

THE
SYDNEY SMITH
ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

Issue 25

Spring 2020

THE SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION (Charity No. 1121599)

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

Patrons

The Right Reverend and Right Honourable Lord Hope of Thornes; The Viscount Knutsford; The Honourable Simon Howard; The Honourable James Stourton

Officers

Chairman – Mr Colin Southall
mail: c_southall@yahoo.com

Hon. Treasurer – Dr Harry Yoxall

Hon. Secretary and Membership Secretary - Mrs Sydness Bones
Mail: sydie.bones@btopenworld.com

Editor of Newsletter - Mr Gerry Bradshaw
Mail : ggbradshaw@btinternet.com

Trustees

Chairman; Treasurer; Secretary; Mrs Peter Diggle; Mrs Deirdre Bryan-Brown; Mr Robin Price, Dr Jeremy Cunningham

Website – www.sydneysmith.org.uk

Stories, pictures or material for the Newsletter – Contact Gerry Bradshaw or Sydnie Bones – e-mail addresses above

OUR CHAIRMAN WRITES...

At the time of writing we are under lockdown. I hope you are all safe and well. In these strange times it is hard to see when normality will return, or what it will look like.

In this environment social gatherings are not possible. Friends and family have been organizing social events online, but though they provide a chance to catch up and laugh, they are not the same as sitting together around a table. For the Association, cancelled lunches are the main casualty, and I for one feel the loss of stimulating conversation and good food. Email and the telephone have provided a way of maintaining contact and exchanging information but are no substitute.

I am “working from home” and, as a colleague reminded me, this is a misrepresentation of the reality that we are actually “at home and trying to work during a crisis.” Though I have often worked for periods out of the office, e.g. when visiting teams in other locations, our effectiveness is based on having met each other. We are now trying to integrate and train new joiners whom we have never met in person. This is forcing us to try new approaches and adopt new technologies. A steep learning curve.

Here we need to think of ways we can use technology to foster our shared interest in Sydney Smith and, as I wrote about last year, grow membership. A start would be to ensure that we can communicate by email, as this simplifies administrative functions and saves us on postage costs, which can be considerable. As you may have noticed, our website is not currently available. It was infected with a virus early in the year and had to be taken down. It

proved impossible to fix the site, so we have embarked on a redesign under the able guidance of Sydnie Bones and Graham Frater (who was actively involved in the design of the original website) and are making good progress on this.

Jeremy Cunningham has established a Twitter account #syndeysmithisms and we are working out how to raise our profile. I am conscious this is not for everyone, but if we are unable to meet then we will need to find other ways of creating and maintaining a sense of community.

In the past year I have enjoyed lunches with York, South West and London members and hope that we will be able to resume in due course. Thanks to Graham Frater, Sydnie Bones and Celia Moreton-Prichard for organizing these events. As reported below, Robin Price has arranged the programme for the AGM in September at St Paul's. I hope we will be able to proceed with this, and that members will feel able to attend.

Having completed the Association's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019, Arnold Arthurs has expressed a wish to retire from the position of Treasurer. He has looked after the accounts for the past twenty years with amazing fortitude and dedication. We are very grateful to Dr Harry Yoxall who has agreed to take over this responsibility. We have co-opted Harry onto the committee as a trustee and look to ratify his appointment at the AGM.

Next year is Sydney's 250th birthday. I hope that we are able to mark this in suitable style. In the meantime, I trust you are able to find cheer with family and friends.

Colin Southall

SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, YORK,

Saturday 14th September 2019

This meeting was held at Bedern Hall, tucked away down an alley around the corner from the Minster. The hall was the refectory for the College of the Vicars Choral from the late 14th until the mid 17th century. The word 'bedern' is Anglo-Saxon for 'house of prayer'. The 36 Vicars Choral sang services in York Minster. Originally there was a bridge between the hall and the Minster Close on the other side of Goodramgate, so the vicars could travel easily between the two, avoiding the townspeople. After the Reformation, the numbers of vicars declined; many moved away as they were allowed to marry, and common dining eventually ceased. Over time this area of York became a slum, and the hall was divided into tenements. In the 20th century it was owned by a bakery and

then by a local butcher who used the premises for curing meat. The City Council bought the area for re-development and in 1979 work began to restore the badly decayed hall. The surviving York guilds formed the Bedern Hall Company to raise funds for this restoration. Today it is used by a variety of organizations for dinners and meetings, and it is also licensed for civil weddings. This attractive example of a medieval hall formed an ideal setting for the meeting. After a cup of coffee, some twenty members gathered around tables and the Chairman, Colin Southall, ran a brisk meeting 'in the style of Randolph



Dr James Williams

Vigne'. We noted with particular sadness the death of Mark Wade who had made the main preparations for this meeting. Colin thanked Arnold Arthurs for taking over the organization. The meeting was followed by a glass of wine and a very good lunch from the buffet. After lunch Dr James Williams, from the English Department of York University, gave a very interesting and amusing talk on the theme of the 'Gravity and Levity' of Sydney Smith. As he explained, he did not seek to reveal new information about Sydney but to tie together some paradoxical aspects of his approach to life. The theme was taken from Sydney's quip about his brother Bobus 'rising by his gravity' while he himself 'sank by his levity'. The talk was warmly received.

After the talk, members dispersed. As it was a beautiful autumn day, I decided to walk the walls and to mount Clifford's Tower, to counteract the effects of some six hours sitting in the train. It is a most interesting circuit, with excellent information plaques at the gates and other places of interest.



Jeremy Cunningham

APPEAL TO MEMBERS

COVID-19 AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EMAIL ADDRESSES

The CORONAVIRUS emergency recently highlighted a major communication problem in the Association; the case arose in connection with the York lunch that was scheduled for 22 April: ***we do not have email addresses for all members.***

The overall cost of sending out the invitations (postage and printing) was over £50.00; in addition there were the hidden costs of finding a printer, and visiting her twice, setting up the software for the address labels, folding sheets for an insert for some members – it was a reminder to have an email address - filling the envelopes, buying stamps, visiting the Post Office, and obtaining a certificate of posting.

And then, the spreading virus obliged us to cancel, with further notifications to send out. Fortunately, most of those members who had opted for the lunch had provided their email addresses: they could be contacted within minutes of the decision, and at no cost. However, there was a handful for whom no email address has been registered, and one with neither an email address, nor a phone number lodged with us.

The over-all picture in the Association's address list runs something like this: 42% of members on the national list have not provided us with an email address for easy contact; 3.6% of members have given us neither an email address, nor a telephone number; and, among the Northern members, the figure for no email rises to 46% - nearly half - yet every penny of the £50 of postage and printing costs for the York lunch would have been saved if we had email addresses for all.

This then, is an appeal to all members to provide Sydnie, our secretary, with an email address. If you have one already, please send it to her as soon as possible at **sydnie.bones@btopenworld.com**

If you do not have an email address, but do have a computer, mobile phone, or a tablet (such as an iPad), please think of getting an address, and passing it on to Sydnie. Email addresses are free, so is sending and receiving them, and the software is easy to install. If you are uncomfortable about the installation, our children - but perhaps our grandchildren best of all - may be the most immediate sources of help: it will take them little more than a minute to do it for you.

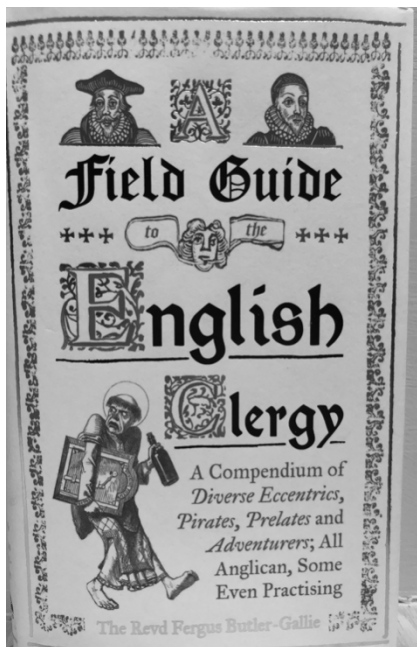
And, as further assurance, the Association, like all groups and companies, is subject to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR); these have legal force and require the Association's officers to observe strict confidentiality with the details that you let them have. For example, when you receive an email from the Association, you should only see your own email address, and that of the sender; all others should be hidden from you, and yours should be hidden from all other members; in short it, should be sent as 'blind copy' – simple, effective, and cost free.

Graham Frater

My appeal then, is simple:

- If you have an email address, please let the committee have it
- If you do not have one, please get one (they cost nothing), and pass it on to the secretary.
- And if you have not shared your phone number, please let the Association have that too.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE ENGLISH CLERGY, BY THE REVD FERGUS BUTLER-GALLIE, ONEWORLD PUBLICATIONS



Among the books added to my collection at Christmas was this delightful guide, chosen no do 48 clerics listed in the Contents, although playing a relatively minor role in this romp through the mavericks of Anglican ministry. The *Dramatis Personae* are grouped under headings of Eccentrics, Nutty Professors, Bon Viveurs, Prodigal Sons and Rogues. Sydney finds himself labelled Prodigal Son, rubbing shoulders with Michael Ramsey and William Webb Ellis. The criterion for assignment to this

category appears to be having achieved success by means other than exemplary clergymanship, which in Sydney's case was by becoming the most renowned wit of his day. This mini biography (three pages only) pays due regard to the wit, noting that 'people travelled from all over the country - indeed, all over the world - to hear Smith hold forth on various subjects'. It covers the fine dining, the unpopular campaigns he supported, and quotes one or two of his most well-known one-liners; and to my delight the author identifies correctly the reference to heaven as 'eating *pâté de fois gras* to the sound of trumpets' as Sydney's description of his corpulent companion Henry Luttrell's vision of the hereafter, not his own. Minor errors and omissions may be excused: he did not, for instance, go 'to Edinburgh to continue his studies'; he

escorted the young Michael Beach there as his tutor, and took advantage of the opportunities to attend lectures on a variety of subjects. There is mention of his wisdom but no reference to the care of his parishioners or the good husbandry he oversaw at St Paul's. But, after all, this is a book about the more outrageous members of the clergy, and Sydney Smith barely qualifies for inclusion.

The joy of this publication lies with its other incumbents. What a motley collection they are, with names such as The Revd Dr Vicesimus Knox and Canon Brian Dominus Titus Leo Brindley which alone could have merited their inclusion. Their lives span four and a half centuries; the earliest, The Very Reverend Marco de Dominis, was born in 1560. He was Dean of Windsor and (I quote) 'sometime Archbishop of Split'. He was also, according to the Revd Butler-Gallie, a Rogue, switching allegiance from the Pope to the Church of England and back again, filling his coffers with each cross-channel defection. The rogues have all the purple prose: Hackman, vicar of Wiverton in Norfolk, murdered the Earl of Sandwich's mistress in a fit of jealousy; and Sir Robert Peat, Perpetual Curate of New Brentford, seeker of titles, revived the Order of the Knights of Malta so that he could install himself as Grand Prior, notwithstanding the fact that the Order was Roman Catholic and that its knights were not recognised as members of the British aristocracy. Best of all must be the tale of the tragicomic Rector of Stiffkey in Norfolk, the Revd Harold Davidson, who 'for a brief period in the 1930s, was the most famous clergyman in the world'. He had always flirted with the theatre, appointing himself padre to the chorus girls and prostitutes in London, neglecting his ministry and bankrupting himself in the process. After unsuccessfully resisting his removal from office, he turned to lowlife showmanship. On a summer's day in 1937, on

the front at Skegness, dressed as Daniel he entered the cage of two lions who promptly set about eating him for their dinner.

The Eccentrics it must be said have all the best stories. There is the Revd Ian Graham-Orlebar, Rector of Barton-le-Clay, who died aged 90 in 2016. Having spent a great deal of his own money restoring the mansion rectory, he assumed the style of a classic country parson, making his visits on horseback. He named his horse 'Ministry' so that his staff could fend off official calls with the affirmation that the rector was out exercising his ministry. Two hundred years earlier, the Hervey family were notorious enough to warrant Voltaire's comment: 'When God created the human race, he made men, women and Herveys'. The Right Revd and Right Honourable Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, as the third son of a peer, was assigned to a career in the church. His amorous conquests on his grand tour earned him the additional title of 'the English Casanova'. Packed off to a Bishop's job in Ireland, to his bedroom pranks he added garden games for the chaplains, leapfrog and naked races among them. After he inherited the Earldom, he left Ireland and spent most of his life in Europe, collecting works of art - and making mischief - never stepping foot in his diocese again. My favourite Eccentric has to be The Revd Robert Hawker, Vicar of Morwenstow, originator of the harvest festival, who 'decided he had a double calling; not only to be a Priest, but also a mermaid'. With his lower half wrapped only in an oilskin he would row out to a rock in Bude harbour, sit on it and sing. Cornwall, writes the author, has a remarkably high tolerance for odd behaviour.

Familiar names also feature, but not many. Woodforde of diary fame is listed as a Bon Vivreur, his years at Oxford being a time of enormous consumption of meat and alcohol; so also is Jack Russell, whose passion for field sports led to his breeding the

eponymous terrier. Spooner and Baring-Gould are both included as Nutty Professors, and William Webb Ellis, who picked up the football at Rugby School and ran with it, earns the label of Prodigal Son, even though the association of his name with the birth of the game of rugby is now considered by sports historians to be something of a myth.

The appended Glossary of ecclesiastical terms ‘for the benefit of the general reader’ is full of wry humour: for example High Church - ‘The wing of the Church primarily concerned with dressing up. Historically the ‘Cavalier’ party of the Church, but it suffered something of a continental infection (known as Roman fever) in the mid-nineteenth century and has never really recovered. Keen on lace, ritual and gin. Not keen on doing what Bishops tell them to.’

The Revd Fergus Butler-Gallie, author of this outrageously funny book, is a young curate in the Parish Church of Liverpool. Educated at both the universities of Oxbridge, he spent some time travelling the world, including Russia, Mongolia and China, before training for the ministry. He has a deep affection for the Church of England with its tolerance of a wide range of opinions. In a Church Times podcast in which he discusses this book and the wider subject of eccentricity, he quotes J.S. Mill: ‘The amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigour and moral courage it contained’. It is reassuring in these prescriptive days to think that there may be examples of idiosyncratic clergymen still practising under the broad umbrella of the Church of England.

Sydie Bones

SYDNEY SMITH'S LETTERS TO MRS LEICESTER STANHOPE

In the last years of his life the Reverend Sydney Smith, of happy memory, exchanged a number of letters with Mrs Leicester Stanhope. She had been Miss Elizabeth Green before, in 1831, she married the gallant soldier and friend of Lord Byron, Leicester Stanhope. After Sydney's death, by way of her husband's inheritance, she was styled Countess of Harrington. At the time of



this correspondence with Sydney she was forty-two/forty-three years old and was a lively hostess in the London society in which the Smiths moved. His letters to her, some from Green Street, Grosvenor Square, others from Combe Florey, some forty of them, have survived and are now lodged in the Manuscript Room of the British Library where Library Readers can access and handle them. It would seem

that these letters have never been published and, indeed, it would seem that the relationship between Elizabeth and Sydney has never been noted by his biographers.

Our Secretary, Mrs Sydnie Bones, was made aware of the existence of these letters by an email from an American researcher, Kelly McDonald, and I have made a start at transcribing them. I have seen enough of them to report that they are of no great consequence to the world. Sydney himself wrote that they were nonsense letters. They are, however, full of good humour and tittle-tattle and are further illustrations of Sydney's frame of mind in the years before his death. His wit was still sharp and he was still having fun with words. Elizabeth was his *Stanhope*, he even sometimes addressed her as *Stan*.

“Forget you, Stanhope? How can such an idea come across you? When I forget my tithes, when my teeth know not how to masticate the unbridled luxury, when I remember what bishops write or forget the poetry of Rogers – then believe that I have forgotten you.”

There are some gems of Sydney's mock-heroic style in these letters and my transcription is necessarily a work in slow progress but, if nobody else does so, we hope to publish them here in full, in time. Meanwhile the letters are safe where anyone can find and enjoy them.

Ralph Rochester

“RANDOLPH VIGNE, HISTORIAN & HUGUENOT SCHOLAR”

The late Randolph Vigne, former Chairman of the Association, is the subject of a book published by the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland, of which he was President from 1980 to 1986. Edited and with an Introduction by the Society's Honorary Editor, Elizabeth Randall, the book brings together some 18 articles and reminiscences, covering his early life as a publisher and anti-apartheid activist in South Africa and his later life as a writer, publisher and historian in England and (post-apartheid) South Africa.

Contributors include Sydnie Bones, the Association's Secretary, Jonathan Ouvry, a member of the Association and Randolph's immediate successor as President of the Huguenot Society, and academics, historians, writers, publishers and others who knew him well in a variety of circumstances.

The book chronicles a remarkable life, not least in the bravery and humanity of Randolph's early life in South Africa, ending in a dangerous escape from the authorities in Cape Town, and

demonstrates the affection and regard which Randolph inspired in all who knew him, and had the pleasure of his friendship.

The book, illustrated and with 131 pages, may be obtained from the Huguenot Society, PO Box 444, Ruislip, HA4 4GU for the modest sum of £5 plus UK postage £2.50 (cheques in favour of the Huguenot Society).

Jonathan G. Ouvry

SEEN AND HEARD

Seen in *The Oldie*, January 2020. In an article entitled 'Good clean fun' on the subject of house cleaning, Valerie Groves writes: *Another cliché – again true. The Rev Sydney Smith's advice 'Make the room where you commonly sit gay and pleasant' is quite as important as his rule 'Keep good blazing fires'.*

Seen in James Fergusson's list of books for sale: PENN (William) DRAPER (Bourne Hall): The Life of William Penn, London c.1833. Inscribed 'Miss Popham a present from the Revd Sydney Smith, of Combe Florey July 26 1833'. Any information as to the identity of the said Miss Popham would be much appreciated by the Hon. Secretary (sydie.bones@btopenworld.com).

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Hon. Treasurer

Professor Arnold Arthurs has retired from the post of Hon. Treasurer at the end of 2019, after 20 years of service. Dr Harry Yoxall has agreed to undertake this responsibility.

Membership

(a) Secretary Mrs Sydnie Bones has taken over the duties of membership secretary.

(b) Subscriptions Members are reminded that subscriptions were due on 1st March, £15 single, £20 joint membership. Cheques should be payable to The Sydney Smith Association and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Dr Harry Yoxall, West Lodge, Pitminster, Taunton TA3 7AZ.

Website

Following discovery of a malware attack, the website was closed by the domain holder and required considerable change to the software. The website is the main source of information about Sydney Smith, containing original material not available elsewhere, and fulfils the foremost aim of the Association. The trustees agreed that the redesign and safeguarding should be entrusted to a professional website designer and have assigned the work to Lawson Design, based in Devon. With the help of generous donations, work has already started and it is hoped that the website will be up and running by the time this newsletter is published.

THE EDITOR'S NOTES

Normally, our Newsletter can headline papers given at our lunches. But this year they are noticeable by their absence, at least partly down to our friend, Covid-19. Thanks to contributors who have provided material, but apologies that it's a bit thinner than usual. We had also hoped to make some changes to the style of the Newsletter, but, in lockdown, I cannot arrange the necessary face-to-face meeting with our printer. So apologies to our readers.

In Yorkshire, we owe our thanks to Graham Frater for taking over the arrangement of York lunches – and feel for him when his work was wrecked by the virus and its undoing caused as much work as its arrangement – see story elsewhere.

By the way, Sydney may be the Smith of Smiths, but he is not without namesakes here in Yorkshire. Go to Scarborough and you will find that the bridge from the harbour to the lighthouse is dedicated to Captain Sydney Smith, who, after a distinguished wartime career, became a long-respected Harbourmaster.

Go a few miles east to Pickering, and in the Beck Isle Museum, you can see the work of Sydney Smith, a notable photographer working mostly between the wars. From the Moors to the coast, he snapped cattle, boat wrecks, street scenes, buses and sold his work as postcards. A locally famous man in his day. Go there if you are in the neighbourhood. A few samples are here on the collection page of its website

<https://www.beckislemuseum.org.uk/collection/harvesting-at-lockton/>

If you know of any namesakes with a story, please let me know for possible future publication.

Gerry Bradshaw

TRIBUTES

Mark Wade.

Mark Wade, who died at his home in York in August last year, was a founder member of the Association. Sydney became a major interest in his life and indeed he shared Sydney's positive view of life and his love of a good dinner and of a well-turned phrase. Like

Sydney he was a serious man who laughed at the follies of this world.

He settled in York after a career as an education officer in the Army and he faithfully supported the Association in many ways, always ready to write up an AGM or plan a meeting or to serve as an officer: he was Membership Secretary for seven years.

Many members can attest to the warm hospitality that they met from Mark and Sheila at their Shipton Road house where tea in the garden or a game of croquet might be on the agenda. Because Mark was also a knowledgeable local historian, one who served as a Guide to the Minster, he was the best possible person to introduce the city of York to members visiting the city. One of his treats was to walk people around the city walls to see the sunrise. He will be sadly missed.

Major General Henry Woods

Henry Woods, a loyal member of the Sydney Smith Association who died in September aged 95, had a highly distinguished military career before retiring to Yorkshire as a major general in 1980. He landed in Normandy with the Skins – the Inniskilling Dragoon Guards – in July 1944 and won his MC at the age of 20 the following March in command of a tank troop after a skirmish on the Dutch-German border.

After the war, and gaining a First in history at Trinity Oxford, he rejoined the Army and served in Germany, Korea, the Canal Zone and Germany again - before commanding his regiment in Aden and Libya. He was later military attaché at the British Embassy in Washington.

His last military appointment was as General Officer Commanding North East District where he worked on home defence planning.

As national chairman of the Science and Technology Organisation and in setting up the Duke of York's Community Initiative, he played an important part in inspiring young people and local Yorkshire developments. He was a founder and trustee of the Second World War Experience Centre in West Yorkshire and was Vice-Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire.

He enjoyed all country pursuits, racing, hunting, fencing and sailing. He is survived by his wife Imogen and their two daughters Sarah and Arabella.

MINUTES OF THE YORK AGM - 14th September 2019

The Chairman welcomed 21 members to Bedern Hall, York.

Apologies: Elizabeth Boyd, Deirdre Bryan-Brown, Darrell Buttery, Paddy Crossley, Bob Durie, George & Marilyn Ewart, Simon Hawes, Christine Mitchell-Innes, Graham Parry, Peter & Maureen Payan, Celia Moreton-Prichard, Michael Ranson, Janet Unwin, Jane Urquhart, Eddie York, Harry & Nicky Yoxall.

The Chairman opened the meeting.

- **Minutes** of the 2018 AGM were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.
- **Points arising:** The donation to Combe Florey Church for 2018 was £1000; the latest newly bound book from Sydney Smith's library was handed to Jeremy Cunningham to deliver to Munden. Sponsorship for two of the remaining three books has been obtained; sponsorship for the remaining book (£100) is sought.

- **The Treasurer's** interim financial report (see below) was read out. Details of donations will be decided when expenditure for the AGM has been settled.
- **Membership:** The Chairman paid tribute to Mark Wade who had recently died. Mark had not only undertaken responsibilities for membership but had also organised the York lunches. It was agreed that the Secretary would take over the membership duties. Members offered suggestions on how to find people who were interested in Sydney Smith with the aim of increasing our numbers. Humphrey Boyle, Robin Price and Dorothy Williams offered to distribute leaflets about the Association prepared by the Secretary.
- **Lunches:** Local organisers continue to arrange lunches during the year. The Secretary sends email addresses of all members to those organising lunches.
 - London: Celia Moreton-Prichard hosts lunches with a speaker three times a year at the Boisdale Restaurant for on average a dozen members.
 - York: A replacement was sought for Mark Wade who organised two lunches a year with a speaker at the Middlethorpe Hall.
 - South-West members' lunch is organised by Sydie Bones, with a member as speaker.
 - The Chairman had attended lunches in all three venues during the year and thanked everyone for their support.
- **Newsletter:** The Chairman recorded thanks to Editor Gerry Bradshaw. Gerry will consult the printers about improving the

quality of the print and the photographs. Postage is a significant proportion of the cost.

- **Twitter:** @sydneyismithisms has been created but as yet has attracted only a small number of followers.
- **Website:** Thanks were also recorded to Alison Vickers for ably managing the website.
- **Election of Officers and Trustees:** Peter Payan resigned as Trustee during the year for health reasons. All Officers and remaining Trustees were willing to stand again for the coming year and this was agreed unanimously. They are: Chairman (Colin Southall), Treasurer (Arnold Arthurs), Secretary (Sydie Bones), Jeremy Cunningham, Sylvie Diggle, Deirdre Bryan-Brown and Robin Price.
- **AGM 2020:** It was agreed that a one-day AGM, focused on a luncheon meeting, would be held in **London**, proposed date **September 12th 2020**. Robin Price will investigate possible venues.
- **Any Other Business:** (a) Thanks were expressed to Graham Frater for his successful efforts to have a blue plaque, commemorating Sydney Smith's association with Heslington, unveiled in April. (b) The Secretary reported that an enquiry via the website from the USA has led to the discovery of a collection of letters between Sydney Smith and Elizabeth Stanhope, held in the British Library. As these letters are not mentioned in any published work that we hold, Ralph Rochester offered to explore the British Library archives for more details.

Financial Report

I confirm that the final accounts for last year 2018 were submitted to the Charity Commission as required. The finances of the Association continue to be sound. Interim figures for the current year which runs to the end of 2019, show receipts of £1592 from subscriptions, donations and gift aid, compared with £1719 for the whole of last year.

When expenses of the AGM are available, we shall be in a position to decide on our donations to churches associated with Sydney Smith.

*Arnold Arthurs, Hon Treasurer, Sydney Smith Association.
9 September 2019*

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

London, Saturday 12 September

This year's AGM will once again be a one-day meeting, to be held at **St Paul's Cathedral on 12th September**. We are most fortunate to have the Librarian of the Cathedral, Jo Wisdom, as one of our members and he has given invaluable assistance to Robin Price who has organised the day's events.

A late start at 11.30 am will allow travellers enough time to reach London and make their way to the Cathedral. St Paul's is the nearest underground station. Refreshments will be waiting for us in the Wren Suite, situated in the crypt. Jo Wisdom will lead a tour of the building, ending with a visit to the world-famous library. The AGM will take place in the afternoon, again in the Wren Suite of

the Cathedral. Sadly, there is no Evensong scheduled for that Saturday.

SYDNEY SMITH AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

In September 1831, Prime Minister Lord Grey was able to offer the Revd Sydney Smith the position of Canon Residentiary of St Paul's which he described in a letter as '*A snug thing, let me tell you, being worth full 2000 per annum*'. Within a month Sydney had been installed and wrote that this move had put him at his ease for life. Obligated to be in residence for three separate months of the year, he was assigned a prebendal house at Amen Corner, which he decided not to occupy, preferring to live in a more desirable district. He soon became a respected and valuable member of the administration and a popular preacher. Residency in winter did have its drawbacks: '*To go to St Paul's is certain death*', he wrote one November: '*The thermometer is several degrees below zero – my sentences are frozen as they come out of my mouth ...*'. His sermons drew many compliments, among them an entry in the diary of the American George Ticknor: '*an admirable moral essay, to prove that righteousness has the promise of the life that now is. ... It was by far the best sermon I ever heard in Great Britain ...*'. By 1837, he was well enough established to preach a sermon of advice to the young Queen Victoria on her accession to the throne.

Sydney soon became responsible for much of the practical business of the Cathedral. He set about reorganising the administration, in particular the care of the fabric of the building and its finances. The health of both these departments was essential to maintain the Cathedral's national status. Notably, he was the first Canon to arrange fire insurance for the building. Additionally, he was responsible for the music and musicians.

One letter of 1844 is a characteristic response to the request for more choristers: *'You talk of competing with other cathedrals, but cathedrals are not to consider themselves rival with opera houses. ... It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether Westminster bawls louder than St Paul's'*. Many cathedral organists today are familiar with his reply to John Goss in 1838: *'What a strange set of creatures you organists are! First you want a bull stop, then you want the tom-tit stop; in fact you are like a jaded old cab horse – always longing for another stop'*. The library too was under his stewardship, its important collection of books no doubt more to his liking than the music.

Sydney's attention to detail is evident in his meticulous record-keeping, a practice on which he insisted when dealing with work carried out on the building. At first, this caused some dissatisfaction among the officers of the Fabric Fund but led eventually to the *'unalloyed confidence and regard'* of C.R. Cockerell, the Chief Surveyor. The correspondence between them makes a fascinating study. Sydney appeared to have an excellent grasp of standards of workmanship and value for money. In one discourse with Cockerell he wrote: *'Your idea of respectability seems to be that no tradesman can be respectable who does not charge high prices'*. When the Surveyor's painter estimated twice the price quoted by Sydney's man, Sydney suggested that each should paint an aisle so that a comparison could be made as to their relative value. In spite of his portly figure, he undertook examination of the building himself, squeezing through narrow entrances and climbing up steep flights of steps into the towers. He asked the Canon of Westminster for advice on cleaning monuments: *'I propose to establish a cleaning fund and to compel every dead hero to pay something towards keeping himself clean'*.

Sydney's responsibilities included some duties in the Chapter House, not only in the legal and administrative departments, but also social. When in residence, Sydney was obliged to host a dinner for six clergy and six vicars-choral every Sunday, a chore which gave him little pleasure. His efforts to change the routine by offers of a cash substitute were repeatedly unsuccessful; it was not until 1843 that the privilege was withdrawn and a recompense of £15 a year was added to the annual stipend of the diners. One contretemps with authority he did win: when the Home Secretary wished to abolish entry fees to the Cathedral (twopence in 1837) on the premise that it was a national monument, the proposal was strongly opposed by Sydney saying that St Paul's would become a Royal Exchange for wickedness. The charge remained until 1851, six years after Sydney's death.

As his health declined in his later years, he took a less active role in the Cathedral, allowing his capable colleague William Hale to take on more of the Chapter business. Sydney, however, stayed firmly in control until the end. When one of the clerks suggested that they could save him the trouble of being involved with details of an event by forming a committee, quoting 'too many cooks spoil the broth', Sydney replied, *'Very true, Sir, but let me set you right on one particular: here there is only one cook – myself; you are only scullion, and will be good enough to take your directions from me'*. After his death, Dean Milman told Sydney's daughter Saba that he found traces of him in every particular of Chapter affairs; and that he respected 'above all, the perfect fidelity of his stewardship'. Alan Bell writes in his biography: 'It was Sydney who laid the foundations of the movement for reform in the administration of St Paul's, which was to lead to the Cathedral being one of the glories of the metropolis later in the century'

Sydie Bones

Dates for Luncheons in 2020

This year the luncheons have been severely affected by the countrywide lock-down. York and the South West will have no bookings for the remainder of this year.

It is hoped that London may be open for the summer luncheon in July.

London, at the Boisdale Restaurant, Eccleston Street: 29th January, 29th April **cancelled**, 29th July. Contact Celia Moreton-Prichard celiamop@celiamop.plus.com

York, at Middlethorpe Hall: April **cancelled**. Contact Graham Frater grahamfrater@madasafish.com

Somerset, at Hornsbury Mill: 18th March **cancelled**. Contact Sydnie Bones sydie.bones@btopenworld.com

Material for the Newsletter

We aim to publish annually by May and our slightly flexible copy date is early March. But at any time of the year, if you have talks, anecdotes, pictures or comments, we will welcome them. Just e-mail them to the editor, Gerry Bradshaw at ggbradshaw@btinternet.com . Or call him on 01653 648328

*It is a bore, I admit, to
be past seventy.*



Sydney anticipates our lockdown?