

Burney Letter

Vol. 5 No. 1

The Burney Society

Spring 1999

Fanny Burney and Bath

By Maggie Lane

In June 1998 at the AGM of the UK Burney Society, held in an hotel just outside Bath which is owned by Bill Fraser, a descendant of the Burney family, I was invited by Jean Bowden to speak on the subject of Fanny Burney's association with Bath. In October of the same year, as I was in Quebec for the Jane Austen Society of North America annual conference, I offered to give a shortened version of the talk at the AGM of the US Burney

Society. I might have submitted the paper to be published in the recently launched *Burney Journal*, but I had a very good reason for not wishing to do so and for supplying this article to the *Burney Letter* instead.

In researching and writing my talk, I realised there was sufficient material to make a very interesting short book on the subject. Happily I was able to convince a local publisher likewise. Millstream Books of Bath had already published, some ten years ago, my book on Jane Austen and Bath entitled *A*

Charming Place. It was agreed that the new book would be of the same length (27,000 words) and format, and that the title would be *A City of Palaces*, with the subtitle 'Bath through the eyes of Fanny Burney'. Publication is planned for May 1999.

I hope the book will appeal not only to Burney enthusiasts, but also to people interested in the history of Bath, who may not – as yet! – know much

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Two Speakers, Discussion of Plaque at 1998 AGM

On a cold rainy night in Quebec City last October 9th 1998, 40 members of the Burney Society gathered for a convivial dinner-meeting in defiance of the truly Gothic weather. The Loews Le Concorde Hotel, which overlooks the wind-swept Plains of Abraham outside the old walled city, seemed an appropriate venue for a conference on Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* which was taking place at the same time.

After a luxurious four-course dinner, Society members were well primed to listen to two interesting talks. The first by Professor Lars Troide, director of the Burney Project at McGill University and General Editor of *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny*

Burney was read in his absence by Dr. Stewart Cooke. Troide outlined the 40-year history of "The McGill Burney Project" founded by Professor Joyce Hemlow, "the architect of modern Burney studies." Hemlow began her editorial work by searching world-wide for Burney family papers, and then filming and transcribing them. Of 10,000 manuscript pages of Burney's journals, Hemlow undertook to edit the second half, beginning with Burney's release from court in 1791. The 12 volumes that she published (1972-84) were remarkable for their recovery of lost or obliterated text as well as detailed notes outlining the family, political or social history.

Editorial work continues at the

project; Troide and his colleagues have now reached the fifth of a projected twelve volumes of earlier material (1768-91) which includes Burney's rise to literary fame and her years in the Queen's household. (The full text of this talk is published in *The Burney Journal*, vol. 2 (1999)).

The second talk was given by Maggie Lane of Bristol, England, Burney society patron and vice president for Great Britain. Notable author of numerous books including *Jane Austen's England*, *Jane Austen's World* and *Jane Austen and Food*, Ms. Lane is completing a book on "Fanny Burney and Bath."

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about Fanny Burney herself. Her importance as a chronicler of the city and as one of its illustrious visitors and residents will thus I hope be reinforced. By gathering together all Fanny's comments (and they are plentiful) on the city of Bath, I hope to make her experience of the city accessible to those who would find it daunting to read the 20-odd volumes of the

Burney Letter

The semi-annual newsletter of the Burney Society, which includes members in Canada, Great Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

President Paula L. Stepankowsky
Editor Lorna J. Clark

Address correspondence regarding newsletter articles to Lorna Clark, 2111 Fairbanks Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1H 5Z2.

Membership in The Burney Society is available for \$15 (US) annually in the United States and Canada, and £9 annually in Great Britain. To request membership information, or to notify the society of a change of address, write in the United States and Canada to: Lucy Magruder, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, AZ, USA 85646 (or lucy@magruder.org). In Great Britain, write Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England, GU34 3JB.

complete *Letters and Diaries*. At the same time, by selecting and juxtaposing these particular episodes from Fanny's long and eventful life, a thread emerges which even Burney aficionados might have overlooked!

In following this thread chronologically, what is so fascinating is the way Fanny's personal experiences echo and illuminate the social history of Bath over the course of

half a century. Fanny's first visit to Bath was in 1767, with her father on the journey back from Bristol Hotwells, where he had attempted to win over Mrs. Allen's brother to their forthcoming marriage. This visit fell within the only non-writing period of Fanny's life, between the famous bonfire and the start of the diary addressed to 'Nobody'. So the first *documented* Bath visit is that spent with the Thrales from April to June 1780, two years after the publication of *Evelina*.

Fêted and sought after, Fanny was thus one of the artistic and fashionable people who flocked to Bath for recreation almost as a matter of course.

Her long diary-letters to Susan portray a highly socialised existence, where every evening was spent in company, and where conversationalists such as Mrs Thrale and Mrs Montagu 'pitted' their wits – the term is Mrs Thrale's own – against one another in encounter after encounter. Fanny's greatest disappointment was in finding Christopher Anstey, author of the satirical rhyming *New Bath Guide*, so stiff in company. But she herself, whom the public expected to sparkle like the dialogue in *Evelina*, was both too shy and too proud to shine to order. Except in her own intimate circle, her talents were for observation, not performance, and she gives us page after page of observation of a Bath whose *raison d'être* was public performance.

Fanny's next visit to Bath was in 1791, immediately after her release from court, as the last three weeks of a six week tour of the West Country intended to recuperate her health. She drank the waters religiously twice a day, and believed she benefited from them. Socially she shrank from new acquaintance, and only one group broke through her reluctance, the Duchess of Devonshire and her extended family, who had retreated to Bath to avoid various scandals that had broken about

their heads. By 1791, Bath was no longer the resort of the aristocratic as it was invaded by the prospering middle classes. This visit of Fanny's came in the middle of the great building boom of 1788 to 91, when the number of Bath's houses tripled to accommodate them all. She describes in vivid detail Bath as one vast building site, as if the world were just beginning, and nobody could endure to live on any other spot. Without others of their kind the Devonshires were evidently bored, and took up Fanny accordingly. Horrified though she was by rumours of their immorality, she succumbed to their personal charm, as a result of which she looked back on this visit as one compounded of pleasure and pain.

Twenty-four years were to elapse before Fanny returned to Bath, this time as a resident. Much had happened to Fanny in the interim, and much had changed in Bath. Its abandonment by the fashionable had continued in tandem with its physical expansion. Now Bath was chiefly populated by the minor gentry, retired members of the professional classes, and widows and spinsters with pretensions to gentility but small means and no importance in the world. It is extraordinary that once again Fanny was representative of this trend. She and her husband, Alexandre d'Arblay, had a very small income to live on. She eulogises Bath for its cheapness, using just the same arguments as Mr. Shepherd in members of the professional classes, and widows and spinsters with pretensions to gentility but small means and no importance in the world. It is extraordinary that once again Fanny was representative of this trend. She and her husband, Alexandre d'Arblay, had a very small income to live on. She eulogises Bath for its cheapness using just the same arguments as Mr. Shepherd in recommending Bath to Sir

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Burney Memorial missing from Walcot church

Burney Society members are making efforts to track down a memorial tablet to Madame d'Arblay (Frances Burney) which has disappeared from St. Swithin's Church in the parish of Walcot at Bath. Frances Burney was buried near the church on 15 January 1840, although her grave remains unmarked since the moving of the headstone in 1955. Restoring her gravestone is one of the aims of the Burney society.

Inside the church in the upper gallery were tablets to the memory of Alexandre d'Arblay, his wife, Frances, and their son, Alexander, as well as to another family member, Sarah Harriet Burney the novelist (half-sister to Mme d'Arblay). These details were given in Austen Dobson's edition of the *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, 6 vols. (1904-5) which also included a 1905 photograph of the tablet in which the inscription was clearly legible.

*Sacred to the memory of
Frances d'Arblay
second daughter of Charles Burney Mus: D:
and widow of
Genl Count Alexandre Jean Baptiste Piochard d'Arblay.*

*The friend of Johnson and of Burke
who by her talents has obtained a name
far more durable than marble can confer.
By the public she was admired for her writings;
by those who knew her best
for her sweet and noble disposition
and the bright example she displayed
of self-denial and every Christian virtue
but her trust was placed in God
and her hope rested
on the mercy and merits of her Redeemer
through whom alone she looked
for an inheritance incorruptible undefiled
and that fadeth not away
she died in London on the 6th day of January 1840:
aged 88.*

*Her remains are deposited in the adjoining church-yard
near those of her beloved husband, and in the same vault
with those of her only son
the Rev^d Alexander Charles Louis Piochard d'Arblay,
who departed this life January 19th 1837:
aged 42.*

Although the tablet to her husband still remains in the church, those to Mme d'Arblay and her sister-novelist have disappeared. Kate Chisholm writes from London of an expedition to Bath to try to locate the tablet or solve its mysterious disappearance.

"Last summer, Maggie Lane, Karin Fernald and myself went back down to Bath to see if we could find the missing tablet in St. Swithin's Church, having established (from a typewritten list of the tablets in the church) that it should have been on the West Wall (the Gallery) behind the organ."

"This was no easy task – the organ pipes extend so far now that we had to clamber through miniscule passages between the pipes. However, with the aid of a torch and the list of tablets, we were able to locate where the tablet should have been – BUT IT WAS MISSING! There was a space on the wall, and some brackets, which suggested to me that it had been moved, presumably when the organ was rebuilt and extended, making it impossible to see the plaques on that wall (great detective work!)"

"So, off to the Somerset Record Office to see if there was a faculty (i.e. record from the ecclesiastical authorities) authorising such a move. And, yes: in January 1958 the Church of St. Swithin's requested permission to move tablets dedicated to Fanny Burney and Sarah Burney (presumably Sarah Harriet).

"So that part of the mystery is solved. However, the fact remains that the tablet is still missing. Was it broken when it was removed from the wall? Where was it taken? We have done a thorough search and found nothing in the crypt and side offices."

The tablet was probably erected by heirs or executors of Madame d'Arblay, according to Joyce Hemlow's account in the last volume of *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 12 (1984). It was this account which first drew attention to the unmarked condition of the d'Arblay graves in Bath. Fifteen years later, the situation remains unchanged, although efforts and initiatives by Burney Society members still continue.

Nominations Open

Nominations are open for the Board of Directors of the Burney Society. Elected every two years, it consists of a President, Vice Presidents for Canada and UK, Past President/Advisor, Secretary/Treasurer and two Members-at-Large. Elections will be held at the annual Burney Society Dinner and Meeting, 8 October 1999. Nominations for these positions should be sent to the Secretary, Lucy Magruder, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, AZ, USA 85646 (or lucy@magruder.org) before 31 August 1999, to be forwarded to the nominating committee.

AGM

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In her fascinating talk, she outlined three periods of Burney's association with Bath. In 1780 at the height of her literary fame, the 28-year-old novelist accompanied the Thrales there on a party of pleasure; they were hurried away after three months by the Gordon Riots. Later in 1791, she visited the city for three weeks to take the waters as a restorative after resigning her place in the Royal household. Finally, in 1815, she returned with her ailing husband, General d'Arblay, seeking the life of quiet retirement which was within reach there even for those in straitened circumstances. She nursed him through his last illness in 1818; he died on 3 May and was buried in the Walcot churchyard. Burney would later request that she and her only child Alexander be returned to the same site for their final resting place. (The Burney Society is making efforts to restore these graves).

After the talks came the business part of the meeting. President Paula Stepankowsky extended greetings to our distinguished visitor, Jean Bowden, secretary-treasurer of the British branch of the society. She also thanked Jacqueline Reid-Walsh for her help as founding vice-president of the society and vice-president for Canada; Jacqui's role will now be filled by Stewart Cooke, co-editor of *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*. Victoria Kortés-Papp, a doctoral candidate at l'Université de Laval, was praised for her achievement in editing the first volume of *The Burney Journal* (1998). Finally, a new editor for the *Burney Letter* was announced, Lorna Clark. The president also welcomed two new patrons of the Burney Society, Professors Juliet McMaster and Peter Sabor.

Ms. Stepankowsky reported on the society's successful application for a

memorial to Frances Burney in Westminster Abbey. As to the inscription, Jean Bowden put forward the wording voted on at the British AGM:

FANNY BURNEY
(MADAME D'ARBLAY)
Novelist
Diarist
Playwright
Daughter of
Charles Burney Mus. D.
1752-1840

Jean Bowden stated that British members felt strongly that Burney should be referred to as "Fanny" and not "Frances" on the plaque. There was some discussion about the appropriateness of using a nickname rather than a Christian name for a memorial in Westminster Abbey and it was suggested that the Dean should be consulted on this point. A compromise was suggested that would include both: "Frances (Fanny) Burney d'Arblay." This would keep in mind the formal and memorial nature of the plaque and its setting as well as include the familiar name by which she has been known to the reading public. British members will have a chance to discuss this proposal at their June meeting.

The phrase "daughter of" also attracted comment, some members expressing the view that the plaque should indicate Burney's achievements and claims to literary fame, not her family connections. Others felt that her strong attachment to her father was an important element of her life and worth remarking. The size of the plaque may be a factor. It is also possible that the memorial might actually be placed next to that of Charles Burney. No conclusions were reached and members will still have a chance to express their opinions before any decision is made.

The membership secretary, Lucy Magruder, then gave her report. The Burney Society now has over 100

members (68 in North America) with assets of \$314 in US funds. Ms. Magruder noted the extra costs involved with producing and mailing a journal (\$4.50 each) as well as two newsletters (\$2.40 each) per year. In order to meet these and other expenses, she requested a raise in dues from \$10 to \$15 US (or £9) per year starting June 1999. This proposal was passed unanimously.

Finally, a silent auction was held to help with the fundraising effort for the memorial plaque. Donated by Joan Drexler and Jean Bowden, three books were auctioned for \$100 to add to the fund. To date, \$3500 has been raised of the £5000 required by Westminster Abbey to endow a plaque. Donations by members are welcomed and are tax-deductible.

The meeting ended with a warm invitation to assemble again in October 1999 at Colorado Springs.

BATH

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Walter Elliot, as a pleasant place to live on a reduced income, in *Persuasion*. It is not, of course, fair to compare the careful d'Arblays with Sir Walter, who has squandered his inheritance. Much more do they resemble the Crofts, all in all to one another, walking about the town arm in arm, greeting friends in the shops and the Pump Room, but happily returning to their own snug quarters to dine and pass the evening. (It is interesting that 1815, the year of the d'Arblays' arrival, is also the date of the Crofts' visit to Bath.) At least as far as the d'Arblays were concerned, it was a quiet, frugal existence, but since so many were in the same state, they were not made to feel inferior.

During this period of residence in Bath, which lasted from November, 1815, to September, 1818, the d'Arblays occupied the same cheap

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lodgings in Great Stanhope Street, equally free, as Fanny wrote, from the damp of the baths and the bleaks of the hills. They had four rooms in the house, and their sitting room looked south over the river to open country. There was a pleasant sheltered walk nearby in Norfolk Crescent (which endeared itself to Norfolk-born Fanny, though named in honour of Nelson) and a level approach to the city centre, useful as Alexandre had been lamed in an accident in France that summer, and was never really to recover.

Great Stanhope Street, wrote Fanny, was named so not from any magnificence in its proportions or inhabitants, but because a Little Stanhope Street nearby was a mere lane. The d'Arblays' house at No.23 may still be seen, as may the much grander house at 14 South Parade, where Fanny stayed with the Thrales in 1780, and which now bears a plaque to 'Fanny Burney'.

In 1817, Fanny's sister Esther and her husband, Charles Rousseau Burney, also decided to retire to Bath for reasons of economy and health.

They bought a rather charming new house with an iron balcony in the latest Regency taste and a delightful long garden to the front. The house was very cheap, because very remote, being about two miles from the city centre and accessible only by a rutted lane. Fanny's letters to another sister, Charlotte, contain many descriptions of the charms and inconveniences of this house, which also still stands, though it has lost its balcony and is now in the thick of a suburb.

Late in 1817 the old Queen Charlotte, Fanny's former mistress, visited Bath for her health, the first visit she had made to any part of the kingdom without her husband George III. Fanny, who was given prior notice of the visit by Princess Elizabeth, proudly describes the entrance into the city of the Royal entourage, the loyal banners of the shop-keepers, and the grand reception laid on at the Guildhall. Alas, that very evening the news came though that Princess Charlotte, the only legitimate grandchild of the King, had died in childbirth. It seems to have been Fanny's knack to have been present at so many historic moments. Later the

Queen returned to Bath and Fanny called on her every day for a month, though she could hardly afford the cost of the chair to take her the mile from one side of the city to the other.

While it would seem Alexandre was always hankering to return to France, and indeed did spend several months there in both 1816 and 1817, Fanny would have been deeply content with their Bath life except that she was never free from three sources of worry: their finances; their son's character and progress at university; and her husband's health. Alexandre died in 1818, having counselled Fanny to leave Bath and get out into the world again. His word was of course sacred to her, and besides, she felt she must live for her son now, and he wanted to make a home in London. Fanny thought this was only natural, Bath having, she wrote, become a place not for young people but for females and invalids. Nevertheless, it was with real sorrow that she left the city in September, 1818.

All three d'Arblays are buried in Bath. The vexed story of their graves and memorials is too long to tell here, but forms the last chapter of my book.

Staged Reading of *The Witlings* in Bristol

By Maggie Lane

Surely nobody, since Arthur Murphy himself, has done more to bring Fanny Burney's plays before the public than Alan Coveney, actor and director of the Bristol-based theatre group Show of Strength. In 1993 he produced the first ever production of *A Busy Day*, and now he has turned his skills and enthusiasm to *The Witlings*. This time, funding was much scarcer, and all that could be offered was a rehearsed read-through on three consecutive evenings in January 1999.

But this was not just 'better than nothing', it was a hugely enjoyable

experience, thanks to a spirited cast and a superb play!

Though the cast kept their scripts in their hands, they were sufficiently well acquainted with their parts to need very few glances, leaving them free to interact with each other and move with confidence about the stage. All the actors inhabited their characters with real gusto, which is what this kind of play requires; it was impossible to come away feeling short-changed. The lack of period costume hardly mattered once one had become absorbed in the story. This was one of the points raised when Alan Coveney encouraged the audience to stay for a post-

performance discussion. Though it is lovely to have the senses ravished by eighteenth-century sets and costume, sometimes their very beauty can have a distancing effect. In some ways modern dress is preferable, as we are better able to 'read' its gradations and relate to its wearers as 'people like us'. However, the choice this time had been an economic, not an artistic one.

Alan told us that he had made relatively few cuts, conflating Mrs Wheedle with her assistant Miss Jenny, omitting Mrs Voluble's servant Miss Betty, and doubling the parts of Jack and Bob. Actors who double

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The Witlings

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always seem to have the most fun. Jack kept Bob's woolly hat in his back jeans pocket, ready on the instant to turn from dashing man-about-town to slow-witted oaf. One bit of sub-plot was cut on the grounds that it came to nothing, namely Cecilia's plan to go abroad to earn her living. Reading the play afterwards, I was sorry this had had to go, since it underlined both her desperation and her honourable

attempt at independence, an attempt I should think modern audiences would applaud.

It is still hard to know why Samuel Crisp and Charles Burney were so adamant that this play should be abandoned. Because it makes fun of the Blue-stockings? Lady Smatter is much too thick for Mrs Montagu to suppose she was intended for her, and Mrs Sapient too trivial. It is a wonderful play, sharp, funny, well-

constructed (it all takes place in one day, and alternates between scenes of low and high life) and with a perennial butt, the pretensions of the literary, for its satire. Not only would Fanny almost certainly have made her fortune by it, but it would have remained in the repertoire from her own time to ours, as did Sheridan's two masterpieces, with which it can well bear comparison.

New Patrons for Burney Society

By Paula Stepankowsky

The Burney Society is honoured to add two distinguished Canadian scholars to its list of society patrons. Both Dr. Peter Sabor and Dr. Juliet McMaster have been main speakers at society meetings and have helped the society with advice and support in numerous ways.

Dr. Sabor, Professor of Literature at l'Université de Laval in Quebec City, earned his bachelor's degree from Cambridge University and his doctorate from the University of London. Before moving to Quebec City in 1995, he was head of the Department of English at Queen's University in Canada.

He is the editor of *The Complete Plays of Frances Burney*, published in 1995 by Pickering & Chatto and McGill-Queen's University Press. Along with Dr. Margaret Anne Doody, another Burney Society patron, he edited Burney's *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer* for Oxford World's Classics. He edited and wrote an introduction to the *Letters and Passages Restored from the Original Manuscripts of the History of Clarissa*, published by

Pickering & Chatto. He also edited a new edition of Sarah Fielding's novel *The Adventures of David Simple*, published by The University Press of Kentucky.

He has published many articles

Both Dr. Peter Sabor and Dr. Juliet McMaster have been main speakers at society meetings and have helped the society with advice and support in numerous ways.

on 18th and early 19th-century English literature. He has served on the board of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and is past president of the Canadian Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies. He is a member of the Jane Austen Society of North America board and is a referee for a number of presses, including the Cambridge University Press and the Princeton University Press.

Dr. McMaster is University Professor of English at the University of Alberta, a fellow of

the Royal Society of Canada and winner of the prestigious Molson Prize, Canada's top award in the Humanities for outstanding contributions to Canadian Culture. Her degrees are from Oxford and the University of Alberta.

Among the books she has published are *Thackeray: The Major Novels*, *Trollope's Palliser Novels*, *Dickens the Designer* and *Jane Austen the Novelist*. She is also co-editor of *Jane Austen's Business* and co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. She has written more than 70 articles on the English novel. Frances Burney is one of the authors included in her new book, *The Body Legible in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*.

Dr. Sabor and Dr. McMaster join a distinguished list of Burney Society Patrons comprising: Dr. Joyce Hemlow and Dr. Lars Troide of Canada; Jean Bowden, Charles Burney, John Comyn, Susan McCartan and Nigel Nicolson of Great Britain; and Mary Margaret Benson, Dr. Rachel Brownstein, Dr. Margaret Anne Doody, Dr. Jan Fergus, Conrad Harper, Ruth Iglehart, Dr. Ruth Perry, Dr. Betty Rizzo and Dr. Janice Thaddeus, all of the United States.

Burney Scholarship Thrives at Eighteenth Century Conferences

When members of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies get together for a conference, they often talk about Frances Burney. This was the case in September 1998 in Edmonton, Alberta when there were so many papers on Burney that they had to spill over into several sessions.

Peter Sabor of l'Université de Laval chaired one session with two papers on *Camilla*, by Victoria Kortes-Papp (editor of *The Burney Journal*) and Diane Harris of Toronto. Noel Chevalier of Regina and Barbara Darby then spoke about Burney's plays (Darby's recent book *Frances Burney, Dramatist*, is reviewed on p. 10). Sabor expressed relief that there was no paper on "Evelina the

inevitable," as he terms Burney's most famous novel, which has spawned so many recent academic critiques (However, the "E-word" did pop up occasionally during his session).

A fifth paper on a related topic, "Sarah Harriet Burney: Sister-Novelist" was given by Lorna Clark in a panel on the English novel. Frances' father Charles Burney was also featured in Leslie Ritchie's talk on the scurrilous satire of *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* which caused him so much pain.

Women writers contemporary to Burney were discussed in talks on Bluestocking Feminism, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Anna Laetitia Barbauld who now has her own website. The conference ended with an update on the Orlando Project, a

collaborative enterprise which aims to produce a scholarly history of women's writing in the British Isles and will include many women writers who were contemporary to Burney.

Another highlight was the sampling of beer brewed according to eighteenth century methods, a growing trend at these academic conferences (would Fanny have approved?)

The 30th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Eighteenth Century Studies in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (24-28 March 1999) will also turn its attention to Burney (after this *Letter* goes to press). Four scholars will speak on the topic of "Frances Burney, Dramatist" including Burney Society members, Janice Thaddeus of Harvard University and Victoria Kortes-Papp of Laval.

British AGM Meets on Fanny's Birthday

The fifth Annual General Meeting of the British Branch of the Burney Society is to be held on Sunday 13 June 1999, at 2 p.m. at Juniper Hall, Mickleham, near Dorking in Surrey. The historic house, now a field centre, witnessed the first meeting of Frances Burney with her future husband, Alexandre d'Arblay in 1793. It is fortunate that this year the meeting will coincide exactly with the date of Frances Burney's birthday almost 250 years ago.

The speaker will be Kate Chisholm, who will talk about *Fanny Burney and the Wanderer*. Kate is the author of the most recent biography *Fanny Burney: Her Life*, which was published last year.

Tickets for the meeting will be £5 per person, to include refreshments, and may be obtained from Jean Bowden (Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton Hampshire GU34 3JB). Members, their partners, and prospective members, from other parts of the world, are very welcome to attend. For further information, Jean Bowden can be reached at 01420-511432.

13 June 1999 Burney Society Meeting

To register for the 13 June 1999 meeting of the Burney Society at Juniper Hall in Surrey, please fill out the form below and send it, along with a cheque for £5 to Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hants GU34 3JB. Please make cheques payable to the Burney Society.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt. or House No.: _____

County: _____ Postal Code: _____

For further information, Jean Bowden can be reached at 01420-511432

Burney Society Launches Fund-Raising Drive

By Paula Stepankowsky

Now that the Burney Society has approval to raise a memorial to Frances ("Fanny") Burney d'Arblay in Westminster Abbey, the task of raising at least 5,000 pounds to create it and maintain it in perpetuity is now ahead.

The society is fortunate that approximately \$3,500 has been raised towards the total so far, including

three major donations and money from the sales of books and other items. These donations came before the formal fund-raising effort was launched, making the society highly confident that the full sum can be raised by 2002.

If it meets with the Abbey's approval, the society hopes to dedicate the memorial on June 13, 2002, a day that marks Burney's 250th birthday. The society also hopes to arrange an international conference on Burney in London at the same time to coincide with the plaque dedication.

We hope you will join us in our effort to honour this major figure in 18th-century English literature by sending a cheque made out to the Burney Society, to one of the following: (in the U.K.) Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3JB, or (in North America) to Lucy Magruder, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, AZ 85646 USA.

You may prefer to add your gift into the donation line in the 1999 Burney Society membership form. All donations are fully tax-deductible.

1999 Membership dues reminder

Renewal forms for the Burney Society's 1999-2000 dues year, beginning 13 June 1999 will soon be sent out.

Thanks to the support of existing and new members, the society is thriving with more than one hundred members world-wide. We are able to produce two newsletters and one journal a year as well as to hold two annual general meetings, one in North America and one in the U.K.

The Burney Society is a non-profit organisation whose primary purpose is to promote the study and appreciation of Frances (Burney) d'Arblay, her works, life and times. Long-term goals include raising a plaque to her memory in Westminster Abbey and restoring her grave in the churchyard of St. Swithin's Church, Walcot, in Bath. A fund-raising effort, to help with the first of these projects, has been launched.

New members or those wishing to renew are invited to fill in the coupon below and mail it (in North America) to Lucy Magruder, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, Arizona, USA 85646 or (in the U.K.) to Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England, GU34 3JB. Tax-deductible donations are also welcome.

Burney Society Membership Form

All new or renewing members of the Burney Society, please fill out the form below and return it with your cheque (made payable to the Burney Society) for the 1999-2000 dues year which runs from 13th June 1999. Those who live in the U.S. and Canada should send a cheque for \$15 US to: Lucy Magruder, Secretary-Treasurer, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, Arizona, USA 85646. Those living in the U.K. should send a cheque for £9 to Jean Bowden, Secretary-Treasurer U.K., Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England GU34 3JB.

Tax-deductible donations, to help with the fund-raising effort, are also welcome. *Thank you for your support.*

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt. No.: _____

City: _____ State/Province/County: _____

Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Membership dues: _____

Tax-deductible donation: _____

Total Amount enclosed: _____

Burney on the Internet

Frances Burney's third novel, *Camilla*, will soon be discussed on the Austen list, an e-mail chat group devoted to Jane Austen which is administered by Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, co-founder of the Burney Society. To subscribe to the list, send a message to:

LISTSERV@LISTS.MCGILL.CA

which consists of the words:

SUBSCRIBE AUSTEN-L

followed by your first and last names. Once on the list, to post a message to all the members, you use the address:

AUSTEN-L@LISTS.MCGILL.CA

The discussion of *Camilla* should take place in late spring or early summer.

Burney also features on many websites. A new one, designed by Barbara Darby of Halifax, Nova Scotia, is located on the World Wide Web at:

<http://is.dal.ca/~bdarby/home.html>

Comments, corrections or contributions are welcome, such as bibliographical information, summaries of Burney's novels, or announcements of forthcoming work. Messages can also be left there for the editors of *The Burney Journal* and *Burney Letter*.

Editor seeks Contributions

The *Burney Letter* welcomes the submission of news or other announcements of interest to the membership.

Tell us about your recent publications, send a note or query, suggest a topic for an article or submit one yourself.

All contributions should be sent to the editor, Lorna Clark, 2111 Fairbanks Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1H 5Z2 or by e-mail at:

lclarklj@aol.com

Members' News

Burney Society members are active in writing, editing and publishing work on Frances Burney.

Professor Lars Troide of McGill University writes that Volume 4 of *The Early Journals and Letters of Franny Burney*, edited by Betty Rizzo (under his general editorship) is now at McGill-Queen's Press and should be out later this year (Clarendon Press will sell it outside of North America). Lars Troide's work on vols. 5 and 6 should be expedited by a National Endowment for the Humanities Research Fellowship which allows a year off teaching duties (1999-2000). Professor Alvaro Ribeiro of Georgetown University also has an NEH to work on Volume 2 of *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney*.

A new biography of Frances Burney by Professor Janice Thaddeus of Harvard University is at press; it is part of the Macmillan Literary Lives series. Also forthcoming is the *Selected Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, edited by Peter Sabor and Lars Troide, Associate Editor Stewart Cooke, which will be published by Penguin Classics in the year 2000.

Dr. Barbara Darby of Dalhousie University has recently published two articles on Burney's plays: "Frances Burney's Dramatic Mothers," *English Studies in Canada*, 23.1 (1997): 22-41; and "Tragedy, Feminism, and Frances Burney's *Edwy and Elgiva*," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 10.2 (1997): 3-23.

Colorado Springs site of 1999 AGM

With the Rockies as the backdrop, the annual Burney Society Dinner and Meeting will be held in Colorado Springs on Friday 8 October 1999. For members' convenience, the dinner will be held at the conference hotel of the Jane Austen Society of North America (which will be meeting at the same time), the Antlers Doubletree

The speaker will be Dr. Stewart Cooke who will give a talk on "Editing *Evelina*." Dr. Cooke edited Frances Burney's first novel for the Norton Critical Series; he is also a co-editor of *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* and an associate editor of *The Complete Plays of Frances Burney*.

More details will be given in the fall issue of the *Burney Letter*.

Book Review

Frances Burney Dramatist

Darby, Barbara. *Frances Burney Dramatist: Gender, Performance, and the Late-Eighteenth-Century Stage*. ix+272pp. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997. \$39.95. ISBN 08131 20225

By Lorna Clark

It is a curious coincidence that the launching of the Burney Society and *Letter* is closely linked with a dramatic "reinvention" of our view of this remarkable writer. The full scope of Frances Burney's versatile talents has only recently been realised. Long admired as a best-selling novelist and vivid diarist, she might equally have been celebrated as a successful dramatist, had circumstances been otherwise.

These remarkable developments have unfolded quickly in the pages of this newsletter. The inaugural issue (Spring 1995) appeared almost simultaneously with Peter Sabor's edition of *The Complete Plays of Frances Burney*, which made available for the first time Burney's entire dramatic oeuvre which until then had existed for the most part only in manuscript. Subsequent newsletters have announced other editions: Clayton Delery, *The Witlings* (1995), a play also included in an anthology by Katharine Rogers (1994), and still more recently, *The Witlings and The Woman-Hater* (1997), edited by Peter Sabor and Geoffrey Sill.

Nor have Frances Burney's plays appeared only in academic editions; they have also at long last found an audience. *A Busy Day* was hailed as a lost comic masterpiece and performed

to great applause in 1993, as described by its director, Alan Coveney (Fall 1996). Ian Kelly informed us (Fall 1998) that the same play might soon be put on at the Bath Theatre Royal. No less than three performances of *The Witlings* have been announced: a staged reading at Covent Garden (Nov 1997); a full-length, full-dress production in Houston, Texas (both in Spring 1998 issue) and lately, in February 1999, a staged reading directed by Alan Coveney in Bristol.

Amidst this flurry of performances and texts, it is gratifying to see that a third element has also been introduced, that of interpretation, in Barbara Darby's *Frances Burney Dramatist* (1997). The plays have previously had some critical attention--in a ground-breaking article by Joyce Hemlow (1950) soon after their discovery and more recently, in Margaret Doody's biography of *Frances Burney* (1988). But Darby's work represents the first full-length study in which she applies recent feminist theory to Frances Burney's plays.

In a thoughtful opening chapter on "Gender and the Stage," Darby turns to critics of feminist studies and performance theory to help define the issues. She believes Burney's plays are feminist in that they present gender as an "ideological construction that... relegates women to a submissive and subordinate position to men" (9). In her plays, Burney explores the "world of female difficulties" (11), focusing the action on female figures. In the tragedies, they are affected by political conflicts and evaluated according to

normative roles of feminine behaviour. Even in the comedies, they are subject to forces which assume their inferiority and demand their obedience. In all the plays then, claims Darby, "Burney examines the forces that construct ideas of femininity and female behavior and suggests alternatives to stereotypical notions about women" (21).

This serious approach works most successfully with the tragedies which had previously been dismissed as records of Burney's depressed state of mind at court. In emphasising the political subtext, Darby brings a new dimension to our understanding of these plays. She notes that two of the plays end with a female corpse on stage, which shows dramatically the effect of patriarchal authority on the fragmented and suffering female body. She defines these tragedies as feminist Gothic dramas with their revolutionary ideology and images of confinement in private female spaces. She even suggests that Burney's plays expand our understanding of tragedy from a purely masculine genre to embrace the feminine, to focus on "female suffering, rather than male heroism" (13). Rather than a tragically flawed though noble hero, they present female victims of male-dominated forces or institutions, who bear no responsibility for the disasters which engulf them. The emphasis is shifted to the destructive rather than ennobling effects of suffering. Less concerned with conventionally masculine ideals, "the public, the majestic, or the lofty," they concentrate instead on the "emotional, domestic, and personal" (48).

Book Review

The contrast is most striking in *Elberta*, whose titular heroine is also (unusually for Burney) a mother, totally absorbed by her maternal role. She exalts private family responsibilities above public obligations, in contrast to her husband, who sacrifices himself to restore his honour even though he leaves his family fatherless. *Elberta* survives; the ending seems ambiguous (whose values are we to endorse?) and suggests the possibility, "that it is female survival that is the central theme of the play" (77). The unfinished state of the manuscript shows the dramatist reworking the material to create different effects; Darby's suggestive reading offers a plausible interpretation of a seemingly fragmentary and incoherent text.

Darby sees the comedies addressing similar issues though the consequences are not as severe. The women are still oppressed by patriarchal forces and institutions; their options are limited and they are powerless. Their lives are confined by "socially sanctioned practices" (108) such as marriage, and their choices are

restricted to the familial roles they play--as wives, mothers, or daughters. Darby finds that three of Burney's comedies explore marriage practices in which the woman is reduced to the level of a commodity exchanged in a monetary transaction. She considers the most interesting to be *The Woman-Hater* in which every male character is a misogynist. The play shows the coercive power of the family group and its role in perpetuating prejudices--of class, race and gender. Darby believes that the exclusion of Joyce (a lower-class female) from the patriarchal family at the end is a moment of liberation though she admits that Burney's attitude is unclear and perhaps ambivalent.

The book closes with a chapter placing Burney in context, juxtaposing her plays with those of other female dramatists such as Hannah More and Joanna Baillie. Finally, Darby reflects on the significance of these plays, on "what it means to be female, feminine, and feminist in late-eighteenth-century society" (198). Far from being an unimportant and unsuccessful sideline

to her novels and journals, Burney's drama may serve as a corrective to an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of her work. In questioning social institutions such as marriage and the family and in showing their negative impact on women, Burney may have been more radical than has been imagined, Darby suggests. Certainly the discovery of these plays, their publication, performance and critique may well affect our views, not only of Burney herself but also of the context--theatrical cultural and historical--in which she lived.

It is unusual to have a whole new field opened up for debate, and it shows courage to venture into it alone. Barbara Darby's new book on *Frances Burney Dramatist* is original, challenging and intellectually rigorous; her take on Burney as a writer is nuanced and provocative. No doubt there is more to come, as we have all the excitement of watching history in the making, with new performances, new editions and new critiques of Burney's recently discovered plays.

Location of Abbey Memorial Plaque under Discussion

By Paula Stepankowsky

Plans for a memorial to Frances "Fanny" Burney in Westminster Abbey are moving forward following a meeting March 23 at the abbey with The Rev. Dean Wesley Carr and two Burney Society officers. President Paula Stepankowsky and Jean Bowden, secretary/treasurer of the British branch, met with the Dean in his office before touring the abbey and

looking at two sites proposed for the memorial.

After talking with the Dean, it became apparent that both he and the Abbey Chapter, who have the final say in where the memorial is located, now favor Poet's Corner as the best place for the memorial rather than next to the memorial to Dr. Charles Burney on the opposite side of the church.

The Burney Society had originally favored a location in Poet's Corner for the memorial, but initially, the Dean

suggested that it might be appropriate for the memorial of father and daughter to be together. However, after examining the space surrounding the memorial to Dr. Burney, it became apparent that the only spot large enough for a new memorial would either be on top of a stone bench immediately underneath Dr. Burney's memorial or on the wall immediately under the bench. The space underneath the bench was large enough, but the

memorial would not be easily seen in that location.

George Burroughs, the abbey's Clerk of the Works who also attended the meeting, said it would be technically possible to locate the memorial near Dr. Burney's plaque, but that the Chapter might not approve of it because it would be placed in a manner different from other memorials in the abbey. There is not enough space to the right or the left of Dr. Burney's memorial for anything but a very small plaque.

The Dean said he now favors placing the memorial in Poet's Corner because that is the location in the abbey where writers are represented. He said that women writers are under represented in Poet's Corner and that the memorial we are proposing would do something to even the balance.

The option open to the Burney Society in Poet's Corner is a leaded

glass pane set within a larger floral leaded glass window above Poet's Corner. If this option is chosen, the Burney memorial would either be under the memorial to Oscar Wilde or to Robert Herrick. The Dean said that on many days, the window is often the only memorial visitors see because Poet's Corner itself is so crowded that no one can see the floor or the walls, which contain memorials to many other writers.

George Burroughs said he would investigate the cost of a plaque compared with a window and let the society know what the relative difference would be.

The Burney Society officers enquired whether it would be possible at this time to reserve a time on June 13, 2002, for the memorial dedication, which is generally done after Evensong. The Dean said he could tentatively pencil it in, but that we

must understand that our plans would be subject to change if the Royal Family or the government had a last-minute need to use the abbey.

In a meeting the next day between Charles Burney, Burney Society patron and the Burney family representative in the memorial matter, and Paula Stepankowsky, another option emerged that will be proposed to the Dean.

While there is no space for a plaque next to that of Charles Burney, there might be space for a plaque in Poet's Corner next to that of Jane Austen. Charles Burney said that he would prefer a plaque as a memorial rather than a window because it is more durable. Paula Stepankowsky will write to the Dean asking if that might be considered another option.

Return address:

IN NORTH AMERICA:

THE BURNEY SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2971,
TUBAC, ARIZONA,
USA 85646.

IN GREAT BRITAIN:

THE BURNEY SOCIETY
PRIMROSE COTTAGE,
GRACIOUS STREET,
SELBORNE, ALTON,
HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND
GU34 3JB.