

The Nesbitts of Norwood House: a footnote to Junius

JANET H STEVENSON

This article reconstructs the growth from about 1768 of the small estate based on Norwood House, traces the lives and careers of its first occupants, Alexander Nesbitt and his wife Mary, and attempts to demonstrate how, despite the notoriety of her early life, Mary Nesbitt, through ability, determination and opportunism, achieved the position in society which she desired and which most of her contemporaries denied her. It seeks to provide a factual account based chiefly on hitherto unused manuscript material, and excludes the numerous legends, unsupported by reliable written sources, that have grown up around Mary Nesbitt and Norwood House.

A series of anonymous letters printed between 1768 and 1772 in the *Public Advertiser* under the pseudonym Junius first appeared in a collected edition of two volumes prepared by Henry Sampson Woodfall in 1772. On the day of publication Hugh Boyd, an Irish political commentator living in London and himself a contributor to the *Public Advertiser*, presented a copy to his wife Frances. She was struck by a footnote to the last letter addressed by Junius to the former First Lord of the Treasury, Augustus Henry FitzRoy, duke of Grafton. The note referred to an incident, not thought to be public knowledge, which had occurred in the family of her guardians, the Nesbitt brothers, and which she had confided to her husband. The purpose of the footnote was to vilify Simon Luttrell (created Baron Irnham 1768; Viscount Carhampton 1781; earl of Carhampton 1785; d. 1787), and in the early 19th century it was advanced as evidence that Boyd was Junius.¹ It is not the purpose of this article to join the longstanding debate over Junius's identity, but to recount and enlarge upon the story behind the footnote.

Boyd's wife, born Frances Murphy,² was the ward of the brothers Arnold, Albert and Alexander Nesbitt, partners in a firm of merchants based in 1753 at 8 Bishopsgate and from about 1773 at 18 Aldermanbury.³ The three were younger sons of Thomas Nesbitt of Lismore, co Cavan, who died in 1750⁴ apparently having provided only for his eldest son Cosby. Another son, William, entered the army, and the remaining three were apprenticed to their father's younger brother Albert, a prominent London merchant.⁵ Albert Nesbitt, an adherent of the Pelhams, was member of parliament for Huntingdon from 1741 to 1747 and for Mitchell in Devon from 1747 to 1753.⁶ In 1750 Arnold, who had joined his uncle before 1744, and the younger Albert were in his London counting house, and the youngest of the three, Alexander, then aged 20, was in France, learning about the import of wines to England and Ireland which formed part of the firm's business.⁷ By the time of the elder Albert's death in 1753, Arnold and Albert were full partners with him,⁸ and Alexander presumably became one soon after.⁹ Arnold, the eldest, became the senior partner, and like his uncle pursued a parliamentary career.¹⁰ He extended the scope of the firm's business to include the supply under government contract of money and provisions for the troops in the North American colonies,¹¹ and the import of sugar and rum from West Indian and Grenadan estates.¹² The careers of his brothers Albert and Alexander are less well documented.

It is the youngest Nesbitt brother, Alexander, who emerges from the shadows in the footnote to Junius's letter of 27 November 1771:

'The present Lord Irnham, who is now in the decline of life, lately cultivated the acquaintance of a younger brother of a family, with which he had lived in some degree of intimacy and friendship. The young man had long been the

dupe of a most unhappy attachment to a common prostitute. His friends and relations foresaw the consequences of this connexion, and did everything that depended upon them to save him from ruin. But he had a friend in Lord Irnham, whose advice rendered all their endeavours ineffectual. This hoary lecher, not contented with the enjoyment of his friend's mistress, was base enough to take advantage of the passions and folly of a young man, and persuaded him to marry her. He descended even to perform the office of father to the prostitute. He gave her to his friend, who was on the point of leaving the kingdom, and the next night lay with her himself.¹³

The story refers to the circumstances surrounding Alexander's marriage to Mary Davis in 1768. It is, as will be shown, accurate in its essentials. The Irish in 18th-century London appear to have been a closely-knit community both socially and commercially, and it is unsurprising that Simon Luttrell was on familiar terms with the Nesbitt brothers. How familiar is illustrated by the fact that when Arnold Nesbitt bought the manor of Icklesham in Sussex on mortgage in 1760, Luttrell advanced £6,000 of the purchase price.¹⁴ The general disapprobation in which Luttrell, 'the king of Hell', was held suggests that there was truth in Junius's allegations, and it is likely that it was he who introduced Alexander Nesbitt to the London demi-monde and encouraged his enjoyment of it. His task was presumably easy, for what is known of Alexander's character suggests that, even in middle age, as he was in 1768, he was suggestible, naive and easily led. Hester Thrale, Arnold Nesbitt's sister-in-law, thought him crass and recorded two of the more entertaining instances of his lack of sophistication in society.¹⁵

When and where Alexander met Mary or Polly Davis is unknown: possibly it was at one of the London pleasure gardens such as Raneleigh which she frequented.¹⁶ Of her origins little is known. She was born in 1743,¹⁷ possibly in the Covent Garden area, if the account of her being born 'in a wheelbarrow' given in a 'Tête-à-Tête' portrait published in the *Town and Country Magazine* in 1775 is true. The same source states that she became a courtesan based at the Bedford Arms Tavern in Covent Garden, and soon afterwards met Alexander Nesbitt. She declined to accept the procedure usual in such circumstances and, such was Alexander's infatuation and susceptibility, she successfully prevailed upon him to marry her.¹⁸ That it was with the encouragement and collusion of Simon Luttrell is confirmed by the fact that he was a trustee of Mary's marriage settlement drawn up on 23 and 24 February, and one of the two witnesses at her wedding, for which she had obtained a licence on 23 February and which took place on 25 February at her parish church of St Martin in the Fields. The other trustee and witness was Thomas Wright, a goldsmith and jeweller in business in Duke's Court. At the time Mary was living in Buckingham Street,¹⁹ possibly at no 10 on the west side where she and Alexander lived after their marriage, when in London, until 1769. In 1768 Alexander was living at Norwood in Surrey in a house he had recently built for himself on the common there; it was apparently his sole asset and as such he settled it on Mary for her life.²⁰ The disapproval of Arnold and Albert Nesbitt is attested by their absence from the arrangements for the marriage and the ceremony itself. That the marriage did not lead to the exclusion of Alexander from the firm of Nesbitt, as the author of the 'Tête-à-Tête' portrait claimed, is proved by the fact that he was still involved in its business in August 1768.²¹

Alexander Nesbitt's house at Upper Norwood, new in 1768, was described as 'a very indifferent single brick house'.²² It stood in a valley south, and at the west end, of Central Hill, then called Vicar's Oak Road, which followed the boundary between the parishes of Croydon and Lambeth. Most of Croydon parish was within the archbishop of Canterbury's manor of Croydon, but it also contained some small freehold estates.²³ The house was near the site of a building which had in 1745 stood beside a gravel pit,²⁴ and was on freehold land bounded on the south and west by gently rising ground covered with ancient oak woodland, the North Wood, in which the archbishop's customary tenants still enjoyed

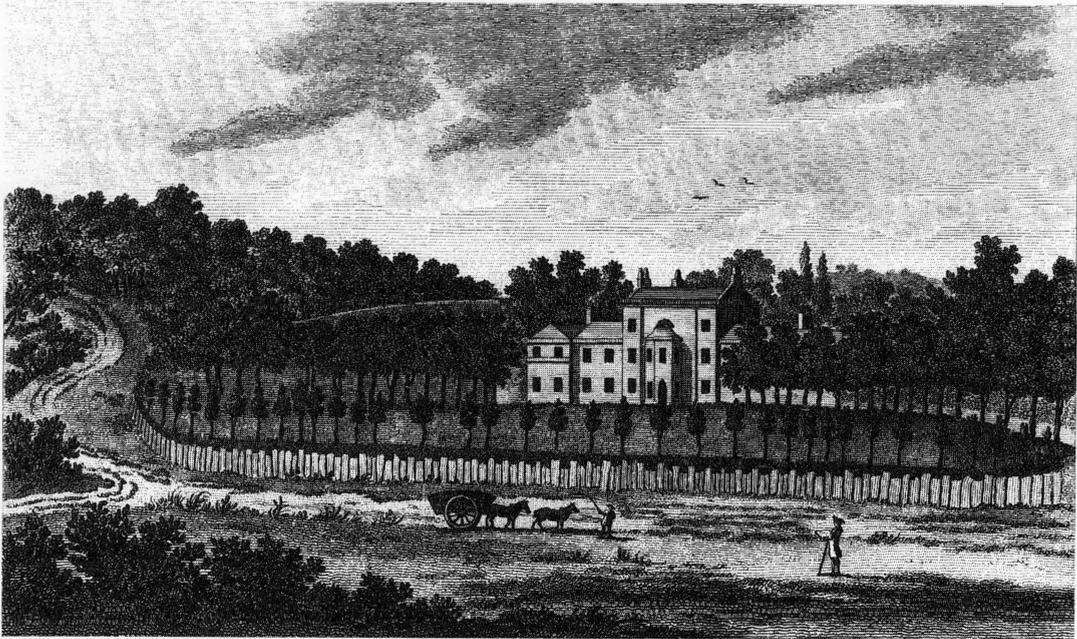


Fig 1 Norwood House in 1786. (Photograph reproduced by permission of the National Trust and the Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds)

rights. The eastern boundary was a feeder of the Thames, the Effra, a small stream which rose in the woods south of the house.²⁵ By bribing the commoners of Croydon manor, Nesbitt enclosed more land, probably east of the Effra, in about 1766. He also obtained effective control of another acre, on part of which a house stood, from a neighbour, John Bonneck, by becoming Bonneck's mortgagee, and immediately extended his house by adding a service wing over Bonneck's land. He also acquired another acre with a kiln on it, once the property of another member of the Bonneck family. His building operations seem to have been constant and included the erection of a necessary house and wooden stabling in the woods. The antagonism of the commoners of Croydon manor, who resented his illegal encroachments, resulted in his being presented at the archbishop's court in April 1766.²⁶

Alexander Nesbitt did not long enjoy his new house and wife. He became insane in about 1769 and from then until his death was confined in private lodgings near Blackfriars Bridge. It is possible that his mental collapse may, as suggested by the author of the 'Tête-à-Tête' portrait, have been caused by the callous behaviour of his wife, who continued her connexions in the demi-monde and apparently lost no opportunity of belittling her dull and stuttering husband.²⁷ He died early in 1772 and was buried on 19 February in the Nesbitt vault in the churchyard of Kilmore, co Cavan.²⁸

Mary Nesbitt received no maintenance from her husband's brothers during his illness²⁹ and at his death her only assets were Norwood House and her own person. By 1771 she had formed a connexion with a naval officer, the Hon Augustus Hervey,³⁰ brother and heir of the second earl of Bristol and estranged husband of the notorious Elizabeth Chudleigh, the bigamous duchess of Kingston. Hervey was at that time a post-captain and colonel of marines, a lord of the Admiralty, Whig member of parliament for the family borough of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, and a groom of the bedchamber to George III. His acquaintance Horace Walpole judged him to be of 'no parts', of 'a very confused understanding', and 'a most servile and forward Courtier'.³¹ A portrait of him painted in

1767 by Thomas Gainsborough depicts no intellectual or aesthete but a relaxed and confident man of the world.³² He and Mary Nesbitt were evidently a well-matched couple and, despite the irregularities of their earlier lives, appear to have lived faithfully together, often at Norwood House.

When the opportunity arose, Hervey continued to build up the small estate on Mary Nesbitt's behalf. In 1771 he bought from John Bonneck the land on which the eastern part of Norwood House was built, extended the house in 1773,³³ and soon after applied to the archbishop of Canterbury as lord of Croydon manor to retain land which Bonneck had enclosed from Norwood common.³⁴ It is likely that he transferred the land to Mary Nesbitt, as he did another 3 acres near the house which he was allowed to enclose in 1775.³⁵ In that year, however, he failed to persuade Cosby Nesbitt, Alexander Nesbitt's eldest brother and heir-at-law, to allow him to purchase the reversion of Mary Nesbitt's life estate in the Norwood property, despite a threat by Mary that she would sue him in Chancery for maintenance during the three years of her husband's illness.³⁶ In 1774, the acquisition of Broomfield, 7 acres west of Knight's Hill, and other copyhold land of the archbishop of Canterbury's manor of Lambeth extended the Norwood House estate north of Central Hill.³⁷ Augustus Hervey did not rebuild the house, as he proposed to do in 1775,³⁸ but he certainly added furnishings, including a clock bequeathed to him by Admiral Byng, portraits of himself and his son Augustus by Gainsborough, and a bell, taken in 1762 from Morón Castle in Cuba, which he placed over the stable block.³⁹

As depicted in 1786 (fig 1) Norwood House comprised a principal block of three storeys surmounted by a parapet.⁴⁰ The north entrance front had three bays of which the central one contained a two-storeyed segmental porch. There was a wing of two storeys, and possibly of two or more bays, on the west of the main block. East of the main block there was a two-storeyed block of two bays and, abutting that on the east at right angles, was another two-storeyed range which may have been what was built in 1773, possibly to extend the domestic and living quarters. Internally, the kitchens incorporated a well for a domestic water supply,⁴¹ and, presumably in the tall central range, there were two large salons with much panelling, decorated ceilings and marble fireplaces.⁴² The house and grounds were surrounded by a ring fence. Between house and stables the Effra, in which two ornamental lakes had been constructed north and south of the house, formed the principal feature of a long and narrow garden which lay north-west and south-east.⁴³ Norwood House, much altered inside and out, and extensively repaired after sustaining damage in the Second World War, still stands and houses the junior school of the Convent of the Faithful Virgin.

In March 1775 Augustus Hervey succeeded his brother George as earl of Bristol,⁴⁴ but survived him by only four years. His health was failing throughout 1779 and on 22 December he died at his London house, 6 St James's Square, aged 55.⁴⁵ His will, made on 20 May, named as executors Mary Nesbitt, his brother the Hon William Hervey, a soldier, and George Coventry, earl of Coventry.⁴⁶ The last declined to act,⁴⁷ and with astonishing speed the will was proved by the remaining executors on 24 December.⁴⁸ Its contents, albeit inaccurately reported, were common knowledge in London society the day after the earl's death. The legatees were Mary Nesbitt and Augustus Hervey, the earl's natural son, born in 1764 or 1765, by Catherine (Kitty) Hunter, from 1770 the wife of (Field Marshal Sir) Alured Clarke, and the daughter of Thomas Orby Hunter, a member of parliament for Winchelsea in Sussex. William Hervey was the remainder man.⁴⁹ To Mary Nesbitt the earl devised for life the manor of Evedon and the right to present a rector for the parish church, properties which he had bought, probably for the purpose, from Lord Robert Spencer in 1777 or later. He also left to her unspecified land in Lincolnshire, devised to him by his brother George. Those estates were charged with an annuity for his son, whom he intended should eventually succeed Mary Nesbitt in them. He devised to Mary and Augustus equally the money to be raised by the sale of his unentailed Suffolk estates, Mary to have Augustus's share if he died under 21.⁵⁰



Fig 2 Mary Nesbitt in 1781 painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. (Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, London)

Immediately after the earl's death, Mary Nesbitt surrendered the keys of 6 St James's Square to William Hervey. She asked that a schedule of the earl's papers should be prepared and a copy sent to her. The papers themselves, which included the earl's own memoirs and those of his grandfather, John Hervey, Baron Hervey, and may also have included title deeds, were to be deposited with a banker in the executors' names. Mary Nesbitt agreed that Frederick Hervey, the new earl, should buy the furniture of 6 St James's Square, valued at £4,343 18s, and the furniture and stock at Ickworth, valued at £3,295 8s 11d. As part of her share, which eventually totalled £7,378 12s 11d, Mary Nesbitt took furniture, jewellery, wines, paintings including some from Ickworth, a harpsicord, a coach, a chaise and five horses, worth together £918 12s 1d.⁵¹

A dispute over the administration of the will immediately arose between Mary Nesbitt and William Hervey, and on 15 July 1780 she filed a bill in Chancery in which she claimed that Hervey had entered on the unentailed Suffolk lands, had failed to provide a schedule of the earl's papers, and was, moreover, claiming the Norwood House estate as the late earl's property. William Hervey did not file an answer until 18 October, when he visited his solicitor Thomas Ryder at Lincoln's Inn for the purpose. In the meantime he had apparently compiled a schedule which was sent, with receipt and account books and the memoirs of Augustus, earl of Bristol, to Mary Nesbitt at her house in Sackville Street. When the cause was heard on 10 March 1781 the earl's will was ordered to be implemented and its trusts performed. An account of the lands devised on trust for sale was to be taken, they were to be sold, and with the proceeds stock was to be bought to provide annuities for Mary Nesbitt and Augustus Hervey, whom the Court of Chancery placed under William Hervey's guardianship.⁵² Perhaps in celebration of her success, Mary Nesbitt sat in May for the second time to Sir Joshua Reynolds. The resulting portrait (fig 2) depicts a handsome, hard-featured, self-confident and determined woman in early middle age, the dove she holds possibly intended to be a symbol of her rehabilitation in society as an independent woman of property.⁵³ The judicial process was incomplete when the young Augustus was killed on 20 October 1782 on board HMS *Courageux* off Gibraltar while serving under the command of his cousin Constantine Phipps, Baron Mulgrave,⁵⁴ and the Chancery proceedings therefore abated. On 8 February 1783 Mary Nesbitt filed a bill of revivor and the trusts of the will were again ordered to be performed.⁵⁵ In December 1784 the unentailed Suffolk estates, which comprised a total of 186 acres in the parishes of Ickworth, Eyke, 'Bromeswell' [? Bromfield], Chevington and Chedburgh, and a fee-farm rent from the borough of Bury St Edmunds, were offered for sale. They were bought before 15 January 1785 by John Griffin, the cousin of Frederick, earl of Bristol, and from 1784 Baron Howard de Walden, for £5,000.⁵⁶

Mary Nesbitt continued to augment the Norwood House estate (fig 3). In 1784 she acquired another piece of land near the Croydon-Lambeth boundary,⁵⁷ and in 1793 bought the great tithes arising from Norwood House and its 21 acres of freehold land.⁵⁸ When the commons of Croydon were inclosed about 1800 she was allotted two portions of land amounting to just over 9 acres, and an unspecified share of woodland in Great Stake Pit coppice south-west of Norwood House.⁵⁹ Early in 1802 Peter Du Cane sold about 4 acres of woodland in Gravelly Hill coppice to her⁶⁰ and in the summer of the same year William Eden, Baron Auckland, of Eden Farm in Beckenham, Kent, a tenant of the archbishop of Canterbury in Croydon manor, renewed to her a sub-lease of 32 acres or more, which she had enclosed and occupied for some years, in Great Stake Pit coppice and Gravelly Hill coppice. Lord Auckland's son and successor George renewed the sub-lease in 1823.⁶¹ North of Vicar's Oak Road in Lambeth Mary Nesbitt bought a house in 1779 and another in 1783.⁶² The inclosure of the commons of Lambeth in 1808-10 provided further opportunities to consolidate the estate north of Vicar's Oak Road. In 1809 Mary Nesbitt bought by private contract from the inclosure commissioners land on the north side of Vicar's Oak Road and two smaller portions which fronted Knight's Hill, and from Thomas Street's

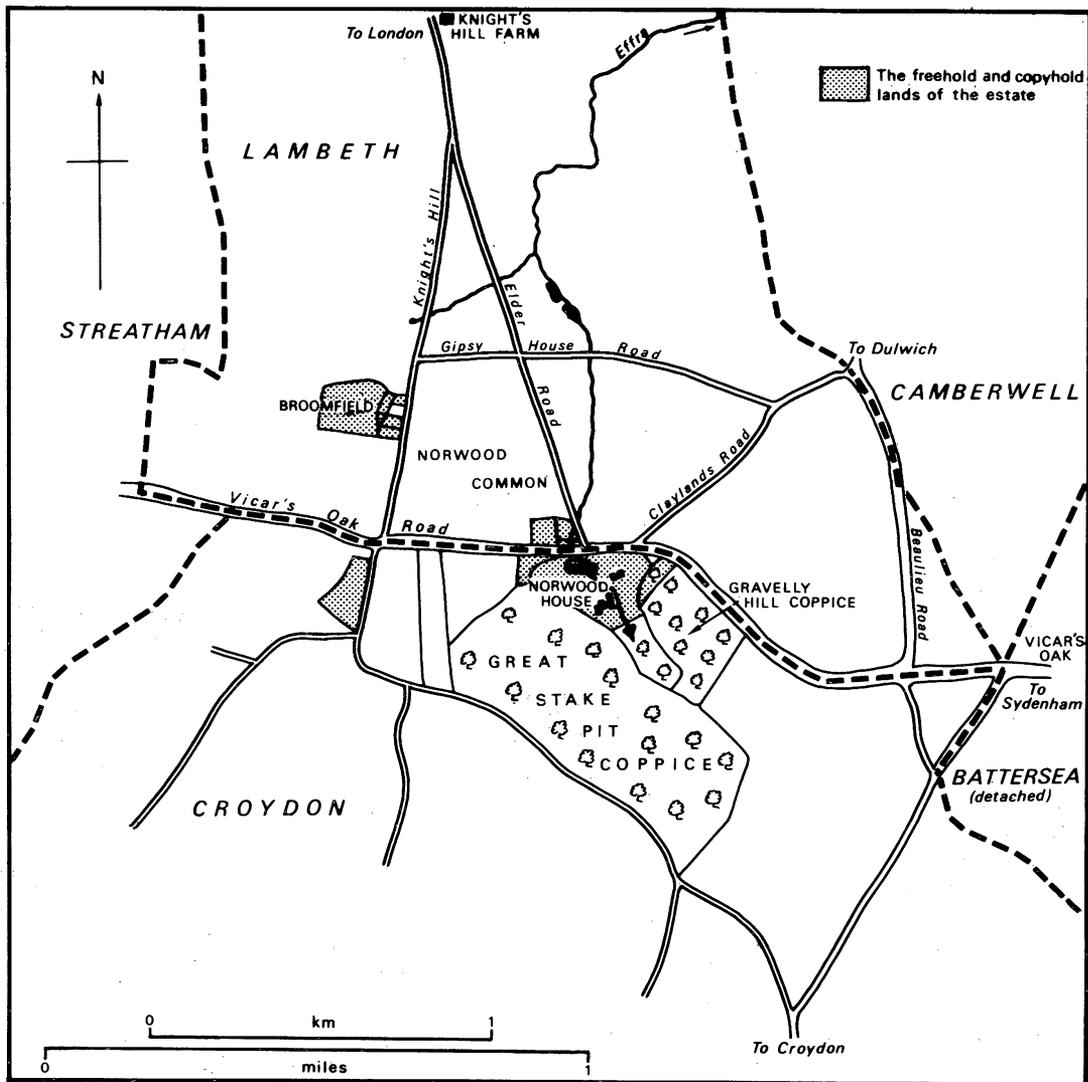


Fig 3 Mary Nesbitt's Norwood House estate c1811: plan based on the Croydon and Lambeth inclosure award maps

devises a cottage and garden nearby. When the remaining commons were divided and allotted in 1810 she received three small portions totalling just under an acre between Knight's Hill and Broomfield, and, near the land she had bought in 1809, two more portions totalling half an acre in the angle of Vicar's Oak Road and Elder Road.⁶³ She surrendered Broomfield and the three other portions of copyhold land west of Knight's Hill in 1820,⁶⁴ and in 1825 the estate comprised about 52 acres of freehold, leasehold and copyhold land, most of it in Croydon parish, around Norwood House.⁶⁵

In the 1780s and 1790s Mary Nesbitt lived chiefly at Norwood House, described in 1789 as a 'comfortable and spacious villa.'⁶⁶ She was resident there when the stables were robbed in 1786 by her coachman and his accomplice, a woman servant formerly employed at the house.⁶⁷ Although her origins and early way of life debarred her for the most part from

London society, she nevertheless received visitors of distinction at Norwood: prominent among them were Lord Mulgrave and George Rose, Secretary to the Treasury and a protégé of Mary Nesbitt's near neighbour at Knight's Hill Farm, the Lord Chancellor, Edward Thurlow, Baron Thurlow.⁶⁸ Another frequent visitor was John Stanley (from 1807 Sir John Stanley, Bt, and from 1839 Baron Stanley of Alderley, d. 1850), a school friend of the young Augustus Hervey. His letters, journals and memoranda record several vignettes of her life both at Norwood and at Paris in the late 18th and early 19th century. Although his version of the origin of Norwood House and its estate is inexact, the anecdotes recorded from his own experiences are presumably more trustworthy. His account of her travels on the continent, particularly in France, Germany and Switzerland at the time of the French Revolution, and an article published in the *Morning Chronicle* on 25 September 1797, suggest that she may have been employed as a government agent in connexion with the covert attempts of Pitt's administration to restore the French monarchy.⁶⁹

In 1808 Norwood House was undergoing a thorough repair.⁷⁰ Possibly partly because of that expenditure as well as her purchases of land in Lambeth, Mary Nesbitt seems to have been in financial difficulties and in 1809 mortgaged the estate.⁷¹ It was probably her straitened circumstances that encouraged her to let it from 1814 to 1817, to an unsatisfactory tenant whose depredations necessitated another thorough restoration in 1817;⁷² and financial embarrassment which afterwards forced her to live mostly abroad, at Montreuil-sur-Mer (départ. Pas-de-Calais) in 1821⁷³ and in Switzerland during the autumn of 1822.⁷⁴ She died at Paris in the autumn of 1825, was buried there on 4 November,⁷⁵ and Lord Bristol's wish, expressed in his will, that she should rest beside him in Ickworth church was unfulfilled.⁷⁶

She devised her real and personal estate upon trust for sale, the proceeds for William Alexander Nesbitt Whitmore whom she described as her nephew. He was apparently the son of the William Whitmore who witnessed her will.⁷⁷ Evedon manor and advowson and the other lands, apparently in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, devised to her in 1779, passed on Mary Nesbitt's death to the executors of William Hervey, who had predeceased her in 1815.⁷⁸ All was sold, including Evedon manor and advowson to Sir Jenison Gordon, Bt, in 1827, to meet the bequests of William Hervey's will.⁷⁹ It was presumably on Mary's death that the memoirs of Augustus, earl of Bristol, were returned to Ickworth.⁸⁰ Norwood House and its estate reverted to the assignees appointed by the commissioners of the Court of Bankruptcy to administer the affairs of John Nesbitt, son of Cosby Nesbitt and reversioner of the Norwood estate, who had died insolvent in 1817.⁸¹ The surviving assignee in 1830 sold Norwood House, 10 acres of freehold land and 3 acres of copyhold land in Croydon, and half an acre of copyhold land in Lambeth to Michael Clayton, formerly Mary Nesbitt's solicitor.⁸² Clayton sold the estate in 1844 to Charles Crawley and Norwood House became the Park Hotel. It was bought from Crawley in 1848 for Henriette le Forestier d'Osseville (Mother Sainte Marie), who founded in it a daughter house of the Convent de Notre Dame de la Charité des Orphelines dite de la Vierge Fidèle at La Déliverande (départ. Calvados).⁸³

Although still debarred from London society even in the more liberal atmosphere of the late 18th century, and possibly even because of her exclusion from it, Mary Nesbitt succeeded in establishing at Norwood House a political salon to which were drawn young men such as John Stanley, and possibly William Whitmore, a younger son of a family whose members formed a political dynasty at Bridgnorth in Shropshire in the 18th century and early 19th.⁸⁴ As far as was possible, her rehabilitation was complete by 1797, an achievement summed up by the writer of the article in the *Morning Chronicle*. His words may serve as her epitaph:

'Mrs Nesbitt has had to combat through life with the prejudice which her first connexion excited, and the woman whom the dreadful pen of Junius consigned to an immortality of disgrace could only rise superior to the memorial by

extraordinary exertions. Yet this she has effected . . . Notwithstanding the recorded anecdote of her marriage with Mr Nesbitt and the miscellany of her life, she has acquired an elevation in life which she has preserved with dignity because she has acted in good fortune with moderation. She has used her influence with the great in favour of the unfortunate, and many deserving men owe their present situation in public life to the patronage of this lady.⁸⁵

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

(See also abbreviations at front of volume)

CFV Mun: Muniments of the Convent of the Faithful Virgin, Central Hill, London

Complete peerage: G.E.C. [G E Cokayne], 1910–59 *The complete peerage*

Early married life of Lady Stanley: Adeane, J H (ed), 1899 *The early married life of Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley*

Hist Parl Commons: The House of Commons 1715–54, ed R Sedgwick, 1970; *The House of Commons 1754–90*, ed L Namier & J Brooke, 1964 (The History of Parliament)

J Hon William Hervey: Journals of the Hon William Hervey in North America and Europe, from 1755–1814, ed S H A Hervey, 1906 (Suffolk Green Books, no 14)

LPL: Lambeth Palace Library

Suff RO: Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds

- 1 Campbell, L D, 1800 *Miscellaneous works of Hugh Boyd*, 1, 18, 143–9, 173; *Complete peerage*, 3, 23–4
- 2 *Dictionary of national biography*: Hugh Boyd
- 3 *New complete guide to London* [1772]; *Kent's directory*, 1774; PRO PROB 11/799, ff 185–8
- 4 Burke, B, 1958 *Landed gentry of Ireland*, 125; Nesbitt, A & C, 1898 *History of the family of Nisbet or Nesbitt*, Torquay, privately printed, 38, 41–2. Both sources are corrected by National Libr Dublin MS 4487, pp 55, 57 (transcripts of parish registers of Kilmore, co Cavan)
- 5 *Army list*, 1776; Nesbitt, op cit in note 4, 38; PRO PROB 11/1020, f 49 and v
- 6 *Hist Parl Commons 1715–54*, 2, 291
- 7 Nesbitt, op cit in note 4, 38. For examples of the firm's involvement in the wine trade, see *Calendar of Treasury books and papers, 1742–5*, 505, 574, 579, 702, 711, 713, 769, 777, 779
- 8 PRO PROB 11/799, ff 185–8
- 9 *ibid* T 1/383/59
- 10 *Hist Parl Commons 1754–90*, 3, 194–5; Stevenson, J H, 1991 Arnold Nesbitt and the borough of Winchelsea, *Sussex Archaeol Collect*, 129, 183–93
- 11 eg PRO C 12/579/8; *ibid* T 1/370/95, T 1/408/365–6, T 1/554/311–12
- 12 *Hist Parl Commons 1754–90*, 2, 236; PRO C 12/579/8; *ibid* PROB 11/1052, ff 187–92v
- 13 *The letters of Junius* (ed J Cannon, 1978), 317n
- 14 East Sussex Record Office SAS/RA/94
- 15 *Thraliana* (ed K C Balderston, 1951), 1, 6, 307 and n
- 16 Bleakley, H W, 1909 *Ladies fair and frail*, 75. An account of Mary Nesbitt given by A R Warwick in *The phoenix suburb: a South London social history* (Richmond, Surrey, 1972: reprinted for the Norwood Society, 1991) at pp 33–44 concentrates on her later career as recorded in the letters and memoranda of Lord Stanley of Alderley and his wife published in *The early married life of Lady Stanley* and, perhaps for that reason, is more sympathetic to her than the present article.
- 17 PRO RG 33/60, p 36
- 18 Suff RO 941/50/9; Lillywhite, B, 1972 *London signs*, 29
- 19 Thanks are offered to the Reverend Mother and the archivist, Sister Dorothea, the Convent of the Faithful Virgin, Central Hill, London, for allowing access to their muniments. CFV Mun, bdl 1, deed 1A, lease and release, Nesbitt, Luttrell, Wright, Davis, 1768; Guildhall Libr London MS 10,091/120; Westminster City Archives, parish register of St Martin's in the Fields, no 39, p 191
- 20 *The Strand. The parish of St Martin's-in-the-Fields, Part II* (Survey of London, xviii, 1937, ed G Gater & W H Godfrey), 134; CFV Mun, bdl 1, deed 1A, lease and release, Nesbitt, Luttrell, Wright, Davis, 1768; PRO B 3/3768, ff 513 and v, 516 and v
- 21 PRO C 12/1900/9
- 22 *ibid* B 3/3768, f 513v

- 23 Anderson, J C, 1889 *Croydon inclosure award*, plan of Croydon parish, 1800; LPL TO 57, Lambeth inclosure award, 1810, f 6 and map
- 24 Anderson, J C, 1898 *The Great North Wood*, map I facing p 16 (the Great North Wood surveyed by John Rocque in 1745)
- 25 A plan of 1830 depicts what are probably the original freehold lands: LPL TR 30, Mrs Nesbitt's estate.
- 26 Croydon Local Studies Libr, transcript of Croydon manor homage jury minute book, 2, 61; CFV Mun, deed 1A, lease and release, Nesbitt, Luttrell, Wright, Davis, 1768; PRO B 3/3768, f 518 and v
- 27 Suff RO 941/50/9
- 28 Nat Libr Dublin MS 4487, p 61
- 29 PRO B 3/3768, f 513
- 30 *J Hon William Hervey*, 231
- 31 *Complete peerage*, 2, 325–6, corrected in some particulars by the present article.
- 32 At Ickworth House, Suffolk, in 1991, and presumably returned there on Mary Nesbitt's death.
- 33 PRO B 3/3768, ff 513 and v, 516 and v
- 34 Croydon Local Studies Libr, transcript of Croydon manor homage jury minute book, 2, 75
- 35 LPL ED 1960, pp 27–8, 46–7
- 36 PRO B 3/3768, ff 513 and v, 516 and v
- 37 LPL ED 1918, ff 28–9; *ibid* TO 16, ff 15v–16; TO 57, map
- 38 PRO B 3/3768, ff 513 and v, 516 and v
- 39 *Early married life of Lady Stanley*, 434; the stables were demolished in 1961: inf from Sister Dorothea
- 40 Paragraph based on a view published in 1786 by L Sewell: Suff RO 941/50/9
- 41 See text at note 33; Wilson, J B, 1973 *History of Norwood*, 42
- 42 Wilson, op cit in note 41, 41
- 43 LPL TR 30
- 44 *Complete peerage*, 2, 325
- 45 *J Hon William Hervey*, xxxvii, 292–3
- 46 PRO PROB 11/1059, ff 98–100
- 47 *ibid* C 12/433/30
- 48 *ibid* PROB 11/1059, ff 98–100
- 49 Walpole, H, *Correspondence* (ed W S Lewis et al, 1965), 33, 148–9; *Hist Parl Commons 1754–90*, 2, 656–7
- 50 Spencer Estate Act, 17 Geo III, c 50 (Priv Act); PRO IND 17012, f 146v; *ibid* PROB 11/1005, ff 311v–318v; PROB 11/1059, ff 98–100; Lincolnshire Archives, Evedon parish, 13/1; *ibid* CRAGG 5/1/109, *ibid* QQS 9, Evedon land tax assessments, 1824–5
- 51 PRO C 12/433/30; *ibid* PROB 11/1059, ff 98–100
- 52 *ibid* C 12/433/30; *J Hon William Hervey*, lxxiii, 300
- 53 Waterhouse, E K, 1941 *Reynolds*, 73, where the sitter is wrongly identified; Ingamells, J, 1985 *The Wallace Collection*, 1, 153–4. Mary Davis was first painted, as Circe, by Reynolds in 1764; Williamson, G C, 1918 *The life and works of Ozias Humphrey, RA*, 31–2. The portrait, c1972 in Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass, is reproduced in Warwick, op cit in note 16. A miniature painted in 1770 by Humphrey is reproduced in Williamson, op cit, at p 176.
- 54 *J Hon William Hervey*, xxxvii
- 55 PRO C 12/937/21; *ibid* C 33/460, ff 155–6v, 166, 380v
- 56 *J Hon William Hervey*, 360; *Complete peerage*, 2, 326–7; 6, 590–2. On the death in 1799 of Lord Howard's childless sister and coheir, the lands descended to his surviving coheir, Frederick, earl of Bristol, and were reunited with the Ickworth estate.
- 57 LPL ED 1960, pp 150–1
- 58 CFV Mun, bdle 1, deed 5A, release, Mills to Nesbitt, 1793
- 59 Anderson, op cit in note 23, 176, 193
- 60 CFV Mun, bdle 1, deeds 6A–B, lease and release, Du Cane to Nesbitt, 1802; bdle 1, deeds 10–11, mortgage, Nesbitt to Pratbernon, 1809
- 61 *Complete peerage*, 1, 333–5; LPL TA 639/3; 639/10; BL Add MSS 34,458, ff 73–4; 34,459, ff 198–9
- 62 CFV Mun, bdle 1, deeds 10–11, mortgage, Nesbitt to Pratbernon, 1809
- 63 LPL TO 57, ff 3, 6, 9, 11–12, 20, 24–6, 40–1
- 64 *ibid* ED 1921, pp 111–13
- 65 PRO B 3/3768, f 526
- 66 *Early married life of Lady Stanley*, 90
- 67 *European Magazine and London Review*, 10 (July–Dec, 1786), 477–8
- 68 *Early married life of Lady Stanley*, 90; *Complete peerage*, 9, 393; 12.1, 730–1; *Hist Parl Commons 1754–90*, 3, 375–6; Anderson, op cit in note 24, 16
- 69 *Early married life of Lady Stanley*, 89–90, 142, 303–4, 432–3; *Complete peerage*, 12.1, 252–3
- 70 *Early married life of Lady Stanley*, 303
- 71 CFV Mun, bdle 1, deeds 10–11, mortgage, Nesbitt to Pratbernon, 1809
- 72 BL Add MS 34,459, ff 198–9; PRO B 3/3768, f 517 and v
- 73 CFV Mun, bdle 1, deed 12, copy will of Mary Nesbitt

- 74 PRO B 3/3768, f 520 and v
 75 *ibid* f 526; *ibid* RG 33/60, p 36
 76 *ibid* PROB 11/1059, ff 98–100. Divorce proceedings instigated by the earl in the Court of Arches were dismissed in 1779 because of his collusion in a successful action in 1769 by Elizabeth Chudleigh to have the marriage declared void: LPL Court of Arches, Aa 74/18; Aa 74/21; D 242, ff 1–76; G 149/43; G 149/45
 77 CFV Mun, bdl 1, deed 12, copy will of Mary Nesbitt. Mary's 'nephew Alick' was painted in 1784 by Ozias Humphrey: Williamson, op cit in note 53, 99. The 'nephew' of her will was presumably the William Alexander Nesbitt Whitmore baptised as the son of William and Elizabeth Whitmore at All Hallows the Great, London, in 1796: Guildhall Libr London MS 5162; Burke, B, 1963 *Peerage*, 2565. The Whitmores probably lived at West Wickham, Kent, in a house occupied until 1779 by Mary Nesbitt's brother-in-law, Arnold Nesbitt: Hasted, E, 1797 *The history of the county of Kent*, 2, 30.
 78 *J Hon William Hervey*, 510–16. Cf PRO C 13/1767/18
 79 Lincolnshire Archives KQS 9, Evedon land tax assessments, 1826–7; Northamptonshire Record Office, Finch Hatton MS 2952
 80 Cf *Augustus Hervey's journal* (ed D Erskine [1953]), p xii
 81 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 87.1 (Jan–June, 1817), 375; PRO B 3/3768, unnumbered folio
 82 CFV Mun, bdl 1, deed 12, copy will of Mary Nesbitt; bdl 2, deed, lease and release, Stone to Clayton, 1830
 83 *ibid* bdl 1, deed 14, bond, Clayton to Crawley, 1844; *ibid* bdl 1, deed 15, admittance of Crawley to copyhold land in Lambeth manor, 1844; Wilson, op cit in note 41, 41–2
 84 Burke, op cit in note 77, 2564–5; Namier, L, 1957 *The structure of politics at the accession of George III*, 243
 85 *Early married life of Lady Stanley*, 433

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The publication of this article has been assisted by a grant from the Twenty-Seven Foundation in association with the Institute of Historical Research.