THE

SYDNEY SMITH ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 1998

The Sydney Smith Association

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Issue 3 April 1998

Here we are again, into our third year and with our third Newsletter.

Our annual gathering last September was every bit as enjoyable and encouraging as the first had been, and the weather was every bit as beneficent. The arrangements (made by our Treasurer, the Reverend Norman Taylor) worked smoothly. There was a full attendance, the wine and conversation flowed and everyone seemed more than satisfied.

Members made their way to Combe Florey on Saturday 6 September while the rest of the nation immersed itself in the funeral of Princess Diana. Were we being wise or wilful? In that morning's Daily Telegraph our Patron Auberon Waugh opened his regular 'Way of the World' column with these paragraphs:

> "While the entire country plans to shut down this morning as a sign of respect, members of the Sydney Smith Society have been in urgent debate about the propriety of holding a planned reunion this evening in Combe Florey, Somerset, where Smith was rector after 1829.
> The likely attitudes of two people seemed relevant: the Princess and Smith himself. After some deliberation we decided that the clergyman and wit who tied pineapples on the trees in his rectory garden to celebrate the Somerset weather would have laughed at us if we cancelled our little celebration, for which people are coming from all over the country. And so, of course, would the Princess. At least one of them might have been appalled by elements of mass hysteria ....."

Our proceedings began with afternoon tea in the village hall. Chairman Alan Bell got the AGM off to a prompt start and kept the business brisk. No Association officers were changed and no one complained. Professor David Eastwood was then introduced and spoke learnedly about Sydney's involvement in the Great Reform

Act agitation, illustrating the subtlety and humanity of Sydney's political thinking and his readiness to adapt his views. It was highly informative and entirely appropriate, since it was from his rectory in Combe Florey that Sydney went down to Taunton to deliver the "Mrs Partington" speech that made him a Reformist national hero.

Then we all made our way up the hill to Combe Florey house, the handsome home of Auberon and Lady Teresa Waugh. In the splendid reception rooms there wine was lavishly dispensed and everyone chatted cheerfully. Just before we left, Alan Bell presented the Waughs with a framed portrait of Sydney in appreciation of their hospitality.

Then it was down the hill again and back to the village hall for a delightful dinner accompanied by wines from the Waugh cellars. It all sounds rather alcoholic, but it should be pointed out that there were no serious casulties on the subsequent walk in the dark to Sydney's church, where we were much entertained by Howard Burnham's readings from Sydney, with apt musical interludes from Nancy Beveridge (soprano) and Ronald Tickner (organ).

On the Sunday morning there was Holy Communion at the church, then Matins at 11 a.m. when Norman Taylor delivered the Address which is printed in full in this Newsletter. Then we all proceeded along the lane to Sydney's Old Rectory, where the current incumbents, Captain and Mrs William Read, provided wine and nibbles in generous profusion. Fortunately, the weather was pleasant enough for people to wander into the lovely garden and see what it was that finally persuaded Sydney that country life was not too dreadful. A general atmosphere of well-being and bonhomie prevailed. The non-stop chatter continued until the time came to leave, signalled by Alan Bell's presentation of a second framed portrait of Sydney, this time to the hospitable Reads. And that marked the end of another wonderful Sydney-filled weekend.

Before departing, I went with Norman Taylor to return to the Waugh house those bottles that had not been used at the previous evening's dinner. We also took the money collected from those who had taken wine at dinner. Mr Waugh would not take the money, generously

urging us to add it to the Association's funds. This was done. Ungratefully perhaps, I then complained to Mr Waugh that his "Literary Review" had failed to review our book "Twelve Miles from a Lemon". He apologised, explained that there were so many books coming out nowadays, and said that if we got a copy to him he would make sure the omission was rectified. The review, one of the best our book has had, appeared in the December issue of the magazine. It was written by Mr Waugh's son Alexander and ended with this clarion call to our Association: " 'Twelve Miles from a Lemon' is an enriching and invigorating book, well presented and carefully researched - a useful step towards a much-needed resurgence of interest in this great figure; but still, if Sydney Smith is to be rescued from the ignorance of future generations, we need the big one - a Complete Works. We want it printed on fine, off-white, book-wove paper - four volumes, each with a hasp, bound in the finest calf and buckram. We look to the Sydney Smith Association to sort it out - Come on, come on!"

Alan Hankinson
Editor

Coming Events and Other Business

LONDON
Wednesday 8 July 1998
4.30 p.m. Mr J.J. Wilson has invited a small group (maximum 20) to visit the Library of St Paul's Cathedral. There is a bust of Sydney Smith by Westmacott, a painting and some interesting correspondence to be seen. Mr Wilson can also shed light on improvements initiated by Sydney Smith while he was a Canon.

6.15 p.m. Dr Leslie Mitchell has kindly agreed to give a talk on Holland House at the Army & Navy Club, where we will be joined by members of The Kensington Society. There will be a reception and dinner in the club afterwards.
Dr L.G. Mitchell has been a fellow of University College, Oxford and a university lecturer in Modern History since 1972. He has written several books on Whig politics and society, including Holland House (1980), Charles James Fox (1992), and most recently Lord

Melbourne (1997). He has also edited the massive 18th century volume of the History of the University of Oxford.

YORK
Saturday 26 September 1998
The AGM will take place in the Merchant Adventurers Hall, Fossgate, York at 5.40 p.m.

The following arrangements have been made for those who do not know York and have come some distance.

A visit to the Railway Museum, which is a short walk from the station. A table has been booked from midday onwards in the buffet, where members can meet up. If there are more than 15 members it will be possible to organise a group rate. A colourful miniature train runs regularly from the Museum to York Minster.

At 3.00 p.m. Oliver Worsley has kindly agreed to show members round the Minster and thence conduct them slowly, on foot, via places of interest to the Merchant Adventurers Hall.

After the AGM, Mrs Wheatley will give a short talk about the Merchant Adventurers Hall which was built in 1357. This will be followed by a reading of Jane McCulloch's 'Smith of Smiths'. The readers will be the Forbes Adam family, direct descendents of the Bielbys, who showed great kindness to Sydney while he was at Foston. Thereafter we will dine in the Hall.

Sunday 27th September
10.30 a.m. Matins at All Saints', Foston, with an address by Father Alberic Stacpoole MC, followed by refreshment.

11.40 a.m. A walk round the gardens of Sydney Smith's Old Rectory.

12.40 p.m. A table has been reserved for members at the Assembly Rooms in York, where a light lunch can be obtained. The Assembly Rooms were completed in 1735 and are attributed to Lord Burlington, who had his country residence at Londesborough some 20 miles away. It is inconceivable that Sydney Smith did not attend gatherings in the Assembly Rooms during the Assizes. (The Assembly Rooms are within walking distance of the station.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Annual subscriptions are now due. Members paying by Bankers Order and those who have already paid need take no action. We would be very grateful if members who pay by annual cheque would consider completing the Bankers Order at the bottom of the enclosed Renewal Form. By so doing the treasurer's work is simplified and costs are less.

Address from the pulpit at Combe Florey

7 September 1997
The Reverend Norman Taylor

> "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth and having on a breastplate of righteousness." *(The Book of Proverbs)*
> "With what delight did I look and listen in that church to the grand form and powerful countenance, the noble and melodious voice." *(Saba describes her father's pulpit presence)*

Despite this description, Sydney was no plaster saint, yet he deserves our admiration, and, more than this, can be an example and inspiration. Whatever our calling in life, no matter how we earn our daily bread, we each and all share three further vocations, which I label explorer, soldier and pilgrim. Let us see how Sydney lived out these vocations.

In 1826 the Edinburgh Review shows Sydney reviewing the work of a real explorer, Charles Waterton, who "instead of passing his life at balls and assemblies, has preferred living with Indians and monkeys in the forests of Guiana. The sun exhausted him by day, the mosquitoes bit him at night, but on went Mr Charles Waterton". Sydney was certainly no explorer in the strict meaning of the term, was very much the armchair traveller. However, I would like to use the word explorer, for want of better, to mean one who discusses and delights in what his world has to offer. "Pray breakfast here at 10," he wrote to Edward Everett, "to talk over the wonderful things of this world". Despite depression, despite many years of disappointment and poverty, the impression Sydney gives is that he enjoyed life: "he was of a merry heart that hath a continual

feast". He rejoiced in his home and family; he made friendships with people in many walks of life; he throve in the sacred parallelogram, where he dined and talked and laughed and made everyone laugh.

"Life is to be fortified by many friendships," he wrote. "To be loved is the greatest happiness of existence." His spirit was as joyous as nature on a sunny day. "There's nothing worth the wear of winning but laughter and the love of friends;" Belloc's words are not wholly true, but here Sydney is certainly Victor Ludorum. He loved reading and encouraged the young to find in this, too, a great source of happiness. He enjoyed singing, especially the songs of his friend Tom Moore, though, as we know, he drew the line at opera and oratorio - "How absurd to see 500 people fiddling like madmen about Israelites in the Red Sea". Making a virtue of necessity, he became keenly interested in agricultural experiments with his glebe at Foston, and even towards the end of his life, thanks to Combe Florey, appreciated the beauty of the countryside. You will soon be visiting the rectory in which he lived: "There now lift up your eyes and tell me where another parsonage house in England has such a view as that to boast of. What can Pall Mall or Piccadilly produce to rival it?" Saba tells how he would come down into his study (the ground-floor drawing room today) and say "Thank God for Combe Florey," throwing himself into an armchair and looking round. "I feel like a bridegroom in the honeymoon." He would ask Saba to ring for the servant and then say to him, "Glorify the room". Venetian windows were flung open, letting in a blaze of sunshine and flowers. Towards the end of his life he even discussed the delights of abstaining from fermented liquors: "If I dream, it is not of lions and tigers - but of love and tithes". "There is good news yet to hear and fine things to be seen," he might have said, "before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green".

A study of Sydney can encourage us to make the most of life, to enjoy this world, to have a merry heart. But he was no simple hedonist or sybarite. He was a soldier as well as an explorer. He lived through decades of war with France and the threat of invasion. Writing to Miss Berry from Combe Florey, he pictures "A French

steamer arrives in the night and the first thing I hear is that the cushions of my pulpit are taken away and my curate and churchwardens are carried into captivity". In Edinburgh at the turn of the century he preached a moving sermon on "The Love of our Country" and said, "In all the history of successful resistence to outrageous tyranny (a short and beautiful page in the annals of man) there is no instance more marked and more illustrious than that which this empire has so recently displayed in the world". But he hated war with all the suffering it brought and did his best to persuade politicians not to embroil this country in the affairs of other nations. Judging by the way he so easily fell off his horse, he would have been no better dragoon than his contemporary Coleridge. But fight he did as a Christian soldier - seeking (in St Paul's words) to overcome evil with good - to which we might add a further word not part of Paul's vocabulary - humour. So many of his polemical writings are seeking to overcome evil with good humour. To mention one: landed proprietors sought to preserve their game with lethal man-traps. The Reverend William St John advertised in the local paper "Spring guns, thigh-snappers and body-squeezers are, and will continue to be set". Sydney wrote in the Edinburgh Review, attacking the Game Laws: "We do not suppose all preservers of game to be so bloodily-inclined that they would prefer the death of a poacher to his staying away. Their object is to preserve game; they have no objection to preserving the life of their fellow creatures also, if both can exist at the same time; if not, the least worthy of God's creatures must fall - the rustic without a soul - not the Christian partridge - not the immortal pheasant - not the rational woodcock or the accountable hare".

In his last sermon in St Paul's Cathedral, Sydney chose for his subject the Sabbath, proclaiming its keeping as a safeguard for the Christian pilgrim: "Can a man be religious who assigns no time for thinking of religion? Is godliness the only great good which can be had for nothing?" And he says that on the Sabbath everyone should think of death: "This is the season in which we are called upon to fling off the drapery of the world - to forget we are powerful - to forget we are young - to forget we are rich - and to remember only that we must die and be judged by the Son of God".

Towards the end of his final illness, when he was semi-delirious, Sydney was heard to say, "We talk of human life as a journey, but how variously is that journey performed! There are some who come forth girt and shod and mantled, to walk on velvet lawns and smooth terraces, where every gale is arrested, and every beam is tempered. There are others who walk on the Alpine path of life, against driving misery and through stormy sorrows, over sharp afflictions, walk with bare feet and naked breast, jaded, mangled and chilled." It was a passage from one of his own sermons. Sydney was very much aware, through years among the poor in his parishes, how many lived a life of much suffering and he believed that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes".

I conclude with his final words on grief in a sermon he preached in St Paul's: "You will all easily anticipate me when I come to the last and greatest consolation of grief - the certainty of another life from the promises of the Gospel; without which all the other consolations of grief which I have suggested would be of little or no avail; for under that promise, every event of life assumes a new aspect, and is to be judged with a fresh judgement. That same truth which deprives the grave of its victory, and death of its sting, turns aside the arrows of grief, and brings the calamities of human life within the powers of human endurance. It is not only a topic for strong and elevated minds, but it penetrates the humblest faculty, and lifts up the feeblest spirit. When we open the book of God, and read that the great day will come, when we are all to assemble before the everlasting Judge for healing, for redress, for recovery, for justice, for renewal of affections, for restoration of rights - when these are the solemn promises of our God and our Saviour, why is not the frantic spirit of grief calmed, and why do we go on to mourn as men without hope? It is but for a season; it will all be recovered, and all be restored; there is some help now, and at the end of all, splendid and immeasurable comfort! God never forsakes us, but there is plan and wisdom in it all! We are perplexed, but not in despair - persecuted, but not forsaken - cast down, but not destroyed."

Sydney - explorer, soldier, pilgrim. Let us thank God for him, not only with our lips but in our lives.

Last year's events in London

Peter Payan

As Peter Diggle greeted 19 members of the Association on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral, information reached us that an eagle owl was roosting on the cornice above us just out of sight. A strange omen but surely a good one.

Inside the cathedral we were welcomed by Mr Jo Wisdom the Librarian, and ascended in a diminutive lift to a level far above the cathedral floor. We stepped out into an unsuspected world very different from that we had left - vast, gloomy, deserted, intriguing.

The Library of St Paul's is a fine high-ceilinged room of 60 by 30 feet situated in the south-west corner of the cathedral over the chapel of St Michael and St George. Among its treasures is one of the only two known copies of Tyndale's 1526 translation of the New Testament. Most of the books were printed before 1800. Our eyes were caught by the bust of Sydney Smith we had expected to see and by a portrait of him we had not.

The sculpture is fine and depicts a character of great strength: one would not be surprised if told it was a Roman emperor. It was considered by the last librarian, Frank Atkinson, author of a guide to the library, to be by Sir Richard Westmacott the Younger (1799 -1872). It is listed thus on page 428 of the revised edition of Rupert Gunnis' Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851, and the published lists of exhibitors at the Royal Academy make the same attribution.

The Cathedral Chapter minutes for 1856 has an entry:

> "Tuesday 3 April 1856: The Chapter gratefully accepted Mr Westmacott's generous present of a Bust of the late Reverend Sydney Smith, Canon of this Cathedral."

The portrait was acquired only in this century and the name of the artist is unknown. It is unsigned, and Mr Wisdom found nothing on inspection of the stretcher. It hangs high on an end wall, accessible only by a gallery and balustrade of uncertain stability constructed about 1691 by Sir Charles Hopson, later Wren's Master Joiner.

Some of the party ventured upon it, the better to view the portrait, but the temptation to linger was readily overcome.

We were then able to inspect letters in Sydney's hand and some volumes of the Chapter minutes Mr Wisdom had kindly arranged for us. He spoke of Sydney's great effectiveness as a practical man and of his importance as a reformer of abuses in the cathedral. One rejoices in the picture drawn by G.L. Prestige in his 'St Paul's and its glory - 1831-1911' (SPCK 1955): "He clambered about roofs and towers and squeezed through openings insufficient to his portly figure: "if there are six inches of space," quoth he optimistically, "there will be room enough for me". There is an enjoyable account of this period in Alan Bell's biography (pp 168-176 of the 1982 Oxford paperback).

Regretting that we could spend no longer with these absorbing documents, we now made our way to the house in which Sydney Smith lived for three years from the time of his arrival in London in 1803. This is number 14 (formerly 8) Doughty Street, one of the pleasing streets of 18th century terraced brick houses just west of Grays Inn Road. We were enabled to visit this private house by the kind invitation of its present occupants, Michael Horowitz QC and Gillian Darly.

They brought us refreshments in a back garden so wild and peaceful that one might have been anywhere but the heart of Holborn. The house itself was spacious, comfortable and homely. We assembled in a fine and sunny double drawing room upstairs to hear Alan Bell talk of Sydney and his time here. He has been generous enough to give me his notes, from which what follows is drawn.

The Edinburgh Review found it useful to have one of its originators based in London. Sydney wrote to Francis Jeffrey, the editor, encouraging him ("you are said to be the ablest man in Scotland") and undertaking to scour the London bookshops with Francis Horner for works suitable to send up to Edinburgh.

There were professional difficulties to start with. He wrote: "I have as yet found no place to preach in; it is more difficult than I imagined. Two or three random sermons I have discharged, and thought I perceived the greater part of my audience conceived me

to be mad. The clerk was as pale as death in helping me off with my gown, for fear I should bite him." Eventually he found regular attachments at the Berkeley and Fitzroy proprietary chapels, but an attempt to set up his own chapel was blocked by a local incumbent anxious to defend his territory.

One of the centres of Sydney's early life in London was a small but influential Whig dining club of which his brother Bobus and the lawyers Mackintosh and Romilly were members. Through the King of Clubs he met Lord Holland and found his way to Holland House. When Mackintosh went to Bombay as Recorder, Sydney sent him regular bulletins about their friends. "Nothing has occurred at the Club. We have been Lemonade ever since you left us. We were Punch before, and stronger in old Bobus's time, whom God preserve and restore to his affectionate subjects at the Crown and Anchor." "The King of Clubs flourishes," he wrote in March 1805, "and is pronounced the pleasantest Club in London."

His letters rarely describe London though at times he finds the climate trying: "May I never be a prebend if I ever spend the month of September in this horrible city. Such detestable unpoetical noises, such red-hot stinks. I would rather quit London altogether". But "I am called a good preacher and there the matter rests".

His friend Sir Thomas Bernard found him the post of Alternate Evening Preacher at the Foundling Hospital, near Doughty Street. Also through Bernard he secured the commission to lecture on Moral Philosophy at the Royal Institution. He described this to Mackintosh as "without any exception the most perfect example of impudence recorded in history. Let prayers be put for me not only in Christian churches in Bombay but in all temples by all Brahmins, to the Persian Gulf westward and as far north as Delhi: and let the good Christian be appeased with a foreign virgin." "Why not Miss Daubigny?" he added, of a London spinster of their acquaintance.

By 1805 he had become "amazingly taken up by Sermons and Lectures" and his success had become such as to secure for him by Crown patronage the living of Foston. In 1806 he could afford to move to Orchard Street, Portman Square, for a further three years, but it was from the "very eligible house" in Doughty Street that

the foundation of his London fame was laid.

Listening to this address had been Lord Runcie, who in a light, graceful and witty speech thanked our hosts and presented them with a copy of the portrait of Sydney formerly in the Justices Room at Malton (Sydney having been a JP and Turnpike Trustee) but now hanging in the County Hall at Northallerton.

This account of an exceptionally enjoyable and rewarding afternoon would not have been possible without the help of Jo Wisdom, who took the greatest trouble to improve our acquaintance with Sydney, and of Alan Bell. I offer them both my grateful thanks. We thank Mr Horowitz and Miss Darly for the privilege of visiting the house and garden in Doughty Street and for their hospitality.

A sad farewell to Frank Muir

A distinguished founding member of our Association, Frank Muir CBE died, alas, on 2 January this year. When he joined us, in the initial wave of applications, he sent a cheque for considerably more than the subscription fee on the grounds, he explained, that Sydney "would be gratified to know that there was always a glass of good sherry to be had at committee meetings of his Association".

Having been a contempory of Frank Muir's is, I think, one of the great bonuses of having lived in the latter half of this century. He enhanced the gaiety of the nation. Most of us learned to think of him as a friend, warm to him for his distinctive elegance and his ever-civilised wit and charm, and to feel grateful to him for the hours of delight he gave over many years and in so many different ways - on radio and television and through his books. He wrote (usually in collaboration with Denis Norden) popular shows like "Take it from Here" and "Whack-O!", and took part (usually with Denis Norden) in countless panel-games such as "My Word" and "My Music" and "Call my Bluff". His reading was wide-ranging and scholarly, which showed to advantage in his books - "The Oxford Book of Humorous Prose" which devoted several pages to Sydney Smith; "The Frank Muir Book", a literary companion to social history which made liberal use of Sydney's distilled wisdom; and his last work, published last year, "A Kentish Lad", his autobiography.

Sydney's foremost protagonist

Alan Hankinson

Who has done the most in this century to promote appreciation of Sydney Smith? The question may seem invidious. Several names might be suggested. But, judging from letters and comments from members of our Association, one name leads all the rest, that of Hesketh Pearson, whose biography "The Smith of Smiths" was published in 1934 and republished as a Penguin paperback (price two shillings) in 1948. I suspect that the paperback proved the more effective agent. I do not know how many copies were printed altogether but they can still be found in their distinctive dark-blue jackets on the shelves of second-hand bookshops all over Britain. And it is still a joy to read.

Pearson was a joyful man, very much in the Sydney mould. He was naturally ebullient, bouncing with vitality, with a great gift for laughter and friendship.

He was born near Worcester in 1887, the son of respectable and conventional and comparatively well-off parents. He went to school in Bedford, hating it because he was flogged regularly and brutally by the headmaster. He did not learn much at school except to distrust authority and stand up for himself. This stood him in good stead when his parents tried to get him to study for Holy Orders. He resisted successfully and pursued a career in various businesses, finding them all so dull that he did not prosper. It was against his nature to be servile or subservient.

An unexpected legacy enabled him to travel widely in North and South America. Tall and smart, well-mannered, charming and attractive to women, he had a thoroughly enjoyable trip. In the course of it he had become fascinated by the writings of Shakespeare and, once back in England, he went to all the productions of the famous Beerbohm Tree Company at His Majesty's Theatre.

In 1911 he boldly went to see Beerbohm Tree and ask for an acting job with the company. He got it and launched himself into a new and much more stimulating career. He had great admiration for Tree, a big and powerful and eccentric personality, and that

admiration shines through the entertaining biography he wrote of him many years later. It was published in 1956.

The war interrupted Pearson's theatrical career. He was in the army and served in Mesopotamia where he was seriously ill; he cured himself, he claimed, by learning off by heart the Justice Shallow scenes in "HenryIV, Part II". He was also awarded the Military Cross, but never told anyone how he had won it.

He had married an actress, Gladys Gardner, and it proved a very happy marriage, even though he was given to philandering. Shortage of money remained a problem for many years.

In 1921 Pearson's first book was published, "Modern Men and Mummers". It was about contemporary odd-ball figures and especially about Frank Harris, the oddest and most outrageous of them, whose character fascinated Pearson. The book was no great success but it produced one great bonus. It intrigued and impressed another literary young man called Hugh Kingsmill. Kingsmill sought Pearson out and they became the closest of good friends and companions.

In the early 1920s Pearson decided to leave the stage and take to the writing of biographies, which he did for the rest of his life. He restricted himself (on the whole) to people who interested and amused him, predominantly writers but also including scientists, politicians, painters, actor-managers and others.

He stated his general approach in these words: "The majority of reliable biographies are unreadable, and the majority of readable biographies are unreliable". And to his friend Kingsmill he said: "I love people who blow respectability and the Establishment to bits". Sydney clearly qualified and "The Smith of Smiths" is one of Pearson's best and brightest books.

Most members of our Association clearly know the book and do not have to be told all this. What many, perhaps, do not realise is that Sydney gets many complimentary mentions in another of Pearson's biographies, that of Oscar Wilde, published in 1946. He loved to discover parallels and similarities between the two men. "As a matter of sober fact," he wrote, "no man was ever more free

from malice than Wilde, who could satirise a species but never an individual. The only man of genius in English literary history who can be compared with him in this respect is Sydney Smith". And elsewhere in the book Pearson developed the theme at greater length: "There is nothing in Wilde's work or conversation to show that he had ever read or admired the letters and sayings of Sydney Smith; yet the parson is his closest affinity as man and wit in the world of letters. They were both good-natured, self-indulgent, fond of the table and society; their humour was by turns affected, rich and nonsensical; their wit was free from malice; they were eccentric in outlook, behaviour and appearance; they were as high-spirited as they were kind-hearted; and one may add that each of them became decidedly fat. If anyone else in history could have written 'The Importance of being Earnest' it would have been Sydney Smith".

Hesketh Pearson went on writing assiduously and enjoying the company of like-spirited friends like Kingsmill and Malcolm Muggeridge for many more years. He died in London in 1964 at the age of 79. Like Sydney, he could have fairly claimed: "I never wrote anything very dull in my life"...

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On the subject of our book "Twelve Miles from a Lemon", a gratifying number of Association members took advantage of the publisher's offer to send them a copy at the reduced price of £14.50 (including p & p). More recent recruits to the Association may like to know that the offer is still open. If interested, please send your order and cheque to:

The Lutterworth Press
PO Box 60
Cambridge CB1 2NT

The Origin of Sydney's Name

After whom was Sydney named? The common form of his name, Sidney, belongs to that group of names evoking distinguished families of the nation that became especially fashionable in the 19th century: other examples are Cecil, Stanley and Russell. But Sydney spelt with a 'y' is most unusual.

One might imagine that he was named after Thomas Townshend, Viscount Sydney (1733-1800), the politician and statesman after whom the settlement of Sydney in Australia was named. But Townshend only acquired the title of Sydney in 1783, too late to be a role model for S. S., who was born in 1771.

So where did his name come from? Information or suggestions on this minor but intriguing matter will be welcomed by the editor of the Newsletter.

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Members may like to know that Alan Bell's biography, *Sydney Smith*, is currently available in hardback from Oxford University Press at the affordable price of £18.80, plus £2.50 postage and packing. (The paperback edition is out of print). Send your orders to CWO Department, OUP FREEPOST, NH 4051, Corby, Northants NN18 9ES, with cheques payable to Oxford University Press. The ISBN number for the book is 0-19-812050-8. The offer ends on 30 June 1998.

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All Saints Church, Foston

Members of the Sydney Smith Association would be very welcome to join us at our regular 1662 Matins, which we hold at 10.30 a.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month. Details of these and other services can be obtained from Peter Diggle, The Old Brewery, Thornton le Clay, York YO60 7TE; telephone 01653 618334.

Jeremy Valentine and Rachel Benson, parish clergy