

# Introduction

In the Library of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia there is a letterbook. It is titled, in the same hand as the letters, 'A collection of Letters from Dr A. Fothergill to J. Woodforde M.D.'.<sup>1</sup> The letters of Anthony Fothergill (1737–1813) to James Woodforde (1771–1837) cover the period 1789–1813. At the time the correspondence commenced Fothergill was a distinguished physician practising in Bath and Woodforde was apprentice to two surgeon-apothecaries in the West Country. Fothergill became Woodforde's patron and the letters record Fothergill's ongoing advice, material assistance and attempts to use his influence on Woodforde's behalf until Fothergill's death shortly after the last letter. Woodforde served his apprenticeship between 1786–1791 and then went to study at the Edinburgh medical school. Three years later, in 1794, he qualified as an MD. He then returned to the West Country and endeavoured to establish himself in practice as a physician.

The letters are a rich source of information for the student of Georgian social life, for they are not confined to technical medical issues. They discuss, for example, the Bath season, the Napoleonic Wars, American affairs, the cost of living and the vagaries of travel and those of the post. For the medical historian in particular, however, the letters are a gold mine. Fothergill's advice to Woodforde as a student included a comprehensive account of the books he considered the aspiring physician should read. It covered the order in which he thought medical lectures should be attended and an evaluation of the various Edinburgh professors. Fothergill also guided Woodforde on how to conduct himself so as to make the best impression on his teachers. Fothergill's reflections on Woodforde's Edinburgh experiences shed much light on student life in Edinburgh. After Woodforde's qualification, the letters are full of remarks on how to construct a successful medical career. The politics of hospital appointments, the challenge of the surgeon-apothecary to the physician and the importance of midwifery, all make their appearance. The letters are crammed with details of the books exchanged between the correspondents and their discussion of new medical theories, such as those of John Brown and Benjamin Rush. Their increasing exchange of journals would seem to be a measure of the rising importance of periodical literature in science and medicine in this period.<sup>2</sup> Actual medical practice figures large too. There are detailed accounts of patients, their illnesses and prescriptions. Significantly, on occasion, physical examination of patients makes an appearance (letters **54** and **71**). The historian of science will find pertinent material here too. Natural philosophical texts, itinerant lecturing, the chemical revolution and electricity are all discussed.

## Anthony Fothergill MD

Anthony Fothergill (1737–1813) lived for much of his life in the shadow of his more distinguished namesake, Dr John Fothergill (1712–1780). It was to John Fothergill, the famous Quaker physician of eighteenth-century London, that Anthony referred in the first letter in this series, in which he disclaimed "the encomiums which justly belong to my late

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Fothergill, *Letters to J. Woodforde. A Letterbook*, 1 volume, 258 pp. B F823, Film 1411. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Susan C. Lawrence, *Charitable knowledge: hospital pupils and practitioners in eighteenth-century London*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

## Introduction

illustrious and ever to be revered namesake, whose character you wish to emulate . . .” (letter 1). Anthony Fothergill was more than twenty years younger than John. Although they both hailed from the north of England and received their education at the same school at Sedbergh, they were not relations. John Fothergill came from a small valley branching off Wensleydale in north Yorkshire, from a family that had been strict Quakers for four generations.<sup>3</sup> Anthony Fothergill came from Ravenstonedale in Westmorland and, even though they were only twenty-five miles apart, the families cannot be positively connected. The Westmorland Fothergills were an Anglican conformist family which produced several men of learning and ability.<sup>4</sup> Thomas Fothergill was Master of St John’s College, Cambridge, in the mid-seventeenth century and, later, George Fothergill was principal of St Edmund Hall. His brother Thomas was Provost of Queen’s College, Oxford, from 1767 until his death in 1796. Anthony Fothergill came from a more obscure branch of this family. His father Anthony, who was probably a farmer, married Frances Bainbridge in 1735. They lived in a small hamlet called Murthwaite, now no more than a few uninhabited farm buildings which can be reached only by a track across the fields. Here their son Anthony was born and he was christened in Ravenstonedale Church on 12 March 1736/7.<sup>5</sup>

Anthony was educated at nearby Sedbergh School where he would have learnt the classical languages then necessary for entry into the study of medicine. In 1755, he was apprenticed to his maternal cousin, John Drake Bainbridge,<sup>6</sup> a well-known apothecary, an influential figure in Durham who became mayor of the city six times between 1761 and 1794. Anthony Fothergill remained with him for five years and then went to Edinburgh as a medical student. He joined the prestigious Royal Medical Society (RMS) in 1761 and graduated MD in 1763 with a thesis on intermittent fever. The thesis was dedicated to his teacher, William Cullen, and to Sir Ralph Milbanke.<sup>7</sup> Sir Ralph was the fifth baronet and a landowner in Yorkshire and Durham. He had been member of parliament for Scarborough from 1754 to 1761 but by 1763 he was the member for the large constituency of Richmond, Yorkshire, which still extends as far as the old Westmorland border. Sir Ralph was no rural dullard. His family had important connections. His daughter Elizabeth became the first Lady Melbourne, the mother of Queen Victoria’s first prime minister.<sup>8</sup> His granddaughter, Anne Isabella Milbanke, had the misfortune to marry the wayward Lord Byron.<sup>9</sup> Sir Ralph and Anthony Fothergill’s master, John Bainbridge, were also connected by marriage. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Sir Ralph had contributed to Anthony’s education in Edinburgh, just as Anthony himself was to do later for James Woodforde.

Soon after his graduation, the young Anthony Fothergill met John Fothergill in London and on his counsel settled in Northampton as a physician in 1764. He was appointed

<sup>3</sup> See R. H. Fox, *Dr John Fothergill and his friends: chapters in eighteenth-century life*, London, Macmillan, 1919. B. C. Corner and C. C. Booth, *Chain of Friendship. Letters of Dr John Fothergill of London, 1735–1780*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> C. Thornton and F. MacLaughlan, *The Fothergills of Ravenstonedale: their lives and their letters*, London, Heinemann, 1905.

<sup>5</sup> Parish Register, Ravenstonedale Church. Copy at the Society of Genealogists.

<sup>6</sup> A detailed genealogy of the Fothergill and Bainbridge families has been prepared by Dr G. C. R Morris of Orpington, Kent. Dr Morris is a lineal descendant of John Drake Bainbridge.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Ralph Milbanke, 5th Bt (1725–1798) was the son of the 4th Baronet through his second marriage to Ann Delaval.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Milbanke (1749–1818) married Viscount Melbourne on 13 April 1769. Her son William Lamb, later Viscount Melbourne, was born on 15 March 1779.

<sup>9</sup> Anne Isabella Milbanke (1792–1860) married Lord Byron on 2 January 1815.

## Introduction

physician to the General Infirmary in Northampton in December of that year but seems to have met with unexpected difficulties. Dr John wrote encouragingly to him from London: “Depend more on propriety of conduct than on recommendations, though these ought not to be neglected. Have patience, be firm”.<sup>10</sup> Throughout his years in Northampton, Anthony corresponded with John and some of this correspondence appears in J. C. Lettsom’s memoir of John Fothergill, published after his death from prostatic obstruction in 1780.<sup>11</sup> It was a task that Lettsom, John’s protégé, was well able to undertake. Anthony Fothergill was later to hope that Lettsom would do the same for his own memory.

In 1778, Anthony was elected to the Royal Society, having been proposed as a “gentleman well versed in mathematics, natural philosophy and the learned languages”.<sup>12</sup> John Fothergill was his second sponsor, William Hunter the third, indicating the high regard in which he had now come to be held. The following year he became a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians,<sup>13</sup> an essential step if he was to practise as a prominent mainstream physician in London. In 1781, he moved to London in an attempt to fill his distinguished namesake’s place. He appears to have lived for a while in the doctor’s house in Harpur Street, presided over by John’s formidable Quaker sister Ann.<sup>14</sup> He did not, however, prosper and it was Lettsom who was to inherit John’s position in London medicine.

The next year, Anthony Fothergill moved to Bath where he was to spend the most fruitful years of his career. He lived at No. 9, Walcot Parade, a terrace of houses on the London road.<sup>15</sup> He became an active member of the Medical Society of London, which had been founded by Lettsom in 1773, contributing papers on influenza, consumption and the treatment of epilepsy. But his main interest was in the fledgling Royal Humane Society, founded by William Hawes and Thomas Coggan in 1774.<sup>16</sup> The Society was particularly concerned with the resuscitation of persons apparently dead from drowning. The means of restoring animation were Anthony Fothergill’s particular interest. The topic was the source of much correspondence between Fothergill and Woodforde and was to be the subject of the latter’s MD thesis in Edinburgh when he submitted it in 1794. That same year, Anthony Fothergill was awarded a gold medal by the Royal Humane Society for an essay on the subject.<sup>17</sup> Whilst in Bath, he wrote on lead poisoning, rabies, and the abuse of spirituous liquors. He published a tract on the use of the Cheltenham waters in 1788<sup>18</sup> and in 1792 he had the distinction, along with Lettsom, of being elected a foreign member of the American Philosophical Society.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> R. H. Fox, *op. cit.*, note 3 above, pp. 131–3.

<sup>11</sup> J. C. Lettsom, *The works of John Fothergill M.D. with some account of his life*, London, C. Dilly, 1783–84.

<sup>12</sup> Archives of the Royal Society, London.

<sup>13</sup> *Annals of the Royal College of Physicians of London* (1779), XIV, 112, 113 and 115.

<sup>14</sup> C. C. Booth, ‘Ann Fothergill, the Mistress of Harpur Street’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1978, 122: 340–54.

<sup>15</sup> Dr Anthony Fothergill’s residence at 9, Walcot Parade is attested by street records of the City of Bath between 1784 and 1804, preserved in the Bath Public Library.

<sup>16</sup> P. J. Bishop, *A short history of the Royal Humane Society*, London, The Royal Humane Society, 1974.

<sup>17</sup> A. Fothergill, *A new inquiry into the suspension of vital action in cases of drowning and suffocation*, London, C. Dilly and Bath, R. Cruttwell, 1795.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Fothergill’s publications include: *An essay on the abuse of spirituous liquors*, Bath, R. Cruttwell, 1796. *A new experimental inquiry into the nature and qualities of the Cheltenham water*, Bath, R. Cruttwell, 1788. *Caution to the head of families, in three essays: (i) On cyder wine. (ii) On the poison of lead. (iii) On the poison of copper*, Bath, R. Cruttwell and London, C. Dilly, 1790. *On the nature of the disease produced by the bite of a mad dog*, Bath, R. Cruttwell, 1799.

## Introduction

In 1803, at the age of sixty-six, he decided, for health reasons (letter **82**), to give up what had become a highly successful practice as a physician and move to Pennsylvania. He travelled to Bristol to take ship for Philadelphia and arrived in the autumn, taking lodgings in Walnut Street. In Philadelphia he played an active role in the affairs of the American Philosophical Society, contributing on Bills of Mortality for the United States, “ice islands”, population and on the cold in Northampton in 1776. He was a member of committees commenting on work submitted for publication by the Society and in 1804 he produced an almost skittish account of the virtues of the common hop, arguing that “the celebrated Nectar of the Heathenish gods, which they were said to have quaffed very freely to render themselves immortal, was none other than fine ale well hopped . . .”. At the same time he made exhaustive daily observations on the weather, wind and temperature and wrote extensively on the population, longevity and diseases of Philadelphia. The work was never published, but the manuscript, a testament to the fertility of its author’s mind, is preserved in the library of the American Philosophical Society.<sup>20</sup> A copy was sent to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society in London.

Anthony Fothergill seems to have enjoyed an active social life in Philadelphia. He met distinguished medical men, among them John Morgan,<sup>21</sup> founder of the first medical school in the United States, and dined with him. He also visited the President, Thomas Jefferson, in Washington in 1804. He may have become acquainted with Jefferson through the Philosophical Society, for he was not only President of the United States but also President of the Society. Fothergill’s letter of thanks following his visit, dated 8 June, is preserved in the Jefferson papers: “Dr Fothergill cannot leave the City of Washington without offering his grateful acknowledgements to the President of the US for his repeated civilities & kind hospitality, wishing him uninterrupted health & prosperity, begs leave to request his acceptance of these little tracts as a token of remembrance.<sup>22</sup> In 1812 the recurrence of war between Britain and the United States made his position in Philadelphia difficult and he decided to return to England. It was not to be for long. He must have had time to meet old friends from the Medical Society of London and he certainly met Lettsom again. But Fothergill was now an old man in his late seventies and he died at St George’s Place on 11 May 1813.

His Will, a copy of which is preserved at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia,<sup>23</sup> was long and complicated, dealing with property on both sides of the Atlantic. He asked first that an oval marble tablet be placed in the Episcopal church in Philadelphia where he worshipped, to be inscribed with his name and the following alarming admonition: “Reader here make solemn pause. . . . Remember that on the present day hangs Eternity towards which thou art hastening . . .”. He also asked that a pathetic funeral sermon be preached from the text: “Let us work while it is yet day for the night cometh when no

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Fothergill’s acknowledgement of the receipt of his Diploma of Membership is given in a letter to George Turner of Bath, dated April 1792. MS autograph letter, Library of the American Philosophical Society.

<sup>20</sup> Fothergill’s manuscripts on all these topics are preserved in the Library of the American Philosophical Society.

<sup>21</sup> John Morgan (1735–1789) played a major role in the foundation of the medical school in Philadelphia in 1765, after his return from studies in Europe. Whitfield J. Bell, *John Morgan, continental doctor*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Fothergill to Thomas Jefferson. MS autograph letter addressed “To His Excellency the President of the United States. By favour of Mr Maddison”. Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, USA.

<sup>23</sup> MS copy of the Will of the late Dr Anthony Fothergill. Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

## Introduction

man can work". This was given by the Reverend James Abercrombie and was later published in Philadelphia.<sup>24</sup> Fothergill left all his papers to Lettsom, together with £1,000 to be devoted to a "New and Elegant Edition of my Works . . .". But, because of difficulties over legacies to his Bainbridge relations, there were delays before the Will could be proved and Lettsom died in 1815 before he had received his legacy. Anthony Fothergill achieved a certain immortality by leaving £500 to the Medical Society of London to establish a medal in his memory. The Fothergillian Medal is awarded to this day. Among the many legacies that he made, there was one other to be noted. He left £100 to Dr Woodforde of Castle Cary.

### James Woodforde MD

It was possibly through his extensive practice that Anthony Fothergill came to know the Woodforde family. At Bath there is little doubt that he was one of those fashionable doctors who attended the numerous upper-class invalids who came to take the waters of the spa. But, as his letters show, he also had a practice that extended widely throughout the surrounding countryside. The Woodforde family, living in or around Castle Cary, only twenty-five miles from Bath, were also sufficiently prosperous to consult one of the leading physicians in Bath.

James Woodforde, who belonged to this family, was born at Alhampton, Somerset, on 22 August 1771.<sup>25</sup> He was thought to be the seventh child of Heighes Woodforde (1725–1789), an unsuccessful lawyer, through his marriage to Anne Dorville. Heighes was the son of the Rector of Ansford, near Castle Cary, and the elder brother of Parson James Woodforde (1740–1803), the famous diarist. Parson Woodforde left Somerset to take up a living at Weston in Norfolk in 1774. He achieved literary immortality from the diary of everyday life that he kept from 1754 until 1803.<sup>26</sup> The diary records many of the activities of his family, including numerous convivial occasions with his brother Heighes. To the uninitiated therefore James Woodforde, future correspondent of Anthony Fothergill, would appear to have been a nephew of the diarist.

Yet all was not as it seemed.<sup>27</sup> Heighes Woodforde's union with Anne Dorville was a classic example of marrying in haste and repenting at leisure. Heighes, at the age of twenty-eight, eloped with Anne and they were married in the Savoy Chapel, London, on 17 December 1754. This clandestine ceremony was already illegal under the terms of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, passed the previous year. It was presumably for this reason that the wedding was repeated in Anne's parish of Ditcheat on 22 January 1757, three months before the birth of their first child, a daughter, who was christened Anna Maria but who was later always known as "Nancy".

According to the Woodforde Family Book, Heighes Woodforde had a tempestuous relationship with his wife, Anne, an independent woman who had inherited property at

<sup>24</sup> James Abercrombie, *Funeral sermon on the importance and the improvement of time . . . in compliance with the desire expressed by the late Anthony Fothergill*, Philadelphia, James Maxwell, 1814.

<sup>25</sup> Parish Registers of Ditcheat, Somerset Record Office, Taunton.

<sup>26</sup> James Woodforde, *The diary of a country parson*, edited by John Beresford, 5 vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968.

<sup>27</sup> The details of the affairs of the Woodforde Family that follow have been taken from the Woodforde Family Book and have been kindly contributed by D. L. Winstanley Esq., editor of the *Quarterly journal of the Parson Woodforde Society*. The Society has one of two copies of the Woodforde Family Book.

## Introduction

Alhampton from her father. There were repeated rows and separations during the 1760s and in December 1770 the couple became totally estranged following a dramatic breakdown of their relationship. Heighes, then living at Ansford, sent his bed to Anne's house at Alhampton. Significantly Anne must have already been pregnant with her seventh child, James. There were stormy scenes and the bed was unceremoniously returned to Ansford. Heighes, like his bed, never returned to the marital home.

There is little doubt that Heighes Woodforde acknowledged the first four children born to the marriage as his own but in a draft of his Will dated 25 June 1783, he wrote of the three youngest children, Ralph, Francis and James, "I do solemnly declare and affirm that they are not to be mine".<sup>28</sup> The probated Will contains no such acknowledgement, possibly Woodforde wished to avoid the stigma of bastardising the children. So although James, future physician and correspondent of Dr Anthony Fothergill, was baptised a Woodforde, there is considerable doubt as to who his father was.

James Woodforde, born within months of the dramatic final breakdown of his parents' marriage, was brought up at his mother's house at Alhampton. We know nothing of James's education until he was apprenticed to two surgeon-apothecaries of Trowbridge, Wiltshire, in 1786. In 1788, when James was seventeen, Parson Woodforde wrote in his diary on 5 April that "Nancy", Heighes' eldest child then staying with him, had received a letter from "one Js Woodforde, who is apprenticed to an apothecary".<sup>29</sup> Parson Woodforde never referred to James as his nephew. In 1790, Parson Woodforde confided to his diary on 28 December that James's mother was "crazy and calls herself Lady Woodforde" but we have no independent corroboration of this observation.<sup>30</sup> There was no love lost between her and the Woodforde family. Parson Woodforde in his diary always referred to her as "Nancy's mother", whilst James, on the few occasions upon which he was taken note of, was the "son of Nancy's mother".

In 1791 James first went to Edinburgh as a student. The University records show that he matriculated for three successive sessions between 1791 and 1794 and that he spelt his name without an "e" (see below, p. xx, fn 49). As a medical student he appears to have been active in student affairs. Encouraged by Anthony Fothergill, he joined the prestigious RMS. Other societies with which he was involved included the Royal Physical Society and, curiously, the American Physical Society. He graduated MD in 1794, his thesis being entitled *De resuscitione submersorum*.<sup>31</sup> It was appropriately dedicated to his friend, mentor and financial supporter "Anthonio Fothergill M.D." and to "Gulielmo Hawes". As these letters show, it was Anthony Fothergill, friend and collaborator of William Hawes, who had suggested the subject.

Following his graduation, James Woodforde returned to his native Alhampton where at first he lived with his ageing mother. But he did not find it easy to obtain employment as a physician, even though Anthony Fothergill helped and advised him as much as he could. In that same year, 1794, his mother Anne Woodforde signed her Will, five years before her death.<sup>32</sup> In that document James is described as "of the City of Bristol, Doctor

<sup>28</sup> MS Will of Heighes Woodforde, dated 5 June 1783. New College archives No. 9537. By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford.

<sup>29</sup> Woodforde, op. cit., note 26 above, vol. 3, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 239.

<sup>31</sup> Jacobus Woodforde, *Tentamen medicum inaugurale de resuscitione submersorum*, Edinburgh, Balfour and Smellie, 1794.

## Introduction

of Physic". The Will also shows the close relationship that she had now developed with her son's mentor, for she chose Anthony Fothergill as one of her trustees. Anne died on 25 April 1799. The main provisions of her Will were aimed at the three children disowned by her husband, who had died ten years earlier and had already provided for the four older children whom he acknowledged as his own. Anne Woodforde's property did not pass directly to her children for she set up a Trust to administer her estate, with Anthony Fothergill and John Goldsmith as trustees. James, however, must now have benefited from the improvement in his circumstances and within two years he had chosen for himself a wife. He was married on 7 December 1801 to Juliana Clutterbuck, daughter of a solicitor of Marazion, Cornwall. There were five children of the marriage, all born within six years—Mary (b. 1802), James (b. 1804), Thomas (b. 1805), Juliana (b. 1806) and Henry (b.1807).<sup>33</sup>

Where James practised after his marriage is uncertain but at some time he settled at Ansford. He seems to have lived an uneventful life. He published in 1820 *A treatise on dyspepsia; or indigestion*<sup>34</sup> and a second edition appeared the following year. He apparently also published a brief work on an outbreak of typhus in the prison at Ilchester and gave evidence at the trial of the gaoler when he was prosecuted.<sup>35</sup> James Woodforde died at Castle Cary on the first day of 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession. A tablet commemorating his family is in Ansford Church. It reads: "In him were verified the words of Solomon. He who honoureth his Maker hath mercy on the poor".

James Woodforde was sufficiently prosperous to send two of his sons to study medicine in Edinburgh. His son James was a student between 1821 and 1825, when he graduated MD with a thesis entitled *De remediis purgantium*.<sup>36</sup> He dedicated his thesis to James Hamilton, Senior, the Edinburgh physician, to his father and to Henry Clutterbuck MD, who was his maternal uncle.<sup>37</sup> Clutterbuck was a prolific medical writer who had graduated MD in Glasgow in 1804. He later established himself as a leading physician and he was prominent in the affairs of the Medical Society of London. For many years he was physician to the General Dispensary in Aldersgate Street. It was presumably through his influence that the young James became a staff member there in 1828.<sup>38</sup> James junior was an able botanist, publishing a work on the flowers of Edinburgh in 1824.<sup>39</sup> There is a fleeting glimpse of him in the autobiographical writings of Dr John Mackenzie (1803–1886). Mackenzie records that whilst in Edinburgh in the 1820s, he made friends with

<sup>32</sup> 'The Will of Anne Woodforde', *Quarterly journal of the Parson Woodforde Society*, Winter 1994, pp. 28–30.

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication, D. L. Winstanley (see note 27 above).

<sup>34</sup> James Woodforde, *A treatise on dyspepsia; or indigestion*, Sherbourne, E. Penny, 1820.

<sup>35</sup> Personal Communication, D. L. Winstanley (see note 27 above). We have been unable to trace this work.

<sup>36</sup> Jacobus Woodforde, *De remediis purgantium*, Edinburgh, P. Neill, 1825.

<sup>37</sup> On James Hamilton see letter 86, note 7. Henry Clutterbuck (1767–1856) was the fifth child of Thomas Clutterbuck of Marazion in Cornwall. He was the brother of James Woodforde Snr's wife. He became a member of the College of Surgeons in 1790 and worked first as a general practitioner in London. He then went to Glasgow, where he obtained his MD in 1804. Settling again in London, he built up a thriving clinical practice as well as excelling as a teacher. He founded and edited *The medical and chirurgical review*. His death in 1856 followed a street accident after he had attended a meeting at the Medical Society of London.

<sup>38</sup> The Aldersgate Dispensary Annual Report for 1937 lists all the physicians and surgeons to the Dispensary from 1770 and includes "James Woodforde M.D." as a physician in 1828. Information provided by Andrew Griffin, Trust Archivist, St Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

<sup>39</sup> James Woodforde Esq., *Catalogue of the indigenous phenogamic plants growing in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh; and of certain species of the class cryptogamia with reference to their*

## Introduction

“an English comrade named Woodford [*sic*], who was as devoted to flowers as I was” and he invited him to visit him at his home.<sup>40</sup> Soon after his graduation, James junior must have moved to London for he was elected to the Linnean Society in 1825, writing to acknowledge his election from an address in Fleet Street.<sup>41</sup> The letter is included as an appendix. James did not stay long in London for he joined the East India Company and in 1829 was an assistant surgeon in Madras. Like so many in colonial service in those days, he died young, succumbing at Guntur in 1838, at the age of thirty-four.

His younger brother Thomas also studied in Edinburgh, from 1822 until 1826, when he graduated MD with a thesis entitled *De mania*.<sup>42</sup> Like his brother, he dedicated the thesis to his father. Little is known of his subsequent career. According to the family records he practised at Taunton and died unmarried on 8 May 1843.

## The Letters

The correspondence opens in August 1789, when Woodforde was apprentice to the surgeon-apothecaries William Palmer and Joseph Sylvester of Trowbridge, Wiltshire. Woodforde was already known to Fothergill, who wrote to him from Bath. Woodforde at this time was obviously uncertain as to whether to make his future as a physician, surgeon or apothecary. Fothergill offered to give Woodforde advice on the choice of books and the educational route he should follow whichever career he decided to take up. Already it was clear, at least to Fothergill, that if Woodforde elected to become a physician his best plan would be to study and graduate at Edinburgh. Shortly after the correspondence opened, Fothergill learned from Woodforde that he had opted to become a surgeon or surgeon-apothecary. Fothergill encouraged him to learn Latin, a little Greek, natural philosophy and chemistry, and recommended suitable texts. These things, according to the letters, Woodforde undertook. In 1790 Woodforde had decided to attend lectures at Edinburgh commencing in the academic year of 1791 when his apprenticeship would be finished. Fothergill then recounted to him some details of his own days in Edinburgh in the early 1760s.

By June 1790, Fothergill was recommending Woodforde to begin the study of physiology by reading the works of Albrecht von Haller. At the end of the year they were engaged in discussing quite detailed technical questions, such as the mode of action of digitalis (letter 10), the status of Joseph Priestley’s gas chemistry and the nature of animal heat (letter 11). At this time too the first suggestion of the possible ill health of Woodforde’s mother was raised (letter 10), later to be a subject of considerable concern. During the first six months of 1791 a large number of books, mainly but not entirely medical, were exchanged between the correspondents. In the summer of that year Fothergill began to give Woodforde advice about how to proceed at the medical school (letter 15). Woodforde was still intending to become a surgeon-apothecary (letter 16) and, as Fothergill put it, considered his “views

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location, Edinburgh, J. Carfrak and London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, 1824.

<sup>40</sup> *Pigeon holes of memory. The life and times of Dr John Mackenzie (1803–1886)*, edited from his manuscript memoirs by Christina Byam Shaw, London, Constable, 1954, p. 119.

<sup>41</sup> The MS autograph letter is from 5 Bouverie Street and is dated “Monday Dec 13”. James Woodforde laments his inability to attend the Linnean Society as arranged and asks that he may attend a future meeting so that “I can take my seat as a Fellow”. It appears that he never did. Archives of the Linnean Society, Burlington House, London.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Woodforde, *Dissertatio medica inauguralis de mania*, Edinburgh, P. Neill, 1826.

## Introduction

limited to surgery, pharmacy and midwifery". In the which case Fothergill advised that a single year in Edinburgh studying anatomy, attending the Royal Infirmary and taking classes in chemistry and materia medica would be sufficient. By August, Fothergill was giving Woodforde detailed advice about getting introductions to professors, finding lodgings, the sorts of clothes to wear and other things necessary for a profitable time at the medical school (letters 18, 19). In October 1791 Woodforde arrived in Edinburgh. He was still planning to stay only a year (letter 20).

A Faculty of Medicine had been established in the University of Edinburgh in 1726. At the end of the century Edinburgh was the greatest medical school in Europe although its most glorious days were just over (it was shortly to be eclipsed by Paris). Its best years, not coincidentally, were those when Scotland's most famous literati also reigned: David Hume and Adam Smith for example.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the century the medical school was staffed by a number of capable but possibly lesser lights than those of the great days of the third quarter of the century. William Cullen, the internationally renowned professor of the practice of medicine, had died in 1790.<sup>44</sup> His successor, James Gregory, attained considerable fame but never quite the lustre of his predecessor. Joseph Black remained as professor of chemistry until his death in 1799, but his health was declining, and from about 1792 John Rotheram delivered a large part of the course, until Thomas Charles Hope was appointed conjoint professor with Black in 1796.<sup>45</sup> Alexander Monro *secundus*, professor of anatomy, was the only other internationally renowned figure. He continued to teach until 1798 when he was in his sixties, but the works for which he was famous had been published in the early and mid-1780s.<sup>46</sup> Andrew Duncan, the elder, professor of the Institutes of Medicine (later to be called physiology), and Francis Home, professor of materia medica, were highly respected teachers but not physicians of the stature of Cullen. The extra-mural school based mainly at and around the Royal College of Surgeons, however, and the students' RMS were flourishing.

Students of all sorts attended Edinburgh, notably surgeon-apothecaries who, after their apprenticeships, intended to add attendance at formal lectures to their credentials. There were also men intent on graduating MD. There were others who simply enrolled at various courses and then went off to practise or took the examination of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh or its London equivalent (not Royal until 1800).<sup>47</sup> Unlike Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh had no formal religious requirements and men of all denominations were to be found there. The school was a particular favourite with dissenters.

<sup>43</sup> For the school's greatest era see Christopher Lawrence, 'Ornate physicians and learned artisans: Edinburgh medical men, 1726–1776', in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds.), *William Hunter and the eighteenth-century medical world*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 153–76. For its relation to Scottish cultural life generally see Christopher Lawrence, 'The nervous system and society in the Scottish Enlightenment', in Barry Barnes and Steven Shapin (eds.), *Natural order: historical studies of scientific culture*, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1979, pp. 19–40. For the suggestion that the great days were coming to an end in the 1790s see Christopher Lawrence, 'The Edinburgh medical school and the end of the "old thing", 1790–1830', *History of universities*, 1988, 7: 259–86.

<sup>44</sup> The practice of medicine was a course of lectures and not a practical course.

<sup>45</sup> R. G. W. Anderson, *The Playfair collection and the teaching of chemistry at the University of Edinburgh, 1713–1858*, Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Museum, 1978, ch. 2.

<sup>46</sup> On the Edinburgh professors who were teaching in the 1790s see John D. Comrie, *History of Scottish medicine*, 2 vols., London, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum/Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1932, vol. 2, pp. 628–31.

<sup>47</sup> For Edinburgh students and the courses they took, and an account of the extra mural school see

## Introduction

Edinburgh also had no formal overall course structure. Students simply matriculated (not all did that) and then attended whichever lectures they chose after paying the professor 3 guineas. They could also attend clinical lectures at the Royal Infirmary after having purchased a “ticket”, a card bought from the Infirmary managers for a fee and giving the student the right to enter the Infirmary.<sup>48</sup> Students matriculating at Edinburgh did so in November when they signed the matriculation album in the University library. Woodforde signed his name in the 1791 album. He also signed the matriculation index and next to his name was a list of the courses he intended to take. This list was made by a clerk. He was listed as attending anatomy and surgery, chemistry, the practice of medicine, obstetrics and clinical medicine. In 1792–93 he again appears in the index enrolled for anatomy and surgery, obstetrics, medical theory (the Institutes of Medicine) and clinical medicine. His signature does not appear in the matriculation album. In 1793–94 he appears once more in the index but not in the album. The smudged entry reveals he enrolled for botany and another course, possibly the practice of physic, but the class list does not confirm this. Class lists were the professor’s personal record of students enrolled. According to the class lists, Woodforde attended the practice of medicine in 1791–92 only. The class lists for clinical medicine confirm he attended in 1791–92 and 1792–93 but not in 1793–94. No other class lists for this period survive.<sup>49</sup>

By March 1792, after he had been in Edinburgh six months, Woodforde had decided to stay until September (letter 22). Although there were no formal university lectures in the summer, there were extra-mural lectures and the infirmary could be visited. By June 1792 Woodforde was expressing a dislike of surgery and had decided to practise solely as an apothecary. He resolved to spend a second year in Edinburgh. Fothergill encouraged him to do whatever he wished but suggested that if he spent a second year at the University he might consider becoming an MD (letter 24). In fact, unknown to Fothergill, in 1783 the regulations had been changed, stipulating that candidates for the Edinburgh MD degree must have spent three years at a university, one of which should have been passed at Edinburgh.<sup>50</sup> Woodforde meanwhile was undecided about which career to follow. By December 1792 he had chosen (letter 27) to graduate. On 10 November 1792, a year after his arrival, Woodforde became a member of the RMS. The RMS began formally in 1737 and received a Royal Charter in 1779. Organised and run by medical students, it was exclusive and widely recognised as having an important educational function. It was also the seat of fierce controversy, as when it was split in the 1780s over the so-called Brunonian doctrine, named after the Edinburgh-trained physician John Brown.<sup>51</sup> Some time in 1793 Woodforde presented to the Society a paper entitled ‘Asphyxia submersorum’, which was a discussion of cases of drowning with commentaries. This was the basis of

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Lisa Rosner, *Medical education in the age of improvement: Edinburgh students and apprentices 1760–1826*, Edinburgh University Press, 1991.

<sup>48</sup> A. Logan Turner, *Story of a great hospital: the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1937, ch. 9. On teaching in the Infirmary see Guenter B. Risse, *Hospital life in Enlightenment Scotland: care and teaching at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

<sup>49</sup> Edinburgh University Library: Medical Matriculation Index volume 2, 1791–95; Da 35, class lists, practice of medicine 1791–92, 1792–93, 1793–94; Da 35, clinical medicine class lists, 1791–92, 1792–93, 1793–94. In all of these entries Woodforde’s name is spelt without an “e”.

<sup>50</sup> Rosner, *op. cit.*, note 47 above, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> On the RMS see *ibid.*, ch. 7. On the Brunonian controversy see Michael Barfoot, ‘Brunonianism under

## Introduction

Woodforde's MD thesis and he was using the RMS to rehearse for his viva. At some point in the academic year 1793–94 he presented a dissertation, 'Why are the animal functions abolished in apoplexy while those of the vital and natural remain?'<sup>52</sup> In February 1793 Fothergill, having learned from Woodforde of the three years university attendance required for graduation, suggested he proceed to Leyden and graduate there (letters **28**, **29**, **30**). Prior to the rise of Edinburgh, Leyden was undoubtedly the premier European medical school. Hermann Boerhaave, who died in 1738, taught there and was one of the most admired and distinguished physicians of the century.<sup>53</sup> It was quite common in the eighteenth century to graduate at a university without having attended it. Rheims, like Leyden, was another popular choice for graduation. Fothergill offered Woodforde an interest-free loan of £10 to assist him in extra study. By June 1793 Fothergill had learned that Woodforde would stay in Edinburgh another year. Much of the correspondence in Woodforde's last academic year was taken up with the issue of his thesis and the oral examination, both of which would have to be in Latin and were necessary for graduation. By the summer of 1794 he had been examined and was an MD, his dissertation being dedicated to Fothergill and the founder of the Royal Humane Society, William Hawes (letter **36**). In September Woodforde was back in the West Country (letters **37** and **38**). Much of the correspondence from here on was devoted to attempts by Fothergill to introduce Woodforde to established local practitioners or to getting him an appointment of some sort, such as at a hospital (letters **37**, **41**, **49**). The correspondents, now on a more equal footing, continued to exchange books, pamphlets and, increasingly, journals. They also discussed medical cases. By May 1796 Woodforde was in practice in Castle Cary, Somerset (letter **50**). In 1799, the year of his mother's death, he moved to Crewkerne, also in Somerset (letter **67**). This latter caused Fothergill some surprise, since he considered Woodforde might have some difficulty attracting patients.

There is slightly less correspondence after 1799 although it seems certain letters have been either lost or were simply not transcribed. In 1802 Woodforde's wife announced she was expecting a baby (letter **78**) which was born in October (letter **80**). In 1803 Fothergill fell sick with "epidemic catarrh" (letter **81**), an illness from which he felt his recovery was unduly slow. His state of ill-health encouraged him in his decision to leave for Philadelphia (letter **82**). Fothergill's last letter before departing was written in August 1803. There are five long letters from America during the period 1809–12, although correspondence from this period is obviously missing. At this time Woodforde was contemplating translating Thomas Sydenham. Fothergill meanwhile was expressing satisfaction with his life of ease (letter **85**). By 1810 Woodforde had 5 children (letter **87**) and was considering a translation of Morgagni (or perhaps just to read it in the original) (letter **88**). The correspondence closes with two letters from London in 1813,

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the bed; an alternative to university medicine in Edinburgh in the 1780s', in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds.), *Brunonianism in Britain and Europe*, London, *Medical History* Supplement No. 8, London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1988, pp. 22–45.

<sup>52</sup> Royal Medical Society, Edinburgh. 'Asphyxia submersorum', in volume 30 of *Cases with Commentaries*, commencing January 1793, p. 259. Woodforde's paper was question 3, suggesting it was presented in 1793. 'Animal functions', dissertations, 1792–1794, volume 29, pp. 431–43. Woodforde's paper was last in the volume, suggesting it was 1794.

<sup>53</sup> E. Ashworth Underwood, *Boerhaave's men at Leyden and after*, Edinburgh University Press, 1977.

## *Introduction*

on the second of which Woodforde wrote “the last from my dear valuable and ever to be revered friend and patron” (letter **91**).

Woodforde’s health was a recurrent source of concern to Fothergill and it is frequently discussed in the letters. In early 1790 letter **4** gave the first indication of Woodforde’s sickly disposition, which was to manifest itself in overt illness on several occasions. This illness had been overcome by April (letter **5**). In October 1792 Fothergill was concerned about Woodforde’s indisposition of the “hypochondriacal kind” (letter **25**). Early in 1794 Woodforde fell ill again (letter **34**) and in 1802 he had a fever and pulmonary haemorrhage (letter **77**). In spite of the correspondence being full of local detail, it is surprising how little reference there is to other distinguished Bath physicians. Caleb Hillier Parry for example, who lived and practised in Bath during the whole time Fothergill was there, got no mention. John Haygarth who retired to Bath in 1798 is mentioned only once and not in any personal manner (letter **67**).

### **A Note on the Letterbook and our Transcription**

Although the letters in the letterbook are clearly from Anthony Fothergill to James Woodforde, they are not originals but transcriptions. This is obvious since many letters begin on the page on which others end. The whereabouts of the originals is unknown. We have also been unable to trace Woodforde’s letters to Fothergill. Fothergill’s papers were acquired by John Coakley Lettsom but then all record of them disappears. The letterbook has no provenance beyond the fact that it was acquired by Whitfield Bell Jr. in 1972 for the American Philosophical Society from a London manuscripts and autograph dealer. The transcriptions are deeply puzzling. At one point (letter **60**) Woodforde declared his intention to transcribe Fothergill’s letters. If he did so these transcriptions are not they. These seem to have been made by someone relatively illiterate and unacquainted with the details of the Woodforde family’s life. It seems impossible that they were made by any of Woodforde’s sons unless it was in their dotage. The letters are numbered and very often have a date; however, the dates are not always in sequence and often do not correspond to the actual calendar (for example, letter **67**, November 9 was not a Saturday in 1798). This, coupled with various internal material contradictions, has led us to rearrange and renumber the letters for a reading closer to what we think was the original sequence. Accordingly, the letterbook numbering in its original form (as in N<sup>o</sup> 1, N<sup>o</sup> 2 etc.) has been retained for information and a new sequential numbering added in bold. We have added two tables correlating the two sets of numbers. For the most part we feel we have recovered the original sequence although some letters defy placement and may well not be part of the Fothergill-Woodforde correspondence (notably letter **84**). We have also indicated what we consider more accurate dating by using square brackets.

We originally intended to publish an exact transcription of the letterbook. However it became increasingly apparent to us that the originals themselves must have differed in many minor ways from the letterbook version. First the transcriber was not familiar with the medical world in which Woodforde and Fothergill lived. Medical terms and the names of famous medical men (especially foreigners) are frequently and often badly misspelt and, what is more, misspelt in different ways. Even allowing for eighteenth-century idiosyncratic spelling, Anthony Fothergill was far too cultivated a physician to have written so sloppily.

## *Introduction*

Second, the transcriber almost certainly had no Latin. Practically every Latin tag contains an error, sometimes quite gross. Fothergill obviously prided himself on his Latin, as the letters indicate, and he encouraged the young Woodforde to perfect himself in the language. That the transcriber seems to have had no intimate knowledge of the Woodforde family is evidenced in numerous places, notably in letter **28** where James is referred to as John. There are many other puzzles, not least that the transcriber was not only unacquainted with the family but seemingly forgot what had already been transcribed. In letters **63–66** in 1798, Fothergill expressed concern for Woodforde's sick mother, who did indeed die shortly afterwards (letter **67**). In letter **89**, written from Philadelphia in 1812, Fothergill enquired after Woodforde's mother. Possibly Fothergill was becoming very forgetful. Possibly he was enquiring about Woodforde's mother-in-law. Possibly it was a thoughtless transcription of brother. This along with countless other oddities has led us to publish the letters in what we consider is a form closer to the originals.

We have made no major alterations, but we have modified some spellings (leaving certain inconsistencies), corrected the Latin, adjusted the punctuation and in a few places altered the grammar. We have omitted nothing. There are ninety numbered letters in all. A consultation letter, also in the letterbook, from the Edinburgh surgeon James Russell, presumably, but not certainly, to Woodforde, is not numbered but has been included in the appropriate place by date (letter **48**).<sup>54</sup> In sum, however, there are very many minor alterations and to have indicated them all would have cluttered the text to an extent that would have made easy, let alone pleasurable, reading impossible. We have tried to identify all people and books mentioned in the letters. All appearances are noted in the index but biographical information or bibliographical details are recorded on the first occasion only, unless it seemed particularly pertinent to repeat them. People mentioned who are unknown to us have not been footnoted. Our title is the injunction Fothergill repeats more than once to his protégé (letters **15, 20, 31**).

Bound in with the letterbook and possibly in a different hand and newly paginated is another document (item **92**). It is the deposition of a person, presumably Woodforde, to the Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the state of the jail at Ilchester, Somerset, in 1820. We have included it, without annotation or correction, for the sake of completeness.

<sup>54</sup> This letter is not numbered in the original but appears between letters no. 88 and no. 89, starting on the page on which no. 88 finishes and ending on the page on which no. 89 starts. This suggests it was in this place in the original letters since the transcriber seems to have transcribed the letters in the order he or she found them. We have given it a number of 88a (**48**) to situate it in the letterbook sequence.