

DIARY

William Bray (1736–1832), Clerk of the Board of Green Cloth

1 January 1756

Called on Miss Stevens this morning. With Mr. Boughton and Shotter to Mr. Shrubbs's at Shalford, to spend the evening. We played at loo, came home a little after 11.

7 January 1756

Drank tea at Mrs. Westbrook's. Mr. and Mrs. Fortery there: they played at quadrille. I went home for an hour, and went again, played and supped there. Home a little before 12.

9 January 1756

Carried Mr. Haydon his appointment as a Trustee of the Turnpike; he gave me 5*s*. After the meeting the trustees went to Mr. P. Flutter's; they sent for me about 8, to play at cards. I played at whisk with Mr. Flutter, Mr. J. Martyr, and Mrs. Flutter; won every game. Home about one; won 3*s* 6*d*.

10 January 1756

Mr. Duncumb dined here. He and I went to Mrs. Wilpley's, but she not being at home, we went to the White Hart and spent the evening, and supped there.

12 January 1756

With Mr. Martyr in his postchaise to London, to Clare, and drank tea with him. To Drury Lane playhouse, but could not get in, so we went to the Robin Hood Society, and stayed till after 10. The question was whether the increase of unmarried people was owing to the men's greater bashfulness, or women's greater coyness than formerly.

24 January 1756

Between 6 and 7 with Mr. Duncumb and Mr. Wakeford, to the Tuns to drink a glass of wine. Mr. Punter, came in afterwards, Mr. Hallamby, Mr. Stovold and Harry Stovold. Home at 10.

29 January 1756

To the Assembly, but there not being enough to dance, Miss Sally Flutter, Miss Parson, Mr. Ford and I sat down to loo, till between 11 and 12.

31 January 1756

A man having taken a shop in Stoke, sometime ago, and selling goods vastly under the usual price, Mr. Haydon set up a shop against him, of whom I bought this morning four pair of gloves, at 7*d* a pair; riding gloves, 9*d*; and a pair of other gloves, 8*d*.

6 February 1756

This day being appointed for a public fast on account of the great earthquake at Lisbon, to Middle Church.

9 February 1756

I was bled this morning for the first time. Mrs. Martyr being about to inoculate Master Jacky, and I intended to be inoculated at the same time. Drank tea with Mrs. Wilpley, and read the new farce of "The Apprentice" to her. Gave Mr. Haydon for three pair of white silk stockings, 7*s* 6*d* a pair, being 4*s* a pair cheaper than common.

27 February 1756

This is evening, I, Master Jacky, and the maid were inoculated.

5 March 1756

Master Jacky was taken with the symptoms, and did not come out of his chamber for a week.

7 March 1756

I was quite easy this morning, when the smallpox began appearing; a restless night, a slight fever.

12 March 1756

I was blind to-day, and continued so till the 16th.

29 April 1756

Drank tea at Mrs. Leeves', with Miss Lavant and Miss More. Walked with them and Miss Leeves up Warwick's Bench and part of Velvet Walk; then played at quadrille. Home 11.

20 May 1756

Richard the man went for a week to the Peasemarch to be aired; he caught the smallpox coming to us. Paid for a cheesecake for Jacky, 1*d*.

22 May 1756

War with France proclaimed at Guildford; the soldiers drawn up in arms, and with music went before the Mayor, etc. Went to see the wire-dancer; he tossed the straw very well, he laid a board on the wire and sat on it himself with three children and a dog in full swing; on the whole quite silly.

25 May 1756

Sir Charles Howard reviewed his regiment in the Artillery Ground. With Parvish to the White Hart, and gave him a bottle of wine, which I owed him for teaching me on the flute.

2 August 1756

After dinner, asked Miss Jeale and Miss Westbrooks to come and drink a syllabub with me, (Mr. and Mrs. Martyr were gone to Chichester), but afterwards Miss Jeale sent me word they could not come, and I must go thither; I did and played at quadrille.

Sunday, 15 August 1756

To the Lower Church. Afterwards walked with Mellersh and Ford, Miss Molly and Sally Flutter, and Miss Parson, up Catherine Hill, opposite Mr. Arnold's; then came back, went up town, Mr. Mersing met us, and walked with us as far as Ganghill Common.

22 September 1756

To Mr. Street's at Chilworth, with Miss Molly and Sally Flutter to dinner. They finished their hopping to-day. About six we began dancing, two Miss Grenville's, Miss Betsey Smallpeice, Miss Hall, two Stovolds's, and young Hall, Mr. Street and us; there being one woman too many, we changed our partners, and one woman always sat down. We danced till 3 or 4. All lay there.

21 November 1756

General Blakeney landed yesterday at Portsmouth, and came this evening to the White Hart. A bonfire and illuminations. The mayor and magistrates went to pay their respects to him. I went into the room with them, and had two glasses of claret. Afterwards sat in the next room with Mellersh, Harbroe, Shoter, Horsenell, Elkins, Clifton, H. Parson, and Buckle, to drink his health, from 8 to half-past 10. Paid reckoning, 1s 6d. Bonfire, 1d.

22 December 1756

Byng went through the town this morning on his way to Portsmouth to take his trial. They tolled the bell, and burnt his effigy on the churchyard-steps.

28 November 1757

I was sworn in to-day in the King's Bench as an Attorney of that Court. Paid Judges' clerk, when I went to be examined, 7s; servant, 1s. Admission on stamp, £6 6s. At 8 with Jenkins and James to the Robin Hood Society. Stayed there till past 9, then went into a room below and stayed till 11.

1 December 1757

To Covent Garden Theatre. Paid for a fortnight's board and lodging, £1 4s; for a bushel of coals, 1s 2d. Tea at Prosser's coffee-house, 4d; wine after dinner, 3d; a pound of candles, 7d.

1 January 1758

In my pocket, £1 5s 5d; purse, £17 9s 6d; money laid out for my brother, etc. £2 7s 7½d; due from my mother at Christmas, £2 2s; in my card purse, 12s 2d; Bank 3 per cent. Reduced Annuities, £100. Of wife and children, debts and taxes clear, £123 16s 8½d.

10 May 1758

Breakfasted with Mr. Street; at 11 to the Bank, and sold £25 stock; at 4 dined with Mr. Adderley at the White Lion in Wyck Street; drank tea with Clare; between 7 and 8 Gordon and I went to Covent Garden: "Miss in her Teens."

18 May 1758

Breakfasted at home; James dined here; he fetched a pigeon pie; afterwards to Prosser's, where Pitts came to me; at 6 Emily came; we took boat at the Temple, landed at Lambeth, and walked to Vauxhall; supped there. Home about 12; very pleasant evening; paid for supper at Vauxhall, 2s; going in, 1s.

19 May 1758

Breakfasted at New Exchange Coffee House; dined at Betty's with Mr. Gordon; then to Drury Lane: "The Rehearsal," Bayes, Mr. Garrick; paid for breakfast, 6d; a letter, 3d; dinner and wine, 1s 4d.

20 May 1758

Jenkins, James, and I walked to Marylebone; at bowls till 8; then we went to the Sugar Loaf in Bell Yard; wine at Marylebone, 6d; supper, 4½d.

28 August 1758

At 8 went to Mrs. Norwood's, Miss Adee and Betsy Stevens breakfasted there; they went down the backway to Mr. Brewer's; I went home and down town; was married; sent Mr. Brewer's man for a chaise and came away directly; went afterwards to Mr. Brewer's and drank chocolate; dined at Epsom; to Mrs. C.'s at 5; I walked to Hatton Garden and with Mr. Boughton to Lincoln's Inn Coffee House; then home; at quadrille before supper.

License £1 11s 6d; Pair of gloves 1s; Mr. Burdett's fee £1 1s; the clerk 10s 6d; Mrs. Norwood's maid 7s 6d; Middle Parish ringers £1 1s; dinner at Epsom 5s 6d; chaise from Epsom to London 14s; driver and hostler 2s; two bottles of Lisbon at the White Hart 3s 4d; for fifty oysters 7½d; a pound of cheese 3½d; a pound and a half of salmon 1s; paid Jenkins for the ring 6s 6d; Mr. Shrubbs for a tabby nightgown £7 14s; ear-rings and necklace 14s; coffee with Boughton at the Lincoln's Inn Coffee House 5d.

9 April 1759

Having a cold, with a difficulty of breathing, I was bled this morning, and found benefit by night.

14 August 1759

My wife brought to bed this morning, about five of a boy. Paid Mr. Burdett, 10s 6d; midwife and nurse, 10s.

13 April 1760

Paid a man going beyond Ripley to get some leeches to bleed the child. A labourer in the garden one day, 1s 3d.

8 June 1761

Mr. Lane and Mr. Godschall made a cricket match today on Albury Heath. Mrs. Skurray and my wife went in a postchaise, and dined with my mother, and then went to see it. I walked. We drank tea in Mr. Godschall's tent, Mr. Lane, Mr. King, Mr. Vincent, Mr. Dickinson, Lord Ossory, etc.

18 March 1767

It pleased God to release my William from his sufferings, when half a year old he was seized with convulsions which never left him.

19 June 1767

Jack was taken with the smallpox, and on the 28th the dear soul died. Polly was taken on the 1st of July, I sent for Mr. Kerr who gave her Sutton's powders, and she recovered.

9 September 1768

To Neville Court, and had the nerve in both ears cut for the toothache, and received relief in an hour.

14 December 1796

My wife died about 5 in the afternoon; the most affectionate of wives, tenderest of parents, and most sincere of Christians; to her great prudence and discretion I owe the prosperity with which God has blessed me.

15 November 1806

This day, I completed my 70th year, without having ever met with any accident of consequence and with very little interruption to my health, except in January last, when I had a very serious attack by an inflammation in my lungs, but from which I am perfectly recovered. My eyesight is so good that I can and generally do use my eyes in reading or writing from the time of getting up in the morning till 10 at night. My hearing is in no way impaired. I have not lost one front tooth and very few others. I am able to walk or ride 4 or 5 hours together, but I do not ride fast. My memory is perhaps not so good as it has been. On the whole I seem to be in a perfect good state of health, thanks be to God.

5 April 1810

I quitted the Board of Green Cloth, after having had a place there for 49 years and a half. I was put on the superannuation list at my request, the Lord Steward having kindly procured leave for it. He also, unsolicited, gave me leave to resign my place of Clerk of the Verge to my son.

16 June 1826

In chaise to Guildford, the County election, voted for Mr. Sumner and Mr. Denison.

24 December 1828

Such has been the decay in my eyesight the whole of this year that I have not been able to read either print or MS., though I have continued to write letters, as I am writing on this 24th of December. I cannot read it when written. I have also lost my hearing in one ear in a great degree; subject to this, my bodily health has been what may be called good. I have been obliged to pay more than £1.100 by the treachery of a clerk, and the malice of one who had been long attempting, and at last effected a loss of long friendship with Mrs. Wigzell.