

THE UNPUBLISHED DIARY

of Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke (1605-1675)

The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke covers his life, from his birth until 6 days before his death. Whitelocke was a distinguished lawyer and Member of Parliament, a keen musician and scholar, a bon-viveur, and a family man, who married four times and had three wives and seventeen lively children.

The Diary starts autobiographically with Whitelocke's birth at a house in Fleet Street, London, and his christening at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, when his unpredictable godfather, Captain Edmund Whitelocke, insisted that the baby was to be given one of its mother's names: 'Bulstrode' (her surname) or 'Elizabeth'; he left the parson to choose which he preferred! Whitelocke gives amusing anecdotes from his childhood, and from his days as a pupil at Merchant Taylors' School and a student at St. John's College, Oxford. He also describes his studies at the Middle Temple, where he came under the influence of the famous lawyer, John Seldon, of the Inner Temple. As a very young man, he was elected to a seat in Charles I's turbulent second Parliament, which he termed 'The best school in Christendom'. He also describes his first disastrous marriage; then how he was chosen director of music, in 1634, for the Royal Masque at the Banqueting House, in Whitehall. For this, he wrote a lively Coranto, which was warmly praised by Queen Henrietta Maria. Later, The Diary tells of his continuous service in Parliament between January 1641 and October 1659, except in Barebone's short-lived Parliament, of 1653.

Whitelocke gives a robust description of a lifetime of experiences, both good and bad. He refers to well over 2,000 people who he knew, ranging from John Hampden and Oliver Cromwell to Charles I and Charles II. In the 1640s and 1650s he held office, variously, as Keeper of the Great Seal, temporary Speaker of House of Commons, and Lord President of the Council. He was also Ambassador Extraordinary to the young Queen Christina of Sweden, who consulted him privately on plans for her abdication - much to the annoyance of other Ambassadors. Whitelocke's Treaty of Amity between the two countries, has never been revoked. The Diary offers a multitude of sharp insights into public affairs, from the 1620s onwards, through the Civil War and Interregnum, and for 15 years after the Restoration of King Charles II. At the same time, members of Whitelocke's large family weave in and out of the political and legal scene, as do scholars, doctors, tenant farmers and servants, giving us a remarkable picture of family and professional life in 17th century England.

After the Restoration of 1660, Whitelocke was out of office until his death from stone, 15 years later but, as a man of immense experience and good judgment, he was still consulted by countless people. These included the Earl of Orrery (when threatened with impeachment by the House of Commons), persecuted dissenters, Prince Rupert and even King Charles II, at whose request he wrote a compelling defence of religious toleration.

All Whitelocke's seventeen children survived into adulthood. The Diary comments on their education, wayward behaviour, and varied careers. Two sons went into trade in Bristol, Malaga, the Canary Islands and Scanderoon, two into the army, one into medicine, three into the law and two of these sons into politics. His daughters' marriages occasioned long negotiations. His mother and two of his wives, Frances and Mary, feature in The Diary as very shrewd, likeable women and able administrators of the family estates. They were a talented family.

Vanity and self-pity filter through some entries in The Diary, but it is an honest and engaging narrative. Whitelocke's interests and sympathies were wide-ranging; some of his friendships were politically very unwise. During the Protectorate, for example, he would play bowls, write verses and smoke his pipe with Cromwell one day, and another day dine with disgraced royalist friends. After the Restoration he sometimes spent an evening with Chancellor Clarendon, and soon afterwards visited the conspiratorial John Wildman; he also helped young William Penn, the Quaker (not long out of prison), and many other nonconformists who were under a cloud. His friendships sometimes got him into trouble with those in power, but he showed no sign of trying to be more circumspect!

The two manuscript volumes of The Diary have been owned by the Marquess of Bute's family, for nearly two centuries. They caused a great stir when, some years after a fire in the Library at Luton Hoo, in Bedfordshire (from which they were salvaged), they were brought to London and identified, in 1872. The present Marquess has generously agreed to their publication. The original is a two-volume manuscript, clearly written in sepia ink, in a disciplined, italic hand. The well know 19th century historian of the Civil War, Dr. S.R. Gardiner, wished to edit it for publication and the Marquess at that date agreed, on condition it was printed in full, omitting only 'objectionable' passages concerning Whitelocke's illness, which were to be indicated with asterisks! Unaccountably the project fell through, so The Diary is now published for the first time - and in its entirety. It is also the first time that a fully annotated text of any of Bulstrode Whitelocke's massive works has been attempted. Research for this has taken the editor to Eire, France and Sweden and to numerous collections, including those in the British Library, the Bodleian in Oxford, Cambridge University Library, the University of Reading Archives, and the Marquess of Bath's vast collection of Whitelocke manuscripts at Longleat, as well as to many County Record Offices. Footnotes and the biographical appendix

(which includes entries for numerous members of Whitelocke's family) draw on many previously unpublished papers. The gratitude and affection felt for Whitelocke by people of all sorts - Royalists, poor men, servants and members of persecuted minorities - are vividly

reflected in their letters. The biographical appendix also includes: Sir John Holland's frank comments on Charles I's demeanour at Holdenby Manor; the key to the number code which Secretary of State John Thurloe sent to Whitelocke in Sweden; and a letter written by Whitelocke to Cromwell, using secret ink, much faded, but brought to light again (after three hundred years) by photography using ultra violet.

The Diary is to be published, in due course, by Oxford University Press, on behalf of the British Academy. It seems to be a unique event, in the late 20th century, for an English 17th century diary of such interest and importance, to be published for the first time.

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