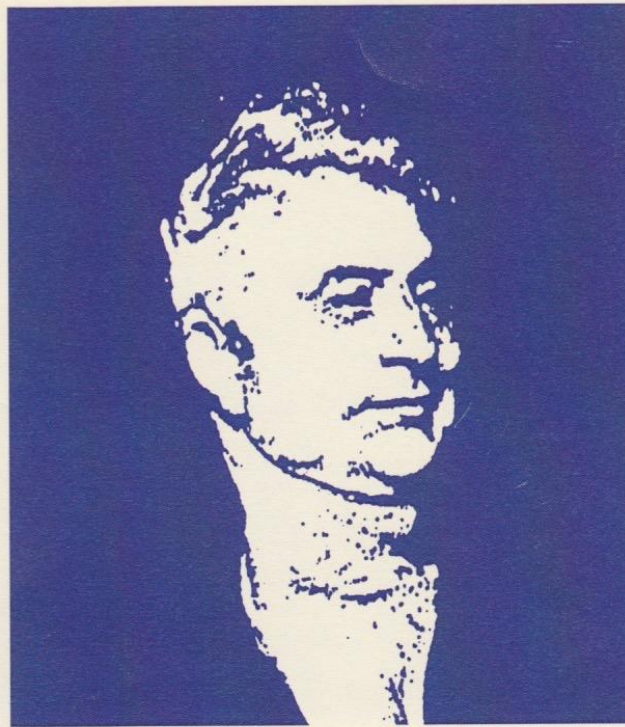


**THE
SYDNEY SMITH
ASSOCIATION**



NEWSLETTER

Issue 20

Spring 2015



AUTUMN IN PARIS

DETAILS OF OUR 2015 A.G.M AND ENTERTAINMENT IN
PARIS ARE INCLUDED IN THE NEWSLETTER AND A
SEPARATE BOOKING FORM IS ENCLOSED

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

'No great city in the world ever had such gardens, not excepting Babylon'. Sydney Smith had a chance to realise his dream of visiting Paris when he was invited by Lord and Lady Holland in 1826. It was a cold and wet spring, but this did not deter him from a packed schedule of tourist and social visits. He claimed to have preached a 'beautiful sermon in the Ambassador's (sic) chapel. This year we are boldly following Sydney's footsteps to hold our AGM weekend in Paris. One of the highlights is the chance to visit the beautiful Hôtel de Charost, the private residence of the British Ambassador since 1814, when the Duke of Wellington bought it from one of Napoleon's sisters. Sydney spent a good deal of his Paris social time in this house, as the ambassador Lord Granville was a friend of the Hollands. I very much hope that Association members will make the journey to Paris. It is certainly very much easier than in Sydney's day, and with no threat of sea-sickness. More details of the AGM weekend appear below.

This edition of the Newsletter has been assembled by Gerry Bradshaw to whom we owe a considerable debt of gratitude.

Jeremy Cunningham

AGM WEEKEND in PARIS September 18th – 19th 2015

Friday 18th

3.30pm Visit to the residence of the British Ambassador, the Hôtel de Charost

The house was originally designed by Antoine Mazin (c1679-1740) who was also involved with the building of the hôtel Matignon, now the official residence of the prime minister of France. It was built between 1722-25 for the Duc de Charost. In 1803 the house was sold to Pauline Leclerc, Napoleon Bonaparte's sister. When the First Empire was proclaimed in 1804, Pauline became an imperial Princess and the Hôtel de Charost became the centre of a small, but fully-fledged court.

In 1814, the Hôtel de Charost was bought by the Duke of Wellington, newly appointed British ambassador to France. The house thus became the first embassy building purchased abroad by a British government. Tea will be served during the visit.

Evening Dinner

It is hoped that we will gather for an informal evening meal in a bistro or restaurant.

Saturday 19th am Visit to Chapelle Expiatoire

Tucked away in a leafy square off the Boulevard Haussmann is the mausoleum chapel erected in memory of the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, which was visited by Sydney Smith on his first visit to Paris. Completed in 1826, it was built on the site where victims of the guillotine were buried, including Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and each January 21 a Mass is celebrated in their memory.

From there, it is a reasonable walk to:

Lunch and Visit to Musée Jacquemart André

An interesting small museum in a Haussmannian Hôtel Particulier from the mid 19th century. Little known to the British, it was the home of wealthy art collectors and is maintained furnished exactly as it was when lived in. Paintings include French, Dutch and Italian masterpieces, including Tiepolo frescos, Uccello's renowned Saint George Slaying the Dragon and the finest Chardins.

Lunch will be taken in the elegant restaurant. Combined entrance and lunch price 34 euros.

6pm AGM and dinner Hotel Napoleon, near l'Arc de Triomphe

40 Avenue de Friedland 75008 Paris. Dinner 70 euros.

www.hotelnapoleonparis.com

Sunday 20th

No visits have been organised for the Sunday but members may wish to visit the Carnavalet Museum, housed in the building noted for its salon presided over by Madame de Sévigné and dedicated to the history of Paris; or a little further afield, the Musée de la Vie Romantique, a quintessentially 19th century town house, complete with furniture and artefacts, which is set in a little park at the foot of Montmartre.

SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION 2014 AGM WEEKEND in LONDON

Celia Moreton Pritchard

Having been plagued by an unreliable alarm clock for a while and thinking a suitable replacement had been found, it was a shock to discover on Saturday morning that no. 2 clock wasn't up to the job either. So the day began in an unseemly rush; Sydnie had very kindly offered to let me change for dinner in her room at the Royal Overseas League, so after parking my evening kit there, it was a swift taxi to Doughty Street where Gillian Darley had very kindly offered to show us Sydney's London home. It is a generously proportioned terraced house with a quietly pretty front door, almost opposite where Dickens lived. The pleasant wide street is unspoiled; Sydney would recognise his surroundings. It was easy to imagine his home life in such agreeable, well-lit rooms; we were allowed a glimpse of the spacious cellar which appeared to be every bit as well-stocked now as one hopes it would have been in his day. A delightful small garden at the back was glimpsed from the rear windows. It is a thoroughly friendly house - and how delightful to find it still inhabited by people who obviously love it dearly, rather than the legal firms proliferating in the area. Gillian was most welcoming and appeared totally unruffled at the disruption caused to her Saturday morning by so large a group of enthusiastic sight-seers.



Sydney Smith's house in Doughty Street

Next stop, St Paul's Cathedral; I joined two others planning to walk there, but gave in halfway and hopped on a bus. We lunched in the Cathedral café and made contact with Jo Wisdom the librarian; he facilitated our visit with great enthusiasm and efficiency. A room had been made available for the AGM – slightly below ground level and bemused passers-by bent double to peer in at us from time to time. Jo had taken great pains to lay out some Sydney treasures for us in the library, so those who felt up to the climb of 140 stone spiral steps made our way there after the meeting; portrait, portrait bust, books and letters were displayed in a high-windowed, dimly lit book-lined room. Again, it wasn't difficult to imagine Sydney working there – the space can't have changed since his day. Then down all those steps again, and we were escorted in state to the Quire for Choral Evensong. As an ex-chorister, it was delightful to sit behind little pink-shaded lamps and pretend to be part of the music. We were warmly welcomed as the service began; apart from clergy microphones, it was all just as Sydney would have known it. Deeply satisfying.

Then away to the Royal Overseas League for dinner. Sydie's room was a revelation; in the heart of London's West End, all that could be seen from her third-floor window were the Green Park treetops – and quiet? A tiny hum of traffic from Piccadilly, that's all. The food was excellent and there was a lively buzz of conversation from the 40-plus diners; a most interesting talk by Linda Kelly about her book on Holland House rounded off a fascinating day.

Your chronicler must admit to a complete failure on Sunday; after checking Saturday's train times with pernickety thoroughness, she didn't do so for Sunday assuming that the normally brilliant Jubilee Line would be working. Alas, not so – which meant that she arrived too late to join the Holland House tour. The delicious lunch was great fun however, and again conversation flowed; but when, in the name of Sydney, does it not? We were blessed with wonderful weather all weekend, which just added to our pleasure. Hearty congratulations to Sydie once more for immaculate organisation.

MINUTES of the LONDON AGM OF THE ASSOCIATION 20th September 2014

The Dean welcomed the Association to St Paul's Cathedral. The Chairman, Jeremy Cunningham, opened the Annual General Meeting, which was held at 3 pm in the Wren Suite at St Paul's Cathedral. Twenty-seven members were present.

Apologies had been received from Mark Bate, Mary Beaumont, Alan Bell, Chris Bones, Don Brierley, Nicholas Faith, Graham Parry, Robin Price, Norman Taylor, Catherine Till, Joan and Philip Trower, Vaun Wilkins and Eddie York.

The Chairman opened the meeting by thanking those involved with running the affairs of the Association: Sydnie Bones, secretary; Arnold Arthurs, treasurer; Mark Wade, membership secretary.

Minutes of the 2013 AGM were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

Points arising: rebinding of books. Ralph Rochester presented the first volume, The Novels of Smollet, brightly rebound in coloured marbled boards with scarlet spine. It was agreed that remaining volumes would be similarly bound in 'gay' colours as loved by Sydney Smith, and possibly housed in the library at Foston Rectory, subject to the agreement of Mrs Walsh. The cost per volume is £100; Ralph Rochester has sponsored the one on display. To make up the gift of £50 from the donor for a future volume, a small additional sum could be added to next year's AGM dinner. Offers were invited for sponsoring the remaining volumes, one per year; titles to be communicated to members. Nicky Yoxall offered finance for this year. Thanks to Kate Rochester for her professional bookbinding were recorded.

The Treasurer confirmed that the final accounts for the year 2013 were submitted to the Charity Commission as required. Finances for the Association continue to be satisfactory.

Interim figures for the current year, which runs to the end of 2014, show receipts from subscriptions, gift aid and donations of around £1800. When expenses of the AGM have been settled, it is hoped that £1000 will be available for donations to Foston, Combe Florey and St Paul's.

The Treasurer was thanked for his Report.

Membership has dropped to around 150, assuming that the 60 who have not been in contact for more than three years can no longer be counted as members. Not all of the remainder pay the full subscription. Although the Treasurer felt that if prompted to pay the full rate, some members may resign, it was agreed that after two years of underpayment, a gentle reminder of current rates should be sent; also that after three years of no payment, names should be removed from the membership list. There was some discussion on recruitment: it was suggested that places associated with Sydney Smith (Foston, Combe Florey, St Paul's and The Royal Institution) could be exploited, and approaches made to members of similar societies.

Lunches: the Chairman thanked local organisers for their continued dedication to arranging lunches during the year.

London: Celia Moreton-Prichard hosts lunches four times a year at the Boisdale Restaurant, with varying attendance, and would appreciate suggestions for speakers. Topics need not necessarily be centred on Sydney Smith but should relate to the era.

York: Mary-Rose Blacker's three York lunches at the Middlethorpe Hall, all with excellent speakers, have become so popular that there is frequently a waiting list.

South-West group holds one lunch gathering in springtime, this year with a speaker.

Newsletter: the Chairman, as acting editor, reviewed the content of the newsletter. As a permanent editor is still needed, he stressed that the workload is not onerous, hardly more than two full days, but word-processing and rudimentary layout skills are essential. Sylvie Diggle is the contact with the printers in York who give first-class service. The trustees will investigate the feasibility of upgrading the quality of the production.

Website is kept up to date, but could be improved. An active manager is urgently required.

AGM in 2015 will be held in Paris, provisional date is 19th September. The Chairman will co-ordinate arrangements. Offers of help with contacts came from Bob Peers and George Ewart.

Trustees: all existing trustees have agreed to stand for re-election: Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Alan Bell, Sylvie Diggle, Graham Parry, Peter Payan, Norman Taylor, Randolph Vigne. It was agreed to vote for the trustees *en bloc*: all were elected *nem con*.

Any Other Business: none.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Sydnie Bones, Celia Moreton-Prichard, Peter Payan and Jo Wisdom for arranging the events of the AGM weekend. The meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.

N.B. After the meeting closed, an offer from Lord Knutsford that the newly bound books, once owned by Sydney Smith, could be housed at Munden was accepted by the Trustees, on the grounds that there is a library in the house and a collection of Sydney Smith letters and items connected to the great man.

HOLLAND HOUSE – LONDON'S MOST CELEBRATED SALON

A talk by author Linda Kelly at our Association annual dinner, 20 September 2014

It's a great honour to be asked to talk to the Sydney Smith Society – I can't think of a nicer society to belong to.

I'm not going to talk about Sydney Smith tonight – you are all experts already – but about a place very close to his heart: Holland House, and its political and social role at the time of the third Lord Holland and his wife. Sydney Smith, of course, was one of the stars of Holland House; he was as devoted to its owners as they were to him. "Some of the best and happiest days of my life I have spent under your roof," he once wrote to Lady Holland, "and though there may be in some houses, particularly those of our eminent clerics, a stronger disposition to pious exercises and as it were devout lucubrations, I do not believe that all Europe can produce as much knowledge, wit and worth as passes in and out of your door under the nose of Thomas the porter."

Holland House as you know was destroyed by enemy action in the last war. Today its ruins form the backdrop for opera performances in the summer and the fifty-two acres of Holland Park are all that remain of its once great estate. But even though it is a public space it still has the feeling of a private park, and the seated statue of the third Lord Holland stands at the meeting point of four main avenues, looking out across lawns towards the ruins of his former home. He is an affable, even welcoming figure, somewhat stout, with rumpled gaiters and the same shaggy eyebrows as his uncle, Charles James Fox. The plinth of the statue is in water, a stone edged pond where ducks swim languidly and the tangled undergrowth around is home to every sort of wild life, not least the fox, from which the Holland family took its name.

For the third Lord Holland, the name of Fox had almost religious significance. Brought up in the principles of his beloved uncle, and heir to his political ideals, he saw himself as guardian of the family flame. Together with his wife, Elizabeth, beautiful, capricious and demanding, he presided over the most celebrated salon of the age. During the first thirty years of the 19th century, when the party was almost continually out of office, Holland House was the unofficial centre of the Whig opposition. Devoted to the memory of Fox and enriched by the progressive views of a new generation of critics, writers and politicians, its influence permeated the political climate. At a time of revolutions across Europe the Whig tradition of aristocratic liberalism, avoiding the extremes of reaction and revolution, would be one of the chief factors in the peaceful achievement of parliamentary reform in the great Reform Bill of 1832.

Lord Holland was born in 1773. His birth, it was said, heralded the destruction of London's money lenders, for Fox's father and elder brother were both terminally ill and Fox, who would otherwise have been his brother's heir, had gambling debts of £100,000 – roughly £12 million today. The birth of his nephew, removing his security with his creditors, threatened Fox with bankruptcy. He was rescued by his dying father in the nick of time.

You might have thought Fox would have resented the inopportune arrival of his nephew, who inherited his father's estates and title when he was barely one year old. In fact he adored the "young one", as he called him, while Holland's hero worship of his uncle and devotion to his political views would be the abiding themes of his career. So thoroughly was he imbued with Fox's sentiments, wrote Lord John Russell, that "whenever any doubt or difficulty perplexed him the first thought that occurred to him was how would Mr Fox have felt on that occasion."

Lord Holland began his political career in the shadow of the French Revolution. "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened and how much the best!" had been Fox's reaction to the fall of the Bastille, and Holland shared his uncle's views. He visited Paris with his tutor in the summer of 1791 and was welcomed as Fox's nephew by progressive aristocrats like Talleyrand, who hoped to combine reform with a constitutional monarchy. Just over a year later the Terror was raging in Paris, Talleyrand had fled for his life and the unfortunate king was imprisoned in the Temple awaiting trial. The bright hopes with which the revolution had begun

had been hideously distorted but Fox and a diminished band of followers remained faithful to the ideals that had lain behind it.

In January 1793 France declared war on Britain; it was the start of a struggle that would last, with two short intermissions, for more than twenty years. Meanwhile, avoiding the countries affected by the war, Lord Holland was completing his education by travelling in Europe: a well-known rite of passage for young Englishmen. He spent three and a half years abroad, visiting Sweden, Prussia, Spain and Italy and acquiring a cosmopolitan breadth of outlook which would stand him in good stead in the years when Holland House was the centre of European as well as British liberal thought.

He also fell in love. Arriving in Florence early in 1794, he had met up with a little group of English aristocrats who were living there. They included Sir Godfrey Webster and his wife Elizabeth, a tall voluptuous beauty, unhappily married to a husband thirty-four years older. An heiress, with large estates in the West Indies, she had been unwillingly married off at the age of fifteen and had soon drowned her sorrows in a variety of love affairs. She had never taken any of them seriously but Holland's infectious high spirits – she called him *sal volatile* – as well as his obvious adoration soon won her heart. Above all he shared her intellectual interests and thirst for knowledge. In her years abroad she had done much to make up for a neglected education, and her drawing room in Florence was a haunt of artists, writers and intellectuals whose conversation merely bored her husband. He did not stand a chance against Holland's ardent wooing, and when, in 1795, he returned to England to take up a parliamentary seat, his wife remained behind pleading pregnancy. The baby, which may or may not have been his, died soon after it was born, but Holland did his best to console her; and only a few months later she found herself pregnant once again. This time the baby could only be Holland's and it was clear that the situation had to be resolved.

18th century morality, especially Whig morality, was easy going where affairs outside marriage were concerned. The Duchess of Devonshire for instance, had lived in a *ménage à trois* for many years and had borne a daughter by her lover Charles Grey. Her sister, Lady Bessborough, had had two children by a younger lover while remaining safely married to her husband. But Holland and Elizabeth wanted more than a discreet liaison; they were determined to live together openly, if possible to marry.

For Elizabeth this would mean great sacrifices. Not only would she face social ruin if she left her husband, she would also lose her three children by him. For some time Sir Godfrey refused to divorce her, and her first child by Holland – called Charles after his great-uncle – was consequently born out of wedlock. (Coincidentally, he would later marry the illegitimate daughter of William IV.) The scandal surrounding the divorce – requiring an act of Parliament to carry it through – meant that even after marrying Holland she was ostracised in many London drawing rooms and could never be received at court.

Fortunately she had a trump card in Holland House. A palatial Jacobean mansion, surrounded by woods and fields yet only two miles from Hyde Park Corner, it

combined the advantages of a town house and a stately home. Here society could come to her, and if by the double standards of the time the guests were mostly men it did not worry her too much. Related by blood or marriage to most of the great Whig dynasties – “they are all cousins”, someone once remarked – Holland fell naturally into the role of host for Fox’s political followers and Lady Holland, in the full bloom of her youth and beauty, could once more exercise her social skills.

“Mixing with a wide variety of people”, she wrote in her journal, “is an advantage to Lord H., because as he, thank God, lives constantly at home, unless I were active in collecting new materials, he might be too apt to fall into a clique, a calamity no abilities can fight against. Ideas get contracted, prejudices strong, and the whole mind narrowed. Mankind was made to live together; the more they mix with each other the better able a man is to judge them and conduct himself.”

It was this open mindedness and readiness to embrace new people and ideas that would make Holland House such a powerhouse in the years to come.

The word Whig had had many meanings during the 18th century. In the beginning the Whigs had been the party represented by that group of powerful families who had brought William and Mary to the throne in the so called glorious revolution of 1688, and asserted the rights of parliament against the absolute monarchy of James II. Their successors, with Fox as their leader, continued to see themselves as guardians of the country’s liberties and a counter-balance to the abuse of power by the crown and the executive.

The excesses of the French Revolution had done much to discredit the Whigs’ liberal policies. Most people were terrified that anarchy would spread to Britain; the fate of Louis XVI had increased their affection for George III and their support for the Tory government. Any suggestion of political change, however moderate, was thought to smack of revolution. When Fox’s disciple Charles Grey put forward a motion for parliamentary reform in the House of Commons in 1797 he was so convincingly defeated that it was many years before the subject could be raised again.

Parliamentary reform, finally carried through by Grey in 1832, was only one of the causes espoused by Holland House. The defence of Habeas Corpus and the freedom of the press when the Tory government was at its most repressive; the right to peaceful public assembly (notoriously breached at Peterloo); the abolition of the death penalty for stealing – Holland was one of the few statesmen of his time to question capital punishment; and the abolition of the barbarous game laws were all part of their agenda.

So too was Catholic emancipation – the right of Roman Catholics to stand for parliament and high office. Obstinate blocked by George III and later George IV on the grounds that it violated their coronation oath, it was finally carried in 1829. Holland as a young man had been the first to raise it in the House of Lords, in the aftermath of the disastrous Irish rebellion of 1798, and was one of the few to protest three years later when the Act of Union was imposed on Ireland.

The abolition of slavery, another important Foxite cause, had a personal dimension for Holland House. Lady Holland had inherited large plantations in Jamaica. This did not prevent her husband from voting for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, though the abolition of slavery itself, which it was hoped would follow naturally, was not achieved till 1833. Holland meanwhile, ran their estates on humanitarian lines, building schools and churches, refusing to purchase any further slaves, and vigorously campaigning for abolition both with the planters and the government. "I am scarcely more convinced that I am an honest abolitionist", William Wilberforce once wrote to him, "than that you are and ever have been such." Despite the financial losses it entailed, Lady Holland never questioned her husband's stance.

Widely travelled and an excellent linguist, Holland took a keen interest in foreign affairs - always backing the liberal side. Holland House as a result was full of foreign visitors, many of them exiles from reactionary regimes. New guests were amazed at the "jabber" of foreign languages at dinner. Bad health prevented Holland from becoming Foreign Secretary when the Whigs at last returned to power, but though his indiscretions sometimes drove the Foreign Office to distraction, his vast experience and friendships with foreign statesmen, in particular with Talleyrand, helped smooth out many diplomatic problems. Palmerston, as Foreign Secretary, arranged that all Foreign Office despatches should be automatically circulated to him,

As with Fox, who confessed he had never got through *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, Holland had a blind spot where trade and economic questions were concerned. He was a child of the 18th century enlightenment, out of touch with the great changes in society brought about by the Industrial Revolution. But the limitations of his outlook were more than made up for when in 1802, a group of brilliant young men in Scotland, founded their quarterly journal, *The Edinburgh Review*. Broadly Whig in politics as reflected in the buff and blue (Fox's colours) of the cover, it rapidly acquired an enormous influence as a force for social and economic change.

It was inevitable that the Edinburgh reviewers should gravitate to Holland House, which most of them, above all Sydney Smith, regarded as their natural habitat in London. The Hollands' librarian and lifelong friend, John Allen, was a Scotsman who had belonged to the same intellectual circle in Edinburgh and was himself a contributor to the review. Regarded as an oracle on literary matters, he was also an invaluable adviser on politics, especially in preparing Holland's speeches in the House of Lords.

Unlike his uncle, whose eloquence was legendary, Holland was a reluctant parliamentary speaker. He spoke from a sense of duty when he had to, but preferred expressing his views in writing in the journal of the House of Lords. His real contribution was the creation of Holland House as a social and intellectual centre, where politicians of differing views could come together, new talents could be encouraged and ideas expanded in the give and take of conversation. The presence of the Whig nobility, their power backed by great possessions, lent authority to the proceedings but it was the cross fertilisation with writers, artists

and distinguished foreigners that gave the place its special zest. On any one evening you might meet Sheridan, Byron and Madame de Stael; later Talleyrand, French ambassador in London, would tell stories of his eventful career, or Macaulay, a marathon talker, would amaze his hearers with his erudition - "He has occasional flashes of silence that make his conversation perfectly delightful" remarked Sydney Smith.

Holland's beloved uncle, Charles James Fox, died in 1806. The Ministry of all the Talents, of which he had been the leading figure, fell the following year, broken on the rock of George III's refusal to grant even a small measure of Catholic relief, in this case the right of Irish Catholics to hold the rank of colonel in the army. For the next 23 years, excluded because of their continuing commitment to Catholic emancipation, the Whigs were out of office.

"The time will come", wrote Macaulay, admittedly a Whig historian, "when posterity will do justice to the Whigs of England and will faithfully recount how much they suffered for Ireland, how for the sake of Ireland they were out of office for more than 20 years, braving the frowns of the court, braving the hisses of the multitude, renouncing power and patronage and peerages and garters and not receiving in return even a little popularity."

It was true that the Whigs got no credit for their principles. The cry of "no popery" was still potent; most people in England agreed with the prejudices of the King. Fox's successor, Lord Grey, was frequently ill or absent from London on his Northumberland estates, and his followers were often discouraged or divided. Through the long years of Tory rule Holland House played a key role in holding the party together and in keeping up morale. "A few Holland House dinners may perhaps put some life in us", the leader of the party in the Commons, George Tierney, remarked at one low moment. There were even some MPs who would not vote unless they had been asked to dine at Holland House.

Lady Holland was in the thick of Whig discussions, occasionally following her own political line. She had a special passion for Napoleon, "that poor dear man" as she called him and sent him over a thousand books and journals during his exile in St Helena. A special gift of sugared plums, "les pruneaux de Lady Holland" was one of the last things he asked for before he died. He left her a precious gold snuffbox in his will.

But she and her husband were just as interested in the arts and sciences as in politics and there were few celebrities in any field who did not make their way to Holland House. As Melbourne said, you met everybody there: from the Prince of Wales to the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Caroline Lamb; from scientists like Humboldt and Sir Humphrey Davy to political thinkers like Malthus and Jeremy Bentham; from painters like Landseer and Lawrence to writers like Sheridan, Byron, Scott and Dickens; from statesmen like Metternich and Talleyrand to radicals, dissenters, political exiles, foreign royalty and politicians of all complexions. Even that arch Tory, the Duke of Wellington, would occasionally turn up on grand occasions.

Holland, ebullient and outgoing, was a delightful host, clever enough to take on the most learned visitor, but kind to the timid and the young ones. Lady Holland was more challenging. Her sharp tongue could strike terror into the uninitiated and she ruled her salon with an iron hand.

“The centurion does not keep his soldiers in better order”, wrote Macaulay, “It is to one go and he goeth, and to another do this and it is done. Ring the bell Mr Macaulay; lay down that screen Lord Russell, you will spoil it; Mr Allen take a candle and show Mr Cradock the picture of Bonaparte.”

But her imperious ways were part of the fun of Holland House and though a London chemist was said to have invented a special pill for people who had been frightened there, the guests kept coming.

“Such is the despotism of this strange house”, wrote the worldly diarist Charles Greville, “that though everybody who goes there finds something to dislike or ridicule in the mistress of the house or its ways, all go there; all like it more or less and whenever by the death of either it shall come to an end, a vacuum in society will be created which nothing will supply. It is the house of all Europe; the world will suffer by its loss and it may in truth be said that it will eclipse the gaiety of nations.”

VISIT TO HOLLAND HOUSE

Jeremy Cunningham

On Sunday morning after the AGM some twenty members gathered at Holland House. Sally Martyn Johns, the Deputy Manager of the Youth Hostel had offered to show us what remains of the house after its almost complete destruction during the Blitz. Accompanied by her enthusiastic son, Sally took us to some of the hostel dormitories, explaining what the rooms had originally been. It was quite hard to visualise them under modern plastering, filled as they were with bunk beds. We were told about the famous ghost of Henry Rich, executed by the Parliamentarians in 1649. One of the interesting viewpoints was out of the top windows from where it was possible to see the outline of the original Jacobean house built for Walter Cope. The main façade is used as a backdrop for Holland Park Opera during the summer, and is closed to the public. However we were able to poke around, carefully stepping over scaffolding, hawsers and builders' detritus. We persuaded Sally to take our picture outside the front entrance. Later we made the short walk to the Belvedere Restaurant, located in what was originally the summer ballroom of the house, and enjoyed a delicious traditional Sunday lunch.



SSA members at Holland House



East Wing of Holland House



Sally Martyn Johns, her son, Sydie Bones and Janet Fearnough

WEST COUNTRY SPRING LUNCHEON, 17 MARCH 2015
Sydie Bones

What could be more inviting than the prospect of meeting old friends for a lively lunch party in an idyllic Somerset valley? There is something special about members of the Association – they love life, good living and their fellow men. The lunchtime gathering at Hornsbury Mill, near Ilminster, did not disappoint. Not only were the surroundings pastoral, the food delicious and the company stimulating, but in addition the after-lunch dissertation on St Patrick given by Canon John Simpson, was the icing on the pudding, illuminating, fascinating and entertaining.

SYDNEY SMITH AND ST PATRICK
Canon John Simpson

Today is St Patrick's Day. I wondered if Sydney Smith would have been concerned about St Patrick. The Roman Catholic Church has celebrated St Patrick from early in the 17th century. Although the saint is in the 2000 Lectionary, the Church of England would not have celebrated the saint in the 19th century. Undoubtedly, Sydney Smith would have had some knowledge of the saint, but it may well have been limited.

I happen to have a copy of the Year Book of 1832 compiled by William Hone, published just after Sydney had become a Canon of St Paul's. Sydney may have dipped into such a book. It doesn't tell us much about St. Patrick and it has some quaint observations about the Irish. I quote.....

ST PATRICK this being the festival of the patron Saint of Ireland is denoted by wearing the "green immortal shamrock" and by feasts and convivial meetings. There are mentions of the "seamroy" – three leaves united on one stalk. In an early Irish-English dictionary "seamroy" is defined as a clover, trefoil, worn by Irishmen in their hats, by way of a cross, on St Patrick's Day, in memory of that great saint.

Shamrocks were vital for the meaner sort in times of famine. In a poem of 1613 by Withers –

*And, for my clothing, in a mantle goe,
And feed on Sham-roots as the Irish doe.*

I imagine that Sydney Smith would have known about St Patrick and the shamrock.

Hone's Year Book also refers to manners and superstitions of the Irish –

Spenser writing in 1596, respecting manners and superstitions in the sister nation states "The Irish, at this day when they goe to battaile, say certain prayers or charmes to their swords, making a crosse therewith upon the earth. And thrusting the points of the blades into the ground, thinking thereby to have the better successe in fight. Also they use commonly to sweare by their swords."

Gainsford in the "Glory of England, 1619,"speaking of the Irish says "They use incantations and spells, wearing girdles of women's haire, and locks of their lovers: they are curious about their horses tending to witchcraft."

These are the kind of thoughts bandied about by intelligentsia early in the 19th century. No wonder Irish Home rule was such a problem!

The same type of legends and folklore pervade the story of St Patrick. We have *'The Confessions'* written by Patrick himself, but there are conflicting traditions about his life. He was a Romano-Britain, was born around the year 390 somewhere on the west coast of England between Cornwall and Cumbria, near enough to the sea to be captured by Irish raiders when he was 16 years old, and taken to Ireland as a slave, where he worked as a herdsman. After six years he escaped and somehow made his way home and then to the Continent. He went to Gaul, and it is generally held that he trained for the priesthood at Auxerre, under St Germanus, and was much influenced by the form of monasticism evolving under Martin of Tours. When he was in his early forties, in about 432 (the date is disputed) he returned to Ireland as a missionary bishop.

There were certainly Christians in Ireland before the coming of Patrick. They had a bishop, Palladius, but no great impression had been made, although some modern scholars think legends about Palladius and Patrick have become entwined. Certainly it was Patrick who caused Christ's gospel to be welcomed far and wide in the north, the central parts and the west, and brought an organised church into existence.

From his *Confessions* may be learned something of the success of his preaching and priestly ministrations, the opposition and dangers he encountered from the heathen, and the criticisms of some who should have been his friends – they accused him of being an ambitious ignoramus.

In 444 St Patrick established his Episcopal see at Armagh; by then he had other bishops to help him and a considerable body of lesser clergy. Despite being unsuccessful in his attempts to establish the diocesan system he had experienced in Gaul, his monastic foundations proved to be the infrastructure required to maintain the faith after his death, which is thought to have occurred in about 460.

Patrick also wrote a *Letter to Coroticus* denouncing an attack on one of his congregations by men linked to that chieftain. The hymn *Lorica*, the Breastplate, is also ascribed to him. What stands out in all his writings is Patrick's sense of being called by God to the work he had undertaken, and his determination and modesty in carrying it out.

Later sources and legends are copious and of very uneven value, causing much disagreement among scholars, not least in the matter of chronology. By the 7th century he had already come to be revered as the patron saint of Ireland.

The saint's emblems are snakes and a shamrock. There are no snakes in Ireland. Legend has it that St Patrick banished all snakes by chasing them into the sea. However all the evidence suggests that post-glacial Ireland never had any snakes.

We noted references to shamrocks in Hone's Year Book. Legend has it that St Patrick taught the Irish about the doctrine of Holy Trinity by pointing out the three leaves on a shamrock. However the shamrock had been seen as sacred in pre-Christian days and three was a sacred number.

I want to refer to one other legend – St. Patrick's Purgatory – an ancient pilgrimage site on Station Island in Lough Derg, County Donegal. According to the legend the site dates from the 5th century when Christ showed Patrick a cave that was the entrance to Purgatory. By witnessing Purgatory the people came to know the reality of the joys of heaven and the torments of hell and believed Patrick's teaching.

Its importance in medieval times is clear from the fact that it is mentioned in texts from as early as 1185 and shown on maps from all over Europe as early as the 15th century. *The Legend of the Purgatory of St. Patrick* is a 12th century poem by Marie de France, based on a Latin text by a monk Henry of Saltrey.

An Irish knight, Owein, travels to St. Patrick's Purgatory to atone for his sins. After descending into Purgatory, he is visited by several demons, who show him unholy scenes of torture to try to get him to renounce his religion. Each time he is able to dispel the scene by proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ. After spending an entire night in Purgatory he returns to the church where he began his journey, purged of his sins.

From the 12th century we move to the 18th century and Sydney Smith. 'St. Patrick's Purgatory', a ballad written by Robert Southey in 1798, is directly based

on this legend. Robert Southey (1774–1843), an English poet of the Romantic School, one of the so-called “Lake Poets”, was a contemporary of Sydney Smith. From 1809 he contributed to the *Quarterly Review* and became so well known that in 1813 he was appointed Poet Laureate after Walter Scott refused the post.

As a prolific writer and commentator, Southey introduced or popularised a number of words into the English language. The term *autobiography*, for example, was used by Southey in 1809 in the *Quarterly Review* in which he predicted an “epidemical rage for autobiography”, which has indeed continued unto this day.

Although originally a radical supporter of the French Revolution, Southey followed the trajectory of fellow Romantic poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge, towards conservatism. Embraced by the Tory Establishment he vigorously supported the Liverpool government. He argued against parliamentary reform (“the railroad to ruin with the Devil for driver”) and opposed Catholic emancipation. But in some respects he was ahead of his time in his views on social reform. He was, for example, an early critic of the evils, which the new factory system brought to 19th century Britain. He was appalled by the conditions of life in towns like Birmingham and Manchester, and especially the employment of children in factories. He advocated that the State should promote public works to maintain high employment and called for universal education.

In 1817 he privately proposed penal transportation for those guilty of “libel” or “sedition.” He had in mind figures like Thomas Jonathan Wooler and William Hone, the author of the Year Book from which I quoted earlier. He urged that they should be prosecuted. Such writers were guilty, he wrote in the *Quarterly Review*, of “inflaming the turbulent temper of the manufacturer and disturbing the quiet attachment of the peasant to those institutions under which he and his fathers have dwelt in peace.”

Wooler and Hone were tried and acquitted. Southey also clashed with Byron. Byron believed that Southey had spread rumours about himself and Percy Shelley being in a “League of Incest” during their time on Lake Geneva in 1816, a claim that Southey vehemently denied.

I end with some questions. Was Sydney Smith concerned about St Patrick? How much did he know about him? Would he have owned or read William Hone’s Year Books? Would he have read ‘St Patrick’s Purgatory’ by Robert Southey? Were he and Southey acquainted? Probably. Sydney Smith knew “anyone who was anybody”, but they probably disliked each other. They were on different sides of the political divide and had opposing views on many issues. It would be interesting to do more research, but in the meantime I hope you have enjoyed the somewhat spurious links between St. Patrick, Sydney Smith, William Hone, Robert Southey and Byron.

THE FRENCH HALF OF SYDNEY SMITH

Randolph Vigne - Boisdale lunch, 15 October 2014

Sydney much enjoyed his several visits to France and, travelling with the Hollands, was made much of at the British Embassy, but his main pleasure was in the wonders of the food and wine that were so superior to ours. Salad was a great theme with him. A French clerical friend taught him a lesson, which he passed on to his Yorkshire landowner friend Richard York. Alan Bell writes that Beauvilliers had it from a dying uncle, Canon of Tours, who 'gave him the receipt, hiccupped, and died ... and here let me beg you always to use *L'Huile d'Aix* or *Vinaigre d'Orleans*, not the liquid tallow and cut-throat acidity with which salads are made in England'.

But isn't it strange that apart from his comment that the levity in his nature must come from his French forebears he said so little about the French side of his family? His grandfather Isaac Olier took refuge here from anti-Protestant persecution in Montauban some time before 1740, the year of his naturalization. He is said to have spoken no English but seems to have prospered, leaving five houses in Little Turnstile in his estate at his death in 1774.

He and Sydney's grandmother Mary Barton, a collateral descendant of Sir Isaac Newton, produced four daughters – Mary, Sydney's mother, married to Robert Smith; Margaret, wife of Robert Vigne; and the unmarried Ellen (known as Nellie or, to Sydney to whom she left money, 'Aunt Olier') and Charlotte; and one son, officially listed as 'Christopher Olier, gent.' – Robert Smith is merely 'merchant'.

The spinster daughters and their mother ran a select little dancing school in Bloomsbury, where a real-life Becky Sharp might have been found, and we have a record of a family party with the Smiths and Vignes and friends present. Robert Smith was Isaac Olier's executor in 1774 but his widow's, eight years later, were Ellen and Charlotte and not Robert, who had perhaps become the rather difficult character whom his sons found him to be. Had there been a family split? A letter Sydney wrote his Vigne cousin, the traveller and author Godfrey Thomas Vigne, is friendly and helpful but contains no hint of a family relationship.

Sydney was 13 when Dr Johnson died in 1784 yet this silence about the Huguenots in England (50,000 of them) is observable also in Boswell, who never mentions that the Great Cham's great friend David Garrick was the grandson of David de la Garriques, a Huguenot pastor in exile in England, nor Anthony Chamier, government servant, an intimate and member of the Club, also the grandson of a refugee Huguenot pastor. We have Sydney's maternal Olier kin recorded in a family tree [circulated at the luncheon table] researched by a great Huguenot genealogist, Henry Wagner, the inspiration of his cousin-once-removed, Sir Anthony Wagner, Garter-King-at-Arms.

Sydney expressed no interest, let alone pride, in his Huguenot connexion. Active fellows of the Huguenot Society can be relied on to do that for him.

SYDNEY SMITH AND SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Philip Chapman, York Lunch 4 June 2014

If Sydney and Scott corresponded with one another, none of their letters seems to have survived. But light is thrown on their relationship by references in biographies, Scott's Journal and other letters, which they each wrote.

First, what do they have in common? Sydney greatly admired the Waverley novels. Sydney writes of *The Heart of Midlothian*: "it made me laugh and cry fifty times and I read it with the liveliest interest" and thanks Scott's publisher for "the last novel of Walter Scott. It would be profanation to call him Mr Walter Scott. I should as soon have said Mr Shakespeare... When I get hold of one of these novels, turnips, sermons and justice business are all forgotten." But he could be critical. He describes the story of Scott's novel, *Nigel* as execrable and continues, "Great part of the second volume very long and tiresome, but on the whole, the novel will do... It does not impair the very noble and honorable estate which he has in his brains. In his novel *The Pirate*, Scott refers to Sydney as a laughing philosopher, the Democritus of our day, and elsewhere describes Sydney as brilliant.

They were exact contemporaries, both born in 1771, and must have met one another, not long after Sydney arrived in Edinburgh in June 1798, aged 27, with his pupil. Scott's first biographer, his son-in-law Lockhart writes: "the Edinburgh Review had been commenced in October 1802 under the superintendence of the Rev Sydney Smith, with whom during his short residence in Scotland, Scott had lived in terms of great kindness and familiarity. Mr. Smith soon resigned the editorship to Mr. Jeffrey... Scott started to contribute articles to the Edinburgh Review." The same year Scott proposed to Sydney, Jeffrey and others that they should form themselves into a committee for a weekly literary club, the Friday club, at which Scott and Sydney became very well acquainted. Sydney shared with Scott a love of Scotland, or at least of Edinburgh. On leaving the city in 1803, he wrote a letter to Jeffrey, which might have been written to Scott: "I left Edinburgh with great heaviness of heart. I knew what I was leaving and was ignorant to what I was going. My good fortune will be very great if I should ever again fall into the society of so many liberal, correct and instructed men and live with them on such terms of friendship as I have done with you and you know whom at Edinburgh." Much later, he writes: "when shall I see Scotland again? Never again shall I forget the happy days passed there amidst odious smells barbarous sounds bad suppers excellent hearts and most enlightened and cultivated understandings."

They also shared a love of conviviality, good conversation and bright lights. Scott had gas lighting installed at his house at Abbotsford. Sydney in a letter setting out twenty recipes for combating low spirits recommends the keeping of blazing fires. He writes, "What use of wealth so luxurious and delightful as to light your house with another...? Better to eat dry bread by the splendour of gas, than to dine on wild beef by wax candles". Believing that nothing produced melancholy so easily as darkness, the room in which he sat every night was lighted up like a town after a great naval victory. Both of them attended the breakfast parties of

their friend Samuel Rogers in London. Rogers had candles put high up on the walls of his dining room to show off his fine pictures. When asked whether he liked it, Sydney replied: "not at all. Above there is a blaze of light and below nothing but darkness and gnashing of teeth" an irreverent reference to St Matthew's Gospel chapter 8 verse 12.

Scott was famous for his conviviality and confessed in his autobiography that he had drunk too much in his youth. Sydney writes: "let me warn you against the melancholy effects of temperance... Depend upon it, the wretchedness of human life is only to be encountered upon the basis of meat and wine." (Such dogmatic statements have the flavour of an utterance of Dr Samuel Johnson, particularly the expression "depend upon it.") In the same letter containing recipes, he urges, "live as well and drink as much wine as you dare." He would have liked the ancient Greek saying that water is best but wine is better.

And what about their differences? Scott was a high Tory, an antiquarian who lived his imaginative life in the past, collecting and writing ballads, composing historical novels and constructing, at Abbotsford, a home for his books, paintings and suits of armour. Sydney lived very much in the present and for the future, for example, playing a prominent part in supporting an extension of the franchise, which Scott opposed, and in doing so, Scott incurred, towards the end of his life, some unpopularity.

Scott was a countryman who, despite his lameness, was extremely active both on foot and on horseback and loved animals and country sports, which Sydney did not. Sydney once said: "I don't like dogs – a lady asked me once for a motto for her dog called Spot. I proposed "out damned spot" but strange to say she did not think it sentimental enough." And writing from Combe Florey, he says. "I saw a crow yesterday and had a distant view of a rabbit today." Even at the age of 27 when one would expect him to be quite energetic, on his way to Edinburgh with his pupil Michael Beach, he mentions their ascent of Skiddaw in a letter to Mrs Beach: "I find it rather difficult to stick upon my horse on the plainest roads and did not find that facility increased by the darkness of the morning or the precipitous paths... I made no manner of doubt that I should roll down into the town of Keswick the next morning and be picked up by the Town Beadle dead in the gutter... As I had a bottle of brandy in my pocket... the coroner and jury would infallibly have brought me in "a parson, as died of drinking".

Sydney could not help laughing at Scott's love of distinctions and little snobberies. When Scott was making a laboured attempt to establish a pedigree, Sydney referred to his own: "my grandfather disappeared about the time of the Assizes and we asked no questions." He added. "The Smiths never had any arms and have invariably sealed their letters with their thumbs".

Though most of Scott's poetry consisted of ballads, he could also write imaginative poems instinct with great feeling, as for example his poem *Helvellyn*, which celebrates a faithful dog who had guarded the remains of his master who fell from the mountain (compare the poem *Fidelity* by William Wordsworth). Here he is addressing the dog:

*How long didst thou think that his silence was slumber?
When the wind waved his garment, how oft didst thou start?
How many long days and long weeks didst thou number,
Ere he faded before thee, the friend of thy heart?*

But Sydney in the recipe letter of 1818 advises Lady Georgiana to avoid poetry and serious novels and everything likely to excite feeling or emotion, not ending in active benevolence. If this represents Sydney's real and lasting opinion, it seems a serious limitation. Let us hope that he had changed his mind about poems and serious novels, at least if they led to "active benevolence" by the time that he met and admired Charles Dickens, whose novels are thought to have influenced some reforms of society of which Sydney would have approved.

ALAN BELL'S COLLECTION OF SYDNEY LETTERS

Alan Bell

I suppose that, like most members of the Sydney Smith Association, my first introduction to Sydney was through Hesketh Pearson's biography (1933), which I bought as a blue-covered Penguin paperback that I still have. I read it as a schoolboy and later on, as a young archivist, I went back to it having noticed some additional documents that seemed unfamiliar. They turned out to be available in the collected edition of Sydney's letters by Nowell C Smith (OUP 1953), a two-volume gathering that Smith had made many years before, and had been the principal source of Pearson's biography. Before long I gathered information that made hundreds of additions to Nowell Smith's Oxford text. There was clearly sufficient new material for a comprehensive review of these novel documents.

Both of Sydney's daughters had married members of two Hertfordshire families, now named Holland-Hibbert, who still lived at Munden, a house near Watford, the seat of the then fourth Viscount Knutsford. David Holland, a cousin of his, whom I knew professionally as Librarian of the House of Commons, wrote to him and arranged for us both to make a preliminary visit to his elderly relation. Lord Knutsford, whom I had discovered was a famous judge of fox-hound puppies, seemed delighted by my interest, and gave me a lot of encouragement, as did his son Julian, later fifth Viscount, prominent in post-war disabled ex-servicemen's affairs, and daughter Diana, who also lived at Munden. They were all very helpful indeed... (Their cousin, sixth Lord Knutsford, is one of our Association's Patrons).

As copyright in the unpublished letters I was finding was clearly the property of Lord Knutsford, it was essential to secure legal authority from him. This produced a fine letter "No objection at all. Good of you to ask. Sydney Smith's Wit & Wisdom would not get him very far these days... However, we are pleased to have had an ancestor who is thought worthy of study." This rather dashing reply simplified my negotiations with many archivists and librarians.

The other group of people I had to meet were the officials of the Oxford University Press, who had taken a helpful interest in my researches, though the sheer bulk of my discoveries of new and improved material would add greatly to the 850 or so pages of Nowell Smith's text. Dan Davin, the Academic Publisher (second-in-command of the OUP), was exceedingly kind. He even arranged for a small research grant to help with the expenses of my quest. Before long he had come up with the suggestion that a new biography of Sydney Smith might prove more acceptable to his Delegates (the managing committee of the Press). The necessary documents were soon approved. They recognised that the complete work would not be available immediately but it came out in autumn 1980 as a "Clarendon Press" publication. (It has been out of print for some years now.) It was aimed at a general readership and I was proud of the fact that the text is fully referenced, but has not a single discursive footnote, which must be a record in Clarendon Press publication!

ALAN BELL'S TRANSCRIPTS OF SYDNEY SMITH LETTERS

Jeremy Cunningham

As Alan Bell explained above, he was involved in preparing a revised edition of Sydney's letters, based on some 800 hitherto unpublished letters that he found in collections in Britain and USA. Alan collected photostats (as they were then called) of the originals and transcribed them ready for publication, recording the then location of the original. Some of these locations will not have changed, for example letters in university collections or local government archives. However some collections have since been dispersed after the owner's death.

After Alan drew extensively on these letters for his biography of Sydney, (published in 1980), the Oxford University Press withdrew from the project to produce an enlarged and revised edition. It must have been a dreadful disappointment for Alan. Last year Alan, who is now in frail health, asked me as Chair of the Sydney Smith Association if we could find a home for this important collection of material. It seemed to me that one potential home could be Munden House, near Watford, owned by my cousin Henry Holland-Hibbert, another direct descendant of Sydney. There is a large original portrait of Sydney at Munden and other material relating to his life. My cousin kindly agreed to eventually house the collection, which consists of six large boxes, each the size of a traditional filing cabinet drawer.

In November, my son and I made a flying visit to Edinburgh to collect the letters from Alan. We had a most interesting evening with him and his wife Olivia, and the next day loaded the boxes into the car. These are now in my study in Oxford, and I am gradually reading the transcripts. It seems to me that there are two or three approaches we could take. The first one is to make contact with the OUP to see if they are interested in returning to the project. I have made approaches but as yet I have received no response. The second is to approach another publisher. Randolph Vigne recommended Pickering and Chatto, and I have made contact with an editor there who sounded quite positive about publishing some or all of the letters. The third is to place a selection of the best, or most unusual letters on our own website. To try this out, I have scanned the first thirty or so to calculate

the pay-off between file size and resolution. To whet the appetite of Sydney Smith enthusiasts, I am printing below Sydney's 1801 letter to the anonymous writer from the Tory supporting 'Anti-Jacobin' review who wrote a negative review of Sydney's sermons. It is a master-example of the polite put-down and, according to my daughter, still relevant and useful today.

I would like to thank Alan for entrusting the association with the results of his extensive and detailed work and I would appreciate any views or advice about what to do about this valuable trove.

To the Anti Jacobin reviewer.-

Sr - On matters of opinion I should never think of calling in question the decisions of a reviewer. When the case is fairly stated, the public are to decide between the opposite judgements of an author & his critic: On matters of fact I think myself entitl'd to a little more latitude, & expect from your known facility of recantation, the correction of a few mistatements which have crept into your review of my sermons.-

You say that I object in general to the introduction of scripture language into Sermons & and that I consider such language as capable of inspiring no other sentiments but those of ridicule & disgust.-The passage of my preface to which you allude, & which you partly quote is this "There is bad taste in the language of Sermons evinc'd by a constant repetition of the same scriptural phrases, which perhaps were us'd with great judgment 200 years ago- but are now become so trite that they may without great inconvenience be exchang'd for others - Putting off the old man -& putting on the new man- The one thing needful- The Lord hath set up his Candlestick- the armor of righteousness etc etc- The sacred scriptures are surely abundant enough, to afford the same idea with some novelty of language; one can never be driven from the penury of these sacred writings to wear & fritter their holy language into a perfect cant, -which passes thro' the ear without leaving any sensations but those of ridicule and disgust."- Now is this passage a satire upon the introduction of scriptural language in general, or is it a satire upon the lazy introduction of the same scriptural language?- does it deny there is any charm in antient, holy words- or does it guard against the destruction of that charm by the tedious severity of eternal repetition? - I think you should have been more cautious than usual in such an accusation, because it is of a very serious nature, & if true affects my character as a Clergyman-

I was surpris'd to learn from yr review that there is scarcely a single expression borrow'd from the sacred writings in my whole book.- In the very first Sermon- there happen to be 13 or 14 Scriptural phrases.- In my 6th Sermon there are 11- the two first pages of my 3rd Sermon- consist wholly of Scripture. I have not taken the trouble of looking at any others in my first volume- and of my second I have no copy at hand- I am not I hope an ill natur'd man & am willing to beleive that the press of business in a review is so great that a critic cannot be expected to measure proportion his assertions, by an examination to facts.- I am convinc'd however these exaggerated statements are mere mistakes.- I respect every man of character too much to tell him that he intentionally perverts the truth.- Such imputations are

reserv'd for the very out casts of society – for those unhappy men who have publicly confess'd themselves wilful & corrupt liars.- Your observation upon my little slips of language & my inaccurate punctuation is perfectly just, I am oblig'd to you for publicly shaming me into a more strict obser attention to these necessary trifles.- but at the same time that I acknowledge my inaccuracy- I am at a loss to know how you discover'd it: As the majority of instances adduc'd in support of the assertion are very unfortunately selected- consider again If it be wrong to use a plural very with World a noun of number?- If Euclid would ha we say the compound ratio of B & C or to B & C.- If amongst be not sometimes more harmonious than among. – but after all I submit to yr superior intelligence on these points.- from your private knowledge of the town of Edinburgh- you are probably a Scotchman- If so- English is to you a foreign language which you neither speak nor write – you therefore have in all probability, studied its minutiae more critically than I have done – [page turns]

If I have written presumptuous, petulant preface tell me so fairly, nothing more probable- nothing I should read with more tranquillity than your rebuke- with tranquillity if it were dull, - delight if it were witty, respect if it were dignified & temperate, - but whether the Rev'd Daniel Sandford serve his chapel gratuitously, or whether as is usual in private chapels the Clerk take the measure of every sitter, & charge according to latitude; whether I live in fashionable circles, whether the pastor of Charlotte Chapel has long edified the metropolis of Scotland by his learning, what has all this to do with the proverbial dulness of English Sermons- Mr Sandford I believe to be a very worthy, honorable, & religious man & I am sure he has too much good sense, & too much of the spirit of a gentleman not to spurn this attempt to set at variance two Clergymen who have always liv'd together on the best of terms, & without the smallest dispute, public or private- May I be allowed in the words of the beautiful plaintive & anonymous writer in the monthly magazine¹ to express my surprise “that you are not deeply & intimately penetrated with compunction for having been thus hurried on by unmerited resentment against a single individual, to prostitute y'r pen & misapply y'r talents to the unworthy purpose of exciting prejudices amongst the innocent living (& to wonder that you do not see) the complicated mischief of such conduct in colors as strong as those in which it can be view'd by the parties themselves”

Do you mean to say because Mr Sandford is extremely attentive to his duties,- that the whole body of the English Clergy are so?- to shew the fallacy of such reasoning- allow me to put a case-, which tho' purely fictitious may serve to illustrate my argument- would it be a fair refutation of a panegyric upon the Scotch Episcopalian Clergy to say that there is one man among them of the most degraded & immoral character, who has ungratefully calumniated his benefactor and freind, whose personal infamy is only screen'd by his political violence, & who if he were not the tool of faction, would be the object of universal contempt?- I am sure you have candor enough to admit the force of this argument.- & to allow that the exception rather proves than falsifies the rule.-As for criticism and Satire I expect them as a matter of course. I did not write that preface, without knowing it was too true to be forgiven & being well aware that I should make every common place thinker my foe.- my cheek is prepared for the scratches of irascible anility- my back for the rod of wrathful dulness. – I perfectly agree with you- that a young man

*detected in the act of thinking for himself is a fair object for punishment, Lash me well- I know I deserve it.- but review my works not me.- for it may perhaps be good policy in you not to provoke me to review you-
I remain Sr with the respect that all respectable men feel for you - Yrs etc
Sydney Smith*



Alan and Olivia in Edinburgh New Town

SYDNEY SMITH – EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO THE REVEREND FRANCIS WRANGHAM

There is a hatter at the corner of Ousegate. Be so good as to give him advice upon the important question of an hat for the Assizes for me. It should be I fancy a mere manual hat – I will not have a shovel –so pray direct about the instrument. I presume it is a Chapeau de Bras. Blanchard will call to consult you. [6 Mar 1824]

(Sydney Smith acted as Chaplain to the High Sheriff of York in 1824 and wrote this letter to Wrangham, who had previously held this office, for advice on choosing a hat.)

I saw 6 weeks ago the Mitre hanging over your head by a very slender thread – the agreeable vision has fled – and you must return to Churchwardens and Overseers till the Whigs learn to avail themselves with greater dexterity of the overtures which Fortune makes to them. All however that a man can do in this world is to make his head learned, and his heart honest, the gods must do the rest, no blame attaches to you. [23 June 1812]

Why are you an honest man? You might have been Bishop of London. Will no time and no example cure you? Repent and do not go unmitred to your tomb. [6 Sep 1813]

Your approbation of the two Visits you made here puts me very much in mind of Lady Holland's approbation of the Highland Inns. She carried her own cook and

her own provisions, and thought she had found the good cheer which she brought. [18 Dec 1809]

We shall be better all our lives for 200 miles of serene discussion. You shall talk for 140 miles and only listen for 60. My first proposition shall commence at Bawtry, or any other arrangement you shall think fit. You live with an equity lawyer, let him decide. [mid-June 1814]

(Sydney Smith and Wrangham were planning to share a coach for the journey from London to York, 1814.)

I should with the greatest pleasure send my Sermon to Mr Montague but I have not one single copy left not if you were to offer me for it Wrangham's Works, in 7 vol 8vo, such an exchange as has never taken place since the days of Glaucus and Diomedes. I printed only 250 copies, and the sermon has received a value from its limited supply, which it never could have done from its merits. Something of this nature has been heard of I believe at the Roxburghe Club. [24 April 1824]

(The Roxburghe Club was founded in 1812 and is the oldest society of bibliophiles in the world. Its membership is offered to those with distinguished libraries or with a scholarly interest in books.)

Sydie Bones writes -

The Reverend Francis Wrangham, 1769-1842, was a Yorkshire clergyman, ending his clerical career in the position of Archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorkshire. Educated at Hull Grammar School and Cambridge University, he became a classical scholar, essayist and prize-winning poet. His political leanings were progressive, similar to Sydney Smith's, speaking in favour of the abolition of slavery and emancipation of Catholics. Wrangham was one of the Yorkshire clergy with whom Sydney Smith became particularly friendly, a friendship which extended from the time the Smiths lived in Heslington until the end of his life. In November 1831, Sydney commented in a letter to Lord Grey that 'you may trust him as long as you have any thing to give him'; and in his last letter to Wrangham in 1842, he wrote 'I wish you had been a Bishop'.

NEWSLETTER MATERIAL

If you have any stories, pictures or other material for inclusion in the next Newsletter, please send it to either;

Jeremy Cunningham, our Editor at Cunningham.jeremy@gmail.com

Or Gerry Bradshaw, assistant editor at ggbradshaw@btinternet.com

The Sydney Smith Association. Objects

To advance the education of the public in the life and works of Sydney Smith.
To advance the Christian religion by the preservation and upkeep of churches
connected
with Sydney Smith, in particular but not exclusively, the parish churches of
Foston in
North Yorkshire and Combe Florey in Somerset.
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,

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*The church is the
great lost and
found department*

