PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal

SEALS COFFEE HOUSE 1823
CORNER OF HOLYWELL AND CATTE STREET, OXFORD

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MRS COTTON [softly]: It sounds a sad piece.

PROFESSOR [quietly]: Yes, it is. A kind of long farewell. An elderly man remembers his world before the war of 1914, some of it years and years before perhaps – being a boy at Worcester – or Germany of the 'Nineties – long days on the Malvern Hills – smiling Edwardian afternoons . . . – all gone, gone, lost for ever – and so he distils his tenderness and regret, drop by drop, and seals the sweet melancholy in a Concerto for 'cello. And he goes, too, where all the old green sunny days and the twinkling nights went – gone – gone. But then what happens? Why, a little miracle. You heard it?

JEAN [softly]: Dinah playing?

PROFESSOR: Why yes. Young Dinah Linden, all youth, all eagerness, saying hello and not farewell to anything, who knows and cares nothing about Bavaria in the 'Nineties or the secure and golden Edwardian afternoons, the moment we stop shouting at each other, unseals for us the precious distillation, uncovers the tenderness and regret, which are ours now as well as his, and our lives and Elgar's, Burmanley today and the Malvern Hills in a lost sunlight, are all magically intertwined . . .

MRS COTTON [to the others, proudly]: When he likes, the Professor's a lovely talker.

J. B. Priestley: The Linden Tree (1947)

Issued to Members of the Parson Woodforde Society

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Naseby is in Leicestershire. There, on 14 June 1645, Oliver Cromwell destroyed the Royalist forces and brought what is known as the first Civil War to an end. It is commonly held to have been the great decisive battle of the war, although I think that the king's cause was beyond hope after the defeat at Marston Moor in the previous year. But Naseby saw the annihilation of the last army of any size that the king was able to put into the field, and so sealed his ruin. I have recently seen it referred to, absurdly enough, as a great victory for democracy. In reality it was the very opposite of that, bringing about the triumph of military power and naked force, a régime so distasteful to the people of this country that the return of the monarchy was made inevitable. Cromwell's army rule survived the death of the dictator by less than two years.

At Naseby the battlefield remained very much what it had been in the seventeenth century, an expanse of flat fields north of the village, with a monument to mark the site of the battle. It was then proposed to build a link road, with two carriageways, connecting the M1 motorway with the A1 trunk road. There were two possible routes. One ran south of the battlefield, the other, the so-called north route, went right through it.

In 1975 the then Transport Minister declared for the south route, saying that it was of overriding importance to preserve the battlefield site. What happened after that is not entirely clear, but there must have been some enthusiastic lobbying by certain interests in favour of the north route, while this was opposed, and rightly opposed, by several conservationist bodies and local people. The arguments went on for more than 10 years, and it was not until 1987 that the junior Minister for the present government "finally decided to ruin the battlefield, and gave his miserable *fiat* to that effect" - Bernard Levin, *The Times, 16/1/1989.* The local protection society then went to court in an attempt to get the decision reversed; but lost. They then went to the Court of Appeal, but the judge ruled that the decision must be with the minister. In the light of this, it may appear odd that the original pronouncement was not respected; but evidently when a minister falls from office, any of his decisions which were not implemented while he was still in power fall with him. The Ministry of Transport then

announced gleefully that the road workings would begin in February. Some newspapers took the line that, the minister being an elected representative of the people, here was another victory for democracy, and Cromwell would have approved of the decision. Criticism fairly recoils from remarks of that degree of crassness.

I have recounted the unfortunate case of Naseby in some detail, because it speaks eloquently of a particular aspect of our national life. No doubt the ostensible reason for the destruction of Naseby was a matter of relative costs or some persuasive arguments advanced by the proponents of the northern route. But I feel, and always have felt, and too many incidents of this kind have taken place in this country for me seriously to doubt it, that there exists in many people, often those in positions of influence and power, a deep-rooted, wholly unconscious hostility to the past and a yearning to destroy and obliterate our history. The most glaring example of this in recent times was the Local Government Act of 1974, which consigned to oblivion place-names which had been part of our national history since the time of the Anglo-Saxons. And we in the Parson Woodforde Society had our own Naseby, when the valiant fight put up by Joan and Bernard Mewes to save the Ansford churchfields from the fate which overtook them was lost.

Readers will no doubt be interested to learn that Tom Custance has agreed to revise the article *The Custances and their Family Circle* by L. H. M. Hill, published originally in the Journal in 1970. Too long for our Journals of the present format, it will appear later this year as a special supplement, free to our members.

Finally, those readers who may on occasion have thought that our Journal was straying too far from its natural centre in Parson Woodforde's life and background, will I hope be pleased to see an issue which concentrates so closely upon him - his aunts, horses, coffee houses and the various books in which he wrote the diary that has made his name lastingly famous.

R. L. WINSTANLEY

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I must begin with an apology to those members who have already ordered a copy of the Society's most recent publication, *The Oxford and Somerset Diary of James Woodforde.* Delay has arisen because of some difficulty with the typesetting of notes and commentary but it is anticipated that these will be overcome shortly so that printing may proceed.

I have recently arranged for the reprinting, on Goatskin Vellum paper, of the exquisitely drawn map of "Parson Woodforde's Norfolk", the work of the late Miss Marion Peck. The map, size 16″ × 12″, is printed in black and suitable for framing and hand colouring. Copies may be had from the secretary, Mrs P. E. Stanley, at £3 plus postage.

The offer of Life Membership of the Society announced in the last issue of the Journal has been taken up so far by a few members. Their names will appear in the next Membership List to be published in the Summer issue. The offer is a continuing one and will remain open indefinitely.

Members' response to the suggestion that the Society should arrange for the republication, in hardback, of *Woodforde Papers & Diaries* has so far been insufficient to warrant printing. I am therefore extending the time for provisional orders for a further month. Members are reminded that the likely cost for the hardback volume is likely to be between £10 and £12. Please notify me if you are interested in reserving a copy.

The appeal for editorial assistance has so far gone unanswered. Members are reminded that the Journal, so essential a part of the Society's life, cannot continue indefinitely unless provision for succession is made. I do urge you to consider seriously whether or not you may be able to help. Please contact either Roy Winstanley or myself for further details.

There will be an informal meeting of local members of the Society on Saturday 24 June to celebrate James Woodforde's birthday on 27 June 1740. Members will meet for lunch at the *Parson Woodforde* in Weston Longville and then proceed to the church for a short service. Members visiting Norfolk at that time are cordially invited to attend. Please contact the secretary if you would like to join in.

G. H. BUNTING
Chairman

JAMES WOODFORDE AND THE OPEN ROAD

By way of introduction – a potted history of the English roads

In the beginning, a "highway" signified, not so much a track of a particular kind as "a local and customary right of way". The first article of Magna Carta guaranteed the freedom of the highway, the public road distinct from the private road which the owner could close off or demand a toll from the traveller as a condition of his being allowed to use it.

As every student of our social history knows, roads in England were properly designed and built under the Roman occupation; but when this came to an end and the legions departed, it took another thirteen hundred years before similar roads came into being. The thoroughfares that appeared during the long interim had a quite different origin. They developed "naturally", from tracks which were trodden out, twisted and turned to avoid perhaps a swamp, the abode of dangerous wild animals (the last English wolf was not killed until so late as the reign of King Stephen) or the property of some landowner known to cherish extreme views about trespass. In later times, long after the original obstacles were gone and forgotten, these diversions remained, often to add the great beauty of constantly changing prospects. Of course, they were not allowed to survive the dynamic age of the motor-car, which ruthlessly murdered them in the interests of speed. We now have the road system we deserve.

In the middle ages, the upkeep of highways was considered "as pious and meritorious work before God, of the same sort as visiting the sick or caring for the poor". Such works were regarded as charity shown to travellers. Bishops would grant indulgences to those willing to undertake them. The craft and town guilds frequently accepted the task of keeping local roads and bridges in repair. The lord of a manor was expected through the agency of his manorial court to look after the roads which ran through his estate. In towns a toll was often imposed upon strangers coming in with goods for sale. This was originally for the repair of the town walls, but later helped to provide money for the paving of the streets also. Individuals and corporate bodies supplied gifts to aid in maintaining the roads. Sometimes these benefactors not only provided money and tools for the work but also undertook to discharge the

labour personally. In 1522 the Will of John Cowper of Bury St. Edmunds directed his executors to gather and carry "six score loads of small stones", such as he had already gathered, and place them on a certain part of the streets of the town where they were most needed. Some 250 years later the Parson's brother Heighes elected to provide road metal for the parish of Ditcheat as a way of discharging his obligation to pay Highway Rate. Prudently enough, he had it put down on the road near his wife's house.

However, apart from all these persons and various institutions concerned in one way or another with road maintenance, from very early times the common law had laid the obligation for this upon the parishes or hundreds through which the roads ran. In 1555 this was made statutory, by the passing of an *Act for the mending of the Highways (2 & 3 Philip & Mary, c. 8)*. It decreed that "the Constables and Churchwardens of every parish shall yearly, upon the Tuesday or Wednesday of Easter Eve, call together a number of parishioners, who shall then elect and choose two honest persons to be surveyors and orderers for one year of the works for amendment of the highways in their parish." Four days in each year were to be appointed, in which the people were to assemble, with the requisite tools and draught animals, and this was to be announced in church at the appropriate time. Each householder occupying land in tillage or pasture, or keeping a plough in the parish, was to send on each of the four days a cart, with horses, oxen, tools and "two able men". Every other householder, and every cottager and labourer, hired servants by the year alone being excepted, was personally responsible for labour, carried out either by himself or a substitute. Various fines were to be imposed on persons failing to fulfil these duties, the receipts to be applied to the mending of the highways.

This was the origin of what came to be known as "Statute Labour".* The Act as originally drafted was to remain in force for 7 years. At the end of that time it was continued for a further

* The only time when the diary shows Woodforde carrying out this statutory obligation was on 13 October 1778, when he wrote: "My Cart & Man went to the Highways this Morn" - As Ben, and the cart, were shown as doing something quite different on the same afternoon, he could have spent, in place of the six days specified in the Acts, only a few hours on the task. In any case, as a servant employed by the year, he should have been exempt. - *Norfolk Diary II, 80*

20 years, with some amendment, among which was an increase in the number of labour days from 4 to 6. In 1562 came the first *General Highway Act* of Elizabeth I (*5 Eliz. c. 13*). Exactly a century later, in the reign of Charles II, another important measure affecting the highways became law (*14 Car. II, c. 6*). By this the Surveyor of the Highways, whose powers had been gradually extended in previous decrees, now had the authority to levy a special Highway Rate, which up to that time could only be done by the Justices of the Peace at Quarter Sessions. The Act also contained regulations about the width of parish roads (they had to measure 8 yards across), the breadth of wheels and the weight carried by carts and waggons. Those with wheels less than 4 inches in breadth were banned, as being liable to cut the soft road surfaces into deep ruts. They also could not be drawn by more than 7 horses, or horses and oxen, nor were they allowed to carry loads of more than 20 cwt. between 1 October and 1 May, or 30 cwt. for the remaining part of the year.

The parish road system had a very long life, survived into and beyond Woodforde's time, and did not come to an end until 1835, when unpaid Statute Labour was abolished, although by then it had long been practically superseded by the Highway Rate already mentioned.

In early times and with little other than local travelling on the parish roads, and when those roads merely linked places within the boundaries of the parish, the system may have worked reasonably well. Where, however, most of the traffic went along an arterial road which merely ran through the parish, wear and tear was caused largely by persons who had no business there and did not contribute to the upkeep of the road. As travel increased this became more and more of a problem. It was to remedy such a state of affairs that the toll-gate or turnpike system came into being.

The first Bill to this effect was introduced into Parliament in the reign of Charles I, but was defeated and so never became law. Its successor was the first Turnpike Act, passed in 1663. It was called *An Act for repairing the highways within the Counties of Hertford, Cambridge and Huntingdon (15 Car. II c. 1).* This Act decreed that in each of the three counties one gate was to be set up on the Great North Road and tolls collected from all who went

on horseback or rode in carriages or drove animals through them. The system was to be organised by surveyors, but unlike those who looked after the parish roads, the turnpike surveyors were to be paid, as were also those who actually carried out the work of maintenance.

The idea of the turnpike road was slow to be taken up. The 1663 Act, with another on the same lines that followed it, was allowed to expire, and not revived until 1692, and then only for Hertfordshire. At first the J.P.'s had the sole authority for the administration of turnpikes, but in 1706 a special body of private individuals was allowed to form itself into what was called a Turnpike Trust. In the first half of the century about 40 of these Trusts were set up.

But all the time expanding trade and greater wealth were leading to more travelling and an increasing demand for better and safer roads. From about mid-century the Turnpike Trusts really took off. Once the great road engineers, beginning with Metcalf, had contributed their skills to the improvement of road surfaces, turnpikes were set up all over the country, being naturally thickest on the ground in the neighbourhood of the larger towns. The primary purpose of the Trusts was to make money for the trustees and only after that aim was secured were funds made available for road repairs and improvement. Some of the Trusts were run incompetently or dishonestly and failed. Some were made to run at a loss in order to accommodate local interests. There was a certain amount of sporadic rioting when the people who were already paying for upkeep of the parish roads found they had to pay tolls in their own parish. The turnpikes of course were set up only in places where there was held to be a reasonable chance of their being able to pay for themselves. Even at the height of the turnpikes' popularity, there were places where they hardly existed. As a traveller went North, for example, they became progressively fewer. The nearby parish roads often got worse instead of better, as Turnpike Surveyors managed to have the obligatory Statute Labour transferred to their own roads. The letters and diaries of travellers abound with descriptions of the uneven nature of the through roads, an excellent turnpike in one place being succeeded by a bad and totally neglected parish road in the next.

But with all this, it remains unquestionably the truth that the

turnpikes and the era of faster, safer, more comfortable travelling went together. The main roads in fact went on improving until a century of progress culminated in the creation of Telford's famous Holyhead Road (the A5 of today). Built on a wholly new principle, partly eliminating the Turnpike Trusts and subjecting the road to uniform standards throughout its length, it might have inaugurated a wholly new era in the history of the roads. In fact, it was opened in 1830, the year which saw the beginning of the railway age. Within a very few years the roads were dead. They were not to return to life until the invention of the internal combustion engine signalled a new phase of road-travel.

In what follows, we are to see how the roads, and their horses and vehicles, the inns and the inn-keepers, entered into Parson Woodforde's life, and what his diary, aided by various other sources, can tell us about these things.

*

Curate on Horseback; and "Papa's Chaise"

What we have come loosely to term the "Coaching Age", by which is usually meant that of the stage coach, although this was only one of a number of options at the disposal of the traveller, was well-established when James Woodforde first took to the roads. At the other end of the time-scale, the really spectacular improvements in road-travel did not come about until after his death. He lived in an era of still quite primitive travel facilities which, however, were undergoing a constant amelioration. Some features of these may be seen and noted by their appearance in the diary.

The structure of travelling England was quite a complicated one. Luxurious travelling carriages were a status-symbol, just as some super-expensive brands of motor-car, a Rolls Royce or Mercedes, are now. The richer the person, the more elaborate and showy his travelling arrangements were likely to be, with four- and even six-in-hand coaches, servants in gorgeous liveries riding behind and, if the owner were a peer of the realm or other grand personage, heraldic panels emblazoned on the carriage doors. For less munificently filled purses, there were less splendid vehicles; the coachmaking trade was highly buoyant and carriages of all shapes and sizes were on the

market, each with its own particular name. For those who either did not wish or could not afford to run a private coach, and who yet were obliged to make long journeys, there were the stage coaches and, from 1784, the coaches which carried the mails. All these were much more expensive proportionately than any form of public transport today. They ran only on the main roads and if the traveller had to complete his journey by taking a hired post chaise, his trip was made dearer still. If it were necessary for poor people to travel, they either walked or went by the stage-waggon or carrier's cart which, although primarily intended for the transport of freight, did take passengers as well.

We are fortunate in this respect, as in so many others, that Woodforde gives us a practically complete breakdown of travel facilities in his time. In the diary may be found every type of transport vehicle commonly met with on the roads. Woodforde was a bit of a snob about carriages. While he found much to admire in a well-turned out equipage, he could be scathing about those which failed to come up to the mark. We do not forget his scornful dismissal of Nephew Bill and his wife: "They sport away in their flashy one Horse-Chaise with plated furniture" (*MS Diary, 14/7/1793*) and the "little shabby Cart" driven by Mrs. Jeans, and "a little grey Horse in it about the size of a Calf". (*Ibid. 31/8 & 5/9/1795*).

However, for a man who was young and active, and obliged to travel frequently, the most expeditious way of getting about was not by any kind of wheeled vehicle. His best bet was to purchase a riding-horse. It is true that if he stayed overnight at an inn, the cost of the animal's feed and accommodation could appreciably add to his hotel bill. For all that, riding was comparatively cheap. It cost only a penny to ride through a turnpike, the toll being valid for a journey in both directions, as against sixpence or more for carriages. For those who did not own a horse, or could find none available when it was needed, a mount could be hired by the day or for longer periods from inns and livery stables.

The very early diary shows Woodforde constantly on horseback. For the space of four years, 1759-1763, he commuted, as we should say, between his home and Oxford. The first entry to show one of these trips is dated 10 July 1760. Leaving the

University for his vacation, he wrote:

> Hired a Horse of Castel to go into the Country
> for half a Crown the first day & last, & one
> Shilling for all the days between . . .

Plainly there had to be some arrangement for sending back a hired horse at the end of a long journey, and the diarist obligingly tells us what was done on this occasion. The Devizes carrier* went between that town and Oxford, and on its journey called at a place not very far from his home. On 26 July he noted:

> William Corpe went with my Hack Horse to Wincaunton,
> to send her back, but the Dev: Carrier was not come -

Two days later he tried again:

> William went again with the Horse & Could [sic]
> no Carrier again

This sort of thing might turn out expensive, since the animal had to be fed and looked after all the time it was absent from its home stable. In such cases the best plan was to enlist the aid of friends. On 31 July the diarist wrote:

> . . . Sent my Oxford Hack by William to M^{r}. Pluck=
> =netts, because his Man sets out for Oxon
> at ten o'clock this very night -

When he himself returned to Oxford on 10 October, he took with him a heavy "Portmanteau", so his brother-in-law Mr. White lent him an extra horse, his own mount being supplied by his father. On arrival he had supper at the King's Arms in Holywell, where his hired man for the occasion, Jack Creed, and the horses, stayed for two days and nights. This cost the diarist a total of 11/7d, with 10d for the "Hostler".

At home there were two horses in his father's stable which he mentions, a grey horse and a "Cream". The grey was used regularly on his longer journeys - to Wells on 1 October 1761, to see Great-Uncle Robert: back to Oxford later that month: a trip to Bristol to stay with his brother on 30 August 1762. However, when a fortnight later he went to Winchester with

* Woodforde mentioned this carrier in some accounts costed on the day he began to write the diary. See - *The origin of Woodforde's Diary* in *Journal XXI, 4.*

Uncle Tom and Frank Woodforde, to see his cousin safely enrolled at the school, his uncle paying all the expenses, he went upon the old "Cream Horse", there and back. Another entry, made on 24 October 1763, about one of his rides to Thurloxton, suggests that this horse was very slow:

> . . . it being a fine morning
> I rode upon Cream an old Horse,
> and got there by six in the Afternoon –

Thurloxton, near Bridgwater, is some 20 miles from Ansford. The diarist was not so well served by the same mount on 4 November, when he had to return to his curacy the day before his usual Saturday, in order to be on the spot to take the Gunpowder Plot service on the next day. It was raining before he started, and he was "very nearly wet thro' " before he got there.

In December, hearing that the Warden of Winchester had fallen dead "in Chamber Court", and his presence requested to take part in choosing a successor, he borrowed for the trip to Oxford "M^{r}. White's little Black Horse". Later his father bought this horse, named Tom, for his own use. But Tom did not give much satisfaction, and later the diarist heard without regret that his father had sold the animal during his absence. At different times his uncle lent a grey mare, Mr. White another mare, which Woodforde enthusiastically dubbed "a sweet Creature", and he had the use of his brother's "brown Mare", bought for £8. 0. 0. with a saddle thrown in. In 1769 he went to Oxford and on to Winchester, where he was to officiate in the Election of that year as "Junior Poser". He took along with him his servant Luke Barnard, who was mounted on a horse borrowed from Mr. Francis, the Cary shopkeeper; but he does not specify what horse he himself rode.

All these entries, and others of the same nature, do suggest that Woodforde had to take "pot luck" in the matter of horses. If one of his father's mounts was not available, he took another, or borrowed one wherever he could find it, or hired a horse from some livery stable. In fact, it would appear that he did not own a horse of his own until 1771 when, having inherited a third part of his late father's cash and property, he bought a "fine Bay Mare (by Name Longlegs) of my Brother John . . . , & two Bridles & one Saddle all very good for which I paid him in

ready money this morning - 21: 0: 0". *Ansford Diary IV, 28/5/1771.*

We have the impression that the young Woodforde was quite unsentimental over horses, as were perhaps the great majority of people in his time. Although he was so often on horseback, he is mostly content just to write "I took a ride to . . .", without so much as mentioning his horse for the journey, and the entries in which a horse is given a name, such as have been quoted here, are definitely in a considerable minority. No doubt he saw the creatures in anything but a romantic light, and associated them with fatigue, boredom, discomfort and pain, as on the occasion when, returning from the University, he was so chafed and sore that he left his horse at an inn *en route* and got home by post chaise.

It is all in striking contrast to the attitude of the older man who always names his horses, making at least some of them into real diary characters, and who was really to grieve at the death of his "good natured Horse" more than for the disappearance of many of his contemporaries. But this was in the days after he had given up riding.

Woodforde continued to ride throughout the Somerset and Oxford phases of his career and on up to the early Norfolk years. The longest journeys he ever undertook were those which took him all the way from Somerset into Norfolk. He went on horseback on the journey to take up residence at Weston Longville, and again on both the forward and the return trips of 1777 and 1779.

Let us look at these more closely. In the spring of 1776 Woodforde was busy making preparation for his coming journey. On 22 April he entered in his diary:

> Mr. White brought me home a portmanteau
> Horse. I hope he will do - I don't know the Price of it -

It may be noted that this took place a week before he decided to take Bill along with him. Nancy having fallen out, it looks as though he was intending to travel with only his servant, and that the "portmanteau Horse" was literally an animal to carry his luggage, just as in former years he had made use of a second horse in his trips between his home and Oxford. This animal was his "great Horse", later immortalised as the "good

natured" beast the reaction to whose death we have noticed. Its colour was brown.

On 7 May, only two days before he was due to leave, he wrote:

> Mr. White spent part of the Afternoon at Parsonage -
> He brought me this morning a very pretty Bay Mare 14 Hands high. 5. Years old, for Bill Woodforde to ride with me -

The same day he paid the sum of £27. 16. 6. for both horses. It looks as though the second mare was bought only because Bill was coming and had to be supplied with a mount.

On 3 May the three riders, accompanied by Bill's Newfoundland dog, Spring, left Ansford on the first leg of the journey:

> After breakfasting at Mr. White's about 10. o'clock I took my Leave of my Friends at Ansford & set forth on my Mare for Norfolk and Bill Woodforde on my Bay. Will Coleman went with me -

This can only mean that Woodforde rode the mare he had purchased from his brother in 1771, Bill rode the new bay mare and Coleman was on the "portmanteau Horse".

On the next day he experienced some horse trouble:

> My bay Mare coughed exceedingly between Hungerford and Farnborough worse than I ever knew her -
> I believe it to be owing to eating Beans only for Corn -
> At 4. this afternoon we set forth for Oxford and got there I thank God safe and well at about 9. o'clock we came on slow on Account of my Mare - I gave her no Beans at Farnborough only Oats well watered and she came on brave afterwards -
> I rode my new little Mare quite to Oxford . . .

It is only at this point that we realise the mares were both bay in colour, since he could not have employed the term "worse than I ever knew her" of an animal he had owned only a few days.

After staying a week and showing Bill the sights of the city and

University, Woodforde resumed his journey on 30 May. The rest of the trip passed off without incident; at least nothing untoward is reported in the diary. The travellers passed their first night out of Oxford at Tring, the second in Cambridge, they were in Thetford for the third night and reached Norwich the next day, where they put up at the King's Head. Next morning, 24 May, they arrived at last at their journey's end. Finding no-one at home at Weston Parsonage, and no food at the house, they pushed on to get a meal at the inn at Lenwade Bridge.

The following year the same three travellers set off on 22 June. The journey followed that of 1776, in reverse order, in every particular, except that on 26 June Woodforde avoided Oxford and spent the night at Abingdon. They reached Ansford at 9 in the evening of 28 June.

In 1779 Woodforde once again made the long journey into the west. On 31 May he wrote: "I took my Man Will: Coleman with me, he riding on my great Horse", while the diarist was on his mare. It was very much the same journey as he had already made three times, except that their overnight stops were made at Royston and Aylesbury instead of Cambridge and Tring. Returning in September, he started by taking a different route to Oxford, via Salisbury, Winchester and Andover. After that the rest of the journey to Norfolk was over the old familiar ground.

By 1779 Woodforde was approaching the age of 40. I think he was a man to whom the habits of middle age came early. It is true that his next trip to Somerset, in 1782, was to be in the company of Nancy, and that this would have necessitated making it by stage coach. But I think this made little difference, and that even without her he would still have changed his mode of travel. Be that as it may, from 1779 Woodforde never again took a long distance ride, although for some years he continued to go on horseback into Norwich from Weston and ride about the neighbouring villages.

We have seen that, although so much concerned with horses and so dependent upon them, Woodforde did not own a horse until comparatively late in this part of his life. As for wheeled vehicles, the familiar "image" of him in this respect comes from a later time, when he trundled about the Norfolk lanes in

his "little old Cart", or, as his utmost concession to the idea of luxury, the "new Pleasure Cart or Curricle" which he bought from a Norwich firm named Adams & Bacon in 1791. In spite of the manifest inconvenience of these vehicles, particularly in inclement weather, he continued to make use of them without, presumably, ever desiring anything better. But we cannot for all that say that he never owned a carriage; unless, that is, we wholly overlook the fairly mysterious episode of the Woodfordean post chaise, originally owned by his father.

We have once more to go back to the early days of the diary. On 26 May 1762 Samuel Woodforde purchased from a Mrs. Vincent of Templecombe a "one Horse-Chair alias Buggy", for ten guineas, the deal including "an old Horse, and 2 Harnesses". This was perhaps felt to be insufficiently imposing, and in 1763 Samuel went one better and bought a post chaise from Bristol, at a cost of £30. "It is as neat and handsome a Post Chaise as I ever saw almost", Woodforde wrote admiringly. - *Ansford Diary I, 20/9/1763.*

A post chaise was smaller than a full-sized carriage and its space and overall weight were further reduced by there being no box, the driver, often referred to by the French word "postillion", - although Woodforde himself never uses this term - sitting on the back of the near horse. This explains the accident that befell poor William Corpe, who was given the job of chaise driver as soon as the vehicle was bought. Turning into the Parsonage gateway he took the corner too narrowly and struck his leg against the gatepost.

The post chaise fell to James' share of the property left by his father's death in 1771. For a time he appeared to be very pleased with his ownership of the vehicle, "Our Chaise" quickly becoming "My Chaise". He used it to get to Cary when he took a service in the church, undoubtedly a grander way of arriving than if he had simply walked there or turned up on the back of a horse. But in May 1773, without any discussion of the matter reaching the diary, he abruptly gave up the chaise, whether out of economy or because he thought it was unsuited to his station in life, there is no telling. On the last day of the month Mr. White took the two chaise horses to Binnegar Fair, where one of them - "the blind one" - was sold for £8. 5. 3. Next day Woodforde gave the other horse to Brother John, who was about to start farming on his own account. As we know, even in

his more affluent days he never went back to owning his carriage.

It is a familiar story with him. Having once resolved to give something up, he made a final break and never for the rest of his life returned to it.

*

Stage coach and post chaise

Stage coaches have managed to capture the imagination of all those to whom history constitutes little else than a series of pictorial anecdotes. They form a popular *motif* for Christmas cards, and if you go to the films to see a "Western", the chances are that it will have a stage coach in it, although these transatlantic coaches are always represented as travelling much faster than they could ever have done in reality. Even the man who "rides shotgun" in the movies had his counterpart in the guard of our coaches, who in the era of the highwayman was often armed for his own protection and that of the passengers.

The stage coach trade was run by innkeepers, who provided accommodation and meals at points along a route. The improvements in time that we can see in advertisements for coach journeys were owing mainly to the progressive shortening of the stages, so that the speed of the horses – as speed was understood in those days, of course – was maintained.

The coaches were fairly uniform in size. Each was licensed to carry four or six passengers inside. But the number carried on the roof of the coach – the "outsides", as they were called – varied with the time of year. The licences had to be paid for, so in the winter months the coaches were licensed, at a rate of 3d. per mile, to carry eight outside passengers, while in the summer, when more people travelled, they could be authorized to take from twelve to eighteen. This meant that the vehicles often started out seriously overloaded. Passengers could sit on the box with the driver, and this was a favourite place for anyone willing to tip him for the privilege. But the end of the box seat opposite to that of the coachman was regarded as particularly dangerous, since the passenger in a full coach sat on the extreme edge of the seat with his body half out of the vehicle, and a sharp turn could precipitate him head first on to the

ground. The newspapers occasionally carried reports of inquests arising out of accidents of this kind.

In addition to the driver or coachman, there was a guard, already mentioned. He was the more highly paid of the two. Woodforde mentions an occasion when no guard was carried on the coach on which he was travelling; but this surely must very seldom have occurred and the diarist would hardly have troubled to mention it otherwise. On mail coaches the responsibility of the guard was very great, since the safety of the mails was entrusted to him. These were marginally faster than the ordinary stage coaches, for while the latter had to stop and pay toll at each of the turnpikes, the guard of a mail coach while still some distance short of the gate blew a blast on his post horn, his "yard of tin" as it was called after its length, and the toll-keeper opened his gate to let the mail pass through. This scene was often depicted in the coaching prints that were so popular in an age which used and admired the coaches.

In spite of his many coach journeys recorded in the diary, Woodforde cannot really be counted among the *aficionados* of coaching. He was of course interested in getting from spot A to spot B safely and in the shortest possible time. He invariably put down what his journeys cost him, sometimes in more detail than at others; he occasionally mentioned comfort, or the lack of it; and once or twice he added little asides about his fellow-travellers. But coaches and coaching very obviously did not stir his imagination, and so he fails to provide any addition to the stock of our coaching literature.

The first coach trip in the diary was made so far back as 1761, when the undergraduate Woodforde and a party of his friends went on a 2-day trip to London by an Oxford coach called "Bews Machine". These were early days for coach travel and the "Machine" made very slow time. Leaving Oxford at 5 a.m., it arrived at its destination, Hyde Park Corner, "about tea time".

After that Woodforde and the world of coaching were mutual strangers until 1765. He was two years into the "Quadrivium" leading to the M.A. degree, when he returned for a short visit to Oxford where he read the three "Wall Lectures", expressively so termed because they were read to the walls of an empty room!

He had gone to Oxford with two horses and William Burge, one of the Ansford Burges, travelling with him as a servant not a companion. But the man must have gone back immediately, taking the mounts with him. Instead of hiring another horse, Woodforde elected to travel as far as Bath in the "Bath Fly". The word zigzags in and out of the history of our roads for two centuries. It stood for different vehicles at various times, but always represented an attempt to convince the customers that this particular vehicle was faster than all the others, like the "flyboats" of the canal age that was just beginning.

It is interesting that, so early as this, seats on a coach could be booked in advance. On 13 August he paid half-fare, 9 shillings, but did not travel for a further ten days. Then he started off at 3 in the morning from the *Star* in Cornmarket street. He arrived at Burford, that lovely Cotswold gem of a town, in time for breakfast, where he paid the balance of the fare plus 1/6d. for his luggage. Having started with three passengers, the "fly" took up two more at Burford, and got to Bath about 7 in the evening; another slow journey. After he had stayed overnight at Bath, Woodforde was met in the morning by William Corpe the serving man with two of the paternal horses. He was back at Ansford Parsonage for dinner, and rounded off his story of the trip piously: "Blessed be Almighty God for sending me safe home to my dear Parents -".

Two years later he made another trip to Oxford, this time for the purpose of having his Master's degree conferred upon him. All the details were as before, except that this time he stayed longer in Oxford - 21 May to 1 June. Again he rode to Oxford and came back by coach, from the same inn and starting at the same time as before, although he now calls the vehicle by the old name of the "Bath Machine". It made even worse time than the "Fly", not getting to Bath until 9 in the evening.

There is one point to be made here, which I think the readers of transport history may well forget. The coach times and length of journeys given in text-books on the subject show a steady, constant improvement through the years, as exemplified by the famous contrast that is always approvingly quoted: London - Edinburgh, two weeks at the beginning of the eighteenth century; 57 hours, 54 by mail coach, before 1830. While these figures are reliable enough, they are all taken from the schedules of times promised by the coaching proprietors

and obviously do not and cannot take into account the vicissitudes of individual journeys. An accident, broken harness, lame or tired horses could easily cause long delays. For that matter, our trains do not *always* arrive at the time that British Rail says they will in its time-tables. Woodforde, with his accounts of actual journeys, is an invaluable corrective here.

In 1773 Cousin Frank took over the living of Ansford. In September the diarist gave in his notice to Mr. Wickham, stating that he wished to relinquish the curacy of Castle Cary as he intended to reside at New College. At the beginning of December he went to Oxford, staying there over Christmas. On the last day of January in the new year, the Parson prepared to go back for a last visit to what was no longer his home. The "Machine" he now travelled on started from the Cross Inn, and was timed to set off at the less "unsocial hour" of 7 a.m. Or so Woodforde thought. He rose at 6.30 and hurried over from New College, but when he got to the inn it was to learn that the coach had gone. He at once hired a chaise and set out after it, overtaking the coach at Eynsham. It did not go beyond Cirencester on that day, so he was forced to spend the night there. The coach resumed its journey in the morning, but it was travelling too slowly for him, as he was anxious to reach Ansford that evening. So he left it at Petty France and took a chaise on to Bath. "It snowed prodigiously all the way" there, he says. He then changed over to another chaise which took him to Old Down, and then one from there to Ansford, arriving "about 6. o'clock".

The breakdown of his expenses here shows that the stage coach fare, Oxford–Bath, was now a guinea, 3 shillings more than in 1765. The first chaise cost him 4 shillings, those at the other end of the journey a total of £1. 2. 3, the sum being made up from 11/3d. at Petty France and half a guinea each at the other two places. This does not include the tip, usually a shilling, which seems always to have been given to chaise drivers. On this occasion Woodforde gave the Bath man 1/6d. "and a Dram", doubtless because of the inclement weather.

In May of this year he paid a flying visit back to officiate at his sister's wedding, travelled the whole distance in a series of post chaises, and was on the road from 5 a.m. to 8 in the evening; "the first Time I ever came in one Day from Oxford –".

The reason why there were so many trips between Oxford and his native village was that the diarist was now working out the "Year of Grace" before his New College Fellowship had to be given up. He spent part of his time moving somewhat restlessly between the two places. On 2 January 1775 he once more used the "Bath Machine" and went the old Burford–Cirencester route, staying two nights on the road.

Returning a month later, on 1 February, he got to Bath, only to find that all places in the Oxford coach were taken. He had paid his half-guinea advance fare, but lost that because he had not been at Bath the previous week to take a coach then. This is the occasion when, as all readers of the printed diary know well, he met at the Angel, in Westgate Street, Bath, S. T. Coleridge's brother William, and they agreed to travel together the following day and share the expenses. Woodforde's half-share came to £1. 14. 6.

On 17 July there was another practically identical journey; by coach to Bath and chaises on to Ansford. Woodforde travelled with a Mrs. Tomkins, wife of an Oxford grocer, and her small daughter, Sukey, "a very pretty little Girl about 11. Years old". He "treated" mother and daughter at each stop on the way to Bath. The Parson's detailed bill for all this contains an item – "Turnpikes 2. shillings". While the cost of going through turnpikes was included in the stage coach fare, with post chaises it was an extra to the half-guinea from Bath to Old Down, and another half-guinea onwards from Old Down to Ansford. Since this item is not listed in the accounts of earlier journeys over that route, I can only suggest that the roads in the district had recently been turnpiked.

The journeys listed above have been described in some detail because of the light they throw on routes, distances, time and cost. But Woodforde's really long-distance travel was, in 1775, still all to come.

NOTE – HORSE'S NAMES

It may seem odd that Woodforde's "good-natured Horse", whose untimely demise so upset him, does not appear to have been given a name. He was the "portmanteau Horse" of 1776, plainly a large animal, a weight-carrier, and part of his good nature was no doubt expressed in his not objecting to any sort

of burden laid on his back. He carried Will, and the portmanteau, all the way to Norfolk. He went clippety-clop to Norwich with Sukey Boxley and Mrs. Hardy, the mason's wife, riding on him. Later horses were all named. Woodforde evidently saw nothing indecorous about giving a mare the "pet" name of his favourite sister. "Rodney" was named after the admiral, "Punch" because he was of the Suffolk Punch breed, and "Phyllis" was no doubt so-called as a play of words on *filly*.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF AUNTS

When reading eighteenth century letters and journals, one is struck by the many references to aunts - autocratic, aggressive, gentle, supportive, submissive; ladies with a "competence" from widowhood or inheritance, with houses of their own; penurious ladies taken into the homes of married sisters until their own chance of an establishment came along, or it fell to their lot to become a second mother to a bereaved family; well-to-do aunts, using their resources to assist nephews and nieces, or starting family feuds by an erratic disposal of their fortunes; aunts taking indigent nieces to live with them, thereby acquiring a companion or housekeeper to ease their own existence; aunts sometimes younger than their nephews and nieces; great-aunts who outlived several generations; eccentric aunts of all ages, their foibles perhaps aggravated by parental unkindness or neglect, or by the frustrated lives they were compelled to lead.

By the time James Woodforde was established in Norfolk only three of his aunts were still living, and they receive but perfunctory mention in the Beresford edition, appearing infrequently in the first volume and making very little impact. It is only through the pages of the Ansford portion of the diary which we would not have but for the Society's publication of the complete text, that these characters spring into three-dimensional life, seen through their nephew's good-humoured and sometimes phlegmatic reactions to their idiosyncracies.

One of his two great-aunts, Magdalen Christyson, known to us as "Aunt Collins", from his mother's side of the family, makes her first and last appearance early in the Ansford record. Woodforde noted her death on 19 May 1766: "Poor Aunt Collins departed this Life this morning at M^{r}. Creeds I hope that she is eternally happy and at rest". But two days later he

recorded in a different frame of mind: ". . . poor Aunt Collins has left every thing she was worth to young Justice Creed, & no Relation to her, she died worth as it is related above two thousand Pounds –." A classic example of the way family fortunes could be diverted, never to return. Although Woodforde nourished hopes that Justice Creed would leave the reversion to the Collins descendants – and who more fitting than himself? – it was not to be:

> This morning M[r]. Creeds Will was found and which I saw – He has given all to his Father without reserve . . . I did expect that he would have given me his Ansford Estate that came to him by my late Aunt Collins, I hope however his Father will consider me in his Will, as his Son always told me that what came to him by my Aunt should revert to her Family again –
>
> – *Oxford and Somerset Diary, 21/1/1775*

But alas! Old Mr. Creed proved equally intransigent, and the diarist could do nothing but wrap up his disappointment in a wry joke:

> Had a Letter this Evening from Brother Heighes to let me know that M[r]. Creed had made his Will, and that he left me £000 – alias nothing at all –
>
> – *Ibid. 14/3/1775*

Great-aunt Mary, née Mary Smith, widow of William Woodforde M.D., one-time Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, stands out as an autocratic old lady of comfortable means, which no doubt ensured her the respect with which she was treated by the family. Even at the height of the quarrel with Uncle Tom, her favourite nephew whose part she took, the diarist was always courteous and affable to her. In the summer of 1767 she was in Ansford, staying with Thomas: ". . . As I went from C. Cary this morning home, my great Aunt threw up the Sash at my Uncle's & made me a very low Congee" (a bow, in other words, and very ceremonious; provided, of course, that the old lady's intention was not ironical rather than courteous). "She also sent her Maid down to the Parsonage to desire me to go & see her, but as I do not go to my Uncles, I think I cannot go". ". . . I paid my Compts to my great Aunt this Afternoon at Uncle Toms, but he looked vey cool on me – I should not have went, had it not been greatly desired by Aunt &c. &c. again and

again". He condescended to stay for coffee and played quadrille at which he won a shilling, no doubt with some satisfaction that he had got at least that much out of his uncle. - *Ansford Diary III, 29 & 21/8/1767.*

Although very old, his great aunt was a vigorous lady who knew how to enjoy herself. During this visit she borrowed his father's chaise to take her to see someone she knew at Shepton Montague. She went to Yarlington Fair.

Great-aunt Mary's companion, her niece Jane Woodforde, his father's youngest sister, appears in that lady's shadow, rarely credited with speech and dominated by the old lady. In the summer of 1768 they made another of their periodical descents upon Ansford, this time staying at the Parsonage. "Both my Bath Aunts", as he called them, were there from 31 July to 6 September: "I played at Back Gammon with my Great-Aunt and she beat me greatly": "My Great-Aunt was extreme good Company all day she took a ride in the morning in our Chaise with Aunt Jenny": "My Great-Aunt is an extreme sensible old Lady". She took Mrs. Melliar's public breakfast in her stride and is listed among the guests there while poor Aunt Jane does not rate a mention. - *Ibid.*

All was not harmony, however. In November of this year the Rev. Samuel and Sister Jane visited Aunt Mary in Bath, but after a few day's stay, ". . . my Father and Sister arrived from Bath - my Great-Aunt drove them from her House by many underhand dealings, in private abusing them" - *Ibid. 23/11/1768.* The hatchet seems to have been buried by the time Woodforde next visited his aunts in Beaufort Square [Bath] where they resided. ". . . I saw the old Lady (my Great-Aunt) she seemed very desirous of seeing her Dear". It may be permitted to enquire who was the "Dear" in question; and if it was the diarist himself, was he mimicking the speech-habits of his relation? - *Ansford Diary IV, 23/1/1769.*

The last time Woodforde appears to have seen his great-aunt was in the following summer, when the aunts were once again staying with Uncle Tom, for on 27 October:

> The Bath Newsman brought Word this morning of the
> Death of my great Aunt of Bath - I hope she is happy -
> She died last Sunday in the Evening -
> She has left Aunt Jenny. 30 Pounds per Ann: for her life -

After Great-Aunt Mary's death Aunt Jenny suddenly becomes a real person. Having achieved a modicum of independence, and retained the maid Betty Clarke as a helper, she set herself up as a Bath lodging house keeper; complete, it would seem, with what must have been a lucrative "extra" that could be hired out, Great-Aunt Mary's "Chair of Bath". Six years later this remarkable contrivance had been given or lent to Uncle Tom and helped Mr. Pounsett recuperate from illness:

> . . . The Chair is very cleaver
> any Person may move himself about in it by himself.
> It turns upon three Wheels - 1. behind & 2. by the Side.
> The Hinderwheel is very small & runs like a Caster -
> The Side Wheels are higher - and in the outside of the
> Side Wheels is placed a kind of another Wheel within
> the Circle of the others, bu which it is moved about.
> It is a great Chair with Arms The Hinderwheel in the Seat.
>
> - *Oxford and Somerset Diary, 7/8/1775*

Aunt Jenny's lodgings must have been much in demand, for on 22 January 1771, when the Rev. Samuel went to Bath for medical advice: "could not get Lodgings for my Father & Maid, where we first called, which rather disconcerted us for a few Minutes, but it turned out very lucky for us, for my Aunt procured extreme good Lodgings for him & his Maid in about an Hour and near her house".

Jane made it clear where her sympathies lay in the disputes with Uncle Tom. No doubt she took her colour from Great-Aunt Mary's partisanship. James became quite resigned to her little raps over the knuckles and sharp letters, and always treated her kindly, right down to their passages over Aunt Anne's bequest. After letters from Jane enquiring about the clothes that had been left to her - on which James paid postage - he wrote: "Gay the Bath Newsman wanted this morning to carry by piece-meal my late Aunt Annes wearing Apparel to her Sister Jane at Bath, but I would not let it go after that manner, but would send it by the Waggon". - *Ansford Diary V, 6/11/1773.* The matter was settled next month when: "I went to my Aunt Jane in Bedford Square - Paid her her Legacy due to her from my late Aunt Anne which was - 10: 0: 0 - I took a Receipt from her for the same & for her Apparell -". - *Ibid. 14/12/1773.*

Woodforde visited his aunt in Bath in May 1776, when he left Somerset en route for Weston. There is no record of his having seen her again. She died in 1780, the news being conveyed to him in a letter from Sister Pounsett:

> . . . in which she informed
> us that my Aunt Jane of Bath was dead and had
> left all that she had to her Maid Betty -
> A great disappointment to my Uncle Toms Family -
> However pray God she may be for ever happy -
> - *Norfolk Diary III, 13/5/1780*

Aunt Anne Woodforde and Aunt (Elizabeth) Parr, the two sisters who lived close to the Parsonage in houses belonging to Woodforde's father, led very different lives. Aunt Anne, who in earlier life had been perhaps a paid companion to the Countess of Derby, a maiden lady with a small "competence", money in "the Stocks", looked after by a village couple, could look forward to family dinners and gatherings in the midst of her relations. She had a soft spot for James, whose judgement she respected, entrusting him with her affairs and making him her Executor. Her chief affections, however, lay with Robert and Thomas, the sons of her brother John. She stands as an exemplar of the benevolent aunt, assisting her nephews and joining with Woodforde to lend the money which bought Thomas a partnership in a medical practice. From time to time she presented the diarist with what must have been treasured possessions: "Aunt Anne made a Present this Afternoon of a very handsome Prayer Book -very kind indeed". - *Ansford Diary III, 22/6/1768*, while next year:

> I went & saw my Aunt Anne this Afternoon who is but very
> poorly indeed at Aunt Parrs, and she gave me a mourning
> Ring in memory of my Grandmother, being her Mother -
> My poor Aunt thinks herself near her latter End, but I hope not -
> - *Ansford Diary IV, 24/11/1769*

In fact, Aunt Anne recovered and lived until June 1773, and Woodforde's moving account of her last illness and death tell of his sense of loss.

Aunt Parr, always referred to as *poor*, typifies the "fallen upon hard times" member of a large family. Apparently widowed for so long that no single reference to her forgotten husband has come down to us, with very little money, she led a subdued existence, depending on the generosity of her relations to provide

dinners and little treats. In an age when servants were essential she could afford only the most unskilled of maids. Her frail health kept her much in the background, Woodforde sending her dinners to her when she was unable to join the family at the Parsonage.

Aunt Parr did not make a Will, and her pathetic worldly goods passed to Woodforde. He lists: "Goods belonging to me - late M^rs^. Parrs" - a pitifully small collection of furniture, household goods, gowns, aprons, ruffles, handkerchiefs, "Mobbs" and a crimson velvet muff. Woodforde's moving remarks on her death have always stirred sympathy in the reader:

> My poor Aunt Parr departed this miserable Life, and I hope to God for a better, about one o'clock at Noon - The latter part of her life was most mierable, and my poor Fathers Illness shortened her Days I believe much - No Woman ever could like a Person more than she did my good Father, & she daily prayed to depart this Life before him, & it pleased God to hear her Prayers & take her -
>
> - *Ibid. 15/5/1771*

Aunt Parr goes down to posterity in the hems of Nancy's refurbished versions of her silk gowns which the diarist kept for years: "Nancy had a brown Silk Gown trimmed with Furr brought home from her Mantua Maker . . . it was a very good rich Silk that I gave her which formerly belonged to my poor Aunt Parr, whose effects came to me" -*M.S. Diary, 30/11/1782.* "Gave Nancy this morning a green Silk damask Gown that was formerly my poor Aunt Parr's". - *Ibid. 11/2/1790.*

Woodforde's two aunts by marriage survived into the Norfolk years. A minor role was played by Aunt Rebekah (Hamilton), widow of Woodforde's Uncle John, rector of North Curry until his death in 1760, and the mother of the two medical men: Thomas, the successful younger son, with a lucrative practice and a well-dowered wife; and Robert, the unsuccessful hack, doomed to drudgery in poorly paid work, his prospects hindered by marriage to a humble woman:

> I went . . . to Wincaunton to the Bear Inn - and there we saw Cousin Bobs Wife & Child - Cousin Bob would not bring her to my House as she was nothing very great with regard to Family - but she seemes to be a very good motherly kind of a Woman

about 30. - She was a Servant at the Hospital at Winchester - I believe was a kind of a Nurse -

- Ansford Diary V, 30/8/1773

Aunt Rebekah (or Aunt John) is first encountered in August 1760 in the process of "settling the remaining affairs at N. Curry". By 1762 she was installed at the "Clergy Widows College" in Winchester, where she was visited by Woodforde whenever he was in that city. James paid regular subscriptions to the "Clergy Widows" - and was rewarded by scolding or demanding letters from "Aunt Reb.", which he took with great forbearance:

Had a Letter this morning by Farmer Corpe from my Cousin Robert Woodforde of Winton with some fine Hampshire Bacon sent me as a present from him. Had another Letter by the same hand from my Cousin Roberts Mother - which was very impudent & saucy reflecting on my late Father & self &c. &c. -

- Oxford and Somerset Diary, 25/2/1774

Aunt Rebekah died in 1791, presumably at Winchester, and was buried in her home village, Chessington in Surrey.

And what of "Aunt Tom", born Sarah Adams? A figure seen for the most part peering over Uncle Tom's shoulder; hot in defence of her husband and fiercely protective of Cousin Frank, the couple's indulged only child. She appears to be the only one of Woodforde's aunts who could sting him into harsh words, and it was perhaps this antipathy that caused him to see malice in her various attempts to score over him, as in the confused story of the key through Lord Ilchester's park owned by Mrs. Melliar, which he thought he had been deprived of through "a Scheme contrived last Night at M^{rs}. Melliars, if possible to discompose us in our Scheme".

She was also the "baddie" or evildoer in one of the most amusing of the stories told by Woodforde about his relations. It was spring, 1772. Mr. Melliar was very ill. He had gone to London in search of medical advice, and disappeared. James Clarke who six years before had become the hero of the hour and a nine days' Cary wonder by rushing off to Kent in order to bring back Mrs. Melliar from Lord Holland's mansion at Kingsgate, where she was staying, her aunt Agnes Cheek having been taken ill, now offered to take to the road again, "to comfort M^{rs}.

Melliar". But let Woodforde tell the rest of the story:

> N.B. The underwritten is a great Deceit of M^rs^. Tho^s^. Wood= =forde of Ansford. - She was yesterday at Sally Francis's with James Clarke & Painter Clarke where M^r^. James was saying before them that he would go with all his Heart with Painter Clarke to London, upon which M^rs^. Tho^s^. Woodforde said to him, what should you go for M^r^. James - what good can you do &c. &c. which kept James from going - and then went home and undoubtedly advised her Son to go, as he is gone.
>
> *- Ansford Diary V, 25/5/1773*

In the end, though, after the reconciliation of July 1789 the diarist was able, if not exactly to forgive the Thomas Woodfordes, at least to meet them with a show of cordiality. During his last visit to Somerset he provides a little vignette of his uncle and aunt in their last years:

> . . . In the Afternoon I walked over to my Uncle's and made him & his Wife a Visit, both of whom considering their age, my Uncle being in his 90th. Year and his Wife in her 84th. were very well - My Uncle can see and walk without a Stick and has all his faculties remarkably well -
>
> *- M.S. Diary, 20/7/1795*

Early in the next year, he commented on the

> Death of my Uncle Tho^s^. Woodfordes Wife, occasioned by a late fall she met with, w^ch^. broke one of her thigh bones, and being at an advanced age, above 84. could not be set. Pray God! her death may be succeeded with Bliss.
>
> - Ibid. 17/2/1796

This pious hope he did not repeat when Thomas himself died four years later.

And so all the aunts, one by one, departed. Perhaps James, established securely in Norfolk with his household, with no repercussions of family quarrels to disturb his peace, had the best of it in the end. Aunt Tom and Cousin Frank have their only claim to fame in the pages of James Woodforde's record, and one cannot help feeling that, despite the doubtful gain of the Ansford living and Frank's occupation of the Parsonage, this is memorable only as an incident in the life of James Woodforde in the Ansford years - with his sisters and his cousins - and his aunts!

OXFORD COFFEE HOUSES

In 1987 a small paperback book (48p.) appeared under the title of *Oxford Coffee Houses 1651-1800*, by Norma Aubertin-Potter and Alyx Bennett, published by the Hampden Press at Kidlington, Oxon. The typesetting and printing were done by two Oxford firms, so that this was very much a local product. It was reviewed in the December 1988 issue of *Oxford*, the magazine of the Oxford Society. My attempt to obtain a copy was at first unsuccessful, as my letter and cheque in payment were returned by the Post Office. I then contacted the editor of the periodical, who passed on my order to Blackwell's, who finally sent me a copy. All's well that ends well.

I already had through Woodforde at least some acquaintance with a few of the coffee houses he knew during his two periods of residence at the University. But this was incomplete and scrappy, and that I feel I have now widened my acquaintance with the topic is entirely due to the work of Mesdames Aubertin-Potter and Bennett. Their book is a veritable mine of information and a "must" for anyone who wishes to know about this interesting feature of Oxford life, although the material might have been better arranged, and we are given two different years for the marriage of the proprietor of Woodforde's favourite coffee house, one of which is impossible. But practically all the background information in this essay about the coffee houses themselves, as distinct from Woodforde's use of them, comes from this one source.

The coffee bean was introduced into Europe from Arabia in the early seventeenth century. In this country, the drink is mentioned in a passage of Evelyn's diary in 1637. Used in its native place as a stimulant, it had no sooner arrived here than the doctors were putting forward all manner of nonsensical claims for its supposed therapeutic properties. It was held to protect the drinker against smallpox, measles, headache, dropsy, gout, scurvy and stomach pains as well as "corruptions of the blood", "the indisposition of the brain", "pains in the spleen", "shortness of breath" and "worms". However, its user was warned against one imprudent practice: "Some drink it with milk, but it is an error, and such as may bring in danger of the leprosy".

By 1680 there were an estimated 2000 coffee houses in London.

While this may be an exaggeration, the demand for coffee was such that an increase of cultivation took place, the Dutch opening up plantations in Sri Lanka and later increasing their area of cultivation in Java.

Oxford actually claims the first coffee house to open in England, situated in a room which formed part of the Angel Inn in the High Street, opposite Queen's. (The site is now occupied by part of the Examination Schools.) The coffee house pioneer was Jacob, "one Jew", in 1651. The following year Arthur Tillyard, an apothecary, opened up another, higher up the street, opposite to All Souls. In view of his profession it is likely that he was one of those who recommended coffee to be taken medicinally. A second Jew, Cirques Jobson, started his own coffee shop on the corner of Queen's Lane, direct competition if you like, since this was right opposite the Angel. However, it has been suggested that "Jacob" and "Jobson" were different names for the same man. In any case, Jacob left Oxford in 1654 and migrated to London where he carried on the trade at Old Southampton Buildings, Holborn, where he can be traced until so late as 1671.

Coffee houses continued to grow in number. Between 1662 and 1686 the Oxford City Council gave permission on 10 occasions for them to have trade signs hung outside the premises. More traditional places of refreshment of course heavily outnumbered them. By the latter date there were over 300 alehouses and about 1000 taverns and public houses in the city, there being so far no kind of control over their numbers.

Fellows and students of the University, along with various professional and commercial people, made up most of the clientèle of the Oxford coffee houses. The colleges had their own preferences, mainly based on proximity.

Originally, it cost 1 penny to enter a coffee house, and a dish of coffee was to be bought for 2 pence. These prices rose later, and in 1759 a number of coffee house proprietors announced that a pot of coffee and a dish of chocolate were both to be increased from 4 pence to 5 pence. Cocoa and tea were also sold, and some of the coffee houses also served alcoholic drinks, competing with the inns and taverns. In 1740 the owners of thirteen coffee houses took out licences to sell wine and, although we

do not have another available list of this kind until 1821, it is clear that the number of licensed coffee houses must have grown. Woodforde tells us that on at least one occasion he was able to buy spirits from a coffee house, and it is most unlikely that this was an isolated case. Some coffee houses also sold food and would obligingly send it in to the colleges, a boon for those students who did not enjoy the meals served up in the college refectories.

Our authority says nothing about another feature of coffee houses, which is however mentioned by Woodforde. It was possible to take out a subscription and, as we shall see, the diarist did that in 1760; it cost him a shilling. If it is asked what special privileges were attached to this, I would suggest that they related to another kind of service provided by the coffee houses. One could read the newspapers there, and for nothing, whereas the diarist had to pay a penny if he wanted to look at a newspaper at the Ansford Inn, in his native village. Beyond this, some coffee houses actually operated as circulating libraries, offering magazines, reviews, current novels and poetry and political literature. In this respect they could even function as aids to study. It was in an Oxford coffee house that Jeremy Bentham came across his wonder-working phrase: "The greatest happiness of the greatest number", in *An Essay on the First Principles of Government* by Dr. Joseph Priestley (1768). It was not until four years later that the Bodleian Library acquired a copy of this pamphlet.

Another type of service rendered to customers was the sale of tickets for various events and social occasions. In 1766 one could have bought tickets for a concert of harp music to be given at the Wheatsheaf Inn in the High Street. In 1772 admission to the Radcliffe Anniversary and Commemoration was advertised. A more one-off affair concerned a collection got up for Abraham Ilive, the bedridden great-great grandson of Dr. Thomas James, the first Bodley's Librarian and compiler of the first Bodleian Library catalogue.

All the activities so far chronicled were indeed respectable enough. But the sale of alcohol at many coffee houses ensured that they were no more immune from being the theatre of rowdy, drunken scenes than were the contemporary inns and other drinking places. In 1728, after drinking all afternoon in a coffee house, three members of Queen's and a man from Oriel

attacked two townsfolk. By 1775, at the end of Woodforde's time in Oxford, widespread drunkenness was still common enough for the visiting Irish diarist Dr. Thomas Campbell to record: "We went to the Coffee house in the evening, where almost all the Gownsmen we saw were tipsy". - *Campbell, Diary, 28/2/1775.*

This kind of behaviour on their premises caused the city and University authorities alike to look on the coffee houses with a certain suspicion. So early as 1679 the mayor forbade the selling of coffee on Sundays. This was a repetition of an original ban made two years earlier by the Vice Chancellor. In 1723 there appeared a University proclamation which instructed the owners of taverns, restaurants, alehouses and coffee houses not to allow students to run up debts in excess of 5 shillings and not to open at unauthorized hours. In 1748 a notice inserted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* urged proctors and magistrates alike to be more vigilant in visiting coffee houses, so as to deter students from frequenting them excessively. In 1766 they were forbidden to open before 5 p.m. on Sundays, and their owners were no longer allowed to send round meals to be eaten on college premises.

It is in accordance with this that we find Woodforde, himself quite an enthusiastic frequenter of coffee houses, writing at the time he was Pro-Proctor:

> . . . Immediately after breakfast, myself & Cooke went with Proctor Webber to Proctor Berkeleys of C.C. Coll: where we met with Norris, and we all took a Walk over the town, to all the Inns, Coffee Houses, Taverns, & Billiard Tables, to give Instructions to them not to entertain Gownsmen after 11. at Night - Billiard Tables not after 9. -
>
> - *Oxford and Somerset Diary, 15/4/1774*

Starting out with general remarks about coffee houses in Oxford, we find ourselves reverting to Woodforde, as always. It is natural enough for the interest of members of the Parson Woodforde Society to centre in the places and institutions most closely associated with him. So let us now look, not at coffee houses in general, but at those particular coffee houses which enjoyed his custom.

Undoubtedly his favourite was 'Baggs's Coffee House". We can pin-point it exactly, on the corner of Holywell and Catte Street.

We even know its dimensions, with a frontage of 31 ft. on the first-mentioned thoroughfare and 27 ft. on the second. The site would appear to be identical with one which features in an entry in the Oxford City Council Acts, dated 29 April 1697:

> Mr. Adrian Roberts is to have a new lease of his houses at Smith Gate for 40 years under the old rent and covenants for a fine of £23, all new building at the Coffee Houses allowed for.

"Smith Gate" was the old name for the street corner site already mentioned. It may or may not be relevant to the above that a very early diary entry (2/12/1759) reads: "Spent the Evening at Mother Smiths at Holwell".

About the time Woodforde first came to Oxford Martha Kinnersley was running a coffee house in New College Lane. Woodforde knew and patronised this establishment. On 25 October 1759 he wrote: "I breakfasted at Kinnersly's Coffea House in New-Coll: Lane, with Geree". Among the accounts which at this time he was keeping separately from the diary - *vide The Origin of James Woodforde's Diary* in *Journal XXI, 4* - is a money sum for this day:*

> At Kinnersly's Coff: House for Tea
> 00 00 04 02
> I subscribed there - 00 01 00 00

Just a month later, on 15 November: "Had a Half Crown Bowl of Punch from Kinnersly's Coffea House upon tick being the first time". It was not to be the last.

On 17 November 1760 Martha Kinnersly married John Baggs, "a breeches maker", aged 43. For a time the couple continued at the same address. Woodforde writes: "Paid John Baggs the Coffea House Man who married M^rs^. Kinnersly 1 0 0". - *M.S. Diary, 27/3/1761.* Shortly after this they must have moved to Holywell, where the diarist continued to give them his custom. This coffee house was closely associated with New College, Hertford and Wadham, being handy for all three.

Woodforde now usually bought on "tick", or credit, running up a bill until it had reached a pound or more before settling. It was apparently this practice that led to trouble with Mr. Baggs:

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* These accounts are not printed in *Woodforde at Oxford.* Dr. Hargreaves-Mawdsley also overlooked the move to the Holywell site; see below.

. . . I sent for some Chocolate
from the C. House, which
Baggs holds, and he sent
me word that he would not send
me any - N.B. I shall have
no more dealings there -

- Ibid. 15/1/1763

The diarist's immediate reaction whenever he had disagreements with tradesmen was to declare that he would have no more to do with them. But the convenience of the place probably outweighed other considerations, and he was still making use of it six months later, and still complaining of the way he was treated:

. . . Paid Baggs at the Coff: House (a very
impudent Fellow) a little Bill of 0. 6. 7
N.B. I do not intend dealing with him
very soon for his impudence to
me Yesterday Morning -

- Ibid. 26/7/1763

All the same, it is possible to understand and even condone the coffee house keeper's "impudence". He must have been ill at the time, and very likely in no mood to put up with the humours of chirpy young newly-made graduates. In October of this year he, stating himself to be in ill-health, made his Will, in which he left all his goods, plate, china, furniture, linen and household premises to his wife Martha, with reversion at her death to his cousin Eleanor, thus cutting out any of Martha's relations who, considering that the coffee house had been her sole property to begin with, possibly bequeathed to her by a former husband, might think that they had a claim to it. John Baggs appears to have died soon after.

Woodforde must have found her easier to get on with than her late husband. She is mentioned from time to time in the diary, but without comment. Martha was still there ten years later, when he returned for his second period of residence at New College.

At Christmas he listed a bill he had just settled:

To M^{rs}. Baggs at the Coffee House for 3. mornings Tea
from thence - p^{d}. her by Jack Bignell -

0: 1: 6

Exactly a year later he paid a heavy bill for the "treat" which all recipients of a newly awarded living in the gift of his college were expected to provide for their colleagues:

I went to Bagg's Coffee House afterwards and paid	
Mrs. Baggs my Bill for my Treat the 15 -	7: 1: 6
viz: 2. Dozen of Arrac -	6: 0: 0
1. Bottle Brandy -	0: 2: 6
To Lemons & Sugar -	0: 18: 0

We hear no more of Mrs. Baggs from Woodforde but she kept on the coffee house until she retired some years later. Her late husband's cousin Eleanor then took it over. In 1781 Eleanor Baggs advertised the letting of the lease. She died seven years later, in October 1788, aged 83. The coffee house then became known as Seal's, under the ownership of Mary Seal, until 1824/5. James Gibbs then became its proprietor, and the business was turned into a wine merchant's. By 1840/1 the building housed a wine auctioneer. It was demolished in 1882 to make way for the Indian Institute, now the History Faculty Library.

The great number of times this coffee house appears in the diary shows that he frequented it assiduously. By comparison, he was no more than an occasional visitor to any of the others. Tom's Coffee house seems to have been the most popular of those, with him.

It was situated at what is now No. 115 High Street. Contemporary descriptions suggest that it was a rather grand sort of place, as coffee houses went. It was styled the haunt of the "most gay and expensive", and boasted a back room, called the "House of Lords", with real Chippendale armchairs reserved for senior members of the University and other important patrons. Originally known as the King's Arms Tavern, it had changed its name when Thomas Hobson took it over. In 1759 he was one of the coffee house keepers who raised their prices. He died in 1764, aged 75. His widow Anne Hobson disposed of the business and Thomas Wynne, who had the right Christian name for the concern, came in. He moved to the Angel in 1776 and two years later was declared bankrupt. The name was retained when Ephraim Ward, a former waggoner operating between London and Oxford, became the next proprietor.

There is an interesting passage in the diary, dealing with Woodforde's proctorial duties, in which Tom's is mentioned

rather ambiguously. The entry is dated 15 April 1774, the day when as we have seen he and his fellow officials toured the city, telling the innkeepers etc. that they must obey the rules. There then immediately follows this passage:

> . . . We went to the Vice-Chancellor at Queens-Coll: concerning Tom's Coffee-House and an Auction of Books of bad repute now selling at the black Horse in S^{t}. Clements . . .

Sedition, I would be inclined to think, rather than pornography; and it is impossible to conclude whether there was any sort of connection between the two places, or whether two quite different complaints were being investigated. We hear no more of the case or cases, only that the Vice Chancellor was embarrassed, or "hurried", as Woodforde put it – "He is an exceedingly good kind of a Man, and seems very fearful of doing any thing that is disagreeable". The type still exists within the educational ranks, and by no means only at Oxford.

On 2 June, the diarist and Webber went out after 11 at night and walked about, checking "the Coffee Houses, Inns & Taverns". At Tom's they found some undergraduates, "L^{d}. Jocelyn & other Gentlemen but they were going to their Colleges immediately". On 27 November he flushed out of the same coffee house two New College men, one of whom was Grattan who had been constantly in trouble with the college authorities, "with some Strangers".* Other references to this coffee house merely recount that the diarist dropped in there of an afternoon for tea, or detail the people he met there.

Dick's Coffee House was somewhere near St. Mary's church, no exact location having been discovered. It derived its name from Richard Spindlow, who was the owner in 1762. There is only one reference to this coffee house in the diary, but it is an interesting one. Woodforde went there at the interval of "a miscellaneous Concert" at the Sheldonian. We are prompted to wonder how long the intervals were, and I have not the least idea why he went there, seeing that he does not tell us himself. Mrs. Baggs' establishment would have been much handier. Perhaps he felt that he just needed a walk.

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* Appendix to F. G. Erith: *The Oglander Family* in *Journal XII, i, Spring 1979*; and *Gleanings from the New College Archives; IV. Grattan and Trotman again* in *Journal XII, 2, Summer 1979.*

There is likewise a single early allusion (13/11/1760) to "James's Coffea House". Otherwise known as Horseman's, this was another High Street coffee house, located at the present Nos. 104-105. By 1753 James Horseman had taken over the tenancy. He belonged to the group that raised their prices in 1759. In the same year he offered a reward for the return of a "Silver Half-pint Chocolate Mug, a Blue & White China Punch Bowl and an old-fashioned Silver Ladle", all missing since the previous summer, while "2 silver cream pots and two tea spoons" had been gone for a longer time. This is at least a cheering reminder that pilfering of the kind is not exclusively a modern crime.

James Horseman died in 1760 and the business was then carried on by his widow Elizabeth and their son John. He died "of dropsy" in 1779, aged 41. The tenancy was then held by William Wall until 1783, when he went bankrupt, the lease, goods and stock being offered for disposal. The new leaseholder was John Darlington. On 28 July 1785 *Jackson's Oxford Journal* carried an advertisement for a "florist feast", to be held at "Mr. Darlington's Coffee House". In a later notice (25/7/1789) Darlington advertised for a pack of harriers, preferably "Dwarf Fox Hound". By 1793 the business had changed hands again and the newcomer inserted a notice in the newspaper too characteristic of its time to be omitted here:

> Robert Smith impressed with the deepest sense of Gratitude for the Encouragement he has experienced from the Gentlemen of the University, and the Publick in General, since he entered upon the Coffee-House, late Mr. DARLINGTON'S, begs Leave to acknowledge his Thanks for the same, and to acquaint them that he has considerably enlarged and improved his House; and the different Branches of his business having been very extensive, he has admitted RICHARD SMITH as a Partner in that Part of it which consists in dealing with Wines in order that the Greatest Degree of Attention may be paid to his Customers; for a Continuance of whose Favours Robert Smith and his Partner humbly solicit and which it will be their constant Endeavours to merit.

In 1801 the business was known as Platt's, after Robert Platt the then proprietor.

It is a tribute to Woodforde's art of making the account of his

daily life "come alive" that we cannot expect to find the same interest in coffee houses which he does not name and probably never entered. Yet it is surely rather a pity that one so keen on the pleasures of the table as our Parson never met George Priddie. He had long been domiciled in Norfolk when that ingenious man appears on the record. "Mr. Pridie's" was a coffee house in the Turl, in operation between 1784 and 1790. He specialized in mutton pies which appeared, aromatic and piping hot, on each Monday, Wednesday and Saturday of the week. The ordinary pie included vegetables as well as mutton and ham; but the *pièce de résistance* was his "Mutton Spicy Pie", the ingredients including mutton, apples, prunes, nutmeg and sugar placed in layers within the pastry. It may be noted of this superlative restaurateur that, in addition to "flower feasts" on three different dates in 1779 and 1790, he also put on a typical Glorious Revolution dinner at 2 p.m. sharp on 4 November 1788, to commemorate the landing of William of Orange (William III) in England exactly a century before.

But what did coffee houses look like, from inside and out, and how would they have been furnished? Our authors print an excellent sketch of the Turl in 1782, much narrower than it is today, taken from across Broad Street. At the left hand junction with Broad Street stood Malbon's coffee house. It appears as a quite modest, two storey building, with part of the lower storey jutting out into the Turl, and with what seem to be pots of flowers over the doorway. Two years later, part of this coffee house was demolished when the street was widened. The illustration reproduced in this number, showing the house once occupied by Mrs. Baggs, it has been chosen purely for its Woodfordean associations. It may have looked quite different in the days when the diarist patronised the place.

As for a coffee house interior, so far as I know we have no primary evidence dating from Woodforde's time. However, go back to the previous century, and there is a very interesting written description of what must have been one of the first coffee houses in Oxford.

In 1661/2 Lawrence Short was in Broad Street, on the site of the Sheldonian Theatre. In that year the authorities granted him permission to erect a sign of a "Turk's Head", coffee being regarded as typically the Turkish beverage. The building of the Sheldonian drove him out, and by 1669 he had moved to

"Hell", the original name of the long, twisting passage between Holywell and New College Lane. (The Victorians were not having that, so re-named it "St. Helen's Passage").

Short died in 1671, and the inventory of his goods provides us with an invaluable glimpse of the interior of a coffee house. It had a library for customers, this having been assembled at the instigation of members of Christ Church. The interior of the building was divided into four rooms, and it is clear that academic and social class distinctions were strictly observed. In the "Masters Roome" were "One Drawing Table" and "twenty-six Lether Chayres". The "Long Roome" held "Two long Tables", "one round Table" and "seventeen Lether Chayres". The "Bachelours Room" had "Two old Tables, one forme" and "six old Chayres", while "in the Shoppe", catering for people at the bottom of the scale, were merely "one Old Table" and "Eight old Chayres". This array of furniture would have provided seating for some 50 or 60 customers, one social group kept as distinct from another as in the various Common Rooms of the colleges.

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Look at the question one way, simply count the gross numbers, and it would seem that Oxford in James Woodforde's time had too many coffee houses, subject to the very fiercest kind of competition not only from one another but also from the hotels and inns which, by and large, offered the same commodities for sale. Seen in this light, what might occasion surprise is not that here and there a coffee house keeper failed and went bankrupt, but that any of them managed to make a living at all.

On the other hand, the evidence from diaries and letters and the occasional literature of the age suggests that they were popular because they played a considerable role in the social life of the time. This ensured that demand was always there, and that the trade was buoyant; otherwise so many people would not have been willing to risk their solvency and good name in it.

However, in spite of the fact that some coffee house keepers did well out of their ventures, as a whole the trade was in decline from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. The reason

for this is to be found in changing economic trends. The main importer and supplier of coffee was the East India Company. By the 1750's the great expansion of trade with China and India had opened up trade routes for coffee's rival, tea. This began to be imported in quantities which were large enough to reduce its price. At the same time less coffee was handled by the importers, which made it more expensive. The coffee house had always depended primarily upon the sale of coffee. Now the tea shop began to appear. Ironically, these were often called by the name of "café", the French word for coffee. They sold food and "soft", non-alcoholic drinks, and thus became major competitors to the coffee houses.

At the same time the growth of circulating libraries took away the need for the supply of books which the coffee houses had formerly met. We can see the beginning of this even in Woodforde's time. When he wanted to read a popular best-selling novel, Richardson's *Pamela* or *Chrysal**, he had recourse to a circulating library. On 7 February 1763 he wrote: "For the reading the two Vol: of Chrysal, at the Circulating Library up the Hill I paid $^{d}6$". By the end of the eighteenth century there were four such libraries in Oxford.

The coffee house played a vital role in the development of financial institutions; both insurance and the Stock Exchange began in the meeting of people of similar interests there. Much of the "news" which got into the press also originated from that source. But then the newspapers began to employ special correspondents to provide material, no longer picking it up from scraps of coffee house gossip. In Victorian society there was no place for the eighteenth century-type coffee house, which dwindled into the coffee room in a hotel, like the one, its inscription seen the wrong way through a glass door as MOOR EEFFOC, which provided the young Charles Dickens with an impression which lasted all his life.

In our time the coffee house has returned, but in a widely different form, aiming to be as our authors say "upmarket of the café". The Parson would not have recognised in these any resemblance to his familiar houses of call.

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* *Chrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea*, London, 1760-65, by Charles Johnston (1715-?1800), a former barrister who became deaf and turned into a journalist and novelist.

APPENDIX: "MOTHER ARMIN" AND OTHERS

In the diary of Woodforde's undergraduate years may be found a number of people, presumably old women, who were in some way or ways connected with the catering trade and given the appellation of "Mother". We have already noticed a "Mother Smith" living in Holywell. At first sight I took their premises, all of which the diarist said that he visited, for alehouses. I had an immediate and no doubt quite erroneous impression from them of some squalid back room, or perhaps cellar, presided over by a cackling, dishevelled crone, dishing out pots of "home brewed", as to the ingredients of which it is perhaps best not to enquire.

At "Mother Holders", ale was all our diarist got. But at "Mother Armins" he played billiards with his friend Reynells, "two Games by Candle-light", which cost him sixpence. No drink is mentioned and possibly this was just a billiard room – *M.S. Diary, 2/1/1762.*

At "Bay's Water", whatever and wherever that might have been, he and his friend Cooke "drank 4 Pints of Ale and smoked a Pipe apiece for w^{ch} I paid 0 1. 0. Out of it Cooke owes me o. 0. 6". He adds that "he carried to the Old Woman a Q^{r}. of a P^{d}. of Tobacco, for which I paid at the Tobacconists 0. 0. 4½", and that he "gave her grandson who was at the Old Womans 0. 0. 1½". – *Ibid. 3/1/1763.*

"Mother Radfords" was in the High Street, "opposite the two-faced-Pump". Three visits are recorded. He got ale there but also, on one occasion, oysters.

"Mother Yeomans" was in Jesus Lane, the present Market Street. Here on 15 January 1763 Woodforde "eat some beef Stakes & drank a Quart of Ale". I think this one must qualify as an eating house of sorts, with some facilities for cooking; unless, that is, the steak was cooked at a public oven and brought in to be devoured.

We simply do not know enough about these "Mother" places to be able to speculate. I still believe that they were alehouses, but some of them at least were in a position to offer other gastronomic amenities to their clients.

More than this it is impossible to say.

THE DIARY NOTEBOOKS

As is now well enough known, the first seventeen years of the complete manuscript diary are written in 48 small paper-covered booklets. These were succeeded in 1776 by another sequence of 25 duodecimo hardback volumes, making a gross total of 73.

All the diary volumes, paperback and hardback alike, have marbled covers.

We do not know when or where the diarist acquired his first two dozen booklets. There is no reference to them in the separate accounts written at the same time as the early diary, or in the diary itself. The booklets are absolutely identical in format, but there is one notable difference between these. No.'s 1 and 2 of the series do not have the interleaved blue sheets opposite each page, used by the diarist for extra comments outside an ordinary day's entry, and in later years for the weather notes which became an indispensible adjunct to the mature diary. All the rest, paperback and hardback alike, have these.

All 48 had originally 28 pages, but here and there the diarist removed odd pages in advance of the point he had reached in writing. The first two booklets, battered and scuffed, have suffered worst in this respect. No. 1 has 17 pages and No. 2 has 22. By comparison, few of the others have more than a single page missing, and most of them are intact. From No. 3 onwards it is possible to see exactly where pages were taken out, since the Bodleian cataloguer who numbered them up wrote the number of a missing page on the interleaved sheet.

The accounts which preceded the diary proper began when James Woodforde first went to Oxford, and he most probably acquired the first 24 booklets soon after his arrival. But they do not appear in his record of purchases for 1758.

The initial reference of this kind relates to the second set of 24, in the diary entry for 16 May 1765 (*Ansford Diary II*): "Two dozen of such books as these - p^{d}. - 0 - 4 - 0". At 2 pence each, they cannot be termed dear. They were obtained, along with a number of m.s. sermon books, from an Oxford bookbinder and stationer named Hood.

At that date Woodforde had not long since begun on No. 19 of the first set of booklets, so he still had four, and the greater part of a fifth, in hand. He came to the end of the set on 25 June

1768 and on the following day began on the first of the next batch, No. 25. This lasted him until 1776. The last of them, No. 48 was started on 17 February, and it was fully written up by 22 June. He had, however, already taken steps to prevent his running out of means for continuing the diary, by returning to Mr. Hood for more supplies. On 31 January the diary had recorded:

> Paid this morning to Hood the Book-binder for 13, blank writing books, half bound - 0 : 13 : 6

The sequence of booklets was thereupon discontinued and a sheet, taken out of one of the booklets for the purpose, neatly written out with the numbers 56-70 was never used and may still be found, slipped between the pages of No. 48. The unused remains of a similar sheet, containing Nos. 49-55, must have been thrown away as not required, seeing that Woodforde did not stick numbers on the half bound or hardback books. The numeration itself continued, however, so the first hardback volume became No. 49.

Woodforde may have gone over to the hardback volumes because the others were no longer obtainable. But a more likely reason is that he was writing more copiously than he had done in the earlier years of the diary. The last few 28-page booklets had been used up at the rate of one to about four months. The new hardback volumes, on the contrary, contained 64 pages.

Although he distinctly wrote "13" for the number of books bought in 1776, in fact only 12, Nos. 49-60, were used as a sequence of diary volumes. It is clear also that the price was reckoned by the dozen, as it works out at 1/1½ pence a volume. The extra book was presumably thrown in as a bonus or present.

The diarist began to write in the first volume of the hardback set on 23 June. It lasted him until 22 June 1777, exactly a year. In the next few years they averaged out at a little less than a year of entries for each, ten years to finish the twelve books. He was on the last but one when, on 30 May 1786, he took a ride to Dereham. There he paid a large bill accumulated with a bookbinder named Barber for several binding jobs, including an encyclopaedia about which he had gone to Dereham to speak with the tradesman on 22 March of that year. Settling the bill

now, he also bought some items of stationery. Among these was "1. Doz. Memo Books, half bound", for which he gave 8 shillings. Although the new books were cheaper, at 8 pence each, than the previous dozen, they had more pages, 90 to each volume. This probably reflects the level of local prices, as against those of Oxford.

On 21 January 1787 Woodforde filled up the last of the Oxford set and on the following day began to write in the first of the new ones, No. 61. The entries in the diary continued, on the whole, to lengthen, and for some time he was filling a volume in about the same time as he had taken to complete the others, although the new books had more pages. But one of the later books, No. 70, took him 2½ years to finish. The reason for this is the onset of his serious illness in the spring of 1797 when, as he says, he "declined entering any thing in this Book", going over instead to the 100 loose sheets which he kept to for some 18 months.

He came to the end of the last of the Dereham books, No. 72, on 6 November 1801. By this late date, of course, Woodforde was far from being the active shopper of his more agile and vigorous years. He could naturally have got one of the servants to bring back some books from Norwich but may have felt averse from ordering a stock and so reminding himself that he was unlikely to live to finish it.

So he made use of a book that was already in the house. No. 73 is very slightly larger in format than the other hardback books, 6½″ × 4″ as against a fraction above 6″ × 4″. It has 127 pages, which give it a chunky appearance. We can see almost at a glance that its original purpose was not to have diary entries written in its pages. It opened, at the top of the first page, in a way that curiously resembles the "Commonplace Book" style of the first two notebooks written many years before. As it is likely that no-one has ever examined these lines since they were written by the diarist, I make no apology for giving them here. They consist of quotations or sayings that must have struck him as worthy to be preserved:

> He looks one way and rows another.
>
> A quotation from Plautus, in Latin, the line paraphrased by Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens as:*
> "One day he gives us Diamonds, next day stones".

A quotation from Aristotle, in Greek.

Royal Poverty - A modern nick-name for the Liquor called Geneva, because after beggars are drunk, they are as great as Kings - Bailey Eng: Dict:-

Fat - Cat - - Steward.
Lean - Cat - - Estate -
Blind - Cat - - Master

On the next page may be seen the original purpose of the volume, which was to list details of farming practices and farm prices. An index has nine different kinds of crop, and two or three pages allotted to each. In fact, none contains more than a few lines, and two of the categories were left blank. These notes appear to have been made soon after the Parson's arrival in Norfolk.

The book was also started from the opposite end. This portion has six written pages, the first of which is headed:

- on -
Anna Maria Woodforde's
Account
from the 9. of October 1779 -

These sheets contain tabulated lists of expenses incurred for Nancy from the time she came to stay at Weston Parsonage. From 1784 full details are given - the Christmas pig, doctor's bills, clothing, down to 1/6d for a fan given to William Woodforde's bride in 1790, and the cash advanced for card-playing most of which, as Nancy invariably lost, reverted to her uncle anyway. Seeing that he had had this volume in his possession at least since 1779, we realise that it is very likely to be identified with the mysterious 13th. volume sold to him by the Oxford stationer in 1776.

So in 1801 he had an almost empty book at his disposal at the same time as he needed to continue the diary. He began by drawing a line beneath the quotations as already noted, and wrote under it:

November - Volume 24th - 1801

The number clearly takes in only the hardback volumes, and even at that it is wrong, since the diarist had filled the pages of 2 batches of 12 each, and the volume he was now using was No. 25.

There is just one more odd circumstance to be noted. Two pages ahead of the last entry in the diary is a set of figures, headed "Largesses in 1802". It records sums of a shilling a team paid out through Betty Dade to the farm workers of fourteen different employers.

If Woodforde had remained in a state to have gone on with the diary for only a week or so longer, he would have caught up with this page already partly written on. Did he intend to tear the page out before he came to it, or by-pass it as he had done with the farming notes?

We shall never know. He had used up 58 pages when, on Sunday 17 October 1802, he began to write his final entry at the top of p. 59. There is great pathos in the appearance of this page, with a few rather shaky but otherwise normal enough lines in his handwriting; then all the rest of the page, and the book, left blank.

After his last "Dinner to day rost Beef &c.", he laid down his pen, never to take it up again.

NOTES AND QUERIES

In the repair of the Post-Reformation reredos in the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Henham, Essex, the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Commandments are lettered in gold on a wooden background. There is a divergence of long and short Ss. How is their placing determined? When were these long Ss introduced?

Miss J. M. Windmil

What are double channel shoes? (*Ansford Diary V, 14/2/1772*).

More on the Charter

Entries mentioning the serving of the Charter at Mr. du Quesne's table and later at the Parsonage and in Somerset seem mainly to occur in the late summer, when apricots would be at their ripest.

However, many early recipe books give directions for preserving green fruits, or "thinnings", and these must have been stored for future use when fresh apricots were unobtainable.

Woodforde notes a rather acid meal on 17 May 1802 (when he was already feeling "poorly"): "I had for my Dinner some Souce fryed and a small green Apricot Pudding".

For my own version of the Charter I use dried apricots soaked overnight and then cooked without sugar in a covered dish in a slow oven. This keeps for some days or can be frozen. As a short cut there is available in the shops a full fruit apricot topping made by an old-established firm, which is useful when needed at short notice.

A postscript from Penny Taylor: More about the Shrimptons

In my essay *The Davie family of Debenham* (*Journal XVII, 2*), I noted a Joseph Shrimpton, Attorney, believed to be Betsy Davie's son, born 1798-9. A little more rather scrappy information about Joseph and his family can be gleaned from *The Southwold Diary of James Maggs, 1818-1876*, published in 1983. Maggs was a Southwold auctioneer and also the coroner, and his diary extracts centre on those aspects of his life. However, he seems to have been a close friend of the Shrimptons, of whom he gives these details: Joseph Shrimpton married a Miss Powis on 6 March 1828, and had three daughters, two of whom were Louisa, who married - Rabbett in February 1855 and had a son on 18 December 1856 and Amelia Alexandrina, who married George Nutt of Aldeburgh. The ceremony was performed by Dr Sketchley, uncle of the bride, perhaps Mrs Shrimpton's brother-in-law. The third daughter, Emily, was still living with her widowed mother in Southwold in 1852.

The Shrimptons lived in Lloyd Street, Lloyd Square, on the border of Islington. They visited Southwold for holidays in 1839, 1840 and 1842, staying in James Maggs' lodgings. On one occasion when they were in Southwold, Maggs, on a visit to Staple Inn, "looked in to see that their house was all right".

The Shrimptons appear to have left London for Southwold around 1843, when Joseph was appointed Clerk to the local justices. He died at Southwold in January 1847, aged 47.

There is no mention by Maggs of Joseph Shrimpton's parents and so the last record of Betsy Shrimpton is her name on a "Fines" list concerning land in Debenham in 1805 and 1806, when the land passed to T. A. Barker, perhaps upon the death(s) of Betsy and her mother - or because the land had been sold.

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