
Trouble in the gallery

Ken Baddley

Parson James Woodforde, who kept a diary between 1758 and 1802, spent the last 28 years of his life as the incumbent of Weston Longeville, Norfolk. Prior to this he had served as his father's curate at Castle Cary, Somerset. It was during this period that he became involved in a dispute with the singers who occupied the west gallery. The dispute erupted to such an extent that it would have ended in the consistory court at Wells had it not been for the political power of the local squire Cary Creed. Ken Baddley traces the dispute from its beginnings in 1767 at the door to the west gallery.

The background

In 1695, the people of the parish of Castle Cary in Somerset provided themselves, by means of a subscription list, with a west gallery in their parish church. The gallery was still there for the historian Edward Rack to see ninety years later.¹ Writing about Castle Cary just after 1785 he described it as

a pretty large parish, 3 miles west of Bruton, 12 south-east of Wells and 13 north of Yeovil ... The whole number of houses is 163 (about 30 of which are farms), and of inhabitants around 950.

By the time of Rack's visit, there were five public houses (tolerable ones, as he said, the George and the Angel being the principal ones), and mineral water of the same kind as is found at Epsom, but little used at present.

There was also what Rack referred to as

a manufactory of Knit stockings, in which most of the poor are employed. Notwithstanding which Poor rates are about three shillings in the pound.

The church he described as being a respectable Gothic structure, the interior of which must have been quite a sight to behold, having clusters of pillars painted to resemble Sienna marble, 72 box pews painted in a stone colour in 1759 at a cost of £18/10/- (as we read in the churchwardens' ac-

¹ The quotations which follow are taken from Rack's unpublished notes which he compiled while researching various Somerset villages for John Collinson's *History of the County of Somerset*, published in 1791. Rack's notes are held at the Somerset Archive and Record Office, Obridge Road, Taunton, TA2 7PU, ref. A/AQP 9/14 and 9/29.

counts), and the rood screen, communion table and rails, and the pulpit painted in blue. The pulpit had, in addition, a 'large green cushion cloth'.

Here are Rack's remarks on the singers' gallery:

In the singers' gallery is a small organ. The front of this gallery is handsomely painted and in the middle of it is a painting of David playing on his harp. Over it are old arms, ... and above are two very antique but disgusting figures in carved work.

I shall omit Rack's detailed description of the armigerous device to which he refers in that passage (I can't identify it: the description bears no resemblance to the Seymour arms or the arms of St Maur of Castle Cary which might logically have appeared there); suffice it to say that 'gold chevrons on a parted blue field with three griffins heads surmounted' can only have added – in terms of 18th-century taste – to the appeal of the whole. It is possible, though, that Rack may have been looking upon a shadow of the former glory of the church, for as he says:

The marks of Cromwell's fury are very evident in this church. He demolished the old organ, and destroyed many of its ornaments.

When Rack visited Castle Cary just after 1785 he recorded seeing an organ in the west gallery which had been erected some ninety years earlier in 1695. It seems that the people of Castle Cary had installed 'a small organ' to replace the one destroyed by Cromwell's men at a comparatively early date.²

Such, then, was the physical appearance of the church in the 18th century when a dispute over the occupancy of the singers' gallery broke out between Squire Cary Creed JP on the one hand and the singers and other members of the community on the other.

² It seems that part of the organ case may have been built into the gallery. If this was the case it would point to the installation of the organ in 1695. However, the churchwardens' accounts for 27 July 1809 (see below) which call for the removal of 'the remaining part of the organ' from the gallery may refer to a platform or plinth on which the organ had once stood. It is interesting to speculate that the removal of the organ and the introduction of alternative instrumental support may have been because it was a barrel-organ with its inevitably limited musical provision. [CT]

James Woodforde

It is to our great good fortune that the curate of Castle Cary at the time was James Woodforde, the obedient son of Samuel Woodforde, the Vicar of Castle Cary. Castle Cary was Woodforde senior's second living – much in keeping with the pluralism of the time – for he was also the Rector of nearby Ansford. Rack, incidentally, refers to Castle Cary and Ansford in his notes as one living, though this was not strictly correct as there had once been a rectorial living at Castle Cary, too, long since appropriated by the bishop.

Woodforde senior was getting on in years and – again according to the custom of the times – served neither living himself, so that his son too embraced pluralism and eventually took over the perpetual curacies of both parishes. Those who know of James Woodforde may associate him much more with Weston Longeville in Norfolk, where he was Rector for the last 28 years of his life, but we shall concern ourselves principally here with his curacies at Castle Cary and Ansford.

I have referred to our good fortune in Woodforde's obedience to his father, because it is as a result of Woodforde's unwavering adherence to his father's advice to keep careful accounts that one of the most detailed records of 18th-century English village life has been preserved. Woodforde was a Wykehamist; a scholar at William of Wycliffe's school at Winchester, and when he went up from Winchester College to New College, Oxford, a Wykehamist foundation, he began (in October 1758) to make entries in the diary – initially only the financial records which his father had advised – which he was to continue to keep until shortly before his death in 1803.

This diary – all forty-four uninterrupted years of it – has long been recognised as an important primary source for many aspects of the social and domestic history of village life in 18th-century England, as it records in minute detail, so valuable to social historians, the daily activities of James Woodforde and the people with whom he came into contact.

John Beresford, the first editor of the diaries¹, mentions Samuel Pepys, John Evelyn and John Wesley as three outstanding names among diarists (Beresford, 1935, p. v). We cannot, however, compare James Woodforde with any of these; he

was a countryman whose only contact with the great and good of his time was during the Norfolk years, when he dined (once only) with the Bishop of Norwich, and had a passing acquaintanceship with another clergy family, the Sucklings, first cousins to Horatio, Lord Nelson, whose father was himself a Norfolk country clergyman.

Some would wish to add Francis Kilvert to this list of 'great' diarists, who like Evelyn, Wesley and Woodforde was also a clergyman; however, unlike Woodforde, Kilvert sought to write prose, and (in my opinion) with a view to posterity. What characterises a diarist – to borrow the opinion of Roy Winstanley, the current editor of the Woodforde diaries – is that he or she writes only about what happens to interest him or her at the moment of writing. Narratives which are written primarily for others to read are wholly different. Winstanley makes the distinction that the diarist, writing solely for his own enjoyment, feels no need to include what he calls 'necessary explanation'. The 'trouble in the gallery' therefore only interests Woodforde – and only begins to appear in the diary – when the dispute involving his friend Justice Creed seems likely to involve a court case, and, most importantly for the fairly unassertive young curate, when it appears that there is a cloud on the horizon of his own normally tranquil world.

There are, as Winstanley says, disadvantages for us in this kind of diary-keeping, in that events are not necessarily recorded in any logical sequence; in that entries may reflect loyalties and emotions rather than facts, and – worst of all – that there may be gaps in the narrative for which there are few other sources of reference. Having said that, the manuscript version of the diary (for the published edited versions, other than the complete transcripts of the Parson Woodforde Society², are too brief by far) combined with evidence from the churchwardens' accounts for the period, does enable us to follow the sequence of the dispute.³

¹ *The Diary of a Country Parson*, edited by John Beresford, was first published in five volumes between 1924 and 1931. A selection from the diary was published as a single volume in 1935 and issued as a paperback in 1978.

² For full details of the Parson Woodforde Society and their publications, contact Mrs P. E. D. Stanley, 76 Spencer Street, Norwich, NR3 4PD. All the extracts from Woodforde's diary used in this paper are from the transcripts edited by R. L. Winstanley and published by the society; the extracts have been drawn from the following volumes: *The Ansford Diary of James Woodforde*, vol. 3, 1766–68; vol. 4, 1769–71; vol. 5, 1772–73; *The Norfolk Diary of James Woodforde*, vol. 1, 1776–77. Because the quotations are all referenced by date, it has been deemed unnecessary to include page references. [CT]

³ The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the work of Roy Winstanley (1974, pp. 27–38).

The fifth of November 1768

The churchwardens' accounts for 1768 for the parish of Castle Cary show that on 5 November, the bellringers had been paid – as usual – six shillings and eight pence for ringing the bells to commemorate what Woodforde refers to in his entry for that day as

the day on which the Papists had contrived an hellish plot in the reign of King James the first, but by the Divine Hand of Providence fortunately discovered.

Woodforde preached a commemorative service at Castle Cary that day, as he was required to do, and – as we know from the rest of that entry – there was a bonfire that evening:

I dined, supped and spent the evening at Parsonage [meaning his father's house at Ansford]. The effigy of Justice Creed was had through the streets of Castle Cary this evening upon the Engine, and then had into the Park and burnt in a bonfire immediately before the Justice's House, for his putting the church wardens of Cary into Wells court, for not presenting James Clarke for making a Riot in the gallery at Cary church some few Sundays back. The whole parish are against the Justice, and they intend to assist the church wardens in carrying on the cause at Wells. The Justice is now at Lord Pawletts at Hinton.

Let me expand upon that rather difficult entry. The effigy-burning was in fact in support of the *churchwardens*, not of the singers. Justice Creed seems to have instituted proceedings in the consistory court at Wells cathedral (the lowest level of *ecclesiastical* court; this was not a civil law suit) because he felt that the churchwardens had both failed in their duty and affronted him, by not recording and bringing to the attention of the Archdeacon at his visitation, the riotous behaviour in the gallery of James Clarke. They had failed, as the term was, to *present* him. The bonfire was, of course, a routine celebration for that day, so much so that Woodforde might not have recorded it, other than for the scandalous behaviour of the people involved in making an effigy of Justice Creed and burning it in a direct imitation of the fate of Guy Fawkes. We should perhaps digress to recall at this point that we are looking here at events which took place only a handful of years before the anti-Catholic Gordon riots of 1780, when the symbolism of such a burning would not have been lost on anyone who witnessed it. Events such as these can only have been seen as a dreadful insult to 'Squire' Creed, who was after all a Justice of the Peace.

Poor Woodforde. A legal dispute in an ecclesiastical court involving both his closest friend, Cary Creed, and his cousin James Clarke (five years

younger than the diarist) who was one of the Cary singers and appears to have taken the leading role in the dispute.

Cary Creed

Some of the issues behind the insult may have been associated with Creed's status within the community; the validity (or otherwise) of that status as perceived by the people of the parish, and the fact that Creed had spent many years out of the parish.¹ Creed was indeed not a 'real' squire at least, not in the context of Castle Cary. He was the grandson of a previous incumbent of Castle Cary, John Creed, who had been the predecessor of Samuel Woodforde, the diarist's father, as vicar of Castle Cary.

He was the son of Cary Creed senior, whose occupation is unknown, but to whom Gibson refers as a member of the minor gentry, involved probably in trade rather than being a landowner. Cary Creed junior was probably well educated, but he did not go to university. He had worked in a government office and at the Court of the King's Bench; his 'autocratic and officious' manner had, in Gibson's opinion, been developed there.

He had also become acquainted with a rich and influential family: that of Earl Poulet, whom he served in a part-time capacity, probably as secretary, from the 1730s until the Earl's death in 1764, soon after which he retired to Castle Cary to live with his father. He appears to have acquired a modest degree of wealth from his employments and from two bequests, including one from Earl Poulet.

It has recently come to light that Creed did indeed become a 'squire', when he acquired the manor of Lovington, not far from Castle Cary, which would have entitled him to be called 'Squire' in that parish, soon after which he became a Justice of the Peace – probably with the assistance of Earl Poulet. So much for the man.

'A kind of Riot'

The events which, from the diary entries, appear to have precipitated the burning of Creed's effigy seem to have been those surrounding the behaviour of this group of people – including his cousin – to whom Woodforde always referred as the 'Cary singers', and the efforts of Squire Creed (and at least one other, as this particular 'bandwagon' developed momentum) to impose disci-

¹ For the following biographical information on Creed the writer is indebted to the unpublished research of Robin Gibson.

pline or control on this unruly group. Here is part of Woodforde's diary entry for 14 August 1768:

There was a kind of Riot this Afternoon in the gallery at Cary church, between James Clarke and Hoskins about sitting in the gallery, but it was just before I came into church, all quiet afterwards.

and the entry for 4 September 1768:

Justice Creed and Mr Hindley made a short visit this morning at Parsonage – Mr Creed desires that the door leading into the gallery in Cary church might be taking [sic] down on account of the Singers keeping out his Servant there this morning – Tom Davidge – The Singers have made disturbances before now and like to make more ...

So this was the root of the trouble: One Hoskins had tried to take a seat in the gallery and Creed had sent Tom Davidge to sit there, but what might have been the reason for this? Well, there is no further reference to Hoskins, but we might speculate that Davidge – as a mere servant of the Justice – may have been sent off to sit in the gallery rather than in Creed's pew-for-life (which, according to the churchwardens' accounts, was the 'first pew on the north side of the middle aisle, opposite the reading desk') as a way of publicly preserving the social differentiation of which Creed was evidently so conscious.

Was Creed perhaps sending Davidge to sit among the singers in a genuine attempt to suppress the unruly behaviour to which the young curate refers in the 4 September diary entry?

Was it merely a case of Davidge, being without a place to sit, being sent to sit in the gallery by his master (something which he could hardly refuse to do) and the singers resenting the presence of a 'non-singer' in a part of the church which they felt to be their own?

The churchwardens' accounts¹ provide a clue, because there seems indeed to have been some form of territorial dispute involved in the occupancy of the gallery. The disbursements recorded on 19 June 1768 are as follows:

Gave the men liquor for moving the organ	[£]0/3/-
James Clarke, for a lock, nails and the curtain hinges and one long brush	[£]0/13/5½
Mr Hadley for painting the Organ and partition	[£]0/15/6
Ditto for Gilding	[£]0/4/6

There is also a later reference, which, while it is admittedly out of sequence here, serves to make

the point that the organ was not only moved, it was moved *out of the gallery* altogether, as the churchwardens' accounts for 27 July 1809 reveal:

It is agreed that the remaining part of the organ be removed from the gallery, by which removal several seats or sittings will be added to the gallery, and do order the churchwardens to get it done as soon as possible.

An organ installed in a small parish church following 1695 would have been a tracker organ, perhaps with a common bass of thirteen notes or so, and with the pipework contained within what would have given the appearance of being a chamber organ. Rack's notes on the church confirm that the organ was indeed a small one, and contained entirely in the singers' gallery.

James Clarke

It does therefore seem that the singers, led by James Clarke, had succeeded in having the organ removed from the gallery, leaving behind that part of the casework which was built into the gallery.² The money which was paid to Mr Hadley for making 'a partition' and for painting and gilding was, as we know from later entries in the accounts referring to other work in the church in 1809, for work done on the organ after it had been moved down into the body of the church.

Further evidence, if it is required, is the fact that the churchwardens had paid £0/13/5½ to James Clarke for a lock, nails and curtain-hinges in order to be able to close off the gallery as and when the singers wished to do so. Later diary entries will show why we can confidently assert that the gallery was not merely partitioned down the middle; for the moment, please accept my assurance that we know this to have been the case, and that of the diarist, when he records that Creed and Hindley

wished that the door leading into the gallery in Cary church might be [taken] down.

It would also have been very odd for the churchwardens to be paying James Clarke for casual work done around the church. They did commission such work, both from tradesmen and from various of the poor when the vestry thought it necessary to lay on work, and the very detailed accounts which show what they paid out for such work – and to whom – never before or after included James Clarke. It would have been surprising if they ever had included his name, as he was not a tradesman.

I have already pointed out that he was the diarist's cousin (not only that, he was his nephew by

¹ Somerset County Archives M. 10970 1-5 and M. 10971 1-2.

² See note 2 on page 17. [CT]

marriage as well, as James Woodforde's mother and James Clarke's mother were half-sisters), but James Clarke was also a physician by profession, one of the last to qualify by apprenticeship¹ and who served under his father until 1 January 1767, as the diary points out. Clarke senior was a well-respected physician with a national reputation as an inoculist, using Dinsdale's famous method, who maintained a successful hospital for fashionable people under inoculation against smallpox. Woodforde's diary shows, in an entry only a few weeks after James Clarke's apprenticeship had expired, that James, to whom the diarist never refers as 'Doctor Clarke', was already working as a physician:

I was bled this morning by Mr James Clarke, and had two ounces of blood taken from me, for which I gave him 2/6d.

N.B. My blood was very rich and, therefore, proper to be bled.

James Clarke, then, hardly needed to turn his hand to a bit of carpentry, unless – as in this case – there was an urgent need to do so on principle.

More problems

It wasn't long before events came to a head again; on 11 September 1768 Woodforde records:

The singers in Castle Cary church kept out Mr Creed's man again from coming into the gallery – Mr Creed therefore is determined to seek for redress – Mr Creed and Mr Hindley made a visit to the parsonage this morning.

Creed was obviously very angry, though the cordial relationship between Woodforde and Creed continued for the time being, as the following day's diary entry showed:

I dined, supped and spent the evening at Justice Creed's, with Him, his father and Mr Hindley.

Two days after this, there is another visit to the parsonage. This time the diarist feels compromised; the threat of legal action has almost become a reality and he is torn between his loyalty to his friend Creed and what he knows to be the strong local support for the churchwardens; Woodforde's anxiety is revealed in this incoherent entry for 14 September 1768:

Mr Hindley and Justice Creed called at the Parsonage this evening in their chair to ask me to Dinner tomorrow to talk about going to Wells with them Friday concerning the gallery work to wait on the Bishop, but I shall not go (I believe) nor interfere at all concerning it but to live peaceably with all men. It is a little unreasonable to desire it, as I must then fly in the face of almost all my parishioners. Great and many are the Divisions in Castle Cary – almost

irreconcilable – Send us peace O Lord, with Thee all things are possible.

Needless to say, he continued to dine at the Justice's house; twice in the next three days – though he continued to resist the pressure to go with Hindley and Creed to Wells.

By 1 November, Creed had carried out his threat to bring an action in the consistory court at Wells. The diarist writes that:

they are cited to appear the 9th instant for not presenting the last presentation some particular people for making disturbances in Cary church & I am really sorry that there is so much likelihood of Endless Quarrels in the town of Castle Cary ...

The case was not heard on 9 November, but, under the firm conviction that it would be, the scandalous events of the evening of 5 November went ahead in the way that I have already mentioned.

Peace and goodwill?

By December, Woodforde and Creed were hardly on speaking terms. As Woodforde said on 11 December:

N.B. Justice Creed was at church and behaved very shy to me.

Christmas came without further mention in the diary of the pending legal action. On 24 December:

It being Christmas Eve we had the New Singers of Castle Cary this evening at Parsonage and they having been at great expense in learning to sing, my Father and myself gave them double that we used to, and therefore instead of one shilling we each gave 2/-.

Why the mention of 'New Singers' and their interest in learning to sing? To understand this entry we have to look back in the diary to well before the dispute in question; to 1764, in fact, when the usual Christmas Eve entry read:

the new singers came very late this evening and they sung a Christmas carol and an anthem and they had cyder as usual and 2/-. The old singers did not come at all, and I have heard that they have given it over.

So one group of singers had replaced another, and, it appears, had gone to the trouble of actually learning to sing! Not only that, but they were being paid money to do so. We learn later in the diary that a singing teacher was involved, one Hooper, doubtless one of the peripatetic kind often associated with psalmody singers.

Neither the diary nor the churchwardens' accounts reveal the reason for the removal of the organ from the gallery; allow me therefore to

speculate in the absence of evidence, though I should point out that later evidence shows that although the organ might have been unused, it did not need to be removed simply to provide more space in the gallery.

I might go so far as to suggest that – for the new Cary singers – the organ might have been something associated with the *old* Cary singers, and therefore worthy of disposal, given the new learning which they had acquired from Hooper the singing-master. This would be – you might argue – a conclusion too far, were it not for the fact that we know that the man who seemed now to be the leader of the Cary singers, James Clarke, played the bass viol, a most suitable instrument with which to provide the bass part.

Back to the diary ... and on 15 March 1768, the year of the dispute, we find the reference we need:

Justice Creed made me a visit this morning, and my Brother gave him a song, whilst James Clarke performed on his Base [sic] Viol ...

It may indeed be that James Clarke is doing here what contemporary accounts tell us other groups of singers did, attempting to establish a kind of authority – a dominance, if you will – which they sought to exercise within the church, though outside the local church hierarchy. Granted, not all of them did it by physically annexing a portion of the church, but I am confident that I can demonstrate with later extracts from the diary that this particular group of singers, by means of what we would now call industrial action, sought to exercise their authority in the church.

A solution at the George

The new year – 1769 – began quietly. The parish clerk, David Maby, dined with Woodforde at the parsonage on 1 January, and the rest of that month passed quietly, with Woodforde continuing to record in his diary the services he conducted at Castle Cary and Ansford. The problems had not gone away, however, and on both 7 and 9 February, the diarist was called to meetings at the George Inn.

Dr Clarke [James Clarke's father, you will recall] spent part of the afternoon at Parsonage. He came to the parsonage to desire my father or me to meet some gentlemen at the George Inn at Cary this evening to endeavour to compromise matters with regard to a law-suit that is now carrying on between Justice Creed on the one part and the churchwardens of Cary on the other; accordingly I went with the Doctor down to the George as my father would not and there I supped etc. Dr Clarke, Mr Pew, Mr Tom Burge, Uncle Tom [the diarist's paternal uncle, also a clergyman], Mr White, Painter Clarke and the

two church wardens, Seth Burge and David Maby were all present.

It was proposed that as the gallery at Cary church was large enough to contain between 3 and 4 score people and the singers not being above 30 in number that there should be a partition made in the gallery for the singers, and the other part open to any body, and also for Mr Creed to pay his own costs and the parish the other, but the churchwardens would not come into it, therefore hostilities are likely to be very great indeed.

This was not, of course, the partition which Mr Hadley had been paid to make; that was in June of the previous year and related to moving the organ down into the body of the church, and this passage also shows that the materials – nails, a lock and hinges – which had been supplied to James Clarke had indeed been used to close off the gallery and not merely to partition it.

At the second of these meetings, agreement was reached in the terms set out in the previous entry:

which proposals [as the diarist wrote] will I hope be agreeable to each contending party, which will prevent much strife ...

though Justice Creed was not at the meeting. As events yet to take place in the church will reveal, it is likely that Mr Burge senior¹ acted on Creed's behalf.

The matter was settled then, and no doubt everyone felt greatly relieved. The dispute had been a serious matter, one which had threatened to destabilise some of the most important relationships in this relatively small community. The churchwardens' accounts for the period show how seriously they took the dispute. We don't know what Creed had to spend in terms of the entering of his plea in the consistory court, but the churchwardens visited Wells three times during February 1769, paying on the first occasion 8/- in travelling expenses and 3/6 for the opinion of a proctor (someone who manages causes in ecclesiastical courts); and on the second occasion £2/19/8 for his legal advice and 4/6 to have the apparitor of the court send a letter on their behalf.

I should mention here that the case was never fully heard. It appears to have been referred on at least one occasion, and the out-of-court terms of settlement agreed by all parties before it was presented. Roy Winstanley is of the opinion that a preliminary case was heard on 9 November 1768, though the churchwardens' accounts show

¹ This is Mr *William* Burge; that is, the individual mentioned earlier as joining in as the bandwagon gained momentum, and not the Seth Burge who was churchwarden.

no disbursements in respect of travel to Wells at that time. It is, of course, possible that one of the undated entries in the accounts was a reimbursement for travel to that hearing. By 12 February 1769, Woodforde was happily able to record in his diary that:

Mr Tidcomb [the schoolmaster] and his boys sat in part of the gallery and the singers in the other part – and very harmonious –

The diarist is not, of course, referring to the musical output of the singers when he says that all was very harmonious. In fact he seldom commented on his singers' standard of performance in the 44-year period of the diary.

The aftermath

Sad to say, Woodforde's happiness was to be short-lived, for the singers were yet to exact that retribution which they felt to be their due.

Before this, however, and only two weeks after the agreement reached at the George Inn, there was another small territorial dispute involving the William Burge who had acted on Creed's behalf. This is Woodforde's entry for 19 February 1769:

No singing at Cary on old Mr Burge's account, as reported he sending persons up into the singing part of the gallery, which was lately agreed on the contrary.

The singers were back the following week, though, and in venomous form. Poor Woodforde had to record on 26 February:

The 36th psalm was sung this afternoon in Cary church by the singers – done out of pique to old William Burge – old Mr Burge concerns himself too much with the singers.

You may be familiar with the Tate and Brady New Version of Psalm 36, but for those who can't bring it to mind 'literatim', here is venom at its best:

My crafty foe with flattering art
 his wicked purpose would disguise,
 But reason whispers to my heart,
 no fear of God before his eyes.
 He soothes himself, retir'd from sight;
 secure he thinks his treach'rous game,
 Till his dark plots, exposed to light,
 their false contriver brand with shame.
 His wakeful malice spends the night
 in forging his accurst designs,
 His obstinate ungen'rous spite
 no execrable means declines.

This action, too, had its consequences in several meetings, in which even Woodforde's father, who had thus far managed to stay clear of the controversy, got involved.

What the singers may have seen as a victory over Justice Creed – and perhaps as a victory over

all of those who did not enjoy what must now have seemed to be the invulnerable status of a Cary singer – seems to have imbued them with a confidence which they seem not to have had previously, and, to the diarist's displeasure, they begin to try to dictate matters in the church, during services. Things came to a head on 12 November 1769:

I read prayers and preached this morning at Castle Cary church – I was disturbed this morning at Cary church by the singers – I sent my clerk some time back by the Cary singers to desire that they would not sing the responses in the communion service, which they complied with for several Sundays, but this morning after the first commandment they had the impudence to sing the response, and therefore I spoke to them out of my desk, to say, and not sing the responses, which they did after, and at other places they sung as usual – .

NB. There was no singing this afternoon at Ansford. The singers in the gallery were John Coleman the Baker, Jonathan Croker, William Pew junior, Thomas Penny, William Ashford, Hooper the singing-master, James Lucas, Peter, Mr Francis' man, Mr Melliar's man, James, Farmer Hix's son, Robert Sweets and the two young Dunfords.

This must have thoroughly upset Woodforde. He was an Oxford man, who had little time for dissenters (he says of a group of such people at a wedding 'the whole set are rank Presbyterians') and had he lived into the mid-19th century (he died on 1 January 1803) I am certain from many references in the diary that he would have espoused Tractarianism very cheerfully indeed.

As an aside, you may recall an almost exactly similar instance from John Wesley's diary, some twenty years earlier, when, on Sunday 4 February 1750, he records:

I preached at Hayes ... the church was filled ... and all behaved well but the singers, whom I therefore reprov'd before the congregation, and some of them were ashamed.
 (Rainbow, 1995)

The singers

I mentioned earlier in this paper that this Woodforde diary entry is the only one in which we are told the names of some of the Cary singers. We know that there were up to 30 of them and that James Clarke was among their number, but they are otherwise anonymous. This is also the entry that confirms the activity of a singing-master, the Hooper to whom Woodforde referred as having taught them singing.

So who were these singers? The diary allows us to identify some of them – and Mr Winstanley has kindly filled some gaps in my knowledge:

John Coleman is obvious; he is the baker in Cary, though there is another John Coleman, who was at one time parish clerk and therefore known as Clark Coleman.

Jonathan Croker is either the publican who kept the Royal Oak in Castle Cary, or a member of that family.

William Pew junior was the son of a successful tradesman, merchant and carrier in Cary, the man who, in a memorable diary entry of Woodforde's at the height of the gallery dispute:

brought me a dozen more spitting basins from Oxford by his waggon.

Thomas Penny was the brother of the clergyman Robin Penny, who was Samuel Woodforde's curate for a time.

William Ashford is identified only as a resident of Castle Cary.

Hooper we already know of. He never appears in the diary again.

James Lucas is, like Croker, either the publican of that name, from the Angel Inn of which Edward Rack spoke well, or of that family.

The rest, apart from the two who we can assume to be schoolboys, are servants.

I would refer again at this point to John Beresford, the editor of the 1935 edition of the diaries, and point to what he refers to as one of the characteristics of the 18th century – the good fellowship between different classes and sections of society and the relative absence of that snob-bishness which was so much to characterise the next century. We have here a west gallery quire comprising (inter alia) one physician, one baker, two publicans, one carrier and several domestic servants. It is not possible to say who among them fomented such strife (though it's an interesting point to which I'd like to return) but two weeks later they again stayed away from church. One of Woodforde's 'NBs' again, on 26 November 1769:

NB. No singing this morning, the singers not being at church, they being highly affronted with me at what I lately had done.

Note, please, that he does not refer to singers being at church but not putting in an appearance in the gallery; *no singers were present* in the church at all, implying a planned co-ordinated absence.

This was not enough for the singers, though, for the diary entry for 17 December 1769 shows that they were not yet sated. Woodforde in the diary entry refers only to 'some people' as the target of the attack; I am sure that we all know by now who they mean, though the first verse of the metrical psalm shows that his choice of words might hide his own offended dignity and reveal the singers'

opinion of Woodforde himself in the context of the gallery dispute:

The singers at Cary did not please me this afternoon by singing the 12th psalm – New Version – reflecting on some People –

Again, for those who don't recall it, here is the full savour of the sweet revenge of the Cary singers:

Since godly men decay, O Lord,
do then my cause defend,
For scarce these wretched days afford
one just and faithful friend.

One neighbour now can scarce believe
what t'other does impart,
With flattering lips they all deceive
and with a double heart.

But lips that with deceit abound
can never prosper long,
God's righteous vengeance will confound
the proud blaspheming tongue.

In vain these foolish boasters say
'Our tongues are sure our own;
With doubtful words we'll still betray,
and be controul'd by none'.

But God, who hears the suff'ring poor,
and their oppression knows,
Will soon arise and give them best,
in spite of all their foes.

Then shall the wicked be perplexed,
nor know what way to fly;
When those whom they despis'd and vex'd,
shall be advanced on high.

There is, as I am sure you will agree, little room for misinterpretation there ...

An end to the troubles

This was to be the end of the 'trouble in the gallery'. After this point in the diary, Woodforde only very infrequently refers to the singers in the galleries of his churches at Castle Cary, Ansford or Weston Longeville and when he does, it is usually in favourable terms, the performance of some neighbouring quires during his Norfolk years receiving quite favourable comment.

Let me conclude with some general reflections on what Woodforde's diaries have told us:

In the case of all the four quires with which Woodforde came into contact – Castle Cary, Ansford, and the quires of Mattishall and Tuddenham (who would arrive from time to time at his church during the Weston Longville years) – there is evidence that their arrival was a matter of their choice, and with the incumbent often unaware of their intention to sing on that day. Their absences, too, appear to have been well co-ordinated. The organised disobedience of the Cary singers reinforces the impression that they

were independent of the church itself and felt themselves to be above or beyond the control of the clergy.

The churchwardens' accounts for Castle Cary for the whole period from 1708 to the mid 19th century show no disbursements whatever in respect of the Cary singers, other than the materials used by James Clark to block off the gallery; no instruments were bought, no reeds or strings renewed, no manuscript books or printed editions of music were bought. This is in contrast with the bellringers of the church, whose every need – right down to polish and ropes – was supplied and recorded in the accounts. In addition, the bellringers were paid a specific sum for each ringing on visitations, presentations and feast days. No payment to any singer is recorded in the churchwardens' accounts.

Finally, the epilogue. No good 18th- or 19th-century story was complete without a truncated ending, happy or not. The diaries cannot tell us what became of the Cary singers after 1769, because Woodforde moved permanently to his Norfolk living in May 1776. Cary Creed, the unwitting villain of the piece, died in 1775 and was buried in Cary Church. His death was a blow to James Woodforde. The lifetime interest in Creed's pew in Cary church was sold to his executors for £5/5/-, one of whom, curiously enough, was William Pew, the father of one of Cary singers, and the other John Tidcombe, the schoolmaster.

