

A SEVERNSIDE MERCHANT

Lying for many years in an old box in a workshop in Old Town, Wotton-under-Edge was a little leather covered book - "The DAILY JOURNAL or the Gentleman's, Merchant's and Tradesman's complete ANNUAL ACCOMPT BOOK For the Pocket or Desk For the Year of our Lord 1783." An attempt had been made to destroy it and the entries to June 2nd. are missing as are those from October 12th to the end of the year. I acquired it from my father and it has been in my possession ever since.

The writing is small but not difficult to read and it soon becomes evident that the diarist lived very near the banks of the Severn and not far from the parish church at Newnham-on-Severn. The family was of some importance locally as the entry for June 26th records the confirmation of "my sister Anne" among many others on the occasion of a visitation by the Bishop of Gloster who with the Member of Parliament for the district and many other guests "came to our house and walked about the Garden".

Each day's entry faithfully records the day's weather; the names of the numerous visitors calling for business or making social calls who all "Drank Tea at our house"; and social calls on friends; the receipt of letters with the names of their writers and the dispatch of replies and other correspondence; details of the family business transactions; and on Sunday the text for the morning sermon and a very short comment on it.

The diarist did not write his name, or if he did the page has been lost, but with the help of Mr. Irvine Gray of the County Records Office and Canon Mansfield, Vicar of Newnham-on-Severn, I have identified the diarist as Richard, second son of John and Elizabeth Mintle, baptized January 7th, 1767. Among their children were John, Anne, James, Thomas and Mary, all of whose names are mentioned as those of brothers and sisters by the diarist.

The family business was that of shipping agents. They had contacts in many places - Bewdley, Bristol, Gloucester, Helston, Limerick, Liverpool, London, Worcester, Upton-on-Severn, Dunkirk to mention a few. For instance, on June 2nd, 1783, the diarist's brother John was at Dunkirk and in a letter dated June 3rd he states that he has purchased a brigg on Mr. J. Boughton's and his own joint account with the intention of taking in a cargo of wheat for Bristol and that he intended coming home in the vessel himself towards the end of the month. He eventually arrived in Kingsroad on July 3rd after a passage of 11 days.

During this period Richard had been occupied at home - going to Gloucester one morning to fetch a forgotten licence in order that the sloop might land a cargo at Beachley, putting 9 or 10 casks of liquor in to a cellar at Ruddle, writing to and answering letters from a Mr. Harrison of London and Mr. T. Gazely also of London among many others. He had to obtain a Brandy licence for Mr. Clark (of the Ship, one of the inns at Newnham).

Another day was spent discharging junk (old or inferior cable or rope) out of the sloop which was purchased by Mr. Kinch of Nailsworth who being in Newnham that day settled for it. The next day was partly occupied by putting into Mr. Shaw's warehouse five casks of Tobacco. This day's entry records that "my father, brother Thomas & self were at the feast with several others" - was this to celebrate the launching of a brigg by Messrs. Swayne & Co.? The next day the sloop was loaded with $22\frac{1}{2}$ tons of Thomas Hales' coal and on the evening tide she went to Amstells. Richard's father had been at Gloucester all that day returning about 10 p.m. Next day she (the sloop) went on the morning's tide to the Tumps, then away to Gatcombe with a letter for Capt. Flaisted who was expected there.

Part of Friday June 27th was occupied in "tying up sticks in number 200 dozen to be sent to London" and these with $\frac{1}{4}$ pipes of brandy were on board Mr. Adams's ship when he set off on the morning of July 1st for Bristol. The next morning, immediately after breakfast, Mr. J. Boughton and Richard set off for Bristol, first riding to Brimspill where with other passengers they went on board Mr. Adam's sloop. Leaving between 9 & 10 they arrived at Hot Wells between 6 & 7 in the evening and immediately went to call on the ladies but were unable to find them. They had travelled there the previous day, first "crossing the water" and continuing their journey by road.

This visit to Bristol which lasted from Wednesday until Saturday combined business with pleasure. The brandy was delivered; the sticks were put on board Captain Priest's ship for London and consigned to Messrs. Davidson; a letter was written to Mr. Kinch of Nailsworth returning his bill which could not be accepted (the one in payment for the junk?); Captain Proctor and Captain Clarkson had to be contacted together with Messrs. Castle & Co., who paid a bill value £140/15/-, and Mr. Cabe who paid one value £140/-/-. After a visit to his brother's brigg the next morning Richard set off about 8 o'clock by coach, dining at Newport (Glos) and arriving home about 6 o'clock.

During the next week or so Mr. Thos. Wintle (uncle) and John (brother) paid two more visits to Bristol the second time being accompanied by John's father. Richard meanwhile paid a visit to Mr. Joe Swayne who "paid me for the things I bought for him at Bristol". Wednesday July 9th was a very hot day particularly in the evening, and "This day we began mowing".

On July 14th "We finished our hay mow this evening". By now Richard seemed to have made other plans for the sale of "a quantity of tobacco". A letter was sent to Owner Noah Pearce, Worcester where he intended sending it next day for sale and his brother John wrote to Mr. Smart Gloster to get a certificate to accompany it. Early on the morning of July 15th the 6 casks of Tobacco were put on board a trow for Gloster. Later Mr. Joe Swaine's brigg attempted to go to Amstells but there was not sufficient water to take her over the sands. However in the evening this was accomplished. A journey was made next day to Gloster to meet the tobacco only to find that it had already been forwarded by wherry to Worcester. "I paid freight for the Tobacco to Gloster & my expenses 13/6".

Richard's own words can best describe his next business trip the object of which was to sell the Tobacco.

July 22nd. Tuesday

Wind about S W blow fresh much hard rain. I called at Mr. Matthew's. About four o'clock this afternoon I set off for Gloster (on my way up into Worcestershire) where I arrived a little before seven o'clock. Rather wet it having rained most of the way. I called at Evans & Hazel and was at Mr. Smart's. Then returned to the Lower George where I stopped all night.

July 23rd.

Wind to the Westward, blowing at times a little fresh. Weather very fine. I left Gloster this morning about 8 o'clock and proceeded for Worcester in the Shrewsbury Wherry we stopped at Ashlard also at the mouth of the Avon near Tewkesbury & at Upton at wch. place we dined. I called at Mr. Wm. Skey's to whom I sold two puncheons of Brandy. We did not leave Upton till near 4 o'clock and arrived at Worcester about eight after rather a tedious sail tho' we passed many places wch. gave me some pleasure. Immediately on my arrival I went to Mr. Pearce's where I stopped all night.

July 24th.

Wind in the same quarter as the preceeding day. Light breese, weather very fine. Not being able to do any business in Worcester I was under the necessity of taking horse after dinner and proceeded to Bewdley where I arrived about 8 in the evening and stopped with my horse at the Black Boy Inn. In going from Worcester thither I passed over two Canals the first about 3 miles from Worcester wch. is navigable to Droitwich, the other about 10 miles from so called Stour wch. as the other emptieth itself into the Severn the last mentioned navigation has a communication with the Duke of Bridgewater's that runs thro' the county of Lancaster etc. How exceedingly convenient for trade.

July 25th.

Wind and weather nearly as the proceeding day. How seasonable. Blessed be God. After breakfast I waited upon Mr. Sam'l Skey to whom I sold a Cask of Gin. He also provided a person who bought of me the Tobacco I had for sale at Worcester: as soon as I had agreed for price I left Bewdley and returned to Worcester after drinking tea with Mrs. Pearce I went to Miss Morgan's Post Office where I had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Widow Jones with whom I made some little stop, I afterwards called upon Miss Linton my sister Ann's old governess. I then returned to Mrs. Pearce's where I slept.

He received £159. 10. 6. for the tobacco and slowly made his way back home, calling on friends and business acquaintances in Worcester, Upton and Gloucester, and arrived early in the morning on 30 July. Twice again that

day he went out, once with Captain Plaisted to load a cargo of coals in his sloop at Purton Passage and again to watch the floating of the brigg 'Good Intent' which had run aground. This impression of constant business activity and ceaseless social events can be seen in every entry in the diary.

M. A. R. Falser

References

Diary of Richard Wintle of Newnham-on-Severn, 1783 in the possession of Miss Falser of Cirencester. Typescript copy in Glos. R.O., D 1559.