

Mary Woodforde's Book

Mary Woodforde (d. 1730) was born Mary Norton in a small village called Binstead in Hampshire. She was the second wife of the poet and divine Samuel Woodforde (1636-1700), as she records on the first page of what she calls her 'book': a small pocket book bound in scuffed spotted calf, which is now NCA 9507. Mary's book is a diary, kept sporadically during the years 1684 to 1690, while she was living with her husband in Hampshire. As such, it forms part of a Woodforde family tradition of journal-keeping, the best-known examples of which are the Civil War diary of Mary's father-in-law, Robert Woodforde (NCA 9502), and the sprawling journals of her grandson, Rev. James Woodforde, which cover 1759 to 1803 and required 17 volumes when they were published in their unabridged form. The first entry in Parson Woodforde's diary, of 21 September 1759, declares that he was 'Made a Scholar of New-College', but the connection between the Woodfordes and New College reaches back into the seventeenth century, as Mary's diary details. And the links hold fast. Mary's book was donated as part of a collection of material known as the Woodforde papers, which was given to the college in 1970 by Oliver H. Woodforde.³

Samuel records on its title-page that it was 'Receiu'd from M

following her husband's example, for the plain pages at the beginning of the volume were filled by Samuel with his own 'Memoirs of the most remarkable Passages of my life long since collected', and stories of his family's recent history. More than this, he annotated most of the book's printed contents, with comments on his personal situation when he made each paraphrase, giving too the reasons behind various alterations made for the second edition, revealing the way in which personal and literary demands alike affected his editing choices.

Husband and wife were in

of the diary, as the entries cover everythi

with various New Collegians which would last for life. Amongst them was the non-juror Thomas Ken (1637-1711), whose farmhouse in Winchester the Woodfordes moved into when Samuel was made a prebendary of the Cathedral, as Mary records with pleasure in her entry for 14 May 1685: 'We came to Winton to reside in a house which was our good & Honoured friends Bishop of bathe & wells (Dr. Ken) tis a very pleasant hous & garden far better then euer I could hope for'. Another New College friend from Samuel's student days was Francis Turner – Andrew Marvell's Mr. Smirk – later Bishop of Ely, and Master of St. John's College, Cambridge. This latter appointment came in handy for the Woodfordes when it came to finding a college place for their son, Samuel (he of the injured finger): 'my husband had a kind letter from y^e Bishop of Ely in order to carry Sam to Cambridg to St Johns Colledge to be addmitted Scholar, God blesse all our proceedings in this affair so as may be for his Glory and our Childs good', reads Mary's diary entry for 1 June 1687.

It was through another of the couple's sons that a more direct relationship with New College was forged. Mary records this in an entry for 20 September 1689 which reveals some of the more dubious entry requirements of the college in the seventeenth century: 'My son John was as I then heard sped to New Colledg in Oxon by a resignation which must cost a great deal of mony, which enable us to pay'. Samuel too details John's entry to New College in his own memoirs, although even in this private record he rather neatly avoids mention of the 'great deal of mony' which so concerned his wife. He does however provide the name of the Fellow who conveniently resigned: '1689. September 19: My Son John child Colledg at Winton vpon Mr Reynells resignation was admitted chosen Scholar at New College Oxon vpon y^e 21. admitted there⁹.

It is particularly fitting, therefore, that Mary's diary – along with Samuel's book and the rest of the Woodforde papers – should have ended up as part of the New College archives, as, against the broader backdrop of the political and religious changes of the late seventeenth century, familial and collegiate history converge within its pages, in a fruitful conjunction of the personal and the institutional archive.

Sophie Butler
DPhilstudent (English)
New College

⁹ The resignation is noted in James Edward Seely's *Registrum Custodum Sociorum et Scholarium Collegii Novi*[MS] (NCA 853), where we are informed that John Woodforde entered the college on 22