PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal

AN ELECTION AT DUDLEY, c. 1834

By permission of the Art Gallery, Dudley, West Midlands

Note women wearing election "favours" and a dog with one.

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[1763]
SATURDAY 12 MARCH

This was one of the blackest days that I ever passed. I was most miserably melancholy. I thought I would get no commission, and thought that a grievous misfortune, and that I was very ill used in life. I ruminated of hiding myself from the world. I thought of going to Spain and living there as a silent morose Don. Or of retiring to the sweeter climes of France and Italy. But then I considered that I wanted money. I then thought of having obscure lodgings, and actually looked up and down the bottom of Holborn and towards Fleet Ditch for an out-of-the-way place. How very absurd are such conceits! Yet they are common . . .

I went to Lady Betty's. Lady Anne only was at home. She gave me some tea and we chatted gently. Then the rest came in. I valued them, as they were to go for Scotland on Monday. I stayed supper, after which we talked of death, robbery, murder, and ghosts . . .

– *James Boswell: London Journal,* 213/14.

[1763]
April 18.–

We breakfasted at Dyers again. At Bowles this afternoon in our Green, one Game, with Ballard, Richardson of Univ: Coll: (a Guest of M^{r}. Peckhams), Peckham, Fanshawe, Russell and myself, won my Greenage* – being – 0. 0. 3.

Jim Chaunler our Chaunler's Brother dined at our Table, being both mad and drunk – For Wine in the Bowling Green 0. 6. Took a Walk this evening with Caldecott in Bays Water – For some Ale at Old Mother Jacobs of Bays Water 0. 0. 4

I gave the old Woman 0. 0. 2 for Porter for Caldecot and myself, at the Kings Head 0. 0. 3

A little Lap Dog followed me from Eddington quite to Coll: He laid in my Room all night –

Richardson of Univ: Coll: p^{d}. me 1.6 which he has owed me near a Twelve-month for Quadrille –

– *James Woodforde, Diary,*
Woodforde at Oxford, 121

** Not in the dictionary, but presumably meant a stake, amounting to a halfpenny for each player, and won by the bowler scoring the maximum number of points.*

Issued to Members of the Parson Woodforde Society

Chairman
G. H. Bunting
Priddles Hill House
Hadspen
CASTLE CARY
Somerset

Editor
R. L. Winstanley
6 Corville Road
HALESOWEN
West Midlands

Secretary and News Letter Editor
Mrs. P. Stanley
76 Spencer Street
NORWICH
Norfolk

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EDITORIAL

In his *Notes* printed in the last Journal our Chairman had something to say about the future of the Journal and the need to formulate a policy which would carry it through any necessary changes that time might bring. The subject was also raised at the Committee meeting in London last November. Already some mutually divergent opinions have emerged, regarding the scope and direction of the Journal in the 1990's.

In the twenty-two years of its existence, many different sorts of essay and article have been printed, but in general three main types have predominated. These are: articles about Woodforde himself, his immediate family and closest friends: pieces which brought in other people but for which the master-source was the diary itself: contributions which in some cases tended to transcend the ambit of his personal life but were at the same time part of what we may call the social background to his life.

In the earliest years, the paramount need was to supplement the diary by producing work on Woodforde's life, and that of his relations and friends. However, much of this material has not been seen by members who have joined the Society in comparatively recent times. It now appears to be felt by some that we might with advantage reprint some of this work, rather than open up new themes which less concerned the diarist in his lifetime. It would of course be easy enough to do this without altering the format of the Journal. On the other hand it may be thought that the right place for it is the kind of supplement which we have just recently produced.

But the really essential question about Woodforde is one which demands an answer from anyone who claims an interest in the diary. What kind of man was he? What is his place in history? If a Society exists to commemorate him, how should it best go about its task?

Now, if he were no more than the greedy, gobbling old parson, obsessed with the aimless recording of triviality, that has become his stereotype with unthinking people, there is surely no problem here. Any scribbled paragraph, knocked off hurriedly by some hack journalist or well-meaning amateur, without regard to accuracy or even common sense, would suf-

fice. But if the diary is what I have never ceased to proclaim it is, an indispensible primary source of much in the social and domestic history of the diarist's time, then he deserves something that is not only better than that, but is as good as we can possibly make it.

I have heard it said that the Journal is too specialized, too erudite and "scholarly" for its avowed purpose. I have no idea whether this criticism is well-founded. But before any decision is made about the advisability of lowering our standards, I think we ought first to look at the alternatives. Do we really want the buffoonery and nonsense that the popular press and the other media, and their friends in the advertising industry, come along with whenever they condescend to take notice of Woodforde? I believe we should consider very carefully before we make any attempt to go down that path.

However, whether you agree with me or not, you can all do one thing to help. Write to me, or to our Chairman, or Secretary, and favour us with your views. I promise that they will receive our best attention.

I have, or rather the Society has, inherited all Penny Taylor's Woodforde papers. Most of these consist of notes, the raw material of so many articles she wrote for the Journal. *Parson Woodforde – and Bungay* must have originated in a talk given to the Bungay Society or some other local body, and is printed here in memory of the author. *Parson Woodforde* by David Duval comes from the same source. I regret my inability to contact either Mr. Duval or the editor of whatever periodical it was that printed his essay, and for that reason could not apply for permission to republish it here.

– R. L. WINSTANLEY

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

With this issue of the Journal comes the first edition of a Newsletter, inaugurated by our secretary, Phyllis Stanley. The success of a venture of this kind depends to an extent upon support from members so I would urge those of you who come across Woodforde items likely to interest other members to send details to Phyllis.

Members will be sorry to hear of the death, aged 90, of Miss Bertha Fügl, a Founder and Life Member of the Society. Miss Fügl will be remembered by the Society particularly for the excellent drawings made specially for us to illustrate various aspects of Woodforde and the Diary. It is particularly appropriate at this time, with the private visit to Stourhead on the Frolic itinerary, to recall the drawing of the Parthenon and Rustic Cottage at Stourhead which was reproduced on the front cover of Journal Vol. VI No. 1. The Society extends condolences to Miss Fügl's family in their bereavement.

At this time of the year it is usual for me to make gentle mention of the matter of unpaid subscriptions. If you are one of those whose memory requires a delicate jogging, please take heed – it will not only save you from the indignity of a further written reminder but will save both work and money for postage. There is also the business of payment by banker's order. Will those few who have not already done so please instruct their bank that the annual subscription is £7.50 for UK members.

Finally, a reminder of the annual Frolic date, 18-29 May. If you have not already booked, but would like to join our Somerset gathering, please ring me at home (0963 50462). It may be possible because of unavoidable cancellations to make the necessary arrangements even at a late stage. We look forward to a successful Frolic and hope for our annual good fortune with the weather.

G. H. BUNTING
Chairman

PARSON WOODFORDE - AND BUNGAY

Woodforde was very fond of what he called "schemes" and excursions, and he visited the Bungay region three times, in 1779, 1786 and 1788. He was acquainted with Roger Hall, rector of Ellingham, and Castres Donne, vicar of Loddon and curate of Broome. He had first met Donne, who was related to the poet Cowper, at Weston, and went to visit him in April 1779: "Took a ride to Brooke, to M^{r}. Donnes about 14. Miles from Weston, and a very dusty ride we had & very hot - we got there about 2. o'clock and there we dined . M^{r}. Donne has got a pretty genteel House and Garden -". Woodforde had also met Elizabeth Davie, the widow of Lancelott Davie, a Southwold surgeon. She was the daughter of Dr. Charles Roope of Pulham Market, and her half-brother George was apprenticed to Dr. Camell, a well-known Bungay surgeon who was renowned for his inoculation treatment against smallpox, two of his patients being the son and daughter of Castres Donne.

In 1786 Woodforde recorded in his diary:

> My Nephew breakfasted not at all at home, but sat of with me about 8. o'clock on a little Tour towards the South East Coast of Norfolk - Briton went with us - We went from home to Norwich but did not get of there but went on to a Place called Porland about 5. Miles the other side of Norwich, and there we breakfasted at 11. o'clock on some cold hard boiled Leg of Pork and drank some strong Beer at the Sign of the Dove - paid there - 0 : 2 : 6
> About 12. we went on for Bungay and there we dined at the three Tunns kept by one Utting, very civil People - paid & gave there - 0 : 8 : 6
> Whilst at Bungay we went and saw the old Ruins of Bungay Castle - scarce worth seeing - gave there - 0 : 0 : 6
> From Bungay we went on to Beccles . . .

Woodforde did not stay long on this visit; and it would seem, in the light of Mr. Reeve's researches into Mrs. Bonhote and the house she built into the Castle Keep, and the other buildings outside the walls, that these did not impress Woodforde as being strange or unusual - perhaps this was a commonplace with ruins in the eighteenth century! After visiting Beccles, Southwold and Lowestoft, Woodforde and Bill went on to Yar-

mouth, and after buying a large cheese at Acle, arrived back at Weston on 7 April.

His third visit, in 1788, ostensibly to visit Mr. Hall at Ellingham, was an overnight one, and the account is again given in his own words:

July - 30.-
I got up this morning about 6. o'clock and
before breakfast mounted my Mare and sat
of for Bungay and Briton with me, went
three Miles at least out of our Way to find out
Ellingham where M^{r}. Hall is Rector, called
at M^{r}. Donnes at Broome, saw only M^{rs}. Donne, her
Husband being gone to Bungay, did not unlight
but from thence went to a M^{r}. Johnsons where
at present M^{r}. Hall boards (about half a Mile
from M^{r}. Donnes) and there met with him, and
a neighbouring Clergyman a M^{r}. Francis with him
eat a bit of Cake and drank a Glass of very old Madeira
and then went with M^{r}. Hall to his Parsonage House
about half a Mile from M^{r}. Johnsons and there
stayed with him till he had dressed himself - Such a House and
Situation I think far from being agreeable —
M^{r}. Hall however is fitting of it up in a shabby
Manner and at present always sleeps there of Nights, no
Man, Maid, Horse, Dog or any living Creature
but himself there - the House very small indeed -
After M^{r}. Hall had dressed himself, he went with
me to Bungay above two Miles and half from
his House, & spent the Aft: at the three Tuns kept by M^{r}. Utting -
We got to Bungay about 3. o'clock, and glad
enough I was to get there having had no breakfast.
We had for Dinner some fish and a Leg of Mutton
which was just fit as we got thither -
In the Evening about 8. o'clock M^{r}. Hall left me
M^{r}. Hall had M^{r}. Johnsons Horse to go with me -
As we were going into Bungay to Day we met
M^{r}. Donne and his Brother in Law M^{r}. Mott with him
in a one horse Chaise - We had some Chit-Chat
together, but for not any considerable Time -
I supped and slept at the three Tunns at Bungay -

July - 31.-
I breakfasted at the three Tuns and after
being shaved & a clean Shirt, about 9. o'clock
mounted my Mare and sat of for Norwich -
To the Barber that shaved me, for the Razor with
which he shaved me and for himself gave - 0 : 3 : 0
At a Booksellers Shop at Bungay for a large Stick
of red sealing Wax - paid - 0 : 1 : 0
To a Book that I happened to see in his Shop
published by an old Acquaintance of mine, by
name Caldecot of the Middle Temple - p^{d}. 1 : 11 : 0
entitled Reports of Cases relative to the duty
of a Justice of Peace from 1776 to 1785 -
Spoke to M^{r}. Doughty my Shoemaker at Bungay
about Boots and Shoes, bespoke a P^{r}. of each.
Saw M^{r}. Donne again this morning at Bungay, this
being Market Day, and he was marketing.
Saw George Roope (who is apprenticed to a D^{r}. Cammel,
Surgeon and Apothecary) this morning before I left town,
as I did also Master Tho^{s}. Roope who is at School
at The Rev. M^{r}. Reeves - gave him 0 : 1 : 0
They are nearly related to Betsy Davy and her Mother -
Paid & gave at the Tunns - 0 : 14 : 6
We got to Norwich about 1. o'clock -

Fortunately St. Mary's parish rate list of 1786 is still surviving and has been published by the W.E.A. in a collection of Bungay documents, and from it, although house numbers are not given, it is possible to deduce that Doughty the shoemaker lived approximately where Mrs. Daniel's shop now stands. The barber was probably James Sexton of Earsham Street who lived two houses away from the renowned baker Indes Mapes, where the launderette and travel agency are today. The bookseller would have been Thomas Miller, the well-known stationer, printer and publisher - and grocer - who occupied the block behind the Butter Cross which now includes Stacey's and the Trustee Savings Bank.

Mr. Camell lived in the house in Broad Street which was recently occupied by a dentist, and lately an antiques centre. The adjoining building at the corner of the Market Place, now the Post Office, was part of Dr. Camell's property and is the subject of an advertisement in the *Norwich Mercury* of 3 June 1786: "To be let and entered upon at Michaelmas next, a com-

modious house for a small family with a shop and warehouse adjoining; the whole is situated in the centre of the Market Place, had lately been inhabited by a Milliner, and is now in the occupation of Mr. Camell, surgeon, from whom further particulars may be known". This building is today a "complex" of about half a dozen houses stretching from Broad Street round into Edge Street as far as the corner of Nethergate Street. Most of them are for sale at this time, and it is interesting to speculate how this block has changed in two centuries.

Mr. and Mrs. Aldis, who were butler and housekeeper to the Custance family, at Weston, retired and kept a tavern in Norwich. Later they kept the *King's Head* at Bungay, and after Mr. Aldis died in 1796 his widow kept on the inn for a time. She died in 1800, and the couple are buried in St. Mary's churchyard.

The *Rampant Horse* inn in Norwich was a well-known venue for prize-fights, curiosities and shows, and there Woodforde saw a "Learned Pigg" who could spell out words, Dr. Katerfelto who combined conjuring with "wonderful experiments", "The Man Satire" which was a monkey in man's clothes, and an automaton that played the trumpet and told fortunes. It was also the "end of the line" for the Bungay carrier, according to this advertisement of 1786: "Mary Girling (now widowed) continues business as Norwich Carrier between Bungay and Rampant Horse Street where her son lives ... Also available, genteel hearse." Mrs. Girling lived in Bros Street, not far from the *Horse and Groom.*

THE POLITICAL SCENE IN NORWICH - AND BRETTINGHAM SCURLL AS ELECTOR

In our Journal for spring 1988 there appeared an article entitled *Eighteenth Century Politics - Windham and Norwich.* Within the context of that piece of work, it was impossible to do more than glance at the political background to some elections, or to say anything about the procedures by which elections were conducted. Now, however, the recent discovery that Briton, the one-time Parsonage servant, voted in a number of Norwich elections, has prompted a return to the subject. But, as there would be little point in simply recounting that Briton cast his vote in this or that elec-

tion, we have prefaced the account of his electoral activity with an outline, admittedly rather brief but endeavouring to include all the salient features, of the political scene as it was in his time.

*

The Parliamentary system as it existed before the Reform Act of 1832 (not that this measure made such a great difference in itself – it was most significantly a portent for the future) was so far away from the one we know that any attempt to equate the two can lead only to confusion and misunderstanding. The essential fact to be kept in mind is that, in spite of what people at the time said and sincerely believed, the entire procedure was to the highest degree undemocratic, by comparison with what we consider to be the right working of democracy. To have been represented by anyone but the rich and powerful; to have conferred electoral rights upon men who could not write their own names and possessed nothing of their own, or on women of any class, would have struck responsible people of the time as folly, of a kind likely to subvert the whole order of civilization. They who voted were held to cast their votes not only for themselves but also on behalf of all those who, for one reason or another, could not be trusted to perform this important civic duty. The number of people who had a vote has been estimated at about 1 in 12 adult males in the population.

The numerical size of the House of Commons was not very far from that of the present day. 40 English counties, without regard to size or populousness, returned 82 members, and 12 Welsh counties had one each. 24 "cities", by no means all belonging to the larger centres of population, were represented by 50 M.P.'s. The bulk of the seats were in the boroughs, 166 of them returning 332 members. Then there were the 2 Universities and the 8 Cinque Ports, each with two members; and 5 single member boroughs; while the 12 Welsh boroughs, like the Welsh counties, had 1 each. That made up a total of 513 seats for England and Wales. Scotland with 45 and Ireland after the Act of Union in 1800 with 100, made up the grand total of 658.

After 1821 Yorkshire had 4 seats, the augmentation coming from the corrupt borough of Grampound in Cornwall, disenfranchised in that year. London was the only one of the cities to have 4 seats; but a place no more considerable than Weymouth, with 2, had Melcombe Regis across the bay with a further 2, making its combined representation equal to that of the capital.

There was, indeed, no sort of logical consistency about the way

the seats were distributed. The electoral map had been drawn up in the late middle ages, and places which had once been of some importance had long since dwindled almost to the status of villages. The Channel ports were heavily over-represented, since in mediaeval times almost all our foreign trade had been with France. Cornwall had 42 boroughs, almost all corrupt, only 3 fewer than for the whole of Scotland, which was so badly under-represented that some of the Scottish constituencies could vote only in alternate elections.

All Parliamentary candidates had to be landowners. From 1709 to represent a city or borough, the basic qualification was ownership of freehold land to the value of £300. For the counties, where the prestige value of being a "Knight of the Shire" was higher, double that amount was required.

In the same way real property provided the electorial qualification in the counties. A statute of 1430 had laid down that the franchise was to be based on the "forty shilling freehold", land or tenements. The great majority of county voters were farmers, as befitted a system which developed at a time when Britain was almost entirely an agrarian community. No tenant, however large his holding, could vote, and even the copyholders, who enjoyed a measure of security far superior to that of most ordinary leasehold tenants, were likewise excluded.

In the cities and boroughs the electoral rights were of great complexity, detailed and analysed with the utmost lucidity by Sir Edward Porritt in his classic book *The Unreformed House of Commons (1903)*. There were franchises that had originally depended upon the payment of certain local taxes (scot and lot), or upon the possession of a hearth on which a pot could be boiled (potwalloper). In burgage tenures the right was vested in certain tenements, including those in the occupation of women, who could pass on their vote to a male relative.* Freeman boroughs were those in which the right to vote was restricted to those upon whom the freedom of the town had been conferred. Very often these consisted of the better-off tradesmen.

* Those who savour the ironies of life will be amused to hear that this tiny and imperfect concession to "women's rights" was swept away by the liberalizing Reform Act. - *Porritt, I, 40.*

The overriding aim of the unreformed Parliamentary system was to keep the electorate as small as possible, the better to control it. In some boroughs there was no kind of representation at all. In Corporation boroughs the members were directly picked by the local authority. The aptly styled "Nomination borough" was typically in the hands of some local magnate, the "borough patron", who retained the seats for members of his own family and others whom he wished to oblige. Treasury boroughs were kept for nominees of the Government, always keen to find a counterpoise to the anti-ministerial opposition in the House. "Rotten borough", a term often mistakenly and indiscriminately applied to most of the foregoing types of unsatisfactory representation, were rightly speaking corrupt places where a handful of voters comprised the total electorate and sold their votes for cash.

The members who entered the House of Commons through this system, and the whole political organisation of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were so different from those of today that any attempts to assimilate then, or to discover specious parallels between "then" and "now", quickly break down. Modern politics did not begin until the mid-century, the age of Gladstone and Disraeli, and the advent of the great political parties, with their well-defined strategic programmes, to which each individual member was subordinated; and the rigid two party system alternating between Government and Opposition.

It is true that just now we are seeing many examples of "back bench revolts", usually by members representing marginal constituencies who become alarmed that the policies of Government may be costing them their popularity. But this is a mere passing phenomenon, evoked by the Government having a large majority in the House. It dies away as soon as the party is perceived to be in danger. The M.P. of today is the representative, if not exactly of the people, at least of the constituency party which has chosen him, and whose disfavour may lead to his deselection. He is paid a salary which is often his sole means of support.

By comparison, the member in the days of the old system was virtually independent, once we have left out of account the rather small number who were nominees of one interest or

another. Independence was guaranteed by the M.P.s status as a landowner, and by the fact that he paid all his own election costs, which could be ruinously expensive. He could sit in the House of Commons for years, if he had a mind to, without making a single speech. He could absent himself through most of the sittings in which he was supposed to be functioning as a legislator, and still be assured of retaining his seat at the next election.

The Parliaments in which these worthies sat differed from those of our times as widely as the M.P. of those days differs from his modern successors. In spite of what party labels and slogans appear to tell us, there were no parties, in anything like the sense in which we speak of parties today. What one had was small groups of people supporting various causes, and united rather by allegiance to a particular leader than to the Government of the time. The Whig party of the early nineteenth century included great landowners like Earl Grey, leader of the administration which passed the Reform Bill in 1832; there were also radicals, and people who represented the interest of the still largely unfranchised industrial towns, and those of the Dissenters. After 1829 there were the Irish nationalists. It is scarcely an exaggeration to aver that an eighteenth or early nineteenth century government was less the creation of a party than of a loose coalition of various interests.

It had not always been like that; and indeed the party system which began midway through the nineteenth century and has continued to our times was to some degree a reversion to the adversarial mode of the seventeenth century, the Tories having evolved out of the "king's party" and the Whigs from the "country party". From the accession of George I in 1715, the Whigs had everything their own way. This was the time of "the grand Whiggery", when different factions of Whigs ruled the country, and even the opposition was composed of Whigs. It was not until 1784 when William Pitt the Younger, backed by the king, became Prime Minister at the age of 24, that things began gradually to change. Although few of those members who came in with Pitt would have called themselves "Tories" at that date, and some of them never did, this was the time when the fortunes of the Tories began to revive. Although they were

no more a homogeneous party than the Whigs themselves, from this time on we can see the first beginnings of a return to party politics. From 1793, the main aim in foreign affairs of Pitt's government was to prosecute the war against France. At home, it defended the status quo and was devoted to keeping the revolution out of the country. They were averse from encouraging Parliamentary reform, removal of the civil disabilities affecting Catholics and Protestant Dissenters, and other reformist causes, although they did support the abolition of the slave trade, which was achieved in 1809.

A Parliament had a potential life of seven years, as against the five year maximum of our times. Then as now, a Prime Minister chose the most favourable time to dissolve and go to the country. Defeat in a general election did not lead, as it does now, to the automatic resignation of the government. Those Parliaments which failed to last their allotted time fell for a variety of reasons. Some were brought down by a vote of "no confidence". The various groups of which an administration was composed could drop away and destroy its majority. In the eighteenth century they could be dismissed by the king, still in theory their master. But as time went on, with the role of Parliament as the effective ruler of the country more and more strengthened, this gambit became unworkable. The last king to dismiss a ministry, William IV, found the situation blew up in his face. His successor Queen Victoria in the early years of her reign refused to accept an incoming ministry (the Bedchamber crisis); but this proved very much a storm in a teacup; since then all sovereigns have automatically accepted the governments elected by popular vote.

*

Norwich was originally a freeman borough, the electoral qualifications of which have been explained. But from the early eighteenth century it was one of 10 constituencies regarded as being of equal rank with counties, like the county boroughs of modern times created by the Local Government Act 1888. A large and populous place, the second city in England, Norwich had its own sheriffs, its own law courts, and enjoyed other privileges of municipal government.

Politics in Norwich, at both local and national level, were run

by an alliance between the Corporation and a number of powerful and prominent local families, members of which frequently appear as candidates in both the county and the city elections for Parliament. On the other hand, many of the townspeople, and in particular the large and politically active body of Dissenters, were hostile to the Corporation. It was this element which, after a long, bitter struggle, succeeded in gaining another city franchise, that of the freeholders, allowing the owners of freehold property above a certain value to vote along with the actual freemen. Norwich gained this concession in 1702, one of only six Parliamentary constituencies to do so. The freeholders made up about one-fifth of the electorate, which altogether totalled some 3500 voters, more than half the number voting in the county elections, which were also held in the city.

If you had been around and walking in the streets of Norwich at election times in the early nineteenth century, you would no doubt have heard less of "Whig" and "Tory" than of the colour slogans which identified the various factions. "Orange and purple" was originally a Whig emblem. One of the two colours commemorated the Prince of Orange, the famous King Billy who had, it was widely believed, saved the country from both Catholic tyranny and the Divine Right of kings. In the time we are concerned with here, those colours were flown by the supporters of the ministerial party which, as we have seen, were more Tory than Whig in their political leanings. On the other hand, "blue and white" were the colours of the opposition. This could be made up of many different strands of political bias, from the extreme right to the equally extreme left, although in later times blue was to become exclusively the colour of the Conservative interest, and "true blue" the great rallying cry of the real dyed-in-the-wool Tory.

Elections in Norwich at this time were usually spread over two or three days, although the poll was not open for such long hours as with us. The excitement gradually built up in the time immediately preceding the election, while the candidates were each making their bids for popular support. The scene at an election of this kind was, because of the large numbers in the electorate, one of colour, noise, rowdyism and occasional violence. As with another popular social occasion, "Assize

Week", an election brought people with money to spend into the city. There were bands, flags, and at night fireworks tore into the sky. The rosettes or "favours" of the candidates were all about. Men wore then in their hats, and fastened them to any projecting part of a building. If you had met a dog wandering in the streets, it was as like as not that he would have been wearing, attached to his collar, the "favour" of his master's favourite candidate.

The "hustings", a term used today in the grammatical figure known as metonymy to denote politics in general, had then, and continued to have until the passing of the Ballot Act in 1872, a real and literal meaning, that of a platform built against the façade of some public building. Here the candidates stood to harangue the crowd, and on the election days the voters climbed up and registered their votes.

Voting in those days was absolutely open. The elector called the names of the candidate or candidates he wished to support, and the poll clerk entered the choice against his name. This system was widely criticized by political reformers (secret ballots were one of the six points of the "People's Charter" in 1838), on the grounds that it led to pressure and intimidation of the poor and weak by the rich and the strong. The tenant farmer afraid to vote against his landlord's party, the shopkeeper dependent upon the custom provided by the "big house", all those whose employment or livelihood were held to be at risk, were said to be endangered by this kind of voting. In practice it is quite extraordinarily difficult to find any trace of real people who were persecuted on account of the way they cast their votes .Of course, all those who wanted to keep things as they were and not meddle with a system that had served for a long time contended that an electorate that was not afraid to reveal which way it voted was the best sign of a healthy political state.

Fair or unfair, voting was anything but a secret matter, and this is why the Poll Books, and the pamphlets made up from Poll Book material, are of such unique value. In those of Norwich, the voters form three categories: the city itself, "London" and "country". As to the last group, during our period a rule came in whereby the country voters might not reside at more than 7 miles distant from Norwich; before then, they could have lived

anywhere in the kingdom. Residence in the city, we see, was not in itself a qualification. All those who voted either had the freedom of the city or possessed freehold land or property within its boundaries.

Those who lived in the city were listed by ward and parish. In all three categories the occupation of each voter was given. Sometimes abbreviations were used: for example, "w.w." stands for worsted weaver and "w.c." for wool comber. As we recollect the total of over 3500 for the city and over 6500 for the county, we can see that the Poll Books are the best evidence available when we are trying to determine if the elections were anything like an example of a true democratic process. Looking through the lists at voters' occupations, we see that the numbers of shopkeepers and people professing the classier trades predominate. There are some gentry, a few parsons and professional men such as lawyers and doctors. On the other hand we find some, although perhaps not many, representatives of more plebeian ways of making a living, as "bricklayer", "plumber", "mason" and the like.

In one way the voter had a wider element of choice than is possible in our time, or until Proportional Representation is adopted. In the predominant two-member constituencies, each elector had two votes. He could, however, if he wished, record his vote for one candidate only. This was known as a "plumper". It was of the greatest importance in determining the result of elections, the plumper being really worth two ordinary votes, and the candidate who achieved the greatest number of them inevitably finished head of the poll.

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In 1802, largely owing to his implacable opposition to the "Peace of Amiens", Windham and his partner Frere were defeated in a poll which was described as the heaviest ever. The losing party called the result "a triumph of Jacobinism and money". The opposition, blue and white candidates, were Robert Fellowes and William Smith, the latter of whom now began what was to be a long political association with Norwich.

Smith was a Londoner, by trade a wholesale grocer, and by conviction a Dissenter and a pacifist. He was heavily suppor-

ted by the London voters in this election. He and Fellowes bought votes at three guineas a time (four if they were successful), and got away with it because Windham and Frere, who had spent about £8000 on the election, were disinclined to lay out any more, Windham already having accepted another parliamentary seat.

By 1806 the position had changed. National issues had receded and local affairs regained their importance. Smith and Fellowes had been much criticized over their handling of the Norwich Street Paving Bill, which they were managing through the Commons. The Orange and Purple faction put up a new candidate, John Patteson, an alderman, who at the time of the election paraded in his robes of office. He headed the poll with 1287 plumpers. Fellowes managed to save his seat but Smith was defeated in spite of having secured 204 out of 263 London votes. About £35,000 was spent in all on this election.

The Parliament, however, lasted for only three months, and in February 1807 there was another election. Again Patteson headed the poll, but now Smith came in ahead of Fellowes and regained his seat.

The elections of 1806 and 1807 had returned one candidate from each of the parties. It was the ideal situation for an uncontested election next time round. Smith now stood alone for the Blue and Whites. That a contest occurred came about because of a squabble among the opposite party, which produced two candidates for Orange and Purple. The second man was Charles Harvey, the recorder of Norwich.

The material in the printed Poll Book for this year gives us a vivid picture of the election. Entitled *Narrative of the Proceedings, previous and subsequent to the Election,* it starts off in fine style with "Addresses" from the three candidates (that from Harvey and Patteson is in common), and from Smith and his eldest son Benjamin. As the joint letter is by far the shortest, it may be given here, as an example of the style of political oratory favoured at the time:

> GENTLEMEN — We beg leave to inform you, that with the sanction of a very large number of our friends, we have determined to offer ourselves as Joint Candidates to represent this

city in Parliament. We entreat the favour of your votes and interests to place us in that honourable and most desirable situation. — Should we be so fortunate as to succeed, it will be our constant endeavour faithfully to discharge the various duties of that important trust.

We have the honour to be, &c.

CHARLES HARVEY
JOHN PATTESON

The sheriffs were pressed to see the mayor about permission to hold a meeting in St. Andrew's Hall, but "he did not think proper to grant the use of the Hall. In consequence of this refusal, a very numerous meeting took place in the Swan Inn yard, on Monday evening, when Mr. Smith, from the box of the Expedition coach [was this the identical vehicle in which Woodforde had more than once journeyed to and from London?] addressed the electors in an eloquent, manly, and patriotic speech, which lasted nearly an hour, and was interrupted only by shouts of applause". The account, which is strongly pro-Smith throughout, then goes on to give a summary of the speech. It is all pure Eatanswill and all that is missing is the voice of the usually silent majority, to bawl from the crowd:

Suc-cess to the Mayor; and may he never desert the nail and sarspan business, as he got his money by!

Two days later the nomination meeting took place. The candidates were sponsored by various local notabilities. Things began to go wrong for Patteson as early as this. In spite of the fact that the mayor himself had nominated him, he failed to get enough support at the show of hands, and "a poll was demanded" for him.

"Mr. Recorder Harvey and Mr. Alderman Patteson, habited in their robes of office (colours Orange and Purple) and Mr. Smith, in a plain dress (colours Blue and White) were chaired as usual in the Market-place. The polling did not become very brisk till about three o'clock, from which time till nearly six, a great number of votes were given -". At the end of the first day, Smith was seen to be comfortably ahead, while Patteson was trailing badly. The poll recommenced at nine in the morning of the second day. It was indicative of the way things were going that now only Smith and Harvey were chaired. When the

poll closed at 4 p.m., it was announced that Smith had won a complete victory. He had 1545 votes, as against 1349 for Harvey and the 1241 of the defeated Patteson, who now dropped out and took no further part in Norwich politics.

Smith then celebrated his victory with another blockbusting speech, which even his admirer who wrote the account of the election admits was "of considerable length". He had no promises to make, he roared, "with respect to the future; but had only to say, that they (his constituents) held the security, not merely of honesty, but of policy itself that he would never swerve" – a sentiment which has in common with many much later political speeches the illusion of appearing to say much more than it actually expresses.

The account ends with the description of what must have been another Hogarthian scene:

> The chairing (as customary on the following day) was for a time prevented, in consequence of a dispute between the two parties respecting the precedency of the Members, which point was understood to have been yielded the evening before to Mr. Smith, on account of his being the highest on the poll. An attempt was made to bring out Mr. Harvey's chair first, on the plea of priority of right as being Recorder; which excited the resentment of Mr. Smith's friends, who drove Mr. Harvey's chair back to the Hall, round which it had been carried; a severe scuffle ensued, and some blows were exchanged. – Mr. Harvey declined riding any more, and Mr. Smith, in full dress, preceded by a band of music, flags flying, and attended by his numerous supporters, was chaired round the Market-Place amidst the acclamations of the multitude and the approving smiles of the fair spectators who lined the windows to witness this triumphant ceremony.

The Parliament chosen by this election lasted for almost all its allotted time, and it was not until 1818 that another General Election was called.

This time Smith was successfully partnered by a Whig, Richard Hanbury Gurney, a member of the famous banking family, and at the time the senior partner in the bank's Norwich office. In a political career lasting hardly more than some ten years (1818-26 and 1830-32) he is estimated to have spent the enormous sum of £80,000 on politics, this including £1000 a

year merely to look after his seat between elections.

But having reached this point, we should like here to go back and look at the last two elections from an entirely different viewpoint, that of one individual elector.

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In the evening of 24 July 1794 Brettingham Scurll had a row with his employer, and virtually discharged himself, saying that "he would rather leave my Service at Michaelmas next - such is the gratitude of Servants". Next day Woodforde said he "should by no means keep him after Michaelmas - He did not care for he could get a Place he did not doubt, if not he had a home to go to, his Fathers". Of course, after tempers had cooled on both sides, both men must have realised that they would be the losers through parting. Briton stayed on, although he continued to misbehave, and so late as November 1801 gave offence, "making a great Noise in Kitchen by singing in an impudent & loud & bold Manner . . ." - evidently a favourite way for him to show his independence, for Woodforde mentions it more than once.

The account of the quarrel is interesting, because it affords us something of a clue as to Briton's later career, after Woodforde died and the household at the Parsonage broke up. Unlike Ben Leggett, Betty Dade and Sally Gunton, all engaged to be married, he had no-one to consider but himself. Nancy, who had always liked him and with whom he had got on well, would surely have provided him with an excellent "character", and his own long-service record ensured that he easily found another place.

In fact, it is clear from the Poll Book in which his name is registered, and where he appears as a voter, marked "Fr." for Freeholder, that he was still a servant in 1812. His absence from the Poll Book of the previous election years, 1806 and 1807, suggests that he acquired the city property which formed his electoral right, some time between the last two dates. He had purchased the double tenement at Hardley, near Loddon, in 1809, but that of course would not have entitled him to vote in a city election.

He cast his vote from Wymer ward, parish of St. Julian. Most of the other electors in that parish are tradesmen of various

kinds, but the list includes "Elisha de Hague, Gent.", and "John Freshfield, Gent.", either of whom might have been of the class who employed servants. He is listed as "Briton Scurl, Servant", and this certainly makes it likely that the form represented the pronunciation of his name, and not merely a nickname that Woodforde gave him. No doubt he in 1785 and the poll clerk in 1812 heard the identical sound. Briton voted for Smith and Patteson, which means that he went across party lines, but this was by no means uncommon.

Six years later, at the time of the 1818 election, his circumstances had greatly changed. He now appears, still "Briton Scurl", as "Gent." himself. We can only guess how this had come about. No doubt the poll clerks copied down exactly what they heard. If Briton, having discarded for good his last suit of servants' livery, now turned up at the poll, smartly dressed and calling himself a gentleman, it is most unlikely that anyone would have challenged him about his credentials. He had also moved out of the city and was described as a "country voter" from Bergh Apton. Also, the city property which formed his voting qualification is now given. It is at Cockey Lane, King Street, in the parish of St. Julian. This is presumably to be identified with the "two Cottages or Tenements with the Yards Outhouses and Appurtenances thereto belonging" which appear in Briton's Will in 1840.

In this election Briton voted for the two Whigs, Smith and Gurney. which at least is politically straightforward and allows us to suppose that he was in sympathy with the reformers.

The information derived from the records of these two elections by no means exhausts our knowledge of Briton as an elector. Unfortunately the rest of the data is incomplete and confusing. As none of the poll records for the 1820's appears to have survived, we cannot chart his progress during the times when the great campaign for reform gathered to irresistible force.

Such fragmentary evidence as we possess, however, might indicate that, in common with so many people, with old age he lost something of his former interest in politics. In the first general election to be held with the new electorate set up by the terms of the Reform Bill, December 1832, his name is there but no vote was recorded. This would not have been possible at the

times of the earlier elections when, as we have seen, only those who actually voted were entered on the lists. There must now have been a special electors' register containing the name sof everyone who was eligible to vote.

We know of the existence of such registers, because two years later, in 1834, Briton appears as one of the people qualified to vote in the city elections. In these two last examples he is called "Brettingham Scurl", and the Cockey Lane houses are registered.

But the most confusing piece of evidence comes with the last reference to him. In 1835 there was another general election. The old gentleman, whatever his indifference to politics had been in recent years, now turns out to register his vote; but in a county, not a city election, for in that election he voted for two victorious Tory candidates.

The Reform Bill had not made any very striking changes to the county electorate. While leaving the forty shilling freeholder qualification alone, it now included an extra franchise for holders of long leases value £10 and short leases of £50. It is always possible that by 1835 Briton had acquired some leasehold property in Norfolk which we know nothing about. On the other hand, the double tenement near Loddon had been bought outright in 1809 for £122, which means that its annual value was far above that of the basic electoral qualification. If, then, he had been eligible to vote in county elections through ownership of this property, it is strange that no trace of his having voted in one until 1835 has yet appeared.

But, as must be obvious to the reader, this is a study of which the last word has decidedly not been spoken, and no doubt some interesting discoveries are still to be made.

PARSON WOODFORDE

I began to claim friendship with the Rev. James Woodforde during the winter of 1940. In London the "blitz" was in full swing. Reading became the great nightly pastime. Books were needed which would transport one from the present, readable

enough to entice and hold the weary wits, yet not so absorbing that one might forget one was on call. Many of us escaped with the Victorian authors into a slower, quieter, ampler world.

Then it was that a friend gave us one of the slim black volumes of Parson Woodforde's diary. An evening with it decided us to collect the set as purse would allow. We were, we found, in possession of something akin to a great pudding of wondrous mellow richness and of a flavour too subtle to describe. Eighteenth century England was in the room. We had a queer feeling of seeing what we knew and loved, Norwich and that part of Norfolk between the wooded valleys of the Wensum and the Tud, through a telescope which cheated time and admitted us direct to life there as it then was.

As for interest, the diary ranges from comments on the American War, the Napoleonic invasion scares and the "Speenhamland Policy" in poor relief, through the day-to-day doings of the neighbourhood and household to such homely remedies as a black cat's tail for a stye upon the eyelid, "as it is commonly said that the eyelid being rubbed by the tail of a black car would do it much good . . . and having a black cat, a little before dinner I made a trial of it and very soon after dinner I found my eyelid much abated of the swelling and almost free from pain . . . Any other cat's tail," he concludes with grave precision, "may have the above effect in all probability but I did my eyelid with my own black Tom cat's tail".

Yes, it certainly is a jumble. But as with any good diary, the jumble is blended by the diarist's personality and here we seem to see the even features of the rector clearly above each page. His editor calls him "that rare and beautiful bird, the typical Englishman".

And so he was, vigorous and positive, but a level-headed man of moderation; devoted to his kin, vexing though some of them could be at times; a mighty eater and drinker, especially the former; a lover of quiet sport, coursing and fishing at Lenwade Bridge especially (though once we read of a youthful game of fives in Babcary churchyard). And, perhaps surprising in a parson dwelling in remote places, he took a lively interest in the theatre. He mentions no fewer than 63 plays and gives an opinion on nearly all of them.

Throughout one sees the English veneration for established things. He would keep 30 January and annually on royal birthdays would fire his blunderbuss and "give three cheers". In the Wilkes affair we find him hotly resenting anything that looked like tampering with liberty. Socially he runs true to type, gratified at dining with squire and Mrs. Custance or the Townshends at Honingham to meet the bishop or nobility but privately confessing that "being with our equals is much more agreeable".

Tithe frolics with the farmers were again a strain for fear that anything untoward might happen. There is always a sigh of relief at their having gone off well. He was happiest with his clerical neighbours at their rotation dinners or at a comfortable dinner at the squire's when Mrs. Custance, to whom he was touchingly devoted, would show the company her curios, discuss with Woodforde's niece Nancy the latest triumphs of the "Frisseur" or play on the "sticcardo pastorale and make very soft music indeed".

We do not know if it be a particularly English virtue, or indeed a virtue at all, but were he alive today he would be a great one for curios and gadgets. We find him always fastening on anything unusual, natural or otherwise. If there were a balloon ascent in Bunn's Gardens he would generally contrive to see it. One day in Norwich he was intensely diverted by the "automaton". "It was a wax doll. A female fiture, dressed and with a trumpet in its mouth under a kind of canopy on pillars. It answered distinctly every question proposed to it and even proposed questions itself. The deception is indeed wonderfully ingenious."

Eclipses of the sun or moon are gazed at and faithfully described. Minor wonders are wheeled at intervals to the kitchen door to be inspected – a dwarf who gave a song beside the fire, a Polish woman, a "Madagasca monkey of the mongooz type", and (preserved in spirits) the body of a new-born child with "two distinct and perfect heads". (Woodforde typically enough enquires as to the subsequent condition of the mother.)

All that is part of the minute interest he had in all things clinical or curious. We noticed it in the incident of the "black Tom cat" and as we read we find he sets down, with minute and sometimes morbid accuracy, symptoms, remedies and further symptoms. His really passionate concern was, of course,

smallpox with its enormous death toll; but he took immense interest in maladies of any sort and we find that he and Nancy, the servants and the animals are visited by an endless series of minor but sometimes very painful ailments. By the end we feel there is little left to know about laudanum and bark, yellow basilicum and red precipitate ointments.

Mrs. Virginia Woolf, in *The Common Reader, Second Series (Hogarth Press, 1935)* claims to wonder why he wrote the diary, so obviously for his own eye only. An indirect reason is perhaps his one and only love affair, if such we may call it. In early days in Somerset a certain Betsy White of Shepton looms rather large and in due course he confides to us that he had "a mind to make a bold stroke". In 1771 he mooted to her the idea of marriage "when opportunity served". She, we read, "was not adverse to it". But nothing more is said and by 1775 we find her marrying a wealthy Mr. Webster from Devon. They showed themselves at Sister White's. Woodforde would not go, "though much pressed". He met them, however, out walking. "She spoke as usual to me. I said little, being shy. She has proved herself to me a mere Jilt." (The capital is his.)

Had he had a wife he might have confided in her. But then he would have confided so much less in us. Mrs. Woolf is so good on the friendship that grew up between him and his little book "When James Woodforde opened one of his neat books he entered into conversation with a second James Woodforde who was not quite the same as the reverend gentleman who visited the poor and preached in church. These two friends said much that all the world might hear but they had a few secrets that they shared with one another only. For example one Christmas when Nancy, Betsy Davey and the latter's young man seemed in conspiracy against him, it was a comfort to exclaim: 'The treatment I meet with for my civility this Christmas is to me abominable'. The second James Woodforde nodded and agreed. Again when a stranger imposed upon his hospitality it was with some triumph that he confided to his other self: 'I put him to sleep in the attic story and treated him as one who would be too free if treated kindly'."

Yes, the two became inseparable. One sees, too, how the diary style came to suit him. He had the Chaucerian hawklike eye for the telling detail. Two lines serve for a portrait: "Mr. Barnwell is

a gentleman of considerable property, much afflicted with the gout; has travelled a good deal over England and well acquainted with families." There are nephew Bill and wife: "They sport away in their secondhand flashy one-horse chaise with plated furniture.".

Also horsedrawn is Mr. due Quesne, the elderly incumbent of Honingham, "complaining much of being terribly shook about in his chaise by the badness of the roads." Woodforde attributes it not so much to the roads as to the advanced age of Mr. du Quesne who insisted on driving himself though he could not see and was too vain to wear spectacles. Lastly there is a Mrs. Goodall: "a squinting old lady, sensible but very bold and rather satyrical." Yes, we seem to know them all.

Besides these trifles there is the broad landscape bordering the river along which his life moves on its long, quiet voyage - eighteenth century England, nothing less, with glimpses of the wider world beyond. America, grim events in France, the victories of Cape St. Vincent, Copenhagen, Camperdown, the Birmingham riots of 1791, the mutiny at Spithead - all these shake him and he makes appropriate exclamations. But they do not disturb the Norfolk rooks nor interrupt the small, clear, moving panorama.

It is difficult to pick out salient features, for each reader will find what interests him most. There is the church. At the upper level we have glimpses of successive bishops of Norwich in the summer months, Woodforde once went to see Bishop Bagot to try and evade the strain of preaching in the cathedral. But the bishop blandly floored him by saying that "he was willing that the pulpit should be occupied by able and beneficed clergy and that it was rather a compliment conferred by him on those he so appointed", which left our diarist nothing more to say.

In the following year came another summons - "brought by the butcher's lad from the Bishop of Norwich" - but this time evasive tactics were successful.

Yet one would not call our diarist undutiful. Weston and the neighbouring parishes do not bear out Dean Swift's rather squalid comments of half a century before. Sunday services may not have been numerous but they were regular and provi-

sion was always made in case of absence. The Weston singers and "J[s]. Smith my Clerk" had their off-moments but these always elicited stringent comments from the rector. The unaccountability of Mr. Cotman, a curate in the later years, vexed him badly and was evidently exceptional.

Woodforde was not what we should call a systematic visitor but he knew and understood his people. His assiduity at sick visiting may have been in part sustained by his interest in symptoms. But it was souls as well as bodies that he tried to ease and one detects a steady conviction that his "poor neighbours" were entrusted by the Almighty to his care. Our general impression is that the troubles seem to lie not so much in the scandalous negligence of the clergy, for these were sensible men and dutiful enough in what was expected of them, as in the general spiritual temperature of the time, too low to combat the many difficulties or to require deeper things or more explicit shepherding.

We learn a great deal of social conditions, the laws of settlement, poor relief and compulsative marriages. (We have a grim description of one at Ringland and we share the rector's abiding hatred of them.) We meet the servants, with their curious names and their sometimes curious behaviour and we note their conditions of employment, the length of time they stay and the ease with which they are replaced. All this seems to bring to life those immense back premises and lavish kitchen gardens which so many country clergy have inherited. Like Mr. Barnwell we travel a good deal over England. There is the annual trip to the old home in Somerset, "down the Bath road in the balloon coach fairly trimming it". Fellow travellers are duly sized up and recorded. A very fat woman with a dog and many band-boxes and also a poor sickly good kind of a man went with us."

They travelled mostly through the night, for what was the use of spending nights at an inn, when even at the best one could be so "terribly bit by the buggs". The crossing of London always gave scope for seeing curiosities. The highlight there was the morning of 29 October 1795. After a night so troubled with the "buggs" he found himself in Whitehall hemmed in by the hostile, bawling crowd which mobbed the king on his way to open Parliament. The fate of Louis XVI across the channel

was so fresh in everybody's mind and Woodforde, like most, was greatly shocked. We rejoice to hear of the royal family at Covent Garden two nights later, when their courage was so heartily acclaimed: "God save the King played six times, everything pleasant. Thank God! They met with nothing disagreeable."

But Woodforde in Norfolk well knew what lay behind all this unrest. The soaring prices of wheat and barley reached their peak in the winter of 1800-1. We meet plenty of those worst hit and hear the rector pay his secret tribute to their patience.

If the poor existed upon what they could, on the tables of the squire and rector we notice the large consumption of (exceedingly expensive) meat compared with that of flour. When food is mentioned, the scene shifts automatically to the parsonage dining table and we see the rector waiting for his dinner. We hear Nancy and the maids dishing up and the aroma chokes all words. The food comes in and we see the pair of them getting silently to work and to appraise. At a party none of the 15 or 20 dishes escaped the ever-observant eye and the ever-ready memory records them in the evening – no mean feat. Prodigious dishes each with their attendant sauces and stuffings. Geese, turkeys, leverets, joints of all kinds. The fish has never appealed to us, the "skaite" was once remarked on as "dark" and the codling as "rather stale", for the sea is far from Weston. We should prefer a helping of a "prodigious fine pike with a pudding in his belly" and afterwards a little of Mrs. Custance's sugared landscape, "coloured like what it represented".

So we read on and on, seeing it all "as one sees the bottom of a stream through clear water", far enough from our world to transport us and yet so strangely real. Mrs. Woolf remarks how Nancy seems at times to emerge from the tank of time and pluck us by the arm. "You," she seems to say, "you may think it a privilege to have been born in the eighteenth century because one called cowslips pagles and rode in a curricle . . . but you are utterly wrong . . . I can assure you my life was often intolerably dull. I did not laugh at the things which make you laugh. It did not amuse me when my uncle dreamt of a hat or saw bubbles in the beer and said that it meant a death in the family. I thought so too.".

How one suffered when Johnny Reeve, the farrier, drew one's teeth and made "a shocking bad hand of it, being old and past his work". Then there is the smallpox. Life's expectation was not long. And there was the savage winter of 1794-5 with poor. hungry people frozen to death upon the roads. Even in the parsonage and in spite of fires the thermometer ("though in my study") stood pretty low. Water froze in basins by the kitchen fire and one scarcely dare to go upstairs. It was real and raw enough and not always so funny as it sometimes seems today.

But still we may go on looking through this telescope. We may go to Weston today. The parsonage has been rebuilt. Weston House is gone. Costessey *Falcon*, so familiar to the diarist on the way from Norwich, is now almost joined up to pink suburbia and Easton *Dog* beside the turnpike stolidly regards the heavy traffic between Norwich and the Midlands. Never has there been such a change in an equal period of time.

But the essentials remain. The Wensum still flows under Lenwade Bridge. Still there are most of the fields where Ben Leggatt was "very busy in sowing Barley". And in the church is a discreet white tablet: "Sacred to the Memory of the Revd. Jas. Woodforde, 29 years Rector of this Parish.".

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ed. note. An attentive reader will not fail to observe some errors here. As their correction must have involved some re-working of the text here and there, I decided to print the essay as it stands. For the same reason the quotations taken from the O.U.P. edition have been, exceptionally, retained. Quite apart from its own virtues of presentation, the essay has now acquired a certain "period" charm, reminding us of just how far we have come in the study of Woodforde and the establishment of an accurate and reliable diary text.

Roy Porter and Dorothy Porter: In Sickness and in Health – the British Experience 1650-1850. Fourth Estate Ltd. (1988).

This is a very interesting book and interesting in a particular way. Although health and its opposite, disease, are the basic factors of existence, and are always present to remind us of the boundaries and limitations inherent to the human condition, this all-important subject has so far received little attention from historians. There are, of course, books about epidemics and plagues. There are books about the lives and achievements of great doctors; and a few outstanding patients – Henry VIII, Napoleon, Goethe – have had their personalities analysed through a study of their physical ills. But here is an outstanding book, which deals with "the everyday history of medicine", and the ordinary person's experience of health and illness. The authors indeed mention some predecessors in this field; but their names are not at all well-known, and they have produced articles rather than books. On the scale our authors have worked, this is a pioneering venture, and one of the greatest importance.

The raw material of such a study must obviously be letters, diaries, commonplace books and other examples of private writing. These make up such a very extensive archive that the authors confess they have consulted only a fraction of the whole, and state that their work is "impressionistic". It is, however, solidly based on a great deal of first-hand material from the two centuries discussed. After an introduction setting out the scope of the work, the book divides into two main sections, "Health" and "Sickness", with a final section entitled "Suffering and the Self".

Of course, then as now, some people were more curious or apprehensive about their health than were others. In the circle in which Mrs. Thrale moved there was a gentleman, Mr. Sewell, whose sole claim to notice was that he was a "valetudinarian" – one who is preoccupied with the state of his own health. Boswell and a friend, writing a series of essays for publication, called it "The Hypochondriack". But health was constantly talked and written about. Samuel Johnson, in 1782, at a time when he did not have much longer to live, wrote

wistfully that "Health is the basis of all happiness this world gives", a sentiment echoed humorously but with an inner seriousness by Keats, parodying *Henry IV*: "Banish money - Banish sofas - Banish wine - Banish music - but right Jack Health - Honest Jack Health, true Jack Health - banish Health and banish all the world".

In 1767 the *Gentleman's Magazine* - and this example taken by the authors is just one of hundreds of similar poetical effusions - published an ODE TO HEALTH, which was "sent in by a grateful convalescent". It begins like this:

> Hail rosy Health, celestial, blossoming Fair,
> Offspring of Temperance, Virtue's soberest child . . .

And so on. The lines espress a commonplace of the time, a point made forcibly by the many published handbooks of home medicine, that good health depended upon a wise condust of life. The Georgians were great advocates of moderation, and doing nothing to extremes. By living rationally one could lay the foundations of a strong "Constitution". This meant in general what we mean when we talk about resistance to disease processes, but there was more to it than that. The term really meant a positive state of health. When, as our authors say, Gibbon wrote of one of his friends: "His Constitution is broke up", this was "tantamount to a death sentence".

The Porters maintain that "Health remained a prized commodity in Georgian England". There was the same paradox here, as there is in all human affairs:

> Of course, perceptions of dirt and pollution are utterly culture-bound, as are the principles of hygiene; and the Georgians were habituated to facets of filth that seem intolerable now - bed-bugs, hair nits, chamber-pots slopping over in the sideboard. Plumbed-in baths remained almost exotic, and basic aspirations low: Samuel Johnson was not ashamed to be no lover of clean linen.

All the same, we have a good deal of evidence to show that there was a growing tendency among the Georgians to equate cleanliness with good health, and it is in this period that it was first called "next to godliness". Medical theory, still wedded to the notion that fume and bad smells were a major source of

disease, held that dirt produced the noxious vapours which brought about infection, and ". . . individuals developed elaborate cleaning and grooming rituals". William Cowper, unable to obtain toothbrushes in rural Buckinghamshire, sent to London for them. (But Woodforde never once mentions that, to us, absolutely indispensible article of dental hygiene.)

Some of the people who could afford the expense travelled widely for the benefit of their health. The idea that "a change of air" was salutary, even if it amounted to a trip of no more than a few miles, was common. Woodforde believed this. Others put themselves through "regular courses of self-physicking - diet-drinks, vomits, purges, blisters, cordials, all frequently attended with unpleasant side-effects". All this was done "to strengthen the constitution and corroborate health", and is treated in the book, with a wealth of apposite quotation.

However, it cannot really be said that the people of the Georgian era attained any very exalted standard of health. The authors say of Woodforde that throughout the length of time represented by the diary, more often than not "someone in his circle was unwell". This is something of an exaggeration, but it cannot be denied that ailments and the treatment of them do play a prominent role in the diary.

In spite of all that might be said in praise of the "early modern" period, and when we have detailed all the real or supposed causes of ill-health and premature death in our era, from cigarette-smoking and road accidents to atmospheric pollution, the chemical adulteration of food and contamination of our water supplies, and not forgetting the "stress" of contemporary life that is said to be so bad for us - the fact remains that we are much healthier than our ancestors. The mean life-expectation in Woodforde's time varied according to social class; but all the figures are very much lower than ours. A glance at any parish register is enough to reveal the huge infantile mortality, from which even the wealthy were not exempt. Smallpox, tuberculosis, and the many "fevers", which the doctors of the time had not yet learned to distinguish one from another, took their heavy toll of children and young adults. The surgery which saves many lives in our time was still

unthought of. Brother Heighes probably had an enlarged prostate. Left without treatment, for none was possible, it eventually killed him. Girls who married, say, at 20 and then had a baby almost every year looked by the time they reached 30 like old women – that is, if they managed to survive what was, the authors make clear, the dreadful business of childbirth.

The second section of the book, then, deals effectively with all that could go wrong, the ills that flesh is heir to, and how people of the time coped with them.

Some invalids, indeed, were always conscious that their health was bad. Pope, who appears to have suffered from a spinal abnormality, which deformed him, and no doubt had other things wrong with him as well, wrote of "This long disease, my life". Tobias Smollett, a doctor himself, and tubercular (and how amazed he would be at the way we rave about Georgian Bath; to him it was a horrible place, and the famous baths, popular resort of wealthy invalids or hypochondriacs, effective only in ensuring that sick people exchanged diseases with one another) wrote to another physician in 1762: "I am now so thin you would hardly know me. My face is shriveled up by the asthma like an ill-dried pippin, and my legs are as thin at the ankle as at the calf". More lyrical was the way the Rev. William Jones expressed himself, on a voyage to the West Indies: "My poor Tabernacle is racked with pain. My flesh and bones are entirely a prey to Disorder . . . Bodily Pains and Lowness of Spirits have filled up most of this day".

We also find people, in addition to describing more or less graphically their pains and feeling of malaise, pondering, sometimes worrying, about the nature of disease. Why did some get ill while others remained healthy? At the onset of an illness, the sufferer was likely to be frightened by the unknown. The doctors were bombarded with questions from anxious patients and their families, which was unlucky for them, as those whose advice they sought often knew as little about the disease as the patient himself. Yet it was comforting to a sick person if his physician could pinpoint a specific complaint, even if some of the names sound odd to us today. The authors mention "Pelham sore throat", current just after the Prime Minister's two sons had died of what was "presumably some virulent form of diphtheria". In the East Midlands in 1781 a

mysterious disease appeared called "Chinese cough . . . The term must have conveyed some special exotic menace".

Among the articulate and the speculative, there was much discussion about the nature of disease. Was it "an outside, invasive being, or was it generated within the body itself?". Was it to be counted as an evil, an enemy to be opposed, or did it represent the body's own attempt to surmount the infection? Here they were at least able to formulate the notion of protective agents, "anti-bodies" as we call them, that provided the body's defences. Again, why did some diseases confer immunity against further attacks, while others did not? We remember how puzzled Woodforde became, when he heard that a person had gone down with smallpox although he knew him to have been protected by inoculation. And were apparent symptoms, the coughing and sneezing that announced a cold, the feverishness, the pain, all that a disease consisted of, or were they signs of a more deep-seated "constitutional disorder"?

And how did the fact of illness fit in with the beneficent Providence in which most people clearly believed? The authors have much to say about the religious connotations of illness. The pious accepted it as a manifestation of God's will. As they say: "the Christian assent to suffering was filtered through theodicies rationalizing the evils of pain, suffering, and death as apparent only". I remember seeing in Peterborough cathedral a monument to a lady who, so the inscription read, was granted the boon of a *long* illness; and of course stories of particularly pious deathbeds abound in the literature and the familiar letters of the time.

There was also a feeling that it was wrong to cling on to life when it was time to leave it. As Johnson put it:

> The faith which, panting for some happier seat,
> counts death kind Nature's signal to retreat.

And some dying patients did in fact see things that way. Pope's friend Dr. Arbuthnot, aged 67 (of course that would have been regarded much more as old age than at present) wrote:

> A Recovery in my Case, and at my Age is impossible; The kindest Wish of my Friends is Euthanasia [in the sense of an easy death]. Living or dying, I shall always be Your faithful Friend.

The authors say with regret that considerations of space have prevented them from giving more studies of individual patients and their ways of looking on and coping with illness. One such, however, is devoted to Woodforde, who is mentioned many times in the course of the book, and here given a more extended treatment.

They see Woodforde as essentially a healthy man. The diaries "project the image of a happy broad-bottomed Georgian, following what, generously interpreted, may be called a moderate regime of life. He ate with relish, never drank himself under the table, and had no other vices that endangered his health. Indeed, he enjoyed a good measure of wellness, which perfectly complemented his generally optimistic, easy-going Anglicanism and his unruffled sense of his churchman's place as a man of the world, quiet hero of a bucolic idyll".

They select two sets of extended passages from the diary. The first is when the Parson's face swelled in February 1793, but went down in a few days. He clearly connected this with the gout in his "great Toe" which he was suffering from at the same time.

Eighteen months later, in September 1794, he had a sore on his right ankle. He put on it one of his favourite stand-bys, a "Family Plaister". (Our authors call it "a plaster made up to a family recipe", but it was a generic name, and not one confined to the Parson's own family.) He covered it with a bandage which he left on too long. The authors make the interesting point that "in those days, minor infections, abrasions and ulcers seem to have been slow to heal" - and no wonder, the age lacking the antiseptic bandages and antibiotic lotions and ointments common in our time. In Woodforde's present case the plaster had infected the wound. As he wrote, it had "corroded" the sore. After one very painful night he sent for Johnny Reeves at the *Hart*, "who practices something in the doctoring Way". (He was the son of the local blacksmith who had made such heavy weather about extracting Woodforde's aching tooth in 1776.) He provided some "Yellow Basilicum Ointment", recommended by the famous Dr. Buchan. This, by the way, is one of only two references in the diary to that esteemed medical writer, and he does not appear to have kept a copy of his best-selling *Domestic Medicine; or, the Family Physician* in the home.

Woodforde's apprehension about this trouble stemmed from two beliefs: that it was impossible to have two diseases, one always driving out the other, and, a variant of the old belief about "flying gout", that diseases moved around in the body and the infection could go from his ankle to some vital part. However, the ointment seemed at first to have done the trick. For some three weeks he makes no mention of his ankle at all, while continuing to live his usual active life.

Then, on 16 October, it was panic stations all round. "Sent Ben early this morning to Mattishall for M^{r}. Thorne to call on me the first opportunity". The doctor was at the Parsonage by noon. First reassuring his now jittery patient by telling him there was "no inflammation", he took off the poultice which had been applied by his order a few hours before, "wiped the part affected with some dry Lint; then put into it some dry Lint and on that something like Turner's Cerat on Linen, and then bound it quite tight with a Bandage". The patient was also instructed not to "eat any Salt Meat nor drink any Wine & but little Malt Liquor". He was recommended to rest his leg on a stool in the daytime. The physician promised to send some "red precipitate" and more of the Turner's Cerate. At night the servant returned with these things and "some Calomel Pills, to take 4. every Night and to begin to night".

There were, however, limits to the extent to which Woodforde was willing to follow the doctor's precepts. He rejected the pills outright: "... I would not take them to Night nor indeed any of them at any Time –", and added next day: "And if I had taken the two mercurial Pills, they would have half if not quite killed me, had I taken them last Night". He was certainly no stranger to strong purgatives, but these he clearly considered too much of a good thing. After following out the physician's dietary plan only to the extent of refusing a helping of goose at one meal, he abandoned it. "Living to [sic] low wont at all agree with my gouty Constitution and past fifty-four Years of Age".

The rest of the story may be read in the diary. The red precipitate turned out to be terribly irritating, and one night gave him agonising pain: ". . . it was like a Dog almost gnawing it". Thorne switched him back on to the Basilicum ointment, with only a "very small matter" of the powdered form of the precipitate. After that things got better and the condition gradually

improved, although there were still ups and downs. It was November before Woodforde ceased to write about his ankle, and the condition had taken two months to clear up.

Woodforde, the authors say, had a pragmatic approach to illness. He felt that he knew enough about medicine to treat himself with home-made remedies. When these appeared to be inadequate he was ready to call on professional advice which, however, he did not always take. They perhaps rather exaggerate his good state of health. In the autumn of 1794 he was less than three years away from the very serious illness which caused his health to break down permanently, and already some premonitory symptoms of his later troubles had appeared.

The book ends with a short summary in which its findings are recapitulated. The authors also point out that the evidence they have used was drawn from the educated, articulate people who wrote diaries and letters to describe their physical state. We know virtually nothing in this respect about the poor who, it would be logical to suppose, were more often ill and suffered more serious disorders than their betters, and at the same time received nothing like the same amount of treatment, so that they must often have been left either to recover from their illnesses or to die of them.

The book is well and lucidly written, with no more than an occasional lapse into the jargon of historiographers and medical writers. Everyone interested in eighteenth century life on one hand, and questions of health and disease on the other, should not fail to read it. Parson Woodforde is well represented in its pages.

Each Returning Day – The Pleasure of Diaries. Selected by Ronald Blythe. Viking Press (1989)

I suppose the continuing vogue for this particular type of book, which may be classified as the anthology of diaries and diarists, tells us something about the tastes and preferences of the book-buying, or at least book-fancying, public of today in this country. Just as the technique of television plays has

evolved out of the belief that the attention of the audience cannot be sustained for half a minute or so, without two or more story-lines which can be switched from one to another, so the popularity of these books must indicate a readership almost entirely lacking the power of concentration. Pick one of them up, and you are at once told to skip and browse. It is all you can do; since this is a genre in which continuity cannot exist.

Anyone who undertakes to publish a book of selections from a single diary is in effect saying to his prospective readers: I have extracted everything that is worth survival. The rest may be left to disappear into oblivion. Then along comes the anthologist of diaries, and guts an already truncated text in order to highlight a few passages which, because they have been ripped so arbitrarily from their context, always seem to be circulating in a void. This is not at all the same thing as making an anthology of poems, which can be grouped, by chronology or subject or some other criterion, to show lines of development. A diary on the other hand represents a single entity, each entry being a link in a chain, part of a long, continuous process. Slice it up for the sake of extracting a few exciting or dramatic lines, and the effect is rather like that of taking a living butterfly in all its beauty of movement and colour, and converting it into a dead specimen pinned on a board.

It may be said for Mr. Blythe that he is a most conscientious anthologist. He has cast his net far wider than most practitioners of the trade. *Each Returning Day* is a large book. Here are represented no fewer than 60 diarists. They come from all walks of life and lived at all times from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. There are very famous diarists, Pepys and Evelyn, Kilvert and Woodforde, together with some very obscure figures, and one or two whom I had never heard of, although doubtless our Chairman will know them all. There is the utmost variety here, from the boy-king Edward VI to Sturt the wheelwright and Thomas Turner the Sussex grocer.

In an attempt to reduce such diversity to a kind of order, Mr. Blythe has classified his diarists. His categories throw some light upon his manner of approach to the problem, so here they are: (1) *The Diarist as Eye-Witness*: (2) *The Diarist in Love*: (3) *The Diarist and the Difficult Marriage*: (4) *The Diarist in the Village* (Woodforde is in this section): (5) *The Diarist as*

Naturalist: (6) *The Sick Diarist*: (7) *The Diarist in the Shop*: (8) *The Diarist at War*: (9) *The Diarist as Artist*: (10) *The Diarist and Royalty*: (11) *The Diarist* en route: (12) *The Diarist in Despair*: (13) *The Diarist and Death.*

It must be obvious enough that one could rearrange these pigeon-holed examples practically at will. Some of the subjects could clearly go into more than one category, and it is arguable that all of them could fit easily into the first column, for what is any diarist but the eye-witness of his own life? Some of the diarists make rather uneasy bedfellows. Woodforde is bracketed with Kilvert, which is fair enough; but also with Thomas Hardy, a very absurd juxtaposition. The famous novelist, who was so fond of hobnobbing with titled women in his later years and keeping very quiet about his rural backbround and the labouring families he was related to, would not have been at all pleased to be called the diarist of a village. The fourth member of the group, previously unknown to me, is a Cornelius Stovein, a nineteenth century farmer and lay reader. I can see no kind of relationship, as diarists, between him and any of the others in his column. A much better choice would surely have been Skinner, Holland or Armstrong, but none of these gets a mention anywhere.

Mr. Blythe's method is to give each of his diarists their own special introduction, which is sometimes more interesting than the quotations which follow. Because of this, he probably felt it advisable to keep the general introduction short. But this is a pity, for it is here that he deals with the basic question confronting everyone who writes about diarists - what made them do so? Mr. Blythe propounds that question but does not really supply any satisfactory answers, and soon falls back on quoting the opinions of one or two diarists about their motives. In a book so full of quotations, we could have done without these.

The great weakness of the whole collection is that everything is taken from printed sources, and most from books of selections, many of which are very badly edited. The preconceptions of one editor or another tend to be substituted for the reality of what the diarist wrote.

This comes out with illuminating clarity in the prefatory remarks by which Woodforde is introduced to the reader:

> The emphasis on eating is so disproportionate to that placed on anything else that he has acquired a reputation for gluttony.

Mr. Blythe could not possibly have written that remarkable sentence if he had known of the Society's Ansford volumes, the early diary in which food is scarcely ever mentioned. It is true, of course, that even the O.U.P. edition, if read carefully enough, would show that Woodforde never mentioned even dinner, the chief meal of the day, as a daily event until 1791, by which time he had been writing the diary for over thirty years; and he has very little to say at any time about the other meals of the day. Of course Mr. Blythe was here going by the general impression of the Beresford edition, which does in retrospect appear to have a lot in it about food because the editor singled that kind of entry out and gave it prominence.

In the same way, taking two separate ideas and linking them together in a wholly factitious cause and effect relationship, he says that Woodforde and Nancy were *often* ill from over-eating. It is worth noticing, apropos of this, that the Porters see him as essentially a healthy man.

Mr. Blythe's selections do make a reasonably good introduction to Woodforde, and he does not overwork the food-theme in his choice of entries. They tend rather to stress the agrarian side of Woodforde's life, but there are accounts of church activities and small gifts to poor people, as well as gin bought surreptitiously from the smuggler and all those slaughtered toads, a most un-characteristic Woodforde passage. If readers are tempted by these selections to explore Woodforde more fully, so much the better.

I remember a talk I had once with a colleague on one of the examination boards I worked for. He had been to see a film about the English Civil War. I forget the title, but it was a very famous film in its day and starred Alec Guinness, no less, as Charles I. My acquaintance told me that it was excellently directed and acted, and he could have derived great pleasure from taking it as a rollicking adventure story – if only he had not been a teacher and knew the period, which knowledge showed him all the historical flaws in the production.

I feel much the same about *Each Returning Day.* If I had never had any acquaintance with Woodforde's diary beyond that of

the casual reader, I should have been quite prepared to accept Mr. Blythe's view for the real one. It is the old story of: *When ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.* Having worked on the diary for so many years, I do know that much of what is most historically valuable in it is of the kind that inevitably gets omitted from all the selections.

Concerning many of the other diarists featured in Mr. Blythe's book, with whom I was little or not at all familiar, I did find that his selected passages were by no means devoid of interest. I still feel, however, that *Each Returning Day* is to be enjoyed as a bedside book, by one who reads while half asleep and drops off before he reaches the end of the page.

COLEMAN REVISITED

In view of recent discussion about the advisability of reprinting some early Journal articles concerning members of Woodforde's circle, in preference to new work on themes perhaps farther away from the diarist's life and surroundings, I have been reading through some of the pieces which might be considered qualified to reappear.

Certainly the publication of Mrs. Hill's essay on the Custance family, especially in its corrected and augmented form in which it has been presented to our present readership, was entirely justified. No-one, I think, would seriously quarrel with the Committee's decision to reprint it.

But work of such distinction does not turn up every day. *Poor Will Coleman*! was published in the same year as the Hill article, 1970 (Journal III, 2), but is far from sharing its merits. If there were a degree course in "Woodforde Studies" put on at an University (and why should thee not be such, rather than some of the ridiculous subjects at present on offer?), and I were an examiner in that Faculty, I would give it a C−, and in doing so count myself as generous. The trouble with many of these very early pieces is, of course, that they were written out of a partial and inadequate investigation of the sources. I had combed the registers of Ansford and Cary, and was the first to discover Will's belated marriage, in 1795, and the very large family he

produced. But I had so far done little intensive work on the m.s. diary, still necessary as the Society had yet to embark on its publication of the whole *Ansford Diary*. The research is adequate, apart from one enormous, whopping error in which one person is mistaken for another, and the dates and factual detail are correct. The long sequence of Coleman's misdeeds at the Parsonage is detailed; although I see I have missed out that dramatic occasion "in Kitchen", when fisticuffs flew about and he came to blows with the head maid, Elizabeth Claxton – and no doubt had the worst of the encounter. The style is not much to write home about. It is mainly impressionistic, and at one point drops into sub-Virginia Woolf, when I have Coleman gulping his pint of home-brewed at Ansford Inn amid fuzzy speculations about the various reasons why his life had gone wrong. This represents the sort of error which introspective modern people so easily fall into. To go rummaging into the depths of one's own past, even to the extent only of lamenting the waste of opportunities, requires on the one hand a certain degree of mental training and, on the other, sufficient leisure for unhurried contemplation. I believe that the labouring men of Woodforde's time lived far nearer to the basic animal level than we do, and that they would quickly banish from their memory everything that was not germane to and part of the instinct to "keep base life afoot", as Lear said.

But the worst fault in my old Coleman piece is not so much that it asks the wrong questions as that it fails to ask the right ones.

For people are not simply isolated individuals, like "Peter the Wild Boy", who is supposed to have emerged from the woods without ancestry, knowledge of human speech or experience of human contacts. (He was a contemporary of our Parson, too!) They fit into a social framework and pattern. They are part of a historical process. They cannot really be understood except by reference to their families, friends, jobs and surroundings.

If we look at Will Coleman again, and in this light, some interesting facts appear. That he was the only one of the servants in Woodforde's Norfolk period who came from the West country, is no doubt pure accident. But he was also the only one who is known to have originated from the poorest labourer class. In the case of one or two others, the evidence is doubtful;

but by far the majority came from the small farmer (Ben Leggett) or tradesman (Brettingham Scurll, Betty Dade) class.

But historically the most important discovery we can make by a careful reading of the parts of the diary in which Coleman's kinsfolk appear, is the very close relationship between them and the Woodfordes. One might almost call it a kind of village patronage, in which one side features as benefactor and employer and the other as the recipient of charity and work.

This relationship seems to have begun with Will's grandmother, invariably referred to by the diarist as "poor old Alice Stacey", one of the most regular objects of the diarist's charity. She trots about on all kinds of errands; she helps out with the Parsonage washing. Her name is on the list of poor people to be presented with a Christmas gift, and she attends the Christmas dinner in the years when that function is held. When Mr. Woodforde senior went to Bath in the winter of 1768 and took his maid with him, Alice looked after the house, with the manservant William Corpe, until their return. When the old rector died, she and her daughter were among the six women "Wakers" who sat up all night with his body before the day of his funeral.

She was born Alice Coles, of Ansford. At the age of 27 she married Wiliam Stacy, and her daughter Mary was born just over a year after the marriage. Some eight months later her husband died. Mary grew up to marry Edward Coleman, of Castle Cary, and they were the parents of Will Coleman. Alice was buried at Ansford, where she had spent a long lifetime of continuous poverty.*

Will, the grandson, was the baptised at Cary in January 1755. He is mentioned in the diary first on 15 June 1765, when the last line of the day's entry reads: Gave a little Boy of Ned Coleman's - 0 - 0 - 1". This is almost certainly Will. A brother,

* [bap. 1703] July: 28: Alice y^{e} Daughter of W^{m}. & Edith Coles: bapt.
[mar. 1730] William Stacy & Alice Coles both of Almsford ... June 6
[bap. 1731] Mary D^{r}. of William & Alice Stacy July 6 bap.
[bur. 1731/2] William Stacy ... Feb: 6
[mar. 1754] Edward Coleman of Ca: Cary & Mary Stacy of this Parish ... Feb: 20
[bur. 1785] Alice Stacy Aged 82 Years - April 23rd -

- Ansford Register

named John, had been born, but is otherwise unmentioned anywhere, and he presumably died in infancy. Six months later, now aged just 11, Will was already doing the kind of small jobs often given by Woodforde to members of his family. On 20 June 1766: "For half a Peck of Black Oats for my Fowls - p^{d}. 0 - 0 - 6 - had from Ansford Inn - I gave little Will Coleman for fetching them - 0 - 0 - 2". - *Ansford Diary III, 20/1/1766.* Again, a few months later: "I gave little Will: Coleman this Evening for 2 Days work - 1 - 0". *Ibid., 2/7/1766.*

On 10 August 1771, after the death of his father and his move to the Parsonage, the diarist noted: "I took little Will: Coleman to be with me this morning". His wages were to be one shilling a week. In the corresponding entry in his special servants' account he repeats this, giving the annual total of £2. 12. 0, and adds "& Cloaths". This was the first personal manservant he had.

On 18 April 1772 he recorded:

> Whilst my Boy (Will^{m}. Coleman) was waiting behind my Chair at Dinner, he fell down in a fainting fit, but he soon recovered again - I gave him some Brandy immed= =iately after, & in the Evening gave him some Daffy -

- that is, the famous "Elixir", made up at home, from which no-one in that household could have long escaped swallowing. In June on a visit to Stourhead gardens Will strained his foot while dismounting from his employer's horse, "& could not stand upon it" -. He may have been clumsy and "accident prone", like his colleague William Corpe, who certainly suffered a series of spectacular misadventures while in service.

In June 1773 he was an attendant at Aunt Anne's funeral and was given "a p^{r}. of Gloves", along with the sexton and the carpenter, Roger Coles, who had no doubt made the coffin and was almost certainly a relation of Will. In September the domestic was sent back to Shepton Mallet with Betsy White, after she had been visiting the Ansford Whites, "to see her safe home". This of course was still some months before the romantic night when Betsy "seemed not averse ... at all" to the Parson's cautious talk about possible matrimony.

Early in 1774 Woodforde handed over the tenancy of Ansford Parsonage to his brother-in-law Mr. Pou nsett. A memoran-

dum which he wrote into his accounts ledger reads:

- Lady Day - 1774 - left of Housekeeping at Ansford -
- dismissed my Servants & went to College —

They were not, however dismissed in the sense of losing their jobs, but stayed on at the Parsonage with Pounsett paying their wages. Will Coleman accompanied his master on most of the journeys the diarist made about this time between Oxford and his birthplace.

Another phase in the servant's life opened when, on 9 May 1776, riding the recently purchased "Portmanteau horse", Will Coleman started with the Parson and his nephew on the long horseback journey to Norfolk. Just before setting off, Woodforde gave Will's father Ned, no doubt at the Parsonage seeing his son off, a shilling.

Will was now 21, and his name is first in a list of Norfolk servants, at a wage of four guineas. His clothes are still being paid for. To be fixed up in a steady, permanent job so early in his life was a stroke of good fortune. Servants' places with the families of professional men were rarely, as has been pointed out, given to people in his social class. Again, Woodforde never bothered to train his servants, and those of the Norfolk period all had to have previous experience. Will Coleman had somehow managed to pick up the necessary skills during his time at Ansford Parsonage. He was also the only servant to be employed both as a boy and an adult, whereas the later "skip-jacks" were generally fired after serving two years.

Strangely little attention has been given by historiographers to the servants of Georgian Britain, and the one distinctive modern book to be written on the subject is American. Yet they held a vital place in the domestic economy of the time. Practically without labour-saving devices of any kind, people had only the choice between doing hard manual work themselves, and paying others to do it for them. The wealthy, leisured, elegant members of the upper classes regarded themselves as much too delicately constituted to endure physical strain or hardship of any kind. This was notably and absolutely true of women, but to a certain degree of men also.

Servants also counted as a status symbol, a sign of evident prosperity and well-being. Generations of satirists poured

ridicule on the hosts of bewigged and bepowdered "flunkeys", with their gold sticks and gorgeous liveries; but huge numbers of them were employed all the same. Well-trained servants were also indicative of sound management, and in Goldsmith's comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* Mr. Hardcastle's young men taken out of the farmyard and hastily drafted into domestic duties were there to be laughed at.

To revert to Coleman, it must be obvious that the only life he could have expected in Cary or Ansford was that of a farm labourer. As it was, he was given his food, clothing and accommodation, all infinitely better than could have been provided out of a labourer's wages, and at least in the years when the Parson was on the move a lot, he had the chance to travel, to see interesting places such as Bath, Winchester and Oxford.

And when we come to look at how wantonly he threw it all away, we come up against an essential manner of dealing with domestic problems which is diametrically opposite to that which we hold today. It is worth while looking at this.

Woodforde hated what we call "confrontation", and for a long time after he had become convinced that Coleman would have to go, he stayed on. Once he had made up his mind, but Nancy interceded for the servant.

The woeful story of his misadventures and shortcomings is all in the printed diary, so we need only recapitulate here. He drank, and when intoxicated was likely to be "saucy" and abusive; he was noisy and quarrelsome; he was unreliable and sometimes went missing when his presence was expected. Let him pass the evening away from the house and sometimes he stayed out all night.

Yet the heart of the matter is this - once the Parson really decided to get rid of him, Coleman reached the point of no return and, as a servant, was done for. No-one would ever appoint him in that kind of job without a "character", a previous employer's reference. And Woodforde could not, as an honest man, give one that was of any value at all.

And it is noticeable that, once the Parson had nerved himself to dismiss him, Coleman quickly lost all his self-assurance and became frightened. Woodforde and Nancy were his lifelines to the old familiar world, and without them he was lost

and helpless among strangers.

In the end Woodforde, who did not want to see harm come to him and may have been afraid that, left to himself, he would sink into vagrancy or crime, helped him to get back to Somerset. He stayed in the Cary district for the rest of his life.

He kept in touch with various members of the Woodforde family, but it is clear that he was never more than an odd-job man and casual labourer. His marriage at the age of 40 to Jane Biggon, member of a low-life Cary family, and the large brood of children he proceeded to father over the next years, may be seen as the outcome of a disorganised life, since it does not seem remotely possible that he could have ever earned anything like enough to maintain them. He and his like were an object-lesson to the Malthusians in their attacks on the effects of the Poor Law, which must have borne the brunt of looking after his large family.

He died in 1832, two years after Nancy Woodforde; with whom he had at least one experience in common. They had both been, as it were, exiles in a distant place, and found their way back home. With Will Coleman the wheel came full circle, since he ended as he had begun, in poverty.

NOTES & QUERIES

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

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

Charles Morris married in 1685. His wife was the third daughter and co-heir of Sir Edmund Bacon, the fourth baronet of Redgrave, Suffolk. Charles was buried at Loddington 25

March 1710 and Susannah died on 28 March 1717 and was also buried at Loddington.

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

Edmund and Anne had five daughters and one son, Charles. Charles must be the Mr. Morris of the diary. His descendant Charles Henry Morris sold the Hall estate.

Loddington Hall is now occupied by Stan Lusby's daughter's family.

– from the Very Rev. J. C. Hughes
former vicar of Great Easton,
Market Harborough, Leics.

"Untrue to call Woodforde a portly parson"

"Your article of 29 January regarding forthcoming celebrations in honour of Parson Woodforde's 250th birthday anniversary states: ". . . the rotund parson moved to the village in 1774 . . ."

Although he was given the living of Weston Longville in that year, he did not actually arrive there until May, 1776.

It is, however, the use of the word "rotund" with which I really wish to take issue. What evidence do you have?

Woodforde certainly describes in detail every item of food on the table on many occasions but, as was the custom of the day, would only have partaken of the particular item nearest to him.

There are stronger arguments to support the claim that he was not rotund. On 12 April 1775 he spent some time with the Bishop of Norwich, receiving his letters of Institution, and he writes "the Bishop of Norwich is a short, fat man". I submit that if Party A calls Party B short and fat, then Party A is almost certainly neither short nor fat.

I would also refer you to the portrait of the parson hanging in Weston Longville church, painted by his nephew, Samuel Woodforde (later to become a Royal Academician). Although not a full-length portrait, it does not suggest anything other than a very average build.

As the events are part of a promotional move by the Norwich Area Tourism Agency, one would hope that such a body would concern itself with accurate information rather than the perpetuation of popular myth. (Heaven knows what they will do with poor old Nelson.)

As you say, the menus are twentieth century interpretations of late eighteenth century fare, and one wonders what would be the response to the real article. Anybody for a second helping of starling pie, hashed calf's head, or roast cow's udder?"

– Frank Pond

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