

The Sydney Smith Association Newsletter

Issue 17 May 2012

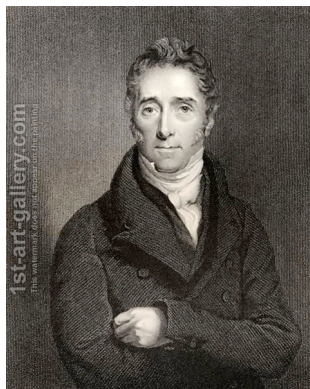
AGM WEEKEND IN EDINBURGH 22/23 SEPTEMBER

The Association returns to Edinburgh for our AGM this September. Detailed arrangements are explained in the enclosed booking form, which we ask you to return by July 1st.

A busy Saturday begins at 10.30am in the impressively refurbished Scottish National Portrait Gallery at Queen Street. Following coffee we shall have a conducted tour of the Gallery and then a private dining room, the AK Bell Room, will be ours for the 2012 AGM to be followed by lunch in the Gallery's Snug at 12.30pm. *[Editors' Note: AK Bell, as in the whisky distillers Arthur Bell and Sons, and one of Scotland's leading philanthropists.]*

In the afternoon a coach will take us from the Gallery to Newhailes where we will be welcomed by Association member Adam Fergusson who will give us a personal account – Fergusson was the heir to the house – of how the estate came to be presented to the National Trust for Scotland.

We quote now from the National Trust for Scotland's excellent guide to Newhailes, reprinted in 2010: 'This fascinating house was home from 1709 to the influential Dalrymple dynasty, who gave the house its important library and its superb interiors, and created its intricate designed landscapes. But almost three centuries later, its existence was threatened. The family, aware of the significance of their home, were determined to keep it intact despite the increasing burdens of taxation, repairs and maintenance. The estate trustees urged the National Trust for Scotland to save the house and estate, primarily to prevent the dispersal of an outstanding collection of works of art from their original setting. With the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Arts Collection Fund and private donations, the Trust finally succeeded in acquiring Newhailes in 1997.'



Colvin Smith's 1835 portrait
of the 'contemptible' Lord
Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850)

At 7.30pm on the Saturday evening we dine at the Royal Over-Seas League Club in Princes Street. We are delighted to say that our after-dinner speaker will be Will

Christie, Professor of English Literature at the University of Sydney. Awarded his D.Phil by the University of Oxford in 1982, Christie says his supervisor, Jonathan Wordsworth, refused to read anything he had to say about Francis Jeffrey and The Edinburgh Review on the grounds that Jeffrey was simply 'contemptible' and not worth the time of day. With the aid of two major grants from the Australian Research Council, he is currently researching a critical biography of Jeffrey and a major study and website dedicated to *The Edinburgh Review*, on which he will speak to the Association.

Sunday's programme begins at 9.30am with Choral Matins in St John's Church at the West End of Princes Street, reportedly the last church in Scotland to hold the weekly service of Matins. A short walk after the service will take us to Charlotte Square, the north side of which was designed by Robert Adam in 1791, where another National Trust property, quite different from Newhailes, is The Georgian House at Number 7. In 1973 the Trust decided to convert the ground and first floor and basement into a Georgian show house displayed and arranged as it might have been when the house was first occupied in 1796.

We must reluctantly end our weekend: at midday, only a short distance away, lunch can be taken at Browns Brasserie, 131-133 George Street.

OUR CHAIRMAN SIGNS OFF

Randolph Vigne writes: Having decided to stand down as chairman at the AGM last September, after 12 years as successor to our founding chairman, Alan Bell, I shall be very happy to propose as our next chairman Jeremy Cunningham, known to many of us who enjoyed his company in Sidmouth.

For 18 years Jeremy was head teacher at, successively, two comprehensive schools in Oxfordshire. Since retirement in 2005 he has continued, as his Open University entry tells us, his activities, since the 1970s, 'in citizenship and human rights education and has written about student participation, school ethos and fair disputes processes'.

His 1986 M.Phil was from the University of York, a link with Sydney, whose first Yorkshire home was at Heslington, now the heart of the university. He is also Sydney's three times great-grandson (and the nephew of our patron Lord Knutsford).

Jeremy's career and research studies are based on concepts which, in their modern terminology, would have been unknown to Sydney. Nevertheless Sydney's passionate avowal of the need for educational reform in his day surely indicates a common gene. He puts it more simply in a brief note in which Jeremy tells us, 'I

studied history at Oxford and my interest in family history took me to Sydney Smith. I admire his tolerant social views and his campaigns for fairness in many areas of society, as well, of course, as his wit and excellent writing style.'

Sydney wrote, after Catholic Emancipation became law in 1829: 'I rejoice in the temple which has been raised to Toleration and am proud that I worked as a bricklayer's labourer at it.' Jeremy Cunningham, who has worked at more of a worthy foreman's level for toleration in other spheres, means, if elected, to spread Sydney's fame, outlook and ideals through such channels as the internet which would have surely baffled his forebear.

I shall be very pleased to nominate Jeremy as chairman on 22 September - with the Association secretary Sydie Bones as seconder. Other nominees may, of course, be proposed, giving notice to Sydie a month before the meeting.

JAMES PATRICK WALSH (1941-2011) – *businessman, philanthropist, owner of the Good Reverend's Foston rectory, and generous trustee of the Sydney Smith Association*

Jim Walsh came to his role as an entrepreneur late in life: he had started as a salesman with a pub entertainment company before setting up a security firm and then a not very successful pool-table business in Portugal. But it was establishing the Tadcaster-based Commer Group in 1989, a £500 company that provided temporary management cover for a single pub in Leeds, which made Jim's reputation. Commer grew into a £400 million concern in just over 20 years.



Jim Walsh: guardian of Sydney's rectory

'The only thing small about Jim was his stature,' the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers chief executive Nick Bish told the pub-trade newspaper *Morning Advertiser*. 'He had a larger than life personality and super-abundant energy that transmitted itself to every venture he was involved in during his roller-coaster career. He was a generous and loyal friend to those who worked with him, for him or were connected in any other way.'

His son Edward, who now heads Commer, said his father's background meant he never lost sight of his responsibility to help others: 'His success brought with it an increased sense of responsibility to give to those less fortunate than himself and also to those who had helped him along the way. He was a regular and generous benefactor to numerous charities in the region.'

Jim was particularly devoted to The Princes Trust and Groundwork Selby, roles which he took extremely seriously, and gave generously to many causes including St Gemma's Hospice, where he died in August. A requiem mass and celebration of his life was held at Ampleforth Abbey with more than 300 in attendance.

Sylvie Diggle, a friend and neighbour, writes: When Jim bought the Old Rectory, Foston, ten years ago he had no idea of its connection with Sydney Smith. It was thanks to Jim's passion for the house that the Old Rectory was beautifully restored with no expense spared. In recent years Jim had begun assembling books and other printed material on Sydney and his times: these he hoped in due course to share with fellow Sydney enthusiasts. Jim was a kind and quietly hospitable man: he valued these qualities in Sydney, and as a Roman Catholic admired his political campaigning for Catholic Emancipation. He is greatly missed in the village.

* It is also with great sadness that the Editors report the passing of Isobel Arnold, of Stokesley, North Yorkshire, who died in November 2011 aged 93. Isobel had been a member of the Association since its foundation.

MINUTES OF THE SIDMOUTH AGM

17 September 2011

The Chairman, Randolph Vigne, welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting held at the Belmont Hotel, Sidmouth. He informed the meeting that Jim Walsh, a stalwart patron of the Association, had died and that an obituary would appear in the Newsletter.

- Apologies had been received from Mary Beaumont, Alan Bell, Mary Rose Blacker, Deirdre Bryan-Brown, Charlie Charters, Frank Collieson, Celia Moreton-Prichard, Graham Parry, Diana Shervington, Dennis and Diana Silk, Joan Trower, Janet Unwin and Mark Wade.
- Minutes of the 2010 AGM, printed in the May *Newsletter*, were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.
- Points arising: none.
- The Treasurer presented a healthy financial statement for the year 2010 which has been submitted to the Charity Commission. Subscriptions amounted to £1986 to which Gift Aid tax recovery had added a further £186.
 - Interim figures for the current year, which runs to the end of 2011, show receipts from subscriptions, Gift Aid and donations of £2223 compared with £2574 for the whole of the previous year. After deduction of outstanding expenses, the projected end-of-year balance is in the region of £6000.

- The committee recommended the following donations: £1500 to the church at Foston which is facing acute financial problems; and £500 to the church at Combe Florey; also that increased expenditure be committed to improving the website. (The trustees were subsequently advised that a donation of £1000 to Combe Florey was affordable and they raised the Association's donation accordingly.)
- The Treasurer's Report and proposals were adopted by a unanimous show of hands, and accepted nem con. The Treasurer was thanked for his Report.
- Membership remains steady at 237, including a number who do not pay their subscription regularly. Membership fees remain: £15 single, £20 double.
- *Newsletter*: the Chairman expressed the Association's appreciation of Charlie Charters' excellent *Newsletter*, and encouraged members to contribute more articles and comments.
- Committee – Existing members have agreed to stand for re-election: Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Alan Bell, Sylvie Diggle, Graham Parry, Peter Payan and Norman Taylor. Jeremy Cunningham, proposed in committee by Randolph Vigne and seconded by Sydnie Bones, has agreed to join the Trustees. Agreed nem con.

Before closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked the Treasurer, Secretary and Membership Secretary for their work throughout the year. He then introduced the Right Reverend Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter, who had been invited to be the guest lecturer, and we reproduce the Chairman's welcome address below:

Welcoming Bishop Michael

'It's a great pleasure to welcome our guests and I must ask their forgiveness for naming only one of them – the Lord Bishop of Exeter, who will be speaking to us after our very brief Annual General Meeting.

'We are very glad to have you with us, Bishop Michael, and we hope our coming together will do something to heal the breach between your predecessor Bishop Phillpotts, and Sydney Smith who spoke so ill of him – I won't quote his words: I'm sure you will.



**Rt. Rev. Michael Langrish,
Bishop of Exeter**

‘May I just add that this hotel is a few hundred yards from a local landmark called Clifton Cottage, below which, right on the beach, once stood a few small dwellings, one of them the home of Dame Partington, whom Sydney put into English folklore by recalling her response to the great storm of 1824.

‘Opposing the House of Lords’ attempt to halt the passing of the great Reform Bill of 1832, he said, in a speech in Taunton, and please forgive me for repeating Sydney’s well-known words:

In the midst of this sublime and terrible storm, Dame Partington, who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house, with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, squeezing out the sea-water and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean.

The Atlantic Ocean was roused and Mrs Partington’s spirit was up, but I need not tell you that the contest was unequal, the Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs Partington.

‘I am quoting from a blog called ‘Thinking Anglicans’ which the Sidmouth Library kindly downloaded for me yesterday. The case was made by the Rt Revd Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham, in the *Church Times* that

Confronted by the new wave of communication technologies that confront us, some Christians will reach for the mop and pail, others will just keep calm and carry on. A few will go sailing, seeing the Atlantic as the way to a new world.

‘I thought it would amuse you, and Bishop Michael, to know that Sydney Smith and Dame Partington are still with us today. I am sure you’ll agree with me that Sydney would have supported Bishop Alan Wilson, perhaps with a deflating witty aside, and would be among the few to sail the Atlantic. We honour him accordingly, as we remember him at our Annual General Meeting.’

‘HENRY OF EXETER’: an excerpt from a lecture by Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter, on his predecessor Henry Phillpotts (1778-1869), England’s longest serving bishop since the fourteenth century.

It's good to be here with you in Sidmouth, a place that Sydney Smith loved to visit with his family. He described it as ‘*a marine paradise*’. He rented a house so close to the sea that, he said, ‘*The noise of persons chattering French on the opposite coast is heard, and flatfish and mackerel have been known to leap into the drawing-room.*’

With such a fanciful description of this part of the then vast diocese of Exeter, which covered the whole of Devon and Cornwall, it would be interesting to know what Sydney Smith made of its Bishop. Smith himself, of course, moved to the West Country to become the incumbent of Combe Florey in Somerset in 1829, a year before the appointment of Henry Phillpotts to be Bishop of Exeter, a position he was to hold for the next 39 years, making him England's longest serving bishop since the 14th century, and becoming certainly one of the most striking figures of the 19th-century church.

Smith was not always a great fan of bishops, for much of his own ministry seeing them as time-serving supporters of a reactionary Tory government. *'The liberality of churchmen generally is like the quantity of matter in a cone – both get less and less as they move higher.'* There is, of course, some debate as to whether he should have been a bishop himself. In fact, two years before his death Sydney said to a visitor in his garden at Combe Florey: *'They showed a want of moral courage in not making me a Bishop, but I must own that it required a good deal. They know, you know, all who have lived and talked much with me must know, that I should have devoted myself heart and soul to my duties, and that the Episcopal dignity would have sustained no loss in my keeping. But I have only myself to blame if I have been misunderstood.'*



**Henry Phillpotts: England's longest serving
bishop since the 14th century**

Actually, for most of his adult life the Tory party was in power, and with his constant fighting against those whom he saw as 'Tory' bishops, intent on increasing their powers even while they were hoping to make reforms in the church; and preferring principle to promotion, he remained a country parson. Of course it might be said that living with principle was also easy, whilst no Tory Prime Minister was likely to recommend him. However, there were two opportunities, with Whig or Liberal governments, in which he might have been advanced to the Episcopal bench.

On 24 January 1831 he wrote this to J A Murray: *'I think Lord Grey will give me some preferment if he stays in long enough – but the Upper Parsons live Vindictively – and evince their aversion to a Whig Ministry by an improved health – the Bishop of Ely has the rancour to recover after three paralytic strokes – and the Dean of Lichfield to be vigorous at 82 – and yet these are the men who are called Christians!'*

Three deaths – but no place for Sydney

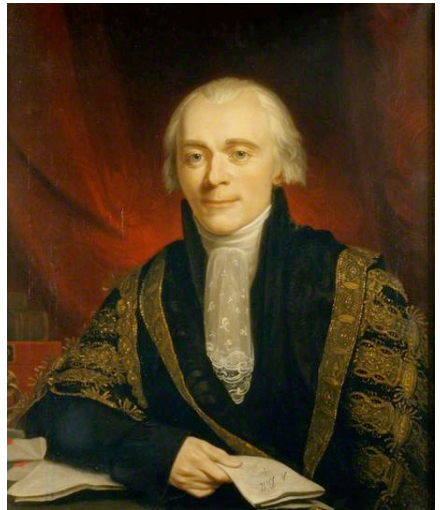
A few years later in 1836 a brief interval with a Whig government, and the death of three bishops in six weeks, provided a real opportunity to elevate Sydney to the episcopate. It was not to be. Lord Melbourne shirked the uproar that might ensue, although he was later reported as saying that *'few things filled me with more regret than not putting Sydney on the bench'*.

To what extent it was from principle, or from his own being passed over from preferment, Sydney Smith continued to be resolute in opposing any increase of powers given to bishops within the church.

Among his papers is a letter to the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval on a subject connected with a bill under discussion in Parliament for improving the situation of stipendiary curates, in which he wrote this: *'Our first and greatest objection to such a measure, is the increase of power which it gives the bench of bishops, – an evil which may produce the most serious effects, by placing the whole body of the clergy under the absolute control of men who are themselves so much under the influence of the Crown. It is useless to talk of the power they anciently possessed. They have never possessed it since England has been what it is now. Since we have enjoyed practically a free constitution, the bishops have, in point of fact, possessed little or no power of oppression over their clergy.'*

And then, in an 1810 article in *The Edinburgh Review* he had written:

'It is in vain to talk of the good character of bishops. Bishops are men; not always the wisest of men; not always preferred for eminent virtues and talents, or for any good reason whatever known to the public. They are almost always devoid of striking and indecorous vices; the man may be very shallow, very arrogant, and very vindictive, though a Bishop; and pursue with unrelenting hatred a subordinate clergyman, whose principles he dislikes, and whose genius he fears. Bishops besides, are subject to the infirmities of old age, like other men; and in the decay of strength and understanding, will be governed as other men are, by daughters and wives, and



Spencer Perceval: 'an evil which may produce the most serious effects'

whoever ministers to their daily comforts. We have no doubt that such cases sometimes occur, and produce, wherever they do occur, a very capricious administration of ecclesiastical affairs. (I have seen in the course of my life, as the mind of the prelate decays, wife bishops, daughter bishops, butler bishops, and even cook and housekeeper bishops.)'

Sydney discovers 'a real Bishop'

Whatever his general views, it does seem that at one stage Sydney Smith, in his Rectory in North Somerset, was quite warmly inclined to this new Bishop in his neighbouring county of Devon. At one point he described Phillpotts as '*a real Bishop*'. And we do in fact know what Sydney meant by that, because found among his papers after his death, there was this fragment in which he describes what a real Bishop should be: '*A grave, elderly man, full of Greek, with sound use of the middle voice and preterpluperfect tense, gentle and kind to his poor clergy, of powerful and commanding eloquence, in Parliament never to be put down when the great interests of mankind were concerned; leaning to the government when it was right, leading to the people when they were right; feeling that if the spirit of God had called him to that high office, he was called to no mean purpose, but rather that seeing clearly, acting boldly, and intending purely, he might confirm lasting benefit upon mankind.*' You almost have the feeling of Prebendary Smith regarding himself in the looking-glass - especially as he went on to say '*Such a real Bishop I never met*'!

Whatever he might once have thought about Phillpotts, was clearly now forgotten. Something, therefore, must have happened to change his view of this episcopal neighbour for later he said of Phillpotts: "*I must believe in the Apostolic succession, there being no other way of accounting for the descent of the Bishop of Exeter from Judas Iscariot.*" So what was Phillpotts like in reality? ... [This, we regret, we must leave the interested reader to discover: for reasons of space we cannot do justice to this long, erudite and entertaining paper. Our apologies and warm thanks to 'Michael of Exeter', present Bishop and our speaker in Sidmouth. Thanks to Sydnie Bones, the full text of Bishop Michael's excellent talk is now on the Association's website under the Newsletter subsection: www.sydney-smith.org.uk]

Devon versus Switzerland

'Bishop Henry Phillpotts was renowned for his suave and courtly manners, his charming voice, and the subtle precision of its modulations At one of his luncheon-parties he was specially kind to a country clergyman's wife, who knew none of the company, and he took her out on a terrace in order to show her the view – a view of the sea shut in by the crags of a small cove:

“Ah, my lord,” gasped the lady, “it reminds one so much of Switzerland.”

“Precisely,” said the Bishop, “except that there we have the mountains without the sea, and here we have the sea without the mountains.””

From W.H. Mallock *Memoirs of Life and Literature* (1920): it’s neat, but perhaps lacks Sydney’s zest

SYDNEY SMITH AND DEMOCRACY by JPG Taylor

From a talk at a York lunch

Democracy in our own day is one of those concepts, like motherhood and apple pie, that has become sacrosanct: no-one dares question the general principle.

Sydney Smith, champion of progressive causes though he was, would not have described himself as a democrat. Writing to Richard York in 1834, for example, he confessed: ‘I am turning more conservative every day and am roundly abused by Democrats.’ Through his articles in *The Edinburgh Review* and his public speeches (notably that at Taunton in October 1831 which included the famous reference to Mrs Partington and her battle with the Atlantic Ocean), Sydney fought with his customary wit and determination for parliamentary reform. But for him, all that needed to be done was achieved by the Reform Act of 1832 – which meant the abolition of rotten and pocket boroughs, the granting of MPs to large towns which were then unrepresented and a modest extension of the franchise (which still left four out of five adult males without the vote, and of course all females.)

You could say – if you were looking to explain his stance on reform – that Sydney, as a country parson in three counties, had had too close an acquaintance with the lower orders to think that they were capable of exercising political power intelligently and responsibly. Here is one telling comment of his: ‘They have no more predilection for whom they vote than the organ pipes have for what tunes they play.’ But then, his writings and utterances make it abundantly clear that he had no more respect for the political wisdom of the aristocracy and the gentry and the clergy. Should they be deprived of the vote on the same grounds as he would deny the vote to the working class?

Sydney: ‘long and vigorous’ ...

Sydney’s view of the secret ballot is interesting in this respect. A provision for secret, rather than open, voting was included in the Reform Bill as first drafted, but never made it on to the statute book. It became a vital plank in the platform of the Chartists, but only became law in 1872. Sydney, by his own admission, more or less

abandoned politics for digestion after 1832, but he briefly came out of retirement in 1838 – all guns blazing – to write an article entitled ‘The Ballot’, which poured ridicule on the idea of secret voting. The article, to cite his own comment on an earlier piece by Brougham, was ‘long and vigorous like the penis of a jackass’. It was also grossly unfair. His case against the ballot was based on his assumption that it was in essence cowardly to conceal one’s views:

‘An abominable tyranny exercised by the ballot is, that it compels those persons to conceal their votes, who hate all concealment and glory in the cause they support ... what right has the coward to degrade me who am no coward and put me in the same shameful predicament as himself?’

It is of course true that Sydney had never been afraid to voice his views, unpopular though these were in the eyes of the establishment; if it cost him a bishopric, he nevertheless ended up richer than many bishops and idolised by fashionable society. He assumed – and this was a failure of imagination on his part – that the working man, if granted the vote, could afford to be equally bold.

Towards the end of ‘The Ballot’ article, Sydney takes a sideswipe at universal suffrage, the principal demand in the People’s Charter, which was presented to Parliament in the same year. He is convinced that its adoption would lead to the destruction of the monarchy, the peerage and the established church. He concedes that it would put an end to bribery and corruption (wrong again, Sydney!!), but at what a cost. ‘Universal suffrage would cure these ills as a teaspoonful of prussic acid is a certain cure for the most formidable diseases’. Yet here we are, nearly a hundred years after the granting of universal suffrage, with all these institutions still intact, the first of them more secure than it was in Sydney’s time.

What do we conclude? This, I think: that Sydney who was on the side of the angels in campaigning energetically and effectively against some of the major abuses of his time – slavery and the slave trade, a corrupt Parliament, the brutal game laws, the treatment of the insane, the civil disabilities suffered by Roman Catholics – nevertheless failed to see the glaring injustice of the electoral system.

Beneath all the bluster, did Sydney perhaps admit to himself that he was fighting a losing cause? Did he perhaps reflect that, to use his own words: ‘The contest was unequal’ - that the Atlantic Ocean would triumph in the end, and that he had himself become Mrs Partington?



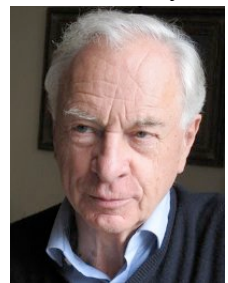
The Chartists' meeting on Kennington Common in 1848, from the Illustrated London News

PUTTING YOUR TRUST IN MONEY by Adam Fergusson

From a talk at a Boisdale lunch *(given at a time of great anxiety and debate over the Bank of England's policy of Quantitative Easing)*

Our banknotes still carry, though in suspiciously small letters, the promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of, say, ten pounds. Suppose you tested it. Would you be satisfied with ten cupro-nickel discs, whose milled edges are an interesting example of skiamorphia, their defunct purpose having been to stop the clipping of gold coinage?

Trust. It is a commonplace that we no longer trust instinctively the great institutions of the State: Parliament (think expenses); the Press (think Murdoch); the City (think bonuses); the Police (think Murdoch again); the Church (think what you like). However, I doubt if any decade has passed in the last few centuries when deep suspicion of the sinister motives and practices of these people have not been prevalent; or when scepticism about the honour and good faith of too many politicians, journalists, bankers and policemen has not been justified.



Adam Fergusson: 'by the end of this luncheon, 0.12p will have been clipped off my ten-pound banknote'

Sydney Smith railed at the *subdolous* press [that unusual word means ‘crafty’]; he accepted that the Bishops were very sorry for what they had done; he hated the corrupt forces of order which the Peelers replaced; he wrote of ‘the rattery and scoundrelism of public life’. So I am almost tempted to say that, since ‘twas always so, it’s not worth getting too excited about.

There is, though, one area where the need for public trust is paramount, and its betrayal disastrous. My text is the revolutionary axiom (ascribed, wrongly I think, to Lenin; but Keynes repeated it) that, if you wish to destroy a nation, you must first corrupt its currency.

I wrote a book published in 1975 [*When Money Dies*, republished in 2010] about the utter collapse of the German Mark after the First World War. The hyperinflation of 1923 had reduced it to one-million-millionth of its former self. It was an economic catastrophe that led in due course to hatred of the Weimar democratic experiment and the arrival of Hitler. It was the most extreme form of Quantitative Easing (as printing money is called now) that Europe has ever known.

Hyperinflation defined

Hyperinflation is usually defined as starting in the *month* when currency first depreciates by 50 per cent. Now, in the 36 years since I wrote that book, although some things cost more, some less, the pound sterling has lost 90 per cent of its value or nine-tenths of its overall buying power. Most of that was caused by oil-producing countries raising the price of oil, and sending up the cost of energy and everything else.

Price inflation invites wage inflation. And the demand for higher wages, especially in the public sector, when a government is weak enough, or too fearful of unemployment and unrest to stand firm, tempts it to get out of trouble by what is colloquially (though nowadays inaccurately) known as printing money, in order to pay them.

Nine-tenths in 36 years. So you see, an important distinction between ordinary inflation and hyperinflation is the *time* factor. Today in Britain we have about 5% inflation. A 5% rate will reduce the value of your capital of £1000 to £500 in less than 12 years. But that rate is still low enough or slow enough for most people either not to notice or not to care. When would *you* start to care? Surely before your capital - or your wage, or your pension, unless linked to the index - threatened to lose half of its value in, say, a year (not to speak of a week, then a day, which was what the Germans suffered). Sooner or later, the dam of your trust would burst; and you would want to take action.

What action? Some will have nowhere to run. But if you have the bargaining power of a trade union you may go on strike, not for a stable currency, the logical thing, but for higher wages to meet the higher cost of living. Or if you have any savings you will switch them into other assets - another currency, or art, or gold, or land, or Mars Bars - anything to preserve what wealth you have. Or, after a spell of shopping as little as possible (thus helping to cause a recession) you will spend your income as fast as you can to get rid of it. And then the money will go round and round, one pound doing the work of two, or ten, or twenty. And that will accelerate the inflation too.

Make no mistake: deliberate government- or central bank-induced inflation, is a repudiation of debt. And that goes specifically for the two per cent inflation target which the Bank of England unconvincingly maintains is desirable. It is a stealth tax, if you like, but an unacknowledged one, and not far from illegal dispossession or robbery. Just like the government, all who borrow enjoy the same annual advantage when they repay. At its extreme, in Germany in 1923, mortgages on great estates could be paid off in postage stamps: the lenders of course were ruined. It's all a matter of degree. And if you feel you are being ripped off - for example that the price of train tickets, or petrol, or postage has been raised absurdly even in proportion to inflation - let me assure you that you are.

Easing does it?

The usual neo-Keynesian excuses are offered by governments who print money: we are told that, in hard times, when interest rates can be lowered no more, an ever looser money policy will help growth, inspire investment, create employment; that by devaluing the currency, our exports will be more competitive . . . and the like. And this has been the justification for creating all that new credit through Quantitative Easing in the past 18 months - by the European Central Bank, by the Bank of England, and most dangerously by the Federal Reserve Bank in America,

Now, it is by the way that this calculated act of inflation to stimulate the economy hasn't worked. (Mostly national banks have simply pocketed the money against the next rainy week.) What is far more concerning is that a measure taken in America purely for domestic purposes has spread distrust and even panic literally from China to Peru about the world's only reserve currency: it is not only because gold is *priced* in dollars that its price has soared. Trust has gone, slipping away bit by bit.

Inflation is like a drug. A little seems harmless. A little more, all right. It is always intended as a short-term remedy - but it always has long-term consequences for a nation, both internally and externally.

This is serious because money is the medium by which wealth is measured, social position maintained, security promised, livelihood supported; which makes commerce, travel, enterprise, insurance and all kinds of civilised interaction possible. So it is vital to be able to trust those who control the *supply* of money, who will contrive its stability, who will be true to the otherwise meaningless promise that is still on our banknotes.

Now to Sydney Smith. This is what I have been leading up to. What would he have thought about governments who, by debauching the currency, repudiate their debts both to the people who elected them and to anyone else - overseas investors for example - who buy their bonds confident that they will be honoured?

Well, we know exactly what he would have said, because he said it. And this will have particular resonance with anyone who has followed the travails of the Eurozone in dealing with the debt defaults in Ireland, Portugal and, above all, Greece. Those who bought and hold Greek bonds have been asked to trade them in for a fraction of their value. Holders of Portuguese debt must accept a longer date for its redemption and lower interest rates than the market demands. They trusted too much.

Many of you will be familiar with Sydney's 1843 petition to the US Congress in Washington and subsequent letters about Pennsylvania's repudiation of its public debts at the time. They are a cracking good read. He himself held Pennsylvanian bonds. He called the pillage perpetrated by the richest state in the Union an act of bad faith without parallel or excuse. Perhaps over-egging it, he said it was a fraud as enormous as ever disgraced the worst king of the most degraded nation in Europe.

He warned all America that, by allowing the bankruptcy of so many, the nation would become one with whom no contract could be made, because none would be kept; a nation unstable in the very foundations of its social life, deficient in the elements of good faith. He professed alarm at Pennsylvania's total want of shame for the callous immorality with which Europe (where many of the bonds were held) had been plundered.

He calculated that, as the debt could be paid off by the State with a mere one-and-a-half per cent of its net income, that that was the price of Pennsylvania's national character.

He then makes his famous remark – 'There really should be lunatic asylums for nations as well as individuals.' The Americans were furious.

As it happens, Sydney's facts were not quite straight. Other American states had indeed *repudiated* their debts disgracefully, but Pennsylvania - which solemnly

admitted them - was not one of them. Because of a general lack of gold and the ungoverned printing of paper money by her banks, Pennsylvania was suffering - here we go again - from galloping inflation. Public wages had to be paid in kind - potatoes, rye - but potatoes were not a practical way to settle what Sydney and other Europeans were owed. Had he lived longer, he would have got his money back and the interest on it too.

Mr Chairman, by the end of this luncheon, I calculate that 0.12p will have been clipped off the ten-pound banknote I mentioned earlier. By this time next year it will be worth 50p less. Though I must stop, the remorseless clipping of your money goes on.

- Adam Fergusson is a journalist, author and former Conservative politician who served one term in the European Parliament. When Money Dies was hailed as a cult classic in the wake of the recent financial crisis, with copies changing hands on eBay for up to \$1000, as a result of allegedly being commended by billionaire financier Warren Buffett.

Postscript: A letter to the Editor of the *London Leader* from Mr George Combe of Edinburgh, contemporaneous with the Reverend's furious attacks on Pennsylvania, makes a similar point to Fergusson's:

‘Sir: I have read with much interest your excellent remarks on the character and writings of Rev. Sydney Smith but beg that you will permit me to correct one error, as it is an important one, into which he seems to have fallen, and into which he has led you. Pennsylvania, although selected by him as the representative of repudiating States, really never repudiated her debts. I have heard it stated that Sydney Smith did not hold any Pennsylvania Bonds at the time when he wrote his pungent satires against her; but used her as a target at which to shoot his arrows intended to pierce repudiators wherever they existed, and I am disposed to believe this statement to be correct. I was not only in America and in Philadelphia at the time when that State suspended payment of the interest of her debts, but I actually held Pennsylvania Bonds, and I hold them still ...



George Combe, an 1836 portrait by Sir Daniel Macnee, great grandfather of the actor Patrick Macnee

‘... Sydney Smith’s satire was richly merited by a number of the Western and Southern States, which did repudiate, and it did excellent service in shaming them into honesty; but it was a positive misfortune in him to have inflicted a vicarious castigation on Pennsylvania, which never deserved it ...

‘... It has given me pain to see Sydney Smith’s charge repeated again and again, even by the most respectable members of the press in England, such as The Times and your own paper, knowing how keenly this injustice is felt as a moral wrong in Pennsylvania. Besides, it tends to screen the really delinquent states by constantly battering the innocent with the blows which should have been bestowed on the guilty alone – I am, &c.,’

- *George Combe was a Scottish lawyer and early proponent of the controversial subject of phrenology, or ‘craniology’ as it was called by The Edinburgh Review in an 1815 report that condemned it as ‘a piece of thorough quackery from beginning to end’. The London Leader was a weekly radical newspaper that ran for a decade from 1850 and included contributors such as George Eliot and Wilkie Collins.*

TAKE HEED OF SOME GOOD ADVICE

The Editors were delighted to receive this Sydney-related contribution from SSA committee member Peter Payan:

Some years ago a middle-aged bishop and his attractive wife came to live in a vicarage near us not required by our new vicar. A handsome and agreeable couple, they became popular dinner guests of the local gentry, and his eventual departure to the post of residentiary canon at a cathedral was felt to be a pity.

Recalling that Sydney had enjoyed such a post in his later years, in particular the powers of patronage that came with it, I decided that when writing to congratulate our man I would tell the story of Sydney and how he’d resolved in characteristic fashion a problem arising from the death of the Canon Tate, vicar of Edmonton.

According to the rules of the Chapter Sydney was entitled to take the living himself, but he happened to know that the bereaved family were reduced to poverty by their loss and that Tate’s son Thomas had been acting as his father’s curate. He decided to call upon the family, consisting of three delicate daughters, an aunt, the old lady and her son, the curate. Let Sydney continue:

‘They were in daily expectation of being turned out from home and curacy.’ After some light conversation in the course of which he expressed the hope that the Chapter might be able to help them, Sydney said to the assembled group: ‘It is my duty to state to you that I have given away the living, and have written to our Chapter Clerk this morning to mention the person to whom I have given it ... [a general silence and sense of dejection] ... It is a very odd coincidence”, I added, “that the gentleman I have named is a namesake of this family. His name is Tate. Have you any relation of that name? No, we have not. And, by a more singular coincidence, his name is Thomas Tate. In short there is no use in mincing the matter. You are the Vicar.

‘They all burst into tears. It flung me also into a great agitation of tears and I wept and groaned for a long time. I never passed so remarkable a morning, nor was more deeply impressed with the sufferings of human life, and never felt more thoroughly the happiness of doing good.’”

I put my letter through the bishop's letter box myself, confidently expecting a friendly letter of thanks. Neither then nor since have I received an acknowledgement. Attending the service of Collation at the cathedral I took advantage of the presence of the new residentiary Canon's wife to beg for enlightenment. She was quite certain that if he had received a letter from me he would have answered it.

Had he not received the letter? Unlikely. One day walking along with our new vicar I asked him a question to which I should have myself guessed the answer. If a bishop were made a residentiary sanon might this be regarded as promotion in the church hierarchy? A moment's pause, a sharp look, and the answer came: ‘No’. Lesson: Congratulate only when in secure possession of the facts.

ON SYDNEY AND PREACHING by The Rev. Sir Timothy Forbes Adam Bt From a talk at a York lunch

I suppose the first thing to be said about ‘Sydney Smith the Preacher’ is what a large and important part preaching played in his life. It wasn't only the way he could make a living – he knew he had a gift for it – but it became a vital and continuous part of his activity in Edinburgh, in Foston, in the Minster, St Paul's, in Bristol Cathedral and in the wider context of the Church, and of national life.

In the torpid world of the Church of England, established in a comfort zone all of its own – though not so comfortable for the unlucky – preaching seems to have been something that was taken for granted. It was what apparently had to be done – as a livelihood, and/or as a supposed, or real vocation. And other people just had to

endure it – unless they gave up attending. This was not acceptable to Sydney. When he saw the state of the Church, and indeed of religious faith, especially in the countryside, he was particularly concerned about bad, conventional preaching, and the normal response to it in church – sleep.

In a letter to Mrs Beach from Edinburgh he says, ‘On the Queen’s Jubilee everybody dances to show their loyalty – except me: and I show it by preaching – and have the pleasure of seeing my congregation nod their appreciation as they sleep.’ He continued his assault on sleepiness everywhere: ‘Is sin to be taken from men, as Eve was from Adam, by casting them in a deep slumber?’ He was driven even to compare Methodist preaching favourably with Church of England sermons: ‘We have cherished contempt for dissenters, and persevered in dignified lameness so long, that while we are freezing common sense – for large salaries – in stately churches, amidst whole acres and furlongs of empty pews – the crowd are feasting on ungrammatical fervour and illiterate animation in the crumbling hovels of Methodists.’



Hogarth's 'The Sleeping Congregation' (1736, 1762): as one critic noted, the only people who are obviously awake are two old women whose hats identify them as witches.

Keeping calm in Edinburgh

About Sydney's own preaching we hear, curiously, a tribute from Scottish lawyer and literary figure Henry Cockburn, on an early sermon in Edinburgh remembered 40 years later. 'The best calm sermon I have heard was one preached in Edinburgh,

by Sydney Smith – on death. He held the manuscript in his hand, and read it exactly as an ordinary reader holds and reads from a printed book; but the thoughts had been so well considered and the reading so quiet and impressive – that the whole scope and pathos of the disclosure are still fresh upon my mind at the distance of many years.’

There were other opinions of course, when he adopted a more animated, even theatrical style – including his own opinion that, ‘I have discharged 2 or 3 random sermons and thought I perceived the greater part of the audience conceived me to be mad.

‘The clerk was pale as death in helping me off with my gown, for fear I should bite him.’ Or again the old lady who said, ‘He was most violent ... [on death again, and] the poor man who read the service sitting underneath would rather have been at the portal of mortality than where he was just then, for Sydney Smith thumped the cushion ‘till it almost touched his head and he must have feared the whole thing was coming down upon him. The lady next to me was quite frightened, and she whispered, “This is Sydney Smith, who has been so long in the wars, and that is what makes him so violent.”’ She had mistaken him for his namesake, the famous admiral.

Whatever people thought of his preaching, his own deeply serious approach he made clear to Kate, his wife, who asked him not to express a certain opinion for fear of offending some friends. He answered her, ‘Do you think, if I feel it my duty to preach such a sermon, Kate, that I can refrain from doing so from fear of giving offence?’

And with some relevance to today’s diversity of opinion about marriage, he said in one of his sermons: ‘It is no duty of a clergyman to preach upon subjects purely political, but it is not therefore his duty to avoid religious subjects that have been distorted into political subjects, especially when the consequence of that distortion is a general state of error and passion.’ It would be good to hear him preach on today’s difference of opinion between Church and State over the meaning and purpose of Christian marriage. Certainly he regarded the imposition of a Trinitarian marriage service on the Unitarians as an infringement on their liberty of conscience.



Henry Cockburn:
‘the best calm sermon
I have heard’

‘He felt what he said’

By and large his sermons were well received, indeed renowned, if not by Lord Macaulay, certainly by a friend, who shared the conduct of a service at Foston with Sydney and who said: ‘about 50 people were assembled ... [a large congregation surely, then as now] ... I entered the reading desk; he followed the prayers with a plain, sound sermon upon the duty of forgiving injuries, but in a manner and voice clearly proving that he felt what he said, and meant that others should feel it too.’ No mention there of the thumping of the cushion, just a freely assembled congregation, and a sincere message. This must have been the case on Sunday after Sunday during his years at Foston. However he still felt he had to warn Mrs Grote, who wished to go to St Paul’s to hear him preach, ‘not to flatter herself with the delusive hope of slumber: I preach violently – there is a strong smell of sulphur in my sermons.’

I found it very difficult to extract many quotations from his sermons, which have to be taken whole, but there is one which says a great deal about his preaching:

‘I would have been heartily ashamed of myself if I had thought only to flatter and please, or thought of anything but what I always think of in the pulpit – that I am placed here by God – to tell the truth and to do good.’ I believe that he meant that, and practised it to the best of his ability and that there was nothing incompatible with this or in his taste for aristocratic company, high living and conviviality; for whoever he was with, his presence was always benign and always the same to everyone – high or low, as indeed it is to us today.

So I will end by quoting Sydney in a way more familiar and endearing to us, revealing both his faithfulness to his profession – from a letter to Lady Woodhouselee, actually refusing an invitation to a ball – and his funny and humble view of himself in action:

‘Tis mine, with all my consecrated dress on
To read the evening and the morning lesson;
With band bi-forkèd, and with visage calm
To join the bawling, quav’ring Clerk in Psalm.
With brawny fist the velvet lump to beat,
And rouse the faithful, snoring at my feet!

THAT PAUL JOHNSON, AGAIN by Celia Moreton-Prichard

Extracted from a Boisdale lunch talk

I first came to Sydney, as most did, via Hesketh Pearson whose book *The Smith of Smiths* was my companion on a long train journey. I was quickly hooked. He burst upon me like the sun coming out. It's the imagery Sydney conjures up of the utterly ridiculous which is so beguiling. That, allied to his avant-garde humanity and glorious, straightforward, practical common sense make him irresistible to me.

I wonder if Paul Johnson did join the Association? He said he would in a piece he wrote for the *Spectator* in April 1996, having heard of its inauguration. At the risk of boring those of you who know the article backwards – which I didn't – here are some of the points he made as to why Sydney Smith is of interest:

'He was one of the best sermonisers of the age who could reduce the ladies – and sometimes the men too – to cataracts of tears. His lectures on moral philosophy at the Royal Institution were, next to the courses given by Davy and Faraday, the most successful ever held there.

'Like Jefferson he was an architect, and built his own parsonage; he was a gourmet and an inventive cook, who not only created one of the best salad dressings there is but was also an expert at producing tasty soups and stews for the poor during the hungry years after Waterloo.

'He provided a free health service at his parsonage, and seems to have known about plumbing, carpentry, arable farming, sheep-rearing, growing vegetables, and designing fireplaces and furniture. He took a close interest in the first gaslights and all other mechanical inventions. In short, a practical man for all seasons – so parishioners were lucky to have him . . . However his real genius lay in his wit which suffused his letters and conversation. There was no malice in him, nor did he save his sallies for the smart – he kept his family in fits, too.



Paul Johnson: 'I am all for unsound men, not least because they are nearly always right'

‘What attracts me most to Smith, however, is his reputation, among the powerful and *bien pensants* of his day, for being unsound. I am all for unsound men, not least because they are nearly always right. He was the ablest Anglican clergyman of his day. He was a great pastor – and a superb administrator, too, as he proved when he ran St Paul’s. But for three decades the Tories were in power and would not notice him because he was a Whig. When the Whigs finally came in, in 1830, the most his friend Earl Grey would give him was a miserable canonry. Make Smith a bishop? Good heavens, NO! Not sound. Why, he cracks jokes, and has advanced ideas, like ending the slave trade before sound people agreed it was time, or emancipating the Catholics years before sensible people were ready. Not only that – he wants to reform the Game Laws and the criminal code and all kinds of things it’s not time to change – yet. You can’t have fellows like that in responsible positions. So the nonentities were promoted and have now sunk utterly without trace – can anyone name an Anglican bishop of Smith’s day? – and the portly little cleric thus kept his irreverence and had more time to delight his family, his friends and his readers. Now he is to have a society of his own which will introduce younger generations to his felicities.’

SOUTH-WEST SPRING MEETING

Sydie Bones writes: At the close of the report of last year’s meeting were the words ‘Next year perhaps ...’ in relation to a visit to the church at Combe Florey. Determined to redress the omissions of 2011, this year we gathered on 20th March in Combe Florey at the local inn, The Farmers’ Arms. From here it was but a short stroll to the parish church where Sydney Smith remains acclaimed as its most renowned rector. As ever, good food and stimulating conversation were the day’s ‘specials’. Thus fortified, the group set off for the church to seek the commemoration of Sydney Smith’s contribution to this village. Over the main altar is an imposing memorial window, inscribed:

In memory of Sydney Smith, Rector of Combe Florey, Vicar of Halberton Devonshire and Canon of St Paul’s, born 3 June 1771 died 22 February 1845, a tribute of respect, esteem and regard from his parishioners, friends and neighbours.

On a side wall of the nave is a bronze plaque with a bas-relief portrait of Sydney Smith, one of three replicas, the others being in the Castle Howard chapel and the church in Woodford, Essex, where Sydney was baptised. The Association was responsible for the installation of these memorial plaques (the original is in Foston); it was good to see that information leaflets and a current *Newsletter* were displayed alongside.

Discussion turned to memorials in other associated churches. The information leaflet in Halberton states that Sydney Smith was its most renowned, but absent, vicar who left the living in charge of a curate. No expectation of a memorial there. The one surprise is that there is no memorial in St Paul's where Sydney made his mark as a remarkable administrator; he himself had expected, after his death, to be found 'at St Paul's, against the wall'. The best tribute is to be found in Bristol Cathedral: his time there, though short, was sufficient to encourage a local charitable society to pay for a splendid marble commemorative plaque, erected in 1909, 'as a tardy recognition of one who reasoned liberally, illuminating civic wisdom with Christian charity, political judgment with social wit and common sense with uncommon insight'.

Surely St Paul's can do equal justice, however tardy, to this Canon of Canons.



The Farmers' Arm in Combe Florey: refreshing the locals since the fifteenth century

LONDON LUNCHESES

London lunches are held on Wednesdays at the Boisdale Restaurant, Eccleston Street, off Buckingham Palace Road, SW1. Dates for 2012 included 25th April when our patron the Hon. James Stourton gave a talk about his family home in Heslington near York, the village where Sydney Smith lived while building his new rectory in Foston (report to come in the next *Newsletter*); the remaining lunches are scheduled for 25th July and 24th October.

Prices range from £23 for one or two courses with unlimited soft drinks, to £34.50 for three courses with soft drinks/wine and coffee. Members are advised to meet between midday and 12.30pm and place their orders in advance. Bills are settled individually with the restaurant on the day.

If you would like to attend, please contact Celia Moreton-Prichard, telephone 0208 852 9636, giving at least a week's notice if possible.

YORK LUNCHESES

Mary Rose Blacker writes: We have been most grateful to Jeremy and Viv Cassell for welcoming us to The Grange for our lunches over the last few years and for the happy occasions that we have had there. For 2012 we have decided to make a change, so our lunches will take place at Middlethorpe Hall, Bishopthorpe Rd, York YO23 29B, or telephone 01904 641241.

The remaining lunches for this year will take place on 13th June and 14th November.

As usual, we aim to foregather at 12.30pm when a glass of wine will be served in the drawing room before lunch in the Pineapple Room at 1pm. The cost, including the first glass of wine and two courses, will be £22.50. Pudding, cheese and/or coffee can be ordered on the day for an extra charge. Those wishing to join please contact The Hon. Mrs Blacker, telephone 01653 696056, at least three weeks before the luncheon date.

SEEN AND HEARD

Sydney and Luca jointly admired

We were delighted to receive from regular contributor and SSA committee member Peter Payan a scanned page from Ogden Nash's *You Can't Get There From Here* (London, Dent, 1957) which includes this Sydney reference:

AN ENTHUSIAST IS A DEVOTEE IS A ROOTER

Or

MR. HEMINGWAY, MEET MR. STENGEL

Into the Grand Canyon of the Colorado
Drop, my boon companion, the word 'aficionado.'
Brand me as provincial, hoot me for a jingo,
Hint that I'm an Oedipus to love my mother lingo,
On my reputation cast a nasty shadow,
Adamant you'll find me anent 'aficionado.'

Never may I languish prey to xenophobia.
Sydney Smith admire I, and Luca della Robbia,
And should Fate transport me into regions foreign
I could wear a chlamys, I could wear a sporran;
Yet, gazing at the Parthenon, strolling through the Prado,
Art lover I might be, but no aficionado.

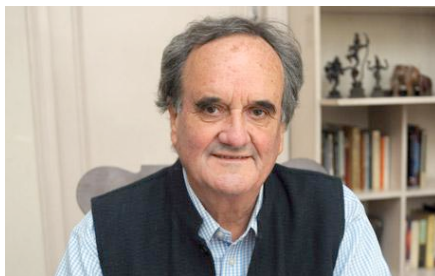
Monosyllabic Master, whither are we heading
Since you thrust upon us this verbal featherbedding?
You who freed the language of fetters euphuistic,
You who taught us terseness, muscular and fistic,
You whose prose is soldierly, Spartan and Mohican –
Why employ ten letters to do the job that three can?

This reproachful tribute to a first-class writing man
Comes from no aficionado,
Just
A loyal
Fan.

A little touch of Sydney

For (very) early and late birds – at around six in the morning, with a repeat towards midnight – BBC Radio 4 has offered for the past 12 years ‘Something Understood’. Its presenter, Mark Tully, had a distinguished 30-year career with the broadcaster in India. The programme, says Radio 4, ‘reflects Mark’s own wide-ranging sympathy, intelligent curiosity and imaginative response to the challenges of living a fully realised ethical life’.

Each edition includes music and relevant, well-chosen poetry and prose. How fitting to find Sydney – in a recent programme exploring the importance of touching in human relationships – delivering this hands-on lesson:



Sir Mark Tully, with Sydney, on the fully realised ethical life

‘On meeting a young lady who had just entered the garden, and shaking hands with her: “I must,” he said, “give you a lesson in shaking hands, I see. There is nothing more characteristic than shakes of the hand. I have classified them. Lister, when he was here, illustrated some of them. Ask Mrs. Sydney to show you his sketches of them when you go in. There is the high *official*, - the body erect, and a rapid, short shake, near the chin. There is the mort-main, - the flat hand introduced into your palm, and hardly conscious of its contiguity. The *digital*, - one finger held out, much used by the high cleggy. There is the *shakus rusticus*, where your hand is seized in an iron grasp, betokening rude health, warm heart, and distance from the Metropolis; but producing a strong sense of relief on your part when you find your hand released and your fingers unbroken. The next to this is the *retentive shake*, - one which, beginning with vigour, pauses as it were to take breath, but without relinquishing its prey, and before you are aware begins again, till you feel anxious as to the result, and have no shake left in you. There are other varieties, but this is enough for one lesson.”’

[From Sydney’s daughter *Lady Holland’s Memoir* of 1855]

Another Sydney Smith, but not the Kilted Kiwi

Dorothy Williams writes: To the three Sydney Smiths whose lives are recorded in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (all, of course, with Sydney spelt with a ‘y’) we can now add a fourth.

Our man, having only one Christian name, comes first. Next comes Sir Sydney Alfred Smith (1883-1969), a forensic scientist from New Zealand who divided his working life between that country and Edinburgh. His son, Sydney Goodsir Smith (1915-1975) comes next. He was a poet and playwright who was a major figure in the 20th-century Scottish literary renaissance. He was sometimes known as the Kilted Kiwi, and ‘gained a reputation as a convivial and cultured presence in the legendary “writers’ pubs” of Edinburgh, as well as more scholarly circles’.

Unlike the other three, the fame of this particular Sydney Smith and his wife Maud may never reach beyond the rural North Yorkshire which they so lovingly recorded in their photographs, now preserved in the Beck Isle Museum. Members are therefore advised to note that mention of THE Sydney Smith can be expected to cause confusion in Wellington, Edinburgh and now in Pickering too!

Reader, Illustrated him ...

Odious Comparisons or A Day in the Country. Poems by Ralph Rochester with illustrations by Ralph and Barbara Rochester, limited edition of 300 copies, published by Hanbury Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-9557090-1-2.



Sydney Goodsir Smith: his poetry personified and sexualized the city of Edinburgh as a many-faced lover

Sydie Bones writes: Anyone searching for an unusual present for a lover of books, of poetry or of quirky humour should look no further than this beautifully presented collection of verse by one of the Association’s long-standing members, Ralph Rochester. Delightfully illustrated in watercolour and handbound in hessian, this slim volume of 23 verses is pure joy. More details can be found at www.hanburypress.co.uk