families had strong genealogical ties with the village, intermarried with each other and, staying in one place in the manner conventionally supposed to be characteristic of all pre-industrial rural societies, in time established a complex link of blood-relationships.

So much as this may be ascertained through a study of the church registers and what little remains of other parochial documents. But if we wish to discover real personal information – if, for example, we are trying to find out what a particular man did to earn his living – it is to Woodforde that we must go for the answers. It is the wealth of detail about the lives of ordinary people that makes the diary, in its full manuscript completion, one of the most fascinating social documents ever compiled. For history, in a general way, has concerned itself very little with ordinary people.

Dr Case's suggestion, in the last Journal, that members of the Society might co-operate in writing the history of certain village families is too sound not to be acted upon. I therefore offer these notes on the Dunnell family as a modest contribution towards a pool of knowledge, as it were, which if created would do much to increase our understanding of working life and conditions in Woodforde's Norfolk parish.

*

Barnabas Dunnell was in all probability not a native of Weston, although certainty can rarely be achieved on the basis of a document so imperfect as the older Weston register. All one can say is that the records are silent until the time when his children were born. We do not know the maiden name of his wife Mary, so cannot come to any conclusion at all about her. But their wedding did not take place in the parish, and they most likely arrived as a married couple, perhaps only just married. Under the Settlement Laws a

householder who occupied a tenement to the value of £10 a year was entitled to the same rights of settlement, parish relief and maintenance for his family as one born in the parish. Once there, the Dunnells settled permanently and did not move again. Woodforde's "Harry Dunnell" was, so far as we know, the eldest child of his parents. By a coincidence, he happened to be an exact contemporary of the diarist. His baptism is recorded in the church register:

August. 24. 1740 Henry Son of Barnabas & Mary Dun[nell]

He was followed into the world by other children:

1742 Mary Daughter of Barnabas & Mary Dunnil June 25

1745 David Son of Barnabas & Mary Dannel July 14

1748 Barnard Son of Barnabas & Mary Dannel May 15

1754 Thomas Son of Barnabas & Mary Donning [sic] May 7

1756 Robert Son of Barnabas & Mary Dannel May 4

There is no further trace anywhere of Mary or Robert, and we must assume that they both died in infancy. It is scarcely open to doubt that the burial of babies and very young children was sometimes omitted from the registers, particularly when the incumbent was an absentee, as was the case until Woodforde arrived. A space of six more years then ensued, before the birth of the last Dunnell of this generation:

Charlotte Daughter of Barnabas & Mary
Dunnell was baptised Mar: 12. 1762

Less than a year later the father of all these children died, the register entering his burial on 8 January 1763. His Christian name defeated Mr Howes, who put it down as "Bartholomew". Another two years went by; then David, the second son, died aged twenty. ("Davy Dannel – Oct: 22 – 1765"). All the other children, and their mother, were living when Woodforde took up residence eleven years later, and the diary becomes our main although not quite our only source of information about the family.

Barnabas Dunnell was certainly a farmer, even though perhaps in quite a small way. After he died, his widow carried on the farm. Independent women farmers were by no means such a novelty as Thomas Hardy supposed, when he wrote *Far From the Madding*

Crowd. Or it may have been that the Victorians simply clamped down on women, taking from them their right to work as they took away other rights. At all events eighteenth century records can show us many examples of woman farmers. Clearly, no landlord would have granted a farming tenancy to an unmarried woman, but it seems not to have been too difficult for a widow to continue her late husband's tenure, particularly when there was a lease involved with some years left to run. In any case, Harry was twenty-three when his father died, and the younger sons were growing up.

The diary gives us a few invaluable crumbs of information about the activities of Mrs Dunnell. She was one of Woodforde's tithe-payers but, unlike the similarly circumstanced Mrs Pratt, old Mr Cary's daughter, she was never represented at the Tithe Audits by a man. Instead she paid her dues personally a day or two later. In his first year, 1776, Mrs Dunnell paid him only the inconsiderable sum of £4. 2. 6, actually six shillings less than he owed her for goods supplied, "for Tithe & Glebe". She had a small piece of the glebe land known as "Bell string Road", which we know of because it became the object of contention between Woodforde and the parish, who both claimed it. "M^{rs} Dunnell has it, and has paid for it 13. years together as a Piece of Glebe to D^r Ridley" – Diary, 24/10/1776. Dr Ridley was his predecessor as incumbent, and the number of years the time which had elapsed since the death of Mrs Dunnell's husband. The following year she paid the very much larger sum of £17. 2. 6, the difference accounted for by the fact that she was now renting some "College Land", meaning a part of the land which Woodforde leased through the Le Neve family from New College. In 1781 her total obligation was £20. 9. 6.

The diarist's relations with Mrs Dunnell, and of course with other village people of her station, illustrate and exemplify the close-knit nature of this rural community. He once or twice bought livestock from her, such as "12. little Geese" on one occasion; and one or two joints of meat. She sold "pork Meat" for him in Norwich, surplus to his needs. At the same time, he was selling her small amounts of butter, always produced in surplus by the Parsonage milch-cows. Her cart and horses came in handy when he wanted goods taken into or collected from Norwich, and on at least two

occasions she sold half a "Pigg" for him there. He also used them, and her workers, to help get in the harvest of the Rectory glebe. On 14 September 1776 "the Men were her Son Thomas and Robin Buck". This last was employed as a carter and to do general labouring tasks about the farm, which tells us a little more about her status in the village; but the fact that he was an elderly man might suggest that her resources as an employer of labour were limited. Robert or Robin Buck died in March 1778, aged sixty-three. Woodforde commented that

No Doctor was sent for during his Illness, neither
by his Kinsmen or M^{rs} Dunnell –

But a few days later a large number of village people turned out to attend his funeral, since "Poor Robin was respected & beloved by all that knew him –". We often enough meet with this strange juxtaposition of priorities when reading the diary.

Mrs Dunnell was probably tough and knew how to look after herself. Amusingly, Woodforde once recorded her as, on a visit to the Parsonage, exchanging "warm Words" with his maid Betty Claxton, a somewhat hardfaced woman whom many people would have hesitated before taking on. She outlived the century and in 1801, when young Stephen Andrews collected the census figures, she was put down as "Widow Dunnell", living alone. She went on another three years, and the parish register finally records her burial on 22 April 1804, aged eighty-four.

The careers of her sons highlight the point I made above, that there was no real line of demarcation between farmers and tradesmen. If Mrs Dunnell kept the farm going herself, with the assistance of a hired man, there could have been no livelihood on her holding for three adult sons, although all of them certainly helped her out at the peak periods of the farming year. In fact Harry and Thomas, and possibly Barnard as well, were carpenters by trade. Thomas made "a P^r of handsome large deal Gates for the Barton" at the Parsonage in 1777. Barnard was also a shoemaker.

We might look at Barnard first. In February 1773 he took a wife, and his choice is of some interest, for he married Bridget, daughter of the late Stephen Andrews senior. As we should expect of a member of that important and prosperous family, she signed her

name legibly in the marriages register. It is unlikely, I think, that any of the Dunnells could write.* The couple had a daughter, baptised on 30 January 1774, who got into the register as “Anne Donning”, just as her father had been dubbed “Bernard” by Mr Howes on his marriage.

Barnard was actually the first of his family to make the Parson’s acquaintance. In April 1775 he was living with his wife and daughter as a sub-tenant at Weston Parsonage, an arrangement no doubt contrived by Howes. Mr Wilson junior, the totally impoverished curate of the Witchingham, was also there about this time, having implored Woodforde’s permission to be allowed to stay there. But he had evidently gone before the diarist made the inspection visit to his new living.

On 16 April, the day after his arrival, Woodforde wrote in his diary:

A Man & his Wife, by name Dunnell live at
the Parsonage & are good kind of People –

Indeed, his reception there was in striking contrast with the state of affairs he found a year later, when he and Nephew Bill arrived to find an empty, cold and deserted house. The Dunnells must surely have had a lower standard of living than that which later prevailed at the Parsonage when the diarist kept house there. All the same, Bridget provided a loin of veal for dinner on the next day, and minced veal and “Norfolk Dumplins” the day after. On 20 April he was not only regaled with “a Leg of Mutton and a Currant Pudding”, but was actually able to offer these comestibles, with tea to follow, to his new lady-friends, Mrs Howes, Mrs Davie and the wine-merchant’s wife Mrs Priest. On 4 May Bridget’s cookery was agreeing so well with him that he became quite lyrical about it:

Had as fine a Leg of Mutton & Caper Sauce
for Dinner, as one could ever desire to sit down to
and dressed as well as could possibly be done –
I made a very hearty Dinner tho’ by myself on it –

Before he left, to return to Norwich and so back to Oxford, he settled his accounts, bought a pair of new shoes from Barnard, and threw in tips: “Gave his Wife for the Trouble I have given – 0: 2: 6”,

* Barnard made a mark on the certificate at his own wedding. Harry did the same when acting as a witness to the marriage of John Knights and Anne Andrews in 1778.

adding another two shillings and sixpence for “their serving Man”. It is scarcely open to doubt that Barnard and his family were not at the Parsonage when the diarist arrived on 24 May 1776 to begin his long period of residence there. It is rather strange that, although after the first day or two meals began to appear, and Woodforde was even able to provide a dinner of sorts for a number of workmen he had sent for to consult with about “dilapidations”, there is no mention at all of the Dunnells’ presence in the house. During June he paid Barnard two bills, obviously for goods got in to order. Then on 25 June:

M^r and M^{rs} Dunnell very busy in carrying of all of their things to day – as they leave the House to day and are to sleep at their Mothers M^{rs} Dunnell –

Not long after this we hear that Barnard had gone into the public house trade and was the licensee of an inn at Morton-on-the-Hill, an adjoining village. Whenever the fishing parties which the diarist enjoyed so much at this particular time of his life took him into that parish, Barnard joined in as one of the helpers who managed the nets. He also provided the liquor with which Woodforde refreshed the labours of his thirsty followers.

Barnard, however, still maintained a tie with Weston. A passage written on 5 October 1776 is of great interest, quite apart from the subject of our present enquiry, because it gives an example of that piecemeal enclosure which has always attracted far less attention from historians than the large-scale, parliamentary enclosure of the text-books:

Took a Walk this morning with Barnard Dunnell over the Glebe Lands in Weston Field – and I let to him one Field of 4. Acres that is inclosed at 18/0 per Acre –

Long after he had ceased to live at Weston Barnard continued to occupy a small amount of land in the parish. For many years he is recorded as having called on Woodforde, usually on the day after the Tithe Frolic, and paid him two guineas. Presumably those whose obligations, either for tithe or rent, amounted only to very small sums were not eligible to attend the party, since it would have been a poor bargain for the tithe-holder to be constrained to wine and dine them in return for such minute contributions. However,

the name "Dunnell" in the Tithe Audit guest list for 1790 seems to refer to Barnard, while in 1792 he is not only entered under his full name but specifically noted as one of the privileged "Parlour Guests". But in later years he went back to paying small amounts after the festivity. He is last mentioned in the diary in this way on 25 November 1801. Long before this, he had lost his wife. Bridget Dunnell died in 1786, aged only thirty-five. There is no evidence that Barnard ever married again.

Like his brothers, Thomas combined the exercise of a skilled trade with the occasional practice of farming, and we have seen him at work in both capacities. He was married, for there is an isolated diary reference to "Tho^s Dunnell & Wife" having dinner in the Parsonage kitchen. There is no record of his having had children, and after 1780 he disappeared from the diary, possibly having left Weston for good.

Charlotte, the youngest child and only surviving daughter of Mary Dunnell, was fifteen when Woodforde came to live in the village. She also is mentioned once or twice as coming to the Parsonage for a meal. In 1783, when she was twenty-one, the Parson noted that "Charlotte Dunnell is reported to be with Child by old Page – she has lately lived with him as Housekeeper". The register confirms that Elizabeth, "spurious" daughter of Charlotte by Phillip Page, was baptised on 27 June 1784. Nearly five years later she married "W^m Lane", the ceremony taking place on 29 January 1789, and we may hope lived happily ever after.

Henry or "Harry" Dunnell has been left until last, simply because the diarist had so much more to do with him than with any other member of his family. He may not make much of an impression on the reader who knows him only through Beresford's scanty selections. In the manuscript his name recurs constantly, week after week, over a period of some years. Harry took part, like his brother Barnard, in the fishing expeditions. He also did an immense variety of odd jobs and ran all manner of errands. We find him "loading Brick" from a piece of wall which the diarist bought from the owner of the recently demolished Witchingham Hall, driving his mother's horses when they were used "all Day to haul Earth to fill up the Hollow in my Barton", shearing and doing other farm work with Ben, fetching goods from Norwich, going for the doctor when

Neighbour Downing was so ill with the smallpox and, most curiously of all, bidding at an auction for two "oil Pictures" that Bill wanted. He was not only in regular employment about the Parsonage, but Woodforde took the step, unusual for him, of paying Harry what we should call a "retainer". We have the agreement for this:

This morning made a Contract with Harry Dunnell before my Nephew to give him 6/6 per Week and a Dinner each Day to work for me from this Day for one Year, and to which he agreed – a Dinner on Sundays –
Diary, 13/1/1777

The sum actually paid out was sometimes more or less, according to the amount and nature of the work done. Woodforde did not always specify this. But in the first period of his residence in Norfolk, he carried out a good deal of maintenance and repair work to the Parsonage and outbuildings. Harry's training and experience as a carpenter would have come in useful here, and he is often found working together with "M^r Hardy the Mason", a master builder who was also much employed by Woodforde about this time.

Harry seems to have been in the main a willing and quite dependable workman. If the Parson did not fail to notice in his diary the times that he was drunk, this was after all a charge he would have had to make on occasion against most workmen of the time:

Harry Dunnell went to Norwich upon my little Mare this morning for me to see some things sent me back from thence in Stephen Andrews's Waggon, which came home in the Evening & he with them, drunk –
– Diary, 14/10/1776

On another occasion Harry got so intoxicated while at work that his services were of little or no value that day. Woodforde was not as an employer a difficult or unreasonable man, but he liked to have his money's worth for the wages he paid out. When he sent Harry to deliver a message and promised him a bonus of sixpence and some food if he returned by a certain time, Harry failed to turn up, and got neither the money nor the "Victuals". Another time he celebrated the completion of the harvest by getting drunk for some days on end; after which he was ill. In fact his health was not of

the best. After one of the fishing trips, at “Carys Pitt & Bowles’s Pitt”, the Parson and his men being out all day, “Harry Dunnell was knocked up & was ill after it”. – Diary, 1 October 1776.

As no-one else seems to have been affected, we might enquire the reason for this weakened resistance in a man still fairly young. Woodforde supplies the answer. On 16 November he notes that Harry “has the Ague very bad”, and by the early part of the new year he was suffering from it severely. He had that variety of malaria known at the time as “tertian ague”, in which the attacks came on every third day. For this the diarist gave him at different times “4. Glasses of Gin” (1 January 1777) and “a good deal of red Wine and Nutmeg to drink – & he drank 3. Q^{rs} of a Pint” (3 January). There is something touching in the belief of Woodforde’s generation that alcohol would cure almost every possible disease, if the patient would only drink enough of it. However, at least the diarist did not recommend Harry to jump into “the great Pond” for a remedy, as he did upon occasion to his servants.

In 1777 Woodforde did not renew the yearly agreement he had made with Harry. This may have been because he no longer required the workman’s services on a regular basis, or perhaps had found the mode of payment more expensive than for casual labour where the man was paid only for the work he actually did. He continued to employ Harry upon a variety of jobs, but gradually the payments to him became less frequent.

It also becomes clear as we study the relations between the rector and his workman that Harry was poor, and that Woodforde recognised him as a legitimate object of charity, sometimes lending him money in advance of his wages and giving him meals even when he was not working at the Parsonage. All in all, they seem to have got along together very well, and so far as we know they had only one real disagreement. But, because the diarist’s account of the quarrel is in the Beresford edition, which contains hardly any other information about Harry Dunnell (of course, there were all those toads which he and the boy Jack Warton picked up and put into the basket!), it is by this only that readers are likely to remember him. The dispute arose over the baptism of his two children and will bear re-telling, since this is typically the kind of entry which called for, but did not get, an explanatory note.

Harry married a Mary Hendry, who almost certainly came from another parish. We do not know when or where he was married. But on 6 October 1777 Woodforde entered the names of his two children, Barnard and Anne, on his baptismal register. They were not twins, for one child was born earlier, no doubt the year before, and had been privately baptised at the Parsonage, although the diarist kept no record of it. Now, while this appears to have been done as a matter of course for the children of the squires and professional men, where the working people were concerned it was very much of a special favour (unless, that is, the baby was seriously ill and not expected to survive), and made conditional upon the parents afterwards bringing the child to be “presented” to the church. At the time Barnard (or Anne) was born, Harry had clearly promised to do this. But he had not kept his word, and the rector now refused to carry out another private christening for Anne (or Barnard). Harry lost his temper and made his “saucy” remark about sending the baby “to some Meeting House to be named”. He probably knew Woodforde’s opinion of the Dissenting clergy and their meeting houses. But, however annoyed the diarist was, he probably did not want to lose his handy workman, and the squabble is not mentioned again.

Harry’s younger children were Bridget (1779): Henry (1781): Mary (1783): Thomas (1785): Robert (1788): Charlotte (1791). The picture is made more complex by the appearance of a namesake. This was another “Henry Dunnell”, who in the year of Robert’s birth produced a daughter christened Rebeccah. But this man’s wife was named Rebeccah Fox, so it is easy enough to distinguish between the two families. Woodforde calls this second man “Henry Dunnell Jun^r.”, which in this context does not imply relationship but signifies merely that he was younger than Harry.

If Harry was poor when he had only one or two children, he would grow no richer when he had a large brood to look after. These two points are as though naturally linked together in a number of later diary entries. On 9 April 1791:

D^r Thorne called here this morning and I paid
 him for inoculating 6. Children of Harry
 Dunnells at $\text{£}2.6^d$ – per head – 0: 15: 0
 by M^r Custances desire out of the Guinea

that M^r Custance gave me for the same – and there
being six Shillings left – I gave it to Harry
Dunnells Wife this Evening, it being desired
by M^r Custance to give whatever remained to her –

In fact, there should have been seven children, not counting Charlotte who was not born until the July of this year. Possibly one had died, but there is no trace of this in the register. On 10 August Woodforde wrote: “I read Prayers, Preached and churched two Women this morning at Weston Church – Rec^d for churching M^{rs} Bush – 0: 0: 6 – Harry Dunnell’s Wife was the other Woman, but having a large Family I returned her my Fee –”.

Like his brother, Harry was a farmer of sorts, and hence a tithe-payer in a small way. On 9 December of the same year Woodforde wrote:

Harry Dunnell called on me this Evening &
paid me Tithe for 4. Acres of Land – 0: 12: 0
I gave him back, having a large Family 2: 6
and also gave him plenty of Victuals & drink: –

the size of the family is not, of course, excessive for the time, and not so much bigger than his own mother had brought up. But Harry clearly found making both ends meet a difficult enough business. This may not have been without having some bearing upon what happened to his two eldest daughters.

Of these, Anne was as we have seen baptised in 1777, and Bridget on 26 September 1779. Both of these girls came to grief, after the manner of their aunt Charlotte, but unlike her were rescued from the ignominy of bearing an illegitimate child by the scarcely more morally acceptable device of the compulsory marriage. It is true that Barnard Dunnell, as well as Harry, had a daughter named Anne. But the register shows that this Anne died in infancy, so that the girl mentioned on the marriage certificate must be Harry’s daughter. She made “a forced Match” with “One Daniel Tabbler of Lyng”, the bridegroom being in the custody of the parish officials at the time of the wedding. – Diary, 23/9/1794. Bridget Dunnell was married in the same way to Philip Chapman on 5 January 1799. But it should be pointed out that neither of these marriages took place within the lifetime of Harry Dunnell.

He died in fact in 1793, over a year before the first of them took place. The register notes with the accustomed baldness of statement typical of such official documents:

Henry Dunnell – a married man was buried July 4th 1793 –
aged – 53 – years

As usual, Woodforde can tell us more than this. He was on holiday in Somerset, and did not hear the news until 30 July, retailed in a letter from Betty Dade:

. . . My poor old
Clerk^{J^s}. Smith she writes me word is dead, likewise old
John Spinks and Harry Dunnell the Carpenter – The
latter was a very usefull Man – he has left a Wife and
a very large Family behind him –

Meanwhile, his namesake was living on Oddenham Green, called by the diarist “Oldham-green” in an entry written on 29 October 1792. He was the father of that most unfortunate child who was “born with a large excrecence or Wen on the Nose just over the right Nostril, as big as full as a Pidgeons Egg, and hangs so heavy on the right Nostril that it almost prevents its breathing in that Nostril”. This Henry Dunnell and his wife Rebecca had another child in 1794.

There was also in the village a third Dunnell family of which I became aware only by degrees. Whether or not they were related to Harry and his people I have no idea. But Dr Case’s researches show that William Case, brother of Henry Case and uncle of the “yard boy” Robert Case from whom the doctor traces his descent married Sarah Richmond of Weston. Then I discovered, thanks to Woodforde’s praiseworthy custom of entering the maiden name of the mother in each baptism he recorded, that Sarah’s mother was born – Anne Dunnell!

That was as far as I got for a time. I could not place this supernumerary Anne Dunnell at all, and almost came to see her as that bugbear of all genealogical enquirers, the odd person out who will not fit into the family tree, the wrongly shaped jigsaw piece that cannot be slotted in to complete the picture. Then, checking back, I saw that she was almost certainly to be identified with the “Ann, Daughter of Christopher and Sarah Donning”, who was

baptised in March 1754. We have come across this particular error twice already; and it may have originated in each case through a confusion with "Downing", another Weston name. Besides, these parents had other children, and appear in the baptisms register as "Dunnil" in 1753, as "Dunhill" in 1756, and as "Dunnell" in 1759 and 1764. I might add that the youngest of these children was that Sarah or Sally Dunnell who in 1784 was taken on as cook at Weston Parsonage – "a mighty strapping Wench" – but given the sack as soon as it was discovered that she had no skill in cookery – "a goodnatured Girl but very ignorant".

But who was Christopher Dunnell? The marriages section of the old register gave me this entry for the year 1752:

Christopher Dunnell of Hockering & Sarah Gath of Weston both
single Persons were married Oct. [date illegible]

We may go back further still to the baptism of his wife, who turned out to be "Sarah Daughter of Thomas & Sarah Gath", 25 October 1724. And by now we have gone a long way into the past. Christopher Dunnell must have been an ancient in the late eighteenth century, since he was Case's great-grand-uncle. But surely the name occurs in Beresford's indices? Well, as a matter of fact it does, but only just. The only allusions to Christopher Dunnell in the diary are to his attendance at the Christmas afternoon dinners for the old folk. He was first present in 1789 and continued until 1798. After that he simply disappeared, leaving no trace either in the register or the diary. His son, also Christopher, married Ann Bush of Lakenham in 1784, and although the wedding did not take place in the village, the notice of calling the banns is in the marriages register.

In the period immediately after Woodforde's death, odd bits of scattered information may be gleaned from the records. Harry Dunnell's third daughter, Mary, was married to Daniel Beard at Weston on 15 February 1806. But without the diary to bring them to life for us, such notices can tell us little.

We might end, as so many essays of this kind must of necessity end, with a query. The entry on Stephen Andrews' 1801 census list immediately before that for "Widow Dunnell" runs: "Harry Dunnell" (8)". Was this the Oddenham Green man and his family,

with perhaps one or living-in workmen or servants? Or could it perhaps have been Harry's eldest son, aged twenty in this year and living as head of the household with his widowed mother and those of the family who had not yet left home? And whichever of the two families it may have been, if in fact it was either of them, what had become of the other?

This article by our late Editor originally appeared in Vol. XIV, 4 (Winter 1981)

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Dear Sir,

As well as belonging to the Parson Woodforde Society, I am a member of the William Barnes Society. Barnes held certain views about what he called National English. I wish to support those views. Thus, I do not think that we should use Common (international) English words such as "commence", "comprehend", "initial", "final" when we could just as easily use the National English words "begin", "understand", "first", "last".

I wonder if you would publish this letter in the Society's next newsletter with a request that any members wishing to promote National English ("English for England") contact me.

Yours sincerely

Robert Craig

20 Priory Road
Weston-super-Mare
North Somerset BS23 3HU

Dear Sir,

With regard to Peter Jameson's appeal for a description of 'hollow cakes', I can, as a Norfolk person, confirm that they were always known as 'Norfolk hollows', 'Norfolk biscuits' or 'Norfolk rusks'. I have memories of seeing them displayed in the glass-topped square tins, set an angle along the front of the counters in all grocers. The word 'cake' is not used today to describe these 'Norfolk hollows' albeit an apt description, as the dictionary defines it thus: 'a small flattened sort of bread, regularly shaped and turned in baking'. Norfolk hollows are very plain, made from a dough-like mixture and pressed into two inch rounds. They are split and twice baked and, as Parson Woodforde wrote, served with butter etc (cheese, honey or jam).

In much earlier days a Norfolk hollow was eaten at breakfast, so it was not unusual for Parson Woodforde to offer them to his guests with a glass of mead during the morning. As a descendant of the Chambers family mentioned in the Diary, I would like to think that they too enjoyed Hollow cakes or Norfolk hollows.

Jean Pond
Norwich

FROM PARSON WOODFORDE'S NOTEBOOK

James Woodforde kept a commonplace book in which he jotted down poems, mostly doggerel, and other pieces from newspapers which, presumably, took his fancy. The following extract tells us something of the Parson's sense of humour.

A Country Conversation Piece

The Company seated, the door open wide,
Whiz in comes the tea-urn, with full boiling tide;
Nanny stands in a corner, demure as a Nun,
To fetch and to carry, the cups one by one;
And though she is tongue-tied, she pricks up her Ears,
And has kitchen uses for all that she hears.
The Lady first hopes that the tea's to their liking;
Then souse to their neighbours affairs they all strike in.
Pray, Ma'am have you yet seen the new married couple?
They were married last week by our friend Dr Supple.
The match was well-timed, for the family found
The young lady looked pale and her Waist grew too round.
Psha, psha, 'tis all scandal, I hate such tale-bearing;
Yet one cannot help hearing, nor then help comparing.
Oh, Ma'am I've a comical story to tell you –
Mr Jalap has lost his old sweetheart Miss Nelly!
She refused him her hand at the Ball t'other night,
So he pouted and now he renounces her quite.
Pray who is the Loser? that is as it may be –
He's a long awkward clown – she's a Bartelmy baby.
The fellow might pass if he wore smarter clothes;
He has stout well made legs, with a promising nose:
As for her she's a thing made for holiday use;
So dandling, so delicate – and so profuse!
They say he was smit with her wit and fine sense,
Yet she's able to squander his pounds for her pence.
Pence! how many pence? She has a few clothes;
And her husband must double the stock I suppose.
Oh, Ladies, I saw our grave neighbour Miss Brown

Last Sunday at Church in a bran new silk gown!
La! Miss, sure, I know every gown to her back,
'Tis her old dirty straw-colour'd died to a black,
Though I thought it unlikely I took it for new,
She has only a pink, this straw-coloured, and blue.
Bob Scarlet the Dyer took it home as last Monday,
And she and her maid got it up against Sunday.
Poor girl she deserves a good husband – indeed!
She may do to mend shirts, to make puddings and breed:
She can drudge, but she has neither spirit nor taste:
And as for gentility, look at her waist!
I'm told there's a family lately come down
To the house in Pig Lane, that is facing the Crown;
Let us hear something how and about them I pray,
To know how to behave when they come in our way.
The man they describe as a Rector in London.
Who insur'd, was unlucky, and next kin to undone.
Oh they won't do to visit; I'm told by a Crony,
They have little to spare, and come here to save money.
Last Thursday they din'd on bak'd shoulder of Mutton,
I saw it go in from your neighbour Joe Hutton.
So I find; and my little sly sharp-sighted Niece,
Made me sick with the pan, the potatoes and grease!
Can anyone tell what they pay for their tea?
And whether they breakfast on green or bohea?
Oh, when my Betty finds out the shops that they use,
She will bring me a bushel of family news.
They call us, it seems, rude unmannerly boors,
For staring, when ever they stir out of doors;
But surely when strangers come into the town,
We may look at the cut of a cap or a gown.
The mother's a dowdy, the daughter a fright;
And the father sits smoking from morning to night.
They live in no stile; for I watch their beginning,
And the Mother and daughter get up their own Linen!
If they stoop to house-work, I'll not enter their gate,
For who would drink tea where there's no maid to wait.

Such a beggarly custom must never come up,
As to stretch forth my arm to and fro for my cup.
Oh, let them alone, since they claim no respect,
We shall soon drive them out of the town by neglect.
Why Madam, they bring a good Character. Oh, Sir,
Let them visit the Shoemaker, Butcher and Grocer.
Whose Ladies, I vow, all dress finer than I do,
But so void of all taste! Oh my dear little Dido!
But as their pretensions rise higher, I say,
We must keep both the Vicar and Curate away;
For should they give countenance others will follow.
Dear Madam, how does the sweet Creature Apollo?
I fear he is sick as you don't bring him out;
Why, Miss, my poor Pollo is lame with the gout.
A dog have the gout! If it is not, what is it?
You must send for young Jalap to give him a Visit.
My Ding pupp'd yesterday three lovely creatures;
So charmingly spotted, such delicate features!
Pray, Ma'am, save me one – and let me have another;
And, Ma'am, you'll oblige me to give me their brother.
Why Ladies you're welcome to all to be got o' me,
But poor Ding then will be suck'd to an 'otomy.
Why there's scarcely a house but a cat can be found,
That will take them to nurse, when her kittens are drown'd.
La, don't be so silly – The method is new,
But instead of bow wow, won't she teach them to mew?
That's true, Mrs Watkins is just brought to bed,
And her husband has got a strange freak in his head;
He that us'd to be thought so indulgent and mild,
As I live, now insists she shall wet nurse the child!
I took the Wife's part, as I ought, like a friend;
But the lord only knows how the matter will end!
Why, is he not right? – What, to make her a slave?
You men hurry all your poor wives to the grave.
So I hear Mr Barton has giv'n his maid warning;
They quarrell'd, it seems, about tea in the morning.
She rejected with spirit, I honour her courage,

Bread and Cheese, water gruel, sage tea, and milk porridge;
At last the poor old sneaking miserly cot,
Put off the poor Girl with the leaves in his pot;
Gave her nasty brown sugar, and all ways to stint her,
Debars her from making a Toast in the Winter!
What a brute! – I hope, Ladies, you'll drink a cup more,
Excuse me, dear Ma'am, I protest I've drank four!
Fie, Child, it is quite unpolite to turn down:
Put the spoon in the cup, 'tis the fashion in Town:
Pray hold up your head, and look down at your feet;
I declare you're as bold as the girls in the Street:
There, raise up your chin, cross your arms and look graver;
If I take you abroad, you must learn some behaviour.
The China's withdrawn, and the Company's wish
Is for candles, for cards, and for ivory fish;
Of scandal and tea having made a full meal,
They first cut for Partners, and next for the deal:
Then jangle the rest of the ev'ning away,
On bad luck, bad cards, and each other's bad play.

Sarum. October 1st 1787

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1968 by the Rev. Canon L. Rule Wilson and may be said to have two main aims: one, to extend and develop knowledge of James Woodforde's life and the society in which he lived, and the other, to provide opportunity for fellow enthusiasts to meet together from time to time in places associated with the diarist, and to exchange news and views.

Membership of the Parson Woodforde Society is open to any person of the age of 18 years and over upon successful application and upon payment of the subscription then in force, subject only to the power of the committee to limit membership to a prescribed number.

The Annual membership subscription of £12.50 (overseas members £25) becomes due on 1 January and should be forwarded to the Treasurer, Dr David Case, 25 Archery Square, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7JA.

Website:

www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY COMMITTEE 2005

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The Parson Woodforde Society is a registered charity no. 1010807

