

THE  
SYDNEY SMITH  
ASSOCIATION



*NEWSLETTER*

Issue 5

March 2000



## *The Sydney Smith Association*

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## THE SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION

### NEWSLETTER

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### *Coming Events and other Business*

**Sunday 14th May 2000**

#### **Woodford Church**

The Right Revd Lord Runcie, one of the Association's patrons, has kindly agreed to unveil a plaque in honour of Sydney Smith at Woodford Church, where Sydney was baptised in 1771. The short ceremony will take place during the normal morning service which starts at 10.00am. There will be coffee after the service in the Church.

After coffee members and friends have been invited to join together for a buffet luncheon at Stansteadbury, Stanstead Abbots, near Ware, Herts. The house is readily accessible from Woodford by major roads and directions to find it will be given to all those accepting this generous invitation by our members Mr & Mrs Anthony Trower. (Mr Trower is a descendant of Sydney's aunt and has a collection of family portraits in his historic family home.) There will also be a chance to visit the old village church, now used for only a few services a year, which is very near the house and should be of interest to members.

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**Saturday, 23rd September 2000**

#### **AGM Edinburgh**

We shall be meeting at the Causewayside Buildings of the National Library of Scotland at 10.30am, where we will be welcomed by our Chairman Alan Bell and introduced to the Library's Assistant Keeper, Dr Iain Brown. He will give us a short talk about Edinburgh social life at the beginning of 19th century, illustrated by the Library's collection of fine original drawings by John Harden of Edinburgh interiors at the time Sydney lived in Edinburgh.

12.30 pm A room has been provisionally booked for lunch at The Vintners Rooms subject to there being 15 or more in our party.

We will also be arranging some further cultural visits for the afternoon.



At 7.00pm the AGM will be held informally in the Music Room at the New Club, 86 Princes Street. After the meeting we will dine in the Long Room which overlooks Edinburgh Castle.

### **Sunday, 24th September 2000**

At the kind invitation of the Revd John Armes, we shall join the congregation of St John's (Episcopalian) Church at the west end of Princes Street for Mattins at 11.15 am, when Sydney Smith will be particularly remembered.

Lunch is available at Pollock Halls

### **LONDON LUNCHES**

Those members who have been able to get into London have had very agreeable lunches in a private room of the Boisdale Restaurant, 15 Eccleston Street, London SW 1. After the last one it was agreed to try to meet for lunch three times a year and dates for this year have been fixed for Thursday 9th March, Wednesday 7th June and Wednesday 4th October

We thought it would add fun to the occasion if we could arrange for conversation at lunch to be general. To assist this it is proposed that one of us should propose and introduce a subject for discussion. We do not wish to be restrictive about the kind of topic that might be chosen, but we thought it might be interesting to take a current issue upon which Sydney wrote. We do not expect to reflect his views (which might indeed be very different if he were living now), but perhaps we can aspire to his searing common sense. Professor Tyrell Burgess has undertaken to start a conversation on 'The Poor in a Rich Society' at our first lunch on March 9th.

To enable conversation at lunch to flow uninterrupted, we foregather at about 12.30pm and place our orders (from a specially selected menu) by 12.45pm. People can leave when they want, paying as they go out. Naturally if you cannot stay for lunch it would be very nice to see you for a drink beforehand.

Price of lunch is based on the following concessionary arrangements:

- |   |   |        |
|---|---|--------|
| A | One or two courses                        | £19 00 |
|   | Unlimited soft beverages                  |        |
| B | Three courses                             | £23.00 |
|   | Unlimited soft beverages                  |        |
| C | One or two courses                        | £26.50 |
|   | Unlimited wine and soft drinks and coffee |        |

- |   |   |        |
|---|---|--------|
| D | Three courses                             | £29 50 |
|   | Unlimited wine and soft drinks and coffee |        |

*Prices include optional 12.5% service charge.*

We very much hope that members who are normally remote from London might find that they had occasion to be free on our lunch dates and thus able to join us.

As space is limited could you let either Mary Beaumont (Tel. 020 8318 3388) or Peter Diggle (Tel: 01653 618334 e.mail [pjdiggle@bigfoot.com](mailto:pjdiggle@bigfoot.com)) know as soon as possible.

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## **THE ASSOCIATION**

Our Association has now surged – along with the rest of the world, of course, but rather more buoyantly than some parts of it – into the first months of the new millennium. No doubt we shall see it through as well.

Our main gathering in the past year took place in the York area. More than 40 members assembled for the AGM in the handsome King's Manor in the early afternoon of 6th October 1999.

Chairman Alan Bell started by describing some recent lunch-time meetings at the Boisdale Restaurant near Victoria St. They were – he said – enjoyable occasions and there would be more of them.

Mr Bell went on to propose that our main gathering in the coming year should be in Edinburgh. The National Library of Scotland, he said, housed a lot of material about Sydney's founding of the 'Edinburgh Review', which played such a creative role in Sydney's life as a reviewer and polemicist. The proposal was warmly welcomed.

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## THE AGM

The AGM chaired by Alan Bell was held in the Huntingdon Room at Kings Manor: some 40 members attended.

The chairman announced that Professor Arnold Arthurs, Professor of Mathematics at the University of York, had taken the place of the Revd Norman Taylor who has been our Treasurer since the Association started. Major Diggle thanked Norman for his work, which Norman modestly assured us had amounted to almost nothing. He confidently expected to find himself a good deal busier in his new role as Joint Editor of this Newsletter.

The AGM continued in our decorous way, though briskly too. Major Diggle gave a summary of the Association's condition which seemed healthy in terms of finance and membership. We were solvent and some 123 members were helping by paying their annual subscriptions by bankers orders. We were able to make a donation of £750 to both Foston and Combe Florey Church Trust Funds. Our membership remains steady at around 300

There were suggestions that we might consider appointing Life Memberships and Honorary Members, but it was felt we were too small an organisation for such complications.

Alan Bell warned that he might be wanting to give up the chairmanship after five full years in office, which would be soon, as he felt that his other obligations meant he could not fulfil reliably all duties of the chairmanship. He also said that 84 people would be attending that evening's dinner at Castle Howard, - a remarkably good turn-out; he concluded the AGM by recounting Sydney's great attachment to the owners of Castle Howard in his time.

### CASTLE HOWARD

After the AGM we foregathered at Castle Howard and were hospitably welcomed in the Great Hall by our Patron and host, the Hon Simon Howard, before we moved off in file along the corridors to admire the family treasures under his personal guidance. The treasures consisted of paintings, sculptures, books, statues and many other objets d'art. Eventually we assembled in the ornate family chapel, where our Patron and host bade us welcome and said what a shame it was that it had grown too dark for us to be able to appreciate the beautiful windows designed for the chapel by Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris. After a short service including a prayer composed by Canon Derek Hall, the chaplain to Castle Howard, we were then introduced to another of the Association's Patrons, the former Archbishop of Canterbury,

the Rt Revd Lord Runcie, who was to unveil a plaque in honour of Sydney Smith. Lord Runcie's address is reprinted in full later in this Newsletter, so too is Canon Hall's prayer.

The plaque was then unveiled and we gathered round to admire it. In all gratitude it should be mentioned it is one of three based on the bas-relief bronze head in Foston Church, the recasting of which was generously financed for us by the Gemini Foundation. The Foundation provides financial help for very gifted young people to continue their education or training.

Sydney might well provide an inspiration for them, as one who was exceptionally gifted, yet, when his talents went for many years unrewarded, continued to use them and to enjoy life. The other two plaques are to go to Woodford Church, where Sydney was baptised, and to his church at Combe Florey in Somerset. It was a great pleasure to have with us Mr Richard Croucher the principal trustee of the Foundation at the evening in Castle Howard as well as Don Barker who undertook the making of the original mould.

From the chapel we proceeded to the dining room and heard a grace specially composed for the association by the Very Revd Robert Holtby. Then we dined, and talked and finally dispersed.

### PRAYER BEFORE THE UNVEILING OF THE PLAQUE IN THE CHAPEL AT CASTLE HOWARD. 6TH OCTOBER 1999

Composed by Canon Derek Hall

*Almighty God, source of the living Word, whose Holy Spirit  
inspires all that is humane;*

*We thank you for the lively wisdom we have been given  
through the life and words and wit of Sydney Smith.*

*We pray, that by the same grace given to him, we may aspire  
to the humility which frees us to laugh at ourselves.*

*This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ who spoke of mote  
and beam in the eye of the soul, so with wisdom and wit,  
striking off the fetters of slavery to pomposity and intolerance.*

*Amen*



To be in Yorkshire and to enjoy the hospitality of Castle Howard, presided over by the reigning Howard, are privileged and cheering experiences for a devotee of Sydney Smith. For it is impossible to know him truly without attending to his twenty years in Yorkshire. One of the later letters that he wrote from Combe Florey was to Lady Carlisle, who when she was Lady Morpeth received the famous letter on how to deal with her depression; 'Here are woods and fields and a fine climate but where is Castle Howard and its inhabitants?'

Of course he often made sport of his exile to Yorkshire. 'I am very pleased in these parts to see the handwriting of a dear friend. It is like the print in the sand seen by Robinson Crusoe.' Yet when Sydney was established and had remarkably designed and built his new Rectory the great 5th Earl of Carlisle made his appearance. Once the boon companion of Charles James Fox, he was Byron's guardian. Now having been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and perhaps more important, Lord Lieutenant of the East Riding, he was a noble elder statesman. It was 1815, the year of the battle of Waterloo in which his favourite son was killed, known by Byron in *Childe Harold* as 'the young, gallant Howard'. There are three portraits by Joshua Reynolds that you will have seen already here.

This rather dramatic visit in which the Earl was literally stuck in the mud since Foston was so 'off the beaten track' was the beginning of a great intimacy. Sydney was soon teasingly referring to this Castle as 'your little cottage of Hinderskelf'. He always took a genuine interest in the whole Carlisle family, no mean part of the population of Yorkshire', he said to Lady Georgiana with her 12 children.

Visits and letters passed to and fro. Sydney was given the run of the library and made good use of it even when the family was away, though he complained that Castle Howard was a lugubrious place without them. Correspondence is full of domestic and humorous exchanges, about disputes on the Bench of Magistrates, the price of coal in Malton and frequent exchanges of gifts; game, cucumbers, flowers. Sydney had an inventive practicality, unusual in someone who was such a good talker. 'Why not' he said to the Earl 'make a venison larder ten yards underground?' He had himself delighted in his creation of a universal scratching post for animals of any size. While Sydney farmed his glebe, controlling labourers by use of megaphone and telescope he also doled out medicine and let out allotments to

the poor; he was the contented family man taking his family round the farm yards and playing ridiculous games.

This is the background against which some of his best remembered contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* arose, - on boy chimney sweeps, public schools, treatment of prisoners on remand or the mentally ill, the game laws and above all, religious toleration as it referred to Ireland and Catholic Emancipation.

The trouble was, as always, half of Sydney was not to be taken seriously and the other half was, and they were delightfully mixed up together. He shocked a companion at dinner by confessing conspiratorially to her his desire to roast a Quaker. Yet in fact he was particularly sympathetic to the work they did at The Retreat and in prisons. He remarked of Elizabeth Fry, 'She is very unpopular with the clergy. Examples of active virtue disturb our repose. We long to burn her alive'. The mixture of polemic and banter as not always understood or appreciated by the clergy or local landowners. The 5th Earl did his best to protect Sydney. Later he warned him of the dangers of wit and ridicule. They may be effective but are dangerous ways to get your message across. Sydney's reaction is characteristic. He admits he has sometimes overstepped the mark. He is penitent: but when Lord Carlisle continues to press the question he made it clear, 'My opinions and the free expression of them I will surrender to no man alive, nor will I hold myself accountable to any man for the exercise of this right.' It is a perfect example of Alan Bell's perceptive remark, 'The aristocracy took him up, but never took him over.'

Sydney was even more intimate with the 6th Earl, Lord Morpeth, who succeeded in 1825, and particularly with the Lady Georgiana. Not only did he tell her 'to keep good blazing fires', quite an instruction in these echoing halls, but also in a serious sentence 'I like in you very much that you are a religious woman, because, although I have an infinite hatred and contempt for the nonsense which often passes under and disgraces the name of religion, I am very pleased when I see anyone religious for hope and comfort, not for insolence and interest.' He really had no time for evangelicals, 'We shall not trouble ourselves to point out the finer shades and nicer discriminations of this lunacy, but treat them all as one general conspiracy against common sense and rational orthodox Christianity.' But in this, as in his send-up of 'The Society for the Suppression of Vice' Sydney is once again making a serious point. The law is not primarily for the promotion of virtue but primarily for the protection of our liberties.



He was serious about game laws and warned the 6th Earl of Carlisle to be moderate in his hunting. At the same time he can write to a Tory squire about his newborn son and hope that he will lisp 'Tally-Ho' as his first words. This is not hypocrisy. It is high-spirited exuberance with pen and conversation, putting his ideas of tolerance and generosity into practice.

So many of the issues that concerned him are still alive today, from religious toleration and Ireland to prisons and the Countryside Alliance. Of course history never repeats itself but most of the protagonists in these debates would be the better for reading Sydney on the subject. There is something spacious about the evidence of Sydney's life, compared with the pamphleteering of Edinburgh and the socialising of London and the quieter years of Combe Florey. There is plenty of laughter from him in Yorkshire and at Yorkshire; people without a sense of humour lack a sense of proportion; but at the serious heart of his life he maintained to the end of his days a gratitude for his Yorkshire friends and above all for those at Castle Howard.

So we unveil this plaque on an evening of hospitality from the present Howard family which would have delighted Sydney whose combination of conviviality and sensitivity continues to baffle us all in its endless fascination.

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## MEMBERS WE MISS

We sadly have to report the deaths of two founder members of the Association

The Marquis of Lansdowne a descendant of the Whig aristocracy among whom Sydney Smith felt so much at home. His death in his 87th year is noted with sadness.

So too is that of Sir Rupert Hart-Davis aged 92. He was truly a man of letters, as publisher biographer and autobiographer, editor and anthologist and a correspondent of rare quality. We can feel that Sydney Smith was one of his many enthusiasms and well represented in the large library that occupied his long retirement in North Yorkshire.

## IRIS AND SYDNEY

John Bayley, in his moving book about his former wife, the novelist Iris Murdoch, tells how he used a quotation from Sydney Smith to try and help him keep her amused during the collapse of her mind in the later stages of Alzheimers. The book 'Iris: A Memoir of Iris Murdoch' was published by Duckworth in 1998. This is the passage:

*'...most days are in fact for her a sort of despair, although despair suggests a conscious and positive state and this is a vacancy which frightens her by its lack of dimension. She mutters 'I am a fool' or 'Why didn't I' or 'I must...' and I try to seem to explain the trouble while rapidly suggesting we must post a letter, walk round the block, go shopping in the car. Something urgent, practical, giving the illusion of sense and routine. The Reverend Sydney Smith, a benevolent clergyman of Jane Austen's time, used to urge parishioners in the grip of depression who appealed to him for help to 'take short views of human life – never further than dinner or tea'. I used to quote this to Iris, when troubles began, as if I was recommending a real policy, which could intelligibly be followed. Now I repeat it sometimes as an incantation or joke, which can raise a laugh if it is accompanied by some horsing around, a live pantomime of 'short views' being taken. It is not now intended to be rationally received, but it gets a smile anyway'.*

With reference to Sydney's letter on low spirits to Lady Georgiana, the Countess of Sandwich has posters, A3 size, in fine calligraphy, designed by her cousin.

If any member would like a copy, please write to her at:

Mapperton  
Beamminster,  
Dorset. DT8 3NR

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## 'SYNTHETICAL PROPENSITY'

In his autobiography 'A Kentish Lad' our late lamented fellow member Frank Muir recalled a moment when his close reading of Sydney Smith came to his help. It was crisis-time at London Weekend Television. Their managing director Michael Peacock had been sacked. The programme makers, Frank Muir amongst them, were up in arms and persuaded Lord Campbell of the Board of Directors to meet them:



....Lord Campbell told us that in his experience all management was the same. 'You unit heads may think that managing talented producers and performers raises special problems,' he said, 'but I have been in sugar all my life and I can assure you that the management of people in television is precisely the same as the management of sugar workers. It was clear that no bridges were going to be built with him, so we tried yet again to find out why these people had chucked Michael. Lord Campbell thought a bit. Then he turned to me and said, 'You will know what I mean, Frank, when I say that he 'lacks synthetical propensity'.

'As it happened I did know what the line meant, but milord seemed so patronizing that I remained silent. If his assumption was that the other unit heads would never have heard of the phrase it was insufferably insulting. The phrase came from a fairly well-known letter written by the Revd Sydney Smith to his co-founder of the Edinburgh Review, Francis Jeffrey. Jeffrey's literary reviews were growing increasingly crabby and vicious and Smith wrote urging him to make his criticism more constructive, and he accused Jeffrey of lacking 'synthetical propensity', i.e., the urge to build up rather than tear down(which is what the phrase means, I think. I must check with a sugar-cane cutter). Anyway, to accuse Michael Peacock of lacking ambition to build up his company and lead it forward would have been ludicrous.

From a letter from Sydney Smith to Francis Jeffrey, Spring 1804:

*I certainly, my dear Jeffrey, do protest against your increasing and unprofitable scepticism. I exhort you to restrain the violent tendency of your nature for analysis, and to cultivate synthetical propensities. What's the use of virtue? What's the use of wealth? What's the use of honour? What's a guinea but a damned yellow circle? What's a chamber-pot but an infernal hollow sphere? The whole effort of your mind is to destroy. Because others build slightly and eagerly, you employ yourself in kicking down their houses, and contract a sort of aversion for the more honourable, useful and difficult task of building well yourself.*

## COUNT-DOWN TO SYDNEY

I must begin by confessing that I have taken, in old age, to watching afternoon television. It is a way of avoiding work without (sometimes) too much tedium. I was pleasantly surprised then, towards the end of last year to hear the name of Sydney Smith come up three days running in the programme called 'Count-down'. I watch this show partly because it is a

pleasant quiz programme about words and maths problems, but chiefly because its presenter is Richard Whiteley, who I used to know. Some 20 odd years ago I was Chief Sub-Editor at ITN and the young Whiteley joined us as a trainee sub-editor. We worked alongside each other for a year or two and I found him competent and cheerful, clearly destined for better things which eventually happened.

'Count-down' uses a word-expert to enliven its proceedings and to speak for a minute or two about words and the way they can be used. The expert at the time was a stand-up comedian, Jo Brand, known for her robust and down-to-earth style of humour, and she used her slot to read one of Sydney's letters and say what a very witty and wise man he was. To my horror, Richard Whiteley rounded on her with the words 'Who is this Sydney Smith? I have never heard of him.'

Miss Brand stood her ground nobly, however, and quoted Sydney again the next afternoon and the banter resumed and then again on the third day. Hoping to keep the pot boiling I now wrote to Mr Whiteley, reminding him of our former friendship, berating him for his literary ignorance and enclosing a copy of 'Twelve Miles from a Lemon' in the hope that his ignorance might be overcome. I hope the address 'Yorkshire Television Leeds' would be enough to find him. Perhaps it wasn't, though I doubt it. Whatever the explanation I am sorry to have to report that there has been no further mention of Sydney (as far as I know) and no other response.

Alan Hankinson

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## A YORKSHIRE FRIENDSHIP

One of our members Mr. J.P.G. Taylor, wrote in August last year, in response to an invitation in the last Newsletter to let me know about a book he had produced which gives Sydney Smith a few friendly paragraphs. Mr. Taylor has been a history teacher and produced several books of local history. One of them is about a place that Sydney grew to know well and care for when he lived at Heslington, York. The book is called 'Escrick: A Village History'. It is available for £12.50 plus £2.00 for p. and p. Please send your order to Mr. Taylor at 24, Holmes Drive, Riccall York YO19 6RT. This is what the book says about Sydney:



Sydney Smith had arrived in Yorkshire in 1809, having been presented with the living of Foston-le-Clay. In a more relaxed age, he would have appointed a curate and continued to enjoy the delights of what he called the Great Parallelogram — the fashionable area in central London formed by Oxford Street, Piccadilly, Regent Street and Hyde Park, which, according to Sydney, 'encloses more intelligence and human ability, to say nothing of wealth and beauty than the world has ever collected in such a space before'. But the new Clergy Residence Act obliged him to live in his new parish, which was in Sydney's classic phrase 'twelve miles from a lemon'. He hated the countryside: he feared that 'Creation would expire before tea-time', it was so boring; but he had no choice, so he decided to make the best of it. Since there was no habitable parsonage-house at Foston, he resided at Heslington to begin with, later building his own house at Foston. It must have been during his five years at Heslington, from 1809 to 1814, that he made the acquaintance of the Thompsons, less than six miles away at Escrick. The few letters that survive of their correspondence — and the fact that they continued to correspond long after his departure from Yorkshire — suggest a very close and affectionate relationship between the two families. In a letter written at Combe Florey in Somerset in August 1829 (he had exchanged the living of Foston for that of Combe Florey earlier that year) he speaks of 'good, excellent and amiable friends, such as we met with at Escrick, I did not expect to find. Fortune may grant such favours once in a life, but they must not be counted upon'.

The opening sentence of this letter indicates that the Thompsons had attempted to use their influence to keep Sydney Smith in Yorkshire — Sydney declares that 'I was sensibly touched with it', but he must have been secretly greatly relieved that they had failed in their attempts. He never returned to Yorkshire after his departure from Foston in 1829, but there were meetings in London when Sydney was Dean of St Paul's, and the two families were corresponding as late as 1842, only three years before Sydney's death. He wrote to Lady Wenlock in September of that year, regretting that she was leaving for Italy: The constant kindness and attention I have received from Lord Wenlock and yourself have bound me over to you and made me Sincerely your friend ... I beg to be kindly remembered to Miss Lawley, whom Mrs Smith and I have fairly fallen in love with; so affable, so natural, so handsome: — you will never keep her for long, for I should think it a perfect infamy in any young man of rank and fortune to be three days in her company without making her an offer.

'Miss Lawley' was Jane, only daughter of Lord and Lady Wenlock, born in 1820; the family reverted to the Lawley surname from this generation on. Jane married,

in 1846, James Archibald Stuart-Wortley, an able lawyer and politician fifteen years her senior who became Recorder of the City of London and Solicitor General in Palmerston's administration of 1855-58. She bore him nine children and died aged eighty, in 1900.

## SYDNEY ON IMMORAL BOOKS

In 1803 in "The Edinburgh Review" Sydney reviewed a novel by Madame. de Stael called "Delphine". He opened with the words "This dismal trash", which gives the gist of what he had to say about the book and about immoral works in general. Since so many works of fiction published nowadays seem to incline more strongly than ever towards the reprehensible, it seems appropriate, if not obligatory, to remind ourselves of Sydney's rigorous wisdom in this matter:

.....The immortality of any book (in our estimation) is to be determined by the general impressions it leaves on those minds, whose principles, not yet ossified, are capable of affording a less powerful defence to its influence. The most dangerous effect that any fictitious character can produce, is when two or three of its popular vices are varnished over with everything that is captivating and gracious in the exterior and ennobled by association with splendid virtues: this apology will be more sure of its effect, if the faults are not against nature, but against society. The aversion to murder and cruelty could not perhaps be so overcome; but a regard to the sanctity of marriage vows, to the sacred and sensitive delicacy of the female character, and to numberless restrictions important to the well-being of our species, may easily be relaxed by this subtle and voluptuous confusion of good and evil. It is in vain to say the fable evinces, in the last act, that vice is productive of misery. We may decorate a villain with graces and felicities for nine volumes, and hang him in the last page. This is not teaching virtue, but gilding the gallows, and raising up splendid associations in favour of being hanged. In such an union of the amiable and the vicious, (especially if the vices are such, to the commission of which there is no want of natural disposition) the vice will not degrade the man, but the man will ennoble the vice. We shall wish to be him we admire, in spite of his vices, and, if the novel be well written, even in consequence of his vice. There exists, through the whole of this novel, a show of exquisite sensibility to the evils which individuals suffer by the inflexible rule of virtue prescribed by society, and an eager disposition to apologise for particular transgressions. Such doctrine is not confined to Madame de Stael; an Arcadian cant is gaining fast upon Spartan



*gravity; and the happiness diffused, and the beautiful order established in society by this unbending discipline, is wholly swallowed up in compassion for the unfortunate and interesting individual. Either the exceptions or the rule must be given up; every highwayman who thrusts his pistol into a chaise window has met with unforeseen misfortunes; and every loose matron who flies into the arms of her Greville was compelled to marry an old man whom she detested, by an avaricious and unfeeling father. The passions want not accelerating, but retarding machinery. The fatal and foolish sophistry has power enough over every heart, not to need the aid of fine composition, and well-contrived incident - auxiliaries which Madame de Staël intended to bring forward in the cause, though she has fortunately not succeeded...~*

*The morality of all this is the old morality of Farquhar, Vanburgh, and Congreve—that every witty man may transgress the seventh commandment, which was never meant for the protection of husbands who labour under the incapacity of making repartees,*

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## LETTERS FROM THE U.S.A.

On the whole our American members have shown themselves better at writing to the editors of the Newsletter than the British - two of them in particular. One of these is Barbara Lund who writes from an address in Hockessin, D.E., She first discovered Sydney, she says, in a book by David Cecil called "Library Looking-Glass: A Personal Anthology", first published in the U.S.A. in 1976:

*At the time (1976) I was a young wife and mother tossed hither and yon by the demands of both, full of doubts and anxiety common to all caught off guard in a new undertaking. and suffering: bouts of low spirits and confusion. Well, Sydney's letter to Lady Georgiana Morpeth and his recipe for combating low spirits was just the ticket. I was charmed by this wise man and then, when I went on to read in a letter of his to Lady Holland, "I am not leading precisely the life I should choose, but.....I am resolved therefore to like it and to reconcile myself to it.....", I was in love. It was, I think, the 'precisely' that got me. What a delicious way of putting it.*

She later found Hesketh Pearson's "The Smith of Smiths" and W.H.Auden's "The Selected Writings of Sydney Smith", and also an anthology called "English Wits, their Lives and jests" (Hutchinson, 1940), which includes an essay on Sydney by Ernest Newman: "Among other things", Barbara Lund adds, "he attributes to Smith 'an acutely logical intellect, a common sense that amounted to genius'"

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Our other American correspondent is Mr Jonathan A. Hayes of Seattle, Washington was in London last summer and, inspired by a paragraph in our last Newsletter, went to look at Sydney's grave in Kensal Green Cemetery. He failed to find it. But Mr Hayes did not give up. He goes on to say:

*Back in the States I was able to discover through the Internet, the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery and their Secretary, Mr Henry Vivian-Neal, was able to provide me with the location. Sydney's grave location is 5680/131/5. The first number is the records of the General Cemetery Company, the second is the number of the square on the map and the third is the location in the square - '5' is the fifth row. He gives the description as a 'chest tomb in Portland Stone located opposite the centre of the North Terrace Colonnade and to the south of North Avenue'*

Mr Hayes ends his letter by asking if there are any plans to establish a web site for the Sydney Smith Association. Perhaps that should be considered at our next A.G.M.

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## ENVOI

### SYDNEY'S RELEVANCE TO-DAY

#### WAR

Many have grown disillusioned with the United Nation's intervention in the internal affairs of various countries, especially in the Balkans. It would be well for politicians to reflect on Sydney's letter to Lady Grey a few years after Waterloo, when there was widespread clamour to despatch British forces to Spain to support the rebels there. He writes:

*For God's sake, do not drag me into another war! I am worn down and worn out, with crusading and defending Europe and protecting mankind; I must think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards – I am sorry for the Greeks – I deplore the fate of the Jews; the people of the Sandwich Islands are groaning under the most detestable tyranny; Baghdad is oppressed; I do not like the present state of the Delta; Tibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people? The world is bursting with sin and sorrow. Am I to be champion of the Decalogue, and to be eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy? We have just done saving Europe, and I am afraid the consequence will be, that we shall cut each others throats. No war, dear Lady Grey! – no eloquence; but apathy, selfishness, common sense, arithmetic! I beseech you, secure Lord Grey's swords and pistols, as the housekeeper did Don Quixote's armour. If there is another war, life will not be worth having.*

#### THE LOTTERY

*The joy of a washer woman, who has just got the £20,000 prize in the lottery, and the joy of a sensible, worthy man, who has just succeeded in rescuing a family from distress, are both feelings of pleasure. But while one is dancing in frantic rapture round her tubs, the signs by which the other signifies his satisfaction are characteristic of nothing but tranquillity and peace.*

## OUR AIMS

- 1) To perpetuate the memory and achievements of Sydney Smith.
- 2) To cultivate appreciation of the principles for which he stood.
- 3) To support the churches connected with his career.
- 4) To help in the preservation of manuscripts and memorabilia relating to him and his family.
- 5) To arrange periodic events, receptions and services in keeping with his inclinations.

