

# THE DIARY OF ADMIRAL SIR GRAHAM MOORE OF BROOK FARM, COBHAM

BY

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**T**HIS voluminous diary, of the greatest importance for naval history, rests in private hands not far from the spot where much of it was written. The first volume is entitled "Remarks and Observations begun in 1784," and the last entry is dated "Cobham, Surrey, Sept. 9th 1843," exactly three months before the death of the diarist. The short extracts below deal chiefly with Surrey.

The diarist was born at Glasgow in 1764, his father being John Moore, M.D., physician and man of letters. An elder brother was Sir John Moore of Corunna fame, who being a bachelor made Brook Farm his home when military engagements allowed. Graham entered the navy in 1777, but it was not until 1804 that he acquired the prize money which enabled him to buy Brook Farm.<sup>1</sup> Watching off Cadiz he captured three Spanish treasure ships and blew up a fourth. The indignant Spaniards declared war, but they had been relieved of over three million dollars.

Brook Farm was bought on 5 September 1805, and had been advertised as "a desirable freehold estate comprising a singularly elegant villa with roomy stabling . . . suited to the Villa, the Mansion or the Farm Ornee . . . called Brooks . . . which will be sold by private contract by Mr. Christie of Pall Mall . . . The whole of the buildings . . . recently erected . . . commanding most delightful and extensive prospects: Pains Hill, richly embowered, forms one of the many picturesque objects on the one side." A "patent water closet suitably placed" was upstairs.<sup>2</sup> The house had been built in 1800 by Colonel Edward Letherland on the edge of ground recently enclosed from the Tilt common, and was now vacant on the colonel's departure to Stoke Grove (later Stoke Lodge). The building was demolished about 1926 and is now represented by Brook Farm Road.

On 29 June 1806 Moore wrote:

I am remaining quietly at home in this beautiful part of the country which has always been a favourite spot with me. My health is very indif-

<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H.*, III, 443.

<sup>2</sup> Printed particulars preserved among the title deeds by Mr. G. D. Heath of 1 The Sanctuary, London, S.W.1.

ferent, and certainly quite unequal to the fatigues of service. I have involved myself, perhaps rather imprudently, in farming, of which I am totally ignorant, but I have a bailiff to whom I am obliged to trust the management of the land and of whom I have had an excellent character. I shall try how this does for a year or two when I must decide whether to go on or not. I certainly have had great satisfaction in this purchase. My mother and sister, who take great delight in the country, are comfortably settled in a convenient agreeable house in a beautiful part of the country not too far from London and not too far from any part of her family who are settled on shore. It is a home for myself and for the general [*Sir John Moore*] when it suits him.

Moore soon began to improve the estate:

Brook Farm, 12th Sept. 1806. My time has been spent chiefly at this place where I have laid out and am laying out a great deal of money; whether prudently or not I do not yet know, it is perhaps risking too much.

Brook Farm, 27th Sept. 1807. I hope this farming concern of mine may not oblige me into too much expence. I have already laid out, on the purchase, in improving the house and farm, between two and three thousand pounds. It is in a beautiful country, and very well situated for convenience to a man who wishes not to be too far from London.

In this same year, 1807, Moore was appointed to H.M.S. *Marlborough*, to escort the Prince Regent and the royal family of Portugal to Brazil when the seat of government was set up there on Napoleon's invasion of Portugal.<sup>3</sup> In 1807, too, Sir John Moore planted the oak tree which still stands in the garden of "Norlands" in Oak Road,<sup>4</sup> and it was at Brook Farm in 1809 that the death of Sir John was announced to his mother and sister.<sup>5</sup> In 1810 we find Elizabeth Lady Holland writing in her *Journal*: "Capt. G. Moore, the brother of the General . . . is a pleasing, well-informed, manly, gentlemanlike person. They are an affectionate, united family, and full of amiable qualities; he alluded to Sir John with feeling" and "his eyes were full of tears when in the course of some conversation he mentioned the narrative written by his brother James." Dr. James Moore wrote two books on his military brother's life and campaign, and followed his father as family physician to the Locks of Norbury Park, Mickleham. Graham Moore had a long romance with Augusta Lock, and set out in his diary various reasons why she would not make a suitable wife for him. He eventually married Dora, daughter of Thomas Eden, brother of the first Lord Auckland, and thus records it:

Brook Farm, 14th March 1812. . . . on the 9th of March I married Miss Eden, daughter of the late Thomas Eden Esq., a younger brother of Sir John Eden, Bart., of the Bishoprick of Durham. . . . When the ceremony was finished I brought my wife to this place, my mother and sister having gone on a visit to my brother Francis at Richmond. I do not know whether I have done wisely or not . . .

A couple of years later Moore was finding Cobham a little dull:

Brook Farm, 11th Sept. 1814. The greatest drawback, I feel, to the satisfaction of living here is the want of that kind of society which I like,

<sup>3</sup> Duchess of Sermoneta, *The Locks of Norbury*, p. 242.

<sup>4</sup> G. Heath, *Records of the Carrick Moore Family*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> C. Oman, *Sir John Moore*, p. 605.

and which is seldom to be met with in the country. It sometimes may happen that our neighbours in the country are very estimable, but that is rare good fortune, and tho' I am on very good terms with the families about here there is not any individual among them whose society affords me any pleasure, or for whom I have any great liking.

In 1817 Moore read Charles Wolfe's "rhymed affidavit" which has given rise to so much controversy:

London, 8th June 1817. The following song appeared yesterday in the Times News Paper; the author is not named, but I wish I knew him. Some of the thoughts are of a gloomy grandeur worthy of the subject, and as the descriptive part is also true, the whole interests me exceedingly.

The diarist then copies out the famous verses on *The Burial of Sir John Moore*.

Tho' these lines are unequal, they are in the true strain of poetry. The author felt what he wrote, and either witnessed the scene or was powerfully struck by the description of some one who was present.

Later on another death grieved the nation:

Brook Farm, 11th Nov. 1817. The melancholy news of the death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales which reached us the morning it took place has thrown a gloom on the public mind. I dined there [at Clarendon?] once about six weeks ago and was very much prepossessed in favour of both the Prince and Princess from every thing I saw of their manner of living. She conversed easily and freely with those about her. His manner appeared to me to be courteous and grave, serious without austerity. He speaks English very well, which I am informed he has acquired almost entirely since he arrived in England by studying it very closely.

In 1820 Moore was made Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. With his connivance Gabriele Rossetti, father of the artist, escaped from Italy dressed as an English sailor, having referred in an ode to the possible assassination of the tyrannical King Ferdinand or Naples.<sup>6</sup>

On his return home Moore wrote:

Brook Farm, 23rd April 1824. . . . During my absence from England my friend and neighbour Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Williams [of Burwood House] negotiated a purchase for me of between 70 and 80 acres of land adjoining to what I possessed before at this place. It cost £2450, and I completed the purchase since my return. I am given to understand that this has been an advantageous bargain; at all events it renders my farm here much more desirable and valuable. It rounds me in, gives me elbow room and a good boundary. The whole of the land now amounts to 164 acres, nearly within a ring fence.

Brook Farm, 20th July 1824. . . . I have commenced making additions and alterations to my dwelling house here, in consequence of which we shall be obliged to quit it for two or three months. I am afraid these operations will ultimately cost me not less than £2000, which is more by near one half what I had intended to lay out upon it. I intend to go to the sea coast when we are obliged to make room for the bricklayers and carpenters, which must be very soon.

Brook Farm, 2nd April 1825. In fine weather, and particularly in the early spring of the year, this place appears very beautiful in my eyes. Without being at all laid out with pleasure grounds, or the usual pretensions of a gentleman's country residence, it has peculiar attractions to me. There is

<sup>6</sup> W. Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, p. 21.

very little lawn, but what there is is very pretty, and the shrubbery and plantation about the house not at all extensive. The farm yard and the farm itself are close in the rear of the house, and the kitchen garden joins the lawn not a hundred yards from the house. This is domestic, rural, and free from ostentation; it occasions no nuisance and is convenient. I wish I had sufficient skill in farming to be independent of a bailiff . . . ; from my ignorance in what relates to country matters I am too much at the mercy of the people I employ. I like to keep the land about me in my own hands, and to grow enough of every thing for our own consumption. I take an interest in what is going on in the fields, and it would be uncomfortable and inconvenient to have the land let close to the house, tho' I am pretty sure that by submitting to that annoyance I would be at the end of the year some hundreds in pocket. However, unless I find that I run the risk of encroaching on my capital I am more inclined to enlarge than diminish my farm.

Brighton, 12th August 1825. The additions and alterations at my house near Cobham are now finished, and I intend returning there in the course of a week. I am afraid that the expences I have incurred there will embarrass me considerably. My consolation is that tho' the whole might have been done by a man conversant in business at much less expence, yet the money laid out is on a place of my own and rendering the property much more valuable than it was. I must endeavour by good management at home to make up in some degree for the extraordinary outlay and to bring my expences within my income.

Under the same date Moore goes on to refer to an early steam vessel:

A steam vessel sailed lately from the Thames bound to the East Indies, this being the first experiment of so long a voyage undertaken under this new power, the capabilities of which and to what extent it may be applied in the practice of maritime affairs is unknown and is the subject of much speculation. There are very great difficulties to be overcome, and it will probably be long before the power of steam can be employed on a great scale in naval warfare, but many think it may shortly alter materially the whole system of naval affairs.

At this time Moore was looking at the newly-published *Diary of Samuel Pepys*:

I am now reading a curious book, the *Diary of Mr Samuel Pepys* between the years 1659 and 1669. There is, I believe, no reason to doubt their authenticity and, tho' a mere diary, written apparently as memorandums for reference and for his own use, they contain much interesting matter descriptive of the manner and complexion of the times he wrote in. He seems to have been a very ingenious, able man, and to have filled offices of great trust and importance in the civil department of the navy.

Returning to Cobham matters we read:

Brook Farm, 24th Sept. 1825. We left Brighton on the 21st and got here to dinner. The additions and alterations to my house here are finished, but a great deal of brushing up and clearing away after the workmen remains to be done which will occupy me until the winter sets in. It will now be a most comfortable residence, and fully commensurate to the expenditure that I can afford to make. Indeed I could not desire a better house with my fortune or any fortune I am likely to possess.

Brook Farm, 20th March 1826. . . . I have held this freehold estate since 1805, but a great part of the intervening time between that and this I have been abroad on publick service, indeed I have never been two complete years constantly resident here since I bought the place. I have kept the land of the original purchase always in my own hands, and have all along had the same working bailiff, which is now a very losing game as the old man is now past his work, and can do but little himself or even look suffi-

ciently sharp after those under him, I cannot bear to discharge him after such long service, and suppose he will end his days here.

Brook Farm, 1st May 1826. On the night of the 10th April about 8 o'clock my barn was discovered to be on fire. The wind at the time was blowing strong W.S.W. The flames spread so rapidly, every thing being very dry and combustible in and about the barn, that in the course of an hour the barn, stables, coach house and almost all the farm buildings were burnt to the ground. 3 farm horses and 2 pigs perished in the flames and another farm horse, tho' with great difficulty got out of the farm stable alive, is so miserably burnt that it is still doubtful whether or not he will ever recover to be an useful horse. I was in London at the time and received a letter from Lady Moore before I was out of bed, written at midnight, informing me of the disaster. Her letter, tho' written under alarm and distress, was clear and distinct. She showed great firmness and presence of mind. Had the wind, blowing so hard as it did, shifted to the N.W., the house would have been in danger. We are therefore thankful to God it is no worse. During the fire my bailiff's cottage was broken into and a considerable quantity of the old man's cloaths were carried off. A box containing papers was also carried out of the house, but afterwards picked up not far from the cottage. I suppose the villain threw it away on not finding money in it. A notorious character who lived in the parish is strongly suspected of the burglary, and indeed almost all the tradesmen and lower class in the neighbourhood give him credit for having set the barn on fire. I believe he committed the burglary, but I rather think the fire was accidental, tho' at the same time I am not without suspicion of his having done both. He is known to be a thief and a vagabond. This misfortune will occasion me very considerable expense, tho' I am insured to a certain amount. I cannot expect to get to rights again under a clear loss of several hundreds of pounds, besides being put to great inconvenience in the meantime. I am thinking, in consequence of it, of giving up farming.

Brook Farm, 15th May 1826. I have begun building a coach house, stable and some farm buildings not far from the place where the former one stood. I mean to place the barn in a different situation, on part of the new purchases where there is an old cottage.

Brook Farm, 14th August, 1826. My new barn is finished. I made an agreement with a builder at Putney to remove the frame work and tiles of an old barn at Putney Park which he had purchased, and to put it up here with new brickwork and new boarding complete, replacing any that was defective, in short making a complete substantial barn, done twice over with tar, for £400. I took the advice of Mr Lapidge, the architect, in this matter, and he thinks that the barn will last a century. I rather think I have had the worth of my money. I am obliged to stack all my grain this year as it is all cut and carried, and the barn not yet sufficiently dry for use. The consequences of the fire have been very expensive to me, and I do not expect to be less than six or seven hundred pounds out of pocket by it, tho' I received from the insurance office (the Phoenix) £750. Ultimately I shall not be so great a loser as my buildings will be much better, and, in the event of my wishing to let the land, retaining 20 or 30 acres of grass in my hands, I can do it advantageously.

Until 1955 this reconstructed barn was still standing near Oxshott Way, at the back of Brooklands School. The old work in the barn may have dated from 1644 if it can be identified with one mentioned in the Diary of Sir Thomas Dawes printed in the *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XXXVII, 1927. On page 32 of that volume we read under date March 1644: "5. wednesday, T.D. barne at Putney Parke & the woodhouse were blowne downe. Deo gloria. . . if I agree with Cred [*itors*] consider where best to set upp Putney Parke barne thats blowne downe or whether make with it an addition to

Putney Parke howse as washhowse laundry &c . . ." From Brayley's *History of Surrey* we learn that Edward Lapidge, the architect, designed Ham church, rebuilt Putney church, and was responsible for the existing old parts of Esher Place and Kingston Bridge.

Three years later we get a glimpse of a famous Surrey school:

Brook Farm, 5th August 1829. . . . On the 3rd of this month I placed my son, who is just seven years and betwixt six and seven months of age, at a school at Cheam in Surry which is kept by the Reverend Dr Mayo. He receives 40 boys and does not like to receive any who are above 9 years of age when they first come to him, but keeps them, if the parents wish it, until they are of age for the universities. He is not more than 36 himself, and bears an excellent character.

Later on Moore refers to some functions he attended:

Brook Farm, 18th July 1830. The funeral of George the 4th took place at Windsor on the 16th inst. Besides the noblemen who acted as pall bearers, and who were all, I believe, dukes, earls, or ministers of state, the king directed them to be supported by eight general officers on one side and eight admirals on the other. I appeared to be ordered as one of the flag officers, which I believe was not originally intended but was owing to one of those named being prevented from attending. The funeral was well conducted and impressive tho' I found it exceedingly fatiguing and oppressive owing to the heat and the immense crowd which attended.

Moore hurried from the funeral to catch an early coach home in order to take his wife and little boy to Ripley Fair.<sup>7</sup>

Brook Farm, 1st April 1836. A few weeks since I received a private letter from Lord Minto informing me that he had submitted my name to the king for the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, vacant by the death of Admiral Sir Thomas Pakenham, and that His Majesty had graciously and very cordially approved of the nomination. I was accordingly invested with the Ribband of the Grand Cross of the Order by His Majesty on the Wednesday the 23rd of March, and kissed hands upon it the same day.

Brook Farm, 22nd Sept. 1837. On the 15th a publick meeting and dinner took place on the race ground at Epsom to celebrate the election of the Honble. Captain George Perceval to represent, in the Commons House of Parliament, the Western Division of Surrey. I went there with one of my neighbours, and met between three and four hundred of the electors. It took place in the race stand, and went off extremely well. Mr Charles Barclay, the late member, was in the chair, and I believe a great majority of the gentlemen of the country were present. I happened to be placed on the left hand of the chair, and to my great annoyance was called upon to acknowledge the toast when the navy and army was drank. I accordingly, tho' completely confused, felt myself obliged to get up and return thanks for the exulting manner in which that toast is generally received at meetings of this kind. I do not know what I said, but I am sure it must have been nonsense as I could not remember a word of it, and felt at the time totally confounded.

Brook Farm, 3rd Nov. 1837. On the 11th of Oct. I took Lady Moore to Brighton with a view to passing a fortnight there. It is a place she likes much, and that she has generally found to agree with her health. Her Majesty the young Queen Victoria was residing there, and we dined at the Pavillion by her commands upon one occasion. The party at dinner was not a large one, consisting of Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerstone, and Baron Dedel, the ambassador from the King of the Netherlands, the ladies and gentlemen of the household, and us. I had an opportunity of observing Her Majesty's countenance and manner perfectly as I happened to be placed at

<sup>7</sup> C. Oman, *op. cit.*, p. 627.

table nearly opposite to her. She sat between the ambassador and Lord Melbourne; without being positively handsome the expression of her face is pleasing. She looks cheerful, and gives an impression of being good natured and kind hearted. . . .

It appears from the journal that Brighton had an autumn rather than a summer season, and that Lady Moore indulged in sea bathing up to Christmas. At home in 1839 Moore writes:

Brook Farm, 17th January 1839. I have let the greater part of my land to a neighbour in the village of Cobham. He is a grocer and a man of very good character whom I have dealt with for many years. I retain about 23 acres of grass about the house for my cows, etc.

In May of the same year Moore took up his last appointment, though failing memory caused him to leave much of the work to an efficient secretary:

Devonport, 8th May 1839. . . . I succeeded Admiral Lord Amelius Beauclerk in the port command at Plymouth, and hoisted the Blue Flag at the Main on board the Impregnable. . . .

Brook Farm, 9th May 1842. On the 26th of April I was superseded in the command at Plymouth. . . . I had every reason to expect to be superseded soon after the 24th of April as that was exactly three years after the date of my commission appointing me. . . . We embarked on the evening of the 27th. . . and got to Portsmouth on the forenoon of the 28th, and the same night reached this place where I hope to pass the remainder of my days.

Admiral Moore died at Brook Farm on 9 December 1843, and his only child, John, died there on 20 January 1866, aged 44. The admiral's widow, Dora, died at the house on 4 July 1875 in her 85th year. All three are buried in Cobham churchyard on the south side of the church. Brook Farm came to the admiral's nephew, John Moore, and then to that gentleman's daughter, Miss Carrick Moore, after whose death at the house on 28 January 1925 Brook Farm was demolished. Miss Moore presented pictures of Sir John and Sir Graham to the National Portrait Gallery, and in 1899 gave St. John's church to Cobham.

Near the entrance to Cobham cemetery lies Miss Julia Moore who died in London on 12 July 1904 aged 100, a great-aunt of the author Horace Annesley Vachell. She had a keen love for Cobham and Brook Farm, where she lived from childhood with her grandmother and aunt, the mother and sister respectively of both Sir John and Admiral Sir Graham Moore. On her 100th birthday she received the graceful dedication to her by Sir Frederick Maurice of his *Diary of Sir John Moore*, and with great interest heard it read aloud. Queen Alexandra sent her congratulations, requesting by her lady-in-waiting "that this message does not get into the papers, or every person who has attained the same advanced age would immediately lay claim to a similar distinction." Later on Miss Moore had an operation for cataract, and was able to read *The Times* without spectacles. She remained vigorous in mind and body to the last, and besides remembering Sir John Moore quite well could also recall the illuminations in London after the Battle of Trafalgar.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Cobham Parish Magazine*, Aug. 1904.

In 1814 we saw Graham Moore lamenting the lack of congenial society, but he was later to find a friend in Sir William Hoste who about 1826 came to live at Pyports opposite the west end of Cobham church. Hoste's father was the Rev. Dixon Hoste of Ingoldsthorpe Hall in Norfolk, to which in the previous generation the family had moved after 150 years at Sandringham. Sir William's biographer records his hero's last autumn, that of 1828: "On moving to . . . Cobham for the winter he became sensibly worse from a return of fever and oppression as well as increased debility. His spirits were greatly overcome at the return to this home in so changed a state from that in which he had formerly resided here. The sight of the flower-garden which he had cultivated with his own hands, and laboured incessantly to adorn in every part, appeared to bring only a sadness of recollection, deprived, as he now was, of taking any part in his former occupations or even overlooking what before he had so greatly enjoyed. With these feelings, accompanied with a sense of increasing malady, he determined to leave his house at Cobham, not to return till the spring following." He died in London aged 48.<sup>9</sup> On 15 December 1828 Moore wrote in his diary:

I have been bereft of a friend for whom I entertained great esteem and affection. Captain Sir William Hoste died on the 6th instant, of a consumption, after a gradual decline which commenced seven or eight months ago. It is upwards of two years since he came to Cobham with his family to reside; I had known him slightly before personally, and, as an officer, his character for valour, enterprise and judgement was well known and fully established. We very soon became intimately acquainted, and passed much of our time in each other's society. He was of an open, frank, manly disposition, possessing a clear and vigorous understanding with much quickness and decision. He had little vanity or ostentation as any person I ever met, and, I think, his ambition was of the right sort, looking for distinction through meritorious publick service, and only, if so obtained. He was bred up under Nelson, had seen a great deal of service, and was very generally looked upon as one of the most rising men in the navy and his death is a serious loss to the service. With all this, he was a most delightful companion and one of the most agreeable men I ever met with. He was a Commander of the Order of the Bath and had been created a baronet on account of his distinguished services. He had for some years commanded the Royal Sovereign yacht and, some short time before his lamented death, had been appointed captain of the Royal George yacht. He has left a widow, daughter of the late Earl of Orford, and six children, three boys and three girls.

Early in his career Hoste became known to the enemy as the "Young Nelson," and when he died a statue was set up to his memory in St. Paul's Cathedral. Facing the south door and the massive marble monument of Sir John Moore, it is also near the memorial to Lord Nelson.

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<sup>9</sup> H. Hoste, *Memoirs and Letters of Captain Sir William Hoste*, Vol. II, p. 295.