

# ◆ Lewes Library Society

THE EARLY YEARS, 1785–1831

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*In 1785 a small group of Lewesians, led by a surgeon, Joseph Ridge, founded a Library Society to acquire serious books. Members numbered 28 in 1786, 60 by 1792 and 90 by the early 19th century. A marked dissenting and radical connection — particularly with the Westgate Presbyterian Meeting — is detectable among the early members. The Society's holdings numbered about 1000 volumes by 1794 and over 3000 by 1827, in the earliest surviving catalogue. A volume recording loans in 1786 is a rare and important survival in the Society's archive (in the East Sussex Record Office) and makes it possible to compare the Society's tastes in reading with those of a contemporary Library Society in Bristol. The initial policy of purchasing serious works was continued. This applied to works on political, social, religious, philosophical, economic, legal and scientific topics, though these were leavened with writings on travel, poetry and some fiction and lighter fare.*

The prime mover in the foundation of a Library Society in Lewes appears to have been the dissenting surgeon Dr Joseph Ridge (Fig. 1). His 'breast conceiv'd the gen'rous thought', says the Society's laureate J. V. Button (1804). The background was explained by the same poet, as follows: 'probably disgusted at the usual trash of Circulating Libraries, some gentlemen, inhabitants of Lewes, conceived the idea of establishing a library, which, gradually increasing, might embrace books in every science, and contain works too expensive for individual purchase'.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to follow the Library in the first half-century of its existence, tracing its development as an institution and the growth and use of its collection. This is made possible by the survival of much of the Society's archive (now in the East Sussex Record Office, R/L11/1–9).

## THE LIBRARY AS AN INSTITUTION

No printed advertisements for the new Society survive and it seems probable that none were issued. Recruitment was achieved by word of mouth, with some success. The Society had a membership of 28 in its first year (1786) and reached 50 by 1789 and 60 in 1792. Advance beyond that level proved rather difficult and in any case was not to the advantage or taste of all; only after 30 years did the membership reach 90, and the 1827 figure of 93 was probably the highest ever achieved.<sup>2</sup>

At first meetings were held each month for the principal purpose of voting on acquisitions of books but also to consider applications for membership. In the early years these meetings took place at the homes of members, often at Mr William Verrall's, but from 1793 the library's own premises were the venue. The intention of this change may have been to encourage attendance but, despite the fine of 3d. levied on absentees, the number present rarely achieved double figures. It should be noted that the Library had women members but they never attended meetings (and it seems unlikely that they were fined). The frequency of meetings was perhaps found excessive (there were also quarterly meetings for more formal constitutional business); in 1796 the monthly meetings became bimonthly and from 1804 quarterly.<sup>3</sup>

Members could borrow one volume only at a time, except that preferential treatment was given to the small number of subscribers who lived more than five miles from Lewes and they could have two volumes. The maximum period of loan was 20 days for Lewesians, 30 for those from further afield. Fines were various and represented a quite considerable source of income. The fine for retaining a book beyond the permitted period was 1d. a day and for lending a book 'out of the Society' 1s., whilst neglecting to enter a volume or making a false entry was punished by a 5s. fine, with 10s. 6d. for a second offence. Every gentleman of the Society not attending the annual meeting was to forfeit 2s. 6d., the money accruing 'to be spent at that meeting',



Fig. 1. Dr Joseph Ridge. (Reproduced from R/L11/7/6 by kind permission of the East Sussex Record Office.)

though in practice this fine seems not to have been levied. The annual meeting was followed by a dinner, which normally took place at the Star Inn or the White Hart or, more rarely, at the Bear.<sup>4</sup>

Admission to the Society was attained through a favourable vote (of at least  $\frac{2}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> of those present) at a meeting. The sum due on admission was at first as low as 2s. 6d., but as membership increased and the need for new members decreased, the fee rose rapidly to fifteen shillings (1788), one guinea and then two (1789), two pounds and ten shillings (1790), three guineas (1791), three-and-a-half guineas (1793), four guineas (1794) and five pounds (1796). These payments, however, did not apply to new members who succeeded to the place of a member who resigned, died or left the area. Those who joined in this way — the succession being agreed to at a meeting — paid only a nominal sum (such as 2s. 6d.) or else the amount by which the entry fee had been increased since the election of the person being replaced.<sup>5</sup>

The Society's early minutes and Articles reveal little about their Librarian. The 1793 Articles stated that each member was to pay the librarian one shilling per annum, which would at that time have yielded him about £3 in all; by 1802 this had been raised to two shillings. In 1804 the post was held by Nathaniel Adams, mentioned in patronizing terms

in J. V. Button's poem:

Obliging ADAMS moves in humbler sphere,  
Whose hands the ranks complete, the volumes rear,  
'Tis his each member and each book t'enroll,  
And guard from eyes profane the sacred scroll.  
Of stature low, by nature prompt to serve,  
Studious to please, he stretches ev'ry nerve.<sup>6</sup>

By 1814 obliging Adams had been succeeded by a Miss Piercy who in that year received £4 6s. in respect of her 'bill for attendance at Library'. Miss Piercy was probably a daughter of Isaac Piercy, a builder of radical sympathies; she was on an annual salary of £12 in 1817, £12 10s. in 1819 and £12 13s. 6d. in 1821. Her successor, Miss Penford, was paid £12 p.a. until 1829, when she received a workbox as a retirement present and was succeeded by Miss Louisa Grayling whose salary was by 1832 increased to £17 16s.<sup>7</sup>

So much by way of preliminaries. But who belonged? The idea of a library society was not a new one in 1785. Library societies had already been established in a number of towns and cities, most of them major industrial and commercial centres where Protestant Dissenters were thick on the ground. Many of these people were Presbyterians, often known as 'Rational Dissenters' to distinguish them from 'Evangelical Dissenters', who were mainly Independents or Particular Baptists. The primary aim of the Presbyterians was not to save people's souls but to enlighten their minds: therefore, they attached great importance to education and, in their academies, offered teaching in a much wider range of subjects than that available at Oxford or Cambridge. The opening of library societies, providing readers with books on philosophy, history, geography, theology, science and modern languages and literature, thus represented an extra-mural extension of their mission to bring light to those dwelling in intellectual darkness.<sup>8</sup>

One of the largest and best-known of these library societies was the one founded at Birmingham in 1779 and re-organized two years later by Joseph Priestley, the newly appointed minister of the Presbyterian New Meeting in that town. Priestley, already famed for his scientific writings, soon became notorious for his theological ones, which were to have a profound influence upon Rational Dissenters throughout England. It is probable that by 1785, the year in which one of his books was burned by the common hangman at Dort in the

Netherlands, Priestley and his work was well known to the congregation of Westgate Presbyterian Meeting, Lewes, where Joseph Ridge and many of his relatives worshipped. Although the English Presbyterians (unlike the Scottish) were not a tightly organized denomination, their congregations did form part of an informal network extending across the length and breadth of the land. It is, therefore, likely that if interesting things were happening in Dissenting circles in Birmingham they would soon be known about in Lewes.<sup>9</sup>

There are similarities between developments in Birmingham, where many of the original members of the Library Society belonged to New Meeting, and in Lewes, where at least 11 of the 25 founder members belonged to Westgate (Table 1). In addition to Joseph Ridge of Lewes, there were his nephews James, Joseph and Benjamin, his nieces Ann and Sarah (Snashall) and his cousin, Benjamin Ridge of Alciston. Other Presbyterians on the list were Thomas Read and John Whichelo (both named as Westgate trustees in 1789), Victor Amadeus Raymond, a Swiss schoolmaster whose children were baptised there in 1784 and 1786, and Christopher Kell, who in 1789 married a Westgate member Margaret Polhill and whose son was christened in the meeting-house ten years later. Two more people had close ties with Westgate: Thomas Harben, whose forbears had been active members, and Jane Comber, whose husband Richard, although nominally an Anglican, was descended from an old Presbyterian family and listed as a Westgate subscriber in 1790. Not long after the Society's foundation the Westgate connection was to be strengthened by the addition of four more Ridges and one of their cousins, Thomas Johnston. Furthermore, the Rational Dissenting element was also consolidated by the admission to the Society of a number of General Baptists, some from the congregation meeting in Eastport Lane, Southover and others from their 'mother church' at Ditchling. These Baptists, called 'General' because they believed that Christ had died for the generality of mankind and not (as the 'Particular' Baptists held) only for the 'elect', were even more radical in outlook than the Presbyterians. Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that in 1791 the admission of James

Table 1. Founder members of the Lewes Library Society.<sup>42</sup>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Religion*</b>
BAKER, John	Lewes	Grocer	A
BRETT, Catherine	Hamsey	Spinster	A
COMBER, Jane	Lewes	Housewife	A/P
GELL, John	Lewes	Haberdasher	A
HARBEN, Thomas H.	Lewes	Banker	A/P
HOPER, Sarah	Lewes	Housewife	A
KELL, Christopher	Lewes	Attorney's clerk	P
MIDDLETON, Joseph	Lewes	Minister	B
MOORE, James	Lewes	Surgeon	A
MORRIS, Abraham	Lewes	Ironmonger	A
POOLE, Edward	Lewes	Medical doctor	A
RAYMOND, Victor A.	Lewes	Schoolmaster	P
READ, Thomas	Lewes	Hairdresser	P
RIDGE, Ann	Lewes	Spinster	P
RIDGE, Benjamin	Iford	Farmer	P
RIDGE, Benjamin	Alciston	Farmer	P
RIDGE, James	Lewes	?	P
RIDGE, Joseph	Lewes	Surgeon	P
RIDGE, Joseph	Iford	Farmer	P
ROYALL, Susan	Lewes	Schoolmistress	A
SNASHALL, Sarah	Lewes	Housewife	P
VERRALL, William	Southover	Brewer	A
WEBB, Anne	Lewes	Spinster	A
WHICHELO, John	Lewes	Clerk	P
WOOLLGAR, Thomas	Lewes	Draper	A

\*A = Anglican (i.e. those not known to be anything else), B = Baptist, P = Presbyterian, A/P = A with P connections.

Drowley, lay pastor at Eastport Lane, should have been promptly followed by the resignation of Joseph Middleton, minister of the newly-established Particular Baptist congregation in Foundry Lane. Middleton, who seems to have been the only Evangelical Dissenter among the founder members of the Society, was perhaps finding himself increasingly ill at ease in such perfidious company.<sup>10</sup>

Inevitably, the composition of the Society in its early years was volatile as members learned by experience the extent to which they made use of the library. Presumably, some found themselves less bookish than they had supposed or else were disappointed by the volumes selected. Also fewer women joined than the initial composition of the Society would have seemed to suggest. The turnover was considerable. Of the 28 members who were borrowers in 1786, six had left the Society by 1789 and five more by 1794; some of these losses may have been due to death or to change of residence (the minutes are unenlightening on this), but almost certainly the majority were the result of resignations. This tendency to rather rapid turnover in the

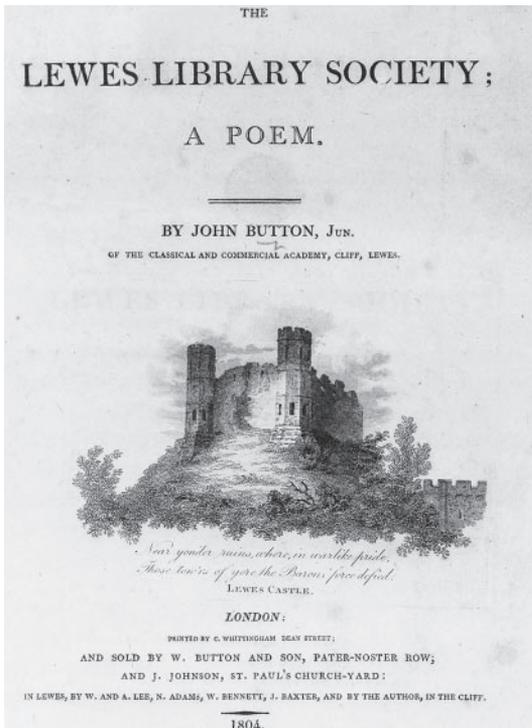


Fig. 2. Title page of John Button's *The Lewes Library Society: a Poem*. (Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library Board.)

membership was to continue. In 1822–7, 42 new members joined but 41 memberships lapsed by death or resignation.<sup>11</sup>

Before coming to the Society's collections and the use made of them, it may be well to glance at the development of the institution itself in its first half century. The original premises were in Dr Ridge's house (80 High Street) and these proved adequate for two decades but in 1804 a committee was set up to consider a new 'situation' and in January 1807 another committee was appointed to reach an agreement over the acquisition of a room in the house built by Mr John Baxter on the premises of the coachmaker John Ade. The move took place in June 1808 and on 6 July a quarterly meeting was held at 'the New Library'. However the new site proved inadequate in turn and a more ambitious move was made in 1814, when four members of the Society combined to purchase 47 High Street, near the top of School Hill, on the south side, facing the Star Inn. The Library was to purchase the new premises, part of which was sub-let to Mr G. B. Botting of Isfield, over a period of twenty years. The

Society's own share seems to have consisted only of space for the books. The minutes never imply the existence of a Reading Room or reading space on the library premises; later proposals (unsuccessful) for daily newspapers, with room for reading, appear to confirm this impression.<sup>12</sup>

However after a few years William Verrall, the member chiefly involved in the 1814 purchase, advised his tenant, the Society, that 'altered circumstances' compelled him to ask the Society to move. After various fruitless negotiations it was decided (January 1831) to purchase another central site, no. 3 in the newly built Albion Street. The initial agreement was for a lease, at £30 a year, with a right to purchase later. This was the most significant move in the Society's life.<sup>13</sup>

The most lively view of the Society in its early years may be gained from John Viney Button's poem (Fig. 2). The author was 19 years old (born in 1785, he died in 1873) when he wrote his 22 pages of stately verse which is, indeed, pompous, but not lacking in skill and charm. Of the library's first home, in Dr Ridge's house, we learn that

A modest mansion, venerably neat,  
With book-stor'd window decorates the street;  
Above the door a board attracts the eye,  
Inscrib'd "THE LIBRARY SOCIETY".

Also 'Six times each rolling year committees meet' and on these occasions

Alternate members some new work propose,  
The rest its beauties or its faults disclose,  
Discuss its merits with impartial views,  
Approve the worthy, and the bad refuse.

He emphasizes the inclusion of 'fiction's pleasing page', despite standards much higher than the commercial circulating library's:

. . . gay fiction's wondrous scenes delight,  
The shipwreck'd CRUSOE and La Mancha's  
knight,  
SMITH's love-lorn page, or RADCLIFF's horrid  
tale.

Button's poem earned him election as an honorary member of the Society and, since subscribers were found for as many as 600 copies, it must have spread the fame of Lewes's library quite widely.<sup>14</sup>

The library was open for nine hours each day, except on Sundays, the hours being 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 2 to 5 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. Doubts must have arisen as to whether the 'obliging' librarian could supervise the Society's volumes on his own. 1805 saw the appointment of a committee of seven (of whom the

young poet Button was one) 'to superintend the library' and in 1807 Samuel Parker, a member of the committee, became the Society's Inspector. The principal task of the Inspector was to undertake quite frequent checks on the stock to detect volumes missing or taken out without being recorded. Rev. Parker was succeeded as Inspector by John Ade. The inspectorate entered a new phase in 1816 with the appointment of John Dudeney (1782–1852) (Fig. 3), a very well-known Lewes character. A shepherd's son, an autodidact and a Wesleyan, he had moved at the age of 22 from his father's occupation to found his own school. Later he was to run a successful academy in St John's Street. Dudeney's appointment was, presumably, a generous gesture which would give him access to the library while sparing him payment of the subscription. He never became a subscriber and was sometimes paid for his duties as Inspector which he continued into the 1840s.<sup>15</sup>

The account-books do not offer a clear image of the Society's finances, but they do suggest that there were difficult times. There was a big rise in the price of books between the beginning of the century and the 1820s. Between 1812 and 1823 — a period for which quite voluminous accounts survive — the Society spent on average over £100 a year (as much as £190 in 1816 and £170 in 1819), mostly on the purchase of books. In some years (1818, 1820, 1821, 1823) income fell below expenditure, occasionally by a sizeable amount in relation to the sums involved. In 1820 the deficit was about £40, in 1821 about £30. This background explains the anxieties felt in 1823, when the officers proposed that a revision of the Society's original articles had become necessary. A body originally 'composed solely of members deeply interested in its welfare' had now altered greatly and 'a large proportion of the Society consists of persons who feel no interest beyond the personal accommodation it affords them'.<sup>16</sup>

One factor in the background at the time of this pessimistic assessment was the appearance of rival libraries. The most significant of these was the Lewes Mechanics Institution; its library was not large (240 titles in the catalogue of 1827), but there was naturally some overlap in the holdings. The Westgate Union Library listed 205 titles (48 members) in its 1825 volume of rules etc., whilst Southover Meeting (Eastport Lane) Library (established 1812) had 32 subscribers and 233 titles, also in 1825, the year in which the two causes amalgamated to form an avowedly Unitarian



Fig. 3. John Dudeney. (Photographed by Mr G. A. Nicholson from a drawing by J. Calvin. Reproduced from R/L11/7/6 by kind permission of the East Sussex Record Office.)

congregation. All meetings of this Library 'were to be concluded with prayer'.<sup>17</sup> Thereafter the Dissenters ceased to take such a prominent part in the affairs of the Lewes Library Society, which subsequently became more representative of the political and religious ethos of the wider community in Lewes. Meanwhile, the Library Society's troubles also included a row involving the Hon. Secretary J. W. Woollgar, who revealed sensitive suspicions that he was the subject of mistrust over financial matters.<sup>18</sup>

Somehow these difficulties were overcome. In 1824 the Library's condition was reported as flourishing in the Rev. T. W. Horsfield's *History and Antiquities of Lewes and its Vicinity*. Horsfield, the pastor of the Westgate Unitarian chapel, had been a member since 1818 and had been granted the special privilege of having four volumes at a time on loan to further the researches which culminated in his handsome book (published in two volumes, at Lewes).<sup>19</sup>

The crucial test of the Society was that implied

in the officers' pessimistic analysis of the situation in 1823; there was always a danger of domination by a small clique. The co-operation and loyalty of a high proportion of the members had to be retained. Participation can be measured by activity in suggesting titles for acquisition and the records suggest that the Society generally worked well in this respect. The minutes for the years 1787–1801 have been analyzed as a sample. They show that in 1787–91 39 members successfully proposed purchases; prominent were John Whichelo (36 titles), also T. W. Woollgar (18) and the Rev. Mr Hutchens (12 after joining in 1789). In 1792–1801 38 members successfully proposed titles for acquisition; the membership averaged about 60 at the time, though the turnover was quite rapid. T. W. Woollgar (later President; father of the J. W. Woollgar mentioned above) was again a dominant figure among these successful proposers (with 45 titles), but several other members were also very active, among them the Rev. Evan Davies (23 titles), James Moore and John Whichelo (15 each) and Robert Ashdown (14). Around the end of the period covered here the situation was perhaps even more healthy; in 1833, 28 members successfully proposed acquisitions.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE LIBRARY AS A COLLECTION OF BOOKS

In the first twelve months 40 titles (74 volumes) were bought, at a cost of £14 2s. 1d. The most expensive item was a complete Shakespeare in eight volumes (£1 6s.), the next Dr Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* in four (£1).<sup>21</sup> The caution used in building up the collection is evident in the early regulations. Proposals for the purchase of periodicals, duplicate copies or any expensive item (i.e. one costing a sum greater than the amount of the monthly subscription) had to be notified one month in advance of the meeting at which the vote took place.<sup>22</sup> Yet it was of the essence of the Society that titles currently under discussion should be secured promptly and this seems to have been achieved. Boswell's *Life of Dr Johnson* was added in 1791, on publication, as was Mrs Charlotte Smith's very romantic and very popular *Celestina* (in the same year) and, three years later, Mrs Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*.<sup>23</sup>

In the early years book purchases were normally made through the local firm John Baxter. This was the case until 1814, but in the following years, whilst Baxter continued to bind and print for the Society

and periodicals were purchased through him, many books were bought through another firm, T. Baker. In 1819 less than 20 per cent of the book purchase bill was Baxter's. This was atypical, but in 1824 Baxter's bill was about £56, Baker's about £24. London firms were able to offer a greater discount. The discount normally available to libraries seems to have been 12 per cent, but in 1823 a committee reported that some London booksellers were offering books (not periodicals) at 15 per cent below the 'market' price, if payment was made within six months, and 20 per cent for ready money.<sup>24</sup>

Various attempts were made to simplify acquisitions policy by purchase of entire series. This technique was in use from the Society's beginnings, which happened to coincide with the decision (1774) ending perpetual copyright. Many purchases were made from John Bell's *Poets of Great Britain* (109 volumes issued from 1776, at 1s. 6d. each) and a complete set obtained of the same publisher's *British Theatre* (21 volumes, 1776–81). When new series were launched in the 1820s and later, some of these were found useful too, for instance Constable's *Miscellany* (1827, 3s. 6d. each), John Murray's *Family Library* (1829), Lardner's *Cabinet Library* and Coburn and Bentley's *Standard Novels* (1831, 6s. each).<sup>25</sup>

Ordering periodicals presented special difficulties, both because taste in periodicals was (and is) peculiarly controversial and also because an order implied a considerable financial commitment. A period of trial was the normal technique, but this could not prevent dissension. Thus the Society voted in January 1827 to drop the *Sporting Magazine*, but at the very next meeting (April) this decision was overturned.<sup>26</sup>

Gifts were not a common method of acquisition. In 1798 Mr Robert Ashdown, a member, presented a copy of Swedenborg's Works (2 volumes) and four years later Mr Cater Rand celebrated his accession to the Society with a present of two globes and six volumes. Further gifts were received from time to time, but it was not until the 1830s that the Society began to solicit gifts from official bodies of their publications.<sup>27</sup>

The collection was enlarged at a steady rate, the average number of titles purchased (excluding periodicals) per annum being 45.5 in 1787–91, 29.5 in the years 1792–1801, 32.0 in 1802–14 and 38.0 in 1815–30. This was achieved despite a marked rise in book prices in the years after 1800. A cautious approach was particularly necessary in respect of scientific and other transactions and journals; the

*Transactions of the Horticultural Society* were costing £6 6s. 6d. per volume by 1823 and other commitments included the *Transactions of the Geological Society of London*, of the Linnaean Society and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and the Royal Institution's *Journal*.<sup>28</sup> The number of volumes held was estimated at around 1000 by 1794 and at 1342 seven years later. The 1827 catalogue records some 1400 titles and 13 journals, amounting to about 3300 volumes.<sup>29</sup>

Repeated attempts were made to record the holdings in printed catalogues. In June 1789 each member was offered a copy of a newly compiled catalogue. Proposals for new catalogues were discussed in 1792, 1793 and 1796, but no catalogue from these years survives and the Society's minutes tend to record intention rather than completion. In 1797 100 copies of a new catalogue were to be printed, each member paying 6d. for their copy. A further catalogue was discussed in 1801. 1805 almost certainly saw the issue of a catalogue of titles acquired since the printing of the previous catalogue. In 1810 a fresh catalogue was issued and in 1816 another was ready (or almost ready?).<sup>30</sup> Proposals put forward in 1826 culminated in the 70-page classified catalogue of 1827, which arranged the holdings by subject and gave for each title the library number and the year of publication. Annual supplements were then issued (the sixth Annual Supplement is dated February 1833).<sup>31</sup>

Every library worthy of the name has at least considered 'de-accessioning'. In July 1825 a committee 'of inspection' was appointed with powers which included 'recommendations for disposing of books'. The proposals of the committee proved so unwelcome that it was decided to adjourn *sine die* consideration of its report. Presumably this was the end — for a time — of all proposals for de-accessioning. There is little evidence about the condition of the collection, though it was noted in 1801 that 55 volumes were in need of rebinding. A few of the earliest volumes are still to be found in the Public Library at Lewes and are identifiable by the Society's stamp on the cover or title-page. All have been rebound in the 19th century or recently, hence it is difficult to assess the extent of their use. Among the volumes clearly from the Library Society are Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (4 vols, 1783), J. Drinkwater, *A History of the Siege of Gibraltar* (1786), Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (3 vols, 1789), Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights*

*of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (vol. 1 only, 1792), T. Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade ...* (2 vols, 1808; not stamped), N. Carlisle, *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (2 vols, 1808) and also Button's *Lewes Library Society* (rather badly foxed in parts).<sup>32</sup>

#### THE USE MADE OF THE LIBRARY'S BOOKS

A Library Society may be of interest as an organization or social institution, but for serious intellectual history one must turn to the use made of its books. What was the reading favoured by the more serious readers of an English country town in the years between the American and French Revolutions and the Great Reform Bill? What do the collection and the use made of it reveal about intellectual interests and literary tastes in this half-century? And to what extent were the Society's acquisitions policy and its members' reading dominated by the outlook of the Dissenting element among the founders?

A preliminary word about the sources available is necessary. The only list of volumes taken out on loan by the Society's members to have survived relates to its first year (1786). Full lists of purchases begin from 1785 and these then provide the only information on the holdings up to the time of the first catalogue of which a copy survives (or is known to survive, to use a more accurate formulation), the full listing of 1827. The survival from 1786 (R/L11/5/9, the source for the following paragraphs) is a very rare one indeed, yet it is frustrating that thereafter one knows what was acquired but not which of these volumes were borrowed or by whom.

The small book recording loans in 1786 has only one known surviving parallel in Britain, this being the lists for the Bristol Library Society commencing in 1773.<sup>33</sup> The period covered in Lewes' volume is from January to December 1786, though a few loans from the next year or two have been entered (the last entry is of 1791). Rather over 800 loans are listed, to 28 subscribers. Inevitably some members kept the librarian busier than others; the most frequent user was John Whichelo with 48 loans, the most modest Mr H. Loftus with five.

Essaying a quantitative approach to the loans of 1786 — it must be emphasized that the numbers both of books and borrowers are small — the author who demands mention first is Dr Johnson, who had

died in 1784. His *Lives of the Poets* was borrowed 16 times and *The Rambler* 11. To these may be added Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, published in 1785 (7 loans) and Mrs Piozzi's still more recent *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson* (1786: 8 loans). The popularity of Johnson's friend Goldsmith was also remarkable; 30 loans were of his writings, including *The Vicar of Wakefield* (10), *The Citizen of the World* (8) and an anthology, *The Beauties of Goldsmith* (8).

A good deal of poetry was read, the poet most in demand being William Hayley (1742–1820), a Sussex man, but not merely a regional celebrity, with 18 loans; his works in six volumes were an early purchase (December 1785). Hayley was followed in popularity by William Cowper (14), then by Hannah More (*Sacred Dramas*: 7) and by Collins and Pope (six each). Peter Pinder's *The Lousiad*, a facetious satire on George III, secured five loans and Robert Burns three. So much for recent and contemporary poets. There were also 17 loans of Shakespeare.

The popularity of descriptions of travel should also be emphasized. The leader here was Dr John Moore (father of the Peninsula War hero), with his *View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland and Germany* (19) and *View of Society and Manners in Italy* (14). Patrick Brydone's *Tour through Sicily and Malta* (12), the Marquis de Chastellux's *Travels in North America* (8) and Captain Cook's *Voyages* followed.

A favoured essayist was the solemn, moralizing Vicesimus Knox with his *Essays, Moral and Literary* (16), who was also responsible for the uplifting *Elegant Extracts* (11). There were also 11 loans of *Sylva or the Wood, a Collection of Anecdotes*. Other items hard to characterize were the posthumously published *Letters of Ignatius Sancho, an African* (9) and the (mildly scandalous) *Apology and Memoirs of the actress 'George' Anne Bellamy* (8). Much Roman history was read, in Rollin's version (7), also Robertson's *History of America* (4). There was serious reading on contemporary issues too, such as Richard Price's (pro-U.S.A.) *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* and his *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution* (8). Voltaire features, but only as historian of the age of Louis XIV and XV (5). Linnaeus's *Reflections on the Study of Nature* (6) was also serious fare.

Fiction was not entirely spurned, even if the Society's main *raison-d'être* was to supply alternatives to it. Apart from *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the first novel to be purchased, Sophia Lee's melodramatic novel of Tudor times, *The Recess*, was a favourite. There

were also readers of Sterne, mainly in the anthology *Beauties of Sterne* (7).

The Bristol Library Society was a larger affair, able to run to more purchases and higher salaries, but the objectives were similar ('novels, at least those of ambiguous character and ephemeral reputation, are excluded'), as was the constitution. Bristol only allowed one loan at a time, too. A general similarity in tastes is evident from a comparison of Bristol's loans in 1786–87 with Lewes', but there were quite big differences over authors and titles. The Bristolians did not read Goldsmith, so popular in Lewes, whereas Swift (12 loans in Bristol in 1787) was unread by the Lewesians until they rather belatedly voted to acquire the 1765–75 edition of his works on 4 July 1787. Reading about travel was as marked a taste among Bristolians as among Lewesians, but the voyagers and travellers, except for Captain Cook, tended to be different ones. Savary's *Letters on Egypt* were borrowed 35 times at Bristol in 1787, whereas Lewes did not acquire this title (published in 1787, 2 vols) until 1799. The Bristolians read Sparman's *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope* (published 1785: 17 loans at Bristol in 1786); this book also was not available to Lewesians before 1789.<sup>34</sup>

Changes and continuities in policy and taste during the period 1787–1827 can be studied in the Society's minutes, which recorded, though sometimes in cryptic form, all acquisitions (or, to be more precise, all decisions to acquire; occasionally the decision, for some reason or other, was ineffective, at least in the short term).<sup>35</sup> The emphasis on serious works remained fundamental. William Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* was bought on publication in 1795, his *Horae Paulinae or Truth of the Scripture* in the following year. The Dissenters' theology left a considerable mark on the library's holdings. In the 1790s these came to include not only single volumes by Priestley (*History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 1793; *Evidences of Divine Revelation*, 1795) and other contemporary proponents of Unitarianism but also the complete works of the pioneer Socinian Nathaniel Lardner. The General Baptist draper Henry Brown first suggested buying Lardner's eleven volumes in 1793 but it was not until 1798 that (at the request of another draper, the Presbyterian Robert Ashdown) the Society finally decided to expend the considerable sum of £3 10s. on them. In 1796 Ashdown, a frequent recommender of new titles, also suggested the purchase of an even more heterodox treatise, Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*.

Although he may have been enthusiastic about the *Rights of Man*, he (in common with most Rational Dissenters) would probably have had doubts about Paine's uncompromising Deism. However, having earlier recommended Priestley's *Answer* (1795) to Paine's book, he doubtless thought it important to hear both sides of the argument.<sup>36</sup>

By this time, moreover, the perfidy of the Rational Dissenters had become political as well as religious. Their commitment to 'Civil and Religious Liberty the World Over' had led them to welcome the French Revolution — a radical stance that is reflected in the books on the subject that they recommended for purchase by the Lewes Library Society. Among items in this category bought at their behest were works by Joseph Priestley (*Appeal to the Public on the Riots at Birmingham*, 1792), Richard Price (see above), Thomas Christie, James Mackintosh, Wyvill, John Cartwright, Mary Wollstonecraft and other well-known Jacobin sympathisers. They were also prepared to support the purchase of *The Rights of Man* in 1791, whose author some would have remembered as the customs officer who had married the daughter of a Westgate member and had once lived next door to the meeting-house. That Rational Dissenters in Lewes were also willing to recognize the Rights of Women is evidenced by the purchase of the first volume of Mary Wollstonecraft's book with this title in 1792. Significantly, this was recommended by Sarah Snashall, one of seven female founder-members of a society that would probably have been considered unusual at that time in opening its membership to women.<sup>37</sup>

Unorthodoxy also came in such forms as William Godwin's influential *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793) and his *Reflections on Education* (1796) and the radical writings of Wyvill (1792), Paine (1792, 1796) and John Cartwright (1793, 1796). After 1789, information and opinions concerning the events in France came in a flood. It is significant that the 1827 catalogue has a separate section for 'Writers on the French Revolution', starting with Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ordered on publication, in 1790) and Sir James Mackintosh's *Defence of the French Revolution* against Burke.

What did the members of the Society who were more conservative in their political and religious views think about the purchases recommended by the Rational Dissenters? In Birmingham there were such strong objections to the books being bought at the behest of New Meeting members that in 1794

the Library Society was split in two. Nothing of the kind happened at Lewes, perhaps because it was only the radicals who were inclined to turn up at the poorly attended meetings. Although one or two pillars of the establishment such as Henry Shelley (member from 1791), Sir Henry Blackman, the Hon. Henry Pelham (a member 1792–96), and Sir Ferdinando Poole (member from 1796) were nominally in the Society, they do not seem to have taken an active part in its proceedings — probably because, if they did want to read books, they were wealthy enough to buy their own. Throughout this decade, and especially after Evan Davies (the newly appointed minister at Westgate) joined the Society in 1794, it was the Dissenters who seem to have made the running. Davies himself was among the most assiduous in recommending books — as was Samuel Parker, who succeeded him at Westgate in 1803 and four years later was appointed the Society's first 'Inspector'.<sup>38</sup>

Not all the acquisitions of serious works in the fields of law and political economy would have been controversial. Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Beccaria's *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (*Dei Delitti e delle Pene*) and Howard's *State of the Prisons* were on the shelves and, in due course, a translation (published in 1811) of the Code Napoléon. Malthus' *Essay on the Principles of Population* and other works by the same author, Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, Thomas Tooke's *Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices from 1793 to 1822* and his *Considerations on the State of the Currency* were also available. There was also a move towards acquiring official and other reports, such as the *Report on the Police of the Metropolis* and the *Report of the Committee on Madhouses*, also *Suppressed Agricultural Reports* (all 1816), the *Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws* (1817) and the reports of the committees on the State of Mendicity and on Bank Restriction (1819).

Meanwhile a considerable collection was being gathered in the field of the natural sciences, where acquisitions were recommended and urged (but by no means monopolized) by the secretary and later president Thomas Woollgar. It was Woollgar who recommended Buffon's *History of Insects*, the *Transactions of the Linnaean Society* and Pulteney's *Historical and Biographical Sketches of the Progress of Botany in England* (all in 1793), but Marten's *Treatise on the Barometer and Thermometer*, Adams' *Essay on the Barometer*, Fourcroy's *Elements of Chemistry* and

*Natural History*, Lavater's (abridged) *Physiognomy* and Macquer's *Chemical Dictionary* were all proposed by other members between 1792 and 1795. These purchases were strengthened by an array of encyclopaedias, dictionaries and other reference works.

There was a continuous stream of accessions in the field of travel and exploration, perhaps the most persistent of all tastes in 'serious' reading. Lewes' readers, as the poet Button put it (p.16):

Round the vast earth with COOK intrepid  
roam,  
Replace their book — and find themselves at  
home.

The section in the 1827 catalogue devoted to 'Voyages and Travels' included 172 titles (in some 325 volumes), whilst the allied sections for 'British Tourists' and 'Topography and Antiquities' supplied many other titles relating to tours in Scotland and Ireland.

The enthusiasm for poetry demonstrated by the loans of 1786 tended to diminish perhaps, though naturally some poetry continued to be added to the collections. No fewer than seven volumes by Robert Bloomfield, starting with his *Farmer's Boy* of 1800, were purchased by 1824. Campbell, Southey, Burns, Crabbe, Charlotte Smith (*Beachy Head and Other Poems*, 1807), Tom Moore, Samuel Rogers and James Montgomery were other poets bought in these years. One poet, Byron, surely caused greater interest than all these. *Childe Harold* (1812), *The Giaour* (1814), *The Corsair* and *The Bride of Abydos* (both 1815), *Fare thee Well and Farewell to England* (1816) and *Mazeppa* (1819) were all acquired on publication.<sup>39</sup> Shelley, who could be claimed perhaps as a Sussex poet, also appears (*The Revolt of Islam*, 1818, the year of publication). However Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats were entirely absent.

The only poet who could compete with Byron was Walter Scott. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, published in 1805, was not acquired till 1807, and there was also some delay over *Marmion* (published 1808, acquired 1809), but *Rokeby* and *The Lord of the Isles* were bought on publication (1813 and 1815). There followed the amazing flood of Scott's novels, beginning with *Waverley* (published 1814, acquired 1816) and *Guy Mannering* (published 1815, acquired 1816), *Rob Roy* (published 1817, acquired 1818), *New Tales of my Landlord* (published and acquired 1818) and *Ivanhoe* (published and acquired 1820). The 1827 catalogue records all of the 21

*Waverley* novels published up to that date. No other novelist is strongly represented in that catalogue. Far behind Scott come the sisters Anna Maria and Jane Porter, historical novelists.<sup>40</sup> The Dr John Moore recorded above as much read on the society and manners of France and Italy, was also a successful novelist; the Society held all three of his novels, published between 1786 and 1800. Some of the fiction held was of a light-hearted variety, with titles such as *Thinks I to Myself* and *Salmagundi or the Whim-Whams and Opinions of Lancelot Longstaff*.

The 1827 catalogue was arranged under five main 'classes', i.e. Theology, Jurisprudence, Science and Arts, Belles Lettres and History. These were sub-divided into Sections, some of which were in turn sub-divided. Inevitably some of the allocation by subject is capricious (and occasionally, simply erroneous), but it may be useful to list the categories and note the number of titles recorded under each of them:

#### I. Theology

I. Translators, Commentators and Interpreters of the Scriptures	12
II. Sermons	16
III. Defences of natural and revealed Religion	13
IV. Controversial Divinity	25
V. Miscellaneous Divinity	20
VI. Ecclesiastical History	17
VII. Jewish and Mohammedan Religions	2

#### II. Jurisprudence

I. British Constitution, Common and Statute Law	10
II. Foreign Law	6
III. Government and Politics	32
IV. Writers on the French Revolution	17
V. Political Economy	33
VI. Money, Trade and Commerce	21
VII. Population	8

#### III. Sciences and Arts

I. General Treatises, Journals, Dictionaries, etc.	12
II. Philosophy	
1. General and miscellaneous Works	7
2. Metaphysics, History of Man, Logic, etc.	3
3. Moral Philosophy	24
4. Education, Manners, etc.	32
III. Natural History	
1. General and miscellaneous Works	13
2. Zoology	11
3. Botany	8
4. Agriculture and Gardening	26
5. Mineralogy and Geology	14
IV. Medicine, Surgery and Physiology	26
V. Chemistry	16
VI. Mathematics	
1. General and miscellaneous Works	6
2. Natural Philosophy	7
3. Arithmetic and Geometry	5

4. Astronomy	6
5. Optics	4
6. Mechanics and Hydrostatics	4
VII. Arts	
1. General and miscellaneous Works	4
2. Liberal Arts	10
3. Veterinary Art	5
4. Mechanical Arts	10
<b>IV. Belles Lettres</b>	
I. Bibliography	9
II. General Treatises, Language, Letters, Literary miscellanies	21
III. Literary Journals	18
IV. Grammars and Dictionaries	7
V. Translations from the Greek Classics	9
VI. Translations from the Latin Classics	9
VII. English Poetry and Plays	91
VIII. Novels, Romances, and other Works of Imagination	129
IX. Essays, Letters etc.	49
X. Complete Works of Miscellaneous Writers	14
<b>V. History</b>	
I. Geography and Chronology	11
II. Ancient and General History	21
III. Modern History (Foreign)	38
IV. British History	
1. Civil History	36
2. Naval and Military History	15
3. Heraldry, Peerages, Genealogy	6
4. Topography and Antiquities	36
5. British Tourists	29
V. Voyages and Travels	
1. Circumnavigations and Voyages of Discovery	16
2. Europe	62
3. Turkey, Egypt and Asia	42
4. America and the West Indies	33
5. Africa	19
VI. Biography	
1. Biographical Dictionaries	5
2. British Biography. Foreign Biography	43

A few general remarks suggest themselves concerning the content of this catalogue. All the works are in English, though two editions of Horace contain the Latin text as well as an English translation. In the literary categories very few of the works are translations; the principal exceptions are *Don Quixote*, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* and three Italian classics (Dante, Tasso, Ariosto). A reader dependent on the Library Society would have formed little idea of the great literary achievements other than those in English. They had no Coleridge, no Wordsworth, no Keats — and no Jane Austen until long after her lifetime (*Sense and Sensibility* came in 1834 as a volume in the Standard Novels series).<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless they were offered much entertainment and a thoroughly solid written introduction to the world, the scientific and other ideas and the events of their own day.

#### Acknowledgements

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#### NOTES

- Anon. (J. V. Button), *The Lewes Library Society* (London, 1804), vii,3.
- Sources for numbers: 1786, R/L11/5/9, *passim*; 1789–95: R/L11/6/1, *passim*; 1804: Godlee lecture (East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO), R/L11/7/6), 'Rescript of a paper upon the History of the Lewes Library Society read by Burwood Godlee Esq. at a Soiree held at the County Hall, Lewes. In celebration of the 73rd Anniversary on the 4th day of March 1859', 28 (also full list of members, 1785–1859, at end of text of lecture; 1823: R/L11/1/5, ff.85–6. A full list of members (Feb. 1827) is bound in the back of *A Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Lewes Library Society* (Lewes, 1827: Brighton Reference Library, S9LEW (26907R)).
- Articles for the Regulation of the Lewes Library Society* (Lewes, 1793) in Gough, *Sussex*. 9(2), Bodleian Library, Oxford, 3–7. Minutes of meetings, ESRO, R/L11/1/2 (1787–91), 1/3 (1792–1801), 1/4 (1802–14), 1/5 (1815–31).
- Button (*see note 1*) mentions ten subscribers from outside Lewes: they were from Ditchling, Litlington, Kingston, Buxted, Stoneham, Landport, Westfield, Brighton, Iford and Alciston.
- Articles* (*see note 3*), III and IV; 'Rescript' (*see note 2*), 17; R/L11/1/2 (unfoliated), 2 Jan 1788; Jan 1789; 12 Dec 1791; R/L11/1/3, 4 Jan 1792; 30 Jan 1793; Feb 1794; Aug 1796.
- Articles*, VII; R/L11/1/4, 3 Feb 1802; Button, 5.
- R/L11/5/1 (accounts, 1811–19, unfol.); R/L11/5/2 (1819–23); R/L11/5/3 (1823–62); R/L11/1/4, f.23. Nathaniel Adams was 66 in 1804 (he was buried at St Michael's, Lewes on 27 Feb. 1826 aged 88: information kindly

- provided by Lady Teviot). Adams may have been a brother of Mary and Hannah Adams who had a girls' boarding school in Lewes, 1781–c. 1817 (J. Caffyn, *Sussex Schools in the 18th Century* (Lewes, 1998), 279). For Isaac Piercy see C. Brent, *Georgian Lewes* (Lewes, 1993), 193 and ESRO, W/ A 76.18 (will). Miss Grayling (born 1801) was the daughter of William Grayling of the Cliffe, a hairdresser (ESRO, PAR 415 1/2/1).
- <sup>8</sup> C. Parish, *History of the Birmingham Library* (Library Association, 1966), 10–12.
- <sup>9</sup> Parish, 34–5; *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. Joseph Priestley; J. Goring, 'The Ridges of Westgate Chapel, Lewes', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter SAC) **129** (1991), 210.
- <sup>10</sup> The members who joined in 1785 and 1786 are listed in ESRO, R/L 11/5/9. For subsequent changes in membership, see R/L 11/1/2, 2 May 1787; 1 Apr 1789; 1 Dec 1790; 5 Jan, 6 Apr, 5 Oct 1791. For Westgate connections, see ESRO NU 1/1/2, 1/2/1, 1/9/11–12. For Christopher Kell's marriage, see *Sussex Notes and Queries* **8** (1942), 173.
- <sup>11</sup> For sources see note 2, above.
- <sup>12</sup> R/L11/1/4 (unfol.), 3 Oct 1804, 7 Jan 1807, 17 June and 8 July 1808, 6 Apr and 22 June 1814; R/L11/1/5, f.86; R/L11/5/2 (accounts, unfol.). On Ade see Brent, *Persons Index*.
- <sup>13</sup> R/L11/1/5, 3 Oct 1830, 30 Jan 1831; R/L11/5/3 (accounts 1832–7, unfol); Brent, 219–20.
- <sup>14</sup> Button, 1, 9–11, 16, 25–8. SMITH is Charlotte Smith (1749–1806), author of *Emmeline*, *Celestina*, etc.; RADCLIFF is Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), author of *Mysteries of Udolpho*, etc.
- <sup>15</sup> R/L11/1/4, 3 Apr 1805, 7 Jan 1807, 7 Oct 1807, 17 June 1808, 5 Oct 1808, 1 Feb 1809, 3 Jan 1810, 2 Jan 1811; R/L11/1/5, f.20; R/L11/5/3 (accounts, 1823–62), 1 July 1828, 1 July 1830, 14 Oct 1831; R/L11/ 7/6, 38; Brent, 100 and Index (on Dudeney see also G. Holman, *Some Lewes Men of Note*, ed. 2 (Lewes, 1911), 61–4).
- <sup>16</sup> R/L11/1/5, ff.81–6; R/L11/5/1–2, *passim*; R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (1957), 260.
- <sup>17</sup> *A Catalogue of the Library of the Lewes Mechanics' Institution with the General Laws relating thereto and the Regulations adopted by the Committee for its Management and Circulation* (Lewes, 1827); *Plan and Rules of the Westgate Union Library with a Catalogue of Books* (Lewes, 1825); *Rules of the Southover Meeting Library with a Catalogue of the Books* (Lewes, 1824). There are copies of these publications in the London Library, Pamphlets, 2992).
- <sup>18</sup> R/L11/1/5, ff.89–95, 115–16.
- <sup>19</sup> R/L11/1/5, ff.80, 97, 102; T. W. Horsfield, *History and Antiquities of Lewes and its Vicinity* (2 vols, Lewes, 1824), I, 342–3.
- <sup>20</sup> R/L11/1/3, *passim*; R/L11/1/6 (unfol; at 1833). It should be noted that the minutes occasionally omitted the names of proposers.
- <sup>21</sup> R/L11/5/9.
- <sup>22</sup> R/L11/1/3 unfol, at June and Sept 1792; *Articles* (see note 3), IX, X, XI.
- <sup>23</sup> R/L11/1/2 at 7 Sept and Dec 1791; R/L11/1/3 at Aug 1794.
- <sup>24</sup> R/L11/5/1 (unfol accounts, 1811–19); R/L11/5/3 (ditto, 1823–62); R/L11/1/5, ff. 89–95.
- <sup>25</sup> Altick (see note 16, above), 53–4, 273–4.
- <sup>26</sup> R/L11/1/5, ff.137, 139.
- <sup>27</sup> R/L11/1/3, July 1798; R/L11/1/4, 7 Apr 1802 (the value of this gift is recorded as £10 1s. 6d.); R/L11/1/5, f.151; R/L11/1/4, 5 Apr 1809, 6 Oct 1813 (copy of returns made under the Population Act).
- <sup>28</sup> R/L11/1/3–5, *passim*; Altick, 260; R/L11/5/2 at 1823.
- <sup>29</sup> R/L11/7/6, 24–6; R/L11/1/3 at 3 June 1801; *A Catalogue of Books ...* (1827), see note 2, above.
- <sup>30</sup> R/L11/1/2, 2 June 1789; R/L11/1/3, Jan 1792, June 1793, Aug 1796, May 1797, June and Dec 1801; R/L11/1/4, 3 Apr and 9 Oct 1805; R/L11/1/5, ff.9, 11, 14, 127B.
- <sup>31</sup> Bound with 1827 catalogue (see note 2, above).
- <sup>32</sup> R/L11/1/5, ff.121, 123, 124, 127A.
- <sup>33</sup> R/L11/5/9 (1786 loans); supplements to 1827 catalogue are bound in the back of the copy in Brighton Reference Library (see note 2, above); for Bristol Library Society see P. Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users* (London, 1969), 28–35 ('Some Reading Trends in Bristol, 1773–84') and K. Hapgood, 'Library practice in the Bristol Library Society, 1772–1830', *Library History* **5** (1979–81), 145–53.
- <sup>34</sup> R/L11/1/2 at 4 July 1787 and 4 March 1789; Bristol Central Library, Bristol Library Society Registers, B7458 (1784–7).
- <sup>35</sup> The sources for this paragraph are R/L11/1/2 (1787–91), R/L11/1/3 (1792–1801), R/L11/1/4 (1802–14), R/L11/1/5 (1815–31).
- <sup>36</sup> ESRO R/L 11/1/3, 30 Oct 1793; 26 Aug 1795; 30 March 1796; 30 May 1798.
- <sup>37</sup> ESRO R/L 11/1/2, 2 Feb, 4 May, 7 Sep 1791; 11/1/3, 2 May, 5 Sep 1792; 29 Apr 1795.
- <sup>38</sup> Brent, 182 and *Persons Index* at 'Poole'; ESRO R/L 11/1/2, 5 Jan 1791; 11/1/3, 4 Jul 1792; 30 Nov 1796; 11/1/4, 3 Aug, 5 Oct, 7 Dec 1803; 7 Jan 1807; R. V. Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* (1938), 271.
- <sup>39</sup> Button (see note 14), 16; in the 1827 catalogue the Society is recorded as holding only a Byron, *Works* (1823–5), 6 vols.: it would be interesting to know what had happened to the earlier purchases.
- <sup>40</sup> For the popularity of Jane Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw* see Amy Cruse, *The Englishman and his Books in the early 19th Century* (London, 1930), 100, 107, 214.
- <sup>41</sup> R/L11/1/6 at 8 Jan 1834.
- <sup>42</sup> The information in this table comes from C. E. Brent, *Georgian Lewes* (Lewes, 1993), accessed via the 'Persons Index'; J. Goring, 'Ridges of Westgate Chapel', 196–201; J. Comber, *Sussex Genealogies*: Lewes Centre (Cambridge, 1933), 80, 311, 324; *Universal British Directory*, photocopy in ESRO; Lewes Poll Books (ESRO), 1780, 1790, 1796; 'Survey of Lewes, 1790' from T. Woollgar, 'Spicilegia' (photocopy in ESRO); ESRO, AMS 508, 922; LAN 92, 206; XE 1/411/3.

*It is hoped to publish an account of the Lewes Library Society, 1831–97, in volume 139 of Sussex Archaeological Collections.*