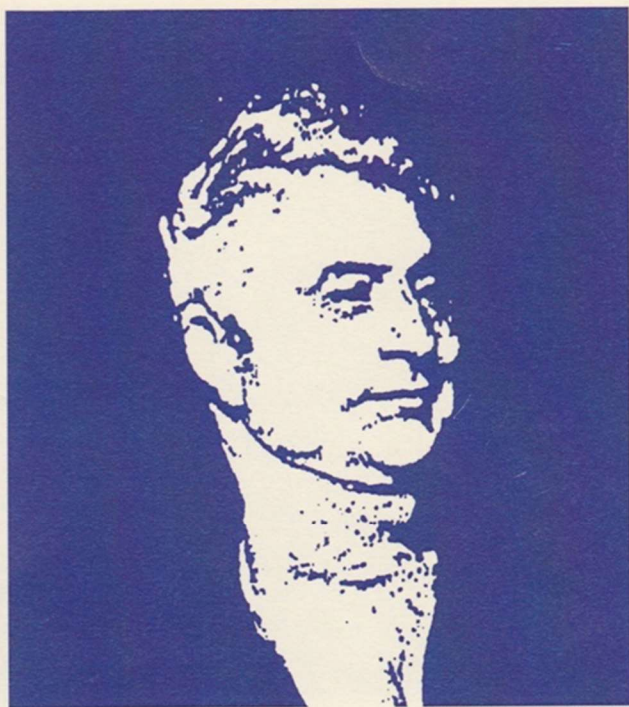


THE
SYDNEY SMITH
ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

Issue 30
Summer 2025

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 James Stourton

Officers

Chairman & Hon. Secretary - Mr Colin Southall
Mail: c_southall@yahoo.com

Hon. Treasurer - Dr Harry Yoxall

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

Newsletter Editor - Mr Colin Southall

Trustees

Chairman; Hon. Secretary; Hon. Treasurer; Mrs Sydness Bones; Mr Robin Price, Dr Jeremy Cunningham, Professor Arnold Arthurs

Website

www.sydney-smith.org.uk

Introduction

Colin Southall

This year marks the one hundred and eightieth anniversary of Sydney Smith's death in London on 22nd February 1845 and thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Association.



Druin Burch wrote an article for the Spectator to commemorate this anniversary which is reproduced in this newsletter.

We were privileged to be able to hold the 2024 AGM at Munden, hosted by Lord Knutsford our Patron and Henry and Kate Holland-Hibbert on a glorious day in September. I was sad to hear of Lord Knutsford's passing in January 2025 and was glad to be able to attend the memorial service which was held in March in Aldenham church. I am pleased that Henry Holland-Hibbert has agreed to become a patron of the Association.

Another sad loss to the Association was news of Deirdre Bryan-Brown's passing in October last year. Articles by and about both of them are included in this newsletter.

We have been informed that the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society has decided to erect a CHIS green plaque at 8, Gloucester Row where Sydney lived while he was resident in Bristol between 1828 and 1831. Permission from the building's current residents is being sought and it is hoped that the plaque can be unveiled in the autumn. This newsletter contains a summary of the research performed to support this decision by Paul Main, the CHIS Committee member who has championed this cause for several years.

Also included here is an article by Sydnie Bones covering letters Sydney wrote in 1824 which have been published or are in the collection of unpublished letters on the Association's website.

Sydney's commonplace book has finally been scanned. These images will be added to the website in due course and will replace the existing entries. This will provide high quality images which can be easily read, provided of course that you are able to decipher Sydney's scrawl. If members want to try their hand at this we can make the transcripts available alongside the images. Please contact Sydnie Bones or me if you are interested.

Lunches have been held in the West Country, York and London over the past twelve months. I hope we can repeat these events in the coming year as it is good to gather, even if only in small numbers.

Sydney Smith's love for life lives on

Druin Burch, The Spectator, 22nd February 2025

Why should anyone care about Sydney Smith, who died on this day in 1845? 180 years have diminished the stature of his worldly achievements. He was an Anglican cleric who campaigned for an end to slavery, against the oppression of Catholics, for moral reform in the church and democratic reform in parliament. His political arguments have lost most of their interest in a world where those questions feel settled.

Smith helped found the Edinburgh Review. He suggested the motto 'tenui musam meditamur avena' - 'we cultivate literature on a little oatmeal' - but this was 'too near the truth to be admitted, and so we took our present grave motto from Publius Syrus, of whom none of us had, I am sure, ever read a single line', he said.

People who knew Smith loved him, and many more have done so by reputation. Smith was another Dr. Johnson, but where Johnson struck fear, Smith kindled warmth. His words were as memorable, his character as strong - yet his spirit was kinder. 'You have been laughing at me constantly, Sydney, for the last seven years,' said one friend, 'and yet, in all that time, you have never said a single thing to me that I wished unsaid.'

He preached cheer, and what he preached he practised. 'Madam, I have been looking for a person who disliked gravy all my life; let us swear eternal friendship.' Putting his neighbour at ease came naturally to him, as did urging people to happiness. 'Many in this world run after felicity like an absent man hunting for his hat, while all the time it is on his head.'

People loved Smith's wit - but even more, they loved Smith. How could they not, when he brimmed with love himself? Smith was amiable - worthy of love and worth loving - because he found his fellows amiable, and because he had the wit to make them feel that this was the case, even when he mocked. Macaulay called him the Smith of Smiths. The two great conversationalists were friends. 'Macaulay,' said Smith, 'has occasional flashes of silence that make his conversation perfectly delightful.'

Smith believed 'life is to be fortified by many friendships. To love, and to be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence.' He preached that someone need not be in front of you to survive in your heart:

If I lived under the burning sun of the equator, it would be a pleasure to me to think that there were many human beings on the other side of the world who regarded and respected me ... It is not that a man has occasion often to fall back upon the kindness of his friends; perhaps he may never experience the necessity of doing so; but we are governed by our imaginations.

Like Johnson, Smith suffered from depression, but while the former was as brutal with himself as with others, the latter was playful and kind. 'Dear Lady Georgiana, nobody has suffered more from low spirits than I,' wrote Smith, 'so I feel for you.' He advised taking a short view of life - 'no further than dinner or tea' - and bade her keep busy. Good advice, then as now.

Forgiveness and optimism, Smith counselled, were duties. 'Some very excellent people tell you they dare not hope; why do they not dare to hope? To me it seems much more impious to dare to despair.' He wanted to be a barrister, but constraints meant he entered the church:

I am not leading precisely the life I should choose ... [but] I am resolved therefore to like it and to reconcile myself to it; which is more manly than to feign myself above it ... as long as I can possibly avoid it I will never be unhappy.

Giving a lecture at the Royal Institution, he asked his audience to picture life as a table with different holes, into which our characters must fit. A man, said Smith, must 'find out where his powers lie, and what are his deficiencies'. Square pegs and round holes are a Smith-ism.

'Don't expect too much from human life - a sorry business at the best,' he said in that letter to Lady Georgiana. Those low expectations were not a way of diminishing life's grandeur but a reminder to seek joy where it could be found.

Man could direct his ways by plain reason, and support his life by tasteless food; but God has given us wit, and flavour, and brightness, and laughter, and perfumes, to enliven the day of man's pilgrimage, and to charm his pained steps over the burning marl.

Smith lived when tragedy was an expected part of life - as, until recently, it always was. In 1829, his eldest son Douglas died. 'His death was the first sorrow he ever occasioned his parents,' reads the epitaph his father wrote, 'but it was deep and lasting.'

He wrote to his friends of his grief:

I am very unhappy, and quite beaten but I shall get better ... I never suspected how children weave themselves about the heart ... God save you from similar distress! ... I did not know I had cared so much for anybody; but the habit of providing for human beings, and watching over them for so many years, generates a fund of affection, of the magnitude of which I was not aware.

In his final days, as he slipped from consciousness, Smith's last words were cries of his son's name.

'We know nothing of tomorrow,' said Smith, 'our business is to be good and happy today.' Johnson is better remembered - not because his life makes a better lesson, but because he had James Boswell to chronicle it. Johnson knew agony and persevered, which is admirable. Smith knew agony too - but it made him cling fast to hope, which is lovable. 'Have the courage to be ignorant of a great number of things, in order to avoid the calamity of being ignorant of everything,' he taught. Wikipedia remembers him for a poem about the delight of a good salad dressing. He ate well. Gout, he said, was the only enemy he did not wish to have at his feet.

Even without his own Boswell, enough of Smith's words survive to pepper our culture. His accusation that a friend's idea of heaven was eating foie gras to the sound of trumpets, his declaration that he never read a book before reviewing it, since 'it prejudices a man so'. Even part of his poem

about salad dressing - 'fate cannot harm me, I have dined today!' - is remembered.

'My sentences are frozen as they come out of my mouth,' he said, of preaching at St Paul's, 'and are thawed in the course of the summer, making strange noises and unexpected assertions in various parts of the church.' Not a bad image for the way a life may echo down the years. 'Pleasure is very reflective,' he believed, 'and if you give it you will feel it.'

Smith still gives it today. Philip Larkin said that what survives of us is love. People loved Smith because love was how he lived. We love him still. He died having written of his thankfulness, and with grief for his son on his lips. Lost to that foreign country of the past, Smith lives on because his gift was to put love for life - real life, with its limitations and tragedies - into words.

Lord Knutsford

Sydie Bones



When in 2003 members in the South West decided to follow the traditions of London and York and hold luncheons in local venues, I contacted Lord Knutsford who lived in Broadclyst in East Devon. On receiving the invitation, he replied with enthusiasm, saying that Sydney Smith would surely have approved of our venture as 'he thought a convivial and gourmet atmosphere was the best medium to companionship and conversation'. Unable to join us on this first occasion, he promised to come to the next one 'if invited'.

True to his word, he came to our luncheon in April 2004, held at Mapperton in Dorset at the invitation of Lord and Lady Sandwich, where he enthralled us with a talk about Sydney and his Grandchildren. His closing words were 'Oh, how I wish I could be transported back to those days ... all I can treasure is the immortal memory of Sydney Smith, unrivalled amongst his contemporaries for his conversation and wit.'

Our South West meetings thus became an annual reunion for us with Lord Knutsford in hostelrys in Halse, Combe Florey and Honiton, when he invariably joined in the post-prandial discussions about Sydney Smith's life or passions, often with unpublished remarks or reviews from his personal archive. On one occasion he raised the question of where today can one find a successor to Sydney's role in the Edinburgh Review - in The Spectator or the media? In 2008, sadly for us, he moved from Broadclyst in Devon to Munden in Hertfordshire, from where he could attend the London luncheons. In the five years of his involvement with us in the South West, he was warmly welcomed and much appreciated by all of us; I in particular valued his input and his friendship. I have his letters, written in pen and ink, in immaculate script, to remind me of his contributions and dedication to the Association.

The Descendants of Sydney Smith

Lord Knutsford

It was a warm summer evening. Nothing stirred and it was too close to do anything active. The little fairhaired boy, dressed in pale blue aertex shirt and grey flannel shorts, was listless. His grandmother sensing that he was also bored, beckoned him over to the window seat in the Library at Munden where he sat drumming his legs against the skirting until he was told to stop and pay attention. She said she would tell him about his illustrious ancestors on both sides of his family - the Hollands and the Hibberts.

She first told him about the chivalrous Black Prince, son of King Edward III, whose wife, the Fair Maid of Kent, was previously married to a Holland

ancestor. His dashing adventures fired the small boy's imagination and he listened attentively.

However when his grandmother told him that on the Hibbert side he was descended from a learned and witty old parson whose idea of heaven was eating patés de foie gras to the sound of trumpets, his attention wandered and he wondered what was for supper.

The family of Holland-Hibbert

Time passed over fifty years and although I had read three biographies of Sydney Smith I did not really take much interest in him until an incident a few years ago in Marrakech. I was recovering from jet lag beside the swimming pool of a hotel. My neighbour went indoors leaving a copy of *The Spectator* on the floor. I idly picked it up and looked through the pages. My astonished eye caught a letter from Alan Bell saying that an Association was about to be formed to perpetuate Sydney Smith's memory and achievements, in the 150th anniversary year of his death. So for a modest subscription fee I joined.

For Sydney Smith was the progenitor of the subsequent Holland-Hibbert family. His elder daughter Saba married in 1834 Dr, later Sir, Henry Holland as his second wife and she became stepmother of Harry Holland, later the 1st Viscount Knutsford.

Sydney's younger daughter Emily married in 1828 Nathaniel Hibbert of Munden in Hertfordshire. One of their three children was a daughter christened Elizabeth, but always called Lizzie.

Harry Holland was 27 when he married in 1852 Lizzie Hibbert, who was only 18 at the time. They were my great grandparents and although not blood relations they could be termed as half first cousins.

Harry and Lizzie had one daughter and twin sons. Tragically three weeks after giving birth to the twins Lizzie died in 1855, aged 21. Now, nearly 150 years later there are only nine members of my family who can claim to be direct descendants six generations back, of Sydney Smith.

So much for the dry facts and dates. I will recall however some personal intimate anecdotes and events interwoven between Sydney and his daughters and grandchildren.

Saba Holland

Sydney's elder daughter Saba, born in 1802, was called after a King in the 72nd Psalm on the grounds that anyone with the surname of Smith deserved to have uncommon Christian name by way of compensation. His choice of a man's name and an unusual one to say the least did not find favour with subsequent generations. My grandfather Arthur (one of the twins), who was a leading breeder of Labrador retrievers, called his best breeding bitch Saba since when the name has been confined to Labradors - indeed there is a Saba at Munden at present!

When Saba married as his second wife, Dr Henry Holland (created a Baronet in 1853) he was already 46 and had known his new father-in-law for a considerable time and they were good friends.

They both belonged to a small select dining club, singularly called The Club. This was a highly prestigious literary club founded in the 18th century by Samuel Johnson and David Garrick, and still flourishing today. Holland remarked that the peculiar faculties of his father-in-law were never more strikingly displayed than at the Club dinners.

The provocation to put forth wit, wisdom and learning was felt and fully answered and every dinner was enlivened by Sidney. His death in 1845 was not only a loss to London society but to the sound practical sense and conduct of English public life. The power and diversity of his wit was greater than that in any man I have ever known.

It was a coincidence that Lord Holland, the Whig host of Holland House was also a member of the Club. Although they shared the same name they were unrelated, for the former was Henry Fox, 3rd Baron Holland whereas Holland was Sir Henry's family name.

Sydney and his son-in-law often met dining at Holland House for the visitors there were not exclusively Whigs or politicians - 'indeed it was ever a matter of rejoicing to Lady Holland when she could catch a stray Tory to mingle with them.'

Emily Hibbert

Emily Smith, nicknamed Duck, was married in 1828 from Foston Rectory to Nathaniel Hibbert, a barrister on the northern circuit. His father George who had been briefly a Whig MP was the first Chairman of the West India Dock Company. He was a FRS and noted collector of the arts.

Nathaniel's mother Elizabeth Hibbert was a Fonnereau of Huguenot descent, a fact of obvious appeal to Sydney because his own mother Maria Olier was also the daughter of an exiled Huguenot. Elizabeth inherited from an uncle in the same year 1828 the house and small estate called Munden which lies beside the River Colne between Watford and St Albans. My forebears have owned Munden for four hundred years and now my son lives there with his young family.

Combe Florey

Nathaniel and Emily had a son and two daughters and when the children were small, the great event of the year was their summer visit to their grandparents at Combe Florey, which is in the foothills of the Quantocks in Somerset. The railway did not reach Taunton until later, so the journey of about 150 miles took three days on the road. The great excitement for the children was sleeping in inns and dining in the carriage as it bounced and swayed along the bumpy roads.

Most years they found Saba's two daughters - Caroline and Gertrude - also staying with their grandparents which was fun as the five children were within eight years of each other in age. It is sad to record however that of those five children, only Lizzie Hibbert, my great grandmother, had issue.

At Combe Florey life was fairly quiet and regular. In the course of the day, particularly if it was wet Sydney would send the little girls into his Library

to play funny games, 'Pull basket' or 'Naughty girl, get out of the room', but the greatest treat was to have Thomas, the footman, in with his fiddle, and to dance, in which Grandpapa himself would join with all his heart and being very fat with real effort. After all he was in his late sixties.

In the evening after dinner Lizzie Hibbert and her sister Katie used to sit at the Library table, each with a thick copy book and immense red pencils given them by their Grandpapa.

At times five children staying in the rectory was too much of a good thing - 'all in a dreadful state of perspiration and screaming.' Sydney liked girls better than boys - 'all little boys ought to be put to death' - so it was perhaps fortunate that Parker Hibbert was his only grandson.

Sydney was especially fond of Saba's elder daughter Caroline, known affectionately as Coo. Coo was a thoughtful child with a poetic and precociously intelligent streak. One morning Sydney was walking in the garden with his arms behind his back clutching his faithful black crutch-stick. (My grandfather Arthur always carried his stick in the same position so perhaps he gained the habit from his great grandfather!). He heard Coo roaring in an upstairs bedroom. Saba explained that the child was unable to grasp some detail about the lives of the ancient Hebrews. Coo was only four! Sydney smiled to himself, continued his walk, but two hours later was found in his library, surrounded by maps and books, with Coo perched on his knee.

Another amusing incident involving Coo occurred. There was, at the time, a fashion for keeping giant turtles. Sydney and Coo visited some friends to look at them. While the grown-ups were talking, Coo went out into the garden and began eagerly to stroke the turtle. Sydney followed her out, bent down and whispered in her ear 'Why are you doing that?' 'Oh to please the turtle' replied Coo. Sydney's face was wreathed in smiles. 'Why child, you might as well stroke the dome of St Paul's to please the Dean and Chapter.'

Munden

Nathaniel and Emily moved into Munden after his mother's death in 1841, which was only four years before Sydney Smith died. Munden has plenty of spacious rooms, the river running by and a large garden ideal for children. Furthermore it is only twenty miles from Hyde Park Corner and Sydney habitually spent eight months of the year in London - at 56, Green Street, near Grosvenor Square.

It was natural therefore that the Hibberts often invited Saba and her Holland family with their parents to stay at Munden. The elder of Saba's two stepsons was Harry. Emily writes in 1840: 'I happened to tell Lizzie that Harry Holland was coming to stay a few days with us and that I had no doubt he would play with her and read to her. Her face brightened all over at the notion'. He would have been 15 and Lizzie only six.

Over the years, Harry's visits to Munden became ever more frequent and his affection for Lizzie soon blossomed into love. Lizzie grew into a lively, original and sweet tempered girl with a sense of fun and good humour inherited from her grandfather, Sydney. She shared a taste for drawing and yet more for singing in a beautiful soprano voice.

Both Harry and Lizzie's parents were worried that Lizzie 'was too young to make up her mind and has seen few young men' and it was not at all certain that Dr Holland would give his son, a struggling barrister, a marriage allowance.

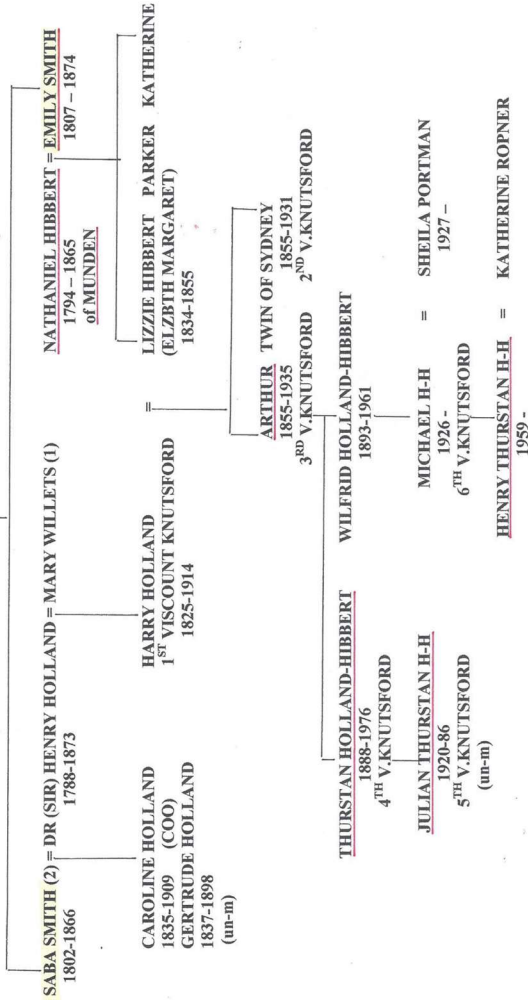
However, the young couple's radiant and confident love for each other overcame any misgivings. Dr Holland would give his son 'an income which together with Lizzie's fortune made up an amount which was thought to justify an establishment for life'.

At Munden was spent the last Christmas of 1851 before the break-up of the family party when Saba, Emily and their families went to Church, sang and dressed up to play charades.

In the following August 1852, Harry and Lizzie were married in Aldenham church. A daughter, Edith, was born the next year followed by the twins, Sydney and Arthur in 1855. Two weeks later Lizzie was taken ill and after a further week she died at the age of 21. The younger twin by five minutes was Arthur, my grandfather.

DESCENDANTS OF SYDNEY SMITH

SYDNEY SMITH = CATHARINE PYBUS
1771 - 1845 1776 - 1852



owner of Munden

Deirdre Bryan-Brown

Colin Southall

I shall remember Deirdre for her huge enthusiasm for Sydney Smith. It was always a pleasure to meet her at London lunches and at the annual meetings.

In October 2018 Deirdre wrote a script of excerpts from biographies of Sydney Smith with snippets from his letters and invited Simon Jones to read them to members gathered for the October lunch at Boisedale. Simon has an illustrious career in the theatre, from student days with 'Footlights' in Cambridge to the BBC and West End theatres, also memorable on TV as Lord Brideshead in 'Brideshead Revisited'. He remembered seeing The Smith of Smiths on his father's bookshelf and much enjoyed reading the selected items.



Seated round the table in the photograph are Simon Jones, Deirdre Bryan Brown, Sian Phillips, Nick Frankfort, Angela Bryan-Brown, Nicholas Faith, Celia Moreton-Prichard, Robin Price, Helen Chamberlain, Colin Southall, Nancy Lewis and David Chamberlain.

At another lunch Deirdre recounted the story of Sydney Smith's trip to New York and the furore this caused there following the publication of his petition to Congress and letters to the Morning Chronicle concerning Pennsylvanian's decision to default on their debts.

Sydney Smith in Bristol 1828-1831

Paul Main, CHIS Committee member

Sydney Smith was appointed as prebend at Bristol Cathedral in February 1828 and took up residence in Bristol in March. Addresses on his letters appear as 18 and 10 College Green and Lower College Green.

My research at the Bristol Reference Library and Bristol Archives has reviewed the following sources:

1. Record of rentals of the Dean & Chapter of Bristol Michaelmas 1827 to Michaelmas 1831: Indicate that he had a 'piece of Garden Ground in College Green', 'rooms against his Prebendal house' and he had '1 years stipend £20 & for residence £2 total £22', from Michaelmas 1828 to Michaelmas 1830.

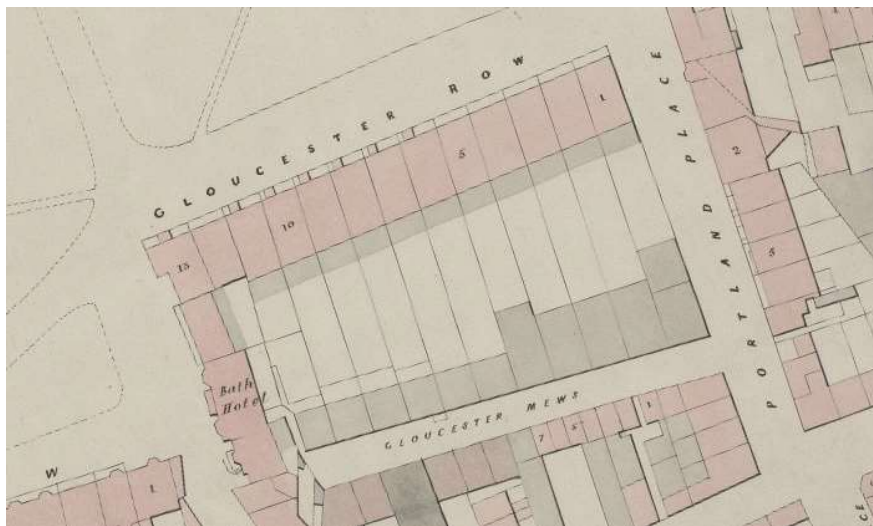
Note: for 1830-1831 his name was crossed out & Rev H Harvey inserted for College Green - this was the year that he left Bristol Cathedral and was installed as Residentiary Canon at St Paul's Cathedral, London on 27th September 1831.

2. Historical Maps in the Bristol Reference Library and Bristol Archives: None of the many maps show a Gloucester Place in Clifton.

3. Poor Rates of Clifton Parish 1829-1831:

- Gloucester Row 1-12:
 - There is no mention of Rev Sydney Smith.
 - Mary Phillpott is the occupier of 8, Gloucester Row.
 - John Lewis Auriol, who built the Clifton Assembly Rooms and Hotel, now the Clifton Club, lived at 12, Gloucester Row.
 - Susanna Morgan, a reformer and campaigner for poor relief, lived at 1, Gloucester Row in the first half of 1829.
- Gloucester Place 1-4:
 - The Bath Hotel was at 2, Gloucester Place which was also called Little Gloster Place.

4. Poll Book for 1830: No mention of Sydney Smith.



George Ashmead's 1855 map of Bristol

So from my researches in the Bristol Reference Library and Bristol Archives I can find no evidence of an 8, Gloucester Place, just 8, Gloucester Row.

The Sydney Smith Association has a letter dated January 1831 in which his correspondence is addressed as 8 Gloucester Place, Clifton.

The late Dr Donald Jones in his *A History of Clifton* (2008) states on page 147 that the Rev Sydney Smith lived at 8, Gloucester Row, Clifton, Bristol.

In *Miss Ann Green of Clifton* by E W Baker (1936) on page 183: 'Mr James Sharples called to ask if Miss Green and Miss Ashworth would accompany him and his sister to the Cathedral on November the fifth to hear the eminent divine, the Reverend Sydney Smith, preach. It was the annual sermon on Guy Fawkes Day, when it was customary to preach against the Roman Catholics and in favour of the Protestant Cause.' And later on page 217: 'Norton Lane left Mrs Sharples at the same time as the Prebendary Sydney Smith. They walked across the close green turf of the Downs together, to the Prebendary's lodging in Gloucester Row'.

Also in the book *Concerning Clifton* by A J Green-Armytage (1922) she writes 'Sydney Smith the witty canon of St Paul's lived at 8, Gloucester Row when he was a Canon of Bristol Cathedral in 1828'.

I think that he was renting while was a canon at Bristol Cathedral though his parish was at Combe Florey.

I have recently discovered in Timothy Mowl's book *To Build the Second City* (1991) on page 120, talking about the York House Hotel and Tavern, 'It was sited in 'Glo'ster Place, the present Gloucester Row.' I have spoken to Prof Mowl and he is certain about this.

The Bristol Reference Library helpfully suggest: 'Perhaps Place and Row were interchangeable? Portland Place runs alongside Gloucester Row - someone whose main residence was not Bristol may have put Place rather than Row on correspondence?'

In a letter to Lady Holland dated 17th February 1828 Sydney Smith says:

My dear Lady Holland,

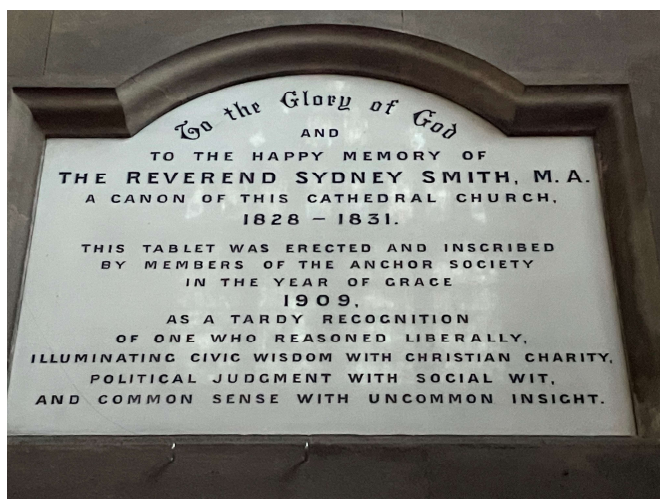
...The colleagues I have found here are a Mr Ridley, cousin to Sir Matthew; a very good natured, agreeable man, - deaf, tottering, worldly-minded, vain as a lawyer, noisy and perfectly good-natured

and obliging. The little Dean I have not seen; he is as small as the Bishop, they say. It is supposed that one of these ecclesiastics elevated upon the shoulders of the other, would fall short of the Archbishop of Canterbury's wig. The Archbishop of York is forced to go down on his knees to converse with the Bishop of Bristol, just as an elephant kneels to receive its rider...

My theory is that he took rooms in Clifton, perhaps because he found the company more congenial and stimulating than the members of the Cathedral Chapter.

Regarding the address the only Gloucester Place (also named Little Gloucester Place) was numbers 1-4 round the corner from Gloucester Row. And number 2 was the Bath Hotel. All of this is now Bridge House. The only evidence of Gloucester Place is from the Poor Rates of Clifton Parish 1829-1831. There is no evidence of a change of terrace name and I suspect he made a mistake as he was only in Clifton when his Cathedral duties required him to be in Bristol.

The Anchor Society erected a plaque in the cathedral in 1909 to commemorate Sydney's achievements.



Source: Paul Main

Cisalpine Club Salver



In 2024 the British Museum acquired at auction a salver presented to Charles Turvile, the secretary and treasurer of the Cisalpine Club, on 28th April 1830 on the day of its dissolution. Having lobbied for the full political emancipation of Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom for nearly half a century, the Club's goal had been reached when royal assent was granted to the 1829 Emancipation Act seven days earlier on 13th April. Among the members listed on the salver is Charles Philip Stourton.

From the Archives - Letters from 1824

Sydie Bones

The letters published in the new 1855 edition of the *Memoir and Letters* were edited by Mrs Sarah Austin at the request of Mrs Sydney Smith after her husband's death.

Sarah Austin (1793-1867) was an English editor and linguist, noted mainly for her translations of German language books into English. In her early married life, she moved in an intellectual social circle in London and her first works were sent to the *Edinburgh Review* by an American author, John Neal. Mrs Austen does not reveal how she came to know the family, only that she received repeated requests from Mrs Smith to undertake the editing of the letters, which had been selected by and put into date order by Mrs Smith. Further guidance was given by Sydney's daughter, Lady Holland, who went on to provide 'the mass of letters out of which I had to choose' after Mrs Smith's death.

Seven letters are dated 1824, written between August and November, none of which is included in Nowell C. Smith's selection of 1956. Three are to Edward Davenport, Esq.:

My dear Davenport,

Foston, August 28, 1824

I did not write one syllable of Hall's book. When first he showed me his manuscript, I told him it would not do; it was too witty and brilliant. He then wrote it over again, and I told him it would do very well; and it has done very well. He is a very painstaking person. ...

I hear your sister is going with a multitude of Berrys and Lindsays to Scotland. I hope she will be retained if we get leave to visit your papa.

Yours, my dear Davenport, very truly,

My dear Davenport

October 1, 1824

I am very sorry there should be any mistake as to the day; ... - the day mentioned was from 15th to dinner, till the morning of the 17th. You will smile at this precision; but I find, from long experience, that I am never so well received, as when I state to my host the brief duration of his sorrows and embarrassments. Upon the same principle, young speakers conciliate favour by declaring they do not mean to detain the House a long time.

Great expectations are formed of your speech. The report is that you apostrophise the shades of Hampden and Brutus. ...

My dear Davenport

November, 1824

Political economy has become in the hands of Malthus and Ricardo, a school of metaphysics. ... Meddle with no such matters. Write the lives of the principal Italian poets ... this is the task I assign you.

The Berrys are slowly rising in this part of the world; I hear of them eighty miles off, and their track begins to be pointed out. People are out on the hills with their glasses. I have written to ask them to Foston. Our visit succeeded very well at Knowsley. The singing of the children was admired, and we all found Derbus and Derbe very kind and attentive. What principally struck me was the magnificence of the dining room, and the goodness of heart both of the master and mistress; - to which add, the ugliness of the country!

I am sorry to hear you are likely to have the gout again. Let it be a comfort to you to reflect, that I, who have no gout, have not an acre of land upon the face of the earth.

...I have read over your letter again. If the object of writing essays on political economy is to amuse yourself, of course, there can be no objection; but my opinion is (and I will never deceive in literary matters) you will do the other much better. If you have a mind for a frolic over the mountains, you know how glad I shall be to see you.

Knowsley Hall, on Merseyside, is the home of the Earls of Derby.

To Francis Jeffrey, Esq.:

My dear Jeffrey

September 23, 1824

If you mean that my article itself is light and scanty, I agree to that; reminding you that lightness and flimsiness are my line of reviewing. If you mean that my notice of M's book is scanty, that is also true; for I think the book is very ill done: still, it is done by an honest, worthy man, who has neither bread nor butter. How can I be true under such circumstances?

To the Countess Grey:

My dear Lady Grey

Foston, Oct23, 1824

I am just come from a visit to Lord Fitzwilliam, that best of old noblemen! I was never there before. Nothing could exceed his kindness

and civility. The author of the 'Paradise Lost' was there also. I am surprised that I had heard so little of the magnificence of Wentworth House. It is one of the finest buildings I ever saw - twice as great a front as Castle Howard! And how magnificent is their hall! ...

I have sent Bishop Doyle a list of errors commonly and unjustly imputed to the Catholics, and more and more believed for want of proper contradiction, requesting him to publish and circulate a denial of them signed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. It would be a very useful paper for general circulation. He writes word it shall be done.

God bless you, dear Lady Grey!

The Unpublished Letters on the Association's website contain a considerable collection written in 1824, too many to reproduce in full. The following is a small selection of extracts which may tempt members to explore the website and read them.

To Mrs Hicks Beach,

4 January

Mrs Sydney keeps good health, as I do - I have a moderate living, and another good one to hold for nine years. My parsonage is extremely comfortable, and I am full of spirits and talk. In short, happy enough.

To Francis Wrangham,

6th March

There is an hatter at the corner of Ousegate - be so good as to give his advice upon the important question of an Hat for the Assizes for me. It should I fancy be a mere manual one - I will not have a shovel ...

To Thomas Moore,

5th June

I have always thought the praise of honest, and enlightened men of more value than a Bishopric, and I shall keep Captain's book and his critical commendation as a piece of moral preferment ...

To Lady Mary Shepherd,

9th June

I have read your book, and of course I think your position right, and those of your adversaries wrong - but whether you have arrived at right conclusions by logical arguments I really cannot decide for I find the question above me with the moderate degree of attention I am able to bestow upon it. I have not the slightest alteration to propose.

Lady Shepherd was a philosopher, author of 'Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect.'

To Richard Heber,

20th August

When my merits are properly understood and rewarded in the Church, I will subscribe to the Athenaeum - or any other

club you please - but I have not risen at present (nor will I ever rise) beyond Mutton Chops and the Grays Inn Coffee House - Many thanks of the intended Honour.

Heber was a founder member of the Athenaeum.

To Sir Robert Peel,

30th August

If I prosecute this man it will cost me 60 or 70 pounds - nor is there any power in the Quarter Sessions to allow me my Expenses. The man therefore escapes with impunity. Surely it would be a great improvement if two magistrates concurring in the indictment of a constable could be allowed their expenses ...

Following an incident when Sydney had discovered a man poisoning cattle.

To the 11th Duke of Somerset,

17th September

It will give me great pleasure to visit you when I come to Town. ... I am a very honest diner out - and never break an engagement I have accepted for one later and more agreeable - and this I am sure you will

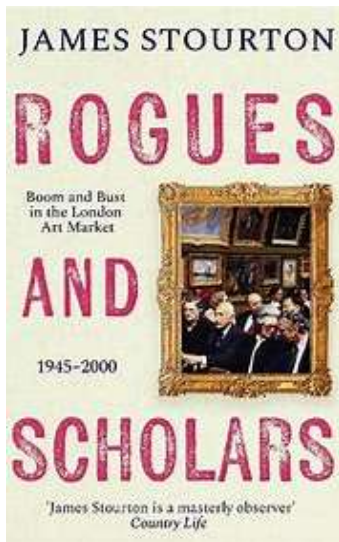
allow to be the morality of Epulation - the good faith of banqueting - high and virtuous principle applied to Fish and Soup.

The letters from October to December all relate to a dispute between Sydney and the Rev. C.R. Read in which Lord Carlisle had been asked to mediate. Alan Bell's biography of Sydney Smith captures the spirit of this correspondence:

The volume of Sydney's letters contains a slip of paper reading 'Words stated by Mr Read to Lord Carlisle to have been used by Mr Smith at a Justice Meeting at Malton - "Sir, if you raise your voice and do not hold your noise I shall say something which you will not easily forget".' This refers to a minor but exaggerated altercation between Sydney and the Revd C.R. Read of Sand Hutton in the autumn of 1824. Lord Carlisle was asked to act as mediator and the opinions of several witnesses were collected. The original complaint which produced the 'words' seems to have been the charge that Sydney had referred to some of his fellow Turnpike Trustees as 'the nine enemies of McAdam' in the press. ... Sydney was alleged to have replied very brusquely when challenged by Read. ... There was some feeling that Sydney was exceeding his station. Colonel Cholmeley of Brandsby wrote to Read that 'I think that a clergyman residing in the county, without an acre of land in the county belonging to him, ought to know better than to attempt to be a leading character in county business'. Sydney showed his own indignation in his letters to Lord Carlisle ... and concluded 'I pass over the expressions of violent and unmannerly abuse in Mr Read's letter, so common among quarrelling clergymen. As I cannot risk my life for this sort of language, I never use it'. The affair eventually faded away, thanks to Lord Carlisle's rather amused intervention.

(Alan Bell: *Sydney Smith*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980)

Rogues and Scholars



In September 2024 James Stourton, a Patron of the Association, published *Rogues and Scholars*, a history of the London art market from 1945-2000. It is a fascinating story of the changing fortunes of dealers, auction houses and artists, fuelled by the sale of country house contents built up over hundreds of years, and disrupted by the internet. This is a story of the individuals active in markets for art, antiques, porcelain, silver and antiquities, and relates the lengths some participants went to in order to secure a sale or purchase. James Holland-Hibbert is mentioned as a seller of modern art 'at the highest level.'

THE SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the AGM - 13th September 2024

The AGM was held at Munden. Seven members present.

Apologies: Arnold Arthurs, Sydie Bones, Sylvie Diggle, Robin Price, Ifan and Dorothy Williams.

The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked The Viscount Knutsford and Henry and Kate Holland-Hibbert for hosting the Association at Munden, and Jeremy Cunningham.

-
- **Minutes** of the 2023 AGM were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.
 - **Points Arising:** The scanning of Sydney's Commonplace Book by the British Library has been delayed. An alternative provider has been identified, and it is hoped that a high resolution scan will be completed in November at New College library. These images will be loaded to the website in due course.
 - **Chairman's Report:** The Chairman was pleased to report that two lunches were held in London and one in York. The website continues to generate enquiries and requests for membership. Further to the discussion concerning the Association at the last AGM, New College would be interested to receive original documents but not derivative works (contact Michael Stansfield, New College archivist for details), and could hold an archive copy of the Association's website.
 - **Treasurer's Report:** At the beginning of 2024 £6,328 was held in the Association bank account. Payments and Receipts for 2023 - as shown on the simple accounts - do not fully reflect activity for the year as several transactions were not completed until 2024. Subscription income fell from £1,274 in 2022 to £1,174 in 2023 but remains adequate to cover the costs of the newsletter and the website which total about £800 a year, leaving a surplus for donations.
 - **Membership:** Currently there are 83 paid up members and 7 inactive members. Two new members joined during the year.
 - **Lunches:** Two lunches were held in London and one lunch was held in York. It is hoped that a West Country lunch can be organised in the autumn. The Chairman thanked Sydnie Bones and Graham Frater for their work in organising West Country and York lunches.
 - **Newsletter:** The Chairman thanked Sydnie Bones for her work on the newsletter, and thanked members for their contributions.

-
- **Website:** Enquiries via the website continue to request or provide information about Sydney and requests for membership. We received a print of a portrait of Sydney Smith which was owned by Robert Holtby, Dean of Chichester from 1977 to 1989, who was a member of the Association for many years.
 - **Election of Officers and Trustees:** All Officers and Trustees have expressed their willingness to stand again for the coming year. They are: Chairman and Secretary (Colin Southall), Treasurer (Harry Yoxall), Arnold Arthurs, Sydie Bones, Jeremy Cunningham and Robin Price (Trustees).
 - **AGM 2026:** A lunch will be organised in Bristol to coincide with the CHIS plaque unveiling in the autumn on a date yet to be determined.
 - **Any Other Business:** None.

Financial Report for year ending 31 December 2023

Income	£1,174
Expenditure	£1,909
Closing balance	<u>£5,593</u>

Harry Yoxall, Hon. Treasurer, Sydney Smith Association
1st September 2024

Association News

Luncheon Dates

York: Graham Frater arranged a well attended lunch in York in September 2024. A change of venue was required when the original booking was summarily cancelled by the restaurant. Colin Southall gave a short talk about Ballot, the pamphlet against secret voting which Sydney published in 1839 much to the delight of the Tories. It is hoped that a further lunch can be organised in 2025.

West Country: Sydie Bones organised a lunch for West Country members during the summer as Malcolm Flower-Smith reports:

On 27th September 2024 Sydie put out a call (an e-mail) to South West members to meet Colin Southall our Chairman at a lunch on Wednesday 23rd October. Colin was on a visit to Devon and had expressed a wish to meet Sidney Smith members whist down here. Those of us within striking distance of the Tytherleigh Arms answered the call. Eight including Colin and his partner Jeanette sat down to a splendid lunch. The members attending had all met previously at a similar meeting with Colin so we all settled down like old friends and conversation flowed easily. Present were Henry Yoxall his wife Nicola, Charlotte Willson-Pepper, Priscilla and Malcolm Flower-Smith and Sydie. A wide range of topics were covered around the table from non-alcoholic beers and Guinness, to Forestry and the Northern Lights via the traffic on the A303 passing through the Blackdown Hills. Despite keeping 'an ear out' whilst talking to my neighbour I have to report that the name of Sydney Smith was not heard! *(Ed: I came prepared to talk about Sydney's Ballot pamphlet, but circumstances mitigated against this. Next time!)*

London: Three London lunches were held at Boisdale over the past year: in March 2024, August 2024 and February 2025. Further lunches are planned for the autumn 2025 and spring 2026.

Website

The website continues to generate a number of enquiries, some of which have provided interesting information on Sydney's activities. Please let Sydie Bones or Colin Southall know if you spot any errors or omissions and we will work to get them corrected.

Newsletter

Please contact Sydie Bones or Colin Southall if you find any potential material for next year's newsletter.

You must not think me necessarily foolish because I am facetious, nor will I consider you necessarily wise because you are grave

