

THE
SYDNEY SMITH
ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

Issue 23
Spring 2018

THE SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION

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

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THE 2017 AGM WEEKEND IN TAUNTON

Mark Wade

(NB. The official bits are at the end of this Newsletter)

We have grown accustomed to our AGMs being accompanied by fine weather and this year proved no exception when some two dozen members gathered on the terrace of the very pleasing, wisteria laden Castle Hotel in Taunton. Immediately adjacent lay the ancient castle, now the museum where we were shortly to take lunch, before us was the colourful hustle and bustle of a continental market whilst sadly to our left hand side lay the aesthetically distressing sight of 1960s architectural endeavour which only too frequently blights our county towns.

It is not possible in so brief a space to do justice to the excellence of the lately refurbished museum and we were both honoured and fortunate to have as our guide the Chief Executive of the Museum Trust, Tom Mayberry, a gentleman of considerable erudition who enlightened and entertained us for over an hour describing a great many artefacts. With many allusions to Saxon times he left us in no doubt as to our being in the very cradle of English history. Admitting that prior to our visit he knew but little of Sydney, he thereupon displayed his uncommon zest for knowledge by enacting the events that had taken place almost 200 years previously upon the very spot where we now found ourselves. At the height of the furore over the Reform Bill when feelings throughout the country, but especially in Somerset, were running at revolutionary pitch, Sydney Smith stepped forward to



address an enormous press of people who had gathered here in what was then the Great Hall of the Castle, once used by Judge Jefferies for his 'Bloody Assize'. Sydney's entrance was that of the consummate actor. He immediately perceived the need to defuse the seething anger of the protestors. His speech was short. He used no rhetoric but by use of mime he fixed in the minds of his audience the image of Mrs Partington attempting to stem the Atlantic Ocean with her mop. This was followed by the briefest of perorations. A great wave of laughter then took hold of the many hundreds of persons.

Newspaper men present probably in anticipation of a bloody riot, ensured that within two or three days prints of Mrs Partington with a face by no means dissimilar to that of the Duke of Wellington, were to be found in the streets of London. Thus it was that by means of a timely jest rather than an eloquent speech, attempts to halt the Reform Bill were made to look ridiculous.

Dinner that evening in the Castle Hotel was a most excellent and amiable affair much enhanced by Dr Robert Dunning, one time official historian of Somerset who entertained us with some extraordinary details of 18th century ecclesiastical matters but upon which it would be superfluous to dwell at this point as the text of his talk is recorded elsewhere in the newsletter. As is usual it was succeeded by a lively discussion around the table largely on the subject of tithes, rectories and prebends.

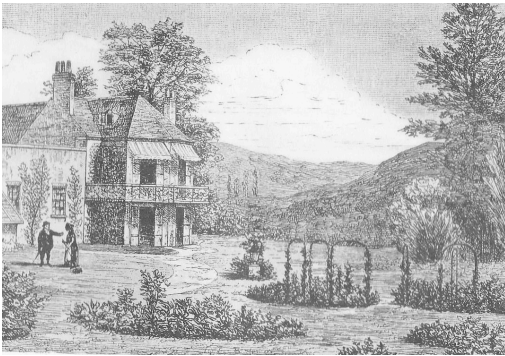
The next morning those of us with a thirst after true religion and virtue, leapt from our beds at an unduly early hour that we might attend divine service at Combe Florey, some five miles distant. We were warmly welcomed by the Rector, Matthew Tregenza, and his wife and were greatly relieved to find that the service was in keeping with Church of England tradition. We enjoyed a very robust BCP matins wherein with due penitence we acknowledged and bewailed our manifold sins and wickednesses. These supplications were accompanied by a very sound sermon in which Mr Tregenza brushed aside, with admirable aplomb, the case of the erroneous second lesson. The ceremony was encompassed withal by four lusty hymns to which we gave voice with great gusto both to our own satisfactions and, one would greatly hope, to that of the Almighty also.



Members in the Drawing Room at Bagborough

A short time later our spirits were lifted even higher on finding ourselves in the splendid drawing room of Bagborough House, the home of John Stedman and Julio Fernandez for a pre-luncheon snifter. We did justice to the admirable sherry that was provided amidst the eclectic profusion of interesting artistic works which they have collected over the years

and indeed still are collecting. The considerate hospitality extended to us was particularly kind in view of their imminent departure to overwinter in their Andalusian residence.



Combe Florey

And then a mad rush through the lanes back to Combe Florey to Sydney's old rectory where our spirits were raised yet again by the sight of a delicious feast laid out upon a huge table. The house, which it must be said is a prince amongst rectories, has

been acquired in recent years by Simon Hawes and has been painstakingly restored with the utmost attention to detail yet includes some bold innovations which serve only to reflect upon Simon and his team's immaculate taste and aesthetic sensitivity. To dwell but on a single feature, Simon has been at pains to leave exposed to view the rash edificial adjustments made by Sydney so long ago to the forward roof of the rectory which has left a ripple effect to the roof and to the internal floors. At doubtless much expense the renovated roof has been made to ripple and internal furniture fitted with legs of variable lengths to accommodate this idiosyncrasy. All has been achieved in the face of frequent obstruction from the planning authority but in the end this must surely rate very highly in the annals of architectural restoration. Bearing in mind the widespread wanton destruction of the interiors of so many fine buildings by those who are painfully lacking in good taste and who turn them into bling palaces, it is especially heartening to encounter such high standards.

The final leg of our weekend involved a visit to the nearby Bishops Lydeard House, the home of Vaun Wilkins and formerly the home of the curmudgeonly, cantankerous, erratic and somewhat shady Robert Smith, father of the



Outside Bishops Lydeard

four Smith brothers of whom Sydney once remarked that “he always seemed to disappear at about the time of the Assizes”. He was a man it seems who often disappeared for, even on the day of his marriage, he informed his bride, at the conclusion of the ceremony at the highly fashionable St George’s, Bloomsbury, that he had to leave immediately for America and thereupon duly disappeared for 2 years. For one who ever pleaded poverty the house takes one aback, for its dimensions are stately, its grounds extensive and most attractively arranged and immaculately maintained. As rain was threatening, Vaun took those still capable of standing, on one of the shorter garden walks having, it must be recorded, rushed back with supererogative zeal to ensure that there was a blazing log fire for those not wishing to venture forth. Of particular note in the garden there is a prodigious pergola on very solid sandstone pillars some 10 feet apart and about 100 yards in length and broken at the half way point by a pleasing fountain. Upon the pillars and beams have lately been planted a profusion of climbing plants which, when they mature, are certain to present a glorious spectacle.

We eventually returned to the house to find tea laid upon a vast table in a welcoming dining room with the laggardly non-walkers merrily ensconced before the fire. We were left with the impression of a most charming house looked after with love and affection.

“THANK GOD FOR TEA”

Seen in large letters on a display board at a tea plantation shop in Assam

“Thank God For Tea!

What Would The World Do Without Tea?

How Did It Exist?

I Am Glad That I Was Not Born Before Tea.”

Sydney Smith

SYDNEY AND THE RAILWAY

Notes for the talk given by Nicholas Faith to London lunchers, January 24th 2018. This is the skeleton around which he wove a delightfully interesting and amusing discourse:-

Sydney never liked stage coaches which took six hours for the journey to Bath: ‘I used to sleep two nights on the road, and to travel with a pair of horses is miserable

work'. He also disliked not having a choice of companions - he was 'frightened that the mayor of Bristol would stay in the same inn.'

So trains were a revelation. He was lucky because Combe Florey was a mere 6½ miles from Taunton which is 150 miles to London. After his first trip from Chippenham in February 1841, he wrote: 'I was delighted. Before this invention, man richly endowed with many gifts of mind and body was deficient in locomotive powers: he could walk five miles an hour while a wild goose could fly 80 at the same time; I can run now much faster than a Fox or an Hare and beat a carrier pigeon or an eagle for 200 miles'.

The trains ran over the rails of two companies, GWR to Bristol and then part of the Bristol & Exeter – by 1842 the route was the fastest in the world with speeds regularly up to 50mph. To Bristol 1½ hours, Bath in two hours, London in six. What an improvement. He recorded that 'Mrs Sydney travelled 100 miles in great pain and would not consent to stop at Bath or Bristol' – and on another occasion that she 'got better every scream of the railroad and is now considerably improved.'

Friends left Combe Florey after nine o'clock and were in Grosvenor Street before six, 'I call this a very serious increase of comfort.' But my favourite quote is 'I dare say the rail road has added 10 per cent to the Value of all property in this neighbourhood.'

His attitude to accidents was typical: 'Every fresh accident on the railroad is an advantage, and leads to an improvement. What we want is an overturn which would kill a bishop or, at least, a dean. This mode of conveyance would then become perfect'. There was a major crash on the route at Sonning on Christmas Eve 1841 and another at Meudon near Versailles when passengers were locked into their compartments. But 'outside mail coach passengers were not tied to the roof nor locked into their compartments' – yet only one door was openable for GWR. This did not dampen Sydney's enthusiasm for the railway: 'I used to travel in my own carriage but this time I went in the public carriages and travelled in six hours 150 miles with as little fatigue as if I had been sitting down in my own Elbow Chair in my own Library.'

Lady Holland was a famous hypochondriac ('never seen anyone so crestfallen and despondent when told she was well') but she was persuaded to take the train to Chippenham. 'A representative of Isambard Kingdom Brunel was told off to look after her. She stood the journey well – a real ordeal for her – considering her timorous nature.'

The Editor adds:-

A generation later, another clergyman in Yorkshire, Samuel Wimbush, was the Tory and rather dull rector of Terrington, a similar distance from Castle Howard as

Foston, but even further from a lemon. His diaries show how distances continued to shorten in the generation after Sydney.

In 1856, in his 20's he describes his Grand Tour of Europe, largely undertaken by train. Later, he often visits his family in Finchley – he rides a few miles to the nearest station; then first train to York; breakfast in the new Station Hotel; 10.30 train to London; Finchley in time for tea. There are choir outings by train to Scarborough. In the 1870's he sees his son off from Victoria to Godesburg on the Rhine on Tuesday, and by Saturday, Samuel receives in Yorkshire a card to say he's arrived. Possibly faster than today's post? Later, he reports the arrival of a 30lb salmon "caught yesterday [by a friend] on the Tweed". By the 1890's, he says goodbye to his daughter, on her way to America for a nursing post. In less than a fortnight, she sends him a cable from Savannah.

OSBERT BURDETT ON SYDNEY SMITH

Sydie Bones

Among my small collection of books by and about Sydney Smith is a tattered copy of a less well-known title: *The Rev. Smith, Sydney* by Osbert Burdett, published in 1934 by Chapman & Hall. Hesketh Pearson's best-selling biography *The Smith of Smiths* had been published in January of that year, yet Burdett makes no reference to it among the other works mentioned in the Preface, which he dated as June 1934. Although in the titles on my bookshelf Burdett's name appears only in the bibliography of Peter Virgin's *Sydney Smith* (1995), I was surprised to discover that *The Rev. Smith* ran to 14 editions, the latest in 1971.

Who was Osbert Burdett? Google has little to offer. Listed as 'Author and Critic', (1885–1936), his best-known works of literary criticism cover Blake, Browning, Gladstone, the two Carlyles and the Beardsley Period, many of them extending to multiple editions stretching well into this century. His style had evidently improved since his undergraduate days: author Forest Reid is quoted as saying that at Cambridge Burdett was writing 'an extremely bad novel' in which he could find only one good sentence. Burdett's father, Sir Henry Burdett, had corresponded with Sydney Holland (Viscount Knutsford) during the years 1894 to 1920 which may have sparked the young Osbert's interest in Sydney Smith. In 1928 *The London Mercury* published his essay on Sydney, which drew favourable comment from Lord Knutsford.

His interest, he says, is in the man – not specifically the clergyman, the wit or the *pater familias*, about which much had already been written – but the whole man.

He wished to draw a portrait from a different angle, quoting as much as possible from works that are least known, especially forgotten lectures and sermons. 'For far too long', he writes, 'the humorist only has been acknowledged'. On the page preceding the Preface, Burdett has written his own dedication:

*Under a Sarum chestnut-tree
The curate's smithy stands.
The Smith a mighty Smith is he,
With snowy, Cambric bands;
But the tissue of his brawny brain
Is of stuff that understands.*

*His face is round, and pink, and gay;
His smile is like the sun.
High spirits are his chief display;
But from this fountain run
Courage (that everlasting joy):
More sense than, even, fun.*

- After Longfellow

The Sarum chestnut tree was in Netheravon, where Burdett describes Sydney's tenure as curate from 1794 to 1797 as being 'buried alive'.

Burdett traces Sydney's career through Edinburgh, London, Foston, Combe Florey and St Paul's, drawing heavily on sermons and lectures for his analysis of character and attributes. A whole chapter is devoted to the *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, delivered at The Royal Institution in London over three years, 1804-06. I learned that Sydney's knowledge of Greek philosophy was 'extremely inadequate' so that he raced through the early years of history until he reached Francis Bacon. The success of these lectures is well documented. Burdett writes: 'To captivate a Mayfair audience during three courses of lectures on Moral Philosophy was an easy task for such a speaker'; concluding that 'Smith led the life of a man who was to talk his way from the solitude of Salisbury Plain to a canonry of St Paul's Cathedral'.

Re-reading this book after more than ten years, I became more aware of details which had previously gone unnoticed. How modern is his view of the importance of light: 'I recommend lights as a great improver of animal spirits. How is it possible to be happy with two mould candles ill snuffed?' In Combe Florey he suffered from

hay-fever and entreated his son-in-law to find a remedy. 'Light, dust, contradiction, the sight of a Dissenter – anything sets me sneezing; and if I begin to sneeze at twelve, I don't leave off till two, and am distinctly heard in Taunton (when the wind sets that way), a distance of six miles.' And how pertinent is this avowal of tolerance (seemingly lacking today): 'I have never given way to that puritanical feeling of the Whigs against dining with the Tories:

Tory and Whig in turn shall be my host;
I taste no politics in boiled or roast.'

In the final chapter, covering the last ten years of Sydney's life, Burdett expounds on the sermon preached at St Paul's Cathedral on the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, entitled 'On the Duties of the Queen'. First and foremost was the education of the people because 'it presents the best chance of national improvement'. Education did not imply only reading and writing, but also poetry, literature and art, and 'the fine morality of the Sacred Scriptures'. The second objective which Sydney wished to impress upon the Queen was 'a rooted horror of war, an earnest and passionate desire to keep her people in a state of profound peace'. Next was a duty close to his own heart: 'I hope the Queen will love the National Church and protect it', at the same time warning her against 'sectarian fanaticism'. Burdett identified this sermon as 'a good example of his manner, his breadth of view, his sense of public duty', noting that when the occasion demanded, 'this independent man could speak with the voice of the church', and be listened to by those 'in the seats of the mighty'.

SYDNEY SMITH AND BOOKS

Ralph Rochester

In 1839 Sydney Smith, of happy memory, was 68 and in that year the Smiths moved into what proved to be their last and their grandest London home, 56 Green Street, near Grosvenor Square. This was the house where, on 22nd February 1845, Sydney died "at peace with himself and with all the world."

The six years or so that he spent at Green Street were not the least remarkable of Sydney's fascinating life. He was a wealthy man now, possessed of rich benefices in the Church and the inheritor of a fortune by the death of his brother, Courtenay, and despite gout and asthma and other ailments he did not cease to enjoy life until the very end. He no longer wished to be a bishop nor, unduly, to take an interest in church or politics. His only ambitions, he wrote in 1832, were "to grow old merrily and to die without pain".

In the years at Green Street, Sydney allowed himself to read books many and various. We know, for a start, that he read and enjoyed Kingslake's *Eothen*, Marryat's *Settlers in Canada* and Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. He befriended and

corresponded with the authors he loved. Scott was an old friend but in these later years he learned to love the novels of Charles Dickens and he made a friend of their author. He also struck an acquaintance with Benjamin Disraeli after having read *Coningsby* and he conversed and corresponded with many more of the literary lions of the time. He was buying books and building a new library in his new home.

One of his purchases at this time, we can safely assume, was the ten-volume set of Ballantyne's *Novelists' Library*. This prestigious work, now rarely found complete and in which every novel was prefaced either by Scott or Ballantyne, was published between 1821 and 1824. It is not improbable, however, that Sydney, twenty years later, bought them *as new*. In those days publishers were also booksellers who held on to their stock for many years.

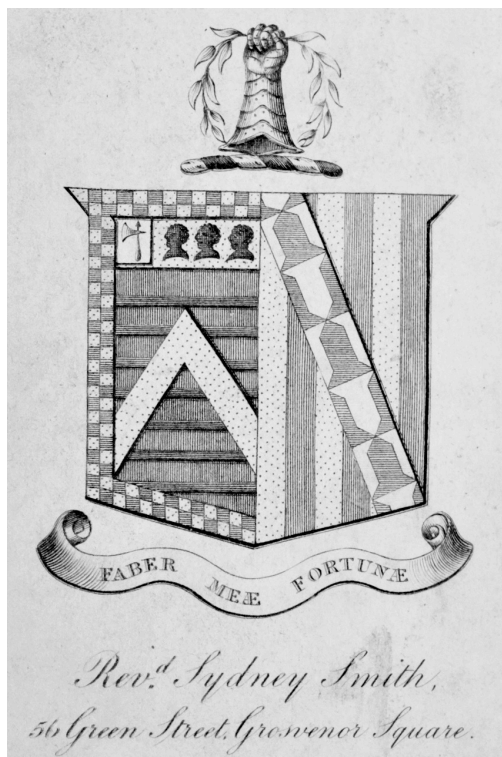
In the summer of 2013, Mr Robert Green, director of the Castle Bookshop at Colchester, sent, as a gift to the Association, the ten volumes of this classic work that once had stood on Sydney's shelves in the Green Street library. He also, very generously, made a contribution towards their preservation. He wrote, to Mark

Wade:

"Herewith Sydney Smith's set. As you will see it's in poor condition with loose backs and some labels missing.

"If the Association has a binder within its ranks, or perhaps, as a minimum solution, 10 slip-cases were made Folio Society style..."

The condition of the books certainly left much to be desired but five of them have now been sponsored by members and have been restored and rebound by my daughter, Kate, who is a consummate binder. They are now preserved, quarter-bound in colourful materials, the way a younger Sydney famously said he liked his books to be bound. The covers are of buckram cloth and marbled paper. They are good for another two hundred years and



are now safe in their new slip-cases in the library of Sydney's direct descendant and our patron Lord Knutsford at Munden, near Watford. Another five volumes remain to be saved to posterity. I have changed the 'Novelists' Library' labels to labels that indicate the contents of each individual volume. The bookplates, which are in excellent condition, have been transferred from the original covers.

Of interest to members of the Association must be these bookplates which Sydney caused to be printed for his new London library. Here we can see the 'Grosvenor Square' address together with Sydney's grandiose arms. I had never seen or heard anything of these arms apart from, what I assume refers to them, this passing mention in Lady Holland's memoir of Sydney's return from Paris in 1826.

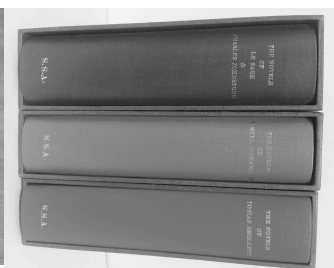
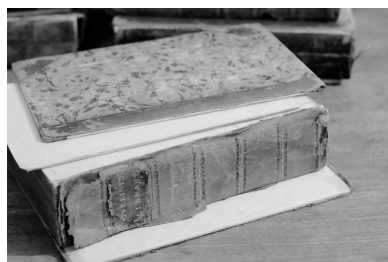
"The only purchase he made for himself in Paris, though he brought us all a gift, was a huge seal, containing the arms of a peer of France, which he met with in a broker's shop and bought for four francs: this he declared should henceforth be the arms of his branch of the Smith family."

Elsewhere Saba tells us the story of the visitation to Combe Florey in 1834 by 'a pompous little man in rusty black' who was writing a book about the worthies of Somerset and who wanted to obtain Sydney Smith's arms. "I regret, Sir," Sydney is recorded as saying, "not to be able to contribute to so valuable a work; but the Smiths never had any arms and have invariably sealed their letters with their thumbs."

The Smiths clearly had no time for 'the little man' and Saba writes further:

"In truth, he could not have stumbled on a more perfect Goth than my father on the subject of ancestral distinctions. For although the Smiths were not literally reduced to their thumbs, yet, feeling how completely he had been the maker of his own fortunes, my father adopted the motto for his carriage of *Faber meae fortunae*" (maker or *smith* of my{own} fortune).

Sydney, as can be seen in his bookplate, subscribed this borrowed motto to his borrowed arms and presumably, in the Grosvenor Square years, was tittuping around London carrying the same, in full colour, painted on his carriage door. This seems to me to be an anecdote of Sydney Smith that eclipses those of his fitting antlers to his ponies' heads or dangling oranges from his fruit trees. I also feel it raises questions that I am not qualified to answer. I wonder what members make of it. The work of rebinding goes on.



**Before
and
After**

N.B. The Society acknowledges with gratitude the original gift by Robert Green and sponsorship of rebinding the first five volumes from Sydie Bones, Lord Knutsford, Ralph Rochester, Vaun Wilkins and Nicky & Harry Yoxall. We are also indebted to Kate Rochester for her professional binding (kate@hanburypress.co.uk).

SYDNEY SMITH TO LADY GREY (February 1823)

Extract from a letter read by actor Simon Jones at a London lunch, October 2017.

“For God’s sake, do not drag me into another war! I am worn down and worn out with crusading and defending Europe and protecting mankind. I must think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards; I am sorry for the Greeks. I deplore the fate of the Jews. The people of the Sandwich Isles are groaning under the most detestable tyranny. Baghdad is oppressed – I do not like the present state of the Delta – Tibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people? The world is bursting with Sin and sorrow. Am I to be . . . eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy? We have just done saving Europe and I am afraid the consequence will be that we shall cut each other’s throats. No war, dear Lady Grey! No eloquence but apathy, selfishness, commonsense, arithmetic! I beseech you, secure Lord Grey’s sword and pistols . . . if there is another war life will not be worth having. I will go to war with the King of Denmark if he is impertinent to you . . . but for no other cause.”

(This was written when it appeared England might go to war in defence of Spain; if the sword and pistols sentence were omitted, it could have been said (elegant language aside) any time in the last few years . . . plus ça change?)

SYDNEY SMITH, JOURNALIST AND REVIEWER

Humphrey Boyle last year entertained Yorkshire’s members with some extracts from his battered volume of Sydney’s essays – effectively, he said, reviews of books, sermons, novels, travel books, letters and social comments from other people’s letters. Mixed with it were comparisons with a modern journalist you may have heard of. All came from his bound copy, also somewhat battered, of Sydney’s works

The benefits of reviews – “One great use of a review is to make men wise in ten pages who have no appetite for a hundred pages; to condense nourishment, to

work with pulp and essence and to guard the stomach from idle burden and unmeaning bulk”.

His journalism was based on a classical education and a complete understanding of the English language on the one hand, and its Northern roots on the other. “Latin and Greek have now mixed themselves etymologically with all the languages of modern Europe – and with none more than our own”

But as a journalist, he doesn’t use understatement or ambiguity, but some techniques favoured by Cicero, such as:-

DIGRESSIO – slipping in a second colourful and diverting story. Or ANACOLUTHON – changing the syntax in a sentence. And many others.

Humphrey pointed out that there is one journalist today who is well educated in the Classics and uses similar techniques – Boris Johnson, our controversial Foreign Secretary. Boris uses Digressio when he writes of his amazement that Greece was in such trouble :-

“Greece looks like paradise from where I sit here in my tavern, with my flagon of retsina. There are helicopters thwokking through the sky as they take Greek billionaires to their luxury villas, there are Greek playboys and girls biffing their high-speed powerboats over the wine-dark sea; and there is an endless procession of planes arriving from less sunny and less fortunate parts of Europe full of pasty faced tourists lusting to spend their euros and pounds”.

Sydney reviews Madame de Staël’s novel, Delphine ;:- “...this dismal trash which has nearly dislocated the jaws of every critic among us gaping, has so alarmed Bonaparte that he has seized the whole impression, sent Madame de Staël out of Paris and for aught we know, sleeps in a nightcap of steel and dagger proof blankets

He slates a sermon by Dr Langford given to the Humane Society which was so awful that it almost killed him :- “ ...an accident, which happened to the gentleman engaged in reviewing this sermon, proves, in the most striking manner, the importance of this Charity for restoring life, to persons in whom the vital power is suspended, He was discovered, with Dr Langford’s discourse lying open before him, in a state of the most profound sleep, from which he could not be awakened for a great length of time. By attending, however to the rules prescribed by the

Humane Society, flinging in the smoke of tobacco, applying hot flannels, and carefully removing the discourse itself to a great distance, the critic was restored to his disconsolate brothers”.

Now for Boris Johnson mixing ancient Italy with the last Labour Prime Minister :- “...the Tuscan palace of Count Girolamo Strozzi, where Tony Blair forged one of New Labour’s few hard-edged ideological positions. He was pro – sciutto and anti – pasto.”

Sydney describes a dreadful incident in his review of Mr Perceval’s account of the island of Ceylon. “The best history we ever remember to have read was of a serpent killed near one of our settlements in the East Indies; in whose body they found the chaplain of the garrison. All in black, the Rev, Mr – (whose name we have forgotten) and who after having been missing for over a week, was discovered in this very inconvenient situation”.



Boris Johnson writes of Lady Thatcher :-
“I was never one of those acnoid Tory boys who had semi-erotic dreams of Margaret Thatcher. She never visited

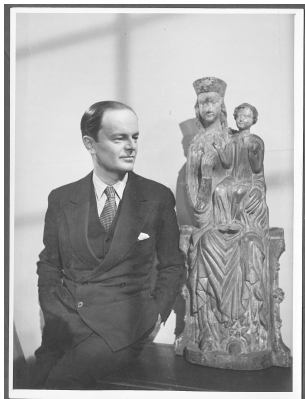
me at night with her imperial blue dress and bling, and magnificent pineapple coloured hair. I never imagined her leaning over me and parting her red lips to whisper about monetarism and taming Union power.”

Sydney describes Richard and Maria Edgeworth’s book on ‘Irish Bulls’ – i.e. government secret documents – as ‘a rambling, scrambling book’. “The essay on Bulls is written in the same manner as a schoolboy takes a walk. He moves on for ten yards with surprising perseverance – then he sets out after a butterfly, looks for a bird’s nest, jumps backward and forward over a ditch. If you leave him at the end of a comma in steady pursuit of his subject, you are sure to find him before the next full stop, a hundred yards to the left or right, frisking, capering and grinning in a high paroxysm of merriment and agility. A discharge of ink was an evacuation necessary, absolutely necessary, to avoid fatal and plethoric congestion.

Finally, Humphrey gave us a quotation from Boris about what he saw as Gordon Brown's prodigality with public money. "He is like a sherry-crazed old dowager who has lost the family silver at roulette and now decides to double up with the house. He is like a drunk who has woken up with the most appalling hangover and who reaches for the whisky bottle to dull his pain."

But Sydney's reviews are consistently and beautifully written in clear and elegant English. This volume should be restitched and restored - and, bound properly in lead, it can be hurled at the head of any politician or journalist who tries to explain Brexit!

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



Kenneth Clark: Life, Art and Civilisation by **James Stourton**, illustrated, published by Collins, 2016. £30. *There will be few among our members who do not remember the ground-breaking television series of 1969, Civilisation. Its presenter, Kenneth Clark, is the subject of a new biography by James Stourton, well known to us as a Patron of the Association and the fount of knowledge about Heslington Hall. A comprehensive and laudatory review appeared in The Oldie (October 2016) written by Richard Davenport-Hines from which I quote: 'James Stourton, who is a*

connoisseurship, has written a matchless biography. His evocation of his subtle, cool and brilliant subject gives an inspiring and even heroic sense of Clark. He gives a captivating account not only of cultural life ... but more generally of the times through which we have lived.' His conclusion that the book is 'a joyous read; often very funny with a dash of stylish pace that disguises formidable but unpretentious erudition' makes an irresistible recommendation.

British Embassies, Their Diplomatic and Architectural History, also by **James Stourton**, illustrated, published by Frances Lincoln, 2017. £40. A recent publication which the synopsis describes as: 'A unique and glamorous book about British imperial and post-imperial architecture and a lively and evocative read for anyone interested in the international projection of British power and culture'.
Sydie Bones

THE SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION A.G.M.

MINUTES of the TAUNTON AGM - 23rd September 2017

The Chairman welcomed 22 members to the Somerset Heritage Museum, Taunton.

Apologies had been received from Arnold and Elspeth Arthurs, Alan Bell, Ruth and Norman Taylor, Michael Ranson, Jane Urquhart.

The Chairman opened the meeting.

- **Minutes** of the 2016 AGM were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.
- **Points** arising: the Chairman reported that the hitherto unpublished letters of Sydney Smith, now lodged at New College, Oxford, had been put onto the website and that his search for an editor had as yet been unsuccessful. He recommended use of the letters for year by year comments, and also for reference when researching Sydney's relationship with his father.
- **The Treasurer's** interim financial report (attached) was circulated. Donations to the churches will not include Foston this year as the church has recently received a substantial legacy; the donation to Combe Florey may be upgraded when final figures are known at the end of the financial year. In addition, members agreed to donate £100 to Taunton Museum for hospitality.
- **Membership:** Mark Wade explained the difficulty of stating the exact number of members as subscriptions tend to be paid somewhat haphazardly, but estimated that there were around 150 members, not all of whom pay subscriptions. The membership continues to need new blood under the age of 60.
- **Lunches:** local organisers continue to arrange lunches during the year. Members from other areas are most welcome to attend. The Secretary will send email addresses of all members to those organising lunches to help with wider publicity.
 - London: Celia Moreton-Prichard hosts lunches three times a year at the Boisdale Restaurant with a turn-out varying from six to 18. On 25 October an extra booking has been made when Simon Jones, well known for his television and radio performances, will read extracts from some of the letters.

- York: Mark Wade organises lunches with a speaker at the Middlethorpe Hall. These have been reduced in number from three to two a year. Attendance is often more than 20.
- South-West members' lunch is organised by Sydnie Bones, with a member as speaker.
- **Newsletter:** the Chairman recorded thanks to Editor Gerry Bradshaw. Members were asked to provide the Editor with photographs to accompany articles where possible.
- **Website:** thanks were also recorded to Alison Vickers and an emolument of £100 agreed.
- **AGM 2018** will be held in Winchester, in September as usual. Michael Ranson will be asked to undertake the organisation.
- **Trustees:** re-election of existing trustees: Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Sylvie Diggle, Peter Payan, Norman Taylor, Deirdre Bryan-Brown and Robin Price. Proposed by Celia Moreton-Prichard, seconded by Priscilla Flower-Smith. Agreed.
- **Any Other Business:** (a) Rebinding of books from Sydney Smith's library. Ralph Rochester delivered the latest two books to the Chairman to go to the library at Munden. Five remain to be rebound. Vaun Wilkins and Sydnie Bones agreed to fund rebinding of the next two copies. It was suggested that photographs of books before and after rebinding might go into the newsletter.
(b) Mini-biography of Sydney Smith. Peter Payan recommended that the Association use the entry on Sydney Smith from the 1911 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica as an introduction for new members. It was agreed that it should also appear in the newsletter.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR AGM ON SATURDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2017

I confirm that the final accounts for last year 2016 were submitted to the Charity commission as required. The finances of the Association continue to be sound. Interim figures for the current year, which runs to the end of 2017, show receipts of £1801 from subscriptions, donations and gift aid, as compared with £1919 for the whole of last year.

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

Arnold Arthurs

Hon Treasurer, Sydney Smith Association

14 September 2017

(N.B. A donation of £1200 to the Church of Combe Florey appeared in the final accounts.)

WINCHESTER WEEKEND 22/23 SEPT 2018

Michael Ranson

This September we shall be meeting in Winchester for our AGM and Dinner. We shall be using the Winchester Royal Hotel as our venue. This is centrally placed, within a very few minutes walk of the High Street, Close and Cathedral. Some of you may remember that we used the same hotel some ten years ago when we last visited Winchester.

Full participation in the programme will involve a certain amount of walking, albeit on pretty level ground.

The pricings shown against the various items in the Programme are based on current quotations, and may be subject to minor variations. At this stage, members are invited to indicate whether they wish to attend, and to specify as far as possible which items on the programme they would envisage participating in. Payment will not be due until much nearer the time. Menus will be circulated in August to those who are attending. A preliminary application form is enclosed in this Newsletter.

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 22 September

1230-1400 Meet at The Winchester Royal Hotel. Lunch will be available (£8.95).

1430-1600 Guide-led tour of the lower city, to include a short visit to the Cathedral (£7.70).

1630-1800 Tea followed by AGM, at The Winchester Royal Hotel.

1900 for 1930 Dinner at the Winchester Royal. (To include a speaker) 3 courses, excl wines (£27.50).

SUNDAY 23 September

1100 Some members may wish to attend Sung Eucharist in the Cathedral.

1215-1400 Sunday lunch at The Wykeham Arms (Roast is £17.50) .

1415-1515 Guided tour of Winchester College (£7.00).

1530 End of programmed events. (Members wishing to also visit the College Museum may do so at this time for a small additional charge.)

ACCOMMODATION

The Winchester Royal Hotel is hosting our proceedings. The hotel is offering an attractive deal to members who wish to stay there:

Twin/double room plus breakfast £120.00 per room per night

Room for single use £90.00 per room per night

Members should make their own bookings, mentioning the Sydney Smith Association. Parking is available.

The Winchester Royal Hotel, St Peter Street, WINCHESTER SO23 8BS.

(Tel: 0844 855 9156)

SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Winchester Saturday 22nd September 2018

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2017 AGM
3. Points Arising
4. Financial Report
5. Membership
6. Lunches
7. (a) Newsletter
(b) Website
8. Chairman's Items including
 - a. 2019 AGM weekend
 - b. Election of officers and trustees
9. Any Other Business

DATES FOR LUNCHEONS IN 2018

London, at the Boisdale Restaurant, Eccleston Street: 24th January, 25th April, 25th July. Contact Celia Moreton-Prichard celiamop@celiamop.plus.com

York, at Middlethorpe Hall: 11th April, 24th October. Contact Mark Wade, mwyork100@icloud.com

Somerset, at Hornsbury Mill: 24th April. Contact Sydie Bones sydie.bones@btopenworld.com

LET'S BRUSH UP ON SYDNEY

We all know and love Sydney, but a summary of his life can be useful, especially when we are talking about him to friends whom we are trying to interest in our enthusiasm. So this is what the Encyclopaedia Britannica says of him, and of the Edinburgh Review, which he helped to found and which played a critical role in the thought of its time!

Sydney Smith, (born June 3, 1771, Woodford, [Essex](#), Eng.—died Feb. 22, 1845, London), one of the foremost English preachers of his day, and a champion of parliamentary reform. Through his writings he perhaps did more than anyone else to change [public opinion](#) regarding Roman Catholic emancipation. Smith was also famous for his wit and charm.

Smith's father refused to let him study law, and after leaving Oxford he was ordained in the [Church of England](#). He later attended lectures in [moral philosophy](#), chemistry, and medicine at the [University of Edinburgh](#). There he made many friends, among them Henry Brougham and Francis Jeffery, with whom, in 1802, he cofounded [The Edinburgh Review](#). He continued to write for that periodical for 25 years, and his trenchant articles were a main element in its success. In 1803 he moved to [London](#), and in 1804 he gave the first of a series of lectures in [moral philosophy](#), which people flocked to hear for their blend of good sense and wit. When the predominantly Whig ministry took office in 1806, Smith received the living of Foston-le-Clay, [Yorkshire](#). He left London for Yorkshire in 1809.

Meanwhile, in March 1807, the Whigs had been forced to resign on the question of Roman Catholic emancipation, which Smith supported. In 1807 he wrote the first of several famous Letters of Peter Plymley to My Brother Abraham Who Lives in the Country, attacking what he saw as Protestant ignorance, obscurantism,

and bigotry. Its success was immediate, and it was followed by four more letters published in 1807 and five in 1808.

Smith won his Yorkshire parishioners' affection through his energy and cheerfulness, and he continued to write effective polemics on the Roman Catholic question. In 1828 he gained preferment, being installed as prebend of Bristol Cathedral. The Whigs came to power, and it was expected that he would be a bishop; but opposition to him proved strong. Eventually he succeeded in becoming a canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, which necessitated his living in the capital three months a year.

Smith had married in 1800, and in 1829 his eldest son died. This caused him lasting grief, and yet his later essays (notably the "Singleton Letters" of 1837 and 1838–39 on church affairs and his petition and letters of 1843 to The Morning Chronicle on Pennsylvania's suspension of interest on its bonds) are as vigorous and spirited as the best of his early pieces for The Edinburgh Review. On his brother Courtenay's death in 1839, Smith inherited a fortune, bought a house in London, and lived there until his death.

The Edinburgh Review, or The Critical Journal, Scottish magazine that was published from 1802 to 1929, and which contributed to the development of the modern periodical and to modern standards of literary criticism. The Edinburgh Review was founded by Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, and Henry Brougham as a quarterly publication, with Jeffrey as its first and longtime editor. It was intended as an outlet for liberal views in Edinburgh. The magazine soon earned wide esteem for its political and literary criticism, and by 1818 it had attained a circulation of 13,500. Its contributors included the novelist Sir Walter Scott, the essayist William Hazlitt, the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, the educator Thomas Arnold, and the legal historian Sir James Stephen. The Edinburgh Review's prestige and authority among British periodicals during the 19th century were matched only by that of The Quarterly Review

Membership Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions were due on 1st March, £15 single, £20 joint membership. Cheques should be payable to The Sydney Smith Association and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Professor Arnold Arthurs, Belgrave House, 46 Acomb Road, York YO24 4EW.

Changes to Data Protection Law

As you may have heard from the press or media, a new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is coming in this May, which will affect all charities as well as other organisations. The new law seeks to address problems such as the use of personal data without people's consent, the sharing of such data with third parties and intrusive fund-raising activities. Because of the change in the law, we are required to explain to you what data we hold for you and how we use it. We hold members' names and addresses (a legal requirement for accountancy and gift aid purposes) and, where you have supplied them, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. We do not hold any personal data supplied to us by other sources and we never share personal data with other individuals or organisations. As you know, we do not engage in fund-raising activities, so all our communications with you relate to SSA affairs or events. If you wish to check what personal data we hold for you or wish us to amend the information, please contact the Secretary, Sydie Bones.

Material for the Newsletter

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

*We know nothing of
tomorrow; our business is
to be good and happy
today*

