Rousseau in Wootton

[A Translation of pp.35-72 of Le Séjour de Jean-Jacques Rousseau en Angleterre (1910) by L.-J. Courtois]

Translators’ Introduction

_The Confessions_ is probably Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s most widely read work, yet few of its readers are aware that much of the first part of it was written during Rousseau’s stay at Wootton Hall in Staffordshire. Indeed, because Rousseau himself relates the events of his life only up to but not including his stay in England, many of his readers are unaware that Rousseau ever visited this country.

Accounts of this period in Rousseau’s life – _The Philosopher’s Dog_ by Edmonds and Eidinow (2006) and _The Philosophers’ Quarrel_ by Zaretsky and Scott (2009) – have concentrated upon his quarrel with David Hume and the feelings of persecution that this engendered. Zaretsky and Scott (incorporating the earlier discoveries made by Edmonds and Eidinow) tell the sad story of this quarrel very well. But, although it is true that ultimately Rousseau’s feelings of persecution caused him to flee, there were in the meantime also peaceful days spent at Wootton.

The latter more tranquil aspect of Rousseau’s stay remains best conveyed in _Le Séjour de Jean-Jacques Rousseau en Angleterre_ (1910) by L.-J. Courtois. On the 250th anniversary of Rousseau’s arrival in England we have here translated a short section of this book in order to convey some sense of Rousseau’s day-to-day life at Wootton. There is material to be found in Zaretsky and Scott that is not to be found in Courtois and _vice versa_, but together these two accounts complement each other.

The fact that Rousseau came to feel entrapped by his enemies at Wootton whilst yet his time at Wootton was also a very creative period is explained by the following passage in _The Confessions_:

> My poor head can never submit itself to facts. It cannot beautify; it must create. It can depict real objects only more or less as they are, reserving its embellishments for the things of the imagination. If I want to describe the spring it must be in winter; if I want to describe a fine landscape I must be within doors; and as I have said a hundred times, if ever I were confined in the Bastille, there I would draw the picture of liberty.

In a “melancholy land” whose language he did not understand, at the age of fifty four, whilst tormented by feelings of persecution, Rousseau wrote about the most carefree period of his life, his youth.

As Courtois’ style is rather flowery we have deliberately translated him fairly loosely, and we have not included all of his footnotes. However, we have of course tried to retain all that is of value. We have also added some photographs of Wootton Hall prior to its demolition in 1929 as well as some modern photographs.

Malcolm Crook and Stephen Leach (2016)
From Ashbourne the road crosses the river Dove at Mayfield and then gradually ascends towards Calwich Abbey; it then descends to the village of Ellastone. Ellastone is the main village of the parish in which the hamlet of Wootton is situated. From near the Gothic village church and its ancient cemetery, a sunken road climbs its way beneath tall trees, skirting the estate of Wootton Hall until, suddenly, wide meadows come into view and peaceful red cows. The road divides; one branch goes to Wootton Hall.

The road becomes uneven, passing between two big rocks; then over the mossy arch of an old stone bridge, and into a small wooded valley, with oak, walnut and fir trees. Suddenly, between the branches, a house can be glimpsed, surrounded by coppices and grassland. Over the hedge the outbuildings appear and the Italianate façade of the Hall itself overlooking a lawn. To the right there is a fountain and further off a dry stone wall separates a wooded ravine from the parkland surrounding the house.

Figure 1 Wootton Hall, from the main entrance (from the south). The house was demolished in 1929. A new house has since been built on the same site.
Figure 2  In 1766 these gates were at the main entrance to Wootton Hall. They are now at Capesthorne Hall in Cheshire, the home of Richard Davenport’s descendants.
Figure 3 St. Andrew, a detail on the gates. Tradition has it that Richard Davenport acquired the gates from a monastery near Milan.
Rousseau and all his belongings arrived at Wootton under an overcast sky in the mid-afternoon of Saturday, 22 March. He was ceremoniously welcomed by the concierge, and introduced to the other servants in the house; then a moment of rest. His first impression of the surrounding countryside was that of a scene of quaint and romantic revelries.

Sunday, 23 March, began with a heavy shower of snow. However, it did not detain the coachman who left in the afternoon for London. In his bag he carried two letters, written by Rousseau upon his arrival, one for Hume and the other for Davenport. To Davenport he expressed his thanks and appreciation of the house; but in a postscript he politely but firmly deplored the fact that he had not had the opportunity to pay for the coach to Wootton. He characteristically insisted on reimbursing this expense; valuing independence above all: Vitam impendere vero. Without further ado, Rousseau involved himself in house-keeping matters: Stewart (Hume’s friend and agent) was to make out (to Rousseau) an invoice of expenses; and would take measures to establish the privacy of the post. For the sake of privacy and economy all letters addressed to Rousseau, including those from Hume, were to be forwarded to Davenport (in London) who would then deliver them in person a few weeks later. These plans were made during Rousseau’s first hours at Wootton.

The house was very isolated, overlooking a grassy slope. The central body of the house was flanked by two wings; currently, the house has a ground floor and a first floor, save for one wing which has two. The roof is flat and decorated with a balustrade. A few square chimneys can be seen. From the main façade there projects a room with windows on each of its three sides. On the ground-floor was Davenport’s bedroom. Rousseau’s apartment was located on the first floor at the back of the house, on the other side of a hallway lit by a glass ceiling. It consisted of two bedrooms and an empty lounge.

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1 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 29 March 1766.
2 [Rousseau was given the impression that an empty coach was on its way back to Wootton – it was only later that he discovered that it had been laid on especially for him. – MC & SL] Davenport protested that the deception was well-motivated (1 April 1766). However, “I do not like being wrong, even for my own good”. D’Escherny Paris, 1814, t. I, p.83.
3 Rousseau to Hume, 22 March 1766: “Je vous suis obligé d’avoir bien voulu solder le mémoire de M. Stuart. J’y trouve deux articles qui ne sont pas de ma connaissance. L’un de Lst. 1. 14 pour du café, et l’autre de 5 sh. pour un moulin. Il est vrai que M. Stuart avait bien voulu se charger de ces commissions, mais je ne les ai point reçues ni avec mon bagage ni autrement, et n’en ai aucun avis que par son mémoire.” [I am obliged to you for settling up with Stewart. There are two articles of which I have no knowledge. One of £1. 1s. 14d. for coffee, and the other of 5 shillings for a grinder. It is true that Mr. Stewart had agreed to obtain these, but I have not received them nor are they in my baggage or anywhere else, and I do have any other record of them other than his memo.]
4 Wootton Hall is not to be confused with the nearby Wootton Lodge.
Figure 4 Wootton Hall (c. 1929) as seen from the South East

The apartment’s furnishing was simple: a bed stuffed with straw, a table, a chair, and, an
indispensable luxury, a small harpsichord; Thérèse Levasseur, Rousseau’s mistress, occupied the
smaller of the two rooms, which contained two beds, a commode and a wardrobe in which
books were kept.

From their windows, Jean-Jacques and Thérèse could see the terrace sloping down to a
wooded valley with its little stream and beyond that more woodland, interspersed with cottages
and farms and several mansion houses. To the north the lounge overlooked a lawn that gave way
to woodland; further off there were the grass-covered Weaver Hills.
It was in this region, with its rolling hills cleft by steep valleys and clear streams that George Eliot’s Adam Bede, Dinah, and Hetty lived.5

The servants were most attentive to the new guest,6 so splendidly dressed in satin and fur. Usually, in the absence of Davenport for eleven months of the year,7 the servants were the only inhabitants of Wootton Hall.

The overall supervision of the household was the responsibility of the steward Benjamin Walton.8 It was Walton who fetched various luxuries from Ashbourne, such as sugar and raisins,9 and, from Rousseau’s accounts,10 we know that he was also responsible for the supply of wine.

Under his command there was a middle-aged couple,11 John Cowper and his wife,12 from whose marital squabbles Rousseau’s mistress Thérèse would learn the only few words of English

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5 There is a brief description of the Weaver Hills as seen from Ellastone to the south in Chapter II of George Eliot’s Adam Bede: “High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north . . . And directly below them the eye rested on a more advanced line of hanging woods, divided by bright patches of pasture or furrowed crops, and not yet deepened into the uniform leafy curtains of high summer, but still showing the warm tints of the young oak and the tender green of the ash and lime. Then came the valley, where the woods grew thicker, as if they had rolled down and hurried together from the patches left smooth on the slope, that they might take the better care of the tall mansion which lifted its parapets and sent its faint blue summer smoke among them.”
6 Rousseau to Davenport, 31 March 1766.
7 Davenport to Rousseau, 24 March 1767
8 Davenport to Rousseau, 25 July 1767
9 Rousseau to Davenport, 9 February 1767
10 Livres de Dépenses, August - October 1766
11 Howitt, William Visits to Remarkable Places, 1840, p.511.
12 Cowper to Davenport, 6 June 1767
words that she would ever know.\textsuperscript{13} There were also Davenport’s old nurse, in her nineties and half-blind, whom Thérèse was not afraid to manhandle;\textsuperscript{14} the gardener, the guard Samuel Finney;\textsuperscript{15} and finally a housekeeper, called “Peggy’s mother”. Samuel Finney and John Cowper,\textsuperscript{16} both discreet and active, were the household’s messengers. John was in charge of taking Rousseau’s many letters into Ashbourne and also of taking messages to Calwich.\textsuperscript{17} In 1767 it would be John who would tell Davenport of Rousseau’s departure.\textsuperscript{18} The guard, Samuel Finney was entrusted with taking messages to Davenport in Cheshire. [42]

None of the servants knew French: they only knew Staffordshire English. Rousseau and Thérèse found it difficult to understand them.\textsuperscript{19} Thérèse’s mimicry was not always enough.\textsuperscript{20} However, Jean-Jacques was prepared to play the hermit: he was accustomed to self-sufficiency. Moreover, he only had to step outside to forget any domestic worries. There was plenty to occupy his curious mind.

But he deplored the cold weather that lasted the entire spring, the persistent snow, the heavy rain and violent wind,\textsuperscript{21} enough to convince him that he had surely come to:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Wootton under Weaver.}
\textit{Where God came never.}\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{13} Howitt, p.511.
\textsuperscript{14} Davenport to Hume, 6 July 1767
\textsuperscript{15} Davenport to Rousseau, 14 September 1766
\textsuperscript{16} Rousseau to Davenport, 4 October 1766
\textsuperscript{17} Livres de Dépenses, 9 August 1766
\textsuperscript{18} Cowper to Davenport, 6 June 1767
\textsuperscript{19} Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 21 June 1766: “leur terrible baragouin est indéchiffrable à mon oreille” [their terrible dialect is indecipherable to me]
\textsuperscript{20} Rousseau to Hume, 29 March 1766; Rousseau to Malesherbes, 10 May 1766.
\textsuperscript{21} Rousseau to Mme de Luze, 10 May 1766; Rousseau to Keith, 20 July 1766
Figure 6 The Weaver Hills, from Wootton. Rousseau arrived at Wootton in late winter snow. The next winter there was also prolonged and heavy snowfall.

Figure 7 Looking back to Wootton from the Weaver Hills. Wootton is mid-distance, left of centre.
In this lonely and wild part of the Staffordshire moorlands, he found some similarities to the Jura: dense woodland, thick undergrowth, grassy slopes, steep rocks, murmuring rivers (sometimes underground), hidden valleys and deep caves. Sunny days gave him the freedom to come and go and to explore the area on foot. He explored the surrounding countryside in all directions, but he found that he had a predilection for the Peak District.

Often he would set off at dawn to walk the 4 or 5 miles to Dovedale. After a frugal repast at the old inn at the entrance to the valley he soon reached the river Dove, meandering its way between the two hills of Bunster and Thorp Cloud; after fording the river the day was entirely his. His happy solitude and tranquility was interrupted only by birdsong. There are trees at the foot of the cliffs, either side of the river and sometimes even halfway up the cliffs. The trees high up on the western cliff are overlooked by a high rocky needle of grey limestone festooned with ivy. The fast-flowing Dove passes over waterfalls and fills pools along its way. Reeds grow along its banks and trout swim in its clear waters, as celebrated in the work of Izaak Walton and his friend, the poet Charles Cotton.

In April the path goes past floods and further on it passes a natural arch and a sombre cave. For a long way the path follows the river upstream through a very steep-sided valley until at last, further north, the valley becomes less steep.

Rousseau, the herbalist, took pleasure in sowing new species in the sheltered nooks of Dovedale. On return visits he would check on their progress. He may perhaps have thought they were more faithful to his memory than were his fellow men.

Rousseau varied his excursions. He also visited the picturesque Manifold valley and Ilam with its beautiful park, Gothic church and pretty cottages. Ilam may have reminded him of certain villages in Neuchâtel. There was never any obligation to take the same path back. We may imagine him resting in the shade of a tree in the park at Okeover, perhaps surrounded by curious deer.

South of Wootton there were other pleasures: the Churnet valley and between Cheadle and Oakamoor the High Shut Ranges, a plateaux traversed by sandy gullies. The medieval ruins at Alton, both graceful and melancholy; and closest of all there were the Weaver Hills, regarded as a fairyland by the superstitious villagers where he would walk at all hours, an exotic figure indeed.

Most of Rousseau’s walks were related to the patient study of botany. His aim was to compile a systematic inventory of plants of the local area. For many were previously unknown to Rousseau – and of such varied forms! And so many different mosses! Each new find was an emotional experience, and in later years he still remembered the joy of their discovery. On wetter days he confined himself to botanizing in Wootton Park and the shelter of trees and rocks and ravines overgrown with oaks and ivy.

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23 Courtois notes that in September 1910 he found that Dovedale still corresponded to eighteenth-century descriptions of it. He mentions Daniel Defoe’s Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, and works by William Gilpin and Thomas Whateley. Dovedale is Happy Valley in Johnson’s Rasselas and Eagledale in George Eliot’s Adam Bede – MC & SL.

24 The Dove marks the boundary between Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Bunster (1,000 ft.) is in Staffordshire and Thorp Cloud (942 ft.) is in Derbyshire.

25 Howitt, p.514.

26 Howitt, p.514. The Weaver hills, overlooking Wootton, reach a height of 1,250 ft.

27 Davenport to Rousseau, 8 Sept. 1766. In May 1766 Rousseau had asked for a microscope.

28 Rousseau to the Duchess of Portland, 28 February 1767

29 Rousseau to Malesherbes, 19 December 1771.

30 Rousseau to Davenport, 11 September 1766

31 Rousseau to La Tourette, 26 January 1770 & 4 July 1770

32 Rousseau to Madame de Luze, 10 May 1766
There were three favourite places: Dovedale, in which he indulged his old habit of walking, the cave around which the Hall terrace was built, and lastly, at a short distance from the Hall, a group of oaks where he was often seen writing: the favourite tree of his youth remained so in later life.

Figure 8 The narrow gaol-like entrance to 'Rousseau’s Cave' (c. 1929) around which the western terrace was built. Photograph taken from the south. It was in this cave, half-natural and half man-made, that Rousseau is said to have worked on his Confessions

33 Howitt, p.513
34 Churton Collins, p.248
35,36 John Gisborne in a note to his poem The Vales of Weever: a loco-descriptive poem (1797) writes: “In a field, at a small distance from Northwood, stands a cluster of oaks, commonly called the Twenty oaks. They form a circle, disclosing between their trunks a beautiful prospect. To this silent retreat Rousseau used frequently to retire, during his residence at Wootton, and some of the stones may still be seen which formed his seat.” [Today, in 2015, no stones remain and only one oak tree. – MC & SL]
36 “Quand vous me verrez prêt à mourir, portez-moi à l’ombre d’un chêne, je vous promets que j’en reviendrai.” – The Confessions, I, VI. [When you see me at the point of death, take me to the shade of an oak tree; I promise I’ll recover.]
Figure 9 Rousseau’s Cave today. Photograph taken from the south

Figure 10 Digital Overlay of the Cave (by Kirsten Jarrett)
Figure 11  Rousseau's Cave as it is today. Photograph (taken from the east) by Chris Bertram. Reproduced here with Chris Bertram's kind permission.

Figure 12  Inside the cave: a small fireplace and several alcoves. There was originally a stone bench to the left of the fireplace. The roof was originally vaulted, with a small wooden hatch.
Figure 13 A reconstruction of Rousseau’s cave at Consall Hall in Staffordshire. When the building stones of Wootton Hall were sold in 1929 the facing stones of Rousseau’s cave were bought by William Podmore of Consall Hall. His son, William Podmore jnr., used them to make this reconstruction.

Figure 14 At the 1929 sale William Podmore also bought this oak staircase from Wootton Hall and installed it at Consall Hall.
Figure 15 Another view of the oak staircase from Wootton Hall
When rain and snow confined him indoors at home, then he would work on his *Confessions*, revising and adding new chapters, or his voluminous correspondence, and on corrections to his *Dictionnaire de Musique* which he had taken with him. He relaxed by playing the harpsichord—the soft Italian melodies chasing away his melancholy. If he hankered after the outdoors, he would spread out his plant specimens upon the table, his harvest of sunny days and dewy mornings.

However, his distractions and studies did not always disperse his dark thoughts. These grew ever more serious and were focused on two subjects: suspicions of Hume, turning into hostility, and the political troubles of his native country.

Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, heard the voice of his people, aroused by his *Lettres de la Montagne*, which the magistrates sought to censor. Now, in exile, he wished to support the watchmakers of Saint-Gervais and the shopkeepers of the City; so he decided to send a donation.

Having now sketched a rough outline of Rousseau’s stay in Wootton; we shall focus on his daily life. Sometime after his arrival in Wootton, on Friday, 9 May 1766, Rousseau was delighted to welcome his host Davenport, who had come for a stay of three weeks. As a host Davenport lacked the embarrassment that had been so dreaded by Saint-Preux (in *Héloïse*).

Davenport did not arrive alone; he was a widower, and since the death of his "saintly" wife, he had taken care of the two children of his youngest daughter. They were orphans: a girl of 10 years, Phoebe; and her brother Davies, one year younger. Davies was subject to an intermittent fever, and had been born in sad circumstances, his mother having died shortly after his birth.

Phoebe and Davies lived with their grandfather and a Swiss governess, Mrs. Lausanne, and Miss Ally, a family friend, perhaps a relative.

And who exactly was this host of Jean-Jacques? To a great extent we have to rely on Rousseau’s own writing in order to answer this question.

Richard Davenport, of Davenport and Calvelley, born around 1705, came from a noble family that traced its ancestry to the time of William the Conqueror. He was a landowner, whose marriage to Phoebe Bagnal, heiress of a City trader, brought an annual income of about 5 or

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37 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 21 June 1766; Rousseau to Keith 20 July 1766.
38 Rousseau wrote about 150 letters or notes from Wootton, many of a considerable length.
39 Rousseau to Guy, 15 November 1766.
40 Rousseau to Beauteville, 23 February 1766; Beauteville to Rousseau, 9 May 1766; Rousseau to d'Ivernois, 31 May 1766.
41 Rousseau to Dutens, 5 February 1767; Rousseau to d'Ivernois, 7 February 1767.
42 Rousseau to Davenport, 5 February 1767.
43 Davenport to Rousseau, 10 February 1767.
44 Roustan to Rousseau, 9 February 1767.
45 Davenport to Hume; Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 10 May 1766.
46 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 31 May 1766; Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 14 June 1766; Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 21 June 1766.
47 Davies was born on 29 August 1757. Phoebe Davenport, his mother, died on 24 September 1757.
48 Rousseau to Davenport, 27 November 1766; Davenport to Rousseau, 4 May 1767.
49 A native of Roehampton, near Putney.
6,000 pounds. His studies at Cambridge (St. John’s) had given him a taste for literature, especially for philosophy, and he was known to be a Deist.

His spirituality helped him overcome a physical infirmity. One of his legs was shorter than the other. A high heel corrected the defect and mitigated a pronounced limp. Davenport was an amiable man and a cheerful and well-informed conversationalist. His numerous letters testify to his conciliatory character – honest, and above all, helpful. He was a good friend and gave good advice, more concerned about his guest’s interests than of his own. Rousseau had barely left his company before he began thinking about re-joining him.

In London and then in Chiswick, Davenport had generously offered Rousseau the free run of his properties at Calveley and Wootton. The latter was a recent acquisition. Davenport lived two thirds of the year in the countryside, mostly not at Wootton, which was rather remote, but at Davenport Hall in Cheshire. He was interested in agriculture, not simply as a landowner, but as an innovator. He invented a new form of plough. This was but one of many agricultural innovations that took place in the early reign of George III.

In such company, there were plenty of distractions and time passed more quickly. In the warm afternoons and in the evenings there was chess. Davenport was a good sport and did not mind losing. There were musical performances, sometimes attended by neighbours from Calwich. There were walks in the park, long conversations in the countryside and interminable philosophical speculations, discussion on Emile, and attention paid to the little boy, Davies, who enlivened the old house. Davenport was pleased when the conversation turned to the layout of the gardens. Rousseau gave his opinions on the subject and it was decided that next spring he would re-design the garden.

Some days Thérèse, who had been given the title of ‘cook’ by Davenport, interrupted the conversation to offer French dishes – a treat for Jean-Jacques, a snail ragout or some cheese soup whose smell reminded him of the mountain country of Salève; or trout, in a favourite sauce. (Rousseau missed the ‘melons sucrés du Dauphiné’, but that could not be helped.) For dessert there was fromage blanc prepared by little Phoebe. Once, Thérèse, taking on the role of housekeeper, presented Davenport with a pair of socks which she had knitted. Davenport was pleased to accept this unexpected gift.

Sometimes, Rousseau broke from his reveries in order to read to Davenport a few chapters of his Confessions. This period marked the beginning of an intimate trust between the two men.

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50 Hume to Blair, 25 March 1766
51 Hume to Adam Smith, 17 October 1767
52 Rousseau to Davenport, 14 May 1767
53 Courtois writes Chiswick then London, but Rousseau was first in London and then in Chiswick.
54 Hume to Davenport, June 1766; Davenport to Hume, 30 June 1766
55 Rousseau to Davenport, 15 December 1767
56 Davenport to Hume, 14 July 1766; Davenport to Rousseau, 25 July 1767,
57 Strangely, the subsequent owners of Wootton showed little interest in Rousseau. According to Howitt (p.514): “I have . . . learned from the Rev. Walter Davenport Bromley, the present worthy proprietor of Wootton, that no memorial of Rousseau remained at the Hall, and that little is known of his acts or habits while there, more than has been made public; for his father, having been educated on Rousseau’s system, and feeling the deficiencies of it, never liked to hear him mentioned.” Should we relate to this period the idea, or even the undertaking, of a new edition of Emile that Rousseau burnt on his departure from Wootton? C.f. Corancez De J.J. Rousseau, p.48.
58 Rousseau to Davenport, 11 September 1766.
59 Rousseau to Davenport, 15 December 1767
61 Davenport to Rousseau, 1 January 1769
62 Rousseau to Phoebe Davenport, 1766.
63 Rousseau to Davenport, July 1766.
64 Davenport to Hume, 6 July 1767: “. . . What he was writing, is the same as he mentioned to you, will be a large work, containing at least twelve volumes. I am positively certain that when I left him, he had not entirely finished
apparently so dissimilar. When Rousseau entrusted Davenport with his will it marked a summit of trust. 

Davenport would have had to deploy the utmost tact and sympathy, for Rousseau’s mood was often suspicious – not entirely without reason – for he had heard there were rumours circulating about him in London and ridicule arising from a letter allegedly sent to him by the King of Prussia. 

Henceforth Rousseau’s agonizing worries gained in momentum. They would come to dominate the course of his entire life. The ancients had a word for this that could only be whispered: Anagkê!

Even before Davenport’s departure for Cheshire, in the first days of June, Rousseau took various defensive measures. Most notably he renounced the royal pension obtained for him by Hume, and he broke off contact with the latter, or, at least, he intended to. Two final letters to Hume, after that date, ignited a storm of reaction and controversy. But while Hume was violent and active, Rousseau was henceforth silent and stoical, avoiding “the mire of ignominy”, and preferring to be “the unfortunate Jean-Jacques” rather than the “triumphant David.”

The letters of the summer of 1766 confirm both the extreme agitation of Hume and the benevolence of Davenport, the intermediary. Davenport pleaded Rousseau’s case, but Rousseau’s erratic behaviour did not help, and his cleverness only made him more dangerous. Hume waited for a letter of apology but it never came, and the philosophers of Europe had to witness the sad spectacle of a feud between two of its sages.

However, there were intervals of happiness for Rousseau. A friend of Davenport who had earlier spoken of visiting Rousseau kept his promise. Thus, Davenport had barely gone before the Hall again became animated. Malthus and his wife Henrietta arrived in June, having travelled from their home in Surrey. They stayed in the Davenport Arms, the Ellastone inn. They arrived in the morning and stayed for eight days. They made pleasant walks with Rousseau, particularly to Dovedale, which they had visited in the first years of their marriage. Malthus took a great delight in botany, which he talked about enthusiastically to his family, and he proposed

one.” Hume to Adam Smith, 17 October 1767: “I asked Mr Davenport about those Memoirs, which Rousseau said he was writing, and whether he had ever seen them. He said, yes, he had; it was projected to be a work in twelve volumes; but he had as yet got no further than the first volume, which he had entirely composed at Wootton. It was charmingly wrote, and concluded with a very particular and interesting account of his first love, the object of which was a person whose first love it also was. Davenport, who is no bad judge, says, that these Memoirs will be the most taking of all his works . . .”

65 27 May 1766
66 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 29 March 1766; Rousseau to d’Ivernois, 31 March 1766
67 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 31 May 1766
68 Rousseau to Conway, 22 May 1766
69 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 31 May 1766
70 Rousseau to Hume, 23 June 1766; Rousseau to Hume, 10 July 1766.
71 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 27 November 1766.
72 Hume to Davenport, 15 July 1766; Hume to Davenport, 2 September 1766.
73 Hume to Davenport, 26 June 1766; Hume to Davenport, 2 September 1766.
74 [Prior to this sentence Courtois briefly discusses portraits made of Rousseau in England by Gosset and Wright. He reproduces a portrait of Rousseau that he thought was by Wright. In fact he was mistaken: the portrait is of Bandetti. – MC & SL] Rousseau criticised the portrait by Gosset as having a nose that is too aquiline. Du Peyrou to Rousseau, 9 November 1766.
75 Malthus to Rousseau, 12 March 1766; Malthus to Thérèse Levasseur, 13 March 1766.
76 Malthus to Rousseau, 24 January 1768.
77 Rousseau to Du Peyrou, 21 June 1766; Malthus to Rousseau, 18 July 1766; Malthus to Rousseau, 24 January 1768.
78 Malthus to Rousseau, 12 March 1766.
79 Malthus to Rousseau, 24 January 1768.
to take Rousseau on a botanical tour of Surrey! Everyone enjoyed the visit, and Malthus looked forward to seeing Rousseau again in the winter.\footnote{Malthus to Rousseau, 18 July 1766.}

Although Rousseau’s hope of receiving d’Ivernois at his retreat were not realized,\footnote{Rousseau to Guy, 2 August 1766; Rousseau to d’Ivernois, 11 December 1766; 31 January 1767; 7 February 1767; 6 April 1767.} he was visited by \footnote{Lamande to Rousseau, 30 October 1766. Lamande, from his refuge in Neuchâtel, had asked for a letter of introduction from Du Peyrou. Roustan to Rousseau, 24 November 1766.} another Genevois, Lamande, who had been exiled from his country for criticizing the government.\footnote{Davenport to Rousseau, 9 December 1766} He also had unexpected visitors. Some, like Mr. Beauferr,\footnote{Could this have been the same Brand whom Rousseau asked to deliver a letter to Vautrave?} came with a letter of introduction. Others, such as Mr. Brand who was well-known in Bath for praising the virtues of solitude, simply presented themselves.\footnote{He later kept up a correspondence with Rousseau that sadly has not survived.} Still others, afraid to irritate Rousseau, used subterfuge. Dr. Erasmus Darwin, for example, was discovered in Rousseau’s path pretending to study a flower.\footnote{Rousseau to Granville, 25 January 1768. Handel visited Granville in Calwich.}

Good relations were established with the local vicar, the Reverend Hake, who visited Rousseau at the beginning of his stay in Wootton, to welcome him to the parish and he often brought colleagues with him on subsequent occasions.\footnote{On his return from his annual visit to Bath.} Even better, Rousseau discovered in the vicinity a nobleman who had recently returned from France, Brooke Boothby, whose friendship would console him more than any other. However, their friendship was interrupted when Boothby again went abroad and it would be ten years before Rousseau and Boothby would next see each other.

But in England Rousseau had no dearer friend – not even Davenport – than the excellent Bernard Granville. He resided, all year round, at Calwich Abbey, a mansion 2 miles from Wootton, in the same parish, on the road to Ashbourne. Descended from a noble family, Granville had received a liberal education; and intellectual matters continued to interest him. He was a friend of Handel. To Granville, music was more than a pasttime: it was indispensable.\footnote{Rousseau to Granville, 58.}

Granville was naturally very happy to discover that Jean-Jacques had come to live in the neighbourhood and he offered him a lasting friendship. From April,\footnote{Rousseau to Granville, 2 August 1766; Rousseau to Granville, 30 October 1766; Rousseau to d’Ivernois, 11 December 1766; 31 January 1767; 7 February 1767; 6 April 1767.} there was a continual succession of walks back and forth between Wootton and Calwich; only torrential rain or deep snow prevented these comings and goings. There was a continual exchange of small gifts, of greater sentimental value than practical. A local trout was sent from Wootton in response to the gift of a turkey from Calwich. Fine wines from Calwich\footnote{On his return from his annual visit to Bath.} crossed the path of venison from Wootton.\footnote{Rousseau to Granville, 25 January 1768. Handel visited Granville in Calwich.} From time to time, Jean-Jacques protested against Granville’s generosity, but only from politeness. After all, Granville was the only one nearby who could speak French. And to an exile, that counted for a lot.

Often, Rousseau, walking along the grassy slopes towards Calwich would come across a small flock of sheep attended by a "gracious shepherdess" who would accompany him to her uncle’s home.\footnote{Jean-Jacques delighted in her company. It was a pleasure to walk through the parkland with its lime trees, oaks and birch, to Granville’s Queen Anne house, formerly an abbey, [62]}

\footnote{Granville’s niece, Miss Dewes, had a flock of sheep and lambs given to her by her uncle.}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 18 July 1766.
  \item Rousseau to Guy, 2 August 1766; Rousseau to d’Ivernois, 11 December 1766; 31 January 1767; 7 February 1767; 6 April 1767.
  \item Lamande to Rousseau, 30 October 1766. Lamande, from his refuge in Neuchâtel, had asked for a letter of introduction from Du Peyrou. Roustan to Rousseau, 24 November 1766.
  \item Davenport to Rousseau, 9 December 1766
  \item Could this have been the same Brand whom Rousseau asked to deliver a letter to Vautraves?
  \item He later kept up a correspondence with Rousseau that sadly has not survived.
  \item Rousseau to Granville, 25 January 1768. Handel visited Granville in Calwich.
  \item On his return from his annual visit to Bath.
  \item Rousseau to Granville, 16 January 1767.
  \item The venison was in effect a gift from Davenport who was then in Cheshire. Davenport to Rousseau, 1 August 1766.
  \item Rousseau to Miss Dewes, 25 January 1768.
  \item Granville’s niece, Miss Dewes, had a flock of sheep and lambs given to her by her uncle.
\end{itemize}
surrounded by huge beech trees – a scene of grace and freshness, flowers and greenery. Perhaps in this setting he brought to mind the Savoyard Vicar!

Cultivated, beautiful, and twenty years old, Mary Dewes was a favourite of the philosopher. He would often bring her curiosities: a collection of botanical prints, a piece of music – he thought his compositions sounded better on his friend’s harpsichord. He also left a wax impression, a precious talisman: perhaps commemorating a game of chess?

The faithful Sultan [Rousseau’s collie], who, no doubt, had to repress his herding instincts when confronted by the sheep, was one day rewarded with a collar that Miss Dewes had embroidered for him.

But, all too soon, Miss Dewes moved away from Calwich Abbey to spend the winter in Welshbourne in [63] Warwickshire. On her return, in May 1767, she found her "old shepherd" had left. Correspondence continued for a while between the shepheardess and the “old fogey”. Some years later, when she was a mother she remembered the “shepheard who made her happy” and regretted that he was not at hand to help her bring up her children. However, she breastfed her children [following Rousseau’s advice – MC & SL], and perhaps in exchange received one of Rousseau’s famous ribbons.

During the winter, Rousseau enjoyed the homely hospitality of Calwich, but in summer it was more lively. At various times Granville introduced Rousseau to, among others, the Viscountess Andover, Countess Cowper, William Fitzherbert M.P., to the Ports (at whose house he stayed in Ilam), and to Lord Shrewsbury of Alton Abbey. It was at Alton Abbey that Rousseau politely refused Count Gregory Orloff’s invitation to come and live near St. Petersburg. Granville also introduced Rousseau to the Duchess of Portland.

It does not appear that Rousseau ever met Granville’s elder sister, Mrs Delaney. She mistrusted the influence of the philosopher on her brother and his niece and cautioned them against being seduced by his ideas. She refused to read Rousseau, on moral grounds, and

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93 Calwich Abbey is Donnithorne Abbey in George Eliot’s Adam Bede.
94 She was an orphan since the death of her mother Anne Dewes, Granville’s younger sister, on 6 July 1761.
95 “My dear Mary, Are you really a chess player?” Mrs Delaney to Miss Dewes, 12 March 1765.
96 Miss Dewes to Rousseau, 29 November 1766
97 Miss Dewes to Rousseau, 18 December 1766.
98 Miss Dewes to Rousseau, 6 November 1767.
99 She married John Port on 4 December 1770 and had four children. Rousseau also remembered Miss Lewes with affection: he confessed in a letter to the Duchess of Portland that he himself wore the embroidered collar that had been intended for Sultan.
100 Rousseau made presents of ribbons to women who promised to breastfeed.
101 Including the lady mentioned in the following note. “In my brother’s possession at Leek are two pictures, for which my father was once offered a very considerable sum of money, and whose probable painters’ names are much desired. The one evidently by a French artist, is an exquisitely finished portrait of Rousseau and was given by the immortal Jean-Jacques himself while residing at Wootton in 1766 to a great aunt who lived in the neighbourhood, and for whom he had conceived a more than ordinary amount of regard.

He is represented in Polish or Gossack dress, being habited in a loose-flowing, light purplish-brown robe, the deeply furred fringe of which he holds with his ruffled right-hand. A high fur cap completely conceals his hair, and a white cravat just peeps out from underneath the robe. The face is nearly full being about three-quarters turned; and the complexions dark olive. Furrowed brow and cheeks, thickly brushed eye brows, dark, deep-set hazel eyes, which abstractedly follow one from all points of view; and a thin-lipped sensuous mouth sum up its other characteristics.” – John Sleigh Notes and Queries 3rd series, vol.IV, 1863, p.475. [Sleigh describes here a copy of Ramsay’s famous portrait against which Rousseau later took exception. – MC & SL]
102 He lived at Tissington 8 miles from Calwich.
103 Miss Delaney to Miss Dewes: “Now for a word about Monsieur Rousseau, who has gained so much of your admiration. His writings are ingenious, no doubt, and were they weedled from the false and erroneous sentiments that are blended throughout his works (as I have been told), they would be as valuable as they are entertaining. I own I am not a fair disputant on this subject from my own knowledge of his works, as I avoid engaging in books from whose subtlety I might perhaps receive some prejudice, and I always take an alarm where virtue in general terms is
disapproved of Lady Kildare for wanting Rousseau to educate her children — further proof that our exile had found many doors opening for him in inhospitable England. Mrs Delaney feared the supremacy of passion and the unbridled play of natural energies that Rousseau seemed to advocate, and she thought that Wootton must be far too austere for such a philosopher.

In July, in Calwich, Rousseau made the acquaintance of the Duchess of Portland, Lady Margaret Cavendish [67] Harley (not, as Howitt claims, Lady Dorothy Cavendish, who did not become Duchess of Portland until 21 November 1766 on her marriage to William Henry Cavendish Bentinck).

The Duchess and Rousseau studied botany in the garden of Calwich and soon extended their field of exploration to the sandy hills around Okeover and further into Peak District. Rousseau was surprised by her agility. At the end of August on the initiative [68] of the Duchess, they began a correspondence. Lady Portland lived in London and Bulstrode (in Buckinghamshire). For the next ten years, they regularly exchanged letters, seeds, plants, and information. Via Lady Portland he also tried — in vain — to renew relations with his friend George Keith.

Thus the summer passed. It was full of contrasts: on the one hand, there was the torment of Hume’s attacks; on the other, the charm of Granville’s receptions.

And what became of Davenport? He had returned to his family estate at Davenport Park in Cheshire. He wrote frequently to Rousseau, as did his grand-daughter Phoebe. But unfortunately Phoebe’s letters are now lost. Just one letter written by Jean-Jacques in reply (in 1766) survives.

The remoteness of the two localities did not prevent Davenport from going back to Wootton twice more during the summer. On Tuesday, 1 July, he went to see his friend — at Hume’s request — in order to gauge Rousseau’s mood. He probably also hoped to soothe his friend’s

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104 Wife of James, Duke of Leinster.
105 Mrs Delaney to Lady Andover, 4 September 1766 “... I am glad you have seen Rousseau; he is a genius and a divinity, and his works extremely ingenious, as I am told, but to young and unstable minds I believe dangerous, as under the guise and pomp of virtue he does advance very erroneous, and unorthodox sentiments; it is not the "bon tons" who say this, but I am too near the day of the trial, to disturb my mind with fashionable whims. Lady Kildare said she would offer R. an elegant retreat if he would educate her children! I own I widely differ from her ladyship, and would rather commit that charge to a downright honest parson, I mean as far as to religious principles, but perhaps that was a part that did not fall into her scheme at all...”
106 Rousseau to Madame de Boufflers, 5 April 1766.
107 “... I hope your neighbour Rousseau entertains you; is he pleased with his own Hermitage? It is romantic enough to satisfy a genius, but not so well suited to a sentimental philosopher as to a cynic, it is rather too rude, and I should imagine Calwich much better fitted for that purpose.” Mrs Delaney to Granville, 3 July 1766.
108 Mrs Delaney to Lady Andover, 15 July 1766. “... The Duchess of Portland wrote me word that she would be very happy to meet your ladyship at Calwich, and I supposed by that it had been settled between you. My brother also impatiently expects and hopes for that honour, and is only concerned that he "shall not be able to entertain you as he ought", but he will treat you with a sight of Monsieur Rousseau, who is in the neighbourhood”
110 Rousseau to the Duchess of Portland, 2 October 1766, in response to her letter of 10 September.
111 Rousseau to the Duchess of Portland, 29 April 1767.
112 Rousseau to Guy, 2 August 1766.
113 A mile from Brereton Green and from Congleton, and twenty miles from Wootton.
114 Davenport to Hume, 6 July 1766.
115 Hume to Davenport, 27 May – 26 June 1766.
melancholy. Jean-Jacques, appreciating his host’s care, paid a return visit to Davenport in Cheshire at the end of August. We do not know if he walked or took the coach that was kept at Wootton, we only know the rough dates. Leaving on the 25th or 26th in the morning, he arrived at Davenport Park in the afternoon.

At Davenport Park the river Dane ran under the tall trees of the park, joined by an irrigation stream that watered the vegetable and flower gardens. It was suggested that Rousseau might like to help design the gardens, and Rousseau promised to think about it. It was an attractive idea! Like Julie, he liked the solitary tranquillity of gardening. On leaving Davenport’s house he went to the village of Davenport. Here there was the customary reaction to his unusual clothes: the villagers thought him mad!

By contrast, his stature grew in the eyes of the children of the house. He took an interest in their games and in their studies, and he helped them with their arithmetic – an essential skill if one was to master English money.

On Friday 29 August he returned to Wootton. We do not know if Thérèse had accompanied him or if she had stayed in Wootton.

Rousseau never forgot to tip any servants who rendered him a good turn. He made a note of these tips in his accounts. As the locals in and around Wootton found out, he seemed to be naturally generous.

He did not always walk long distances. Sometimes he liked to simply wander around the park surrounding Wootton Hall, to look at the crops and the cattle, and (in spring) at the sheep shearing. From the Hall he would often visit the hamlet of Wootton, which was only fifteen minutes away. The hamlet consisted of grey stone houses, with small wall-enclosed gardens. The hamlet was at the junction of three roads: one led to Ellastone; another led to the Weaver Hills and Stanton and Ilam. There was no inn or shop in the hamlet. Ross Hall, as he was known to the locals, on his own or accompanied by Madam Zell (after “Mademoiselle”), often visited the hamlet and was even invited inside some of the cottages, where he would distribute his freshly gathered herbs.

On his solitary walks Rousseau came across lead-working around the village of Stanton. He was interested in this but he also noticed the poverty of the miners and he regretted that he did not have more money himself, to relieve their distress!

The locals showed Rousseau great respect. They thought he was a king in exile. The children thought he was mysterious and frightening. When they saw him approach dressed in his Armenian hat and caftan they would run away.

To master English money, was taken from this picture. The people, in the neighbourhood of Davenport, who had seen or spoken to him, thought him mad; perhaps they were not much mistaken. Edgeworth, Memoirs, p.382.

116 Rousseau to Davenport, 24 – 31 July 1766.
117 Davenport to Rousseau, 4 May 1767
118 Livres de Dépenses “Du 29 [August]. Pour le voyage de Davenport deux Dinors en route . . .”
119 Edgeworth and her family passed the summer of 1781 at Davenport Hall “. . . We rented it from Mr. Davenport, to whom it belonged. He had entertained Rousseau there, when he was brought over from France by Hume. In one of the rooms there was an excellent picture of the eccentric philosopher of Geneva. I believe that the print, which is prefixed to the English translation of his works, was taken from this picture. The people, in the neighbourhood of Davenport, who had seen or spoken to him, thought him mad; perhaps they were not much mistaken.” Edgeworth, Memoirs, p.382.
120 Rousseau’s Livre de Dépenses mentions the servants of Port and of Davenport, Granville’s gardener, Peggy and her mother, and the child of the gardener at Wootton
121 Malthus to Rousseau, 18 July 1766. It seems that Rousseau knew enough English to answer their questions about wild herbs.
122 Rousseau to Madame de Luze, 10 May 1766.
123 Howitt, William Visits to Remarkable Places, 1840, pp.510-11.
With thanks to the Honourable Johnnie Greenall, the owner of the present-day Wootton Hall, for granting permission to see Rousseau’s Cave, in his private garden and to William Podmore O.B.E. for showing me the staircase from Wootton Hall, and for sharing his memories of Rousseau’s cave in 1929 – when, as a ten year old boy, he accompanied his father on a pre-sale visit to Wootton Hall. The digital reconstruction of the eastern wall of the cave, now missing, is based on information supplied by Mr. Podmore – S.L.

Figure 16 A window separated the cave from a corridor in the servants’ quarters (digitised by Kirsten Jarrett)