



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
JOSEPH MAYETT OF QUANTON
(1783-1839)



Royal Bucks Militia Orderly, 1793 (BL Stowe MS 488, f. 12)
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THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
JOSEPH MAYETT
OF QUANTON
(1783-1839)

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

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PREFACE

In the latter stages of research for *Servants in Husbandry* I was fortunate to stumble across what seemed at the time the Dead Sea Scrolls, the first-hand testimony of an eighteenth-century farm servant, this autobiography. I cannot now remember why I had travelled to the Buckinghamshire Record Office (collecting the inadvertant biographies of servants in settlement examinations, chasing references in the *Posse Comitatus List* of 1798); reading Mayett's account swept the intentions of the visit from my mind.

With the early encouragement of David Vincent¹ and the unstinting assistance of the archival staff at Aylesbury, both in 1979 and more recently (especially that of the County Archivist, Hugh Hanley), the project of producing this edition began. Eileen Scarff of the Buckinghamshire Record Society has been a great help in seeing it to its conclusion.

Mayett's life has become a multi-media event. The third episode of *This Land of England* (Channel 4) is woven around the autobiography;² I have profited greatly from the friendship and help (long discussions of Mayett, exchanging of information, and direct assistance in checking the final text) of the historian and associate producer of that series, David Souden.

¹ David Vincent, *Bread, Truth and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* (London, 1981).

² The series is a production of Mirageland; David Souden and David Starkey, *This Land of England* (London, 1985) is the book of the series, and would make a useful companion to the autobiography.

MANUSCRIPT AND EDITION

Mayett's enlistment in the militia meant that he moved farther than a farm servant/day-labourer of an earlier or later generation would have been expected to do; dying a childless Baptist seems to have caused his memoir to travel vastly greater distances than he did. Mayett's manuscript was presented to the Buckinghamshire Record Office by Miss Dorothy H.E. Watson, of Kirkeswell, Penrith, Cumberland, in 1970. As Miss Watson related, the autobiography had been found among the papers of Miss Helen Pierce, former headmistress in Blindcrake, Cumberland, where Miss Watson's brother lived. Miss Pierce went as a missionary to Pakistan in the late 1950's and died there. Some of her music and books, in great disarray, were posted to Miss Watson's brother; he gave the music and manuscript to Miss Watson, who then contacted the *Buckinghamshire Herald*, and Philip Fountain suggested she deposit the manuscript with the record office.³

The manuscript is composed of seven octave gatherings, now foliated 1-149.⁴ This edition presents the whole of Mayett's text. I have indicated the start of each gathering by square brackets, and inserted folio numbers in the margins. I have attempted to maintain his inconsistent capitalization and spelling. He wrote, on the third page of the work, 'I never Learned the points and stops the accents nor emphatical words', and indeed the whole manuscript is almost free of punctuation, and is not formed into paragraphs. The immediate effect is of an anachronistic stream of consciousness (although the text approaches that form towards its end), but the stream is in fact punctuated verbally (e.g., 'at that time' often begins new episodes). As a concession to legibility, I

³ Personal communication from Miss Watson.

⁴ Buckingham Record Office (hereafter BRO), DX/371.

have adopted the convention used by Eric Robinson in his edition of the autobiographical writings of Mayett's contemporary, John Clare, by inserting spaces in the text at sentence-like breaks in the narration and breaking the text into paragraphs.⁵

I have appended to the introduction a table showing the use of a number of words in the text, in the various phases of Mayett's recorded life. No one else is likely to enter the whole text on to a word processor, as I did in preparing the edition. A benefit, however dubious, of having the text in machine-readable form is the ability to count the occurrences of each different word, by pressing a few buttons.

⁵ *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings* (Oxford, 1983).

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Mayett sets out briskly on his walk through the wilderness of this world; the publication of his incomparably early account of the life of a farm servant and agricultural labourer invites you to follow. Echoes of the rural labouring life of Fred Kitchen and George Sturt will be heard, at nearly a century's distance.⁶ The introduction serves two purposes. The first, more useful, is to give a slight shove to the door opened by the edition, a sketch of events and players and a view of the form of the autobiography. The second is to allow me the chance to discourse, briefly, on the aspects of the autobiography that have engaged me.

Scene, Players, and Events

Joseph Mayett, son of a day-labouring father and lace-making mother, was born in 1783 in Quainton, Buckinghamshire. He ended his autobiography a poorer, disabled and sick labourer, in Quainton, after absences caused by service in husbandry and twelve years in the militia. He died there in 1839. The large, still agricultural, parish lies on the edge of the vale of Aylesbury, six and a half miles north-west of Aylesbury;⁷ much of his life, outside the militia, was spent in a narrow band of parishes lying along the Bicester Road.⁸ Quainton's low-lying heavy clay fields and nucleated village back on to the mass of Quainton Hill, which rises 363 feet above the low point of the parish.⁹ A nucleus of open fields

⁶ Fred Kitchen, *Brother to the Ox: The Autobiography of a Farm Labourer* (London, 1940); George Bourne, *Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer* (London, 1907) and *idem*, *The Bettesworth Book: Talks with a Surrey Peasant* (London, 1901).

⁷ Quainton (less Shipton Lea, which was later joined to Quainton) was 5,510 acres in extent (1831 Census); its population was 750 at the first census of 1801, and had grown to 952 at the time of Mayett's writing in 1831.

⁸ Quainton itself, various hiring fairs and hirings, and harvesting in Alderbury, Hertfordshire: (see map 1).

⁹ *VCH Buckinghamshire*, iv (1927), pp. 92-94; J.J. Sheahan, *History and*

remained in the late eighteenth century (indeed, until 1840), but much of the parish had earlier been enclosed, by agreement, into compact farms and isolated farmhouses.¹⁰

He was the eldest surviving child of Joseph Mayett and Mary, his second wife; only two siblings, brothers William (b. 1786) and Thomas (b. 1790), feature directly in his account. His was an active Nonconformist household, in a minority in the parish, licensed first as a Methodist and later as a Baptist meeting house, after his parents' conversion by Mr. Davis, the charismatic preacher who arrived in the neighbourhood in 1801.¹¹ Mayett, eighteen at the time, waited to follow his parents (and brother William) into the Baptist Church until his return from the militia in 1815.

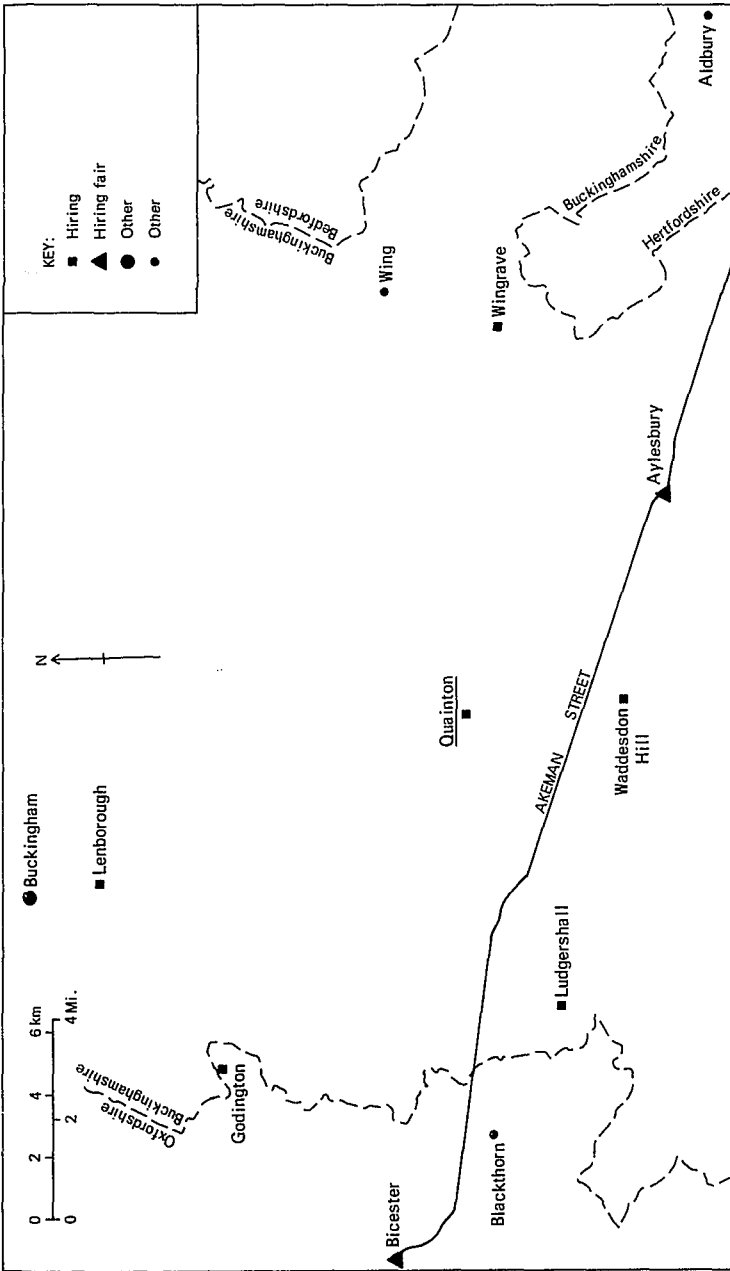
Mayett's ability to write an autobiography was a remarkable achievement. The inability of others to write is frequently referred to in his account; his mother could read, but not write, his brother William marked, instead of signing, the marriage register as witness to Joseph's wedding; in the militia, he was persuaded not to join the Marines, when they were looking for someone who could 'write legible' for the non-commissioned officers; later he found employment working for the pay sergeant of his company, who could neither read nor write. Quick to learn and eager for the praise it earned, he was taught to read by his mother, from his godmother's gift first of a Bible and then of the little illustrated chapbook, *The Reading Made Easy*, but then, at seven, was set to lace-making with his mother, in the classic pattern of the labour-intensive cottage occupations of wives and children of day-

Topography of Buckinghamshire (London, 1862); T.J. Parker, *Quainton: Fifty Years Ago* (Aylesbury, 1915).

¹⁰ A letter written during the dispute over enclosure in Quainton contains an estimate that two-thirds of the land in the parish had already been enclosed, with only one-third remaining open (BRO IR/M 9, 24 February 1801).

¹¹ His parents eventually joined the Particular Baptist Church at Waddesdon Hill. For the history of the Baptists of the region see D.W. Lovegrove, 'The Baptist Church in Mid-Buckinghamshire' (n.p., 1967). See also A.C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London, 1947).

HIRING FAIRS



1 Hiring Fairs and Mayett's Places of Agricultural Employment

labourers, like straw-plaiting in Bedfordshire.¹² His reading was stretched further at eleven by the loan of Pilgrim's Progress and Watts' hymns, and his ability to write by the opening of a Church of England Sunday School in the village. Once acquired, his literacy was to be nurtured at times by the farmers who employed him as servant, and again in the militia, but his indebtedness to earlier instruction blazes out of the account of his initial opposition to the scheme of his own church to set up a Sunday School in rivalry with the National Sunday School, on the grounds that the children would be less well taught.

He was sent out to work at thirteen, first under the eye of his father, with the same farmer, and then on his own, as a servant in husbandry. Until the age of twenty, with unusually high mobility even for a farm servant, he worked in twelve different hirings in Quainton, Waddesdon Hill, Ludgershall, Wingrave (for three days), Godington, Oxfordshire (for a month) and Lenborough, in Buckingham, in a variety of agricultural occupations, including milking and carting.¹³

After a false start, mis-timed during the Peace of Amiens,

¹² For a later edition, see *The Reading Made Easy in a Variety of Useful Lessons*, 4th edn. (Berwick, 1835). See also Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide from the Beginning of Printing to the year 1897* (Harmondsworth, 1977); Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1957). G.F.R. Spenceley described seventeenth-century lace-making in the region, finding that women could earn as much at lace-making as reaping, the highest wages available to them in agriculture ('The Origins of the English Pillow Lace Industry', *Agricultural History Review*, xxi (1973), pp. 81-93).

¹³ Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981). St. John Priest found that women in lace-making parishes would not do field work (*A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Buckingham* (London, 1810), p. 81). It is for related reasons that we find the reversal of sex-specific employment in the case of Mayett, who often was employed by dairymen for milking. He is not listed in the *Posse Comitatus* enumeration of males aged fifteen to sixty, in 1798 (British Library, hereafter BL, Stowe MSS 805 and 806; BRO L/P 15 and 16. See Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus 1798*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, xxii [1985]). Mayett turned fifteen in March of that year. Most of the list was compiled in February, presumably making him exempt; other entries of servants in the returns are vague, however (in the list for Waddesdon is 'Mr. Francis Cox's 2 servants, names not known'), and Mayett may simply have been missed.

he enlisted in 1803 in the Royal Bucks Militia, seduced, he recalled with regret, by the martial music and the sight of the soldiers and musicians (in red uniforms, for the King's Own regiment, not the blue of other militia regiments, 'and all very Clean').¹⁴ Joining the Regiment in March 1803, he was in for the duration (as would not have been the case had he been balloted), and unable to escape until demobilized in May 1815.

Within five months of mobilization in 1803, he had contracted smallpox in Harwich Camp, and had had an eye damaged by a militia surgeon. He was eventually marched from one corner of England to the next (see map 2), serving in Essex and Suffolk, in Devon, in Sussex, and then in Dover, where his living arrangements were strained by the return in pestilential tatters of the Walcheren Expedition.¹⁵ Then, in a different phase of the militia's employment,¹⁶ the regiment marched north, to suppress the Luddite and Radical disturbances of 1812-13, in Nottingham and later around Manchester. After then marching to a camp within 16 miles of Berwick-upon-Tweed, the regiment recrossed England to Liverpool, and was shipped to Ireland, to continue in its new police function. Based at Portsmouth in 1815, aged thirty-two, he was demobilized. He probably finished writing his auto-

¹⁴ In 1802, the balloted term would have been five years (J.W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army* (London, 1909), p. 16). The regiment became the King's Own or Royal Bucks in 1794, when, encamped at Weymouth, it formed the personal guard of George III during his stay at the seaside (J.C. Swann, *The Citizen Soldiers of Buckinghamshire, 1795-1926* (London, 1930), p. 15). The set of coloured drawings of Bucks militiamen of 1793 in the British Library (Stowe MS 488) includes one of blue-coated gunners and red-coated Bucks militiamen. In all the other drawings (save those of the musicians, including the exceptionally garbed cymbalist and tambourin) the soldiers are pictured in red uniforms. There is no little irony in the appeal to farm workers of the cleanliness of the peacetime militia.

¹⁵ Private Wheeler, whose letters were published in 1951, was a militiaman who succumbed to the volunteerings from the line that Mayett resisted, enlisting in the 51st Light Infantry in Maidstone in 1809. He then sailed on the Walcheren expedition. See *The Letters of Private Wheeler, 1809-1828*, ed. B.H. Liddell Hart (London, 1951).

¹⁶ Earlier, the regiment had been put on alert for the riots expected at the arrest of Sir Francis Burdett (see below). F.O. Darvall estimated that more men were deployed against the Luddites than in the Peninsular Campaign (*Popular Disturbance and Public Order in Regency England* (Oxford, 1934), p. 40).

Key:

a Quainton
b Wing
c Oxford
d London
e Horsham
f Eastbourne
g Brighton
h Brighton
i Brighton
k Brighton
l Brighton
m Brighton
n Brighton
o Brighton
p Brighton
q Brighton
r Brighton
s Brighton
t Brighton
u Brighton
v Brighton
w Brighton

- a Quanton
- b Wing
- c Colchester
- d Harwich
- e Colchester
- f Maidstone
- g Chelmsford
- h Colchester
- i Taunton
- j Honiton
- k Ottery St Mary
- l Excter

m Horsham
n Eastbourne
o Dover
p Woodbridge
q Nottingham
r Mansfield
s Manchester
t Mottram
u Belford
v Liverpool (to Ireland)
w Portsmouth

2 Mayett's Postings, 1803–1815

biography in 1831 (see below); if his adulthood began at eighteen, when he wrote of being grown to the stature of a man, nearly half of Mayett's adult life, as described in the autobiography, was spent in uniform.

When the large army and militia forces were disbanded, with peace, hundreds of thousands of demobilized men flooded the labour force, which had particularly acute effects on labourers in southern, non-industrializing England. Joseph, part of that flood and full of hope, joined the Baptist Meeting at Waddesdon Hill to which his parents and brother and sister-in-law then belonged. He found employment in building the new church¹⁷ and in December married Sarah Slade, also of Quainton, a new member of the church. But within five months of demobilization he had been reduced to rag-picking and peddling, and spent the rest of his working life, in deteriorating health, as an occasional day-labourer (with one hated stint as hayward of the open field), increasingly dependent on payments from the overseer of the poor and from the Box Club (his mutual benefit society) that he had joined in 1817.¹⁸ He was deeply involved with his church, in the establishment and difficult early years of the separate Quainton congregation.

He died, childless, in 1839, after having buried his father in 1826, his brother William in 1827, and his mother early in 1830, and after having seen his other brother Thomas and his family emigrate to America. Sarah died five years later.¹⁹

¹⁷ The building still stands, now disused, alone on the apex of Waddesdon Hill.

¹⁸ Mayett wrote that he had been a member of his Box Club for 11 years in 1828. A list of the orders of the Friendly Society held at the White Hart Inn, Quainton, 1813, survives, but it cannot be determined that this was Mayett's club (BRO Q/RSf/96). See St. John Priest, *General View*, in praise of Buckinghamshire Box Clubs in 1810 (pp. 347-48), and P.H.J.H. Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England: 1815-1875* (Manchester, 1961).

¹⁹ The burials of the Mayetts are listed in *The Church Book Belonging to the Particular Baptists, Quainton Bucks* (BRO NB/15/1). In that book, Thomas Mayett's name in the list of members is annotated 'dismissed to America'. In March 1834, William Pigott, J.P. and Mayett's 'old squire', signed an agreement to give Thomas Mayett £17 to assist his emigration to America with his wife and three children, on condition that he promised never to return to England (John Henry, *Quainton: Lipscomb's Village* [n.p., 1985]). Thomas and Sarah Mayett had baptized six children; three died before they reached two years of age (*Church Book, Particular Baptists of Quainton*).

When?

Mayett wrote his work on singly-purchased sheets of paper, which were then folded into octave sections and cut, and then hand-ruled in pencil. The sheets are dated from 1828 to 1831, in the watermarks of three different mills.²⁰ He thus died eight years after the last sheet was manufactured. The character of the memoir changes radically towards its end, becoming the record of a life being lived, rather than a past remembered. Together, these point to his having completed writing the autobiography *c.* 1831, soon after the last recorded event, his winning the sad battle with the Box Club, in which he was proved ill enough to continue to receive the Club's benefits. It is likely that he expected to die soon after. In any case, the account ends there, with eleven blank sides left in the section. The last eight years remain a blank for us as well.

He had most probably started writing no more than two years earlier. A curious aspect of the memoir is Mayett's occasional precision, down to the date, in his timing of past events: on 10 August 1803 he was reported sick with smallpox for the third time; on 27 March 1806 the regiment arrived in Taunton; on 14 December 1810 a cliff collapsed near Dover and killed a woman and six children; on 24 July 1805 the corrupt pay sergeant was transferred out, etc. There are 43 similarly dated instances in the text. But the dated incidents are strongly clustered. Only nine predate 1802: two references to birthdates at the outset of the autobiography (his own and that of his mother's last child, Thomas), and seven to the 11th, 12th, or 13th of October, surrounding the usual Michaelmas hirings.²¹ In his first year in the militia, fourteen dates are mentioned; the frequency then dies down, with no dated instances in 1809, 1811, or 1813; once posted to Ireland, the precision recurs, with fifteen dates mentioned between the assault on him in February 1814 and his return

²⁰ Two sheets bear no manufacturer's name; the others are marked 'Huxham Mill' or 'J. Davis'. Seven of the ten sheets are dated 1831.

²¹ Michaelmas New Style, after the introduction of the Gregorian reforms to the calendar in 1752.

to Quainton on 13th May 1815. His marriage, the ordination of the minister of the new congregation in Quainton, and the opening of the new Quainton church are dated (1815–1819), but from 13 October 1819 to 8 July 1828 (when he fell into a storm-swollen brook), no event is dated, not even the death of his father in 1826. In the two and a half years that remain until the end of the autobiography, he precisely dated fourteen events, including the death of his mother.

The interrupted precision would seem to be consistent with Mayett's having begun a journal in 1803, as literacy collided with a flood of new experiences, and then, as most diarists do, he stopped, to make only occasional additions until the new flood began in Ireland. Then, when he started writing the autobiography, the boundary between the forms of diary and memoirs became blurred. The tone of the text changes, as his past caught up with the present.

The Confessions of Joseph Mayett

The autobiography's intentional structure is a recital of youthful folly (swearing, drinking, and stealing pears) followed by a life of trials, all seen in the light of his preparation for death, trusting to his salvation. We can say with hindsight that he has produced a late example of confessional writing, in the Puritan tradition; the work resonates with the language of Bunyan and the Bible, and the rhythm of Dr. Watts' hymns.

Mayett's household was originally Methodist, not Puritan. Then, following no neat theological sequence, his parents were won over by Mr. Davis, and had their house relicensed, this time for the week-night meetings of the new Baptist church of Waddesdon Hill. Mr. Davis was a Strict Baptist, and the sect, unlike the General Baptists, was very much in the Puritan line. The Strict or Particular Baptists were a Calvinist predestinarian branch, with roots in the seventeenth century, but which was receiving, as is apparent in Mayett's account, strong and attractive evangelical grafts in the early nineteenth century, not without tension. The doctrine of

Election did not arrive in Quainton with Mr. Davis in 1801, though: Mayett remembered with chagrin his adolescent reply (at fifteen) to his parents' reproofs, that if he was elected he would be saved, and if not, there was no use in trying.

The doctrinal tension surfaces at many points, in the language of the arguments within the Baptist congregation in Quainton and between Mayett and his brothers. High Predestinarians battled with more eclectic members over the appearance of Walter Evans, the Ranter, who succeeded where the efforts of the home congregation had failed in attracting a large draft of enthusiastic new members. Mayett supported Evans: his autobiography records his arguments with his brother Thomas over Evans' welcome, and he kept a tally, often with precise dates, of the new members Evans drew in. Evans left within a year of his arrival, however, either through poverty or because he was expelled.²² Near the end of the memoir, the Methodists of North Marston, Buckinghamshire, are reported to have been alarmed about the new Baptist prayer meeting, which 'our friends' had begun. The upset, Mayett recorded, was once again over the doctrine of Eternal Election and Reprobation. Mayett, however, dismisses their worries, writing that 'at this time there was no more than two or three in our Church that did hold it and they had no influence over the rest'.

He, as an adult, certainly did not hold it. The tension that strained the church is recapitulated in the account of his own life, in the sequence of events recorded and the meaning given to them. For his childhood, youth, and young adulthood, he produced a catalogue of accidents, most of which involved falling (on to a frozen pond, into a storm-swollen brook, off a straw waggon, and overboard, to be rescued by the French prisoners he was guarding at Dover), in which the hand of Providence preferentially saved him. The early account is punctuated by references to the temptations of Satan, to whom he attributes his enlistment in the militia, against the

²² In the Quainton Baptist Book, Evans' name is struck through, and 'Excluded for Improper Conduct' added. Mayett wrote that Evans was obliged to leave 'through poverty'. It is possible that bad debts underlay both accounts.

wishes of his parents. In his record of adult life, however, a dramatic change occurred. Accidents and illness became trials to be suffered, and references to Satan (or the devil, or Beelzebub), damnation, and Hell virtually disappear.²³ It is as if he was recognizing, in the act of writing, how much his view of God and the world had changed. At the end of his battles, as he must have thought, he recounted his rapturous Bunyanesque dream of salvation won after severe trials, a rural labourer's recasting of the image of the refiner's fire, in which a field of wheat was both ripened and cleansed of weeds by a flameless fire that swept through the field.

His own agenda was Joseph Mayett's *Trials on the Road to Salvation*. In the narrow confessional form, mundane details of life may be offered up to serve as illustrations of the sin and trials that precede the assurance of salvation.²⁴ But life and the immediate world keep bursting out of Mayett's account. The longest section (relative to the number of years) covers his first seven years in the militia, when he moved from home (farm service had never taken him far from Quainton) into a wholly new and almost wholly unpleasant life in a wider world. Simple sibling rivalry accounts for much additional information, extraneous to the confessional form. And whenever writing rekindled his resentment over authority abused, or immediate injustice, the narrow bounds of the confessional form were broken. This is clearest in the conflict between the formal, deferential expectations of the local community, which he did not transcend, and his unhappiness with that position, as encapsulated in his rejection both of the pietistic texts of Hannah More that were thrust at him by his employers, and the pamphlets of Wooler, Cobbett, and Carlile, given him by other labourers, whom he met on the way to work.

Silences

Much everyday detail can be gleaned from the auto-

²³ See p. xxxii, below

²⁴ See Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London, 1960), for his discussion of religious autobiographers, who 'fail to see clearly either the outer world or themselves as persons' (p. 34).

biography. Of perverse interest, however, is what he did not tell us, his silences on issues that we, avid for the first-hand account of an agricultural labourer of the early nineteenth century, want him to describe. We want his account of the Important Questions of the Age, as defined by our historiographical agenda. But we cannot prod him with gentle cues. I would be in the foolish position of making excuses for his not having provided this service to social history, had Mayett not compensated us within his own agenda. The areas of silence are in matters social and personal, and these will be taken in turn.

One question that might have been asked concerns enclosure in Quainton, or rather its failure despite the wave of Parliamentary Enclosures that was sweeping over the Midlands. For here is an unusual parish in which a counter-petition succeeded, in 1801, in blocking the enclosure for more than a generation.²⁵ Mayett's father was a day-labourer in the parish; Mayett was still a farm servant in the area, living as a member of the various farmers' families, when the petition and counter-petition were presented, and the Bill died.²⁶ The matter must have been the talk of the supper table, at least occasionally.

There is no direct mention of the matter in the memoir. We discover that common land still existed after 1815 only when he found employment as the village hayward; he detested the job, since it forced him to work on Sunday, and kept him from Church. But the issue was less far-reaching than it might have been had the parish been entirely open. The only acres that still lay open were the common fields; what was once the extensive common pasture and waste, the hill above the village and much of the surrounding parts of the large parish, had already been enclosed by agreement, and the parish as a whole consisted of individual enclosed farms and lone farmhouses surrounding the tightly nucleated

²⁵ Michael E. Turner, 'Some Social and Economic Considerations of Parliamentary Enclosure in Buckinghamshire, 1738-1865' (Univ. of Sheffield, Ph. D. Thesis, 1973), esp. pp. 182-84. See also his general discussion in *Enclosures in Britain 1750-1830* (London, 1984).

²⁶ For the counter-petition and supporting evidence, see BRO IR/M 9.

village and open fields. With no common pasture left, the only great boon to a propertyless labourer from the open fields might have been gleaning, but in Quainton it is by no means clear that the open fields were arable c.1801.²⁷

Moreover, an examination of Mayett's immediate situation reveals more reasons for his lack of interest. In 1798/99, he was at a 'Lone' (enclosed) farm in the parish, and employed at his father's instructions in the garden in the springtime, instead of being out with other lads; in 1799/1800, after three days with a madman of an employer in Wingrave, he found a second extra-parochial place, at another lone farm in the parish of Ludgershall; in the hard year of 1800/01, the failure of the hiring at Bicester Fair brought him back to Quainton for the desperate winter, and the account is then filled with Mayett's delightful scheme to get back into service in order to solve his very immediate concerns, to gain both an ample diet and to distance himself from the constraints of his parents. In 1801 he left Quainton for the place with the hypocritical Baptist mistress at Waddesdon Hill, and when he stormed out of that hiring, to return to Quainton, it was not for long, for his next, and last, hiring took him north to Buckingham, and thence into the militia. As compensation, we are given copious detail on the life of a farm servant of the later eighteenth century, with suggestions of his expectations as servant, and descriptions of the range of masters and mistresses, from the drunkard, the madman, and the hypocrite, to the 'good' master who encouraged his reading.

Farm machinery was burned in a Swing action in neighbouring Waddesdon in November 1830, as a rural protest against the introduction of the threshing machine, thief of the day-labourer's off-season employment.²⁸ And in

²⁷ St. John Priest found that only 22 per cent of Quainton's land was arable in 1810 (*General View*, p. 370); the letter cited above in note 10 gives the percentage of unenclosed land at 33 per cent in 1801. If both estimates were correct, with no change in land use in the ten years, then a minimum of one-third of the open fields were in meadow and pasture, and not arable (if any of the old-enclosed land was arable, the percentage of open-field that was not arable would have been still higher).

²⁸ E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 115.

1834, five years before Mayett's death, the Poor Law was radically changed, much to the detriment of the rural poor. As has been well documented, the Old Poor Law had nearly as many institutional variants as the number of parishes in which it was used. In Quainton, Mayett and others were found employment by the overseers of the poor, at extremely low wages, but this was still outdoor relief, in contrast to the indoor relief to be afforded to the 'able-bodied' poor under the New Poor Law, the work house. Mayett was no longer able-bodied when he wrote; the illness benefits he received from the Box Club were far greater than those available from the Parish. And the Waddesdon riot occurred at the most introspective point in this introvert's life; in the case of the New Poor Law, he had ceased writing three years before its introduction. We get in place of this absent commentary much direct testimony on rural grievances and difficulties at the most individual level. I shall return to these in the last section.

Those interested in the English Crowd in the Napoleonic Wars will find that Joseph Mayett, militiaman, was part of authority's anti-crowd, and an unreflective part at that. His company was made ready to march on London, to quell the riots expected when Sir Francis Burdett, Radical member for Westminster, was taken from his barricaded house, under arrest: 'we had an expeditious rout to Chatam at the time that S^r France Burdett was Sent to the Tower', and after 15 days in Chatham 'returned back again to Dover'. And that is all he has to say.

But then, in 1812, the regiment departed from its coastal postings, and was marched into action in Nottingham, and then to Manchester at the time of the burning of the Royal Exchange, and then was encamped near Manchester, making sorties to Stockport, in the brutal attempt to quell the Luddite and Radical disturbances.²⁹ Two years later the Royal Bucks Militia was in service in Ireland. What do we hear from Mayett, as the militia entered into roles with such strong

²⁹ Local militias were adjudged too sympathetic to the protest. See Fortescue, *County Lieutenancies*, p. 267.

modern resonances?³⁰ Another 'expeditious route' to Nottingham, with Mayett left behind with the baggage for the first week of the campaign, enjoying his freedom from supervision (in which he 'threw the reins on the neck of [his] lust'). At the Manchester encampment at Kersal Moor, we learn of the cruel general, cruel though in the sense of being cruel to his troops.³¹ The company was sent 'to fire ball' in Stockport three times, reported as if it were an abstract activity. Of his time in Ireland, we read directly only of

i A magical cure; Mayett the Englishman turned sceptic when in contact with Irish folk-medicine (did they fool him? The cure worked).

ii The one enemy hand raised against him in the militia, being that which knocked him down in Ireland, when he was attacked after having served as the escort to a recaptured prisoner, outside the prisoner's uncle's house.

iii His relief at arriving back 'Safe on old England shore'.

Mayett carried a very small political universe in his baggage, which extended only to those in his immediate proximity, where his sharp concern was with the proper and improper exercise of authority by those with immediate power over him. His politics were schemes to get those in power to act in his interest, first exercised in his successful attempt to trick his employer to take him in as farm servant, by pretending to be interested in another (invented) post in Blackthorn, Oxfordshire, and enlisting a fellow servant as co-conspirator. He accepted the formal deferential framework into which he was born, with its occasional, too arbitrary benefits. A colonel of his regiment was made to realize the cruelty and deceit of the drill sergeant, and Mayett was thus avenged; 'the Most Noble the Duke of Buckingham as is now and was then the Right Honourable Earl of Temple and head

³⁰ 'Plus ça change . . .' with suggestions of nationally recruited police, out of sympathy with the grievances of other regions, British soldiers unhappily deployed in Ireland, and cuts in unemployment relief in times of great regional unemployment.

³¹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 622.

Colonel of the regiment was through divine mercy providentially directed by the tent door' in 1803, and ordered the proper medical attention to Mayett's smallpox. Near the end of the account, we read of the young gentleman, 'one of my particular friends', who took him in his gig to Oxford for medical consultation.

Most often, deference alone solved none of his adult problems of poverty, unemployment, poor wages, and illness. The problems were made more severe by his strong desire to add to his expenses, in paying his subscription to the Baptist church in Quainton. And here arises the great crisis of deference and class in the memoirs, his dispute with Mr. Cox, the 'gentleman who supported the cause', but who never joined the church in Quainton. Mayett's autobiography is the story of an individual's relation to God; the church was a community of individuals, but poor individuals, in an independent church, supported by local subscriptions. Into the gap came Mr. Cox. He donated the land on which the new church at Quainton was built; he guaranteed the debts of the new congregation. In return, in Mayett's account, he expected to exercise some influence over the life of the church and the behaviour of its members.

John Cox's economic base was as owner of a large enclosed farm in Quainton.³² The dispute between him and Mayett began in the affairs of the church, as Cox put pressure on Mayett to pay his subscription, saying that Mayett was a hypocrite who had no love for religion. It spilled over into Mayett's working life, coming to a head in 1821. Mayett quit Cox's employment as day-labourer in September 1820, over

³² Mr. Cox is given no Christian name by Mayett; he wrote that Cox's brother was deacon at the Waddesdon Hill Baptist Church. Henry Cox was a stalwart of the Waddesdon Hill Church, judging from the Particular Church's Memorandum Book (BRO NB/19/1). He died in 1826, leaving a will (BRO D/A We 135/95) styling himself as Dairyman of Cranwell in Waddesdon. He named his brother John Cox of Denham Lodge in Quainton as a beneficiary, who received £100 as a token of affection, and the ownership of Henry's half share in Denham Farm (the brothers had each owned half of Henry's Cranwell farm as well—it went to his married daughter Sarah Rose and to John's son William). There is no mention by name of any Cox in the Quainton Baptist Book, until William Cox joined in 1829. The Waddesdon Memorandum Book does not contain lists of contemporary members.

an argument about wages, and after being dismissed by his next employer (on the grounds that others were not employing their quota), he went to the overseer for work. Cox intervened, persuading the parish to stop Mayett's relief. Mayett appealed to Petty Sessions, and won back the right to be offered work by the parish. The dispute then looped back into the church when Cox complained that Mayett did not deserve to be a member of the church: rather than offend Mr. Cox, the minister capitulated, and Mayett and his wife were barred from taking communion, which threw her, already ill, into a state of 'mental derangement'. Only the pleading of his aged father persuaded Mayett back into the church, when the crisis abated. Mayett was vindicated, as he described it, three years later, when even Mr. Cox had to realize that Mayett's brother William had not kept proper track of the church candles: 'he saw clearly that I was right'.

Mayett was a gritty verbal battler, with no power except his mouth and wit. He had exercised that combination in farm service, first with his quip to the wife of the drunken master, that since he had already been beaten by him for no reason at all, there was no point in agreeing to fetch him back from the alehouse, and again in his argument with the Baptist mistress at Waddesdon Hill. His Blackthorn gambit succeeded; he won redress from Petty Sessions over Mr. Cox's wishes, and again in 1829, when refused illness benefits although his finger was gangrenous. But the results were not always entirely beneficial. He was fired by the drunkard and the Baptist. One suspects that there was much more to the argument with Cox than Mayett recorded. And he overshot his mark, in mocking 'the Old Squire', William Pigott, once his officer in the militia,³³ for swearing, and in complaining when Pigott, as J.P., ordered all wages paid by the overseers to be reduced by 2s. per week (Mayett's pay would then have been only 4s.). Mayett led the complaints, and was in turn denied any poor relief by Pigott.

Turning now to the silences in Mayett's personal life, we

³³ Mayett had been despatched to fetch him from Doddershall, the Pigott seat, on the mobilization of the militia in 1803.

know the maiden name, and the Christian name, of Mayett's wife, Sarah Slade, only thanks to Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, which gave the Church of England a monopoly over marriages, except those of Quakers and Jews. Thus we find, in the Quainton Parish Register, the marriage of Joseph Mayett and Sarah Slade on 18 December 1815. She charmingly signed the register as 'Sarah Mayett', then crossed out the surname so that she could write in 'Slade'. Mayett tells us that he married a young woman (she was two years his junior, and we know that, too, only from the Quainton Parish Register of Baptisms), who was a new member of the Baptist congregation at Waddesdon Hill. And he tells us, directly, almost nothing else about her in the next fifteen years of their married life.

At first reading, her absence is startling. She is present, though, in his highly individual account, at the major decisions he took in his life. Her advice was sought, and she, with 'a natural weak Constitution', shared the consequences of the exasperated wrath directed against her husband. She was embroiled in his long struggle with his brother William and William's wife, and during the doctrinal crises that threatened the very existence of the congregation. Caught in a cash crisis, with his subscription to the Baptist Church in arrears, and suffering the wrath of his brother and sister-in-law, it was Sarah, he reported, who agreed that they should sell the bell-metal pot, and buy in its place a cheap tin boiler. She and Joseph both became teachers when he attempted to rescue the education of the students in the newly-established Baptist Sunday School. Her marriage may have been unpopular with her family: her brother, near death, confessed to Joseph his sin of trying to break up their relationship. She was active and present in his life, but appears largely as the co-sufferer in his chronicle of trials (only once, caught up in the language of the confessions, did he refer to the heavy trials she caused him to suffer, through her state of nervous debility). Perhaps, if he and Sarah had had children, his account of them might have had to involve more detail about her. But even Christian went home to get his wife.

If he was less than forthcoming about his wife, he was even more reticent about his relations with women before marriage. At sixteen, he stayed 'with a girl that had worked for my master in the haytime untill nearly midnight' before being enlisted in the plot to rob a pear tree; at nineteen, while in service at Waddesdon Hill, he 'formed a Correspondence' with a young Baptist woman, angering his Baptist mistress; he 'was on the point of marriage' with a woman in Manchester (a fellow servant in Mayett's captain's household) before the militia was marched across the Pennines to Northumberland. The longest passage on the topic, hedged around with excuses, described the furlough of December 1811 (Mayett was then twenty-seven):

I rode from London on the Coach and the weather being Cold and I had plenty of money I drank a greate deal of brandy so that I became intoxocated and when I came to Woodbridge I went to a publick house which was infested with bad girls of the Common sort and being drunk and my time not being out till the next night I was easely led away with one of them though I had never given up myself to them before.

Who are these girls, or 'bad girls of the Common sort'? Whether or not Mayett intended anyone else to read his autobiography (he often adopts a didactic tone), a powerful censor stood over his shoulder while he wrote: there are no other details of his sexual activities in the memoir.

As if in compensation for the gaps regarding his wife and his earlier experience, he tells us far more about his relations with his parents and brothers. He describes moving from his mother's realm to his father's, after acquiring literacy, thanks to her and to the friends who lent them Watts' hymns and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and afterwards lace-making with her. And indeed his father took him into his first employment, then accompanied him to the hiring fair, and advised him in the dispute with the drunken master (Mayett senior's employer, as well) and in the Blackthorn plot. His father conditioned with another master that Joseph should be kept gardening, not cricket-playing, in the springtime. But as Mayett moved

closer to adulthood, his relations with his parents became strained: their reproofs rankled when, at eighteen, he was forced to return to live at home for the first time in five years, making him eager to get back into service, and ready for the seduction of the uniforms and music of the militia.³⁴ During his last years as an adolescent in Quainton, the larger community (briefly) took on the role of censor, as other labourers berated him for swearing.

His contact with home was largely broken by service in the militia, except for his occasional furloughs (he was on the way back to camp from Quainton when he had the night with the 'bad girl of the Common sort'). When a fellow soldier helped him with his writing, Mayett used his newly-honed ability to write a letter to his father, asking him to sell an old overcoat and to send him the money. After his release from the militia, his parents continue to appear only in restricted roles. His 'poor aged father' mediated in sibling disputes, persuading him to return to the church after the Cox crisis, in which Joseph's brother William had taken Cox's part. Both parents became incapacitated with age; after his father's death, another harsh dispute with William arose, over the collection of illness benefits for their mother, who had been 'struck with a paretic stroke so that she was intirely helpless'.

His two brothers, both younger than Joseph, hardly feature in his memory of childhood, youth and young adulthood, but afterwards they became the most important figures in his life, as recounted in the memoirs.³⁵ Part of the change is due to the universal telescoping of age, as the unbridgeable gulf of a few years in childhood narrows with time. But their absence from the early sections is also due to the 'accident' of physical separation in the militia, and the more institutional departure from home that farm service entailed (although he was briefly in the same service with William, called simply 'my Brother that was three years younger than myself').

³⁴ He wrote that he was out of the realm of his mother, but it is then interesting that in the account of his childhood and youth, up to the time that he enlisted in the militia, he mentioned her almost as often as he mentioned him. See p. xxxii, below.

³⁵ See p. xxxii, below.

But once settled as an adult in Quainton, after demobilization, his relations with his brothers occupy much of the text, with one brother always cast among the circle of adversaries. While William lived, their relations were ever-strained, with the youngest brother, Thomas, depicted as Joseph's ally. On William's death, Thomas appears to have had the adversarial role thrust upon him. I finally developed some sympathy for William. Joseph was jolted into a kinder recollection, following William's death, but that passage strongly contrasts with his recital of the grievances of the past. Mayett resolved this contrast by coming to blame everything on William's wife, but that was not what aroused my sympathy. Perhaps I read too much into William's marking, not signing, the register as witness to Joseph and Sarah's marriage. But if he was unable to write, his refusal to keep an account book when deacon of the Quainton Baptist Church, which Joseph attributed to William's malfeasance, may have been attributable instead to William's inability to keep accounts. It is easy to imagine that William would not wish to offer illiteracy as an excuse, however, under the circumstances. It can hardly have been easy for him, after thirteen years, as the elder, resident Mayett son and stalwart of the Baptist congregation at Waddesdon Hill, when the literate, prodigal, older brother returned. Joseph, furthermore, helpfully added to his account a dream of himself, when in the militia, as the Prodigal Returned. In any case, Joseph appears in his own account as a difficult person, a prickly introvert.

A Difficult Life

Mayett had a hard life. The autobiography traces a path of intergenerational decline, and of decline in material circumstances over much of his own lifetime. His father, 'poor but I trust honest', worked in steady employment as a day-labourer for a single employer, and brought up ten children 'without any assistance from the parish'.³⁶ Joseph, his eldest surviving

³⁶ Of whom no more than four lived at the same time, but that is due to infant mortality as much as poverty. Following the naming convention of the day,

son, had the misfortune to be born to suffer the worst times for agricultural labourers in either of the centuries that bracketed his birth. By the time he had reached the age of his father at his own birth, he had no children, but had often to throw himself on the overseer for work, and was left unemployed when he refused to work for two extra hours a day for no more weekly pay. Real wages in agriculture were eroded in the later eighteenth century by population growth (not all fathers saw only three out of ten children survive to adulthood), competition for jobs, and inflation.

During the Napoleonic Wars, when prices were forced up by the disruption of international trade, demands for food, and several bad harvests, shortages of labour temporarily secured better real wages in agriculture, except for the years of deficient harvests.³⁷ But by 1803 Mayett was in the militia, hit by high food prices, and not benefiting from the higher wages. And when the wars ended, market conditions reversed in the non-industrializing south, with the consequences, for the rest of Mayett's life, of uncertain employment at eroded wages.

The decline in circumstances did not manifest itself at the outset of his life. His first years were spent in occupations not much different from those of previous generations of day-labourers' children. He entered farm service as so many had done before, finding there the kindnesses and cruelties, the mobility and living conditions that servants in husbandry had found for centuries. He moved from master to master more often than the average servant, but I suspect the cause was in part his sharp tongue and difficult nature.

Joseph and Thomas Mayett had been immediately preceded, in birth order, by Joseph, baptized 15 February 1782 and dead a month later, and Thomas, baptized 23 November 1788, buried three days later. Too often the practice is interpreted as signalling a lack of affection of parents for children, as in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage* (London, 1977), p. 409; see Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983) for a sharply contrasting interpretation. For a presentation of recent discoveries concerning infant mortality see E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, 'English Population History from Family Reconstitutions: Summary Results 1600-1799', *Population Studies*, xxxvii (1983), pp. 176-78.

³⁷ Glenn Hueckel, 'War and the British Economy, 1793-1815. A General Equilibrium Analysis', *Explorations in Economic History*, x (1973), pp. 365-96; Clive Elmsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London, 1979).

Contingency intruded in 1800/01; he left, by mutual consent, his Roman Catholic master in Godington, Oxfordshire, in November, leaving open the question of why he had departed. Did the farmer regret having contracted to keep him in board, in that disastrous harvest year? Had the farmer been persuaded not to give a legal settlement to the outsider?³⁸ Had Mayett sounded off on Roman Catholicism? Whatever the reason, Mayett was then reduced to a diet of barley bread and cow-peas and had to go to the parish overseer of the poor for work. The times were still with Mayett, though. Farmers needed labour, and a goodly proportion of the labour force was in uniform. Mayett fought his way back to board and lodging with the Blackthorn gambit, and again the next year found a mid-year service after his mistress had dismissed him, threatening to 'blacken his character so that he should not get another job within 5 miles'. But within a year, he had enlisted in the militia.

His first seven years in the militia take up more words per annum than any other. There he found little escape from the times: his pay was low, and prices high. In addition, he suffered miseries more specific to the militia: petty corruption (double-charging for his new gaiters, withholding of pay), concentrated exposure to a variety of diseases, and the imprisonment of enlistment for the duration of the conflict. The only escape open to him was enlistment in the Army, the several strong 'volunteerings into the line', which Mayett, with increasing doggedness, resisted. His life was relieved only by occasional kindnesses, and breaks in routine. He joined the harvest force in Kent in 1804, able then briefly to earn the temporarily high wages available in agriculture.

³⁸ One year's service erased the previous legal settlement, and its attendant eligibility for parish relief. Mayett's last year in service was spent in Ludgershall, in 1799-1800. Whether to take this as evidence of slack enforcement or of a fifty-one week, settlement-denying hiring that year, is not determinable. If his right to parish relief is attributable to his having been born in Quainton, with the rest of his family still resident there, the technical illegality of his settlement (it is doubtful that he paid parish rates, or held parish office (unless being hayward counted), the other routes open to establishing a new settlement) suggests a certain power of servants, to settle either in their home parish or in that in which they served their last year. Mayett mentioned no fifty-one week hirings, nor examinations by J.P.s questioning his settlement in Quainton.

Fellow soldiers encouraged him in his reading and writing, and he was several times employed as a servant to officers in the regiment, which earned him better food (and in one case, the run of his master's library).³⁹

His hopes for an end to these trials were raised by the apparent victory over Napoleon and the end of the war with the United States, in 1814, only to be deflated when he received the posting to Portsmouth and further misery, when harassed by the 'Bigot to religion' who forbade Nonconformist services. Religion had been no constant relief to Mayett in the militia; in his agenda, the years were more a time of continued folly, providential rescues, and trials. In his last year in uniform he had been able to save most of his wages, and in one of the strongest passages of the autobiography he stopped to reflect on the twinned poles of acquisition and poverty. Savings led to covetousness, but as the rest of his life was to teach him, 'without money there is no peace'. He returned to Quainton in buoyant spirits. He was home, he had found employment, and he capped his joy by joining the Baptist church at Waddesdon Hill. It was not only religion that 'seemed to go in its silver slippers', so briefly. The first cold wind blew in with autumn, at the end of the year's agricultural work. He was unemployed, and judged ineligible for parish work, since the Army was still recruiting (and thus open to him).

He was thereafter caught in the trap of poor and uncertain wages, even when healthy. He worked for at least ten employers between 1815 and 1828, and had periods of unemployment occasionally relieved by odd jobs, including one selling yeast, when he was recovering from the gangrenous hand caused by a cut while reaping.⁴⁰ He was swept from one material crisis to the next, such as the loss of possessions involved in the sale of the bell-metal pot. The rent crisis he

³⁹ Like so many bright prisoners, he used the opportunity to read up on military law.

⁴⁰ In addition to the ten certain hirings and odd jobs, at least two harvest months, mentioned in connection with illness and injury, were spent in Alderbury, Hertfordshire; Quainton had by then gone over to dairying.

faced in 1820 is instructive: he was forced at the death of his landlord to leave his old cottage, which he had rented at £2 12s. per annum, for another cottage, at £4 6s. 8d., and worse still he was then to have to pay his rent monthly. His distress is a certain token of his well-shaken expectations for constant employment. The promised subscription to the Baptist Church further strained him, both because of his straitened circumstances and the opprobrium brought upon him through non-payment. None of this would have been easy to bear, in good health. Illness strained him further. When his wife was ill, for example, he had to find money to hire someone to look after her. The poor rates provided very inadequate relief, and precious reserves of energy were needed to prise the funds from the overseers.⁴¹ The Box Club comes out best in the story of assistance.

The autobiography is, finally, swamped by a pervading sadness. The most touching section, twinned with the dream of salvation in the wheat field, surrounds the death of his mother. This is followed in quick succession by his own illness (after the previous harvest in Alderbury), his wife's illness, and his further weakening (catching cold standing outside in late December hoping for work from the overseer), so that when his mother approached death, his brother Thomas thought not to bother Joseph. Mayett wrote simply 'and I did not see her again'.

Was religion a consolation to Mayett? He had an abiding interest in the administration of the church, and was absorbed in reflections on salvation. But his attachment to the church also left him distressed over paying the subscription, and tied him again to the thick thread of contingency. There is an ideal rhythm of a tale of folly, trials, and salvation, as in that of his exemplar, Bunyan, although the latter is not one of inexorable decline. Christian at last reached the Land of Beulah, in sight of the Heavenly City, and the last trial in the River, Death, only strengthens the ecstatic level finally

⁴¹ Mayetts (his mother, his wife, himself, Thomas) appear with great frequency in the long lists of those who lined up to receive poor relief, each week. See the thick Overseer's Account Book for 1827-31 (BRO, PR 169/12/11).

attained in Bunyan's narrative. But when the thread of contingency is pulled from Mayett's account, the hopeful structure of his own narrative is left lying in pieces, and one senses that this intelligent, difficult man knew that when he put down his pen.

TABLE

*Word Usage, including alternate forms
(God and Lord, die and death, etc., plurals and possessives)*

use per 1000 words

	start to enlistment 1803	militia, to July 1808	militia, July 1808 to demob	demob to July 1823	July 1823 to end
(words per annum)	(518)	(1271)	(652)	(701)	(1088)
mother	1.8	1.1	.4	.3	1.1
father	2.4	.9	.2	.5	.7
brother	.1	.5	.2	5.9	4.0
wife	.1	.3	.4	5.2	2.9
God	1.7	2.6	2.6	2.3	5.0
devil	.9	1.2	.4	.2	.1
religion	.7	.5	.9	.8	.3
church	1.3	1.3	0.0	6.4	5.2
sin	1.3	1.1	.4	.8	1.0
illness	.5	.3	.6	.3	1.4
death	.4	.6	.6	.3	1.2
went	4.4	4.5	1.7	1.6	3.2
being	4.0	4.2	4.1	2.6	2.2

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH MAYETT

- 1 I Joseph Mayett was Born in the Parish of Quainton in the vale of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire of poor but I trust of honest and Religious parents my Father had been the husband of one wife before my mother and by both the father of ten Children but four was the most that ever was living at one time I was the fourth Child born the Second of mother and was born on the 12th day of March in the year 1783¹ from that day until the 12th day of March in the year 1790 Six more Children were born my father was a labourer and worked for Six Shillings per week in the winter and nine in the Summer without any assistance from the Parish till I was nine years of age by this I was deprived of a liberal Education for instead of being Sent to School I was Set to Lace making to provide something toward a livelihood through the narrowness of our Circumstances however notwithstanding this my mother being able to read and write a little though in some instances hardly legible yet She taught me to read at a very early age I cannot Remember learning the Alphabet but when I was four years of age or there about my Godmother presented me with a new book it was the
- 2 reading made easy² it had many pictures in it which I Remember I was much delighted with

this taking my attention there was nothing suited so well as my book and by this means I was soon able to read it without

¹ Joseph, 'child of Joseph Mayiott by Mary his wife', was baptized in the parish church of Quainton on 6 April 1783. He was their second 'Joseph'; the first was baptized in February 1782, and buried a month later. His younger brother Thomas was also to take the name of the dead brother who immediately preceded him (BRO PR 169/1/5).

² In *The Reading Made Easy in a Variety of Useful Lessons*, 4th edn (Berwick, 1835), the alphabet is introduced with paired couplets ('E was an Esquire, with pride on his brow', 'O was an Oysterwench, and a sad scold') and woodcut illustrations; lessons of words of two letters, then three, four, and five follow, and the short volume ends with seven Divine Songs. The first of these concludes: 'Then will I read and pray,/ While I have life and breath;/ Lest I should be cut off to-day/ And sent to endless death'.

Spelling this being the Case my Godmother sone provided me a testament but my mother not being able to Read the first Chapter of St Mathews gospel I began the Second and read it through as well as she could teach me and then I began it again and Read through the 4 gospels and by this time I begun to enquire into the meaning of that which I Read and my mother taught me Something of the meaning thereof as far as she knew and I was somewhat affected with the sufferings of Christ because I thought it was great Cruelty but I knew nothing of the Cause thereof after this I took a fancy to Read the Bible and began the first Chapter of Genesis but I did not those Chapters with hard names but when I Came to the history of Joseph and his Brethern I was very much affected with their Cruelty towards him but this was all nothing more than natural affection for I knew nothing of the Spiritual meaning of it

- 3 during this time I spent but little of my time in play for the people that Came to my house at times would Call me a good boy/and sometimes give me a halfpenny which induced me to persevere for I loved praise better than play but when I was about 7 years of age I was set to lace making which took up a great deal of my time but I Spent all the time I had at my book but I made very little progress in Learning untill the year 1794 only my mother borrowed the pilgrims progress and Doctor watts hymns for me and told me the meaning of them as well as she Could which kept me from going back but I Could not advance because I had no one to teach me in the year 1794 there was a Sunday School Set up in the town to which I was Sent and the master being a tolerable good scholar for that age I made some progress the first twelve months in Learning hard names and I sone became the first boy in the School but my master being taken ill was obliged to give up the School and I was turned over to another School master but I made but little progress for I never Learned the points and stops the accents nor emphatical words only I Could Read without Spelling neither did I learn any of these untill I was 23 years of age³

³ See below, May 1806 (p. 37), for Mayett's tuition in the militia.

in the year 1795 I narrowly escaped the jaws of death
one Saturday night my mother Sent me into the town for
errands and as I was Returning home again by the town pond
4 by some/means I lost my Reason in a great measure but how
I do not know but the Causeway being broken down I [fell]
down on the pond I suppose it to be a fit of some kind for I
received no hurt nor bruise from the fall though the pond was
frozen very hard and thus by the mercy of God my life was
preserved for if I had fallen a few yards backward from where
I did fall I should have fallen where the Ice was Broken for
the cattle to drink but God who is ever mindful of his
Creatures preserved my life from the hand of the destroyer
this was the first time as I Remember my life being in
danger through accident but at this time I knew nothing of
that hand that Saved me

in about two months after this I was sent out to work for the
Master that my father worked for I was now out of the
Jurisdiction of my mother and not always with my father and
being in the Company of those who practized Swearing and
all other ill habits Common to men in a Carnal state and not
being always under the eye of my father I Sone learned to
swear but I kept a strict guard over my tongue when I was in
my fathers presence neither do I Remember that ever I swore
an oth in the presence of my parents in my life

5 after the Summer was ended I left that place and was Sent
to another in the parish/where I had a good place I had a
good master and a good mistress they were very good to me in
temporal things but they were Carnal people and knew
nothing of Religion so I was not under much restraint from
them my master would Somtimes give me a Stripe for
Swearing and my mistress often Reproved me for it and there
was a young woman which was a Relation to my master and
mistress and she would often Reprove me and tell me I was
the ugliest fellow for Swearing She ever Saw in her life and
would threaten to tell mother but I used to think though I
did wrong in Swearing and well knew it that She was no
better than myself for although She did not Sweare She would
Sing Songs which I thought was no better though I knew it

was not quite so hateful in the Sight of man for I had been taught that Singing was a sin unless it was psalms or hymns and here I hid as I thought my own sins by Considering others as bad as myself and thus I went on untill the autumn of 1796 when my master left his farm and I went to another master to work and here I was under no kind of Restraint whatever So that I gave up myself entirely to vice and folly as far as my age and knowledge would admit at that time of life

- 6 when I was about Six years of age my father had his house licenced for the Methodist to preach in it which for many years was a great eyesore to the inhabitants of the Parish particularly the Parson for he Set all the Rable of the town to persecute them which they did to the truth untill they laid hold of some of them and followed the law on them and made them Smart for it this stoped their action but it did not still their tongues and when I was old enough to go to work they laughed at me and Called me a methodist and a tubthumper and every thing they Could devise on purpose to vex me and Set me to Swearing which they easely done for I had no more love for Religion than they and thought that if I Swore as well as they they would not say anything to me about it and this was the principle Reason why I adicted myself So much to Swearing but in all this the Lord had a watchful eye over me for although he permitted [me] to do this and sin against him in Such a disgraceful manner yet he provided a hard place of labour for me which prevented me from takeing to pastime and pleasure as many of the youth did and are Commonly Subject to at the age as I/was at then

7 and thus I went on untell the autumn of 1797 at which time I went to service at the same place where my father worked here I was a little Restrained but not Cured my master was much in the habit of getting Drunk and then he would beat me with out a cause but not so much as he did the other boys that were there because he Rather feared my father for he was his right hand and he Could not very well do with out him at that time but in the month of march 1798 my father and mother were both taken ill and at that time

- master was often out and mistress sent me after him at night to see him safe home from the Neighbouring vilage alehouses Round about and when he got me home he always beat me with his walking Stick and this he did four or five times I do not exactly Remember wether it was four or five but I am sure it was four and all in one week of this I began to grow Sick and the workmen on the farm perswaded me not to go after him after eight oclock in the evening I took their advice and on the monday following he went to waddsdon to hire another boy and staid at alehouse till midnight my mistress ordered me to go after him but I told her I would not
- 8 go unless She would give/me Sixpence for I thought it was worth Sixpence to have a hiding and if he was determined to give it me I was determined She Should pay for it for this She Called me a saucy fellow and said she would tell my master which she accordingly did when he came home about midnight he being drunk as usal Came upstairs and I being asleep he pulled me out of bed and swore he would turn me out of doors naked but I told him I would not go out naked and laying hold of a working tool that was in the Room I Swore if he touched me again I would beat his brains out which I believe I Should have done but he left me so I dressed myself and went down stairs and as I went through the house he forbid me of the ground and I went home to my father and told him but he being so ill he perswaded me to go back in the morning and ask him for my mony and Cloths and if he Refused to give me them to tell him that if he would not pay me for my time or take me in again as Sone as he was able he would make him Smart for it which I did and at this he was afraid and so he took me in again but I lost my Jobb of going after him for my mistress never asked me to go any more nor never Spoke to me no more for Six weeks
- 9 at this time I had three fellow servants and one of them was an old man the other two about my own age the old man and one of the young ones was Rather given to drinking pride and pleasure taking and in the Spring of the year would go to the public house on a Sunday evening this being one of the devils Stratagems to promote vice and dishonour the Saviour

he sone prompt his agents to draw me into that snare but his scheem did not altogether take in this point for I had no money and though they in the first instance would treat me Rather than neglect their masters business yet finding that I had no money and my friends would find me none for such a purpose they sone grew sick of finding money to treat me with and on the last Sabath evening that I went after I Came away from the public house as I was going by the town pond seeing some other boys walking along the tops of the Rails I thought I could do it as well as they so I mounted the rails but having had Rather to much beer to try such an experiment I sone fell off the rails into the pond but the water being low as I fell I Caught hold on a bunch of grass that grew by the side of the pond and so escaped all injury only wetted one arm but having such a narrow escape my Conscience told me I had done wrong and my friends reproved me for my misconduct/and my own conscience Cooperating therewith I left the public house on a Sabath day and thus through the Mercy of God the Devils design was frustrated and I was prevented from following at the present time

nothing Remarkable no more took place before the nex michalmass only I still continued my practice of Swearing and prodigality and dureing this year I seldom Read a Single Chap^r in the word of God but I did not forget that which I had already Learned but when my parents Reproved me for my misconduct I used to tell them that I Should Repent when Gods time was for if I was Elected I should be saved and if not it was of no use for me to try for I should be lost live how I would but I knew no more about Election than a Crow and therefore I humbly beg that no person that proffesses Religion will ever take a pattern by my Example for it is a very spurious Beliefe

there was nothing more as I Remember that was Remarkable took place before Michealmass in the year 1798 when I lift my place on the 11th of october and on the 12th I went to Aylesbury fair and my father with me and there I was hired servant to another master in our own Parish at a lone farmhouse where there was only one servant man besids

11 myself and he was a Methodist and I believe a good/man and a Christian and was hired my father Requested that my master would employ [me] in the garden in the spring of the year after I had done my other work while other servants had their liberty to go to Cricket playing and other pastimes this did not very well suite old father Adam I mean my Carnal nature but I was obliged to submit to it This did [not] much trouble me for I thought as it was but for one year it would sone ware away and I Should have the reins of govermt in my own hands and I thought I would take Care for the time to Come. The next day I went to my place and a very good place I had

the following winter proved very severe in the month of January 1799 there fell a very deep snow and dureing this year it was my place to Cary the butter on every wednesday and Satuday for which purpose I was alowed a horse untell the snow fell which was blown up so much at the gates that we Could not get them open so I was obliged to cary the butter on my back and one day as I was going with it when I Came to a narrow burge over which I had to pass the snow being blown up over the top of the burge so that I Could not see it and passing as I thought over the burge I missed it and sunk into the snow where I might at some times in the day

12 have been froze to death but through the/Mercy of him who never slumbers nor sleeps but always keeps a watchfull eye over all his people my life was mercifully saved for the shepard of the farm was near at hand and saw me fall and ran to my Reliefe and so I escaped without any injury My fellow servant used sometimes reprove me for swearing and this would sometimes have a little efect upon my mind but it sone wore off again

during this winter I practised Rather more than I had done before for the last two years for my master used to Read himself and make all as Could in the family on a Sabath evening and sometimes we were permitted to read Books of a religous nature as we sat by the fire side in the week day evenings but not always in the Spring of the year this was laid aside and I was set to gardening according to my

agreement and thus I passed this year till michalmass without anything more very Remarkable only my mistress would Compell me to go to Church or meeting one or the other which I plased

when Michaelmas Came I left my place and on the 12th of october I went to Aylesbury fair where I was sone hired to go to Wingrave in Bucks to live this being on Saturday I was obliged to go on Sunday when another Servant met me the same evening and another Came on Monday night the master was like a madman the first word in a morning was an oath every morning while I was there but
 13 that/was not long for we all run away together on wednesday morning and left him the same day I set myself to another master at a lone house Called Sharps Hill in the Parish of Ludgurshall [Ludgershall] Bucks here I had a very good place all the year for during the winter there was no other Servant beside myself and the girl till the spring of the year when my master hired my Brother that was three years younger than myself⁴ So that I had nobody to interfear with me beside my master and mistress and they were both very good to me for I had lived the year before in Close Confinement and now I did not desire to go from home and this suited my master and mistress both very well for the house being alone by the Road side and many loose fellows passing and Repassing so that my mistress was much plased with my stoping at home and would often give me a pint of ale my master also was very well pleased with it he also was a good Scholar and took great pains to teach me in reading and here I made a Considerable progress in reading for although I had heedlessly neglected learning yet I had not lost my taste for it nor forgot the importance of it

during the winter I milked eight Cows at a Cowhouse by myself which was Called gosstelows-ground and in the spring of the year I had a very Remarkable Dream which afrighted me I thought as I was agoing to my Cowhouse early in
 14 the morning to milking when I was in the/next ground to the

⁴ William, son of Obadiah Marriott by Mary, was baptized on 20 April 1786 (BRO PR 169/1/5). See below, p. 12, for 'Obe' as the family nickname.

Cowhouse the Devil Came and being in the shape of a man he took me and Caried me to Hell which I thought was in this gosstelows aforementioned the surface of which appeared to me to be all over black like small Coals and all on fire underneath and a little smoake issued out of the top in places here I thought he took a iron shovel and diged a hole in the fire which appeared to me all red Coals of fire he held me round the middle with his left arm while he made the hole with his right and just as he was going to put me into the fire there Came a man all in white flying through the air to my assistance and Caught hold of my hair on the Crown of my head and snatched me out from under his arm and flew away with me and set me in the place where the devil took me from but neither of them spake to me a single word here I awaked and was much affighted at such a dreadful scenery

this had some weight upon my mind for a few days and I began to be very good as I thought but this being done in my own strength my Repentance sone became like the goodness of Ephraim and Juda which was as the morning Cloud and as the early dew which sone passed away hosea the 13th and 3^d verse⁵ for instead of softening my hard heart at this time it only Confirmed me in that wretched principle which I was still the subject of at that time namely if I were Elected I should be saved and I vainly/thought at that time that my
15 being delivered in that way was an Evedence of my Election

so I went on in my old way of sin and iniquity though at some times my Conscience would upbraide me and tell me that this was not the way to prove my Election and I well knew that I was doing wrong yet the lust of the eye the lust of the flesh and the pride of life was more than a Counter balance for my Repentance and thus the Convictions of my Conscience were stifled because that vital principle of faith that works by love and purifies the heart and leads to God was wanting in my soul and thus I went on serveing my old master

nothing more Remarkable transpired dureing this year till

⁵ And 'as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney'.

michaelmas when I left my place on the 11th of October 1800 on the Friday following I went to Beicester [Bicester] fair and was hired to go to live with Mr Thomas Tompkins at Godington oxon this new master was a Roman Catholick but my mistress and her neice who at that time lived with them were protestants but I knew nothing of this untill I Came to my place neither did it make any difference to me for I was not Required to go to Mass with him only I had to get his horse ready on Sunday morning to go to tuzmere [Tusmore, Oxon] Before I went to Church and wait at home to take and Clean it when he Came home in the afternoon⁶ I did not very well like my master for he was a very odd man but my mistress and her neice was both very good to me/

16 but I was not troubled with master long for when I had been there just a month he came to me in the stable on the Sunday morning and told me he thought I should not suit him and paid me for my time and told me to take my Cloths and go but he never told me the reason nor he and I never disagreed

so I Came away and went to the overseer for work and he sent me one week to a master in the parish to work and gave me eight pence per day and the next week he sent me to another master at the same price or wages this was the firs time that the Cares of the world laid hold on me and now I began to wonder what I should do for Bread was almost all that year untill near the next harvest at three shillings and eightpence the half peck loaf and I worked for four shillings per week but I had no eye to the goodness and mercy of God and so I began to be in trouble about my body but thought nothing about my soul However in this Case the Lord sone provided for me for on the Sunday morning after I had been there one week my [master] sent his son to tell me to Come to him again and he would pay me himself accordingly I went and when the next week was ended he advanced my wages sixpence per week in money and often gave me my dinner when I went out with the team as this was

⁶ Tusmore, 5m. N. of Bicester, was a local centre of Roman Catholicism (*VCH* Oxfordshire, vi (1959), p. 338).

- 17 the Reason why he had me because the Carter was an old /
[No 2] man and not able to perform his office in every point
and I being young and strong he engaged with me by the
week to milk night and morning and go with the team which I
did for the space of eleven weeks

during this time through the dearness of provision I was
obliged to live cheifly on barley bread and hog peas except
when my master gave me my dinner when I went out with the
team this I was not very fond of but it being winter and
provisions dear and many servants out of place I could not
extracate myself from it but in about a month or five weeks
after Christmass in the begining of the year 1801 I found my
master entended to keep me on but in Consequence of the
dearness of provision he would not hire me servant so long as
he could have me at four shillings and sixpence per week

- this Caused me to begin to devise a scheem to get him to
hire me and this I sone accomplished as I did not milk on
Sundays I had my liberty to go where I pleased on a sunday
and now I began to be a little political at this time I knew
there was a large farmer at Blackthorn oxon whose name was
Garner who lived there but I knew him not nor nothing about
him but this thought struck my mind at this time that if I beat
out after a place and my master heard of it he would sone hire
18 me or I should get a place somewhere else/ however I
had devised the following Scheem in my mind to go to
Blackthorn to this mr Garner and to tell him I had heard he
wanted [a] servant although this was faulse for I had heard
no such thing only I used this as a Cloak to deceive others for
my pride was such that Could not bear the thought of beging
myself in anywhere although my Scheem was no better in
Reality for that was the soal ground of my Scheem
however I broke my mind to my father and he agreed to my
plan and on the Saturday I told the head Cowman my design
and Requested him to tell my master on Sunday while I was
gone and so on Sunday morning I went to Blackthorn
and enquired for mr Garners house which I sone found but he
being gone to Church I was forced to stop untill he Came
home when he Came to me I told him my business

he said he wanted a servant girl and he told me mr King wanted a man to shephard but that was of no service to me for I knew nothing about that business however I Returned with this Resolution that if my master did not hire me in the Course of the week I would take the same steps the next Sunday only to another place but I had not the opportunity for while I was gone to Blackthorn the head cowman said to the master I wonder wether Joe will get hired today or not the master hearing this enquired to know where I was gone he told him I was gone after a place at
 19 Blackthorn my master hearing this began to think if he had me he must hire me or eles he should loose me for work was Just Coming in at [that] time so on monday when I was at plough he Came to me and said well obe (this name was the Christen name of my grandfather and many people used to Call both me and my father Joe obe and my master thought it had been my name) so he said well obe did you get hired yesterday I told [him] no to which he Replied if you wish to go to service you may as well set yourself to me this was just what I wanted to hear and on the thursday following he hired me and the next morning I went.

during this time of my being out of place I [had] a tolerable steady life as I lived hard and was more minutely under the eye of my parents for although I was grown to the stature a man did not fear corection at their hands yet I knew it would displease them and I had the power within myself to Refrain from swearing when I pleased for it could not be a work of grace else it would have been perminant and I should not have Returned again as the dog to his vomit or as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire but I was like a Tyger tamed with hungar for no soner than I was better fed and got out of the Company of my friends I Returned to my old Course of sin again and was worse than ever for I gave up myself to all manner of folly and prodigality for I Cohabitted with the aforesaid head Cowman and thought that he was the wisest man I had ever met with though as I found afterwards
 20 he was the/biggest fool.

and thus I went on untill the latter end of may 1801 when I

was taken ill for about a fortnight this rather Calmed my madness for a little time but as I grew better in health I grew worse in behaviour for about this time there was a man by the name of mr John Davis a baptist Minister made an aplication to father for the liberty to preach in his house that being licenced before for the methodist my mother gave me an information of the [?] and to me that she had given leafe for him to Come and preach there but she would have nothing to do with dipping for at that time both my father and mother though as I trust they loved gospel as far as they understood it yet through ignorance they were strenious opposers to Baptism by immersion to this I said little but let the matter rest for thought I was not obliged to be there and therefore I did not trouble myself about it But they had not Come long before baptism was introduced to my mother and she Being a very illiterate woman She was easely perswaded as She has told me many years Since that she thought that if She was baptized according to the Command of Christ and Joined to the people of God She should be saved and I do not wonder at it for this minister was a strenious advocate for Election and she poor woman like many more as I have known since thought that Baptism was a proof of her Election and thereby she thought she should be saved but the

21 Lord was pleased to open her eyes/and shew her better about 15 years afterwards this she told me herself since I have Been a member myself

but to Return to my subject my father was not so easely perswaded for he was a man of more Consideration and searched the scripture for himself and when he was Convinced that it was right my mother informed me of the matter at which I began to persecute them and told her that they had been Christened once and I thought that was sufficient and I told her I thought they had ways anow for their money giving it to them she presently told me that there was nothing to give but this I did not easely believe for I told her that I did not like to work for nothing neither would I believe that other people would but however I was sone Convinced of this for I found out that the minister had a donation and this

Removed my scruples on this ground but still I was against it and every time I saw her I was att her about it she would sometimes reprove me and sometimes perswade me telling as well as [she] Could the danger of liveing such an ungodly life to which I many times replied I shall Repent when Gods time is but I Confess and I hope with shame of face and horror of heart that I was too much like many others I did not Care wether his time would ever Come or not although I Confess I had sometimes some very sharp Checks of Conscience which would at times make me tremble but these
 22 were too terrefic for me to bear in my own/strength and not haveing any will to Change my Course of life but rather to persue it I done all that lay in my power to stifle the Convictions of Conscience and to persue my old course of life again at this time there was a poor man who worked for my master as a labourer who used often try to perswade me to Change my Course of life and tell me that such Conduct and prodigality would do me no good and my master would sometimes say ah obe you will know better one day or other but I was like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear I would not listen to the voice of Charmers though Charming never so wisely⁷.

and thus I went on from bad to worse untill almost every body that knew me Cried out Shame upon me for there was hardly any mischief done in the place but I had a hand in one Sunday evening I set off down to the town where I met with a girl that had worked for my master in the haytime and stayed with her untill nearly midnight when I left her in order to return home but meeting with two more of my Companions in vice we presently agreed to go and rob a pear tree and on the thursday evening following to meet again to Rob another and away we went to the tree but when we Came there we agreed that one should Climb the tree and gather and the other two should watch and if any body Came the watch were to whistle and make their escape when all was settled there was only me that Could Climb the tree so I

⁷ Psalms 58:4.

- 23 assended the tree/and gathered them in my shirt bosom I had filled it twice and emptied them and assended the tree the third time when my fellow-servant pass^d by and as I sat in the tree I knew him the other saw him but knew him not so they gave a whistle and ran away and left me all the pears which I Caried home and had them myself⁸

on the thursday evening following according to our appointment to the place which we were to meet at for the purpose of robing the other pear tree which was at my fathers house this was the night on which the mr Davis Came there to preach this we done to hide our wickedness but there was but one of the other that Came so there was but two of us to efect our design after the service was ended away we went and about midnight we made the attempt and when we had gathered about a bushel two men Came into the orchard on the same footing and we not knowing their intent nor who they were we ran away and left our booty to them which saved them the trouble of gathering the other man left his hat behind but I had one so much like it that but few people Could disern the difference which I gave him so the Crime was not discovered but this made me begin to tremble and Resolved to give out theiving for I thought that though I had escaped Justice that time if I still practized it would harden me more in it and bring me to the gallows at last so I gave it up altogether

- 24 at this time I was in the nineteenth year of my age and grown to the stature of a man but I had grown faster in manhood than I had in wisdom for at this time I was of a very passionate temper and had wholely given up myself to folly and vice for on the 13th of September it being on a Sunday morning as I was milking my last Cow She did not Stand Just to my mind so I fell in a passion swore an oath and struck her on the first rib with the milking stool and Broke the rib the poor dumb Creature fell on her knees and belowed out

⁸ Saint Augustine's more famous theft of pears smacks more of pure vandalism – the fruit was shaken down 'simply to throw them to the pigs'. See *Saint Augustine's Confessions*, tr. and intro. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, 1961), p. 47.

which struck me with horror of heart to think I Should be so Cruel for her falling down and bellowing seemed to me as though she Cried for mercy and the Cruelty affected [me] more than the sin for I thought nothing of the sin against God and the law I was not afraid of because no person saw me do it at night She was very lame but She was near the Cowhouse when I went home at night I told my master and the next day he went to See her but he never found out that her rib was broken for on tuesday morning She was very thin and Could not get about after her meat so on tuesday morning after I had milked her I thought I would try if I could pull the rib up in its place again and it being the first rib I Could lay hold on it so I tried and as soon as I pulled the rib it Came up in its place again so I let her out very Carefull and at night she was much altered for the best and Soon got well again

- 25 on the thursday evening following I went to my fathers to the meeting with an intention to stay out all night with a person that was not of a very good Character so I went to the meeting in order to pass away the time untill it Should be Convenient to put my design into practice but after the sermon the minister gave out the 355 hymn in Rippons Selection and when he Came to the 6th verse — I Can but Perish if I go. I am Resol'd to try. for if I stay away I know. I must for ever die.⁹ these words powerfully arrested me and wraught so upon my mind that instead of prosecuting my design I went home and these words was followed up by the following in westleys hymns. ah know I still may turn and live. for still his wrath delays. he now vouchsafes a kind reprieve. and offers me his grace,

at this time I began to Consider the many mercies the Lord had favoured me with and among these I thought it was a great mercy from him that he had so quick healed the poor Cow which I had so lately abused and I was so much

⁹ The hymn begins 'Come humble sinner, in whose breast/A thousand thoughts revolve,/Come, with your guilt and fear opprest,/And make this last resolve': John Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors Including a Great Number of Originals: Intended to be an Appendix to Dr. Watt's Psalms and Hymns*, 13th edn (London, 1802).

impressed with his goodness toward me as it Respected temporal Blessings but alas I knew nothing of the wretchedness of my own heart nor of the nature of the love of God in sending his only begotten Son into the world to Save Sinners all I knew was that I was a sinner and that I was accountable to God for my misconduct and that I must obtain
 26 mercy from him or sink/into everlasting destruction at this I began to tremble and began to reform my life but alas I was too much like many others I took the pruning hook instead of the grubbing hoe I lopped off the outward branches but left the root however I was so far Convinced of the evil nature of sin that I began to hate it in part and so far that I would not Commit a sin if I knew it to be a sin I left off swearing and prodigality and took to reading my Bible and attending divine worship and in doing this I laid hold of some of the promises of the gospel and applied them to myself this elivated my mind and I thought I Could go through fire and water for the sake of the gospel neither did the persecution of the world affect me for my old Companions began to observe a moral Change in me and began to pour contempt upon me and upon Religion and would often tell me I thought myself much better than they and that I Should soon turn again and be worse than I was before and to my shame it proved so as will appear in the futer part of my life however it had little efect on me then for it being near Michealmass I was separated from them and I have never seen some of them since

in this Case I informed my father and mother of my feelings and Spent all my leisure time in their Company which pleased them much and they gave me all the Encouragement they Could but I was not Reconciled to Baptism by immersion and told my mother I did not believe it to be right
 27 / but this obstacle was soon removed out of the way for she pointed me to the acts of the apostles and which soon Convinced me of [the] nature of it as I was not at that time prejudiced against it but it was Something remarkable that about a week Before the time that my father and mother were to be baptized I was quite satisfied about the ordinance

so that I was no longer an instrument in the Devils hands to oppose it but he stired up my father to oppose it and although the[y] had Both given in their experience and were both accepted by the Church he declared that he would not go himself nor let her but the devils design was frusterated here also for on the Saturday night before the ordinance he was struct with a thought that he was wrong in what he had done and on Sunday the 4th of october 1801 he acknowledged he was wrong and they both set out to go to waddsdon hill and I went with them to see the ordinance and when they were I thought it seemed as though they were taken into heaven and I was shut out and in the afternoon of the ordinance of the Lords Supper I thought the same¹⁰

the next day my old Companions began to pour out all the Contempt upon me as the[y] Could devise and one of them that had formerly reproved me for my wickedness began to persecute me worse than the others but this I did not mind for I was like too many others I thought I was Certainly
 28 something better/than I was before here I thought I Could stand anything for the sake of the gospel and felt myself willing to suffer anything so that I Could but go to heaven at last and my zeal was such that I began to reprove others for their sin forgetting that passage in the 7th of Mathews gospel give not that which is holy unto the dogs neither ye your pearls before swine &c¹¹ I was so much diverted with my new Reformation that I feared nothing for I had forgot all my troubles and amongst the rest of my forgetings I had forgot to pray or rather never knew it for in all this I was a strainger to prayer

however on the 11th of october I left my place on the 12th I was hired again and on the 13th I went the house at which I was hired to go to live was near waddsdon hill and

¹⁰ The Church was a congregation of Particular (i.e. Calvinist) Baptists which had moved from Dinton Castle to Haddenham to Littleworth to Warmstone and then finally to Waddesdon Hill on 8 August 1792. See D.W. Lovegrove, 'The Baptist Church in Mid-Buckinghamshire' (n.p., 1967), p. 44. The original building, no longer maintained by the Baptist Church, still stands alone on its hill.

¹¹ 'Lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you'.

the mistress was a member of the Baptist Church there but she had not long joined it my master attended there also and here I had the opportunity of going to meeting every Sabbath day at this time there was no sermon suited me but those of an alarming nature for I wanted driving to heaven with a whip for I knew nothing of the attracting influences of the dying love of Christ and thus I went on easy for I had no persecution to encounter with from the world as I was very little among the people of the world the family wherein I lived being professors

- about this time I being about 19 years of age I formed a
- 29 Correspondence with a young woman a member/of the same Church with my mistress and Joined at the same time as she did this Correspondence my mistress found out in the month of Jan^y 1802 and was very much opposed to it because I was not a member of the Church but she not thinking proper to Reprove me herself She acquainted mr Davis the minister with the matter and on the next Sabath evening he Reproved me very sharply for my misconduct as he Called it before the greatest part of the Congregation but he never told me what I had done nor who his informer was this put me into a Consternation for I knew I had done nothing to disgrace my Character neither did I know that the Correspondence had been discovered my mistress said nothing to me about the matter only when I got home she Rather Jeered me and told me to begin again as there was plenty of room to mend but never informed me of the matter however the minister sent for the young woman and severely reproved her and threatened to set her aside from the ordinance and when I saw her again she informed me of all the whole of the matter and how my mistress had found it out by seting a watch for me and she had reported it to mr Davis the minister and by this means I found it out

- I not being altogether ignorant of the nature of things I began to think it was a spirit of persecution and began to retaliate upon her and to Charge her with being as bad as myself for I remembered that one Sunday not long before
- 30 mr Davis/had been at my masters house for dinner my

mistress sent me to the next farm house to borrow two pipes for my master and mr Davis to smoke after dinner and bid me to tell them if the[y] asked me who was there that I did not know which was a downright lie for I knew that she knew that I did know this greived me much for though I Could Stand the persecution of world I knew not how to stand it from such a quarter as those that proffessed to be the Children of God for I did not expect to find a party spirit among Christians in this Case I began to question wether there was any Reality in Religion or not

on this ground I and the young woman agreed mutaly to breake off the Correspondence between each other as there was nothing of a binding nature between us and after that She married a young man a member of the Church and there was nothing the matter but I did not spare to tell my mistress my mind about it but we did not agree together long for in about a month afterwards one Saturday night the servant girl told her that She heard me swear at one of daughters about 11 years of age which I was not guilty of for the words that I said to her go to Enley upon Thames but she stood me out of it to my face that I bid her go to hell and be d--n although the daughter Came forward and declared what I did say yet the mistress would not believe her for she did not know that we had broken off the Correspondence and she thought now she should do her work Complete but with all her zeal neither She nor her Servant Continued in the Church long on the
 31 next morning after this I lift/my place but in all this I was kept from passion sauce and abuse I only told them to provide themselves with another servant for I would stay no longer and away I Came that very morning so my mistresses designs were frusterated but she told me that if I would not stay there she would blast my Character so that I Should not get a place within 5 miles of the place but this did not disturb me in the least for I knew better but instead of my pitting her weakness I was weak enough to laugh at it and tho I saw no better then I trust I have seen the evil of it since

however I went home and as soon as I entered the place I met a man who told me that he had orders from his master to

send all the men he Could to him for work and he would give them 8 shillings per week accordingly I went and he engaged with me and I stayed with him 8 weeks untill the work was done up that was in hand during this time my fathers master a man that I had lived with before sent for me three times by my father but my father perswaded me not to go for he had beat me several times when I was a boy and he thought if he said anything to me then it might stir up old agrievances so I took my fathers advice and Refused it however at last he Came himself but as it was my fathers wish I declared off and parted in peace

nothing more particular happened during the 8 weeks I was at this place I went regular to waddsdon hill every Sunday and mr Davis Continued to preach at Quainton on a thursday evening so I was very Comfortable during this time at the end of which I met with another old master that I
32 had/lived with before who wanted a man to hoe some beans so I [?] them of him and the next monday morning I began them and on tuesday morning he Came to me asked me to Come and live with him again and we presently agreed and on wednesday morning I went my mistress being a very moral woman immediately told me she insisted on my going either to Church or meeting one or the other she did not Care which I told her it was my desire to go to the meeting so I had the liberty to go to the meeting at waddsdon hill every Sabath and on a thursday evening without Control

nothing very material transpired till July when one day the weather being rather wet and showerey but this day the weather Cheared off and it was fine and we had three loads of hay to Carey and as the weather looked dubious the master promised to give us a pint of beer each man extra if we would try and get it up before it rained and we told him we would try so to work we went but my fellow servant began to quarel with me but I said but little to him at last he Challenged to fight me this iritated my temper and I gave way to it instead Checking it however it ended without blows for he would neither fight not shake hands at which I fell in a passion and Said I would go for a Soldier but I did not think

of going when I said so but I set out up the hill and the rest of
 33 the people thought I had been gone/ but I only went to
 fetch my Cows for milking but when I was Coming with the
 Cows my masters son met me he was about 13 years of
 age and a strange boy to sweare and he began to sweare at me
 and said he thought I had been gone for a soldier but I was
 not that fool then he swore I was afraid of a red Coat
 signifying that I had not Spirit enough to be a soldier

this stung my pride and irritated me afresh and off I set to
 Buckingham but when I arrived there the recruiting party
 was gone out of town and it being peaceable times they would
 not enlist me in the militia but I met with a Serjant there that
 I knew belonging to the militia¹² he gave me a pint of
 beer and sent me back again I took his advice and
 Returned but I lost my way a Coming back and got very wet
 and was forced to lay in a hay feild all night wet as was but I
 Caught no Cold from this in the morining I got home in
 time to do my work and all was hushed into peace again

the next thing that transpired of any note was an
 extraordinary deliverance which happened on tuesday the 23
 of Sept in the year 1802 I was loading a load of hawm¹³
 in Quainton feild after taking up part of the load in one
 34 furlong we was obliged to go to another to make up our load
 and as we was going along the joint between the furlongs/to
 another land the Road was over ridge and furrow and the
 furrows very deep and I was kneeling between the fore
 Corners of my [load] to keep them from parting and I was
 about 9 or 10 feet from the ground and as the fore wheels of
 the waggon Came into one of the furrows not just upright the
 Corners of my load parted and I fell on my head just before
 the fore wheel and finding myself a falling I Cried woe as I fell
 and every horse stoped as dead as though he had been shot
 and if this had not been the Case it appears I must have been
 under the wheel but through the mercy of God I Received no
 injury only I was stunned for a short time through the

¹² The Treaty of Amiens had been signed three months earlier (27 March 1802).

¹³ Straw, most probably: 'hawm' is another form of 'haulm', stems or stalks (OED).

fall but after a short time I got up again and finished my load and drove it home thus I was mercifully preserved from the jaws of death

Nothing more of any note transpired before michealmass at which time I left my place and was hired again to go to live at Lenbrough in the parish of Buckingham here I had no means of grace to attend to but Buckingham Church this was a very fine place as I thought so the appearance of the place and the soldiers that attended there struck my attention more than the service it being peaceable times the staff of the militia lay there and being all Serjants and Corporals and musick men and all very Clean I was much delighted to see them and to hear the musick¹⁴ this was Congenial with
 35 my Carnal nature and a great opening/for Satan to draw me away from all thoughts about religion which he did not fail to do (here I would advise all young professors to observe the Sly insinuations of that deceiver of mankind) when he began with me he did not ask much at a time in the first instance he was satisfied with my taking a pleasure in seeing the soldiers and hearing the musick although this brought me to the Church yet he did not mind that so long as he Could divert my attention from what the minister said when he had accomplished this the next thing he asked was to be light and triffling in my discourse telling me I was far enough off from my friends and thos with whom I had formerly gone with to the house of God when he had gained this point the next thing he required was to sing a good war song telling me there Could be no harm in that and from that to a merry love song and from that to all the paltry and filthey songs that Could be devised

and thus he led me on till the month of Feb^y 1803 when they drawed the militia on the Sunday after the draught I went home to fetch my Clean shirts and stockings but when I Came home my mother was gone to waddsdon hill and had

¹⁴ One can glimpse the colours of the uniforms, if not grasp the cleanliness of the soldiers, in the sketchbook of the uniforms of the Royal Bucks Militia current in 1793 (BL Stowe MS 488). Five of the eleven pictures are of music men, including gold-coated drum major, red-coated musicians and drummers, and gold-coated, long-trousered, tassell-red-booted and turbaned cymbalist.

the key of the Chest with her and I was forced to go there to her for it which made my journey 28 miles that day but I being young I did not mind that but when I Came there I stayed to the afternoon service after that was ended I
 36 spoke to several of the/Members of the Church but there was but two that would speake to me and I knowing that they knew nothing of my Character at that time I was sure as that Could not be the reason but I knew not the reason so I went away with a very heavy heart however I went home and Satan was ready enough to tell me that religion was all a humm and that they which made such a fuss about it were a set of painted hypocrites altogether and I haveing the Spirit of Cain my own Carnal nature sone Concured with the temtation and Satan obtained his ends on the 12th day of Feb^y I inlisted for a Soldier into the Royal Bucks or Kings own Militia and on the 4th of march 1803 I was sworn in at Wing in the hundred of Cotslough [Cottesloe]

from thence I Returned to Buckingham and stayed there 7 days untill my mother Came to fetch me home when I Came home my father told me that if one Shilling would buy me off he would not give it this rather touched my feelings but I did not show it for I told him I did not desire it my mother was much disturbed about it and asked me the reason many times why I went but I never told her

on the 24th of March I Joined the Regiment at Buckingham and Received my Regimentals arms and accoutrements and on the 25th we marched to winslow and on the 26th to Aylesbury and stayed there till the begining of may dureing the time I stayed at Aylesbury we were kept very strict to our discipline 8 hours per day but this did not dishearten me for the serjants and officers took much to me at that time and began to talk about makeing me a Corporal for I was very Clean and that pleased me much for I was very proud at that time and thought myself somebody but I knew not who

by this time I had shook off[f] all thoughts of religion and
 37 the devil led/me Captive at his will in the begining of may our Company was sent back to Buckingham and the

light infantry sent to Aylesbury in our place on the 15th of may [my] brothers Came to see me and it [being] Sunday they went to Church with me that morning the officers told us we were to be dismissed before the next Sunday after service I told my brothers the news but they being young paid but little attention to it soon after we had dined my brothers gave me the slip and went off unknown to me but I happened to look out at the window and saw them and ran after them and soon overtook them but I Could not perswade them to stop any longer with me

this struck a damp on my spirits that the news the officers had told us that morning was false and so I found it for on tuesday the 17th the Rout Came for Colchester Barracks in Essex and the first division to march on the 18th to Aylesbury on the way for Colchester as soon as the Rout Came I was sent off with a Copy of the rout to Captain Pigott at doddershall in the Parish of Quainton and was ordered to joine the division the next night at Aylesbury which I did¹⁵ and my mother went with me to Aylesbury after I had taken leave of my father and brothers my mother stayed with me all night with a very heart heart she pressed me very hard to tell her the Reason why I went for a soldier but I would not tell her for I knew it would make a disturbance in the Church to which she and my father belonged for the Chief Cause originated in them in believing the falsehood my mistress had Raised about me without investigating the matter and though she pressed hard I would
 38 not tell her So the next morning before I/Fell into the ranks I bid her farewell and told her she would find out the reason before she saw my face again so we marched off and left her with a very heavy heart and I saw her no more for the space of two years and 7 months during which time she found it out to her satisfaction but to the greif of the Church in general for my old mistress was detected and excluded

¹⁵ Possibly the '... Piggott' listed as 'Volunteer Officer' of the Royal Bucks Militia in 1793 (BL Stowe MS 488). The Pigotts resided at Doddershall; William Pigott (1773-1838) eventually attained the rank of Lt. Col. in the Bucks militia, and is to figure in Mayett's life after demobilization in 1815 as Squire and J.P.

but to return to my subject we Marched from Aylesbury on the 19th of may 1803 and arrived at Colchester on the 25th inst I did not very well like my situation at first but I soon overcame the difficulty and was very well satisfied in my station during my stay at Colchester I went on in my old Course of life in sinning against God without any Concern about my Soul but one day the drill serjant Came into the place where I was and began to tell us young soldiers how they went on in battle I Remember I told him that the only way a man Could do in such Circumstance was to pray to the Lord for his protection but he immediately swore an oath and said that a soldier had something else to think about in action without prayer this I thought a queer expression for I had not lost all the Remonstrances of Conscience though I had no religion

- about this time I was on the main Gaurd one night and there Came a great Storm of thunder lightening and I was on sentinal at a back post after I had been posted some Considerable time it been in the night and very dark except when it lightened I heard a voice speak to me in the box which alarmed me very much for I had not perceived any one
39. Come to the box since I had been there/ but it proved to be a little boy who had Come there for shelter before I was posted but I have thought many times since what a simple thing this was to afright a man that did not fear to sweare break the Sabath or take the name of God in vain but Such is the nature of the Carnal heart that it often fears but never loves

on the 25th of june we marched to harwich Camp in Essex this I thought very strange work at first but I soon became used to it and very well satisfied with it I feared nothing but the alberts nor not them much for the love of praise and the vain and a flattering hopes of promotion Caused me to keep Close to my duty I fancied myself that I should soon become a great man which perhaps might have been the Case if the Lord had not in wisdom and mercy prevented it for the officers and noncomisioned officers took very much to me at that time but God who orders all things

well soon found means to take down my pride to stop me in my Course and preserve me from that danger to which I might have run into if he had not stoped me for I was bent upon pride and vain glory

but on the 7th of August I fell with the Smallpox on the 8th I was reported sick and went to the doctor but the pox not been Come out he took but little notice of me but bid me go to my duty but I was not able on the 9th I went to him again and I Received the same answer again on the 10th I was reported sick again and went to him again but Still he took no farther notice on that day the Regiment being
 40 gone out to a feild day/I and another young man of the Same Company who was in the same Case as myself agreed to go to the mess house and have a quart of ale to throw [the] pock out when we Came there the mistress saw what was the matter with us so she gave us the ale and bid us keep our money to buy us something else as she knew the nature of the disorder better than we and bid us go to the tent and Cover ourselves up with the Blankets that was in the tent which we did and soon fell asleep when we awoke we were almost Covered with the pock it was Come out to that degree and we being very thirsty we searched the tents for water but it appears the Lord has so ordered it in his wisdom that there was not a drop so away we went to the well and when we Came there the Barrack Serjants wife saw what was the matter and prevented us from drinking a drop She immediately mad us some mint tea and gave us advice she went also and provided a Remady to get them out of our throats and suplied us with mint tea night and day untill we went into the hospital which was the next Sunday and thus our lives was mercifully preserved this was on the wednesday I went to bed in my tent that night and on thursday morning I was quite Blind with them and helpless in this state I lay till Sunday the Surgeon never Came near me neither had I any assistance only from the Barrack Serjants wife and the man that slept with me in the tent here I was very uncomfortable for we had only a Circle of ground 12 feet in the diamiter for 12 men to Sleep

- 41 in/[No 3] However on the Sunday evening the Most Noble the Duke of Buckingham as is now and was then the Right Honourable Earl of Temple and head Colonel of the Regiment was through divine mercy providentially directed by the tent door as he Came to the parade and seeing me ly in such a condition immediatly Called for the Serjant of the Company and enquired to know the reason why I was not taken more care of and immediatly Sent for the Surgeon and when he came his Lorship gave him a severe Repremand for his neglect but he said he did not think I had been so ill but he never Came to see although I had been Reported every day I was immediatly ordered to the hospital and Caried by four men in a blanket

- the next morning the head surgeon came to the hospital and enquired to know how I was I told him I was very ill but he told me I should be well and out again at my duty in a fortnight I told him I was afraid not he went from me to another man in the hospital and asked him how he was but he Could not speak the surgeon called for the orderly and bid him see to him telling him he would not live till night but he was deceived the next morning he Came again and asked me how I did but I could not answer him for I Could not Speak and although I had the purples out upon me at the Same time yet I was sensible for I heard him tell the orderly
- 42 to pay attention/to me for I should not live till night but I Remember I thought he was deceived for I thought I should not die at that time he left me and went to the other man that he spoke to the day before and said Baldwin (for that was his name) how are you today and answered him very sharp and quick and said I am a great deal better Sir I am almost as well as ever I was in my life this I heard though I Could not speake and this struck a damp upon my spirits for I thought he would not be long here but the surgeon said he never anything like the smallpox for that man which he thought would die the day before would recover and I that he thought would soon recover must Certainly die but that God who has the power of death in his own hand knew best and spared my worthless life and took him out of time into eternity

for he died in about three hours after however the Barrack sergeants wife and some other good natured women whom the Lord had put it into their hearts to attend me which they did gratis untill the purples were fell and I was safe this I have often thought a great mercy from my God though I only veiwed the means then and knew nothing of the ends at that time

in this helpless state I lay five days without eating anything as I Remember except a little wine put into my mouth with a tea spoon and the first thing I eat was some Cucumbers and vinegar which the Surgeon refused to let me have for he said it
 43 would kill me but I told/him [I] Could eat nothing else at last he Consented for he said I should starve without them and I Could but die if I had them and when I had eat them I lay and slept three hours and after that I Could eat anything and in about five weeks I left the hospital and went again to my Company as a Convalescent

in a little time after this one of the sergeants in the Company being a Churl and the subject of more pride than reason Compeled me to Clean my foraging Cap which I did and before it was dry I was forced to put it on to go to parade in the Rear of the Company and by thus doing I Caught Cold and lost my right eye and never done a days duty for 22 weeks at the end of which I was ordered to be discharged but there Came a new assisting surgeon to the Regiment and when he saw my eye a day or two before I was to be discharged he said he thought he Could take the speck off of the sight of my eye if I would let him to which I readily Consented and he took the point of the lancet and took if off and the head surgeon came the next morning and saw my eye was better he scratched my name out and this prevented my being discharged but the other surgeon had rather injured the glass of my eye with the lancet in takeing off the speck so that my eye never was right no more but it got better and I Could see with it though very imperfect after this I
 44 went to my duty but the weakness of my eye Caused me to suffer much through the tyranny of some of the Sergeants/and Corporals who were led more by there nose than their sense

In the begining of the Spring in 1804 the drill sergeant took upon himself to order ten men of each Company to do outline pickets and to attend all punishing drills 6 hours per day and to accomplish his design the better and preserve himself from apprehension he first perswaded the sergeant major and then picked out such men as he thought incapable of seeking their redress and I was one among them he then told us that it was the Colonells orders but his design was soon frusterated for his makeing use of the Colonells name betrayed him for one of the men found himself agrieved at being punished in such manner without a Crime and being perswaded by another sergeant who abhorred the pride and arrogance of the drill sergeant to go to the Colonell and ask him to forgive him which [he] did at this the Colonell was surprized not knowing anything of the affair and enquired into the matter and he being a very kind Gentleman he sent him home and bid not go no more and he obeyed his orders and as he Came home he told the rest of us the affair and when we fell in for drill in the afternoon we told the drill sergeant that we would all go to the Colonell as soon as the drill was over if he did not dismiss us and there being about ninety of us he was afraid and so he dismissed us and that ended it

- 45 about this time the general who was a very stern man found out the pride and idleness of the sergeant major and sergeants and Corporals and ordered them all to attend drill and dismissed all the men but this only led to a fresh disaster for as soon as we left Harwhich and Came to Colchester which was on the 6th of June under another general that did not pay so much attention to his duty they being aware of this they told [us] it was their time then and the[y] verified their words in our experience for they drilled us 8 hours per day but this did not last long for on the 24th of July we left Colchester to go to Cox heath Camp in Kent [Coxheath, 3 m. S. of Maidstone] the first day we marched [to] Chelmsford and I was on the Rear guard the next morning the Colonell ordered the old guard to Send their knapsacks by the baggadage and I being one of the old guard I sent mine with the rest but this displeased one of the sergeants and when we

Came to Mucking heath where we encamped all night for we went on flying Camp he ordered me to attend parade Clean that night I told him I Could not for my things were all gone to Tillbery [Tilbury] fort by the Colonells order he began to abuse me and threaten to Confine me and I expected no other but the Colonell Came by at that instant and hearing him Called me to him and asked me what was the matter and I told him the truth he then Called the sergeant to him
 46 and gave him a reppremand/and sent me to my tent to take my rest

the next day we marched to Chattam [Chatham] and the next to Coxheath Camp on Saturday and on Sunday morning this sergeant that was my greatest enemy asked the Colonell for a pass to go to Maidston which was three miles to see his Mother for She was an old woman and lived there and had not seen him for many years the Colonell gave him a pass for three or four days and he went and I saw him no more for he was a deserter from a regiment of light dragoons and apart of them lay at maidston Barracks and when he found they was there he went to the river Midway [Medway] and drowneded himself so I saw him no more but the Regiment knew nothing of his being a deserter untill he had drowneded himself

after this in about three weeks there Came an order for a Certain number of men to go to harvest work and I been one that was in debt I was permitted to go for one in order to reduce my debt for when I had the smallpox not being able to see to my affairs myself and the Care being left to the orderly that [was] appointed to look after me he was a man that would get drunk as often as he Could and with any persons money he being intrusted to draw money from the pay sergeant for me to suply my wants in my detress so he took Care of himself and the pay sergeant was no better than he for he knew that he should be shure of his money whether I lived or died for if I lived I must pay it and if I died the Captain must and so between them both they brought me
 47 upwards of five/pounds in debt

so I was sent to work in order to Reduce my debt so to work

I went for three weeks thinking to Reduce my debt I lived on the money that I earned and left my pay towards it during the three weeks I was at work my pay amounted to a pound during the time I was at work I Came home every Sunday and the pay sergeant kept a shop and Sold bread and beacon ready dressed at one shilling per pound I had half a quarter loaf and half a pound of Beacon each Sunday and that was Charged against me in my account as I did not pay for it but the rest of my provision I paid for as I was five miles from the Regiment and when I had done work I went to the pay sergeant to settle expecting to find my debt Considerably reduced but to my misfortune I had had as much or at least there was just as much booked against me [as] my pay Came to and at that time the marshal law was such as I dared not so much as to say I had not had it on pain of being tried by a Court marshal for insolence which would have rewarded me with three hundred lashes a pare of shoes also which I had before at nine shillings was put in the ledger against me twice over and I durst not say I had not had them

all this put me to a stand and I began to Consider what steps to take at length I Concluded to go to the pay sergeant which I did and asked to put me out of the mess and under stopagies of half my pay which he did and here I knew
 48 he Could not/defraud me because the returns must go to the general and if there was not a proper account given of all the money that I paid he would enquire into it

But though I stoped his progress in this point he soon found out another for the May before the Regiment had all paid for a pair of gaters each man 4^s 6^d each to ware with the new Clothing according to orders and these gaters were served out to the men while I was at work¹⁶ at this time a Recruit Joined the Company and there was no gaters made for him and as I was at work and was not there to receive my gaters when the other men did the pay Sergeant gave my gaters to this Recruit and Charged him for them again under the

¹⁶ The gaiters are illustrated with the rest of the uniform in BL Stowe MS 488, at least as current in 1793.

pretence of giving me another pair So when I had done work and Came to my duty I asked him for them but he told me he had none I asked him for them several times but he never had any one Sunday I was for guard and the Corporal that paraded the guard found fault with me for not haveing on my new gaters the pay sergeant Came up at the Same time and ordered him to Report me dirty and send me to the black hole for fourteen days¹⁷

49 this I took very hard that he who had defrauded me out of them should punish me for not wareing them but the Lord who sees all the transactions of men and abhoreth injustice appeared for me and Set me at liberty for he stired up another Sergeant who hated oppression to stand my friend he being enraged at the action knowing it to be unjust that same/night finding that same Corporal absent at tattoo Beating and being absent all night for which the Sergeant Could have screened him from punishment if he would but seeing him determined to punish me without a Cause he was determined to do him justice for he went to the Adjutant and Reported the truth on both sides so he Cleared me from punishment and Sent the Corporal to the black hole for 14 days instead of me

during the time I was at Camp I done very well for the man that slept with me was employed at the head Colonels and was alowed all the broken victuals which [he] gave me for taking care of his arms and necessaries and so I lived better out of the mess then they did that were in it but on the 3^d of Nov the Camp broke up and we marched to Maidston Barracks for winters Quarters the head Colonell left the Regiment my Comrade lost his place and I lost my liveing here I was Soon Reduced to a state of destress and weakness through hungar and spite for though it was the sergeants duty to pay me every night yet he would not and I have many times stood and beged as though I was abeging for my life for a halfpenny of my own money to buy me a

¹⁷ 'Black hole' was the official designation of a barrack's punishment cell or lockup until 1868, despite (or because?) of the notorious connotation gained in India in 1756 (*OED*).

halfpenny worth of potatoes for my supper and sometimes
Could not obtain it and thus I went on till nearly
Chrismass

50 during this time one of the men engaged to learn me to
write a little and as soon as I Could write legible I sent a letter
to my father to sell a great Coat which I had left at home and
send/me the money which he did not being able to send it
without

during this time the pay sergeant and the Corporal lead
their heads together against me and one morning I was
agoing on guard and the Corporal Reported me dirty again
because I had not my new gaters on and although I had asked
the Sergeant for them so many times yet he would not give
them to me and the marshal law was so severe at that time
that I dared not Report him so the Corporal reported me
again but the Lord appeared for me again for the Sergeant
major Refused to take his report and Reproved him for doing
it but he knew nothing of the affair for it did not Concern him

however their malice did not stop here for the pay sergeant
seemed to be bent upon doing me an injury and in a day or
two after he thinking he had the law in his own hand as I was
but a young Soldier and afraid to Speak for myself for the law
was so strict that no Soldier dared to go to an Officer unless a
Sergeant or a Corporal went with him and as my Case
affected them they would not go with me and I was afraid to
go by myself (it is true that sometimes by Chance a soldier
would go to an officer but it was always on that ground that
Queen Esther went to King Ahasuerus it was at their peril) so
he thinking himself secure he Reported me himself to the
Adjutant for these gaters

51 and here he overshot himself/for this Caused the Adjutant
to Call for me so I was had up to him and he began to
threaten me severely at this [I] began to tremble and my
heart being full of greif I burst into tears the Adjutant
seeing this immediately Changed his mode of attackt and said
Come Come I will have no Crying if there is anything the
matter speake freely to me and I see you righted here a
door was opened for me and I told him the truth how he had

defrauded me and how he had used me and he Could not deny it the Adjutant was surprized to hear it and began to sweare most dreadfully at him and told him if he did not give them to me as soon as he got home he would breake him and flog him so as soon as he went home he gave them to me but it did not appear to be willingly for he threw them at me with an air of disdain

a few days after this I Received a letter from my father with a draft Containg £1. 11^s 6^d and I had reduced the debt by degrees below that Sum So I went and paid him and provided Such things as I had need of and took Care that I never got in his debt no more Just after this the Duke of York found out the abominable transactions that were Committed in the army and altered the marshal law and after that we had the Liberty to Speak for ourselves and see ourselves righted without any danger of a Courtmarshal

52 in the month of April 1805 there Came an order to the/Regiment for a volunteering into the line at this time the pay sergeant Strongly perswaded me to volunteer and recomended me to a Corporal of the marines who had a Commission to engage any man that Could write legible for noncommissioned officers in the marines but his Scheme did not take in this for there was and Sergeant in the Company he that had stood my friend before stood to me now for he put my name down for my discharge and then told me not to volunteer for I should have my discharge when the volunteering was over this he done on purpose to prevent my volunteering as he thought it was the likliest means to prevent my going and it had the desired effect in the latter end of may we left maidstone and marched for hull in yorkshire but when we Came to London we were Countermanded to Chelmsford in Essex where we arived the 4th of june 1805 and on the 24th of July the pay sergeant was transfered out of the Company so I was troubled with him no more but he that Came in his room was no better

about this time one Sunday I was Coming by the Baptist Chapel the people was Just going into the Chapel I haveing nothing to do I thought I would go to[o] so in I went I do

not Remember the text nor any of the sermon but I Remember I knew I was a sinner and thought I would give
 53 out sining/and live a better life So I Set to work to leave off swearing and on monday I did not sweare more than once or twice and I thought I was much better for this Resolution was made in my own strength for a few days afterwards while I was on the Kings works the major of the Regiment gave out an order that no man should go upstairs without takeing off his shoes and when we Came home the Sergeants Stopped us and made every man take off his shoes this being quite a new thing I burst into a fit of Swearing forgot all my religion and became a worse heathen than ever

on the 24th of August I was sent to purfleet to do duty over the magazines there I went [to] work and earned 4^s per day here I had plenty of money and took to gambling and drinking and I Remember one sunday being three parts drunk I played a game at Cards for a gallion of ale and the men Cried out Shame on me and one night after this being on guard it thundred and lightened very much and I was at Cards at eleven oclock the Releif was Call out to go on Sentinal and there was a young soldier who was very fearful whose turn it was to Stand at a place where it was said that it was haunted he offered a shilling to any one who would Stand two hours for him but it being so wet nobody
 54 would go for him the Corporal was aswearing/because he Could not get the Releif out for the poor man would not go out of the guard Room but Stood Crying and begging and praying for some one to go for him I had ended my game at Cards so I got up and swore if he would give me a Shilling I would Stand for him if the Devil Came which he gave me so I took my arms and off I went

the thunder was very heavy then but that I did not mind nor fear but I had not been posted long before I heard a strange noise like someone aswearing between the Claps of thunder I began to remember what I had said and thought it might be a Judgment upon me for my presumption but I found it out to be a pig that was asleep in a shed that stood hard by my post so I lost all my fear and it had no more impression upon me

on the 24th of Sept^r I returned again to Chelmsford Barracks and in the month of Nov we marched to Colechester Barracks. Soon after this I received a letter from my father Stating that my mother was very ill by which I obtained a Furlough to go home to See her but when I arived She was much better and She told me she did not wonder at my going for a Soldier for She had found out the reason why I went for the Church at waddsdon hill had found out the misconduct of my old mistress and had excluded her from the Church¹⁸. I staid at home ten days untill my mother was recovered and then I Returned again to the Regiment but the meeting was all over at Quainton and my friends had no means no/nearer then Waddsdon hill

55

I Returned again to the Regiment at Colchester Barracks while I was on furlough a despute had arisen between the Regiments then lying in the Garrison and it went on till there had like to have been murder among them So the general gave the militia Regiments a rout to Weeley Barracks to separate us and by that mains brought us to be peaceable again. In the begining of march 1806 we Received a route to march to bridgewater in Somersetshire and on the twelfth of march we marched and on the 26th we arived there. on the 27th our Company marched to Taunton. here we stayet about a month and then marched to Honiton in Devonshire. during this time the Regiment marched to ottary St marys and in the begining of may our Company Joined the Regiment again

here I was stationed in a half Room that is half the men of our Company and half of another Company and there was a man whose name was Samuel winright a man of the other Company in the Room with me and he was a good Scholar and he undertook to learn me to Read in a better tone of voice than I had attained too and to keep my points and stops for I had never learned them before

At this time there was a little group or Company of men in

¹⁸ The first Memorandum Book of the Waddesdon Hill Church preserved in the BRO begins in 1814 (NB/19/1); it has not been possible to discover the name of the mistress.

the Regiment who associated themselves together for Religious exercise the leading fifer was there head or fore man and he was of Methodist principle the next to him was a
 56 Baptist a member/of the old Baptist Church at Chesham Bucks his name was James Basse he was brought into the Regiment by ballott these men met together often for divine worship Sometimes in the independent Chapel at ottary st marys and sometimes in the feilds or woods they had a little secluded spot in a little Copse near the barracks

this little Company went by the name of the soapy set in the Regiment among the ungodly of which I was one of the foremost and was at this time among my Companions Considered a great wit and one day being in Company with Some of my Companions that was Saying they Should like to find out the Spot where this Set resorted to which they did every night for evening worship but this they Could by no means accomplish for when they pursued them they would not go to it but would take a different road and lead their persecutors a long journey another way so that they Returned home as they went out this soon sickened them of following the Set as they Called them so they was telling me their desire and I soon devised a plan to find them out
 57 this plan was for one of us to seem Religous and act the hypocrite for I knew Something of the nature and disposition of Christains though/I knew nothing of Christain feelings experimentaly but the Lord prevented my wicked design but it was not a malicious one for I did not design to persecut them nor injure them but merely to show my wit as I thought it at that time but as I said the Lord prevented it in his wise desine for the person nor time was not appointed at that time in a day or two after this I found out that my teacher was become one of them and I would do nothing against him so I did not joine my old Companions again and there being none of them able to execute the design without me it was prevented

Just after this there was a man in Plymouth that gave out a kind of prophecy that the world should be destroyed on whit

sunday this Seemed to alarm Some of the Soldiers but I did not believe it for I thought he knew nothing about it so I only made a jest of it when the morning arrived it was a very fine morning and when I awoke I saw the sun shine in at the window and was just going to say now where is this fool with his prophicy but I had a thought struck my mind I had heard a minester preach a sermon Some years before on the destruction of Sodom and he said there was no doubt but the men of Sodom said when the sun arose on the City now
 58 w[h]ere is this fool with his prophecy/ this struck my mind with terror for as Sodom was destroyed So I thought the world might be destroyed that day for ought I knew and this prevented me from saying anything this lay heavy on mind all day I got ready for Church and paraded for guard mounting and then marched off to Church but the thoughts of this Still lay on my mind after Church I had my dinner and the weather being fine instead of going to prayer to implor divine forgiveness I took the old rule to drive away sorrow I mean I went to the publick house to drownd it but this was in vain for the more I drank the Soberer I was and the Stronger my Convictions Came on So I Returned home and got ready for the evening parade

when we fell in, we fell in on the private parade facing the sea I Remember I thought if this did not take place that day I would amend my life but I Could not find it in my heart to pray then for I thought it would be a Compleat Mockery of God therefore I would not do it but this is a Stratagem the devil uses when he has led a person into sin as far as he Can then he will drive him to despair if he Can While we Stood on the private parade to be inspected there arose a black Cloud out of the Sea in the front of us and just before we marched off to form the grand parade there Came a very
 59 Sharp flash of lightening and the thunder/followed immediately and I think a bean straw would have knocked me down speaking after the manner of men for I verily thought it was agoing to be but it thundered no more it come a slight shower the parade was dismissed the weather Cleared and I was revived

from this time I began to Consider what I must do and the first thing I tried was prayer as well as I knew how which was but weak I kept the matter Close and Broke my mind to no one but prayed to the Lord to assist me and enable me to serve him aright but no sooner than I had begun to pray but I began to think I had Committed the unpardonable sin I Remembered when I was about 8 or 9 years of age my mother had been Corecting me for something I had done wrong and I thought I would be revenged on her I had been reading in St mathews gospel where the jews said he Casteth out devils by Belzebub the prince of devils I thought this was the sin against the holy ghost and thinking to be a made for my mother I said to myself God is the devil for I Remember I thought I would not go to heaven to spite her this I had forgot but it appears Satan had not forgot it for [he] undoubtedly tempted me to it this was a great trial to me sometimes I thought it was of no use to pray for God would have no mercy on me and I knew not what to do I often read but all seemed to be agains me and there appeared no way of escape but to hell I must go

60 in this state of destress I Remained some time till one night as I was in bed I dreamed that I was not a Soldier but I had ran away from my father and was reduced to poverty and destress in this State I resolved to go home to my father acknowledge my Crime and beg his pardon accordingly I set out and when I Came near home I walked down under the hedge and was ashamed to go in home but my father seeing me Came unto me and fetched me in and when I Came into the yard I Confessed my Crimes and begged his pardon he said he freely forgave me and bid me not to mind it for I was Come home safe and that was all he Cared for

At this instant I thought I saw the Heavens open over my head I thought I saw the divine Being and his son sitting on his throne the holy ghost I did not see but I saw all the host of heaven around the throne and I thought as it were the saviour spoke to me and said to me Just so hast thou run away from me yet if thou wilt Come now I will receive thee and the heavens were Closed again and I awoke this I knew not

what to make of but I took some encouragement from it and the next day I was reading in the pilgrims progress and was by a quotation directed to the 33 Chap of Job and the 15th and 16th verses

In a dream in a vision of the night when deep sleep falleth upon men in slumberings upon the bed Then he openeth the ears of men and Sealeth their instruction

61 finding this in the scripture so quick after my dream/and not knowing it to be there before it seemed to be a kind of interpretation to my dream yet this did not satisfy me for I was afraid to trust to a dream lest I should be deceived

in a few days after this I met with a book written by mr Bunyan the title of the book was the two Covenants in this book the unpardonable Sin was explained this part I soon found and read it over with eagerness for I thought mr Bunyan Could not be deceived such a man as he was but I found no satisfaction for all seemed to be against me I Read it again several times over for I Could not give it up at last I found something to rest upon as I thought So I read it again and by searching more minutely I found it must be a rejection of Salvation by Jesus Christ and to be determined to be saved by some other means and this must be done willfully willingly knowingly deliberately and above all maliciously well thought I if this be the Case here is some ground for hope left still for I knew though I did it wilfully and willingly I did not do it deliberately for I done it all in a minute and though I had done it in a manner maliciously my malice was against myself and mother and not against Christ nor the holy ghost neither had I any such thought and here I lost the burthen of that sin and found Satan out to be a deceiver

About this time I broke my mind to my teacher the man that undertook to Learn me to Read proper he had not 62 Long joined this Company/Called the Set but he soon acquainted them with my Case and they soon began to enquire into it and invited me to go with them which I readily Complied with but yet I was not altogether satisfied in my mind for though they gave me all the encouragement they Could yet I was very backward for some time I suffered a great deal of persecution from the ungodly part of the

Regiment but this I did not so much mind for I was got out of debt and so much the master of my business as a Soldier that I neither Courted the Smiles nor feared the frowns of any but Still I seemed to think I should never hold on and out to the end happy had it been for me had I Continued in this fear always but alas it happened to me according to the true proverb the dog is turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire¹⁹ But this did not happen untill about two years after

however I began to be rather bolder and in a little time they began to talk about Calling upon me to engage in prayer among them this I trembled at but nothing would do but I must engage and at such a time which they appointed how to accomplish this I knew not how neither did I take proper steps to accomplish it for instead of going to a throne of grace and imploring the divine assistance I took notice what the others prayed for and having a large Share of head knowledge I set to work and Composed a very fine prayer as I
 63 thought/ But when the time was Come they Called upon me to engage but I Coul not think of a word So I thought I would never try no more but with this I was not Satisfied for when I thought it was of no use for me to try to pray as I thought at that time it seemed as though it would do me no good one day as this was strong upon my mind a thought darted in upon my mind as though some one had spoke to me and Said Suppose it does not do you any good you do not know but you may speak something that will do somebody else some good and if [it] does you no good you ought to do good to others if you can to do this I found a willingness and so I began to think how I was to do it and while I was thinking of this it was as though one had said to me pray first so I Came to this Conclusion in my own mind to pray for assistance which I put in practice and the Lord assisted me and so went on and accomplished the hard task as I thought it which my friends had laid upon me

¹⁹ The phrase travelled from the Old Testament (Proverbs 26:11) to the New (II Peter 2:22), and then to *Pilgrim's Progress* (ed. Roger Sharrock) (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 103) and Mayett's memoirs. This is, moreover, the second appearance of the vivid image (see above, p. 12).

After this I began to gather strength and while we were at Ottray St Marys we prospered and went on rejoicing in the Strength of the Lord for here was but one place of worship at Ottray and that was a independent so we were all united together because we all attended at one place of worship I felt myself delighted in the Service of God neither did I Care
 64 for the persecution of the/world I well remember one night when I was on Sentinal at the back gates by myself I was thinking of the love of God in Sending his only Son to die for Sinners and although my Ideas was Confused yet I thought that the divine Being was Such a glorious Being that if he were to Cut me off that instant and Send me to hell for my Sins I could not help loving him for his love and mercy to mankind in providing Such a Saviour for them though I myself were Cast out of his presence for ever

at this time I seemed to enjoy heaven upon earth and this Continued during the winter but in the month of march 1807 we received a rout to go to Exeter to which we marched on the 24 but before we moved mr Vurder the independent minester gave us a letter of recommendation to mr Allen the minester of the independants at Exeter but here Satan got among us and scatered us for our two head leaders were one a methodist and the other a Baptist while we were at Ottary where there were no methodist they would joine and agree with the Calvinist but when we Came to Exeter where there were Both Satan soon found a means to Cause a division among us though we were but thirteen in number for the leading fifer being a methodist in principle and three others the[y] wanted us all to follow them and to leave the Baptist by himself but this we would not Consent to do²⁰

²⁰ The next four pages, not numbered in sequence, were later interleaved with the memoir proper. They are covered with single sentences, copied over and over. The first is 'All boys that love not their book for good need not to', the second with 'A man that dispises counsel getteth himself a blot', the third with 'The labour of the righteous tendeth to life the fruit of the wicked to sin', and finally 'The wise shall inherit glory but shame shall be the promotion of fools'. 'Aylesbury', 'Buckinghamshire', 'Northamptonshire', and 'Sorrow' are interspersed among the sentences of the third page. The only mention of 'Northamptonshire' in the memoir itself is as the destination of the Ranter Walter Evans whose membership in the Quainton Church Mayett supported.

So four followed the Methodist principle and the rest the Baptist and there being Methodist and Calvinist both in that City we had the privillage to follow which we pleased but the fifer entered into a paper war with our leader the Baptist and Charged him with leading the rest of us into an error this made a Strong Confusion among us for we knew not which to follow for my own part I knew nothing about principles at that time but I was quite decided on the ordinance of Baptism therefore I Continued with the Baptist and soon got acquainted with mr Daniel Sprague the Baptist minester in Exeter and thus we Continued in union throught the Summer with the loss of the four only that followed the methodist and were very Comfortable together in the month of Sep^r we had a very Strong volunteering into the line which reduced our Regiment to about three hundred men at Michealmass I was transferred into another Company and we marched to horsham in Sussex to be filled up with recruits to the amount of 9 hundred and we Came to horsham we were obliged to attend the high Calvinist there being no other but at that time but they were never friendly with us as others had been before here we lost our privilladge of prayer meetings having no place to assemble in and it being winter we Could not meet in the feilds and here Religion began to grow Cold

66 in the latter end of october I obtained a furlough for 19 days and when I arived at home/My eldist Brother had maried a young woman a member of Baptist Church at waddsdon hill and had joined the Church himself and the meeting was established again the third time in my fathers house at Quainton²¹ here I enjoyed good friendship with my friends and the people of God for a Short Season At the end of my furlough I Returned to the Regiment again and

²¹ William, three years Joseph's junior, married Mary Parker on 27 July 1807 (William was aged twenty-one). Because of the near monopoly of marriages enjoyed by the Established Church under Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753), the marriage is recorded in the Quainton parish register, PR 169/1/10.

being in a new Company one of the Sergeants engaged with me to Clean his things and to miss morning drills and evening parades this opened a way for my advantage in a temporal way for the pay sergeant kept the mess for the officers and he wanted a steady man to take Care of the Companys Stores under him this led me to the Captain to be his outdoors servant, but this was not all that it led me to for at this time the recruits had very great bounties and I being an old soldier and having the care of the Companys Stores I had an opportunity to get a great deal of beer and having more liberty then I formerly had I sone became adicted to drinking and although I advanced in the favour of those who superintended me which I did for I had that economy in me to keep myself sober when I was among any of my superiors in general but alas I sone got Cold in my

67 proffession and Cared but little about it /yet Conscience would not let me rest at sometimes so that I did not finally forsake it all at once on the 24th of Feb 1808 we marched with a route to East Bourn in Sussex and after loading the baggadage I got very drunk and was Confined to the black hole till I was sober by a Corporal but I easeily got over that Crime for the paymaster of the Regiment had the Command at [that] time and he was the officer in our Company and well knew me but never saw me drunk before and so it was not reported no farther

when we came to East Bourn there was a small Baptist Chapel near the Barracks here we attended again a little time but not long for at the 24 of Mar 1808 two of our party was discharged being ballotted men and they were our two leaders and I believe both good men Sone after this one of our party Joined the Baptist Church and then bought his discharge and sone turned gambler and drunkerd Cheater and everything that was bad another was discharged unfit for duty and turned out as bad another deserted two more turned out into the line and left the Regiment and another disgraced his Character by getting in debt and defrauding others to pay it in this Case I began

68 to think there was no reality in religion at all/ So I

returned again to my old Course of life again and became worse than ever I was before but the Lord was very mercyfull to me and did not Cut me off in my mad Creer

during our Stay at East Bourn I narrowly escaped the Jaws of death the first was by bathing in the sea I went into the sea to learn to swim having provided myself with two Canteens for that purpose²² I went to the Sea along with another man that Could swim and at the edge of the water at low tide there was a Channel where the water always run and at high water it was very deep and I mistook the tide and thought it was going out but that was Coming in so when I went into the water I could but just foord the Channel the water being Shallow beyond the Channel I stayed out a full hour or more for I thought I would Stay till the water was sunk but when I returned I found out my mistake for the water had rissen much higher than my head but this did not daunt me for I trusted to my Canteens but when I Came to the Currant of the Stream the water turned me round took away my Canteens and I went to the bottom but the hand of the Lord was there or I had been lost but when I Came up to the surface of the water I struck at the water and with Lords assistance I swam to the shore and so escaped but I Could not swim at other times no more than a stone,

- 69 The other escape that I had/was in a stone vesel I was ordered on the Kings works to unload a vesel load of Stone and my Station was in the hole below deck with three more to halter the Stones with a timber Chain and after we had nearly unloaded the vesel we had Just haltered a great Stone more than a tonnn weight and fastened it to the takel at the yard arm Just as it was going up the hatchway I was standing under it one of the men that was with me Cried out mayett Come away Suppose anything Should happen you would be killed in a moment to my Shame and disgrace I answered with an oath I Shant be killed today I know Just as I spoke the Stone Cleared the hatchway and Swang over the

²² Listed among the standard kit for a militiaman in 1793 was a wooden canteen with straps. See J.R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660-1802* (London, 1965), p. 386.

deck and was underneath the Chain broke and the Stone fell on the deck Just over my head but the deck being very Strong there was no harm done and thus the Lord in much mercy to my poor wretched Soul delivered me from the Jaws of death at this time also,

in the month of July 1808 the Regiment volenteered to go to Spain but his Majesty refused to let us go²³ in the month of Nov I Came home on furlough to see my friends but this was not so friendly a meeting as I had before the meeting was broken up at my fathers house but this did not trouble me much for I had forsaken religion but I took Care that my friends did not discover it I returned back again to the Regiment at my time,

70 in the month of may 1809 we had another heavy volunteering into the line but/That was all over in two days in the month of June following we marched to dover in Kent where we stayed two years six months and seven days before we got another general route here our duty was very hard and very strict but I was not hurt by it for here it was that I became out door servant to the Captain by which mains I was exempt from a great deal of Common duty which was only Ceremonial and useless but my Guards I always done unless my master paid for them which he often did when he wanted me to go with him afishing or shooting with him

this helped me to a great deal of mony to spend for he was very good to me and always paid me well for all I did for him and though I made a bad use of it in spending it in drinking yet I took Care to spend it when I had liberty without neglecting my duty so that I was always Judged to have plenty of money although I had none by this means I was soon introduced to the Colonel who was a great admirer of Sobriety and I took Care that I was never seen drunk nor absent without leave by this means I got so much in his favour that he would not believe an ill report of me from no one unless he had seen it himself such was my Craft and pollicy in Carring myself upright before men while I was no

²³ Militia regiments were barred from service overseas; this attempt at joining the preparations for the first Peninsular Campaign thus failed.

better in reality than the very worst of men for I had no fear of God before my eyes or at the best very little Sometimes
 71 Conscience would lift up his head/and upbraid me for my misconduct and then I had recourse to some ill habit or other Such as Card playing or drinking or some other vain amusement to Stifle Conviction and thus I went on Galio like Caring for none of these things in Feb 1810 I Came home on furlough and during the time I was at home my mother observed a Change in my Conduct and reproved me for it to which I gave her but little answer at the end of my furlough I returned Back to Dover

Sone after my return the pay Sergeant was discharged and left the Regiment and a new pay Sergeant was Stationed to the Company and he Could neither read nor write and I being Capable of both and having the Companys stores in my Care before he took to me and put great Confidence in me and I was faithful to my trust for I always in the worst of my Conduct abhorred dishonisty unless sometimes in a trick of prodigality this gave me more liberty Still and having more time on my hands and So intimate with my master the Captain I had the liberty to take any Books that he had in his LibRARY and I did not spare to make all the profficiency I Could so that I sone knew all the laws that Concerned a Military life and sone learned the System of politics in a greate measure for anything I did not know my master would teach me but in all this I paid no regard to my soul except when my Conscience Checked me in the month
 72 of/April we had an expeditious route to Chatam at the time that S^r France Burdett was Sent to the Tower²⁴ here we remained 15 days and returned back again to Dover during the summer the Regiment was filled up again to 900 men strong

in the Autumn of this year the expedition returned from Flushing and Most of them being sick they had two parts of

²⁴ Sir Francis Burdett, Radical member for Westminster, was ordered to the Tower by the House for having denounced the arrest of John Gale Jones; he barricaded himself in his house, 'and it seemed that riots on the scale of 1780 were inevitable' (E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 511).

the garrison for an hospital which Caused our duty to be very hard indeed so that we was on guard every other day and sometimes t[w]o nights together and the men died so fast that there was three or four funerals every night for three months together²⁵ on the 14th of december a part of the Clift fell down and beat down a house and killed a woman and Six Children in the begining of Jan^y 1811 I was on the amerst Guard and in the night I was Called out with the Sergeant of the Guard and three more men to take five prisoners and was near loosing my life in takeing them I got three wounds in my right hand but they were but Slight and Sone got well Sone after this I was on the Same Guard again and being on Sentinal on board a Cardeel loaded with French prisoners it being in the evening a little before Seven oclock it was very dark and the battlements of the Ship being down on one side I fell overboard into the water but here the Lord appeared for me and wraught a wonderful deliverance for me I fell in/between two Ships in about 12 feet of water and no one to assist me but the French prisoners which I was Sentinal over to keep them from making their escape and only three of them on deck these three men hearing me fall into the water and knowing it must be the Sentinal they ran immediately to the place and one of them being a tall man the other two let him down head first and held him one by one leg and the other by the other leg till he Could reach my hand So they pulled him and pulled me till I Could get hold of the rattlines of the Ship and so my worthless life was preserved,

In the month of Feb^y I was on the outline Picket one very wet night and I and two more being on Sentinal without a Centry box we were very wet and being forced to remain in our wet Cloths all night we all Caught a severe Cold and the next night we were all three taken with a pain in the left side but I was far the worst for I Could hardly get my breath at

²⁵ Mayett appears to have misremembered the year: the malaria-ridden remnants of the Walcheren Expedition returned from Flushing in the late summer and early autumn of 1809, when 'the Kentish ports were filled with militiamen bearing pale-faced ghosts from the transports' (Arthur Bryant, *Years of Victory, 1802-1812*, rev. edn (London, 1975), p. 333).

all the Surgeon was sent for and when he Came he let us all blood and the next morning we were all ordered into the hospital and the Surgeon ordered us all to be put into the hot Bath but I objected to it for I was struct with a thought that it would be Certain death to me So the Surgeon did not
 74 force me the other two Consented/to the hot bath but they both died but I returned to my duty again in four days So meraculously did the Lord appear for me but I did not Consider the power of his arm not the operation of his hands

in the month of July 1811 the Regiment volunteered to Serve in Ireland for which we recived two guineas bounty each man for going this Set the Regiment all to drinking in general but my master the Captain desired me not to get drunk and to oblege him I kept myself Sober the next morning I awoke out of Sleep Just as the sun was rising and I do not remember that I ever saw such a scene in all my life there was not a birth in the Room except my own and the pay Sergeants without a drunken man in it but that which made the Scene so dreadful to me was the Barrack windows opened toward the east and in the east there arose a full dreadfull Storm of thunder and Lightening and as sone as I opened my eyes the Sun being Just arising and the Lightening together the element appeared to be all in flames and [I] really thought the world was at an end I remember my thoughts to this day I thought the world was at an end and I was not prepared and what Shall I do but I thought again I must take my Chance and do as others did for at that time it was of no use to pray then for that would be only mocking of God for I had forgot that Sweet passage in the 50th
 75 psalm Call upon/me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee and thou Shalt glorify me but Satan will always practise on the mind and tell the wretch that is led Captive at [h]is will that it is time enough yet but when the danger appears he will tell the poor soul it is presumption to pray then

after this I was a little uneasy in mind for Some time Sometimes I thought it was of no use to try to amend my life

for there was no hopes of Salvation for me and therefore I would have my fill of pleasure here for I was not likely to have any hereafter at other times I was tempted to put an end to my existance but when this temtation assaulted me I knew it Came from Satan and then I used to think that miserable as I was here I should be worse then for I believed that all Selfe murderers immediately sank into hell and I was willing to keep out of there as long as I Could and with this thought I overcame the temtation at other times I have thought I would try to lead a better life and then I thought again it would be only mocking the divine Being while I was in that line of life and Sometimes I hated my life because I Could not govern my own Corrupt nature after a while these reflections wore off and I became worse than I was before

76 in the month of Dec^r 1811 we marched from Dover in Kent to Woodbridge in Suffolk from thence I Came on Furlough to see my friends here I met with another divine deliverance as I was on the Coach and Coming through Colchester in Essex/the Coach being heavy loaded with 18 passengers and the Coachman beside other lugage the fore axletree broke and overturned the Coach from this I received not the least injury though the Coach was dashed to peices and some of the passengers received some slight injuries but I received none I Came home and found my friends all well at the Expiration of my Furlough I returned again to the Regiment at woodbridge Barracks I rode from London on the Coach and the weather being Cold and I had plenty of money I drank a greate deal of brandy so that I became intoxocated and when I Came to Woodbridge I went to a publick house which was infested with bad girls of the Common sort and being drunk and my time not being out till the next night I was easely led away with one of them though I had never given up myself to them before at this time I gave myself up to all manner of vice and folly and retained no more sobriety and prudence than Just enough to maintain my duty as a Soldier So that I kept my Character good before all those that superintended me but this was

done by pollicy for they knew not what I done in the dark and this was hypocrisy Compleat for I regarded not him that seeth in secrete so that I Could hide it from the world

- 77 In the begining of Feb^y 1812 we got an expeditious Route to Notingham at the time of frame breaking but I was left behind with the baggage and did not march till a week after²⁶ this gave me great Liberty as I was under no kind of goverment So I threw the reins on the neck of my lust and began to live a licentious life which I did not try to restrain no further than I was Compeled for fear of offending my Superintendents one thing I desire to remark here that is I only restrained my passion in part perhaps some may think I Could not because I did not but I know I did not because I would not for as I was able to restrain part I knew I had power to restrain the whole seeing that grace was intirely out of the question

however in about three weeks I joined the Regiment again and remained at Notingham till the month of April when we marched to Mansfield here I met with a man who was a member of Johannah Southcott Society and he lent me Some of his books and told me many Straing things So that I began to be taken with his devices but by his books I found Some things that did not Correspond with the bible and also that it was a trick to get money so I declined his religeon and bid him adue²⁷

- 78 on the first of may we got another expeditious route to Manchester at the time they brok the royal Exchange and here we lay till the 27th of May and then we marched to Kersel [Kersal] moor Camp about three miles from Manchester here we lay under a very severe General²⁸ he was a

²⁶ Nottinghamshire had been, from March 1811, the originating focus of Luddism. The arrival of the Royal Bucks Militia in February of the next year coincides with the passage of the bill making frame-breaking a capital offence (Thompson, *Making of English Working Class*, p. 622).

²⁷ Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), prophet, around whom grew 'a cult of the poor' which was especially strong in the west and north (*Ibid.*, pp. 420-26).

²⁸ Luddism spread north-east and north-west from Nottingham, and the Bucks militia followed. Kersal Moor was the sprawling garrison camp outside Manchester. Altogether, eight regiments of regular militia (including Mayett's) and three cavalry regiments were positioned around the district. General Maitland was in supreme command of the emergency forces in Lancashire and

tyrant if ever there was one however Nothing Remarkable occurred for some time only the weather was Continually wet and he ordered us to march out in Contoonments²⁹ and Change every three days and Some of our Journies was twenty miles in a day and this made our duty very hard about the middle of the Campagne he ordered the Regiment to go to Stockport to fire ball³⁰

Just at this time my master the Captain resigned his Commission and left the Regiment the General had given orders that every man Should attend evening parade and no man Should have leave except those that were on fatigue so three days before my master left the Regiment he had returned me on fatigue because the orders was that every man that was absent Should be tried by a Courtmartial and be punished and that day as my master left he sent me to Manchester with his luggage to the wharfe at this time the pay sergant was orderly and it was his place to make the returns for parade I had told him to return me on fatigue and after I was gone his wife was taken ill so that he Could not attend parade/and another Sergent was obliged to take the office of orderly Sergent and he was no friend to me and having an antipatha against [me he] thought he had an opportunity to pay me for I knew not that he was the orderly and although he knew where I was because I did not tell him myself he reported me absent from parade under a pretence of doing his duty but the Lord provided for me and prevented him for that day the Colonel Came to my masters house to take his last fairwell of him and saw me there and asked me the nearest way to the Camp and I told him so when the report was given in the Colonel would not Suffer me to be Confined till he had seen me for though he had forgot where he had seen me yet he knew he had seen me and would

Cheshire; General Dixon was his subordinate for the Manchester area. See Frank Ongley Darvall, *Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England* (London, 1934), pp. 102-03.

²⁹ 'Cantonments', or 'places of encampment'.

³⁰ Stockport, a centre of political agitation, was the scene of riots in the months after the riot at the Manchester Exchange (8 April 1812).

not believe that I was absent but when it was found out and he got severely reproved himself thus mallice punished itself

80 in a few days after this we were ordered the 3^d and last time to fire ball the Journey being 10 miles the Lieutenant of our Company had a mind to ride so he sent me the night before to Sawford to fetch him a horse and ordered me to take it to a public house near the Camp where another Lieutenant lodged and ordered me to tell [the] horselar to provide him with a bed and provision and he mr Gillman my master would defray the expences which I done Corect the other Lieutenant being an enemy to me he thought to wreck his vengence on me and after the feild day was over while I was gone to take the horse back again/He laid a Charge against me for setting up a horse in his name and stealing another mans hay for him and swore he [would] Confine me to the rear Guard and try me by a Courtmartial but my master would not suffer him to do it for he said he knew that I had obeyed his orders and he would prove it before he should be Confined so away we all went to the house and I was proved right and master gave me a shilling and sharply reproved the other Lieutenant and so Lord delivered me again out of the mouth of the Lion, but in all this I Remembered not the mercy of the Lord nor Considered the operation of his hand

in the latter end of october we broke up the Camp and marched again to manchester barracks where we lay ten days and then we went to moterhan [Mottram] in Cheshire and there we lay sixteen days here I was on the point of marrige with a young woman that [worked] with me at the Captains before he Resigned but the Route Came for us to march to Bernard Castle and another Route met us there to march to New Castle on tine and from there I was sent to Belford in Northumberland within 16 miles of Berweck upon tweed having this long Route nearly 200 miles prevented my marrige at Belford I remained till the next may here I had liberty to go to work at 15 shillings per week Besides my pay but this done me no good for having no

81 regular duty to do I Spent it all as fast as I got it and lived a very Loose/life

in the month of may we had a route to Liverpool and from thence to Dublin and from there to Athlone³¹ here we stayed nine days here I offended the General by going to him at his office but the Colonel had sent me for I had been to him first but the General being a hot and passionate man would here no reason but sent me and two more to the Guard house and swore he would try us by a General Courtmartial but the Colonel sone told him better for he had neglected his own duty and the Colonel told him that we knew of it so he was sone glad to release us again for his own Safty the Regiment marched from there to Boile for head quarters and went into Cantonments but our Company was sent to Strokes town about 20 miles from head Quarters here we lay till the month of Sept when we were called into head Quarters at boile where we staid about 3 weeks when we were Sent out to do duty at Carick on Shannon as 2^d head Quarters here I lay till the month of Dec^r when a volunteering Comenced into the provisional militia but I did not volunteer³² the volunteering lasted 28 days during which time we that did not volunteer was very Sharply discipld for they Continually marched us about from place to place and made us do all the duty but we beared it all with patience for we knew it would be all over in a month and then we Should be right again but many that did go was Sorry afterwards when their money was gone

82 at this time I was taken with the white flux but it did not prevent me from doing my duty but it Continued upon me untill the next September and the doctors Could do me no good though I tried many in the month of Sept 1814 it turned to the yellow Jaundice and I was perswaded to go to

³¹ The regiment had earlier served in Ireland, in 1798-99 (J.C. Swann, *The Citizen Soldiers of Buckinghamshire, 1795-1926* (London, 1930), p. 15.

³² Under 54 Geo. III c. 1, militiamen were to be permitted to serve abroad in new Provisional Battalions. One of the only successes won by this plan was the formation of the First Battalion from a large part of the Bucks militia. See J.W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army, 1803-1814* (London, 1909), pp. 276-80.

an old Irish Catholick who had Cured many of that disorder by a Charm this I thought was an odd way of effecting a Cure but my master insisted on my going and I dared not Rebell so I went on a Sunday morning but the old man Said he Could do nothing only mondays and thursdays so I returned again to my master and told him on the next day he sent me again and the old man undertook to Cure me he gave me nothing but ordered me to strip into my Shirt and [I] did and he took some green herbs and rubed them on the bents of my arms my Chest and my forehead and wispered something in to himself after this he ordered me to Come again on thursday which I did and he repeated the same again and told me that I should find benefit on the next day and bid me Come again the next monday according to his word I found reliefe on friday morning and on monday I went again and he repeated it the third time and bid Come again on thursday which I Complied with on thursday as I was going up the yard to the door his wife met me with a pap spoonfull of Course Sugar and put it into my mouth and

83 Said I give you this in the name of the father Son/and hole ghost and as sone as I had received it she said you are well and I was as well as I ever was in my life now whether this Ceremonial Charm was the real Cause of my Cure I pretend not to say but this I will say that whereas I was afflicted with a disorder that baffaled the skill of all the physicians that I had the opportunity of trying and that I received an efectual Cure under these means and I believe that God has a right to use such means as he pleases to accomplish his ends

but to return to my subject after the volunteering I was sent to Bal-in-the-moor³³ on the Kings revenue and on the 5th of Feb^y I was Called out by the Gager to go to take a prisoner who had made his escape some time before and when we had taken him to the magistrate he Committed him to Carick on Shannon Jail and on the 6th we marched him to prison on the 7th we returned to Bal-in-the-moor

³³ Probably Ballymore, in co Roscommon, 2½m. SW. of Boyle.

again after I returned in the evening I went into the next house to my quarters to fetch a pennyworth of butter for my super and there was the prisoners uncle in the house as sone as he saw me he went out of the house and as sone as I Came out it being dark I did not see him nor I did not know him nor had I any thought about him but as sone as I Came out he struck me on the head with a Stick and knocked me down as Soon as I fell I Cried murder and the people rushed out of their houses and Came to my assistance and he

84 ran away I lost a great deal of blood and did/not recover the blow for several days but as soon as I was able to march the officer sent me into head Quarters and another man was sent in my place lest they should kill me quite

in a few days after I was Sent to another Station at Drumsna about 3 miles from head Quarters and here I lay till I returned to England which was about 8 months afterwards

in a few days after I Came to Drumsna the officer took me to be his orderly to assist his Servant and to go on Commands and to do his erands for him and he and his Lady was very good to me and often gave me a fivepenny or a tenpenny which was the Curency in that Country one thing I remark here that I never was the Subject of Covetousness till now but one day I had a thought to look into my purse to see what money I had and finding more than I expected for I had as much as ten or twelve tenpenneys and upon seeing this I felt my heart Set upon it so that I thought I was rich and I thought I [would] try to increase it which I Could easily do so I became very saving and such a niggard that I denied myself of the Common necessities of life to save money and it greived me to Spend a penny but in all this I did not like to be Called a niggard Such was my pride but my old master soon helped me to a Cloake to hide it

85 for the Lord in his mercy was pleased to put an end to the war at/this time and we expected to be soon discharged and here I concealed my niggardliness under the pretence of saving my money to assist myself when I was discharged in this I satisfied my Conscience and gained the applause of all my superiors and Came off with flying Colours as I

thought but the fact is however I might hide my abominations from the sight of men in the sight of God it was real Covetousness for during the time that this lasted I was never happy but was always in care how I might get more

this also prompt me to seem religious that I might Carry it off[f] the better but I beg leave to ask the question what Religion Could there be in a heart that was filled with Covetousness in the Course of this summer one day I took the Bible to read and happened on the 54th Chap^r of Isaiah a Chapt that I had never noticed before and as I read it I had such a glorious insight of the promises therein Contained and although I Could not apply one of them to myself yet I saw that God was gracious and so mercyfull as to forgive the sins of the worst of sinners and here I had some hope that he would forgive me for I believed that he was able and willing to forgive all that would make an application to him this operated on my mind but when I attempted to Come to a throne of grace this thought struck my mind what
86 use is it for me to try to follow religion while/I am a soldier since I have made so many attempts and all proved useless then I thought it would be mocking of God and had better let it alone till I was discharged and had my liberty so by degrees it wore off and I began to be as lighy as ever but thanks be to God it never finaly left me for though I did not openly proffess religion yet I had a Secrete desire for it and often wished the time to Come that I might enjoy the Company of the people of God

in the month of October 1814 we received a route for Dublin we marched on the 17th and arived at Dublin on the 22nd and imbarked the Same evening for Liverpool and on the 23rd we landed Safe on old England shore here I began to rejoice for we expected a route to Buckingham to be discharged for many of the Militias were disbanded and we expected the same we waited at Liverpool till the 28th when the route Came but to our sad surprize and disappointment instead of it being to Buckingham it was to Portsmouth for hard duty here I fell into despair of ever being discharged so long as I was able to bear arms on the 29th

we marched from Liverpool and on the 5th of nov^r at Litchfield as I was loading the baggage I and my pardoner has just laid a very heavy arm Chest on the off side of the waggon before which being to[o] heavy for the Shelvings it overballanced and fell to the ground the other man fell
 87 with it and the shelvings struck me on the/head and knocked me off the waggon and I fell with my right thigh on the edge of the Chest I thought I had broke my thigh at first but it was only bruised the other man was very much hurt but we both Came on with the Regiment we had some hopes that when we came to Banbury we should be Countermanded to Buckingham but these hopes were vain for when we Came to Banbury we were turned off to Woodstock my mother and my Brothers met me at Woodstock and I stayed there with them a night and a day and then took my leave of them and Joined the Regiment again at Abingdon on the 19th of Nov^r we arrived at Portsea Barracks in the vicinity of Portsmouth

here I found myself in the midst of hard duty and all hopes of liberty appeared to be Cut off so I determind then to save no more money the money that [I] had I Broke by buying some necessaries which I wanted for my use and the rest I spent here I lost my Spirit of Covetousness and I am sure I lost the worst torment I ever had in my life for in all my Straits in poverty I never was so miserable as I was in the love of money and I would advise all men that love money to forsake it and only use it with moderation we Continued here till Christmass and on the 24th of Dec^r peace was Signed with America this began to revive our hopes again
 88 at this time/we were sent out to do duty at a little Fort this was a little respite from hard duty but in fourteen days we returned again to Portsea about this time the Oxfordshire Militia were sent home to be discharged but we was left this made our duty heavier still at this time the independants sent their Itinerates to Preach in the barrack rooms these were Cordialy received for most of the men were soberly disposed and took delight in hearing but this did not satisfy my mind for I wanted my liberty on the 24th

of March 1815 we were sent to Fort Cumberland about 3 miles from Portsmouth to do duty over the Convicts here I had 22 Guards in 47 days the Governor of the Fort was a Biggot to religion and because there was an old order in the Garrison many years before though it was grown out of date yet because it was not repealed he would not suffer the deserters to Come into Barracks but one Lady Gray that lived at Portsmouth wrote to the Duke of York and there Came an order that if the men approved of it no one else was to interrupt them so then they was permitted to Come again as usual³⁴ on the 5th of May there Came an order for one forth of the old soldiers who had served five years was to be discharged on the tenth and I being the oldest soldier in the Regiment I was discharged on the tenth and arrived at Quainton at my fathers house safe on the 13th of May 1815

Having obtained my discharge from the army and being returned home I began to fancy myself that all my Troubles were at an end I found myself among my own friends and those that I believed were real Christians my father and mother and my eldest brother and his wife were all members of the Church at Waddson Hill and they had newly opened their house again for preaching three times on the Sabbath days and on a Wednesday evening and my youngest Brother was under deep impressions and many others in the place were delighted with the sound of the gospel a good spirit of hearing prevailed among the inhabitants so the house began to be too small for the Congregation and almost every one was willing to Contribute to the Cause of the Redeemer this delighted me much for it was just what I had wished for, for a long time religion began to go in his silver slippers³⁵ and I fancied myself that it would be summer

³⁴ A candidate for 'Lady Gray' is Elizabeth (d. 1822), widow of the First Earl Grey (once commander of the 'southern district', d. 1807).

³⁵ 'By-ends: . . . first, . . . we never strive against wind and tide; secondly, we are always most zealous when religion goes in his silver slippers; we love to walk with him in the street if the sun shines and the people applaud it.' Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 136.

all the year and when one Sabath was over I was impatient for the next

90 mr C-³⁶ a gentleman that attended with us and was delighted with the prospect undertook to enlarge the place and made all things quite Comfortable I was a strong man and in good health and happened to get into a good place of work at the best price so that everything went on very pleasant through the whole of the summer and we were well supplied with a ministry/ in the month of Sept^r 1815 four young women of Quainton that attended with us Joined the Church at waddsdon hill³⁷ this doubled the number of members and an Itinerate from the hill Constantly attended us in the ministry and all things Seemed to prosper

at Michealmass my master declined business and I was out of work and I being a single man and at that time the King wanted Soldiers So the parish would not imploy me but I was determined not to go for a soldier again so I set of to gather old raggs and Sell a few things such as tapes laces thred and Cotton &c at which I done prettey well at first and still enjoyed my liberty on the 18th of Dec^r I married one of the young women that had recently Joined the Church and we were all blessed with the means of grace every Sabath day and prayr meetings in the weekdays through the winter³⁸

we had entered into a society that is the members of the Church and several others that attended to provide somthing for the suport of the ministers to which we Contributed liberally and the money was deposited in the hands of my eldest brother he being a member of sometime standing and there being no other man in the Church except my father and he was an old man and past work and of no abilities though I have every reason to believe he was a good Christain so my

³⁶ Probably John Cox of Denham Lodge in Quainton. See below, 80n.

³⁷ Among whom was Mayett's bride-to-be, Sarah Slade. The Memorandum Book at Waddesdon Hill records her joining the Baptist congregation in the note for 1 October 1815 (NB/19/1).

³⁸ Sarah Slade was the bride (PR 169/1/11); she was the daughter of Thomas and Ann Slade, and had been baptized in Quainton on 31 August 1784. The witnesses to the marriage were the ubiquitous D. Dormer and William Mayott [sic]. All but the latter signed the register (William marked); Sarah (eagerly?) signed 'Mayett' first, then crossed it out, and signed 'Slade'.

- 91 brother had the lead of every thing that appertained to the Cause at Quainton

in the month of may 1816 and on the first Sabath I and my youngest Brother and three more men and one woman all Joined the Church at waddsdon hill³⁹ we were then fourteen in number and we had three ministers who had engaged to preach to us each of them every third Sabath in their regular turns so that we Could say our cup overflowed with blessings and I thought surely goodness and mercy would follow me all the days of my life and was not mistaken for goodness and mercy hath followed me but not in the way that I then imagined for I thought all my sorrows was at an end because the Candle of the Lord shined round about me in the month of July we had t[w]o more women Joined the Church at the hill and the Cause seemed to prosper and all was joy and gladness

on the first of Sept^r 1816 we requested our dismissal to be formed into a separate Church⁴⁰ the Church Complied with our request and respectfully and affectionately dismissed us being sixteen in number and another woman who had been excluded and was at this time restored which made seventeen in number and on the 29th of Sept the Rev^d G. williams our former pastor formed us into a separate Church at Quainton in the County of Bucks and my Brother william being the oldest member was appointed first Deacon and I was appointed Second⁴¹

- 92 after this I soon found the path/way was no longer Strewed

³⁹ On 21 April 1816 Joseph and Thomas Mayett, three other men, and one woman are noted to have joined the church (NB/19/1).

⁴⁰ The transition was not as simple as the text suggests. The Quainton group requested their dismissal in February of 1816 and were denied; 'Brother Williams' was sent in the interim to preach in Quainton. On 2 August 1816 the Quainton congregation was finally dismissed. The Memorandum Book for Waddesdon Hill lists the Quainton members forming the new church, including Joseph Mayett, Sr. and Jr. (his father and himself), Mary Mayett, Sr. and Jr. (his mother and sister-in-law, William's wife), and William and Thomas Mayett, his brothers (*Ibid.*).

⁴¹ The new Quainton Minute Book names Daniel Walker as pastor, and Joseph and Thomas Mayott [sic] and Joseph Dickens as deacons. There is thus an inconsistency between the text and the Minute Book: Mayett notes that William, not Thomas, was the initial deacon (NB/15/1).

with roses for the Care of Church began to involve upon me and things of an unpleasant nature began to transpire about Christmass we engaged with mr Daniel walker of Swanburn one of Deacons of Swanburn Baptist Church who had Constantly preached to us to be our pastor and to pay him by subscription to which I set my hand to pay 1^s 6^d per month as long as I was able after this engagement we proceeded to an Ordination which was Solomnized on the 29th of January 1817

here I met with the first opposition in the Church we were all poor and in narrow Circumstance of life and the ordination Could not be attended without some Considerable expence as there was several ministers to be provided for I and my brothers began to Consult the nearest way to provide for them as we did not know that any would lend us a helping hand my brothers wife wanted to provide a dinner Sufficient for all those people that would Come from other places this plan I and my youngest brother opposed and would not agree to provide no more than what was sufficient for the ministers but my brothers wife said that she should have something from mistress hughes toward the expence and she would keep that and do as she pleased with it when the time drew near mr Cox agreed to provide for part of ministers and mrs hughes gave a pound/to my Brothers wife to be devided between me and my brother for us to provide for the rest of the ministers without any expence to the Church this pound was given to her on the Friday before the ordination but this was unknown to the rest of the Church except herself

this pound note she put into her huzzy⁴² where she had deposited her gold ring after she left the house she dropped the huzzy by the pathside when she Came home she missed it and immediately went back in search of it but Could not find it this made it manifest to the rest of us what she had received and discovered all the secrete on the next tuesday following my business led me along the same

⁴² A case for needles, thread, etc.

path where she lost it and as soon as I awaked in the morning these words struct my mind by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharoahs Daughter and all the while I was getting my breakfast the words by faith was all the while on my mind and while I was eating my breakfast something struck my mind that I should find this money and I said to my wife I shall find marys money this morning as I go to Claydon she said how Could I think of such a thing

I set out to Claydon and the 11th Chap^t of hebrews run Constantly in my mind⁴³ and I thought I should find it so I Carefully searched the road on both sides till I got into the
 94 feild where she Lost it when something else took/my attention and I thought no more about it till I was got quite over the ground and as I was geting over the stile I turned my head and saw the huzzy lay about three or four yards from the path I picked it up and examined it and found the ring and note both in it as soon as I returned home at night I went and informed her that I had found it and gave it to her and as soon as I told her she exclaimed well the Lord has brought good out of evil which gave rise to suspicion that she meant to have kept it herself but this discovered the secrete and after the ordination the money was deyided for what it was given

Soon after this Some of the members began to breake their minds to me on the subject which they had long suspected there had been many Colections made and the money deposited in my brothers hands but no one knew what the money was expended in except himself and his wife I being the other officer in the Church I immediately Contrived a plan how I might Clear my brothers Charackter and satisfy the Church my plan was to have an account Book and to set down all the receipts and disburstments but this plan was
 95 strongly opposed by my brother and his wife and they/would by no mains agree to it and through this many of the subscribers withdrew their subscriptions and in this Case they began to usurp athority over the rest of the members and

⁴³ 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1).

to Censure others that was not members this I did not approve on and often talked to them about it but all in vain So that I began to wish myself out of the Church

about this time I began to be in very narrow Circumstances in life the harvest before being very wet and the wheat much growed⁴⁴ the bread was very dear so that poor people Could not buy any or but very few of my goods that I had to Sell and there was such a Contrast in all sorts of trade at that time so that all things the poor had to Sell was very low and all kind of provission was very dear I soon began to be in debth and this soon brought me into trouble so that I was hard put to it to pay my monthly subscription for the maintainance of the minister but I could not bear the thought of withholding it however I got three month behind and many others withheld their payments because they Could not pay them so that the burthen lay very heavy on the gentleman who had enlarged the place for he had engaged to make up that which we Could not rise through this my own
96 brother and his wife Censured me very sharply/and told me I might pay it I would but I had no love for the Cause of the Redeemer and this greived me to the heart

at this time I knew not what step to take I Consulted my wife on the subject I had a large bellmettle pot in my posession and we agreed to sell it and pay the money to give satisfaction so I took it to Aylesbury and sold it fo[r] 10^s 6^d and bought a tin boiler instead at 6^s and the other 4^s 6^d I brought home and paid it to the gentleman that paid the minister with this he Seemed satisfied the next day was the subscription day again and I had not a single penney so I Could not give it the next Sabath this gentleman accosted me in a very abrut manner and told me that if I had any love for the gospel I should pay that if I could not pay nothing else this greived so much that I knew not what to do I went home and told my wife and took my Bible and opened it upon the 37th Psalm I read it and found much Comfort from it and I made it a matter of prayer and the Lord

⁴⁴ I.e., sprouted.

enabled me to bear the burthen at this time but I was Compeled to withdraw my subscription for I Could by no means pay it⁴⁵

in the [month] of June 1817 two young women Joined the Church which increased our number to 19 but we soon after this had the painfull experience to exclude a young man that was Baptized with me⁴⁶ which reduced our number again to
 97 18/ about [this] time I gave up gathering rags and took to work for which I received 7^s per week to maintain me and my wife and bread was 3^s per loaf in this Case I was much distressed but the Summer Coming on I was soon releived by an advance of wages but the harvest proved very wet so that I met with a disappoint by the great loss of time I sustained but after harvest I met with a place of work at the Esquires⁴⁷ at 10^s per week and the price of bread was Sunk to 2^s per loaf and by these means things of a temporal nature began to take a favourable turn

but I still met with opposition in the affairs of religion my brother and his wife still opposed me and Charged me with many things that were false for they knew the[y] did not act as they oughted to do and this was their policy to blast my Character so that no one might believe anything I said so that they might keep their own standing for they still made a hand of the Colections and embazeled the money that was Colected

about this time there arose a division among us my brother and his wife had stood members at waddsdon hill under the ministry of one mr Davis a great advocate for eternal election and Reprobation he had instilled the principle into many of the members of that Church that Christ died for the elect only for if he did not they said that his
 98 blood must be shed in vain if any soul was lost/ this principle my Brother and his wife began to infuse into the

⁴⁵ Psalm 37 begins 'Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb'.

⁴⁶ The Quainton book has no record of the exclusion in 1817: one of the two women joining at this time was Sarah Holton, later to marry brother Thomas (NB/15/1).

⁴⁷ William Pigott inherited Diddershall from his father (also William) in 1802.

minds of the members but I and my youngest brother opposed it at this time I knew nothing or but very little about doctrinal points but I knew I had been persuaded to believe some thing of that kind myself and it had been the Cause of my living a very licentious life and many others that I had known who had drank deep into that spirit who before had lived a very sober and modest life and fled from sin as from the face of a serpent but after they had drank into this spirit they Could drink down sin as the greedy ox drinketh down water so as they Could but hide it from the eyes of the world the eye of God they did not mind because they believed they were elected on the other hand I had known some who had believed the same principle and had fallen into disgrace and had been driven into desperation because they thought they Could not be elected for if they had they should have been kept from falling

99 this made me stand in opposition to the principle and I was soon able to put its advocates [to] silence but I Could not persuade them to live a prudent and honest life neither did I obtain any peace of mind for they still militated against me and/Charged me with all the infamy they Could devise in order to make others believe my word was not to be taken and many there were that believed it and it done me much injury both in mind and Circumstance for my wife being of a natural weak Constitution and knowing this all to be false it threw her into a state of nervous debility and almost into mental derangement from which I suffered great loss and heavy trials but I trust it has been all for my profit

at this time the esquire that I worked for had hired a Bailly to manage the farm for him and in the month of January 1818 the esquire being gone out for along time the bailly took it upon himself to reduce the wages of me and several more of the men we had no Children for he said a man without a family Could live better upon 9^s per week than those that [had] Children Could upon 10^s but he required us to do as much work as they so in the month of march we all left him and got work elsewhere in the the month of May we had two more females Joined the Church and in

August a young man this increased our number to 21
 in the month of oct^r 1818 my youngest brother Married and
 I was Sent to work for the gentleman that suported the
 Cause⁴⁸ at this arose a disput in the Church Some of
 100 the members had a suspicion that my eldest/brother did not
 act with honesty So the[y] agreed to put the affairs into
 the hands of my youngest brother and he soon made it appear
 that their suspicion was not without ground and while he
 attended to the affairs of the Church things began to appear
 with a better aspect peace and tranquility began to be
 restored but to our sad experience my youngest brother was
 moved four miles away in providence and the affairs of the
 Church fell back again into the hands of the other and this
 Caused a great falling away so that our Congregation was
 very thin yet in the month of may we had one young Man and
 two females Joined the Church

at this time it was Considered that the inconveniency of the
 place was the Cause of our low estate but I told them I
 thought the place was not so much in fault as the people but
 for this I was severely reprovod by my Master he said I
 oughted to be ashamed to Charge my [brother] and his wife
 with such Conduct for he did not believe that they would be
 guilty of misconduct but he thought I was prejudice against
 them

about this time I gave up my office as deacon in the Church
 for which I was highly blamed but I told them that such a
 ruin Should not be under my hand about this time my
 101 master bought a peice of ground and/Begun to build a new
 Chapel in which I was imployed to do the Carting⁴⁹ I
 worked hard but this I did not mind for I began to have some
 hopes that it might prove the means of reviving the Cause
 again

⁴⁸ Thomas Mayett married Sarah Holton on 14 October 1818 (PR 169/1/11); this may have been his second marriage. The Quainton registers show Thomas Mayett marrying Ann Pinder in 1812 (PR 169/1/10); Ann Marriott, aged twenty-five, was buried in Quainton on 13 October 1814 (PR 169/1/18). Joseph Mayett spent 1812-14 distant from Quainton, in Nottingham, Lancashire, Northumberland, and Ireland.

⁴⁹ Mayett's chapel is no longer standing. It was at the village's northern end, i.e., at the opposite end from the parish church, Winwood almshouses, and rectory.

in the month of September we had another man Joined the Church and two of my wives sisters⁵⁰ I had kept them back from Joining the Church sometime because they were young and did not sufficiently know what a weighty Concern it was to Joine a Church for this my brother and his wife Charged me with stoping the increase of the Church the real fact was they knew that I was aware of their abominations and was afraid they should be found out so they tried to the uttermost of their power to set my master against me and if possible to make it appear that all I said was false and if possible to get me out of the Church for they thought if I was once gone they should be right enough

they even tried to perswade me to run away from my wife but I paid no regard to what they said for I knew the acusations were false and the Lord knew so too so I beared it with as much patience as I Could I read my bible at all opportunitys and Carried the matter Constantly to a throne
 102 of grace/ under these Circumstances I was often cast down but the 8th and 9th ver^s in the 7th Chapter of Micah was a great suport to Me under my trials⁵¹

at length the Chapel was finished and on the 13th of october 1819 it was opened at this time we had Changed the place of worship but we had not Corected our evils so we still remained in a very low state and instead of an increase we met with a decrease about twelve months before this I had again Commenced paying one Shilling per month toward the suport of the Minister which I Constantly paid to my master for he employed me and gave me 9^s per week and I Considered it was my duty to do all I Could and this I Continued till January 1820 when my landlord died and I was turned out of my house which I rented at £2 12^s per year and was Compeled to take another at £4 6^s & 8^d per year and was forced to pay my rent every month in this case I Could no longer pay my subscription and was Compeled to withhold it my master often reproved me for it because I did not

⁵⁰ Ann and Maria Slade were baptized in August 1819 (NB/15/1).

⁵¹ 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: My God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: When I fall, I shall arise; When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.'

pay it has I had done heretofore I often told him it was my desire to pay it and I designed to pay it as soon as [I] Could but he always Said I had no desire to pay it and I found by experience that without money there was no peace

103 the Church continued still to dwindle away and I was Charged with being the Cause at this time there was a great many tracks Came out and their Contents were Cheifly to perswade poor people to be satisfied in their situation and not to murmur at the dispensations of providence for we had not so much punishment as our sins deserved and in fact there was but little else to be heard from the pulpit or the press and those kind of books were often put into my hands in a dictatorial way in order to Convince me of my errors for instance there was the Sheperd of Salsbury plain . . . the Farmers fireside and the discontented Pendulum and many others which drove me almost into despair for I Could see their design⁵²

however the harvest Came on and my master and I disagreed about wages but we did not part for he Could not get a man at that time to do his work so I staid with him five weeks longer when he asked me about my subscription I told him I intended to pay him the next week it had lay back 8 months and was 8^s which I intended to do but he fell in a passion and said he would have it then and Charged me with many things that were false which my brothers wife had told him and he believed them so I told him I would not

104 pay it at all I also told/him there was no prospect of any more peace between us and I thought the best way was for him to get another man and I would get another master so I Staid with him four days till he got another man and then I left him the next day after I left him I met with another master who engaged with me for 9^s per week and I stoped with him till the next Lady day in 1821

During this winter I fell into Company with some men in my Journeys to and from my work that were of a Deistical principle these men had got several Books that were

⁵² I have been able to identify only the truly soapy *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, by the indefatigable tract-writer Hannah More.

- written by Cobbet woler and Carlisle against all revealed religion and these men often put them into my hands and I at this time thought myself a sufficient Judge to read them without any danger of being drawn aside by them⁵³ but in this I found myself greatly foiled for between the Carnality of my own heart the insinuations of Satan the perplexities and trials I met with under oppression the Sophistry and deceit of those who gloried in appearance and not in heart and the general Conduct of many that professed to be Christains indeed I began to think there was no reality or at the most but very little for these books seemed to be founded upon the
- 105 Scripture/and Condemned all the sins of oppression in all those that had the supremacy over the lower order of people and when I Compared this with the preceptive part of the word of God I began to Conclude that most if not all professors of religion did it only for a Cloake to draw money out of the pockets of the Credulous in order to Spare their own and no wonder for I had experienced Something of this myself in this State of mind I was in Such a strait that I knew not what to do nor which way to turn I knew I had a precious and immortal soul and I believed there was a Just God and that he would deal with every man according to the deeds done in the body I also knew that I was a Sinner and that I Could not Save myself here I was puzzled to Such a degree that I Could have easily embraced any doctrine either Atheist deist or anything else for I really knew not which way to take and one night being almost overwhelmed and not knowing what to do I was led to Carrey the matter to a throne of grace and I earnestly prayed to God to save me in his way for I believed that he knew how to Save me and guide me and would do it if I put my trust in him
- 106 Just after this as I was going to work one morning one of those men began to talk about religion and after a little Conversation he began to abuse the son [of] God he

⁵³ His comrades had produced an all-star bibliography of Radicals: William Cobbett, editor and author of *Rural Rides*, et al.; Thomas Wooler, publisher and editor, from 1817 to 1824, of *The Black Dwarf*; and Richard Carlile, freethinking printer and publisher.

Called him an imposter and everything that the devil Could put in his head this made one Shudder the thought of Such expressions yea I may say it made me full of anger and fury but I said but little for I found it was but little use to Cast pearls before Swine So from that time I forsook their Company and took Care in futer how I read any more authors I have read many authors since but if I find them in any way Contridict the Bible or themselves in any one instance I Cast them away as a thing of naught and I would advise others to do the same and always prefer the bible before any other book however feasable the[y] may seem

on new Lady day⁵⁴ my master discharged me because the rest of the Parish officers refused to employ their quota of men through this my wages was reduced from 9^s to 6^s per week about three weeks after this my old master which I left the Sept^r before said I did not aught to be employed nor relieved because I had left his Service so the Parish refused to employ me on that account but I went to a magistrate and he Compeled them to employ me or relieve me and give me 7^s per week till I Could get work but I got work the next day/and did not trouble them no more till near the Chrismass

during this time our Cause was at a very low ebb our Congregation was very thin and our prayer meeting very often quite neglected this winter the bread was very dear and after the wheat seeding was done I was out of work and obligated to apply to the overseer for labour he employed me but he would not give me only 6^s per week at this time bread was 2^s 4^d per loaf my wife was very ill and I was obligated to have a woman to wait on her 3^s 2^d per week I paid for rent and fuel which left me only 2^s 10^d per week to maintain myself my wife and a woman to do for her but in this destress the Lord in mercy appeared for me and raised me up a friend who employed me and gave me full wages for my work I also left my house and took another at one Shilling per week and paid my rent half yearly

⁵⁴ 'New' since the dropping of eleven days with the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1752.

and my wife recovered her illness and thus I was delivered again from this State of thralldom

about Six weeks after this my old master that I had left before went to my master that employed me at this time and perswaded him to discharge me which he did then I was Compeled to apply again to the overseer but I did not trouble him long for after the firs week he would not employ me because I had no family/ but here the Lord appeared for me agaig for this wrought for my good for in Consequence of his refusing to employ me another man employed me one week and gave me 8^s 6^d instead of 6^s and before the week was ended another master that I had often worked for before Came and engaged with me to Come to him as soon as the other had done with me

So the Lord led me on Step by Step through all my difficulties and although my enemies Combined together against me yet the Lord did not suffer them to triumph over me on the Saturday I finished my Jobb and on monday I went to the other master to bean setting and while I was at work the same man who had perswaded my master to turn me away Came by me as I was at my work and accosted me in a very abrupt manner and Charged me with Scandlising his Character by saying he was the Cause of my being turned away for he did not know that it was known but the other master that had discharged me had told another farmer and he had told me and I had said it to one of his men and he had told him of it again however in this Case I Confessed the truth and told him there had been a great difference between him and me a long time and I thought it was time to put it to an end and make the matter up between us but he burst out into a great passion and Called me a swindler which I knew he not no other man Could prove me this exasperated me and [I] Confess I spoke unadvisedly/which I ought not to have done for I told him of his faults as well as he did me of mine and this sorely offended him so that he said he thought I was not a fit person to stand a member in the Church this just suited my brothers wife for she thought and said if I was set aside from the ordinance I should leave the Church

altogether and so she tried to the utmost of her Power to accomplish her design

the Sabath after this I went to the Chapel 3 times but neither the Minister Deacons nor any other member never so much as named it to me but the next Sabath after being ordinance day my brother and his wife and the other deacon took it upon themselves to Consult the minister who lived seven miles off[f] and knew nothing of the Subject except what they told him without the approbation of any other member of the Church for they knew the Church would not Conive at his faults more than mine So they agreed and perswaded the minister to set me and my wife both back from the ordinance but they did not let us know untill the evening before the ordinance day when the other deacon Came to my house and told me and my wife that he and my brothers wife and the minister had agreed to set us both back from the ordince to which I replied I saw no injustice in Setting me aside but I wanted to know the reason why my wife was to be set aside/ he told me it was the gentlemans wish that suported the Cause and they must not offend him so I told him they did not mind offending God by punishing an Innocent person So as they did not offend a gentleman

the next morning my wife went up to my brothers house where the minister always Come before he Came to the Chapel and there She met him and my brother and his wife all together and asked if they had done right in setting her aside from the ordince who knew nothing of the affair till I Came home at night and told her to which they Could not answer her a word only it was the gentlemans wish that suported the Cause and they must not offend him but this was only a cloak to hide their design as it appeared afterwards So they exorted her to Come and to tell me to Come as usal to the ordinance but I refused it So they Come to me after morning Service and entreated us both to Come as usal but I told them they had dealt with me Contrary to Church Dicipline and as they had set me aside I would take Care and keep so we neither of us went the next day my poor aged Father Came to me at my work and

111 begged hard that I would forgive them and go again he
 reasoned the Case with me very powerfully/and I Consented
 in the month of April 1822 my youngest brother returned
 home again and he had been in the habit of attending the
 independant Meeting at winslow and had been regularly to
 the ordinance with them and at that time we had an
 independant member or two who often attended at our
 Chapel which made an application to us for admittance to the
 ordinance with us this my other brother and his wife and
 my mother Strongly opposed but I and my youngest brother
 Supported it and the minister being of an open and free Spirit
 we Carried our point in the Month of June we had a
 young man Joined the Church but notwithstanding this we
 were at a very low ebb⁵⁵ our Congregation grew less and
 less untill there was very few attended at any time and prayer
 meetings in particular

112 toward the latter end of this summer my eldest brother and
 his wife and the other deacon Contrived a plan to open a
 Sunday School and thought that would be the means to
 increase the Congregation for they said if they taught peoples
 Children the parent of the Children would attend the
 Chapel but I told them I [thought] that Such a step was
 not very likly to increase the Congregation Seeing there was/a
 national School in the Church of England⁵⁶ but I told
 them I thought that a thorough Reformation in our own
 Conduct was the most likly means to increase the Congregation
 but my advice was not approved on for the[y] Could not see
 any fault in themselves however I would have nothing to
 do with it for I told them that I knew if they took the Children
 from the other School they would pay no attention to them
 and I thought they had better let them Stay where they were
 taught than take them away and then pay no regard to
 them but they told me the old Story which they had told

⁵⁵ The man was George Saunders. He was later noted as having been dismissed to London, second to America as destination of migrants from Quainton in the Minute Book of the Baptists (NB/15/1).

⁵⁶ The building still standing at the end of the churchyard in Quainton dates from 1851.

me many times before that I had no love for the Cause So they began the School

soon after this I was sent to a master to work where I had never worked before and he employed me to milk night and morning and Sundays and I was obligated to do it or have no work and because I had no Children I was forced to do it for 8^s per week while other men had nine but this I did not much mind because I had no trouble with the overseer and I staid with him untill the next hay time during this winter our Cause grew worse they attended the School prettey well at first/ [6th] But they soon began to grow tired of the trouble and by the next haytime the Children were so much neglected that it was very seldom that there was any one to teach them or even to put or keep them in their places

during this winter my work lay very hard upon me and in the Spring it grew worse so in the month of June 1823 I began to think how I might ease myself of the burthen when the haytime Commenced my master and I disagreed about wages he wanted me to work from four in the morning till eight at night which was two hours per day longer then the other men for the same money for he said I had no Children and therefour I Could aford it but I told him if I Could I would not so I left him and engaged with another master the next day for one Shilling per week more than the other would give me and not to milk at all

hence I had my liberty on the Sabath days at this time I went to the chapel two or three Sabath days and found from twenty to thirty Children who Come there to be taught and no one there to teach them this Struck me very forcibly that although I had not Consented to the School that when I saw the others neglect the Children it was my duty to take the matter in hand and to teach them myself as God had given me education and opportunity to do it So I Consulted my wife on the subject and told her I thought we were doing wrong/in letting the Children go without teaching while we were able to teach them so we Consulted the minister on the subject and we agreed to take to the School and manage it if the others were willing

So I and my wife and a few others who had not had no hand in it before undertook it and in a very little time we brought the Children into better order and before the Summer was ended the School was increased to more than fifty Children for I had devised a plan to make every teacher forfit two pence that was behind time and engaged with Several others to Subscrib a little to it every month and so gave a Small prize to those Children that behaved well and by this means I soon accomplished my end in Reforming the Children but all this time we had no prosperity in the Church but everything seemed to get worse but he who knows all things knew how to bring the matter to light in his own good time

115 in the Autumn of 1823 we made as usual a Colection for Candles for the Chapel and these as usual were delivered into my brothers hand and on the Sabath after the Colection as he was puting them in the Candlesticks he desturbed the Children in their Classes so I told him if he would leave the Candles I would put them up for him to which he readily Consented and this was the first step toward finding their misconduct out but I am sure I had not the least/thought of any such thing but when I went home I told my wife how I had agreed to put them up for him but my wife being aware of their spirit advised me not to have anything to do with it for she said if there was not a sufficiency to last the season they would say that I had made away with them but I did not like to give it up after I had agreed to do it so to secure myself I made me a little book and put down therein how many whole Candles I put up every Sabath day and the day of the month and had another member of the Church who assisted me in the School as a witness to all that I done in order to save my own Character and in the whole season I only expended 8 pounds out of fourteen when there Should have been six pounds left in hand

in the month of Feb^y 1824 my Mother who was then about 75 years of age was struck with a parelatic stroke so that she was intirely helpless and my Father was nearly 82 years of age and having only six shillings per week to maintain them I

- purposed going to the vestry to ask the Parish officers to allow them a little more but my brothers wife objected to my going for she said she was appointed by the Parish to do for my mother in her illness for which they gave her three shillings per week and She was the properest person to go to the vestry So I Consented for her to go and when she had
- 116 been she said they would not give them no more/ in this state they Continued for the space of six weeks when one morning as I was going by the overseers house I went in and asked for a trifal more to suport my father and mother with in their destress I said that six shillings per week was too little to suport them in their destress and begged that they would give them a little more when to my surprize the overseers wife replied they have six and sixpence to which I replied I was sure they had not had it and to Convince me that they had paid it she shewed me the Parish book and there I saw six and sixpence booked to my fater for six weeks back I begged her pardon and went home and told my wife and she advised me to search the matter out
- in the evening when I had done my work I went up to my fathers house and told my father the Case when he told me he had never received no more than six shillings per week and that was all that my Brothers wife given him I then Called her and asked her how it was that she had kept back the sixpence per week which she asolutly denied and said that she had never received only six shillings per week for them and threatened to take me before the Magistrate for scandeleizing her Character for she did not know that I had been to the overseer but when I told her I had been to him and had seen the book she then Confessed that he had given her Sixpence per week for washing for them and so laid the fault
- 117 on the overseer /but I told her if She did not produce the money before I left the house I would go to the vestry the next night and report her abominations to the Parish officers So at that She left the room and went as She Said to the overseer and when She returned She brought half a crown which She Said the overseer had given her out of his own pocket for he the overseer Considered that I had used her very

ill however this was all proved afterward to be a lie altogether for one of the members for which she had done some thing for owed her this half Crown So She went and got it and brought it home and asked my mother what she was to do with it so I desired her to give it to my father so she gave it to him and he took it and forgave her the other six pence

this soon Come to the ears of the Church and some believed it and detested the abomination while others whom she had deceived with her Sophistry disbelieved it and pitied her Case but I let the matter drop for the sake of peace after a little while mother got better but never able to do for herself again

thus we went on smothly till the next Sept^r when we began to want Candles again in the Chapel my Brother stoped the Church the other deacon was deceased and my youngest brother was nominated deacon in his room the Church being stoped enquiry was made to know what it was
 118 stoped for /this question was soon answered by my brother for he said he must have a Colection for Candles and I knowing there should be six pound in hand and having the account in my pocket I asked him what was become of all them that was bought the year before to which he replied they were all burnt I asked him where and [he] said at the Chapel I told him there had been only 8 pounds expenced with there out of 14 to which he replied then you have Carried them home and burnt them yourself for said he I will take an oath that I brought them here but the Church was soon Convinced for the other member was there and was wittness to the truth so the matter was soon decided but my brother fell in a great passion and gave up his office as deacon in the Church and left the Chapel for that time after his Passion was over he Confessed his fault and made up four pounds of Candles again but declined his office for he said he was drove to do that which he would not do so he took the blame himself and the Church forgave all but his wife stood it out and vowed she was innocent So the
 119 Church set her aside three months/from the ordinance and we were at peace again

But this occurance soon reached the ears of the gentleman

that supported the cause and he sent for me to Come to his house and I went but not knowing what he wanted me for but expecting it was on that Business I took my accounts with me and when I came there I found it as I expected he asked me the particulars about it and I told him the truth and shewed him the account he asked me if I could attest it on oath and I told him I Could and would if it were the last word I had to speake not through prejudice on any account but as a Confirmation of the truth and an act of Justice and having a sufficient witness and his name Signed to the account he believed it and said he Could not have thought they would have done such a thing and Confessed that he had reproved me in many things which he saw Clearly now that I was right in

120 he told me he would Consult his own brother on the Subject who was at that time Chief deacon of the Church at waddsdon hill from which Church we had been formed which he did and one of our members lived Servant with his brother at the same time Confirmed it for truth⁵⁷ his brother told him that money was a tempting thing and oftentimes when it was/deposited in the hands of poor people without any account being kept they might be tempted to make use of it at times thinking to make it up again but not being able to do it they might be tempted to embezel it from time to time till it became habitual to them without any design to defraud in the first instance which he apprehended was the Case but he would advise him to take a fresh plan as we were all poor people that was to keep an account book with all Reciepts and Disburstments and let one Deacon keep the accounts and another the money and this he thought would prevent all defrauds and keep peace and give Satisfaction to all this plan we adapted and we have had no disputes on that ground since,

In the Autumn of 1824 the subscribers to the Sunday School for prizes and rewards began to withhold their

⁵⁷ Henry Cox, described in his will as 'Dairyman' (D/A We 135/95). His brother John, presumably 'the gentleman that supported the cause' in Quainton, occupied the substantial moated farm of Denham Lodge, and was Henry's executor.

payments through neglect I was compelled to give up rewarding the Children not being able to reward them myself at this the Children took a disgust as they were Constantantly rewarding the children in the Church School So a great many left the School and went to the Church School So that our number was reduced from fifty to about ten or twelve Some of our people began to blame me for letting the Children go but I told them it was not my fault for they themselves would not pay there subscription and I was not able to maintain it myself so they said no more about it

121 in the month of Jany 1825/I was out of work and was Compeled to go into a milking place again the Esquire that lived in the Parish and was a magistrate wanted a man that Could milk and there being no other man out of work at that time beside me he set upon me and made me go or I should have no employ So I was forced to go or Starve so I went about a week after I went my wife was taken very ill I aplied to the Parish for the docter but they refused to let me have him the Churchwarden who had engaged with me to set his beans was not very well pleased that the Squire had taken me away nor with the Parish for forcing me to go but he had not given me earnest and therefore Could not stand against it so he advised me to go to the Squire and get an order and he would See that it was obeyed but he Could do nothing in it himself

The next morning I went to the Squire and Stated the Case but he Said that I was a good labourer and Could get the best of wages and therefore I must pay a docter myself I asked him to give me liberty to go and fetch a docter and he gave me leave I Came home and in the street I met the Parish docter I asked him to Come and see my wife to which he readely Consented I told him the Circumstance and he said he Considered it a piece of greate imposition on the part of the parish and the squire to but he told me not to fear for he Could soon Set her up again and he would do it with little or no expence to me and accordingly he did for when I
122 went to him for the bill he told me/not to trouble myself about it unless he sent the bill but he never sent it but afterwards I was informed that the parish had paid it

about two months after this I Experienced the loss of my brother by law by death he had been a moral man and a very friendly brother to me but one that paid no regard to religion while in health but in his last illness he became the subject of conviction and reflected much on his past misconduct

he said he had sinned against light and knowledge and he thought there Could be no forgiveness for him I often exhorted him to look to Christ but he would say how Could he presume to go to Christ when he had sinned So much against him and would often say o that I had followed religion when I was in health how can I think that God will forgive me now he often said if please God to raise him again he would serve him better and when the docter pronounced him near the grave he was almost in despair but the mount of danger is the place where Jesus shows his smiling face the Cheifest sin that troubled him was that he had secretly and designedly Contrived to break the peace between me and my wife and had tried to prevent us serveing of God and persecuting desenters though he often attended the Chapel and this he said was worse than all for God knew his heart

123 all this was unknown to me untill he confessed it he often begged us to forgive him which we readily did in his distress I often read to him and prayed with him and my wife likewise I pointed him to such portions of the word of God as I thought would suit his Case at length about 14 days before his death I went in to see him and I read the 84th Psalm I thought perhaps the 11th verse might adminester Comfort unto him as it had been a suport to myself for the Lord God is a sun and shield the Lord will give grace and glory no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly but to this he said I have not walked uprightly and therefore the promise is not mine I read the next verse O Lord of host blessed is the man that trusteth in thee it pleased God to accompany the word with power and energy divine light broke in upon his soul and he Clapsed his hands together and Said then there is hope for me and from that time he never had another doubt his earnis desire was to depart and with Jesus and

124 to the end of his life his greatest fear was if God should restore him lest he should fall again into sin and abuse the goodness of God and as he termed it to throw dirt in Gods face for what he had done for him by sinning against him about 14 days after he died expressing these words/Come Lord Jesus Come quickly

In the month of May the Squire wanted to hire me for the summer and bid 12^s per week but I wanted thirteen he said he would give twelve and that was the same as he gave the rest of his men but I said he had told me that I was a good labourer and could get the best of wages and then was my time to stick up for it and if he would not give it I knew then that would and if he had my labour he should pay for it or else he should not have it so he discharged me after this I was hired hayward of the open field which Station I held three years but this was very injurious to my spiritual interest because I was continually bound on the Sabbath day and deprived of almost all the means of grace⁵⁸

125 in the month of January 1826 I was mercifully preserved from injury I was in the garden and had got the gun to shoot at some small birds that infested it and when I fired the gun the barrel burst and blew the lock all to pieces so that some of it was never seen no more and broke the stock in two or three pieces but I received not the least injury from it in the month of March my father died in the 83^d year of his age and we have every reason to believe he is gone to possess that Crown which he so earnestly sought after so many years,⁵⁹

nothing material transpired till the month of March 1827 when my eldest brother died and gave every evidence that his soul was safe in the arms of Jesus⁶⁰ after the death of my

⁵⁸ Quanton was in a tiny Buckinghamshire minority, a parish that resisted the main waves of Parliamentary Enclosure. Open fields existed in 1826, at the centre of the parish, surrounded by ancient enclosures. See M.E. Turner, *Some Social and Economic Considerations of Parliamentary Enclosure in Buckinghamshire, 1738-1865* (Univ. of Sheffield, Ph. D. Thesis, 1973), pp. 102, 184, 194.

⁵⁹ The list of the burials in the Baptist chapel yard includes, on 23 March 1826, Joseph Mayett.

⁶⁰ William Mayett was aged forty at his death, and was buried on 25 March 1827.

brother his widow Still maintained her old principles of Covetousness and my mother being in a state of mental insanity at times She had got many of her goods in her own possession and would not give them up neither to her nor to my brother [nor to] me but said that the overseer had given her orders to keep them and if I or my brother said anything about them he would Settle us and take to them himself and this he actualy had done so that he was more in fault than she

I said to my brother that if that was the case we would let them rest to which he agreed and I went to the overseer and asked him what athority he had to proceed in such a maner he at first denied it but I attacked so Close

that he Could not deny so I found it to be a Conspiracy between him and my sister by law and he being Constable as well as overseer I told him if he did not deliver everything into my hands the next morning I would put the law in force against him⁶¹

so the next morning he Came and delvered them up to me and my youngest brother and my mother was put to my brother for his wife to do for her about a month

126 after this a young man who lived about two miles/off died suddenly and my brothers wife was required [to] attend on the Circumstance this caused my mother to be removed to my house for my wife to take care of her while my brothers wife was away after she returned my mother Choose rather to stay with me because she was nearer the Chapel so we let her have her own way,

Nothing material transpired through this summer and the next winter not of a temporal nature but our Church Continued all this time in a very low Condition at a prayer meeting we seldom had more than three or four to attend so that our Cause almost dwindled into nothing in the month of march 1828 I gave up my place as hayward of the field and went to work again on the Parish for I found that the money alowed me for doing the office was less than paupers allowance and I was Confined and obliged to work

⁶¹ The alleged conspirator was Stephen Read, who in 1827 held the offices of deputy overseer (PR 169/12/11) and petty constable (Q/S 0/39, Easter 1827).

the same on the Sabath as on other days and I did not like it so as soon as I Could Consistantly give it up I resigned it

127 about 3 months after I gave it up I was near loosing my life on the 8th of July 1828 there was a very heavy Storm of thunder and Lightening and a great inundation of rain and hail So that in about the Space of tow hours some of the fields and most of them were entirely imersed in water my master sent me to see after some of his sheep and as I was returning home I had to Cross a small brook when I Came to it the flood had Carried the plank away and the water being so much higher than the place where the plank should have lay and I not knowing the plank was gone I fell in and very narrowly escaped drowning but bless be God he did not leave me to perish but mercifully preserved my life again

128 at the latter end of July I went up to Alderbury in hartfordshire⁶² to harvest and while I was reaping I pricked the first Joint of my forfinger of my left hand this took to swelling and gangering so that I was forced to leave my place and return home and for ten days I had no rest night nor day and I began to think my finger would mortefy and kill me this was the first time I ever thought of being near death this made me very uneasy for I had no assurance of being saved and although I had made a profession for so many years yet I was alarmed at the thoughts of death for I knew not how a sinner Could be sheltered in the righteousness of Christ neither had I once gave it a thought how God Could be just while he Justified the sinner in his Sight and I began to reflect more particularly on my past life/and the solemnity of meeting my God as a righteous Judge in about ten days the gathering brok in my finger and I obtained ease and found it out of danger and felt my heart thankfull to almighty God for his kind interposesion on my behalf

from this time I began to search the scripture more minutely and to pray more earnestly for the influencies of the

⁶² Aldbury, 3m. E. of Tring, up on the Chilterns across the Vale of Aylesbury from Quainton. It is 14 miles from Quainton.

129

Holy Spirit to enlighten my understanding and to teach me the right way to understand the plan of Redemption and the real meaning of the word of God I had thought before that I understood the Scripture aright and was very well Satisfied that all my Constructions that I had put upon the word of divine truth was right and according to the will of God but when I Came to search more minutely and to Judge impartialy I soon found that I had put a wrong Construction on some of the passages because I found other passages that Clashed with my Construction and I Could by no means make them harmonize which I knew must be the Case if I had not Constructed them wrong this put me on the rack for I thought as I was wrong in some I might be in all and from this time I resolved with the Lords assistance to follow the dictates of scripture and not my own foolish opinion nor the opinions of others and to/pray earnestly to God to grant me his holy Spirit to instruct me and not to Come to any hasty Conclusion but to Search the Scripture dilligently to See whether things were so or not this I did and the more I searched the more I saw my weakness and ignorance and was brought more wholly to trust to the mercy and will of God and the teachings of his holy spirit and to put no Confidence in the flesh,

At this time I had been a member of a benifit Society 11 years and received 15^s per week from it⁶³ at 5 weeks end I declared off[f] the Box though my hand was not well enough to work but I bought yeast and Carried it about the villages for my living which I followed till the next new years day at this time there was a man by the name of walter Evens who had been preaching about the villages in the Conection of Ranters or Revivilest of two or three years past this man had made an aplication to mr Sexton of Chesham the general baptist for baptism by imersion and had been baptized but

⁶³ At least one Friendly Society had been operating in Quainton in 1817 (i.e., eleven years earlier): the meeting at the White Hart Inn was begun on 1 June 1812, and its orders (signed in 1813) are preserved in the Quarter Sessions records (Q/RSf/96). Rule 15 bars those over thirty-five from joining; Mayett was aged thirty-four in 1817.

had not Joined no Church⁶⁴ there were some few people who had been Convinced of the State they were in by nature and Practice t[w]o among which was two young men in our own place and four in uper winchendon and those two in our own place had been very profligate Characters and was greatly reformed in their walk and Conduct which bore a great testimony that he had Preached the Gospel

- 130 This man had a mind to preach in our Chapel and one Sabath day in the month of September these two young men who had been brought to the knowledge of the truth unde his ministry made an aplication to the gentleman that Suported the Cause for admision to the Pulpit which he readily granted but I knew nothing of the matter untill I Came to the Chapel in the afternoon when our own minester told me of it I had heard much about his Preaching before but had never heard him but I was desirous of hearing him and here I had opportunity the Service Comenced and he Preached from the 12th Chap of St Johns gospel and the 32d ver and I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me, he dwelt much on the solemnity of the death of Christ and the Congregation paid great attention in fact I never heard of only two in the Congregation that did not approve of him and they were two high Predestinarians and it was evident that it was not his doctrine that they objected so much as they did his being a ranter as I was Coming I said to my brother how did you like mr Evens and he answered me in the following words I should like to know who Could dislike him our minister approved on him much and engaged with him to preach again in the evening after evening service I asked him and our own minister to go to my house to supper and they Came with me while they
- 131 [were] at my house they agreed to meet each/other on the thursday following at that aniversary at Aylesbury which they did while they were at my house our minister Said we wanted such a man as he to preach in the week days to stir up

⁶⁴ The General Baptists did not support the doctrine of Election and, by the early nineteenth century in Chesham, were strongly evangelical. See D.W. Lovegrove, 'The Baptist Church in Mid-Buckinghamshire', (n.p., 1967), pp. 39, 43.

the people to a better attendance on the means of grace as he lived only two miles from us and he that is our own minister lived 7 miles of[f] from us and Could not attend himself he also asked my opinion on the subject and I said I had not the least objection if it was agreeable to the rest of the Church and to mr Cox and mr Evens said he should like to Come and to Joine the Church if it was agreeable⁶⁵

I began to be lifted up in spirits for I thought it would be the means of bringing some poor souls to the knowledge of the truth which I trust has been the Case so we agreed for him to Come if the people were willing the next morning I [went] up to my brothers house my brother was out at work but his wife was at home I asked her how she liked mr Evens she said not at all for she said he did not speak the truth I asked her what it was that he said that was not truth she said that he said there was weeping in heaven and she would not believe it, when he was Speaking of the sufferings of Christ on the Cross he said well might John weep and there was Silence in heaven for the space of half an hour and to illustrate his discourse he said he made no doubt but/there was weeping among the angels this was a simple thing to object to but whenever the Devil is in danger of loosing a subject he will be sure to bestir himself in order to keep them and to stop the progress of the gospel but her objections did not dishearten me although She biased the mind of my brother against both him and me

the next Sabath day he preached again and the inhabitants of the place began to show a manifestation that they approved on him by their attendance on publick worship on the Sabath days and some said they wished he would preach a sermon in the week days this was Just what he and I and our own minister had already Contrived though we had not made it publick but as soon as we found that the people were willing to receive the gospel we were determind to persevere

so we soon opened the doors for Preaching once a week and

⁶⁵ Walter Evans was baptized in 1828, for at least the second time, if Mayett's recollection of the baptism at Chesham is correct. He was the first new member of the congregation since George Saunders joined in 1822.

the Chapel was well attended but my brother and his wife and another man who was a very high principle man but not a member of the Church but had Something to do with it because he helped to suport our minister these three militated against this man because he was Called a ranter this man Certainly was a very poor man and very low in the vale of
 133 Poverty and the people of the world/had branded him with much infamey and some of the desenters to[o] but there was none found that Could prove him guilty of anything laid to his Charge except it was his being a little in debth and this I believe was Cheifly through Poverty for before we admitted him to ordinance we traversed his Character through all his Changing scenes of life where Providence had led him even to the society that had Called to the ministry yet notwithstanding this my brother and his wife strenuously opposed his Joining the Church but the Lord appeared to bless his labours for before Chrismass we had no less than 7 young men who had never before manifested any regard for religion all brought under deep impressions and all Joined the Church afterward seeing a prospect of good being done I was determined to Persever if the Lord enabled me for I saw Clearly that those young had set their affections on him because he had been the instrument in bringing them to the knowledge of the truth which is generally the Case with young Converts and this I looked at for I saw Clearly that if we rejected him in the Church those young men would follow him as a ranter so I strove to the utmost of my power to bring him in and on the 16th of Nov 1828 he appeared before the Church related his Experience was baptized beforehand among the generals and on the 7th of Dec^r 1828 took his place at the Lords table

134 At this time my brother (with whom I had lived for the space of 38 years on the best termes of friendship and I do not remember that we ever had a Jaring word in all our lives) became opposed to me and tried to the utmost of his power to perswade the rest of the Church that this man was an imposter and only wanted to get into the Church for sinister ends in this point I was rather doubtful myself but it

Could not be proved to be so at that time and seeing as I did at that time that the prosperity of the Church depended upon his being admitted into the Church as the Chief means and that the downfall of the Church rested upon rejection of him I was determined to persevere and leave the matter in the hands of that God who Sees the Secretes of all hearts⁶⁶ for I thought if he was an imposter it would [be] best to let those who was so much attached to find it out by experience as his Conduct proved than for us to reject him on mere Supision and the Church was of the same opinion

but my brother and his wife were both of them very fond of the doctrine of Eternal decrees and was determined to oppose the proceedings of the Church but he laid the blame on me and said that I had led the Church into errors but the Church paid no regard to what the[y] said at this time we had a
 135 good/Spirit of hearing and those two young men that had been impressed under the ministry of this man came forward to Joine the Church and was accepted they were baptized and took their place at the table of the Lord on the 4th of January 1829 about this time the Cause seemed to be as it were all life and prosperity whenever we met we hardly knew how [to] part except my brother and his wife they attended the publick means of grace but withdrew themselves from all friendly Conferances and stood aloft from us

about this time I fell into some disgrace myself there was a man a member of the Benifit Society to which I belonged that was my most inveterate enemy I had sometime before detected him in some of his dishonest transactions and had brought him to Justice and this Caused him to militate against me and he tried every means to turn me out of the Club but it never was in his power this man overtook me one day on the road as I was Coming from Aylesbury and began to pick a quarel with me and abused me

⁶⁶ There is a risk of mistaking association with causation, but note that even though six men and women joined the congregation in 1819, only George Saunders (1822) was added until Walter Evans joined (1828). Then at least eleven joined in 1829 alone (NB/15/1).

136 very much with words which I took very peaceably for a long time untill he Called me a rogue and Charged me with being an imposter upon the Club when my hand was bad the harvest before which I knew was faulse/ this exasperated my temper and I gave way to passion and Struck him this soon Came to the ears of the Church and a Church meeting was held to enquire into the affair but the people of the town all well knew this man and the baseness of his Character and that he had insulted me many time before and therefore allmost every person in the place said it was only doing him Justice and the Church Considered it in the same light but this did not Justify me in giving way to passion nor in striking him neither did it expiate my guilt this lay heavy on my mind for a Considerable time untell the Lord was pleased to remove the burden from my mind and to shed forth the beams of his mercy and grace again into my soul

after this we went on Comfortably and our Cause seemed to prosper those young men who had been impressed under the ministry of this man that had lately Come among us these had Commenced holding privat pray meeting among themselves and was very Zealous for the honour and glory of God and the wellfair of souls and I am happy to say that their labour was not in vain in the Lord for the Lord was pleased to bless their labours and crown them with Success and to grant
137 a great increase to the Church/[N^o 7] on the 3d day of May 1829 we had three more Joined the Church and we went on rejoicing in the work of the Lord all was unity peace and prosperity except my brother and his wife these Stood aloft from us and held but very little conection with us but we others Still was determined to persevere so we went on and tried every means to promote the Cause that lay in our power we often met together for spiritual conversation in our private houses and at this time we never were so happy as when we were together and we Could say the candle of the Lord Shone round about us on the 30th May 1829 we had six more young men Joined the Church and the work of the Lord seemed to prosper in our hands through the whole of the summer and we were able to say the Lord had prospered us in all Spiritual blessings in heavenly places

but in temporal things I met with much opposition in the begining of June my master which I had worked for all the Spring discharged me because he had nothing for me to do I had been employed for several months in the place of one of his Constant men who had been ill and when he was recovered he Came again and I was discharged and forced to aply to the overseer for work at this time there was many men out of work and the old squire been the Cheif Justice in this part of the Country he took upon himself to reduce
 138 every/mans pay two shillings per week and I was alowed only 4^s per week to maintain myself and my wife to pay rent and find fuel unless I Could get work and that I Could not do for a Constancy⁶⁷ So Some of us went to the squire to make our Complaint but he would not hear a word we had to say but began to swear and abuse us and I reproved him for swearing and told him if he swore again I would make him pay for it this enraged him to such a degree that though he took Care that he swore no more in my presence yet he ordered the overseer not to relieve me nor find me a days work So long as I Could get 4^s per week so when I got a days work I lived on it till I got another so from the begining of June to the begining of August I got no more than 5^s & 6^d per week and this brought me into a very weak state for want of the Common necessities of life

in the begining of August I went up to Alderbury in hartfordshire to harvest at the same place as I was at the year before the next day after I went up the weather began to be very wet and I Could not get a bed no w[h]ere in the town so we were forced to sleep in a loft the wheather Continuied incesantly wet all the time I was there and one day I got very wet indeed and Caught a very bad Cold and being so weak before it settled in my Chest and ruined my
 139 Constitution/ about the middle of August I returned home and the weather became more fine so that my Cold seemed something better I got about 14 days work areaping and on the night I finished as I was going home I

⁶⁷ The 'old squire' was William Pigott of Doddershall (1773-1838), J.P. since 1800.

was attacked with the spasms in my Chest and was forced to stop after it was gone off I went home and found no more of it for the space of fourteen days

on the following monday I mad[e] an application to the overseer for imploy but he refused to imploy me so I Complained to the magistrates in the pettey sessions and they ordered him to relieve me the Same as other men on the following day I went to my old master which I had worked for the spring before to thresh a bag of beans which lasted 10 days while I was [there] I found nothing of the Spasms in my Chest but when I had done threshing I was sent to work on the road and then the spasms returned but the[y] were very light and I thought they would leave me in the spring of the year so I made no application to any medical aid for assistance though they still grew worse till the 22nd of november when my wife was taken ill and the parish doctor Came to see her when I asked him about it he said I had taken a bad Cold and it was settled in my Chest but he would send me something to remove it he sent me a box of pills

140 and I began/to take them on Friday morning the 27th I was took with a pain in my left side near my heart and was Compeled to give up my work and fall on the Club from which I received 15^s per week and 2^s & 9^d from the parish I was well provided for temporal blessings and well attended with my brother members in the Church

In the course of the last summer before I was taken ill our friend walter Evens was through poverty obliged to leave us⁶⁸ he went to reside at greens norton near Towsiter [Towcester] in Northamptonshire and thus he requested his dismision to Joine a church in that neighbourhood and we dismissed him but one of the men that had been enlightened under his ministry was called to the work himself so we were still able to carry on the cause⁶⁹ this youn man and I was very intemate with each other we were both of one

⁶⁸ The Quainton Minute Book records, in three hands, 'Walter Evans' 'Excluded for bad conduct' 'Ranter'. The second hand also struck through the name; he was the only excluded member to have been so obliterated.

⁶⁹ John Bridges, John Gunn, and Zachariah Craker were all members of the intake of 1829, and are noted as having been dismissed to America (see below), but beyond that no identification of the intimate friend is possible (NB/15/1).

principle and opinion on doctrinal points and the whole of the Church concurred with us in sentiment except my Brother and his wife and they steadfastly opposed us but this we did not mind for we gave up ourselves up to the constant practice of reading and Studying the Scripture and we made it our practice to meet every night in the week except Saturday
 141 night at one private house or other and to visit the sick till I was taken ill and then this man together with the rest paid a very strict attention to me

In the month of September 1829 we had 7 more added to the church and in the month of Dec^r I recovered Strength my cold got better and the pain in my side left me but the pain in my chest still continued but I still thought it would wear off and leave me in the Spring of the year and the doctor said the same so on the 18th of Dec^r 1829 I declared off the Club and went out again when I went out I was forced to apply to the overseer for work but it being a frost he had no employ for none of the men that was at that time out of work so we had to go to him every morning to answer our names but we had nothing to do beside the weather being severe and having to stand at his door for a long time in the morning till he dismissed us I caught a fresh cold and of the 29th of Dec^r I was taken ill again and forced to fall on the Club again the second time at this time my brother was very much opposed to me and the proceedings of the church and tried every means to persuade me to be of his principle but this I could not agree to no further than the word of God gave me authority and this caused us to keep at a distance from each other more than we ought to have done

142 at this time my mother lived with my Brother and his house was nearly half a mile from mine and on the 28th of Dec^r the day before I was taken ill the second time she was taken ill but my brother did not let me know till after I was taken ill myself and on the 2^d of Jan^y 1830 she died so I never saw her no more⁷⁰ from this time till the month of Feb^y I was close confined at home the weather was very severe but when

⁷⁰ Mary Mayett was buried in the Chapel yard on 2 January 1830. The Overseer's book records the administrative history of her last days. Every week in

the weather broke I got rather better but the next week I fell off again so the docter said he thought I had better try without medicine for that seemed to do me no good

at this time there [were] many Sick on the Club and the overseer was a member so he used his influence to persuade the docter to turn me off the Club by telling him he would suport me from the Parish without work this struck me off about 13^s per week I than made application to a water docter⁷¹ and he gave me a Certivicate and put me on my pay again from the Club but at the end of 14 days he pronounced me incureable and said he could do nothing for me he told me the nature of my disorder and said that I might live some little time but he did not believe I could be Cured

143 at this time I felt great Consolation of mind I was sensible that the Lord had a sovereign right to deal with me as he pleased and I trust I can say with propriety that if I ever enjoyed the presence of the Lord this was the time I felt well satisfied with his dealings toward me so that I could rejoice in my afflictions for I had such a glorious insight of his sovereignty over me as his Creature and of his grace and mercy in perserving and providing for me so that I felt thankful for all that I received and that I was still this side of eternity I was much delighted in the plan of redemption as I viewed it free and full and so well adapted and suited to every case of poor perishing sinners and I see so Clearly that God was willing to pardon and forgive every soul that would Come to him for life and salvation and that he would Cast none out that came to him by faith and the more I contemplated on his grace his mercy his longsuffering his patience condision his love and all his divine attributes and perfections the more I felt my heart drawn out after the Lord and felt him to be the chiefest amongst ten thousand and altogether lovely

144 in the begining of my illness I had a very curious

1829, 6^d is allotted for 'doing for widow Mayett'; in the first entries for 1830 is 'widow Mayott's Burial, 9^s 5^d' (PR 169/12/11.Q).

⁷¹ The *OED* allows three possible meanings, c. 1830: a water-caster (who practised the inspection of urine as a means of diagnosis), the medical profession (depreciatively), or quack.

dream I dreamed that I was at Alderbury in hartfordshire and entered into a field of wheat which was very strong and green and the corn in the ear at its full growth but not ripe and as I stood and veiued it I perceived a fire on the ground among the wheat but no flame I examined the field and found it all alike and I thought I would stay and see the end of this sight and as I stood viewing it I perceived a very great cloud of smoke ascend up from among the wheat so that the Sun was darkened with it but after a little while the smoke vanished away the Sun shone again very bright and the wheat appeared very ripe the weeds that grew among the wheat and all the flag that was upon the straw was all consumed by the fire but not the least stalk of wheat was injured by the fire but the straw was remarkable white and the[y] were the largest and best ears I ever saw in my life this wrought much on my mind for I thought the Lord would try me in the furnice of affliction yet he would save me from the Power of it as he did the wheat from the fire

145 and when I looked back and took a reterasperspective view of my past life and remembered the many deliverances he had wraught for me and how I had sined against him I could but adore his wondrous grace love and mercy toward me and Say all the way the Lord hath led me hath been a right way I felt as though I Could not love him enough I thought all my trials in this life was at an end and that I was as good old mr Bunyan terms it in the land of Beulah⁷² but the Lord did not see fit that this should be the case for he raised me again in a great measure and after this I found many sore conflicts to encounter with and I am sorry to Say from a quarter that I little expected

however in the month of march the Lord enabled me to go again to the Chapel and to worship in his sanctuary and though my friends constantly visited me at home yet I delighted to meet them in the house of God in the latter end of march my most particular friend the young man that had been Called to the work of the ministry with whom I had

⁷² The 'country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant', lay 'within sight of the City they were going to' (*Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 195).

146 Spent so many delightful hours/was called in Providence to emigrate to America this loss I felt severely for there was no other friend in the church that I could converse so freely with as with him for he was a free open hearted christain at this time we were all in unity peace and tranquility except my Brother and his wife and these were opposed to us all but this had no efect upon the rest of us for we constantly met together and our prayer meetings [were] well attended at all times and our fame was Spread abroad far and near for being the most friendly people in this part of the country for we all was Joined together in hand and heart and sentement and thus we continued for twelve or fourteen months

in the month of May 1830 I [was] perswaded to go to Oxford for advice to the physians which I complied with and one of my particular friends a young Gentleman and member of the church which I was very intimate with and was at that time on the most agreeable terms of friendship this young man took me to Oxford in his gig on the 19th of May and again on the 3d of June but I obtained only a partial releif⁷³ I took their medicine for a time but they soon
 147 gave me up as/incureable so I was without medicine till the next october when a Medical Gentleman Came to one of my neighbours when I saw him I asked him his opinion of my disorder and when he had examined me he told me he had no hopes of performing a cure but he said he could give me medicine that would prevent other disorders Joining with it and that might perserve my life for some years and he would do it gratis as I was a poor man and not able to pay this I considered a very great mercy from God and felt my heart full of gratitude to him for his kind mercy toward me in sending such a friend to me at such a time when I had no hopes of reliefe from any quarter and how could I consider it otherwise when I never saw the man before nor he me but we were intire strangers to each other moreover he desired me to send to him Constantly and bid me not be

⁷³ William Cox, named as son of John Cox of Denham Lodge in his uncle Henry's will (D/A We 135/95), was part of the large 1829 intake of the Quainton Particular Baptists (NB/15/1). His father never joined the Quainton congregation.

afraid of the expence for he would [not] Charge me anything he let me blood and sent me a blister and some medicine by which I found reliefe in some measure though not a cure and I have reason to bless the Lord that he ever Sent him to me

148 in the Church we were all united/in general our friends had Commenced a prayer meeting at [Shipton] Lee and another at North Merson [Marston] and both were well attended but at Merson there was a society of the weslians or Methodists and when our friends began to hold prayer meetings in their border there arose no small stir among the methodists lest their people should be drawn away by the Baptist for many of their members attended with ours and this exited the minds of their leaders and they Charged the Baptist with holding the tennets and principles of the antinomians that is eternal Election and Reprobation which at this time there was no more than two or three in our Church that did hold it and they had no influence over the rest⁷⁴

on the 12th of Dec^r 1830 we had 5 more members added to the Church at this time I was some what recovered and was able to take my place again at the Lords table in assisting the minister at the ordinance this day there were many spectators of our order among those there were some who made their business to inform the Club to which I belonged that I had Carried the bread and wine round at the ordinance in which case they called their Committee together to prove me an imposter on the Box but this they could not do without sending a medical to examin me so they sent one to
149 examin/me and [he] returned me in a very dangerous State so they could do me no injury

⁷⁴ The Methodists had a local precedent for their concern. In 1829 in Quainton, where Joseph Mayett had learned to read in a then-Methodist household, the Nonconformist Returns found forty Baptists and no Methodists (QS/W/A/169 (i)).

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