

Richard Warner: A Curate in the History of Bath (1763-1857)

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Fig.1: **Reverend Richard Warner** - Downside Abbey

Reverend Richard Warner's *The History of Bath* (1801) has been credited as one of the works which created the city's Georgian image. However, this large volume was not the only contribution that the controversial curate of St. James' made during his years in the city.¹ His literary output was prolific and varied, and it has been suggested that his work provided inspiration for contemporary authors, such as Jane Austen and William Wordsworth.² As

1 Richard Warner, *The History of Bath* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1801); Peter Borsay, *The Image of Georgian Bath, 1700-2000: Towns, Heritage, and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.216.

2 Janine Barchas, 'The Real Bluebeard of Bath: A Historical Model for Northanger Abbey', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* (2010), p.128; Tomoya Oda, 'Warner's Unrecognized Visit to Wordsworth in July 1801', *Notes & Queries*, Vol. 48 (2001), pp.123-4.

well as being an influential figure in Bath's literary society, in his role as an Anglican clergyman Warner was actively involved in the religious and philanthropic life of the city. Outspoken and confrontational, the 'rather beauish' curate employed both his pulpit and his pen to express his religious and political opinions, and to attack some of the divisions which prevailed in late Georgian Bath.³

It was Warner's love of declamation, inspired by a childhood visit to see *Macbeth* at Covent Garden, which drove his ambition for a clerical career.⁴ In a period when there was an increasing public appetite for sermons, it was a valuable talent, particularly for clergymen working in fashionable towns and cities. Warner was acutely aware of the power of oratory, observing

that correct and impressive reading, and graceful and energetic recitation ...are not only in themselves elegant acquirements, but, may be made powerful instruments, in working upon the imagination, mind, and moral feeling of mankind at large.⁵

His skills were honed at his London boarding school and Christchurch Grammar School, but in common with an increasing number of late eighteenth-century clergy, he was the son of a middling professional family without money or livings to ease his path. He first tasted the disappointment of being overlooked for patronage when he failed to secure a promised place at Winchester College, which he viewed as his passport to New College, Oxford and a 'lofty' preferment.⁶ Demotivated, he spent several years working in law until, at the age of twenty-four, he matriculated at St. Mary's Hall, Oxford with a view to entering the Church. Competition for clerical positions was fierce and when, after just eight terms, the incumbent and family friend, William Gilpin, offered him the curacy of Boldre in Hampshire, it was an opportunity that he could not afford to turn down. When Warner was ordained in 1789, he was not only older than the average ordinand but he was also, unusually, a non-graduate.⁷

3 John Britton, *The Autobiography of John Britton* (London: 1850), p.215.

4 Richard Warner, *Literary Recollections* Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1830), pp.15-6.

5 Warner, *Recollections* Vol.1, p.120.

6 Warner, *Recollections* Vol.1, pp.176-80.

7 Warner, *Recollections* Vol.1, pp.293-4; William M. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.43.

Religious Life

During the second half of the eighteenth century many of the Anglican clergy moved away from their rural parishes to reside in towns and cities.⁸ The urban environment of Bath held many attractions, not least of which were the rich networking opportunities provided by the kaleidoscope of residents and visitors, making it an ideal choice for a clergyman seeking a preferment. Having served as a curate in rural parishes for five years, thirty-one-year-old Warner arrived in Bath in 1794 to take up a new appointment as the curate of All Saints, one of the Anglican proprietary chapels which were built to accommodate the demands of the city's increasing population.⁹ Within months, the death of the curate of St. James' provided an opportunity for him to secure a position at one of the parish churches; a post he held for the next twenty-two years.¹⁰ Along with the Abbey and St. Michael's, St. James' was one of the churches which comprised the Bath rectory that, until damaged by bombing in 1942, stood close to where the Marks and Spencer store is today.

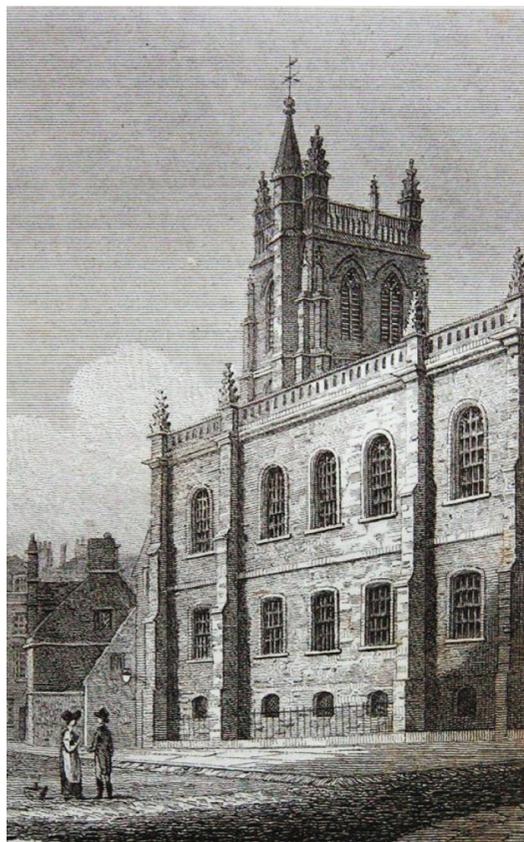


Fig. 2: St. James' Church, Bath c.1818, from Pierce Egan, *Walks through Bath, describing every thing worthy of interest, including Walcot and Widcombe, and the surrounding vicinity, also an excursion to Clifton and Bristol Hot-wells* (1819)

Clear divisions existed between Bath's proprietary chapels and parish churches.

⁸ Jacob, p.106.

⁹ Daniel Cummins, 'Exclusive Oratories and Magnificent Pagodas: The Anglican Proprietary Chapels of Eighteenth Century Bath', *Historical Research* Vol. 85, no. 228 (2012), pp.254-64.

¹⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine* (January 1858), pp.101-4.

With their comfortable interiors and high charges, and ministers employed for their oratorical skills and high qualifications, the fashionable chapels were socially exclusive.¹¹ Despite his few months at All Saints, Warner did not identify with some of his colleagues at the chapels, or approve of their exclusivity. In 1807, under the cover of a pseudonym, he published *Bath Characters*, a series of satirical sketches in which he attacked the 'folly and vice' of Bath's vain society. His characters were thinly disguised and included fellow clergymen and others easily identifiable to Bath's residents and visitors. Lady Lofty [Lady Belmore] observed the differences between the proprietary Octagon Chapel and the city's parish churches,

I am acquainted with no place of worship which is so well calculated for *genteel* people to say their prayers as in your chapel. Here is every contrivance for warmth, ease, and repose; and the company is select, well-bred and well dressed. In general, too, the mode of performing the service is graceful, agreeable, and judicious. No violence; no scolding; no terrifying stories about hell and the devil, as one meets with in vulgar parish churches.¹²

Warner was a popular preacher and St. James' was packed with the city's elite and visitors who had heard of his reputation, but, unlike the ministers at the proprietary chapels, he did not spare his congregation. One reviewer observed 'unlike the fashionable preacher...Mr Warner does not attempt to sooth, but rather to alarm his hearers'.¹³ Warner's sermons did not meet with everyone's approval and, over the course of his career, many letters appeared in the press and pamphlets were published which criticised his conduct. The first time he was severely rebuked for his performance in the pulpit was in 1797 when he preached a sermon following the death of Mary Wollstonecraft. He claimed that the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* 'bitterly lamented her past life and conduct' and had 'expired in torments too horrible even for the imagination, confessing and bewailing her errors'. Despite being persuaded to write a public apology in the *Bath Chronicle*, an anonymous pamphlet was published in which the author remarked that 'in a function that... requires a character of unsullied purity', Warner should not circulate as truth 'the unfounded and perhaps malignant whispers of rumour' and accused him

11 Cummins, 'Exclusive Oratories and Magnificent Pagodas'.

12 Peter Paul Pallett, *Bath Characters: or Sketches From Life*. 3rd Edition (London: 1808), pp.46-7.

13 *Monthly Review* (November 1807), p.335.

of having been motivated by ‘the despicable personal vanity of exhibiting your flaming qualifications as an orator’.¹⁴ Warner’s most controversial sermon was the one he preached in May 1804, during the Napoleonic Wars. According to Bath’s Unitarian minister, Joseph Hunter, it was so contentious that, when he arrived in the city five years later, people were still talking about it.¹⁵ Several months previously Warner had stirred up public opinion by calling on the city’s magistrates to prevent the volunteers drilling at the same time as Sunday evening worship, but he claimed that when he prepared his anti-war sermon, he had not been aware that there would be a group of them in his congregation.¹⁶ Several people walked out of St. James’ while the sermon was being delivered, and his subsequent publication of *War Inconsistent with Christianity* drew criticism from Bath and beyond.¹⁷ Three years later he used the incident to further disguise his authorship of *Bath Characters*, by satirising himself as the clergyman Dick Sable.

Let SABLE then take up the ball,
He’s GAB enough to serve us all.
Yes, chairman, and I think I’ve reason
Tax’d as I am with PREACHING TREASON;
And, what’s worse (confound his tongue)
In SERMONS of an HOUR long.¹⁸

By the end of the eighteenth century, theological divisions had emerged in the Anglican Church between Evangelicals and ‘orthodox’ churchmen.¹⁹ Evangelicalism particularly appealed to the middling sort, and as an increasing number of retired professionals made Bath their home, so its popularity in the city grew.²⁰ Among those openly opposed was Warner,

14 Verax, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr Warner ... Refuting Certain Assertions Made by him Respecting the Authoress of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Parsons, 1797).

15 London, British Library, Add MS 36527, Biographical Notices by Joseph Hunter, Richard Warner, fol 140.

16 *Bath Chronicle* (15th December 1803).

17 Warner, *Recollections* Vol. 2, pp.266-7; Richard Warner, *War Inconsistent With Christianity: a Fast Sermon Preached at St. James’ Church, Bath, Friday, May 25th, 1804* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1804)

18 Pallett, *Bath Characters*, p.xxxix.

19 Jacob, p.306.

20 Stephen Waddell, ‘William Jay: Evangelical Preacher’, in Graham Davis and Martin West (eds), *Bath History* Vol. XIII (Bath: Bath Spa University, 2013), p.93.

who according to Hunter, became 'the pure Champion against Evangelical doctrines in this part of the Kingdom'.²¹ He vigorously denounced Evangelical preaching from his pulpit and in print, but, despite counter attacks, he remained determined in his cause. One reviewer observed, he 'forgets every past skirmish and defeat, and returns to the attack, as though no arrow had ever been shot by the enemies'.²² Warner was later also outspoken in his opposition to Catholic emancipation and in 1829 published an address against proposed legislative measures.²³ Over the course of his literary career he published in excess of 175 sermons, many of which were preached in Bath.

Charitable Work

In line with the genteel image that Georgian Bath tried to promote, Warner claimed in his *History* that 'Bath has little trade, and no manufactures, the higher classes of people and their dependants constitute the chief part of the population; and the number of lower classes being but small', but this was not an accurate description.²⁴ During the eighteenth century the city became a magnet for tradesmen, migrant labourers, the poor, the infirm and prostitutes, and a significant proportion of Warner's 3,300 parishioners fell into these categories.²⁵ In 1795, the *Bath Chronicle* reported that 1,850 of the 'industrious poor' of St. James' had received relief, and in 1800 when many were suffering from wartime depression and food shortages, Warner, along with the principal inhabitants of his parish, wrote to the Mayor requesting the city address the King on behalf of the inferior orders, about the high price of food.²⁶ Warner's pastoral obligations to his parishioners were also fulfilled by personal benevolence and making appeals in local newspapers on behalf of specific causes; one of his contemporaries recalled that 'his name was forever in the newspapers recounting this or that case of distress'.²⁷

In the urban environment Warner's charitable work extended beyond his own

21 London, British Library, Add MS 36527, fol 134v.

22 *The Christian Observer* Vol. XVI (Hatchard, 1817), p.651.

23 Richard Warner, *Catholic Emancipation, an Address to the Protestants of the United Kingdom* (London: Rivington. 1829)

24 Warner, *The History of Bath*, p.344.

25 R.S. Neale, *Bath: A Social History 1680-1850 or, a Valley of Pleasure, yet a Sink of Iniquity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981)

26 *Bath Chronicle* (19th February 1795); *Bath Chronicle* (9th October 1800).

27 London, British Library, Add MS 36527, fol 134.

parish boundary and he co-operated with other members of the religious community, the Corporation and the charitable elite of the city. In 1799, the Corporation set up a subscription to help the 'industrious labouring poor' and 'distressed poorhousekeepers', who were prevented from working due to severe weather conditions, and Warner sat on the committee.²⁸ Although sympathetic of the labouring poor he demonstrated less understanding towards the beggars who lived in 'squalor and poverty' in the Holloway district, and whom he described in *Excursions from Bath* as 'in a much more numerous proportion than in any other place in the Kingdom'. The beggars posed a problem for Bath's image and, according to Warner, were 'the greatest of those very few evils which attach to the city ... the exposition of maimed limbs and chronic sores in the streets is a tax upon the feelings of the public'.²⁹ In 1798, he invited Bath's five parishes to work together to establish a House of Industry to remove 'those swarms of beggars who infest our streets' but, although the idea was warmly received, the project did not get off the ground.³⁰

Warner preached sermons on charity, and regular collections were made in the city's churches for the Infirmary and Dispensary, the General Hospital and the Blue Coat School. As in other matters, his relationship with Bath's charities was sometimes contentious. In 1802, during a sermon for the benefit of the Dispensary, he referred to a dispute between its physician Raphael Gillum, and its apothecary, and drew criticism from Gillum who complained,

this is not the only time you have rendered yourself conspicuous in the pulpit ... Does not a conduct like this tend to contaminate the pure system of the Christian religion? Perhaps it may fall to your lot to preach another more charitable sermon.

In response Warner printed the private correspondence in the *Bath Chronicle* to explain why he was refusing to preach for the General Hospital, Dispensary or the Blue Coat School until,

a public censure shall have been passed upon the writer of [the letter] by the Gentlemen who are the Protectors and Directors of the Charities of this City: and at whose particular request the

²⁸ *Bath Chronicle* (14th February 1799).

²⁹ Richard Warner, *Excursions from Bath* (Bath: Crutwell, 1801), pp.3-7.

³⁰ *Bath Chronicle* (22nd February 1798); Trevor Fawcett, *Bath Administer'd* (Bath: Ruton, 2001), p.32.

resident officiating Clergy have so repeatedly and willingly exerted themselves in favour of these benevolent establishments.

Warner's power was not as great as he thought and the General Hospital advised that it would find another clergyman to preach for them at St. James'.³¹ Three years later Warner explained in the same newspaper, that he had refused a request to preach for the General Hospital because the committee had sanctioned the 'disgraceful' practice at Christchurch of retaining a third of the charity collections for the church's own use.³² His accusation enraged the Venerable Charles Daubeny, minister of Christchurch and Archdeacon of Salisbury, who threatened to prosecute the editor of the *Bath Chronicle* for libel.³³ Warner later satirised Daubeny in *Bath Characters* as Drawcansir, a man full of 'pride, pomp and bigotry'.³⁴ In due course Warner reconciled with the Bath hospitals and, in 1810, offered his services to conduct regular Sunday services at the Infirmary and Dispensary; by the 1820s he was also a governor of the General Hospital.³⁵

The combination of the effects of economic depression, an Evangelical drive to improve public morals, and the Corporation's desire to keep Bath's streets clean, resulted in a spate of new charities being established in the city, and Warner was actively involved with several.³⁶ In 1805, he was a founding committee member of three charities. The Royal Somerset Jennarian Society was established to promote smallpox vaccination.³⁷ The Bath Humane Society provided equipment to rescue people from drowning, apparatus to resuscitate them and rewards for those assisting in saving them.³⁸ The third was the Bath Penitentiary, an institution for 'the reception, protection and reformation of penitent prostitutes', which in 1816 was expanded to include a Lock Hospital. Warner fulfilled the function of the Penitentiary chaplain until he left Bath in 1818, after which he continued as a committee member and trustee. From its inception he stressed that the Penitentiary would be 'founded on the broad basis of Evangelical love and Christian charity, and

31 *Bath Herald* (26th June 1802), p.2; *Bath Chronicle* (23rd December 1802).

32 *Bath Chronicle* (5th December 1805).

33 *Gentleman's Magazine* (July 1806), p.637.

34 Pallett, *Bath Characters*, p.ix.

35 *Bath Chronicle* (1st March 1810); Anne Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999), p.279.

36 See the various contemporary Bath guide books; Rowland Mainwaring, *Annals of Bath, from 1800 until the Passing of the New Municipal Act* (Bath: Mary Mayer & Sons, 1838).

37 *The London Medical and Physical Journal* Vol. 13 (London: Souter, 1805), pp.187-8.

38 *Bath Chronicle* (18th July 1805).

supported by the aid and co-operation of...every description of Christian, without respect to church, sect or religious persuasion'.³⁹ A few months earlier he had publicly declined an invitation to join the Bath branch of the Society for the Prevention and Discouragement of Vice, because it specifically precluded the co-operation of dissenting groups whom, he argued, 'have proved themselves, in many ways, to have had quite as much at heart as the members of the Established Church'.⁴⁰ His attitude reflected the fact that, despite their theological differences, some members of the Anglican clergy were happy to work with dissenters in the fight against immorality and vice. Warner might have been happy to co-operate to achieve social reform but he was unwilling to compromise on the form that religious worship should take within charitable provision. In the 1790s he was acknowledged for his support of the Sunday School and School of Industry, an institution open to children of parents of all religious persuasions. Subsequently he withdrew his support, objecting to the committee's 'unlimited toleration' when in a period of financial difficulty they agreed to William Wilberforce's proposal that children of dissenting parents be allowed to attend an alternative church to the Abbey; in return Wilberforce offered the institution financial support.⁴¹ In 1810, Warner and others responded by opening the Bath and Bathforum Free School in Corn Street. Run along the Bell-Lancaster lines, it aimed to influence 'the morals and conduct of the lower orders of people, by rescuing poor children from vice and idleness' and unlike the Sunday School and School of Industry, the new charity expected those children who were not already a member of a Sunday school, to attend the Abbey Church.⁴²

Advancement

Warner's income from St. James' amounted to just one hundred guineas a year with occasional gratuities.⁴³ Although this was augmented by surplice fees and his literary publications, during his years in Bath, his quest for a preferment was evident. As well as seeking out new contacts he also solicited via existing friends, on one occasion he asked Samuel Parr to transmit a copy of one of his sermons to Charles James Fox, explaining,

³⁹ *Bath Chronicle* (21st November 1805); *The Collective Reports of the Bath Penitentiary and Lock Hospital, from 1816-1824* (Bath: 1824), pp.61,155.

⁴⁰ *Bath Chronicle* (8th August 1805).

⁴¹ *Bath Chronicle* (29th March 1810).

⁴² *Bath Chronicle* (22nd March 1810); *Bath Chronicle* (3rd May 1810).

⁴³ *Bath Chronicle* (21st April 1808).

[my] only reasons...to look with any desire to Church preferment, are the precariousness of a curate's situation; and a wish to be enabled to smooth the latter years of an aged mother, and to assist two invalid sisters.⁴⁴

Warner married in 1801 and, in addition to his mother, sisters and wife, he later had two spinster daughters to support. However, his attempts to gain a living were hindered by his controversial opinions and difficult personal relationships. Hunter recalled,

he had not feared to make known his sentiments on puritan theology & in Politics, which were not likely to recommend him to the dispensers of Church preferment. —So Warner wants preferment! What can this man be thinking of? ...a man like him can have no preferment in our Church'. This was said by Archdeacon Daubeny.⁴⁵

Warner acknowledged that on one occasion he failed to obtain a promised preferment because his peace sermon did not find favour with a prospective patron.⁴⁶ Unhappy at being overlooked, he used *Bath Characters* as a vehicle to criticise the manner in which some incumbencies were distributed. Dr Vegetable [Reverend Dr. Gardiner, proprietor of the Octagon Chapel] explained,

the clerkships of such parishes as these, are too valuable things to be given to *vulgar men*. We generally bestow them upon some poor relations; give them as portions to younger sons; or dispose of them for a good round sum of ready money.⁴⁷

When James Phillott, the Bath rector, died in 1815, Warner offered himself to the Mayor and Corporation as a candidate for the post of Rector of Bath. In an open letter to the *Bath Chronicle*, he blatantly attacked the way in which the city distributed appointments writing,

[n]ot being connected by relationship with any gentleman belonging to your Body Corporate. I feel and acknowledge that many stronger claims to your favour than any which I can advance may naturally be

44 Samuel Parr and John Johnstone *The Works of Samuel Parr* Vol. 8 (London: Longman, 1828), p.285.

45 London, British Library, Add MS 36527, fol 134.

46 Warner, *Recollections* Vol. 2, p.268.

47 Pallett, *Bath Characters*, p.145.

expected to grow out of family ties, and long-established friendships; but should no such claim happen to arise ...⁴⁸

But the Corporation presented the living to the son of an alderman; an example of the nepotism that Trevor Fawcett has observed created the 'dynastic families' in the city.⁴⁹

Warner finally acquired his first living in 1809, twenty years after he was ordained, on the patronage of an old school friend, but the rectory of Great Chatfield was small and there was no house so he continued in his role at St. James'.⁵⁰ His work was appreciated by his parishioners, who in 1812, presented him with a piece of plate in thanks for 'the conscientious and faithful discharge of his various and important duties'.⁵¹ In 1817, aged fifty-three, and after twenty-two years working in Bath, Warner resigned his curacy, advising his parishioners that it was due to 'frequent indisposition' and that having been presented with the vicarage of Norton St. Philip by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, he was going to fulfil the duties of Norton 'in person'.⁵² His farewell sermon *All the Counsel of God. A Word in Opposition to Fanatical, Calvinistic, and Solifidian Views of Christianity* was yet another which drew a raft of criticism and a flurry of pamphlets in response.⁵³ Warner's subsequent livings were all rural Somerset parishes, but he did not always reside on them; he retained his cottage at Widcombe, and for many years after leaving St. James', he continued to be involved with Bath's charitable and intellectual society.

Secular Pursuits

Warner's non-religious works were numerous and diverse. Before arriving in Bath, he had already produced publications on the fashionable topics of antiquity and topography, and a couple of guide books to Hampshire towns. As in his religious writing, his secular work occasionally landed him in trouble. Following the publication of his book on culinary antiquities (1791), he was

48 *Bath Chronicle* (22nd June 1815).

49 Fawcett, *Bath Administer'd*, p.34.

50 'The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835' Richard Warner, Person ID 104822. <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk> [accessed 21st August 2016].

51 *Bath Chronicle* (1st February 1812).

52 *Bath Chronicle* (23rd January 1817).

53 Richard Warner, *All the Counsel of God. A Word in Opposition to Fanatical, Calvinistic, and Solifidian Views of Christianity: in a Farewell Sermon Preached to the Congregation of St. James' Church on Sunday 23rd March, 1817* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1817).

found guilty of 'literacy piracy' for having reproduced an engraving without permission.⁵⁴ It was not the only occasion he plagiarised someone's work; he has also been accused of copying a geological table and fossilological map in *The History of Bath and A New Guide through Bath and its Environs* (1811) which were drawn by his friend, the geologist William Smith.⁵⁵ Not long after he arrived in Bath, Warner's antiquarian interests led him to seek permission from the Corporation to gather up all the neglected Roman artefacts scattered throughout the city. The items were cleaned, interpreted and housed in a museum, and the project resulted in *An Illustration of the Roman Antiquities Discovered at Bath* (1797).⁵⁶ Over the years his literary output included a gothic novel, an unsuccessful periodical and various other miscellaneous works, however the majority of his material consisted of histories and guide books. During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, when international travel was curtailed, domestic tours became popular; between 1797 and 1808 Warner took time out from his work at St. James' to visit several regions of England and Wales. His expeditions resulted in five guides covering Wales, the western counties, the northern counties and Cornwall. Some of his travels were on foot and he credited these works for starting a national taste for pedestrian tours.⁵⁷ In later years his most notable work was *A History of the Abbey of Glaston: and of the Town of Glastonbury* (1826).

Warner happily took the credit for his literary work, which earned him the status of a celebrity, and the place of 'the lion of Bath Coteries'.⁵⁸ However there were occasions when he recognised the advisability of remaining anonymous. At the time *Bath Characters* appeared there was much speculation that he was the author but, when he died fifty years later, a degree of uncertainty persisted. The publication, which reportedly created 'combustion' in the city, rapidly ran to three editions, and following its success Warner reprised some of the characters, and introduced some new ones, in two further satires.⁵⁹ *Rebellion in Bath* (1808) and *The Restoration* (1809) were cantos, in which he continued to ridicule the divisions and practices of fashionable Bath. A note to the first poem reads,

54 Richard Warner, *Antiquitates Culinariæ; or, Curious Tracts Relating to the Culinary Affairs of the Old English* (London: Blamire, 1791); Warner, *Recollections* Vol. 1, pp.274-7.

55 Simon Winchester, *The Map that Changed the World* (London: Penguin, 2002); Richard Warner, *A New Guide through Bath and its Environs* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1811)

56 Warner, *Recollections* Vol. 2, pp.120-3.

57 Warner, *Recollections* Vol. 2, p.136.

58 Britton, *Autobiography*, pp.214-5.

59 *Gentleman's Magazine* (January 1858), p.103.

nothing more strikingly distinguishes the manners of Bath, from those of every other city, than the *judicious precautions* adopted to prevent the contamination of *genteel society* by the admixture of *Vulgar company*. From the *balls, fashionable chapels*, and concerts, the filthy *canaille* are effectually excluded, by the barrier of special rules.

The first canto is a tale of a conflict which breaks out in the Upper Rooms, when Ramrod [James King, Master of Ceremonies] is over-attentive to Wilhelmina Puff, the wife of a tobacconist who has achieved a knighthood. Lady Lofty indignantly complains,

Gods! Do we live the day to see,
Of such disast'rous prodigy,
When RAMROD thus forgets his duty
To blood, to pedigree, and beauty,
And places on the *title-bench*
A city-tradesman's ugly wench.

Lofty and her vengeful lady friends subsequently turn on Ramrod and Wilhelmina, and the fashionable assembly rooms descend into chaos as wigs are torn off and characters are verbally and physically assaulted. In the sequel, Ramrod is eventually restored to his position as the king of the Upper Rooms. Warner's own satirical disguise also had a role in the tale,

Dick Sable eager bustles through the crowd,
Fam'd for his wise discourses *long* and *loud*,
His *democratic* fists prepared to try
Their mighty force on *prostrate majesty*.⁶⁰

Warner's literary work received mixed reviews; his friend John Britton observed 'he has been the theme of flattering commendation by some, and of severe censure by other professional critics, as well as by real and

⁶⁰ Peter Paul Pallett, *Rebellion in Bath: or, the Battle of the Upper-Rooms: An Heroico-odico-tragico-comico Poem, in Two Cantos [...] Canto the First* (London: Robinson, 1808), pp.4-5, 26,42.

pretend friends'.⁶¹ Hunter held the view 'that he was deep in no subject. He has read little, made no particular preparation for publication and began to read in a subject only when he had previously determined to publish upon it' and, in Robert Southey's opinion, he wrote 'bad books'.⁶² But Warner also had his admirers and was a popular author in his day, with many of his works running to multiple editions.

Warner died on 27th July 1857, aged ninety-three years, nine months and nine days, and was buried in at St. Leonard, Chelwood, where he was the rector. During his long life he made a significant literary contribution to Bath with his volumes on its history, Roman artefacts, and guide books; he was also a satirical commentator on the city's Georgian society.

As an Anglican clergyman he participated in contemporary debates about theology and clerical practices, and also made his mark on Bath's charities. The author of *The History of Bath* left the city a literary, religious and philanthropic legacy, and gained his own place in *Bath History*.

This chapter contains extracts from Diane Brunning, 'White Pocket-Handkerchief Preachers of Bath', unpublished MA dissertation, Bath Spa University, 2016.

61 Britton, *Autobiography*, p.214.

62 London, British Library, Add MS 36527, fol 140; Ian Packer and Linda Pratt (eds) 'The Collected Letters of Robert Southey' Robert Southey to Grosvenor Charles Bedford 30th March 1802, *Romantic Circles*. (online) https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Two/HTML/letterEEed.26.667.html [accessed 21st August 2016].

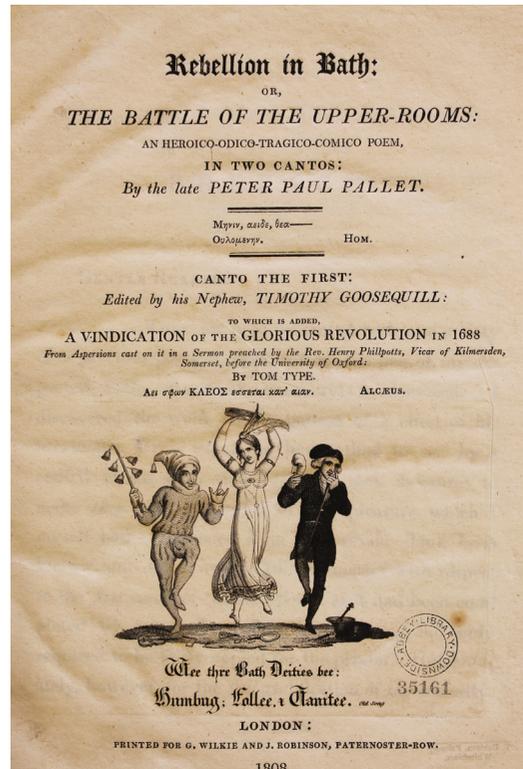


Fig. 3: Title Page of Peter Paul Pallett, *Rebellion in Bath: or, the Battle of the Upper-Rooms: An Heroico-odico-tragico-comico Poem, in Two Cantos ... Canto the First* - Downside Abbey

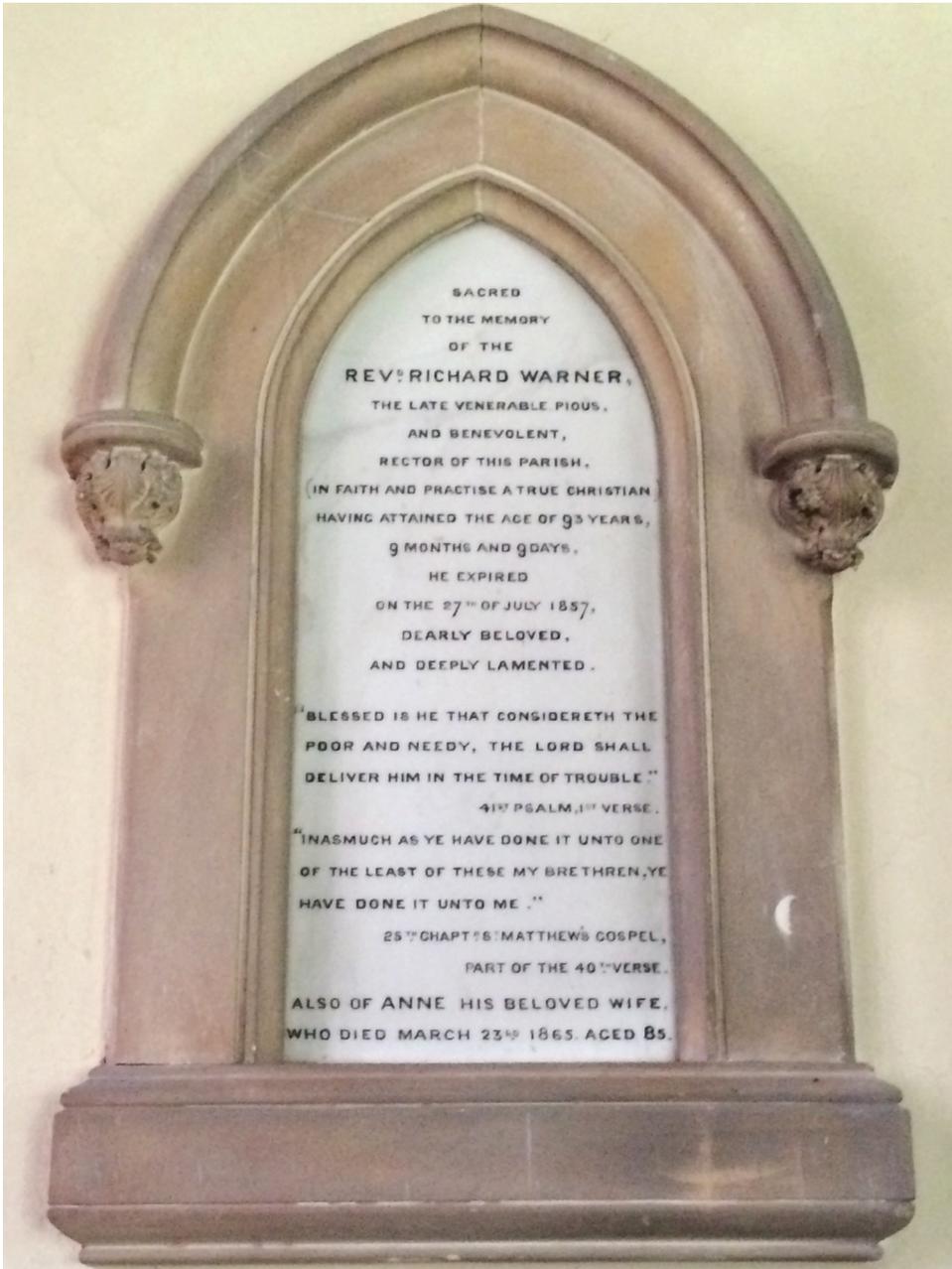


Fig. 4: Memorial to Richard Warner, Chelwood Church -
Photograph by Diane Brunning

About the Author

Diane Brunning first came to Bath as an undergraduate teacher of science, following which her dissertation research into an eye disease of cattle was published in the *British Veterinary Journal*. Having spent the majority of her career in the financial services industry, Diane's interest in history was ignited six years ago when some ancestral research unexpectedly led back to eighteenth-century Bath. In order to fully understand the context of her work, she enrolled on the Jane Austen's England MA course at Bath Spa University. For her recently completed thesis Diane examined the urban Hanoverian clergy by focusing on the lives and work of two of Bath's Anglican curates, and her chapter on Richard Warner draws on the research for this assignment. She is currently writing a full length biography of another of Bath's Georgian clergymen, William Robert Wake.