

# GILBERT WHITE'S WILTSHIRE FRIENDS

The centenary of Gilbert White of Selborne occurring in June 1893, may perhaps be admitted as a reason for the insertion of a note of his association with some members of one of the oldest of the Wiltshire families.

Smart Poore by his wife Elizabeth left two sons, Edward Poore of North Tidworth, who died in 1787, and George Poore of Devizes, commonly known as " Counsellor Poore". This Mr. George Poore married a daughter of .... Philips of Devizes, and had issue Edward Poore of Tidworth, who resided for the most part abroad, and died at Rome in 1803; and two daughters, Elizabeth and Jane. Elizabeth was married to W. Dyke of Syrencot, in the parish of Figheldean, Esq., who on inheriting the property of his maternal uncle, Edward Poore (the younger) of Tidworth, assumed the name of Dyke-Poore.

This group of worthies were among the most intimate friends of the Rev. Henry White, the brother of Gilbert White, and the great naturalist himself met them frequently when on visits at Fyfield Rectory, Hants, where his brother held the living twenty six years. The Rev. Henry White, indeed, for a considerable time acted as curate at N. Tidworth, and almost invariably spent part of the Sunday at Mr. Poore's, where he constantly met the Counsellor; Gilbert White, on some occasions, being of the party.

We have this information from some very interesting diaries kept by the Rector of Fyfield, now in the possession of the Rev. F. G. Holbrooke, Rector of Kimpton, from which the following description of a Wiltshire seat is extracted:

"1783, May 16. Rode with E. W. Jr., C. H. W. and dined at Syrens Cot, quite a single track over ye wide Down, shady pleasant riding though the hottest day this year, much water remaining in long bottom of ye Land Springs from the back of Chidbury Hill. Mrs. W. could not go, went to bed ill of a cold. Two of ye little Pigs killed by ye Sows lying on them, 1 last night, 1 to-day. Downs look more bare and brown than ever remembered, many farmers think they must return to foddering with hay. Some in ye Avon Bourn have actually begun, Mr. Dyke says. Polygala Bloom looks bright among ye brown grass. Barley said to advance from 30 shillings to 36 shillings at Warminster Market. The most magnificent Horse Chestnut tree ever seen is now growing in Mr. Dyke's garden in vast vigour and strength, and seems not to have attained to its full size; its bloom is destroyed and leaves injured by the late frost. He moved the fence of his garden to take this tree in from ye meadow adjoining. Beech trees scorched totally brown as in Deer, in ye plantations at S. Tidworth, at ye N.W. corner."

Another day's outing resulted in this interesting record:

"1781, February 20th. Expedition to ye Duke of Queensbury's and Stonehenge. Metaque fervidis vix avitata rotis. Thus ye ancient Druids, etc. House at Amesbury much altered by ye present Duke; the approach now on the side next the turnpike. Pictures likewise differently placed, and some taken away. Lady Forbes and Lady Clarendon possess the other half of this grand collection of portraits by Vandyke and Lely which were formerly all to be seen together at Cornbury Lodge, Oxfordshire."

February 22nd. Paper covering at ye Duke of Queensbury's new Kitchen and cart house : very light, beautiful and elegant, but, qu. whether durable and how expensive."

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