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**The Gloucester Music Meeting of 1781: glimpses of Gloucester  
and the triennial music meetings in the letters of Mary Yorke**

by A. E. Jones  
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## The Gloucester Music Meeting of 1781: glimpses of Gloucester and the triennial music meetings in the letters of Mary Yorke

By ANTHEA JONES

The Hon. James Yorke was one of the two Stewards of the Gloucester music meeting in 1781; James Dutton Esq.<sup>1</sup> was the other. When the meeting was being planned, James Yorke was bishop of Gloucester, but a month before the three-day festival was to take place he was offered the see of Ely. He had only been at Gloucester two years and was most reluctant to move, as the position of bishop of Gloucester had enabled him and his family to spend time in their own home at Forthampton Court, a few miles north of the city.<sup>2</sup> As he wrote to his brother, Lord Hardwicke, 'Here my business and domestic concerns were so much within my ideas of convenience and pleasure and so concentrated, that I cannot without reluctance give in to the propriety of taking advantage of blind fortune's favours'.<sup>3</sup> Earlier, he had been bishop of St. David's for five years, and dean of Lincoln since shortly before his marriage in 1762. He did accept the more senior mitre of Ely, 'kissing hands' for the bishopric on 13 July, and going to London again just as the music meeting began. He left his wife, Mary (Fig. 1), to take his place as the ceremonial lynchpin; James Dutton's wife was ill and unable to attend.

James Yorke was the youngest son of Philip, the first earl of Hardwicke, who had established himself both politically and economically as a Whig magnate through his great ability as a lawyer; he had taken his title from an estate in Gloucestershire,<sup>4</sup> and later purchased the suitably grand estate of Wimpole in Cambridgeshire. Mary Yorke's background was less notable. Little is known of the early years of her father, Isaac Maddox, but academic aptitude led to university and then to a career in the Church. He was given a prebend in Chichester by the bishop and in 1731 married a well-to-do lady, Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Price of Hayes in Middlesex. One writer in 1806 said that 'Dr Maddox, to show his freedom in love, ran away with the prelate's niece'.<sup>5</sup> Maddox was made bishop of St. Asaph in 1736 and then of Worcester in 1743. At his death in 1759 Mary was his only surviving child and heir to his Forthampton estate. She was considered a surprising bride for one of Lord Hardwicke's sons, but 'a very deserving girl'.<sup>6</sup> Mary was probably 18 when she was married in 1762, while James was 32.<sup>7</sup> It proved to be a long and happy marriage.

From the time of her marriage, Mary Yorke wrote regularly to her sister-in-law Jemima, Marchioness Grey, whenever the two were not living close enough to converse in person. Jemima was the wife of James Yorke's oldest brother, Philip; her title of Marchioness Grey had been inherited within a few weeks of her marriage in 1740 together with her country 'seat' at Wrest Park, in Bedfordshire, and her husband became the second earl of Hardwicke in 1764. Jemima preserved a great many of Mary's letters. One in particular, written during and just after the music meeting of 1781, gave Lady Grey a delightful and lively account of her life during that week, and is printed here in its entirety, together with a programme of the 'Miscellaneous Concert' on the Friday evening, 31 August, only the second such programme to be found.<sup>8</sup> Lady Grey's daughter, Amabel, known to Mary as 'Lady Bell', also preserved Mary's letters; Amabel



Fig. 1. A miniature portrait held by family tradition to be of Mary Yorke. A lock of thick fair hair at the back suggests the subject was young, countering the impression given by the conventional powdering. The miniature has been dated to *c.* 1790 but, as Mary was then 45 years old, it must be earlier. *Reproduced by kind permission of John Yorke.*

was just seven years younger than Mary and married Lord Polwarth in 1772. The account of the 1781 Gloucester meeting sent to Amabel was briefer but adds to the overall impression of the event. The only surviving letter from Mary to her husband was written after the meeting; it is affectionate and shows also her competence in the business of the Stewardship. Like the correspondence of other 18th- and 19th-century wives, it belies the stereotype woman who had no active role in affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Altogether nearly a thousand of Mary Yorke's letters survive and are in the Wrest Park archive.<sup>10</sup> A certain number were written from Gloucester and from Forthampton Court (Fig. 2),



Fig. 2. A watercolour of Forthampton Court *c.* 1860. Mary and James Yorke built the pediment over the front entrance; the colonnade was added by her grandson, Joseph Yorke, *c.* 1860 (C. Aslet, 'Forthampton Court, Gloucestershire', *Country Life*, 27 September and 11 October 1979). *Reproduced by kind permission of John Yorke.*

which the family visited most summers. A selection, published for the first time, relates particularly to triennial music meetings at Gloucester and at Worcester, and contains glimpses of Gloucester as seen from the bishop's palace. Nearly all these letters were written to Lady Grey, and the exceptions are indicated before the letters concerned. Punctuation and paragraphing have been modernised as far as seems necessary. A few capital letters have been retained where they add emphasis to the text, although Mary Yorke used them much more frequently than is now customary and not necessarily at the beginning of sentences. Spelling has also been modernised. Most abbreviations have been expanded but a few, frequently used, have been retained to give more of the flavour of the original texts. These are: Bp (Bishop); Ld (Lord); Ld H (Lord Hardwicke); and Ld P (Lord Polwarth). The courteous acknowledgements of letters received and hopes for good health and happiness are generally omitted. A very few words inserted by the author are in square brackets.

*Gloucester and Worcester Music Meetings*

Music was one of the interests which bound Mary and James Yorke together. Family concerts were arranged, and probably the seven children learnt instruments; this is the implication of a letter Mary wrote in September 1793 to Lady Grey about an impending visit to Wrest Park.

Tuesday morning [17 September 1793]<sup>11</sup>

[Ely House]<sup>12</sup>

Dear Madam

I have just received the honour of your Ladyship's kind letter. We look forward with great pleasure to the reaching Wrest on next Tuesday evening...The assortment of music has long been packed but to our great mortification our flute is not with us. We left him at Gloucester from whence with Mr. John Pelham he was going to take what both Mothers thought but a foolish Tour in these short days — to Monmouth up the Wye etc. for which purpose they had furnished themselves with Gilpin,<sup>13</sup> a tin case for drawing materials etc., and were to write constant accounts at night to their friends, with all the form of people of taste, but with what pleasure the weather must determine. Philip's excuse to me was that this was the only opportunity, as when in Orders he should think himself, especially at first, less at liberty to ramble ...

Philip, the 'flute', was the sixth child; he was ordained the following June. The three oldest of the Yorkes' children, Margaret, Charles and Joseph, are mentioned in the context of the 1781 music meeting, and Lady Mary Grey, Amabel's younger sister, also seems to have had a strong interest in music.

When she was 14 years old, Mary had obviously enjoyed the music meeting of 1758 held in Worcester. She referred to her happy memories in a letter to the Marchioness Grey following another Worcester meeting in 1770.

20 September 1770<sup>14</sup>

Forthampton

Many thanks Dear Madam for your Ladyship's last kind letter; I believe it will be impossible for you to guess at the reason for my having so long deferred my acknowledgements, and what it is can have taken up so much of my time. Don't be surprised when I tell you that Mr. Yorke<sup>15</sup> and myself spent the greatest part of last week at the Worcester music meeting in the midst of noise and bustle and at my particular request. It will be asked what could tempt me to take so violent a step, and to say the truth I feel myself rather at a loss for an answer; only that I remembered having been very happy there just twelve years ago and knew I should have an opportunity of meeting with many old acquaintances who I could not see any where else, and I flattered myself that as the music is always remarkably good it might prove no disagreeable amusement to Mr. Yorke. I deserved the disappointment however that I met with. I ought to have recollected that 12 years

makes a considerable alteration in one's taste for Balls, and diversions, and as for my friends that I expected to see, most of them were either dead, or married into some other Country, the remainder so altered that I hardly knew them (not to mention some few who did not know me).

The musical part of the entertainment was indeed beyond my expectation. Guardini (who was one of our principal performers) declared that the oratorios were much better performed than in London, which by the by was not saying much in their favour. We had a most delightful Voice from Bath, her name was Linley,<sup>16</sup> she is now but 16, but if she lives will be universally admired, as an English singer she is incomparable, but Mr. Ward's<sup>17</sup> opinion was that she rather wanted taste in her manner of singing the Italian Airs. Tenducci (another of our Voices) was much admired by those that could hear, which were very few in so large a room, I did not think he was taken so much notice of as he deserved, it is pity his voice is not stronger. Fischer upon the haut-boy gained great applause as did Guardini himself.<sup>18</sup> In the course of three days and nights we had: three oratorios and a concert besides Purcell's and Handel's *Te Deums* which were performed in the church, as indeed was the *Messiah*. The whole entertainment ends very whimsically; the morning after the last Ball all the company assemble upon a large Bowling Green out of the town very pleasantly situated just above the Severn, where they breakfast, and dance French dances upon the grass. I have been told it is a very pleasing scene but I was in too much haste to get home again to be an eyewitness of it.

*Messiah* had become the accepted centrepiece of the music meetings, and the various performers mentioned were regularly engaged.

Mary Yorke did not attend the Worcester meeting in 1773, but she still sent her sister-in-law an account as related to her by a Forthampton neighbour. It may be wondered whether the original tale was presented quite so humorously.

21 September 1773<sup>19</sup>

Forthampton

Having this morning parted with my three boys who are all set out in the rain for school<sup>20</sup> I am consoling myself Dear Madam at your expense by bestowing a little of my dullness upon you and thanking you for the last kind favour, which brought so melancholy an account of the weather in Bedfordshire ...

I must now proceed to give a little account of Worcester music meeting which my neighbours Dowdeswell<sup>21</sup> tell me I ought to have been at, as the music was finer than ever by the addition of an organ in the concert room. Mrs. Sheridan performed wonders, behaved very modestly and sat with the performers, her sister<sup>22</sup> improves, and the women chorus was charming, in short all agree it was much beyond any thing one can hear in London. A great deal of good company<sup>23</sup> and the collection clear for the charity £500,<sup>24</sup> Ld Sandwich exceedingly pleased, and his behaviour at church so pious that he always knelt when other people stood. Ld Mountmorris a little attentive to our great fortune, Miss Vernon. Mr. Hamilton (single speech) I heard no anecdotes of. The handsome Mr. Gresley just returned from Paris, has forgot his own language and shrugs up his shoulders with the true *bon ton*, he was intended for his rich cousin Miss Gresley, and as most of his fortune was personal he went abroad to make that complete in order to lay it at her feet, but unfortunately for his father (not the Lady) the air of Paris has so entirely changed his sentiments that the very idea of a rich cousin is shocking to him. As for poor Ld Coventry he has to be sure been particularly unfortunate for as he was flourishing about and doing the honours of Croome to the Lady Carpenters etc. a few days before the meeting, in jumping over a rivulet he broke a small tendon in his heel and has been so lame as not to be able to move but in a wheel chair or with a crutch, a very mortifying circumstance when he had so many fine things to say to so many fine Ladies, not one of whom of the younger sort had ever the charity to sit by him. The Supper and private Ball at his own house was said to be very elegant, the Gallery which is really a fine and pleasing room was lighted up, and the Supper which consisted of fruits, ice, cold things and only hot soups, looked pretty and reached from one end to the other; they sat down about 50 to it, and some gentlemen at a table in the bow window; after supper they danced again in the Saloon till morning ...

P.S. It has rained all this morning without ceasing, we had a few wet days in the holiday time which is always a misfortune but the Dean [hit] upon an expedient which made them pass better than they otherwise would, namely he set the four eldest to act some scenes in the Drummer, so that getting of parts, making of dresses, conjurers, beards etc., rehearsing and contriving, employed many idle hours after their business was done; they entertained us old Folks not a little, and the theatre was crowded with our own servants, and some of the farmer's family who lived just by. My son James was admirable as the gardener. And what with plenty of Prologues, Epilogues, Hornpipes, Minuets and Allemandes between the acts our entertainment lasted a considerable time. Pray tell Lady Mary her boy<sup>25</sup> was a performer but failed in his part for he was intended to make one in the concluding country dance, but all of a sudden in the middle of right hand and left took to his heels and run behind the scenes, to see where the music came from.

Two years later, in 1775, Mary and her husband went to the music meeting at Gloucester; by this time James Yorke had become bishop of St. David's and Mary wrote to the Marchioness Grey immediately on their return from Wales.

5 October [1775]<sup>26</sup>

Lincoln

Here we are Dear Madam; we have been arrived about four hours after a pleasant journey of two days and a half ...

As a proof of the Bp and my own spirit, I think our getting up at seven one morning and driving in the rain to the Gloucester music meeting was not amiss, though at the same time I must add it would have showed a great want of spirit if we had not taken that little trouble for the finest musical entertainment that I believe was ever heard in England, and I would have gone only to have heard the single symphony in the *Messiah* before 'As the shepherds were feeding their Flocks by Night'. The softness of the music, and distinct return made by the gothic arches of that fine Cathedral was something that the performances in London give one a very faint idea of. The Band was the largest that has been had, the Voices the best that could be procured though Ruzini (or something -ini)<sup>27</sup> but ill-supplied the place of Mrs. Sheridan. It was said he performed better the night before in an oratorio of Guardini's, I suppose out of compliment to him, as he was present and led the Band; Norris<sup>28</sup> did his best but was much out shone by a member of the Choir whose name I forget; when I was there I enquired after Mrs. Warburton (who is indeed much to be pitied) and the Bp. They were absent and she tolerably well, happily for him poor man, at present, he is not capable of feeling his misfortune in its full force; and there is nothing could be a more happy event than his following his son to the grave, but of that there is no immediate prospect.

William Warburton had been bishop of Gloucester since 1759; he did not die for another four years, then providing the vacancy that James Yorke briefly filled. His health and memory had been declining for some years before his only son died in 1775, hence Mary's observations in this letter.<sup>29</sup>

The following year, 1776, Amabel was sent a description of the Worcester music meeting.

To Lady Amabel Polwarth

Sunday [September 1776]<sup>30</sup>

[Forthampton]

I will not delay acknowledging Dear Lady Bell's very obliging letter and the kind manner in which she mentions her stay at this place, which gave the Bp and myself so much pleasure; ... we have had uninterrupted fine weather ever since: even the day you left us was a good one, and we rejoiced in it for the sake of the travellers... [*She proposed other points for sightseeing on a future occasion, including Worcester and its manufactory*]...I must add (indeed you know by experience) your

friends are much more accessible on that side, than over vile Gloucester Turnpikes; having mentioned Worcester I should proceed to inform you what was done there.

... I spent one day and night in the hurry of the Worcester music meeting much to my amusement, and as it is always the custom to enlarge upon the charms of any diversion to those who have missed being at it, so I may tell you (though really with truth) that you never heard an oratorio so performed in your life (no not even at Ld Sandwich's) and the whole entirely conducted (both the morning's and evening's entertainment) to suit your taste; for the Chorus, of women, were excellent, especially in a semi-chorus in the *Messiah*... The company had been brilliant but were many of them gone the night I was there, especially Ld and Lady North and family who went that morning... I was invited to dine and sup at the Palace, but chose only the latter which we did quite at our ease, between the Concert and Ball while a long pool at Commerce was going on for some pounds in the Drawing Room. Happily it was not genteel to return to the Ball that night, so I went quietly to bed and returned home next morning. You will see in the Papers list of the company perhaps, so will not enlarge upon that subject, but inform you out of pure compassion that Rauzzini did not shine at all in any of the oratorio songs, however he made full amends in the Concert the last night, where his music was some of it of his own composing and perfectly suited to his voice. I happened to sit close by him and really thought it delightful. I have only to add that the whole was well conducted and Lady Plymouth did the honours of the Rooms at night, and took care we should have places in the morning.

*James Yorke becomes Bishop of Gloucester*

In 1779 James Yorke became bishop of Gloucester, and Mary Yorke hastened to tell Jemima about the ceremonies and her new palace. The second such letter was written from Mary and James's London home in Upper Brook Street.

23 July 1779<sup>31</sup>

Forthampton

I have deferred making my acknowledgements Dear Madam for your last kind favour (and likewise an account of our safe arrival here) from day to day in hopes of having had it in my power to give your Ladyship a little information respecting our new habitation etc. at Gloucester at the same time, but Mrs. Warburton being still at the Palace and a trip over consequently not very practicable for me, I grow impatient to enquire after my friends...

Were it not for the kind interest you take Dear Madam in all that belongs to your friends, I do not apprehend you would have any loss in my not being able to send a particular account of house, gardens etc. at Gloucester. A first visit there will be attended with very different circumstances from my first visit to the Palace of St David's! And what ever comfort the owners may find in the contrast, the former is certainly less capable of furnishing amusement to a correspondent than the latter. The large old Cathedral, though, I find is too well known to admit of any description, and the house, fit only to live in, and not ruinous enough to set for its picture like that at St David's. The front I am told is that of a Grecian Temple which seems to me a little inconstant in Order with the first room we are to enter, namely a gothic Hall. This I am informed makes a good dining parlour, but I think I should be tempted to beg the favour of the house door to remove itself out of it, at least at dinner time, or in cold weather. Up stairs I learn is another very good room, but that there was no way to it except through the Bp's study and that some years ago, when Mrs. Warburton graciously made a great Drum for the Ladies her neighbours, his Lordship not choosing to make one of the party, nor caring to quit his study, submitted to have a large screen placed before him to conceal him from the company passing and repassing. Had the screen fallen the *éclaircissement* would have been almost surprising (though more decorous) as that in the *School for Scandal!* For fear of such an accident I think I shall [?] not venture upon this mode of shutting up the Master, when I open the house.

29 July 1779<sup>32</sup>

Upper Brook Street

...[*Removal to Forthampton is imminent*]...We do not propose to stop at Gloucester in our way as it will be an easy drive any morning between breakfast and dinner! a pleasing reflection! and though I hope I shall never be so ungrateful to forget the constant civilities I met with in one of the most beautiful Countries, yet there are certain domestic comforts and ideas of being an hundred and twenty miles nearer one's children and friends to be thrown into the opposite scale of happiness that will make it greatly preponderate; in short though we have many reasons to be thankful that we have been in Wales, we have still more to rejoice that we are not going there again, nor can I conclude this subject without repeating our thanks to those friends who so kindly entered into our feelings upon it. I believe all the forms will be gone through in about a month when the Bp will again return to London to finish the ceremony. The day before he and his brother of St David's kissed the King's hand the papers mentioned Mr. Gibbon the historian as the new Ld of Trade and therefore likely to attend at St James's upon the same ceremony, the Bishop could not help thinking it would be rather an odd circumstance for him to be supported by two bishops. However he did not appear, and now they say he is not to be the man.<sup>33</sup> All public news is conveyed to your Ladyship much better by the Papers than by my pen, and private I know none, London is now emptying every day...

29 August [1779]<sup>34</sup>

[Forthampton]

... I snatched one day last week from my nursing confinement to visit our house at Gloucester and found it so good a one that it emboldens me in the Bishop's and my own name to say that we shall be very happy to receive Lord Hardwicke and Lady Grey and Lady Mary there whenever they will honour us with their company. We shall be putting furniture into [it] in the spring, at present there is very little more than a few pictures of Bishop Benson, and one of Mr. Yorke that Mrs. Warburton left in the house for us as a present as likewise one of the late bishop. The Gallery indeed is ornamented with prints of many of the bishop's connections, Ld H, Sir Joseph Jekyl<sup>35</sup> etc. The Chapel with the painted window which I am told cost £300 is really elegant, and the great Hall makes an admirable parlour this hot weather, it is ten feet shorter than your Ladyship's long drawing room in London, but nearly 30 feet wide, well stuccoed, ceiling very tidy and a fine large window at one end with coats of arms of painted glass, chiefly Bishop Benson's arms, which appear twenty times about the house. The view from the drawing rooms is pleasanter than one would expect in a town.

Martin Benson, bishop of Gloucester between 1735 and 1752, had altered the palace, adding the ornate classical portico to the south end of the great hall described by Mary in a previous letter as so out of keeping. Horace Walpole visited the palace the year after Benson died and referred to the portico as 'pert'. He also recorded that William Price the younger had painted the chapel window for Benson. One of the many glass panels of Benson's arms was rescued when the palace was demolished in 1860 and placed in the new palace, now the King's School.<sup>36</sup>

4 September [1779]<sup>37</sup>

Lincoln

... Your Ladyship enquired what is become of our predecessor Mrs. Warburton! She is retired on a handsome fortune to her house at Prior Park<sup>38</sup> very well and in pretty good spirits. One day before she went being seized with the migraine in a fine Lady way she laid violent hands on a picture of herself which Fame says was left (by mistake perhaps) by the late Bp to his successor, it was dressed rather fancifully, and she was found one day in tears over it, cutting out the head saying she did not love to be talked of, and therefore would not leave her likeness to put people in mind of her. By accident one of our servants who was shown the house before she left it, amongst other particulars mentioned having seen a picture of Mrs. Warburton without a head. She afterwards proceeded to carve out the arms, but the fragments were I believe all burnt, I never found



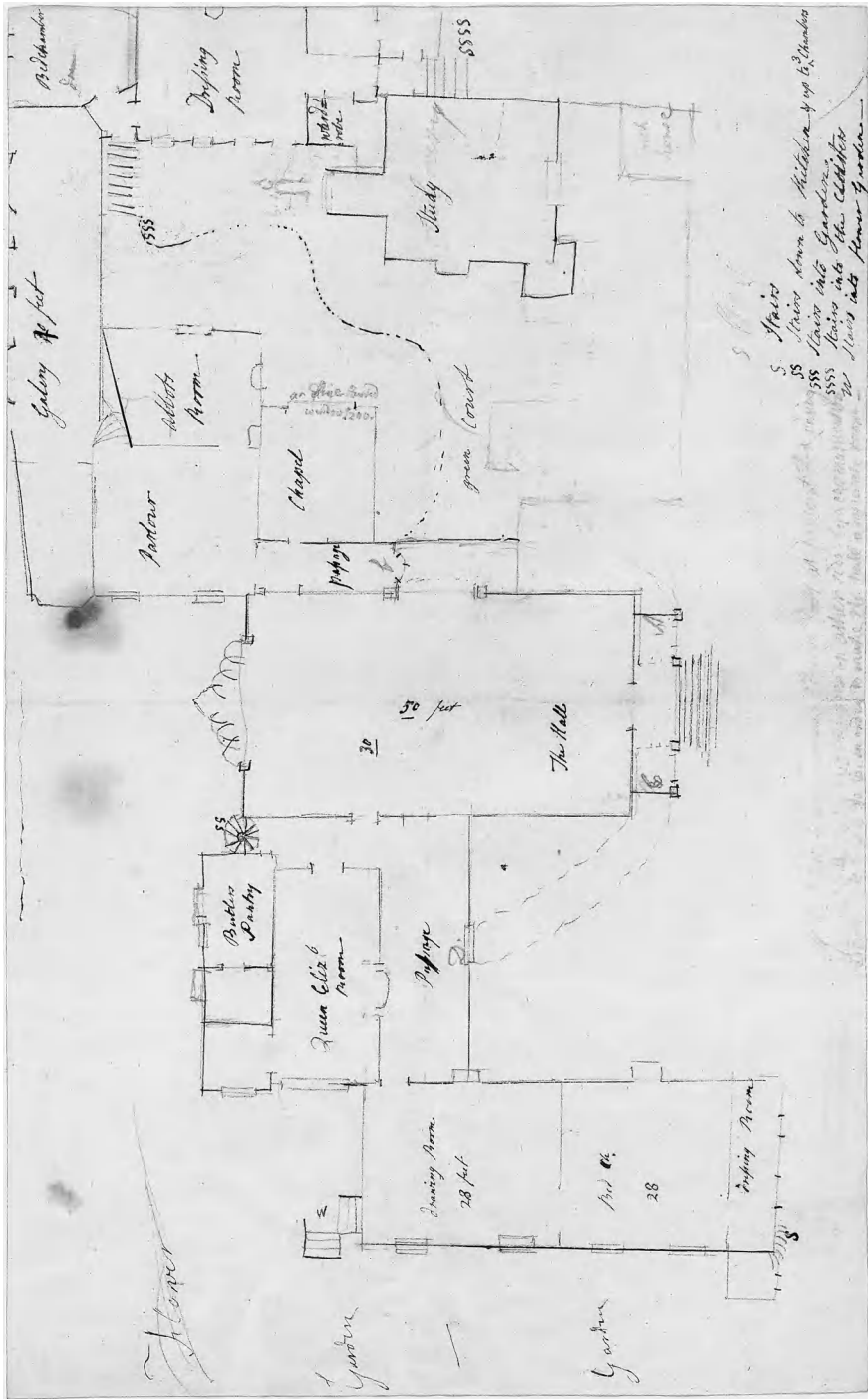


Fig. 3. Plan of the bishop's palace at Gloucester as sketched by Mary Yorke in 1779 for the information of Lady Grey. The 'pert portico' on the south side, the main entrance, which was mentioned by Horace Walpole and by Mary Yorke, is clearly indicated.

any of them; I wonder she did not ask at once for the whole picture, as it certainly was very proper she should have it, and not us.

20 October [1779]<sup>39</sup>

[Lincoln]

... As your Ladyship always so kindly interests yourself in the comforts of our habitations I enclose a plan I took of our house at Gloucester with all its bendings and turnings, perhaps you will kindly consider in what manner we can connect the two ends of the house together without passing through the Hall?

The plan (Fig. 3) is still with the letter and demonstrates the difficulty which Mary Yorke alluded to in her letter.

28 May 1780<sup>40</sup>

Forthampton

... With respect to ourselves we moved from our Palace at Gloucester to our *ferme ornée* here without much regret, though I must confess the Palace is a very excellent house and the field walking about it very pretty. I would wish that my friends when ever they do us the favour of a visit in the country would choose the month of May for the purpose; as the profusion of blossoms that surround us are very pleasing mixed with the peculiar ordure of this early season, every cottage with a few apple trees about it, presenting one with a bouquet. But I believe we are obliged to the fragrance of the thorn blossom for the perfume it scents the air with. If I remember right there was a great deal of this at Wimpole.

The ten days I spent at Gloucester passed off in a very smug manner, for as I did not exhibit myself at the College till the day before I was to come away, so I was not visited, and as to the Militia they marched out of the town a day or two before we came there. In short we have passed our time in the Old Style of unknowing and unknown, having by some mistake lived even without our Newspapers for some days, but when we begin to receive letters from our friends we shall then be up with the world again ...

There is one thing I must mention to Lady Mary with respect to Gloucester Cathedral which I observed its merit in last Sunday, namely that the building is particularly adapted to music, I would wish this fact to sink deeply into her mind, as it is a foundation I hope here after to build upon, though not so suddenly as I could wish.

To Lady Amabel Polwarth

[June 1780]<sup>41</sup>

[Forthampton]

... you see we have made our escape into the country as soon as possible, having in the first place made a visit at our house at Gloucester for ten days where we lived unvisited, except by our old friend the Dean who is just in his usual style both as to good humour and politics; so though I am not at all advanced in my acquaintance with the good people of Gloucester, I am very much, with those of America, both as to their manners, and national abilities etc., and we drank wine, tea, and syllabub at his house in good quantities with our young folks to the great satisfaction of all parties.

The dean of Gloucester since 1758 was Josiah Tucker. His interest in matters concerning America was of long-standing; he had written a tract against going to war for the sake of trade in 1763 and he maintained the desirability of separation from the colonies. The year after this meeting with the bishop and his wife, he published *Cui Bono*?<sup>42</sup> arguing that war with America was a mistake for all concerned. Peace with the new United States of America was made in March 1783.

*The Gordon Riots*

Anticipation of the following year's music meeting was already evident in 1780. But this was also the year of the Gordon riots, and Mary Yorke's letters convey several interesting insights into the unrest and how it also affected the Gloucester area. On Friday 2 June a petition, to protest at a modest amount of relief for Roman Catholics proposed by the government, was presented to Parliament by Lord George Gordon;<sup>43</sup> it was accompanied by a large crowd of supporters who marched in procession, but then obstructed and attacked coaches taking members to the afternoon session. That night and for five successive nights a mob looted, built bonfires in the streets with the contents of the houses of prominent men and Irishmen, attacked Roman Catholic chapels and the Bank of England, and released prisoners from goal. Not until the army was allowed to fire on the crowds was order gradually restored. There were many rumours that the unrest was fomented by the French and Americans but nothing was established.<sup>44</sup>

18 June 1780<sup>45</sup>

Forthampton

...the good news brought by the post this day gives such vigour to the pen that it cannot any longer lie still; and a letter at the same time from Lady Bell gave us the satisfaction of hearing that none of our friends had materially suffered by the alarming events of the week before last.

The whole affair was indeed of so shocking a nature, and attended with a barbarity so much better suited to a party of savage Indians than of men professing the most humane of all systems of religion, and yet making that very religion as a plea for all their cruelty! that I would wish to have the memory of it entirely blotted out (if possible) both at home and abroad, that the effects it may have upon the minds of people of different persuasions in various parts of Europe may not be so bad as we have reason to apprehend they would naturally be. But while we lament the distress of individuals I can not be sufficiently thankful that none of Ld H's family were in attendance at the Houses upon the first night of the Riot, and that the Bishop had so providentially determined to spend the Whitsuntide in the country and by that means escaped the danger.

All about us here is very quiet, the affair of Bath consisted in pulling down two chapels and seven private houses, at Worcester they have been apprehensive and the Guards from Gloucester marched by us last Thursday. We have been told some thousand men were ready to rise in our county, under the discretion of Ld George Gordon[s] Secretary<sup>46</sup> who is a Gloucestershire man, which report has made the town desirous of detaining these Guards, besides them an association is forming and our whole Corporation etc. will I suppose appear in Red Coats: you see the Bp's Palace will be well protected in that town. We are going there for a few days during the Visitation and I have prevailed to stay [the boys] from school a little longer till we see what turn things will take upon the troops being removed from London, which I suppose will be done gradually and very cautiously and perhaps not till some of the ring leaders are secured, but I am afraid the plot is too complicated and too deep to be easily unravelled, and therefore most likely will not be too much enquired into...

By your leave Madam I must not let the last sentence in your letter concerning a pique about church music pass unnoticed; that your Ladyship has always liked this sort of amusement I will not deny; and that you would be highly entertained at Gloucester music meeting I am likewise as clear in. But I will now let you in to the truth of the case, I am naturally of a very choleric disposition (being lineally descended from the ap Madoc and ap Prices of fiery memory) and of all things in the world I cannot bear a refusal to a favourite scheme that I have once entertained. This I know I had no reason to fear from my good friend Lady Mary, she would I flattered myself readily comply with my request. I confess I had my doubts about your Ladyship and Ld H, and should meet with a refusal! But take the consequences, having now a handle given me I shall certainly lay hold of it, and therefore proceed in the name of the Bp of Gloucester (who will most probably be the Steward of the meeting) and myself to beg the honour and favour of Ld Hardwicke, Lady

Grey and Lady Mary's company not only to partake of the amusements Gloucester may afford, but likewise to repose themselves for a few days under my humble roof at Forthampton.

I now bar all excuse of being afraid of crowding the family etc., as we have room sufficient at either house to receive Lady Bell and Ld P if they will join the party. I bar innuendoes that Lady Mary may be otherwise disposed of etc. etc., as I do not doubt she would be as much her own mistress in such a case as at present, and we shall only be the more flattered by her bringing an addition to the party. I bar all speculations about fatigue at the meeting, as people are at liberty to take just as much or as little as they please, Forthampton being always at hand to retire to.

And now Dear Madam having answered all the particulars of your last favour, I hasten to subscribe myself (cordially if you come into my scheme) your Ladyships ever obliged and affectionate

Mary Yorke

P.S. ... in addition to my former prohibitions I must add that I bar all 'may be's in general, as we may be sick? lame, blind, deaf etc. We may be governed by riot instead of order, enthralled by discord instead of music. This Country may be a province of France or America and ourselves slaves; in short the earth may be swallowed up in the expansive tail of a fiery comet etc. etc., but to all this my answer is ready before hand that though all these events may be yet they may not be.

To Lady Amabel Polwarth

20 June 1780<sup>47</sup>

Forthampton

... I did not imagine till I received your favour the alarm of the Riots had extended to St James's,<sup>48</sup> nothing of that sort having got in the Papers... For my own part I am still so much in ignorance as to the true and real cause of these diabolical proceedings as not to be entirely convinced our present quiet will be permanent when the soldiers are removed and disposed. At least I have desired the Bp not to send my boys to school immediately. In the mean time I hope the best, and so trust to that good Providence who has lately been so particularly kind to us, in the escape both your Lady and mine and others of the family had in not attending Parliament on that formidable night when Riot ruled uncontrolled. It is a shocking subject; a disgrace to the annals of our Country who boasts from principle a superior humanity to its neighbours, and yet in this instance has acted with a ferocity which I doubt has not often been equalled by them. For my part as I wish it to be forgot all over Europe, so I shall not dwell upon it any more myself but turn to a much more pleasing subject (after having assured you our own house at Gloucester is well protected, and at Worcester, where they are more apprehensive, all is quiet.)

And now I must congratulate you upon our late happy victory, and when I look back upon the public successes of the last 10 months I cannot help flattering myself the scale is turning in our favour, the repulse at the Savannah, and the taking of Charles Town, then the two engagements by sea of Rodney's, are all great strokes, though perhaps the latter might have been greater.

I should prose on some time longer I believe, if I was not summoned down to an ageish patient, who I suppose is shaking and trembling below till I have subscribed myself

Yours ever most affectionately

Mary Yorke.

N.B. Mr. John Yorke was so attentive to us as to have the Name taken off the door, and send his own servant into it, who with our own cabinet maker I find was all alert upon the occasion. Query whether the latter would not have been half pleased to see the tables and chairs blazing? The Bp sends love to both.

Sunday 25 June [1780]<sup>49</sup>

Gloucester

You will easily believe Dear Madam I cannot suffer a single post to pass, without returning our best thanks for the very kind and agreeable letter from your Ladyship yesterday... The Bp is sorry the continual business of his Visitation (which is now beginning) will not allow time, he fears for some days, to write to Ld Hardwicke himself...

I know not when I should quit this new subject you have given me if the bell did not summon me to dinner, and the two Cathedral services today at church, with company in the evening will I doubt leave me no time to proceed after. I wish your Ladyship had been with me this morning there, I think you would have been pleased with a sermon our Bp gave on this text 'Ye know not what Spirit you are of'; the subject led to the late unfortunate affair in London, and the whole I trust was spoke in the true spirit of Christianity. The Mob were much pleased too, followed me out of Church exclaiming they never heard such a sermon in their lives in which every word was true, and all according to Conscience. When they first called after me, I was not quite sure whether it might not be on a less agreeable occasion...

To Lady Amabel Polwarth

23 July [1780]<sup>50</sup>

Forthampton

... the Bishop... desired me to say that hitherto he has had no time, but will write to you himself... this being the summer for visiting the whole Diocese, taking up more of his time than usual, he was out every day for above a fortnight and saw some very beautiful scenes, especially near the mouth of the Severn and in the Clothing Country, where the number of neat dwellings dress the hills and valleys extremely. The views in general are thought similar to some of the pleasing ones in Italy; as those in Wales were thought so to the Scenes of Switzerland.

### *The 1780 General Election*

After the excitement of the Gordon riots, Parliament was dissolved on 1 September 1780. The election passed off quietly, though as Mary's next letter illustrates, not without some anti-government feeling. Two members were elected for the City of Gloucester and two for the county: for 25 years Gloucester had had one Tory and one Whig member, but in 1780 the Tory George Selwyn<sup>51</sup> was not returned.

21 September [1780]<sup>52</sup>

[Forthampton]

... [Mr. Yorke not to stand at 'Ryegate' for election to parliament]<sup>53</sup>... As for his brother member Sir Charles Cocks,<sup>54</sup> his appearance at Worcester has placed him rather in a ridiculous light in this neighbourhood. He and his Lady came to the town, were met by the rabble of the opposite Party, who honoured his entrance with a train of Geese (some say only Ducks) dressed in black hoods (referring I suppose to the Commons he has enclosed lately with such ill-success); this sight struck such a panic into Sir Cocks or at least affronted him so much that he quitted Worcester the next day, notwithstanding all the Gentry would have been for him, and Mr. Ward who comes now to a much greater disadvantage is likely to get his election. At Gloucester it is over and the Bishop wrote me word from thence that he saw (by way of wit) under his windows two carpenters in mourning cloaks representing on a bier the death of the blue interest, and the flight of Mr. Selwyn. So much for elections ...

Before the year's end one of Gloucester's M.P.s died, resulting in a second election in January 1781.

19 Dec [1780]<sup>55</sup>

Gloucester

... Gloucester is much quieter than I expected after the death of our Member Mr. Chester.<sup>56</sup> We expect very little contest. Mr. Berkeley, who is gone to sea will not, he declares, disturb the peace of the Country, but if we choose to elect him, he is ready to obey our commands; Mr. Dutton, who gave him his interest last time, now sets up for himself, and as Mr. Berkeley is pretty certain of coming in for the Town next vacancy, he will not be so mad sure to push the present point where to all appearance he has so little chance. It is generally understood he does not mean it...

P.S. Since I wrote the above I have picked up worse intelligence about our Election which the Bishop has transmitted, too, in a letter to Ld H: Ld Berkeley seems determined to support his brother.<sup>57</sup>

Berkeley was not successful. However, as Mary predicted, he was elected in 1783, and as well as having a most successful career in the Navy, he represented Gloucestershire until 1810.

### *The 1781 Music Meeting*

After keen anticipation of the event, three of Mary Yorke's letters describe the music meeting held in Gloucester in 1781, when she herself played a prominent role and was resident at the bishop's palace. Her first and very full account, written for Lady Grey, was in the form of a daily diary of events (Fig. 4). As her earlier Worcester letters showed, the music meeting was a social occasion, which with 'ordinaries, balls and horse races provided a focal point in the social calendar'.<sup>58</sup> Mary's social circle at the Gloucester meeting included the nobility of the county or at least their ladies, the men being probably at the races: the duke and duchess of Beaufort, (Badminton) and their son, the marquis of Worcester, Viscount and Lady Tracy (Toddington), Sir William Guise (Elmore) and Mrs. Guise (Highnam), George Selwyn M.P. (Matson), Mr. Boscawen (?) and of course James Dutton (Sherborne). Lady Bathurst, wife of Earl Bathurst (Cirencester), sent her apologies. Mary Yorke's letter to her husband at the end of the festivities makes a fitting conclusion to this pleasant series.

To Lady Amabel Polwarth

24 August (1781)<sup>59</sup>

[?Gloucester]

This kisses your hands my Dear Lady Bell with our sincere thanks for the honour you did us by your kind visit... If you met with any difficulties upon the road I assure you I was no ways the cause as I immediately repaired to Prayers (for all my friends travelling by sea or land) at the Minster, where the Dean joined in his Devotions. After Church was over he accosted me (as he was proceeding with Vergers before him etc. in all due state) with enquiries after your Ladyship, and then partly whispered me in the ear that he had yet had no answer about my turtle for the music meeting; that the war made it a difficult affair etc.

Dear Lady Bell how this meeting haunts the thoughts of all Ranks, in all situations; no wonder your poor Aunt's head should be full of it. As for my Bishop, he is in hopes to miss it all by being called up to London, and to leave the Abrams, Prudoms, etc. to pull caps at their pleasure; indeed I shall be very glad to have him excused any further trouble on the subject. Should any disputes be brought before my Tribunal I shall infallibly give it in favour of the Jewess, against the Christian, the former possessing much more of the true Spirit of humble meekness — than the latter; notwithstanding their different persuasion.

My Bishop is now gone on his last Confirmation, he invited me to be of the party, and said so much to me of the beauty of the country that I was almost tempted, you know I am something of an enthusiast about natural Views, however I had the virtue to refuse him, in consideration of my young folks who I ought not to be leaving for ever both by and at, Sixs and Sevens (as Mrs.

Monday night.

Gentlemen returned, Miss Abrams in high good humours & quite gay; smiled, & shook hands with a little Boy of the Choir who sung a duet with her. Fisher played the Gloucester Concerto, (so nominated by King who lately wanted him when he was composing this piece for the meeting, & could not attend his Ma<sup>ty</sup>.)

Miss Prudom not there but said likewise to be in good humour & much pleased with the last message from Northampton. a whisper however got about that some body who had seen her, thought she looked grave, & was not quite pleased with some of the Band. most likely a false report.

Tuesday morn.

roused by the ringing of bells. preparations; Hair-dressers &c. reported that neither the Du<sup>ty</sup> of Beaufort nor Lady Bathurst will come.

Night.

The Dance Ball. opened by L<sup>d</sup> Worcester & my Daughter; minutes lasted 2 hours & a half. made my honors round the room at 12 o'clock, & took myself &c. away desiring the Duke to make my excuses to the Steward, as it was absolutely necessary I should live through the three next Days; the other Stewards Wife being very ill. n. B. my Son<sup>x</sup> Joseph, & the Stewards niece finished with a minute. the best I thought ~~that~~ had been danced. mem not to let anybody know I thought so for fear of being accused of partiality to my own Children)

\* See the conquering hero comes.

Fig. 4. An extract from Mary Yorke's 'diary of events' written during the music meeting at Gloucester in 1781.

Margaret Jefferies I suppose would say, when she had a mind to crack a joke).<sup>60</sup> Had I gone with this Bishop of mine I take it for granted he would have dragged me up some little tump or hill, there produced out of his pocket a bit of rumpled paper (letter case or other), an inch or two of pencil, and perhaps making the top of his hat a table, insisted upon my taking a View in short hand, as he calls it; the wind perhaps blowing round me from every quarter. In such circumstances, nothing but my ardent desire to oblige him could inspire me with the powers of obeying; the scratch, however, you know would have been made; his Lordship would have breathed hard upon it with all his might, and then thrust the poor miserable scrawl into the repository of his long coat pocket for future unravelling.

P.S. ...They have an idea at Gloucester Sir Joseph Yorke<sup>61</sup> is to come to our Meeting and you may be sure I did not positively contradict it, as I wish to draw as much company there as possible.

[Completed Sunday 2 Sept 1781]<sup>62</sup>

Gloucester

Dear Madam

I will not use up my paper in apology for my long silence or thanks to Lady Bell for her last very obliging favour as well as for her goodness to us in her late very friendly visit at Forthampton. No Dear Madam, the voice of friendship itself must now give way to the sound of pleasure: and you must (however reluctantly) submit to be of my party through three days, or three pages, of incessant amusement. Should it prove fatiguing, remember that it was your Ladyship's and Lady Bell's request has brought this trouble upon you. In order that the style of my letter may suit the subject, I think it will be proper to adopt something of the Diary plan: Miss Harriet Byron in continuation, shall be my precedent, being just the thing for the purpose. Well then —

August 27th. Monday noon

Came to Gloucester, ran down into the Housekeeper's room to enquire after my venison, Charles met me and in gentle terms, but with a melancholy face accosted me with — O Mama what will you do? the venison stinks! This was a more particular mortification, as Ld H had been so kind to take so much trouble in ordering and sending it, but the weather was most unfavourable. Melancholy intelligence from the lower regions continued, no turtle to be had, no Monsieur Frayce from Mr. Foleys!<sup>63</sup>

Tea time: the Butler introduces a gentleman in a linen dress by the name of Mr. Cook whom I greeted and was answered in very good English, that he hoped to conduct this whole affair as reasonably as possible; on a little further conversation I found alas! my mistake: this was not Monsieur Frayce but the treasurer of the music meeting.

Soon after received the enclosed from Ledbury that he could not come; this was the third trial of temper. Was thinking that Serena's tone might be very useful during this whole week.

The gentlemen gone to the Rehearsals — employed myself in cleaning my jewels. N.B. Margaret and Joseph practised their minuet.

Monday night

Gentlemen returned, Miss Abrams in high good humour and quite gay; smiled and shook hands with a little boy of the Choir who sung a duet with her.<sup>64</sup> Fischer played the Gloucester Concerto 'See the conquering hero comes' (so nominated by the King who lately wanted him when he was composing this piece for the meeting, and could not attend his majesty).

Miss Prudom not there but said like wise to be in good humour and much pleased with the last message from Forthampton. A whisper however got about that some body who had seen her,



thought she looked grave; and was not quite pleased with some of the Band. Most likely a false report.

Tuesday morn

Roused by the ringing of Bells. Preparations; hairdressers etc. — reported that neither the Duchess of Beaufort nor Lady Bathurst will come.

Night

The Race Ball. Opened by Ld Worcester and my daughter; minuets lasted 2 hours and a half. Made my honours round the room at 12 O Clock, and took myself etc. away, desiring the Duke to make my excuses to the Steward, as it was absolutely necessary I should live through the three next days; the other Steward's wife being very ill. N.B. My Son Joseph and the Steward's niece finished with a minuet, the best I thought that had been danced. Memo not to let anybody know I thought so for fear of being accused of partiality to my own children.

Invited Mrs. and Miss Townsend, [and] the little Fagniani<sup>65</sup> to come to dinner. Mr. Selwyn wanted to know, of the Duttons, if I would give her Governess leave to sit in my Gallery. Answer — that the seats being all at my disposal they could make no reply for more than three Ladies, who they did not doubt would be welcome. The Duchess being very indifferent excused herself from my Dinners. I was sorry to observe not one of the Berkeley Set (except Sir William Guise) were at the Ball. N.B. Every body very civil to me.

Wednesday — the 1st day of the Music Meeting

From nine to half past ten, breakfast, notes etc. — invited Mrs. Guise (Mr. Guise being the great leader hereabouts of the Berkeley Party) to dine with me any of the Three Days — if she comes, we will take her in triumph to the rooms but if she refuses me, all of them, I shall say fie! upon Politics amongst the Ladies!

Church two hours and a half, the music and accompaniment by our whole Band, even to the common Psalms, very fine. The Duchess named a favourite song of the ancients composed by Boyce for Harrison to sing on Friday.<sup>66</sup>

Noon

Visited by everybody. Charles met with great joy, and informed me: six fine pine apples were just arrived from Sir Joseph Yorke! the satisfaction soon spread and was very universal, all being anxious Mama should be pleased!

2 O'Clock

The Bishop (and Charles) set out for London; he had attended Service and held a plate as Steward for the Charity.

4 O'Clock Dinner

Lady Tracy and others. But being alas! only Ladies without one Gentleman to talk to us, you will not Dear Madam I am sure wish for any further account. 7 O'Clock, left them to go with the Duchess to the Rooms. It is the great Booth Hall of the Town. A raised seat with a canopy over it at the end for the judges, is appropriated to the Stewards' Ladies; this time being only one, I graciously invited the Duchess to sit by me; not choosing you may suppose to make so very distinguished a figure. Joshua went off extremely well, Miss Abrams was much clapped (the Prudom was not there) the music of this oratorio is very fine, the chorus suited our room extremely, the songs were certainly none of them sufficiently heard except Norris's. I was very glad to find however the company so well satisfied with Miss Abrams, after being so many years used either to Mrs. Sheridan or Mrs. Bates. The Tea in the Council Chamber, sent my orders to have all the

windows in the Hall put open while we were absent. Went down to the Ball. No minuets, two rows of country dancers, numbers unknown. My daughter began with Mr. Boscawen. Mr. Dutton and others paid me many compliments on her style of dancing both minuets and country dances, feel myself inclined to be of their opinion but determined nobody shall know I am. Stayed only two dances, came home, was quiet by two O'Clock.

#### Thursday Morn

Waked by ringing of Bells at half past seven. Church — returned her Grace's and other visits (N.B. I fancy these visits are contrived that one never may be in danger of being too quiet). Dress — dinner and petticoats as before. Mr. Isaacs, the manager, called upon me to settle a difficulty about Harrison, who being a young man, had been taken in by our 'Styre Cyder'<sup>67</sup> and spoilt some of the Othniel airs. Query whether I would have him leave the Town? or condescend to support him by a party of my Gentlemen on his next appearance, as without a clap he could never muster courage to sing again having indeed been threatened with a hiss. Agreed (in my clemency) to form a party for the latter. The poor culprit has just been here, trembling most piteously, to plead for himself. Should he be hissed tonight, the manager thinks it might almost ruin him. The Duchess is very anxious for him, being his great admirer; as I hear Ld Sandwich is.

#### Dinner

Females as usual.

#### Oratorio

*The Prodigal Son* was well performed throughout, and many of the airs were pretty, but I confess upon the whole I think it too like an English Burletta, and came to disadvantage after Handel's *Joshua*; it was however much liked. Miss Abrams sung (her second song especially) with very great taste and performed indeed the whole very well. But the Prudom, who appeared tonight for the 1st time, had I thought greater brilliancy and strength of voice. N.B. Harrison rose, and was received with a violent clap — he sung the first air in the oratorio, and with great feeling — but his voice is too low and hollow for our room. When the whole was over Sir William Guise came up to me and said Miss Abrams was extremely sorry she had performed her first song no better (her's was the mother's part) but really she had been so frightened and fluttered by the Prudom's insisting upon taking the right hand, that she scarcely could sing. She is the best and most humble creature in the world, and I believe I am thought partial to her; upon this occasion however I advised her giving up, as we have here always given precedence to principal Opera singers when we had them.

#### Ball

More couples than ever — Margaret did not dance — home two O'Clock: N.B. Received a pine apple from Mrs. Guise and her excuses for not coming being near her time and not well.

#### Friday Morn

Ringing of Bells, rattling of carriages, many coming in today, for the grand amusement of all.

From Eleven to one, *Messiah*, which went off charmingly, this Church being highly calculated for music. Miss Abrams sung the principal songs with great taste indeed, but was frightened though she promised the night before she would not, and her judgement is so good, I am convinced she is conscious of her own deficiency of voice. The Prudom began nodleing her head, showing her teeth, quavering and trilling as if at the Opera; and spoilt the songs; she is however much better heard and I am afraid (in general) liked than the other. Mrs. Townsend whispered to me that Mr. Selwyn wished I would not mention my Dinner before Mademoiselle Faniane as he thought she had better not come — the Governess was with her but only Mrs. and Miss T dined with me.

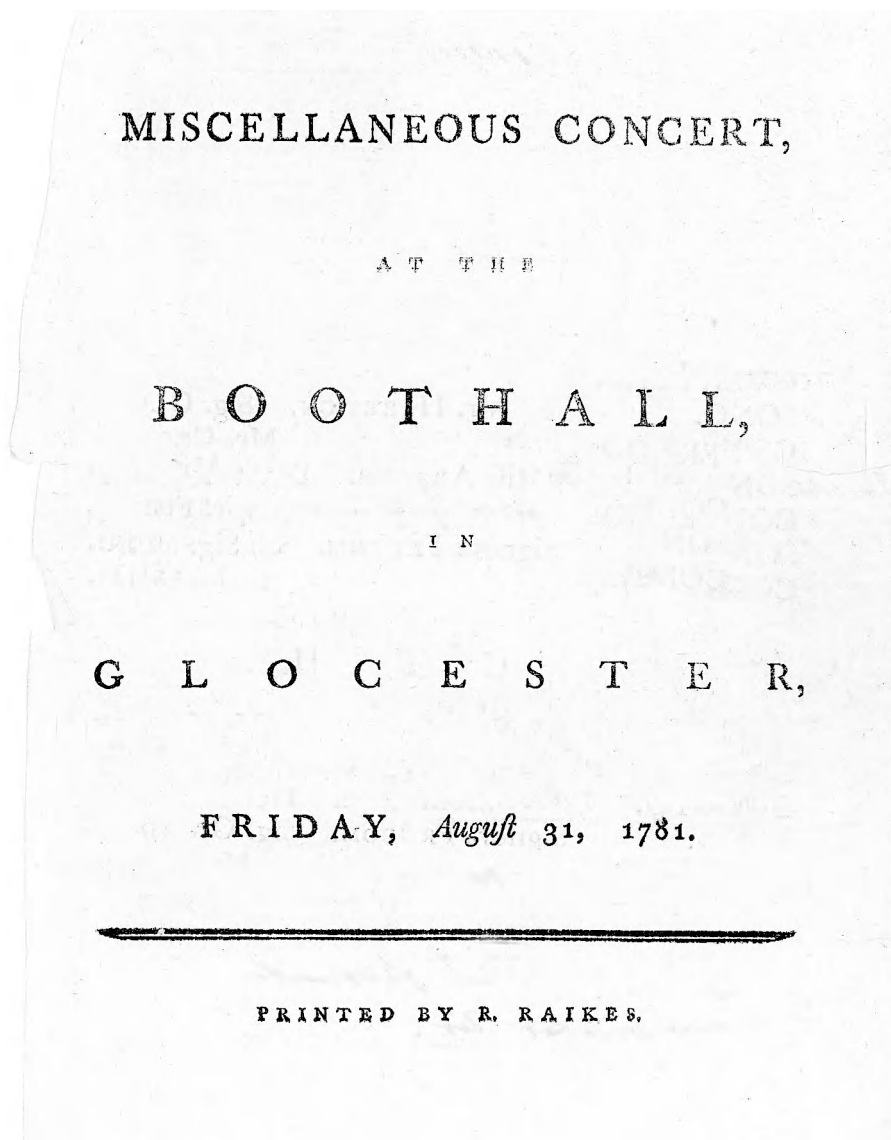


Fig. 5. Front of programme for the concert given in the Boothall, Gloucester, on Friday 31 August 1781.

N.B. Thirteen of us at Dinner and pretty comfortable, considering us as almost all strangers to each other.

Tea

Sent for the Manager, desired him to convey an encouraging message from me to Miss Abrams' ear alone, when the Prudom was not by.

The Concert — a list of which I have enclosed [see Figs. 5 and 6].<sup>68</sup> The Duchess was quite in raptures during the time Miss Abrams sung the song I bespoke extremely well, her voice is so apt

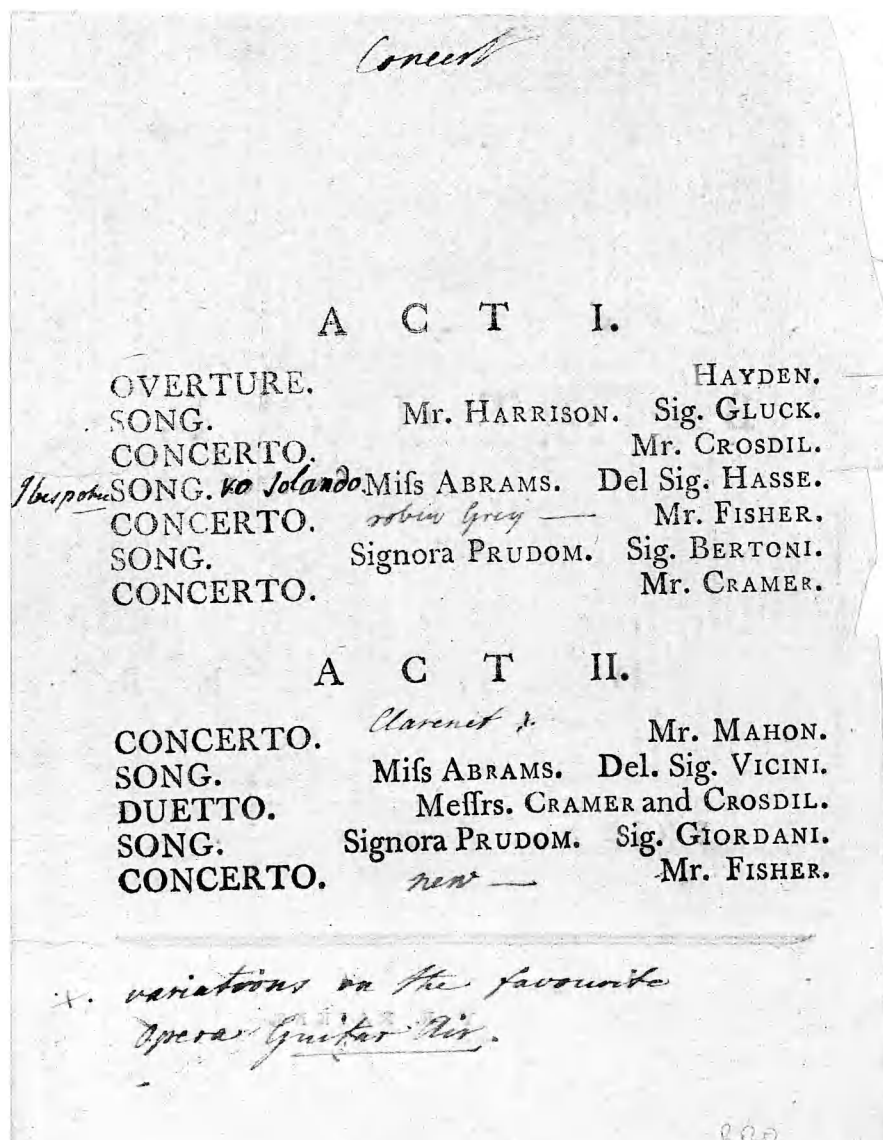


Fig. 6. Back of programme for the concert given in the Boothall, Gloucester, on Friday 31 August 1781.

to be strained I was afraid to secure an encore for either of her Songs, the Duchess said it would give her pain to sing them twice. Harrison sung the one she desired, very well; it was one of Dr. Boyce's — I have forgot the words.

Ball as usual, Miss Yorke not at it. N.B. A very fine dancer honoured us, a Miss Draper, daughter to a Lady celebrated by Sterne. Stayed being the last night till past two. Was assured by Mr. Dutton every body was well satisfied.

Bed

Saturday morn

Isaacs, the Duke of Beaufort, Ld Tracy, Miss Abrams etc. etc. etc. called, some to take leave etc. — the latter to thank me, which she did in a most pleasing, modest manner; we both regretted I had not let *se non timorer* be encored, but her Grace thought it must hurt her.

We had a tender parting and thus ends the history of my music meeting. Now the music is over, I feel something tired, while that lasted, it was always sufficient to take off the sense of mere fatigue as I was otherwise well.

I will not add to the tediousness of this strange scrawl, but hasten to assure you Dear Madam how much I am ever your Ladyships faithful

MY

P.S. Gloucester Palace.

I return to Forthampton this evening.

The receipt for the Charity was only £300, the receipt for the Stewards above £500 — and as every ticket is *5s. 6d.* it shows our company to have been in all only 2000 people which is less than usual. The expense of performers £533, the number of them 59 — including Voices. I fancy we shall not be out of pocket above four score pounds which is very well.<sup>69</sup> N.B. The Races continued all this time, and the Ladies attended them after dinner. I excused myself always.

My Son Joseph was, for the time, his own Master and went to the Gentleman's Ordinary. Lady Bell will be glad to hear he conducted himself through the whole very properly.

Sunday Morn Forthampton

Found my family well. All of us once more in health and spirits, being perfectly rested from the fatigue of amusement.

I am sorry Dear Madam I could get no blacker ink at Gloucester though I tried two sorts.

P.S. I will trouble your Ladyship to present my respectful compliments to Ld H with thanks for his kind attention in the venison, with good wishes to Lady Bell, and Lady Grantham,<sup>70</sup> who I hope to have the pleasure of hearing from, now she is settled. How am I ever to condescend to clamber over Forthampton stiles by myself I know not, after being so handed about for the last week; the ceremony at the Hall was ridiculous enough; the Duke leading me from the State, down the steps, where the Steward took me by the hand to the Tea room, and Ld Tracy came into office to fill my tea.

To her niece, Mary was modest about her part as Steward's Lady.

To Lady Amabel Polwarth

9 September [1781]<sup>71</sup>

Forthampton

After the long Paddy-Noddy I sent Lady Grey I should not so soon have troubled you my Dear Lady Bell with my thanks for your kind and entertaining letter if it had not been to enclose the direction to the young woman I mentioned as a House Maid...

Our music meeting turned out much pleasanter than I expected, and was not hot: indeed I am afraid I made freer with open windows at night than some of the company liked, but the Duchess of Beaufort it liable to fainting fits, and must have air.

I am afraid my detail could not afford much amusement, though you would be diverted at the

mock pomp with which the Steward's Lady is stuck up; to the great satisfaction of all beholders. I could not help thinking how differently this exalted Seat had been filled! sometimes by Justice in the person of our judges; sometimes by Pleasure — in the person of Mrs. James Yorke; sometimes by Religion herself in the person of Mr. Whitefield, who used to pour out his eloquence with both hands, from the very place where I sat flirting my fan with one.

To James Yorke, bishop of Ely

Thursday [probably 13] September 1781<sup>72</sup>

[Forthampton]

This in compliance with your wish, my Dearest Love, has my orders to lay itself quietly upon your table at Ely House where I hope you are safely returned, though I doubt much fatigued by all this hurry and bustle. I am impatient to set out, I should certainly do it on Monday if I did not think it would be rather adding to your pother to have all the tribe of Boys with you so many days, as they think the School does not meet till after the 20th. However expect us to storm your castle about dinner time on Wednesday, 4 O'Clock; we set out on Tuesday morn.

I have heard nothing yet of the new Bishop, but will leave proper orders with Terret who is at present (poor man) ill, and in the dismals. I have sent orders to Conibeer to prepare the Inventory and send our things...<sup>73</sup>

Amongst other things I shall bring the account of the music meeting, your share amounting to £83 12s. — I have given Mr. Cook a draught on Niblet for [it], so there ends that expensive troublesome job; better for £30 than was expected. Mr. Brereton was £150 out of pocket. It is a foolish business, and will I suppose ruin itself.

The matting and paper of Hall and Church is cut up; and divided between you and Mr. Dutton. Perry has been these two days, pricking his fingers, and making it up. So now we are all over matting, and he seems much delighted. He and John are as quiet and orderly as a Lady can wish, so indeed are all my family. ...

If it suits your convenience I should be much obliged to you to let your horses meet me the last stage,<sup>74</sup> as it will save a good deal of money — the last stage being much the dearest — and I shall make a handsomer entry in the middle of the day than with four mats and my petticoats tied up — alias, coach box cloth. We hope to be at Uxbridge Thursday noon.

Since I wrote the above have received your kind Letter my dearest love; I have to return you my best thanks for your attention to the old Lady<sup>75</sup> who will the most likely be better for her disorder. Perry in great haste going to Gloucester must take this along; so no more from your ever faithful wife,

MY

### Notes

1. James Dutton (formerly Naper) of Sherborne was created Lord Sherborne in 1784: *Complete Peerage* **11**, 676–7.
2. Forthampton Court had been the country home of the abbots of Tewkesbury before the Reformation: *V.C.H. Glos.* **8**, 202.
3. Gloucestershire Record Office (GRO), D 2240/Box 22.
4. He was created Baron Hardwicke of Hardwicke in 1733 and earl of Hardwicke in 1754: *Complete Peerage* **6**, 305–6; *V.C.H. Glos.* **10**, 182.
5. M. Noble, *A Biographical History of England* **3** (1806), 92.
6. Philip C. Yorke, *The Life and Correspondence of Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke* (Cambridge, 1913), ii, 597.
7. Mary's date of birth has not been found but she was 21 by April 1765. She died on 30 December 1823.

- James was born on 9 March 1730 and died on 26 August 1808. Information about James's and Mary's families is drawn from notes by Gerald Yorke and from the family Bible at Forthampton Court and also from J. Godber, *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park* (Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc. 47, 1968) and *Burke's Peerage* (1828). A fuller account of their family backgrounds introduces A. Jones, 'Letters from the Bishop's Wife during episcopal visitations of the diocese of St. David's 1774–1778', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 38 (2002), 14–19.
8. The other 18th-century programme is for 1790: A. Boden, *Three Choirs* (1992), 33.
  9. K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998: see particularly chapter 1, 'The Lady at their Head: Women and the Landed Estates').
  10. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service. Letters to Jemima have the reference L 30/9 and those to Amabel L 30/11. The helpfulness of the archivists is warmly acknowledged. A study of Mary Yorke's letters has been facilitated by Mr. John Yorke's generous loan of transcripts made by his father Gerald. Letters preserved at Forthampton Court have been deposited at the Gloucestershire Record Office (reference D 2240/Box 20). Some extracts from the transcripts relating to the Gloucester music meeting are in GRO, D 1137/2 and others of more general Gloucestershire interest in D 1137/3.
  11. L 30/9/111/270.
  12. The London house of the bishops of Ely, now 37 Dover Street.
  13. William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales ... relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*, illustrated with aquatint drawings, was published in 1782. The first of a series of five such travel books, it was said to have created a 'new class of travels': *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB).
  14. L 30/9/111/29.
  15. Probably John Yorke, an older brother of James and a widower, whose wife was a Lygon of Madresfield near Worcester, where he and his daughter often stayed.
  16. Elizabeth Linley made her London and Three Choirs débuts in 1770. She subsequently eloped with and married Richard Brinsley Sheridan: Boden, *Three Choirs*, 30.
  17. Probably the Hon. William Ward, son of the 1st Viscount Dudley, who was elected an M.P. for Worcester in 1780. See Mary Yorke's letter of 21 September 1780.
  18. Felici Guardini became leader of the Band in 1770; Giusto Ferdinando Tanducci was an Italian castrato soprano; Johann Christian Fisher, the noted oboist, married the daughter of the painter Thomas Gainsborough: Boden, *Three Choirs*, 30.
  19. L 30/9/111/43.
  20. Charles, Joseph and James went to Hackney School.
  21. The Dowdeswell family had long been established in Bushley, where their main house became Pull Court, a few miles north of Forthampton Court and they were active politicians. Isaac Maddox had bought Forthampton Court from Richard Dowdeswell's mortgagee: cf. *V.C.H. Glos.* 8, 201.
  22. Mrs. Sheridan was the former Elizabeth Linley, her sister Mary.
  23. Amongst the company were John Montagu, earl of Sandwich, Arthur Annesley, Viscount Valentia and Baron Mountmorris, and George William Coventry, earl of Coventry.
  24. A charitable donation had been made with the proceeds of a collection since 1724. An alternative, a subscription scheme, was first introduced at Worcester and in 1786 adopted at Gloucester: Boden, *Three Choirs*, 13–14.
  25. i.e. her godson Philip.
  26. L 30/9/111/55.
  27. Venanzio Rauzzini was an Italian castrato soprano and a regular performer at music meetings: Boden, *Three Choirs*, 31.
  28. Thomas Norris (1741–90) was a chorister at Salisbury Cathedral, bachelor of music and organist of Christ Church and St. John's College, Oxford.
  29. *Gentleman's Magazine* 50 (1780), 413.
  30. L 30/11/339/24.
  31. L 30/9/111/85.
  32. L 30/9/111/84.
  33. Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, was Commissioner for Trade and Plantations between 1779 and 1782 and was a known critic of the Christian church: *DNB*.

34. L 30/9/111/86.
35. Philip Yorke, 1st earl of Hardwicke, was a patron of William Warburton. Sir Joseph Jekyll (1663–1738), Master of the Rolls 1711–38, married Elizabeth Somers and so was an uncle of Lord Hardwicke: Yorke, *Correspondence*, i, 70.
36. *V.C.H. Glos.* 4, 287; O. Bradbury, ‘Overlooked aspects of the 18th-century bishop’s palace at Gloucester’, *Trans. B.G.A.S.* 118 (2000), 157–71. As Benson placed so many panels of his arms in the windows, it seems that the one which was rescued need not have come from the chapel.
37. L 30/9/111/87.
38. Mrs. Warburton (née Gertude Tucker) was the favourite niece of Ralph Allen, who had built Prior Park near Bath between 1736 and 1743 with stone from his own Combe Down quarries. Bishop and Mrs. Warburton ‘resided chiefly at Prior Park’. After the death of her uncle and his wife, Mrs. Warburton inherited the estate. She later remarried: *DNB*, s.v. William Warburton; J.S. Watson, *The Life of William Warburton DD* (1863).
39. L 30/9/111/88.
40. L 30/9/111/92.
41. L 30/11/339/45.
42. Josiah Tucker, *The case of going to war for the sake of procuring, enlarging or securing of trade, considered in a new light* (1763); *Cui bono? Or, An inquiry, what benefits can arise either to the English or the Americans, the French, Spaniards, or Dutch, from the greatest victories, or successes, in the present war? Being a series of letters* (Glouc. 1781).
43. Lord George Gordon, son of the duke of Gordon, sat for the pocket borough of Ludgershall in Wiltshire, by agreement of the proprietor of the burgages, George Selwyn, who himself was one of the members for the City of Gloucester: C. Hibbert, *King Mob* (1959), 14.
44. For a full account of Lord George Gordon’s career and the night by night riots, see Hibbert, *King Mob*.
45. L 30/9/111/93.
46. Gordon in 1779 had become president of the London Protestant Association, whose secretary was James Fisher: Hibbert, *King Mob*, 31–2.
47. L 30/11/339/46.
48. Lord Hardwicke had a London house in St. James’s Square. Riots here do not figure in Hibbert’s account, although there was a rumour that Edmund Burkes’ house in Charles Street, St. James’s Square, was going to be attacked. Later, soldiers drawn up across the Strand and Holborn prevented the mob moving westwards: Hibbert, *King Mob*, 73, 119.
49. L 30/9/111/265.
50. L 30/11/339/47.
51. George Augustus Selwyn of Matson was a notable wit and holder of numerous minor government offices. He was one of the two members for the City of Gloucester between 1754 and 1780; after this defeat he sat for the borough of Ludgershall: W.R. Williams, *The Parliamentary History of the County of Gloucester* (Hereford, 1898), 210.
52. L 30/9/111/96.
53. Reigate in Surrey was a pocket borough. William III granted the manor to the first Lord Somers; part of his interest descended to Sir Charles Cocks and part to Lord Hardwicke, whose wife was Margaret Cocks, Lord Somers’s niece. Yorke bought up burgages, so that the two families controlled 75% of them: Yorke, *Correspondence*, i, 211; W. Hooper, *Reigate* (Surrey Archaeol. Soc. 1945), 119–22.
54. Charles Cocks of Castleditch in Eastnor, Herefordshire, was M.P. for Reigate 1747–84. William Ward sat for Worcester from 1780 until 1788.
55. L 30/9/111/100.
56. William Bromley Chester had been elected one of the members for Gloucestershire in 1776; he died 12 December 1780: Williams, *Parliamentary Hist.* 66.
57. The Hon. George Cranfield Berkeley, brother of the 5th earl of Berkeley. James Dutton sat for Gloucester until he was created Lord Sherborne in 1784: Williams, *Parliamentary Hist.* 67.
58. Boden, *Three Choirs*, 19.
59. L 30/11/339/54.



60. Seven children!
61. Sir Joseph was one of James Yorke's older brothers. He had been ambassador to the Hague between 1761 and 1780, when the war with America escalated into war with Holland: *DNB*.
62. L 30/9/111/105.
63. A French chef employed by Mr. Foley, who was possibly Edward Foley of Witley Court, Worcestershire, a son of Lord Foley and one of the M.P.s for Worcester.
64. Mary inserted an asterisk here and at the end of the letter noted 'See the conquering hero comes'.
65. Maria Fagniani was the adopted daughter of George Selwyn; his sister had married the Hon. Thomas Townshend: Hibbert, *King Mob*, 105; S. Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), 542.
66. William Boyce (1710–79) was a notable London organist and composer; he was buried in St. Paul's: *DNB*. Samuel Harrison, a treble until his voice broke at the Gloucester music meeting in 1778, became a well-esteemed tenor: Boden, *Three Choirs*, 31; *DNB*.
67. Gerald Yorke noted, in 1977, 'we still make it on the estate'.
68. The programme of the 'Miscellaneous Concert' was preserved by Lady Grey but subsequently misplaced with L 30/9/111/55 (a letter which refers to the 1775 music meeting).
69. The Stewards' role was so costly that from 1755 two men were always invited to accept the role: Boden, *Three Choirs*, 19–20.
70. Lady Mary Grey married Thomas Robinson, 2nd Baron Grantham, in 1780.
71. L 30/11/339/57.
72. GRO, D2240/Box 22.
73. The bailiff at Forthampton. The inventory was of items in the palace in Gloucester which they were in process of vacating.
74. Uxbridge, Middlesex.
75. Mary's mother, Elizabeth Maddox, was 80; she died in 1789 aged 88.