

THE GOODALLS OF DINTON AND ETON

ALAN DELL

This article contrasts the careers of two brothers with identical upbringings and educations. As Provost of one of England's most famous public schools, the younger became the mentor and confidant of statesmen, generals and royalty. Through marriage, the elder became lord of the manor of Dinton near Aylesbury and, as absentee Rector of Marsham, Norfolk, lived the life of a country gentleman in Buckinghamshire. Despite their different careers, the brothers shared a passionate interest in natural history in all its forms.

Joseph Goodall, a Derbyshire and Hertfordshire landowner, married Ann Lupton, whose family had Thame connections, at St Martin-in-the Fields, London, in 1756. For some time, the couple lived at a house in Henrietta Street off Cavendish Square. Their two sons, William and Joseph, were baptised at St Margaret's Westminster and educated at Eton College (Naylor's). Both boys proceeded to Cambridge University, William to Christ's in 1775 and Joseph to Kings in 1779.¹ After Cambridge, however, their lives and careers, hitherto very similar, moved in different directions.

At Eton, Joseph, the younger by three years, became friends with his exact contemporary Richard Wellesley. Wellesley, elder brother of Arthur Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington, had been removed from Harrow School after leading a riot against the new headmaster, but was to have an important if controversial career of his own. The friendship between Joseph Goodall and Richard Wellesley survived into manhood,² serving Goodall well and probably assisted his subsequent preferment.

It seems that Joseph was the more gifted of the brothers. He was notably successful at Cambridge, where the award of a Craven Scholarship and the Browne Medal two years running, in 1781 and 1782, suggest a very promising Classical scholar. In 1782, Joseph was elected as a Fellow of King's and appointed an Assistant Master at Eton. In 1787 he was ordained Deacon, and in 1798 was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Cambridge, but there is no record that he was ever ordained priest.³ He resigned his Fellowship at King's in 1788, on his marriage to Harriet Arabella, daughter of Revd. J. Prior, another Assistant Master at Eton. Joseph

became Headmaster in 1802 and, in 1809, was appointed Provost of Eton and Canon of Windsor, holding both positions until his death in 1840. Goodall's appointment as Canon of Windsor may have owed something to his friendship with Richard Wellesley. His position as Headmaster of Eton would have brought him into quite frequent contact with members of the Royal Family, and it was widely believed that he was made Provost of Eton at the express wish of George III.⁴

When Goodall became Provost of Eton, he succeeded as Headmaster by John Keate, another distinguished Eton and King's scholar. When visiting Eton in 1832, King William IV promised Keate that, in due course, he too would become Provost. Pointing to Goodall, the King said, 'When he goes, I'll make you him.' Keate made no comment but, with a gracious bow, Goodall said, 'Sire, I could never think of going before you.'⁵ Of course, the King spoke with a sailor's directness and by normal standards his remarks were singularly ill-judged and inappropriate. Goodall's skills as a courtier, revealed in his ability to turn what might have been an embarrassing incident into a joke, though with a hidden barb at the King, were clearly of a high order. He has been described as a 'model of what a Provost of Eton should be; tall and stately, a delightful manner, dignified without pomposity and joy without levity.'

Joseph Goodall was very much the traditionalist and still wore the clerical dress of the eighteenth century until the end of his life, with a barber bringing a newly dressed wig to the lodge every morning and taking away the previous one.⁶ He was a traditionalist in other respects too, and this was to lead to criticism from those who subscribed

to more modern values. He was Rector of various parishes, including Hedgerley (1788-97) and Hitcham (1811-33). His whole life was bound up with Eton and 'every stone and pinnacle was dear to his heart.' As a staunch conservative 'no tradition could be questioned yet alone be reformed and none took place during his regime.'⁷

Financially, however, the College flourished under Provost Goodall: in 1818 he told a committee of the House of Commons that the revenue of Eton College averaged £7000 per annum and arose chiefly from reserved rents, woods, fines and heriots from manors and redeemed land tax.⁸

Many years later, John Fowler, landlord of the *White Hart Hotel* in Aylesbury, gave an outsider's description of the Provost. Writing in 1898, Fowler said, 'In my boyhood I well remember his genial and benevolent countenance, often lit up with a humorous smile, when he changed horses at my father's house at Aylesbury on his way from Eton to his brother ... I was always glad to see the Provost as he generally had some kind remark to make adorned with some simple Latin quotation, as it struck me, to discover if I kept up my school classics, which fortunately I did.'⁹

One tradition that Dr Goodall would have supported was that of the annual Eton Montem, which was well under way by the time of his Headship. By that time, it had become a muster for the whole school, a semi-military parade that was often attended by royalty from nearby Windsor. The Montem started as an initiation ceremony for new pupils, who were sprinkled with salt on a hill near the present-day Slough; the area still retains the name Salt Hill. Later, money was demanded from passers-by towards the expenses of the Senior Colleger as he went up to Kings: royalty were not exempted from the 'tax'. Goodall would have benefited from the collection when he left Eton for Cambridge, and no doubt approved the continuance of this ancient custom. Headmaster Hawtrey abolished it in 1847 when the opening of the railway from London attracted undesirables and trouble-makers.¹⁰

In contrast to Joseph, his elder brother William was less of a public figure. Having taken his B.A. at Christ's Cambridge in 1780, he was ordained as a priest the following year and became curate of St Peter's, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, where his father owned considerable property. It was there that William met his future wife, Rebecca, only

daughter of Sir John van Hattem, owner of Dinton Hall, near Aylesbury, and of a surrounding estate of 1000 acres. Based on her age at burial – there is no extant baptismal register for the time and the Bishop's Transcripts are sketchy – Rebecca was born around 1767. There is no evidence that John van Hattem was married: his memorial in Dinton Church certainly does not shed any light on this matter. Van Hattem's will, made early in 1786, left the bulk of his property to Rebecca, describing her 'lately called Rebecca Dorsett' and adding that she was attending a boarding school at Berkhamsted run by Miss Amelia Smith. He also provided an annual annuity for his housekeeper Mary Howes and afterwards for her son William.¹¹ The implication must be that Rebecca was illegitimate.

John van Hattem died in December 1787 and his will was proved only a couple of weeks after his burial. The speed was highly unusual for the time, and has interesting implications. Sir John makes no mention of William Goodall in his will, yet the young clergyman married Rebecca van Hattem/Dorsett on 15 April 1788.¹² Since their first child was baptised at Berkhamsted less than three weeks later, it is clear that Rebecca must have been pregnant at the time of her father's death. This may explain why it was necessary to prove the will so quickly. Sadly the child, baptised William Goodall van Hattem, lived only for a few months and is not mentioned on the large tomb at Dinton where many of the family are buried. William's behaviour may not have been altogether becoming in a clergyman, but his marriage to Rebecca certainly assured his future, made even more secure following the death of his own father, Joseph Goodall, in March 1788. In October 1788, the couple moved from Berkhamsted Hall to Dinton Hall, as noted in the Dinton Hall Memorandum Book.¹³ The Memorandum Book gives details of tree planting, fish stocks and general landscaping of the estate, together with jottings of local and family happenings including the period before the Goodalls arrived.

Although no children were born to Joseph, William produced a large family of sixteen between 1788 and 1811, though four children died in infancy. Four of William's daughters married Anglican clergymen and Joseph came over from Eton to officiate at his nieces' weddings.¹⁴ In the absence of a family of his own, Dr Goodall seems to have taken a keen interest in his brother's

children and especially in his nephews, George and Henry. The Provost made his feelings very plain; in a codicil of 1834, one of many to his will,¹⁵ he stated that Henry had not conducted himself in such a way as to merit that place in his regard that his excellent brother, George had done ‘...my dear nephew George it has pleased the Almighty to take to himself.’¹⁶ Joseph stipulated in his will that a bequest of £50 to Henry should only be paid if he gave proof of his amendment and good conduct during his life, and that Henry would be excluded from any future division of property after his wife’s death.

Henry was clearly the black sheep of the family: little is known of his schooling or career, but he does not seem to have met the high standards set by his uncle. The reason for Joseph’s displeasure is unclear, but Henry certainly did not benefit from the inheritance in which his surviving brothers and sisters shared. He died in March 1850 at the *Black Lion Inn* in Conway, North Wales: the death certificate gives paralysis and bronchitis as the cause of death.¹⁷ Henry had probably been a permanent guest at the *Black Lion* for some years; in the 1841 census a man of this name and age (of independent means) appears as living at the inn in question. It is not known when Henry fell from favour, though it was probably shortly before Dr Goodall inserted the extra codicil to his Will in 1834. In the 1820s, Henry was still very much part of the family at Dinton, appearing as a witness to two of his sisters’ weddings in 1826 and 1827 respectively.¹⁸

It has been shown that after leaving Eton the Goodall brothers had very different careers, but they still had much in common, especially their shared interest in natural history. Joseph collected, named and described shells and shellfish and was well-known in this field. His collection of drawings was said to be one of the largest in the country. In 1819 he paid £200 for over 3000 conchological drawings accurately coloured by Charles Wodarch, an authority on the subject. They had previously been commissioned by Napoleon Bonaparte, but had not been completed by the time of the Emperor’s downfall. Eighty years later the same drawings were sold at auction for a mere £21 10s.¹⁹

William’s interest in natural history led him to make many drawings of shells, flora and fauna. On his death, William’s portfolios of drawings passed to his surviving son, James Joseph, Vicar of

Bromham and Oakley, Bedfordshire,²⁰ James Joseph Goodall also inherited part of Provost Goodall’s vast collection. Some of it had been offered to Joseph’s wife Harriett but as he wrote ‘... she has no partiality for shells.’²¹

William’s desire to draw may have been heightened by his appointment as the Rector of the Norfolk parish of Marsham. In the adjoining parish of Stratton Strawless some 3½ miles away, Robert Marsham, Fellow of the Royal Society (1780), and his family had for many years recorded the first arrival in spring of various local species of plants and animals: he is hence regarded as the founder of phenology. It is possible that Marsham influenced William, but Marsham died in 1790 and William was not appointed to Marsham until 1787 and was non-resident there, so any overlap in Norfolk was short.²² The parish registers of Marsham suggest that Goodall paid a curate to take services there throughout, and apart from paying for a bell in the church in 1824, left little mark on the parish.²³

William was focussed on Buckinghamshire where he lived the life of a country gentleman at Dinton. Although he probably had plenty of leisure, William took an active part in the life of the county, serving as a magistrate and running the van Hattem estate at Dinton. As a Justice of the Peace, William Goodall was involved in a wide range of administrative duties. For example, in 1805 he became one of the Commissioners appointed by Parliament to settle and award damages in a dispute between the Grand Union Canal and the owner of Bourton Mill at Buckingham, who feared he would lose water to work the mill when navigable cuts were made to connect with the main canal.²⁴ In later years William Goodall became less active in local affairs. At the time of the Buckinghamshire Swing Riots in 1830, he sat neither on the Magistrate’s Bench at the initial trials, nor on the Grand Jury at the Special Assizes the following year. His curate at Dinton, Charles Robert Ashfield, took a leading part when men from Stone and elsewhere were arraigned. Dinton itself seems to have escaped the worst of these problems.²⁵

In 1829, when William Goodall was in his seventies, he became briefly involved in the Brunswick Club movement, whose aim was to thwart proposals to allow Roman Catholics to sit in Parliament. Both in Buckinghamshire and nationally one of leaders of the movement was the Marquess of Chandos, who managed to gain the

support of a large number of the Anglican clergy of the county. In the autumn of 1828 the Buckinghamshire Brunswick Club was launched at a boisterous dinner at the *White Hart* in Aylesbury: Goodall's name appears as a member of the Committee.²⁶ Despite clerical support the campaign came too late: it appears that the country gentry were less enthusiastic than the clergy, and the Marquess's father the Duke of Buckingham and his uncle Lord Nugent were known to favour Catholic emancipation,²⁷ which passed through parliament and gained the royal assent on 13th April 1829.

The 1851 census, taken after the deaths of both brothers, provides basic information about the circumstances of their widows. Joseph's widow, Arabella, was living in Hyde Park Square, with two unmarried nieces, Arabella and Eliza, and a staff of three: she died a few months after the census date. Rebecca's household at Dinton consisted of three staff, her other unmarried daughter Caroline and her married daughter Matilda with her husband Sackville Phelps, described in other records as a landed proprietor. This seems quite a modest establishment: perhaps the upkeep of the Dinton estate, which included nearby Westlington and Ford manors, had made inroads into the family finances. In fact, William's estate at probate was less than £10,000, while a figure of £100,000 was quoted for Joseph's.²⁸

The Estate Memorandum Book, which has been mentioned, reveals that there were quite serious problems. The normally simple and good-natured comments are interrupted by occasional outbursts. William Goodall reported in 1838; 'Began putting in thorough repair of the Old Farm maliciously dilapidated by the villainy of the Widow of the late tenant (Thomas Watkins of Westlington). ... In bonds, law suits, malicious chicanery, I lost £900 by the infamous jade. Her name is Watkins'. Further evidence can be found in letters from Goodall to his solicitor, Thomas Tindal.²⁹ In March 1838 he complains, 'I am sorry to say the Watkins are going on most infamously. They either have or are selling off everything from the premises' and four weeks later, '...the rascally Watkins are continuing their old roguery and refuse to go out.'

After his father's death, William Goodall's eldest surviving son, James Joseph, (1800-1886) continued the entries in the Estate Book, though he actually shows some affection for the memory of

the 'infamous jade's' husband. Clearly the Watkins family had not always been so troublesome. In an entry copied from his own commonplace book, which he had kept for many years, James Joseph recalls that, at the age of eight, he helped Mr Watkins in 'planting firs in the orchard at Blenheim', one of the farms on the estate. But, as in William's time, money remained a problem. James Joseph died in 1886 and his Will shows the upkeep of the estate had been a net drain on his resources. He asks that everyone concerned 'should take into account the necessity of making such small bequests': some were as little as three guineas. James Joseph describes the large expenses – estimated at between £7000 and £8000 – which he had been forced to make towards the upkeep of the estate. This included the erection of new farmhouses at Waldridge and the repair and restoration of farms and cottages that had been 'in a deplorable state'.³⁰

Soon after Joseph's death in 1840, a life-size marble statue was erected to his memory. Adelaide, the Queen dowager, headed the subscription list. In more recent years this has been moved from the Eton ante-chapel to a position in the churchyard. William's memorial is a large table tomb in Dinton that records his resting place and that of his immediate family. Indeed, the extended family of his surviving son and married daughters can be traced well into the twentieth century, long after the Dinton Estate had passed out of the Goodalls' hands.³¹

NOTES

1. R.A. Austen-Leigh (ed.) *Eton College Register 1753–1790* (London 1921) p.220; J.A. Venn (ed.) *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part II from 1752 to 1900* vol. III Gabb-Justamond (Cambridge 1947) p.80.
2. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (hereafter ODNB), Goodall Joseph (1760–1840).
3. <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp> Joseph Goodall, accessed 2 September 2011.
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. Sir H C Maxwell Lyte, *The History of Eton College*, (1911) p.432

7. Lionel Cust, *The History of Eton College*, (1899) pp.153–4
8. BPP 1818 (426) Third Report from the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders p.69.
9. John K Fowler, *Records Of Old Times* (1898) p.34
10. Maxwell Fraser, *The History Of Slough* (1980) pp.74–8
11. National Archives (hereafter TNA) Prob. 11/1160. The will of Sir John Hattem
12. Amelia Smith was a witness to the marriage, suggesting she was fully aware of the relationship between Goodall and Rebecca.
13. A transcribed copy is held at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (hereafter CBS) D-X 612.
14. Burke, Bernard, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Great Britain & Ireland* (5th ed, London 1871) p.517 cited on www.acartha.com/goodalls, viewed 23 November 2011.
15. TNA. Prob. 11/1925. The will of the Reverend Joseph Goodall.
16. George was buried at Dinton in 1833.
17. Death Certificate d.24 March 1850 in author's possession. See also announcement in *Morning Chronicle* 28 March 1850. An obituary notice in the *London Morning Chronicle* gives his address of Dudton Hall, Bucks, clearly the same man in spite of the misprint.
18. *Morning Post* 6 May 1826; *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 14 April 1827.
19. *New York Times*, 12 July 1896. Sale of Literary Property.
20. A living to which he had been presented in 1823. The patron was Eton College, almost certainly evidence of Provost Goodall's solicitude for members of his family.
21. TNA Prob. 11/1925. The Will of the Reverend Joseph Goodall. For many years it was thought that the collections of drawings, subsequently disposed of and more recently sold off in odd lots in New York, were the work of W(alter) Goodall (1830–1889), a prolific portrait painter. However, more recent research by Professor Michael Locke of the Department of Zoology of the University of Ontario and Dr J. V. Collins has established that they were by Revd. William Goodall, lord of the manor of Dinton. A copy of their paper and conclusions which was published in *The Linnean* (the Journal of the Linnean Society) Vol. 17 No. 4 is in the B.A.S. Library. George Lamb's notes on 'Lost Paintings from Dinton Hall' in *Records of Bucks* 44 (2004) pp.140–3 add historical background to the story.
22. For Marsham see <http://www.robertmarsham.co.uk>, accessed 2 September 2011.
23. http://openlibrary.org/books/OL14033659M/The_parish_register_of_Marsham_Norfolk, accessed 2 September 2011. Ed. A. T. Michell. *The parish register of Marsham, Norfolk from 1538 to 1836* (Norwich 1889)
24. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, October 12, 1805
25. Ashfield had married Ann Goodall in 1817.
26. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, December 20, 1828 reported that 1385 members had joined and the committee numbered 78
27. John Beckett, *The Rise And Fall of The Grenvilles Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, 1710–1921*, (Manchester 1994) p.114
28. This was probably because according to van Hatten's will the Dinton estate was left to Rebecca for her life (held by trustees) so Joseph did not own it and John Joseph was the first of the Goodalls to take legal possession. William died on 19 March 1844. See *Alumni Cantabrigienses* reference above.
29. CBS D/TL Box 14a
30. PCC Will of the Reverend James Joseph Goodall, proved 24 February 1887
31. For some details see www.acartha.com/goodalls, accessed 23 November 2011

*Sadly, Allen Dell died in January before he could see his article in print.
An obituary will appear in the next issue of Records.*