Polite Letters

Polite Letters:
The Correspondence of Mary Delany (1700-1788) and Francis North, Lord Guilford (1704-1790)

Edited by

Alain Kerhervé

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Polite Letters: The Correspondence of Mary Delany (1700-1788)
and Francis North, Lord Guilford (1704-1790),
Edited by Alain Kerhervé

This book first published 2009

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-0610-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-0610-7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DNB	Leslie Stephen, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1885-1900. 63 vol.
Llanover	Delany, Mary. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville Mrs Delany, with Interesting Reminiscences of King George III and Queen Charlotte.* Edited by Lady Llanover. 6 vols. London: R. Bentley, 1861-62.
MS North	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS North.
Newport	Newport, Newport Reference Library. 2M416.6; 012 DEL. *Mrs Delany's Letters.*
Yale	New Haven (CN), Beinecke Library. General Collection Manuscript. Miscellany. Osborne Files.

INTRODUCTION

"A chain of comfortable friendship"[1] is the phrase used by Lord Guilford to sum up his epistolary exchanges with Mary Delany. It was written in 1786, after over thirty-five years of contact, and it pointed to the longevity of a relation based on pleasure, fidelity, familiarity, closeness and intimacy. Their friendship was shown in many ways, including the repeated concern for each other's health, the genuine attention to their relatives, the desire to help, and the readiness to sympathise or comfort on any occasion. Moreover, the letters were only intended to maintain links when they were unable to meet (as they frequently did).

And yet the prism of friendship would probably be too restrictive an introduction to their correspondence. It is an eighteenth-century correspondence between a man and a woman, a prolonged exchange between two individuals belonging to distinct social categories and yet living in the same social circle. Several political matters are also largely represented in the letters, which are both political and polite. We cannot deny that the exclusive appearance of friendship needs qualifying, if we consider the permanent presence of politeness – clearly materialized in their writings – first because both abode by the rules of polite discourse, and second since it matched and reinforced their refined, public way of conversing and living. The letters exchanged by Mary Delany and Lord Guilford clearly highlight the fact that "the public and private realms are less well segregated from one another and less exclusively gendered than they are sometimes represented to be,"[2] but also that state and family –

[1] Letter 38. The phrase might have been inspired by Marcus Tullius Cicero's treatise "On Friendship" which was translated into English in 1704. It was taken up in several letter writing manuals in the eighteenth century. See for instance *The Court Letter Writer* (London: printed for S. Bladon, 1773), p. 121, or *The Complete Letter Writer* (London: B. Long, and T. Pridden, 1776), p. 173.

[2] Lawrence Klein, "Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, ed. J. Still and M. Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 102.

zones which are usually gendered as male and female – may merge into a symbiotic realm in which gender differences become blurred.[3]

Mary Delany and Lord Guilford's lives were regularly inscribed in the public sphere, since the two of them participated in a number of social and political gatherings. However, they were also tensed by a consistent private sphere (two husbands and three wives, several estates to manage, large families) and frequent involvement with the Court and the royal family. Their lives will be examined first. The presentation of their correspondence will then permit to examine the sources from which the degree of public and private involvement can be questioned. The geographical origin and destination of the letters and the evolution of the density of exchanges can help us understand the origin of the constant movement from one sphere to another. A third step of this presentation will focus on the way the private sphere is presented in the correspondence, under the form of familiar letters, tackling domestic issues to be shared almost exclusively with family and friends. In a fourth point, this introduction will aim to tackle the degree of public involvement in the letters. It will permit to establish how some historical events are recorded by two correspondents with rather similar feelings towards the events. Eventually, we will try to assess the public dimension of the correspondence in what Habermas calls the "republic of letters," by examining in what way the correspondence between Lord Guilford and Mary Delany was representative of a correspondence between a man and a woman in eighteenth-century England.

[3] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

1. Short biography of Mary Delany (1700-1788)[4]

Mary Delany, an artist and letter-writer, was born in 1700 in Coulston, Wiltshire (England). She was the daughter of Bernard Granville, younger brother of George Granville, Lord Lansdowne. Her father's sister Ann was maid of honour to Queen Mary, and afterwards married Sir John Stanley, who was one of the commissioners of customs from 1708 to 1744. She was first raised by her aunt, in expectation of a place in Queen Anne's household, and she met George Frideric Handel for the first time when she was ten years of age.

With the death of Queen Anne, the Granville family had to retire to the country, where Lord Lansdowne introduced his niece to his sixty year-old friend Alexander Pendarves. Mary was forced to marry Pendarves and accompany him to his castle in Cornwall (Roscrow) in 1717.[5] She had many suitors, but remained faithful to her husband to the end. He died in 1724. The twenty-year-old widow settled in London, sharing a house with a friend, Sylvia Donnellan. There she met William Hogarth. Soon afterwards she was set to marry Lord Baltimore – who later founded the eponymous American city – but he changed his mind at the last moment and she decided to follow Bishop Clayton and his wife to Ireland, where she sojourned in 1731 and 1732, exchanging letters with her family and also John Wesley – later founder of Methodism. In Dublin, she spent many an evening with Jonathan Swift, whom she continued to write to when back in England, and Patrick Delany, Swift's friend and biographer,[6] who

[4] Several biographical essays were written about Mary Delany's life. See for instance Austin Dobson, "Dear Mrs Delany," *Side-Walk Stories* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 110-29; "Mrs Delany," *Frasers Magazine* (1862), p. 448-457; George Paston, *Mrs Delany (Mary Granville): A Memoir* (London: Grant Richards, 1900); Walter S. Scott, "Mary Delany," ed. Gertrude Townshend Mayer, *The Blue Stocking Ladies* (London: J. Green and Co., 1947), p. 19-44; "Mrs Delany," *Westminster Review* (1862), p. 374-399; Gertrude Townshend Mayer, "Mrs Delany: Queen Charlotte's Friend," *Women of Letters* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1894), p. 163-205; Colwyn E. Vulliamy, *Aspasia, the Life and Letters of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany (1700-1788)* (Edinburgh: J. and J. Gray, 1935).

[5] Her autobiography reads: "I was married with *great pomp*. Never was woe drest out in gayer colours, and when I was led to the altar, I wished from my soul I had been led, as Iphigenia was, to be sacrificed. I was sacrificed" (Llanover, I, 29).

[6] Patrick Delany (1685-1768) was an Irish theologian. He published *Revelation Examined with Candour* (1732, 1734, 1736), *Reflexions upon Polygamy* (1738) and *A Historical Account of the Life and Reign of David King of Israel* (1740-42).

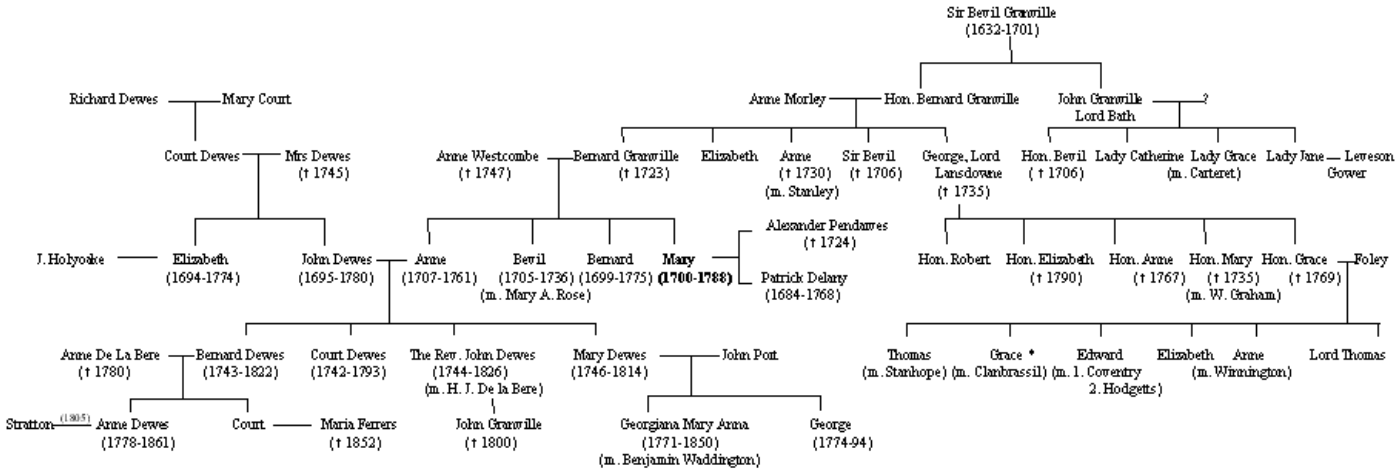
eventually married her on 9 June 1743. In the 1730s, she also made friends with Margaret Bentinck (1714-1785), the 2nd Duchess of Portland.

Between 1743 and 1768, the Delanys spent several years in Ireland, in Delville – their Dublin estate – and Downpatrick, since Patrick Delany had been nominated to the Deanery of Down. There Mary Delany became one of the most prominent figures at Court, attended concerts and various assemblies, read, painted, and wrote letters. The happy couple returned to England in 1746-1747, 1749-1750 and from 1754 to 1758, when they met Samuel Richardson and the Duchess of Portland regularly. After another nine years in Ireland, Patrick Delany died, in England, in May 1768.

The last twenty years of widow Delany's life were spent with her family, her friends and the royal family, in a period when she met Lord Guilford and his relatives regularly. From 1776 onwards, she worked on her *Flora Delanica* (1,000 "flower collages" now kept in the British Museum) and took part in various assemblies with other "blue stockings." One of them, Hester Chapone, introduced Frances Burney (the famous diarist, novelist and letter writer) to her in 1783. She spent the summers at Bulstrode, the estate belonging to the Duke and Duchess of Portland, and the winters in her own house in London, until she was offered an apartment at King George III's Court in 1785 and was daily allowed into the close royal family circle. She introduced Frances Burney to the King and Queen and obtained a position for her in the Household. Mary Delany died on April 15th, 1788.

He was appointed Dean of Down in 1744; several volumes of his sermons were released between 1744 and 1754. In 1754, he wrote a defence of Swift, *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*. He died at Bath in 1768. For more detail, see Robert Goode Hogan, *The Poems of Patrick Delany* (University of Delaware, 2006).

Fig. 1 Select genealogical tree of Mary Delany's family



2. Lord North and his family

Francis North (1704-1790)[7] was the grandson of Francis North (1637-1685), who helped to restore the Stuarts in 1660, occupied several high ranking positions (attorney general, chief justice) and consequently was made first Baron Guilford in 1683. During his marriage to Lady Frances Pope he acquired the manor of Wroxton Priory, a few miles west of Banbury. Thus a branch of the family was established in Oxfordshire. His eldest son, Francis North (1673-1729), 2nd Baron Guilford, inherited the title and property. He was lord lieutenant in Essex and later a lord of trade. His son Francis succeeded him.

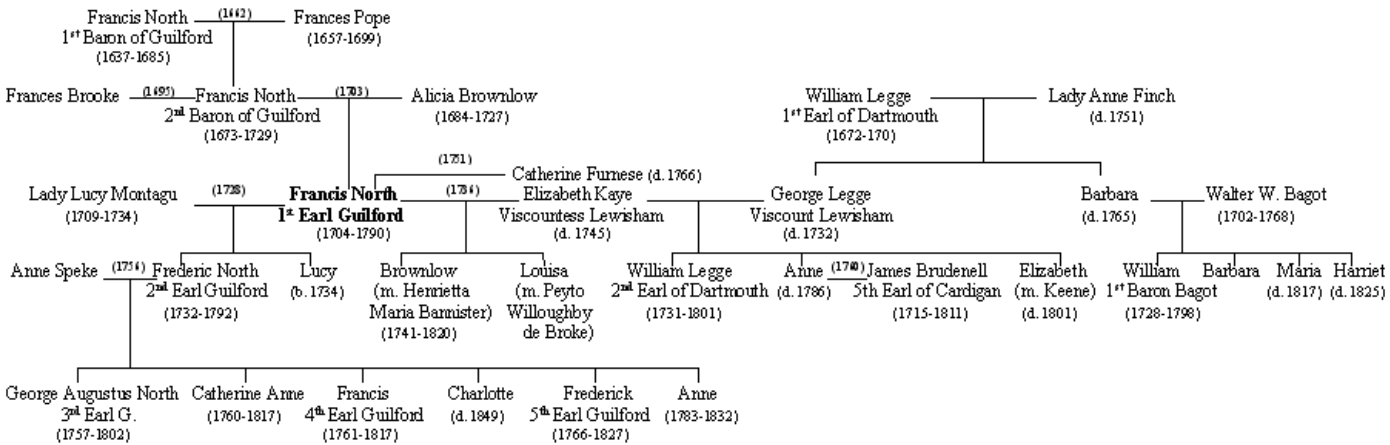
Francis North (1704-1790) and Lady Lucy Montagu's marriage in 1728 was not without political consequences, since it established links between the North family, which was inclined towards the Tories, and the Montagus, who were prominent Whigs. Two years later, Francis was appointed as a lord of the bedchamber to Frederick, Prince of Wales, with a stipend of £600 a year.[8] In 1732, they had a son, Frederick North, who was to become the most famous member of the family. In 1734, Francis North acquired the added title of Lord North when his nephew William died without issue. During the same year his wife, Lucy Montagu, died after giving birth to a daughter. Two years later, he married Elizabeth Kaye, widow of George Legge, Viscount Lewisham. Francis North was equally devoted to his son Frederick and to his stepson William Legge, whom he sent off respectively to Eton and Westminster School.

In the meantime he had to share his life between the overseeing of his lands, which participated in his considerable wealth, and his political ambitions, for which he chose to call himself a Whig. His Banbury seat was secured by his political agent, Matthew Lamb. However, being

[7] There is no official biography of Francis North, Lord Guilford. The following elements are collected from various sources, primary and secondary.

[8] For some of the biographical information in the paragraph, see George Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England...* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 2000); Alan Valentine, *Lord North* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), vol. 1, p. 5-7.

Fig. 2 Select genealogical tree of Lord Guilford's family



appointed a lord of the bedchamber to Frederick, Prince of Wales, was a threat to his aspirations because of the dissension between George II and his son. Francis North and the Prince became such close friends that the striking physical resemblance between their sons (George and Frederick) did not pass unnoticed. The early forties were prosperous to him, politically and personally.

In 1745 his second wife, Lady Lewisham, died with her infant in childbirth. She was soon succeeded by Frances and Charlotte in the following year. The father was extremely grieved, as some of his letters show, all the more so as the Jacobite rising was seen as a threat to his remaining children and step-children. And yet Frederick and William graduated from Trinity College Oxford in 1751 at a time when a career in the church was being considered for Brownlow. Lord Guilford himself was appointed governor to George and Edward, the Prince of Wales's two sons, for a salary of £1,000 a year.[9] The position, coupled with being a lord of the Prince's bedchamber, would keep him in contact with at least one future king of England. In 1751, Lord Guilford also married Catherine Furnese, the widow of Lewis Watson, second Earl of Rockingham, who had died in 1745. She brought him the family fortune estimated at £6,000 a year, plus the mansion and estate of Waldershare near Dover which became the couple's second home.

However, in 1751, with the death of the Prince of Wales and his replacement as governor to the princes, he lost considerable influence. While he had arranged for Francis and William to embark on the grand tour, he was created Earl of Lord Guilford in April 1752. His son then became known as Lord North. His stepson, Dartmouth, took his seat in the House of Lords in 1754; Lord North was elected in his father's previous seat, Banbury, in the House of Commons; he was to keep it for the next thirty six years. In 1756, Lord Guilford's sons, Frederick and William, Lord Dartmouth, married.[10]

---

[9] In *The Early Career of Lord North, the Prime Minister* (London: Athlone Press, 1979), Charles Daniel Smith quotes from a letter by Delany on that subject, p. 57. She was one of the first persons to report the piece of news: "I had a letter last post from Mrs. Montagu, she informs me Lord North is made governor to Prince George, with a salary of £1000 a-year, and continued Lord of the Bedchamber to the Prince of Wales: she desires me not to speak of it till it is public, which I suppose it will be before this salutes you" (Llanover, II, 598).

[10] Frederick North married on 20 May 1756 (see Llanover, III, 336).

In 1760, he wrote a letter to Queen Charlotte, consort of George III, to congratulate her on the King's accession and asking for her good offices to be used in his favour.[11] At the time, he was constantly kept informed by his son of all state matters and nominations.[12] And he continued to advise him on state and personal matters.[13] Lord North was appointed Prime Minister in January 1770. Lord Guilford replaced him at official ceremonies which he could not attend in his constituency of Banbury,[14] and also helped him with financial matters.[15]

Between 1773 and 1790, Lord Guilford was Treasurer to Queen Charlotte. His nomination on 28 December 1773, in Horace Walpole's words, "surprised and made everybody laugh."[16] The possible reasons for these assumed reactions were highlighted by Walpole: Lord Guilford's age and the inadequacy between his large revenue and the awarded salary of £900 a year – "The Earl was extremely infirm and very rich, but very covetous." Walpole was also convinced that the nomination had been

[11] See MS North, c. 11, fol. 201-2.

[12] For examples of nominations, see MS North adds. c.4, fol. 25-32 (Lord North's leaving the treasury), 34 (Lord Sandwich being Embassador in Spain; Mr Rigby Vice-Treasurer of Ireland; end of Lord Rockingham's Lieutenancy in Ireland), 47 (Mr Ellis, new Secretary at War), 54 ("the Political Plague continues, & there are removals almost every hour … if I can pick up any fresh intelligence I will trouble you with a letter…"), 79 ("the resignation of Lord Edgcumbe was not voluntary…"), 88 ("Sir Piercy Brett & Mr Jenkinson have succeeded to the Admiralty"), 91 ("the only promotions I have heard of since my last are…"). In another letter of the period dated 25 Nov. 1762, Lord North informs his father of the content of parliamentary debates (MS North adds. c.4, fol. 37); in 1766, he relates the King of Denmark's visit (MS North adds. c. 4, fol. 119, 125), in 1769, he comments upon the decisions of the King of Poland (MS North adds c.4, fol. 144).

[13] MS North, adds. c. 4, fol. 53 (letter from Lord North to Lord Guilford, dated 22 July 1765): "Your Lordship's advice against being precipitate in altering any plan of life is so just and reasonable…" See also for example MS North d. 25, fol. 98-101 (a long letter from Lord North to Lord Guilford dated 2 Nov. 1776).

[14] In a letter dated 14 September 1771, Lord North asks his father to make his excuses at the election of the Mayor at Banbury (MS North adds. c.4, fol. 155).

[15] MS North, d. 24, fol. 188 (letter from Lord North to Lord Guilford dated 24 September 1773).

[16] Horace Walpole, *Journal of the Reign of King George the third, from 1771 to 1783*, ed., with Notes by Dr. J. Doran (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), vol. 1, p. 277.

arranged by Lord Guilford's son, Lord North.[17] However, Lord Guilford's friends were delighted with this due reward to a reliable man.[18] Mary Delany for one wrote to her brother Bernard Granville on 1st January 1774: "The newspapers have informed you that Lord Guilford is made Treasurer to the Queen, in Mr. Storie's place. He was with me this morning to thank me for my congratulations on the occasion." (Llanover, V, 575) His son continued to keep him informed of the state affairs, which complemented his knowledge of what he learnt at Court.[19]

He died in 1790. His family tomb, with an inscription to his three wives, had been carefully prepared in the 1750s. His memorial, a monument carved by John Flaxman with the figure of Britannia, can be seen in the Church at Wroxton.

3. Sources

It is almost impossible to tell how many letters were exchanged between Lord Guilford and Mary Delany. As a matter of fact, forty-two manuscripts are still kept in archival centres in the United Kingdom and the United States.[20]

Nearly all the letters written by Mary Delany to Lord Guilford are kept in the Bodleian Library (Oxford, UK), with the exception of one which is conserved in the British Library (London). The James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (USA) hosts the letters in Lord Guilford's hand. Generally speaking, the manuscripts are in very good condition for eighteenth-century letters.

The documents held in England are part of the North Family papers which were kept at Wroxton Abbey, Oxfordshire, until they were bought by the Pilgrim Trust and given to the Bodleian Library in 1932. Mary Delany's letters are frequently accompanied by the envelopes which

[17] See MS North, a. 5, fol. 81, "Copy by Lord Guilford of a note from the King to Lord North, desiring him to tell Lord Guilford that he will be directed to attend the Queen on 28 December, 1773".
[18] For more details on the nomination, see Alan Valentine, p. 304-5.
[19] MS North adds. c. 4, fol. 209: "Our American affairs on this side of the water go on much better than I expected, but what will happen on the other no mortal knows…"
[20] For a full list of the 42 letters, see "List of letters," p. 41.

contained them, which helps determine the direction and the places concerned, and which guarantees their authenticity. All the letters written by Mary Delany are in her own hand. Marks of wax seals, with Mary Delany's initials, remain on most envelopes.[21] They are holographs.

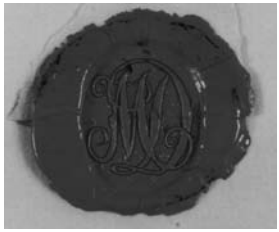


Fig. 3. Mary Delany's wax seal with letters M and D intertwined.

However, if Lord Guilford's correspondence was penned in his own hand, he is known to have made a draft that served as a copy for his own records.[22] Considering the absence of envelopes[23], and the ink spots and corrections on several letters in the Beinecke Library, they might be the drafts and not the actual letters which were sent to Mary Delany. As a matter of fact, at the end of her life the old woman burnt hundreds of letters that had been sent to her, with the help of her dear assistant Frances Burney.[24] The messages which were actually sent by Lord Guilford may have been part of the documents.

---

[21] For a description of the different wax seals used by Mary Delany, see Alain Kerhervé, *Une épistolière anglaise. Mary Delany (1700-1788)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), p. 39.

[22] Alan Valentine, p. 9. Other letters by Lord Guilford are conserved in the Bodleian Library, see MS. North, c. 11, fol. 68, 71, 78; MS North d. 8 fol. 159; MS North d. 9, fol. 39; MS North d. 10, fol. 18, fol. 31; d. 15, fol. 175, 187.

[23] Jeremy Greenwood explains that missing envelopes might have been taken away by Victorian collectors who were gathering signatures, seals or postal marks; see Jeremy Greenwood, *Newspapers and the Post Office* (London: British Postal Society, 1971).

[24] For instance, on one occasion, Mary Delany wrote to her sister: "I believe I have burnt this week an hundred of your letters: how unwillingly did I commit to the flames those testimonies of your tender friendship!" (*Llanover*, II, 292). Also see Frances Burney, *Diary and Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1904), vol. II, p. 294-295. The practice was not uncommon at the time, as Isaac Disraeli recalls in citing the example of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print. Writing Women and Women's Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 87.

A number of additional letters must have been exchanged between the two main correspondents, as some sentences from the extant ones suggest. In letter 6, for instance, Mary Delany writes: "this morning has added to my obligations by your Lordships letter," but the mentioned document has not been traced.[25] Some letters must have been lost by the mail services, as Lord Guilford clearly suggests on one occasion:

> I fear I have lost the pleasure of a Letter in which you mentioned the Gracious Manner in which the King had given your youngest Nephew to take the name of Granville. But it does not surprize me; as since the Establishment of a Mail Coach to Dover, there has been innumerable mistakes, & a terrible uncertainty in the Conveyance of Letters. One neither knows when they will arrive, nor whether they will arrive at all. (letter 34)[26]

If other letter-writers also complained of losing letters in the eighteenth century, in this particular case Lord Guilford probably shows to have been diffident of novelty, since the new mail coach service had just been set up in order to improve the speed and safe delivery of letters. This eventually proved to be quite efficient.[27] Other letters may not have been conserved by their recipients, or not have been located yet. The following example from letter 3, "I did not receive the honour of your Lordships letter till last night that the Dutchess Dow[ager] of Portland brought it from Bulstrode," clearly suggests that the letter reached its intended reader, even though it does not seem to have reached posterity.

As a whole, the estimated number of letters exchanged between the two correspondents can be assessed at a minimum of 54, with repartition shown in Fig. 4, "Letters exchanged by Lord Guilford and Delany," below. Chronologically speaking, the letters were exchanged between 1751 and 1786. The exchanges started several years after their first meeting: the first mention to Lord Guilford (then styled Lord North) in Mary Delany's correspondence dates back to February 1746 (NS).[28] Mary

[25] For other examples of allusions to lost manuscripts, see letters 10, 13, 16, 17, 20, 23, 29, 32, 34.
[26] Another example of trouble with the delivery of a letter is developed by Lord Guilford in letter 16.
[27] For more detail, see W. Turrentine Jackson, *The Development of Transportation in Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 324-27.
[28] Llanover, II, 422.

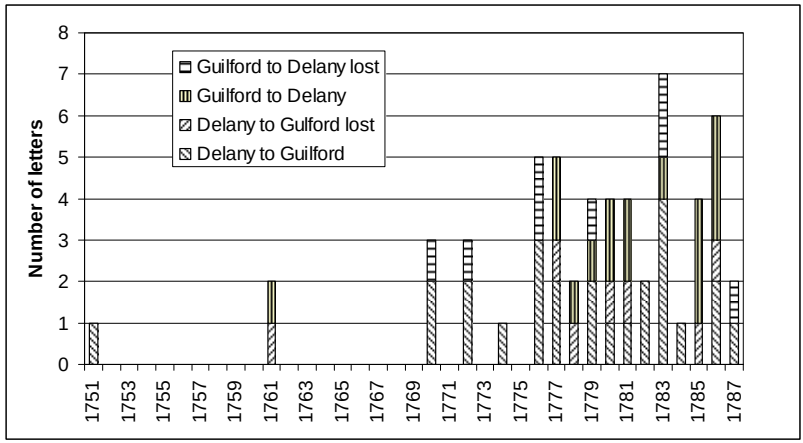


Fig. 4. Letters exchanged by Lord Guilford and Mary Delany

Delany had met Lady North before her death;[29] in 1749, she met the widower and the references to him and his family multiply in her letters in the following years.[30] The only extant letter for the period is dated 1751. The nineteenth-century editor of part of Mary Delany's correspondence explains the evolution of Mary Delany's production in the 1760s in the following words:

> By degrees Mrs. Delany added to her correspondents, she often wrote to Lord Guilford and to Lady Andover, between whom and herself a lasting friendship was maintained, but her natural elasticity of spirit did not recover its former level for many years after Mrs. Dewes's death, and the advancing age and increasing infirmities of the Dean were in themselves a sufficient reason for care, without other causes of anxiety which will be apparent in the letters of the next seven years. (Llanover, IV, 3)

Lord Guilford also faced the death of his third wife, Catherine Furnese in 1766, an event which the Countess Cowper wanted Mary Delany to tell her more about, as she enquired in a letter to her niece.[31] Patrick Delany, Mary Delany's second husband, died in 1768. Deaths rarely benefit

[29] Llanover, II, 224.
[30] Llanover, II, 513, 525, 528.
[31] On 4 January 1767, the countess Cowper writes to Miss Dewes: "What did the Duchess of Lord Guilford die of?" (Llanover, IV, 92)

correspondences.[32] Moreover, at the end of the decade, they probably met several times; in 1767, as a letter written by Lord Dartmouth to his father suggests,[33] in 1769, as clearly stated in a letter which Mary Delany sent to the Viscountess Andover,[34] in 1770 as she told Frances Boscawen.[35] They met again in January 1772,[36] and several days at the beginning of a week in June of the same year. In January 1773 Lord Guilford came to Mary Delany's place.[37] The epistolary exchanges multiplied from that period, Mary Delany writing seven letters between 1770 and 1776. After that date, a real correspondence between them took place in the period 1778-1783, Lord Guilford being the main correspondent of the last period, 1785-1786, at a time when Mary Delany's letters became scarce.

Geographically speaking, the letters were written from different places, as can be seen on the map below. Lord Guilford's three addresses are clearly identifiable. All his letters to Mary Delany are written from his family mansion, Wroxton, near Banbury, in Oxfordshire. However, Mary Delany occasionally directed to him in Henrietta Street, London, particularly in the months of September, October and November, that is after the start of the Parliamentary sessions. She also directed a few letters to Waldershare, near Dover, which had become Lord Guilford's second home after his third marriage. Some of Mary Delany's letters are written from Delville, the Delanys' mansion, outside Dublin, in Ireland. Yet most of her letters are from Bullstrode, the residence of her best friend, the Duchess of Portland, where she spent quite a while each year after her husband's death in 1768.

---

[32] Very few letters are dated from the decade in Lord Guilford's correspondence kept in the Bodleian library.

[33] MS North d. 11, fol. 74, a letter from Dartmouth, dated 17 oct 1767: "I beg my compliments to … Dean & Mrs Delany" suggests that the Delanys were perhaps staying at Lord Guilford's or at least liable to meet at the time. In August 1767, the Delanys were staying at Calwich; in November 1767, they were in Bath. See Llanover IV, 118, 125. They might have visited Wroxton, which was located about 100 miles south of Calwich on their way to Bath.

[34] Llanover, IV, 221: "Lord Guilford has just been with me; he is pretty well, and Lady Willoughby and her little girl as well as can be wished."

[35] Llanover, IV, 318: "Last Sunday my party was our dear friend Lady Weymouth, Lady Edgecumb, Lord Guilford, and Mr. *T. Pit.*"

[36] See Llanover, IV, 411, 431.

[37] See Llanover, IV, 490.

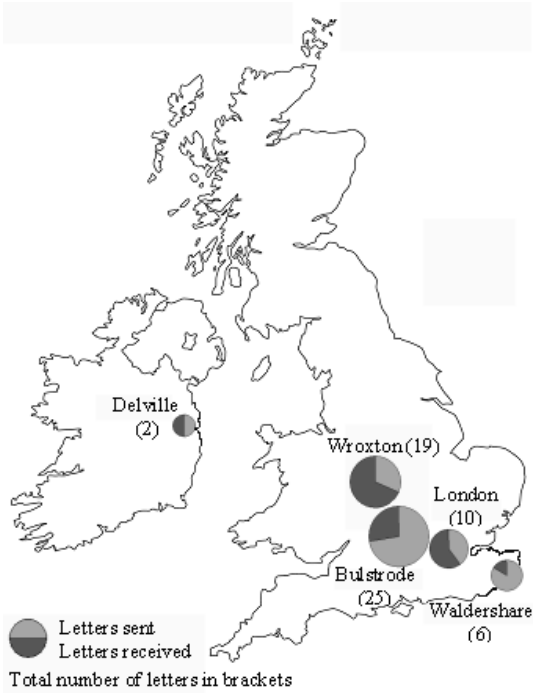


Fig. 5. Origin and destination of the letters

4. Familiar letters in eighteenth-century England

The letters contain elements which were commonly found in familiar letters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They mainly concern the private sphere, more precisely the closest relatives of the correspondents.

News from close family has always occupied a central place in familiar letters from Cicero's writings.[38] It was purported by James Howell, who

[38] See William Henry Irving, *The Providence of Wit in the English Letter-Writers* (Durham: Duke UP, 1955), p. 14-15, 44, 56, 78, 147. Also see Catherine Virlouet, "La Place des femmes dans les relations de sociabilité politique à la fin de la République romaine, d'après la correspondance de Cicéron," *Correspondance et sociabilité*, ed. Daniel Hurel (Rouen: Presses universitaires de Rouen, 1994), p. 12.

wrote daily to his brother in seventeenth-century England,[39] at a time when Madame de Sévigné's influence became essential to the definition of the genre in France. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu mainly wrote to her daughter; Lord Chesterfield has remained famous for his letters to his son; Henrietta, countess of Suffolk, exchanged numerous epistles with her husband.[40] If Mary Delany and Lord Guilford were not related, the family matters they tackle testify to the close links between their two circles, which were large ones, judging for instance from the size of the select family trees (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

Their letters almost invariably refer to the members of the two correspondents' families. In the only letter preserved from the period when Mary Delany was married, she expresses her husband's "best respects" to Lord Guilford (letter 1). Since she did not have any children, she was often seen to spend some time with her nephews and nieces. On several occasions, she mentions the names of her nephews and nieces when writing to Lord Guilford, either for precise reasons (letters 4 and 9) or to keep him informed of her activities. Logically enough, on several occasions Lord Guilford also enquires about his correspondent's relatives: "I hope all your Nephews and Nieces are well, & beg you to make my best compliments to Miss Port, & tell her I take a very sincere share in her happiness" (letter 34). In 1785, when he wrote those words, Miss Georgiana Mary Anna Port, Mary Delany's grand niece, had long become her great aunt's favourite and was spending a lot of time with her great-aunt, who was helping with her education.

Even more detail is found concerning Lord Guilford's family in the correspondence. It seems to be one of the man's favourite topics. Not only does he expand on such special occasions as his daughter Louisa's wedding (letter 2), or his daughter in law's miscarriage (letter 20), but he also regularly keeps his correspondent informed of his children's diseases (letter 23) or movements, their being at Wroxton or moving to other places for instance. Letter 13 is very representative of that type of discourse:

> Upon the arrival of fine weather, Lord and Lady Dartmouth resolved upon endeavoring to catch some of it here. They set out for Compton yesterday

[39] William Henry Irving, p. 96 and 100.
[40] See Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); Philip Dormer Stanhope, *Letters to His Son* (1774), ed. James Harding (London: W. J. Mackay, 1973) and William Henry Irving, p. 247.

> se'nnight, where I met them, & with Ld and Ly Willoughby came back with them hither on Monday; where Mr. William and Mr. Charles Legge also met them (letter 13). [41]

In a few lines, the 73 year-old man manages to mention his daughter, Louisa Willoughby, her husband, his step-son William Legge, second Earl of Dartmouth, his wife and two of their sons, Charles and William Legge. The rather exceptional clumsiness of his repetitive style ("met," "where," "them") betrays his pleasure at being with his family. In other places, the grand-father also marvels at his grandsons' abilities (letter 19).

Consequently, Mary Delany shows herself to be very much interested in Lord Guilford's children. She sends her compliments to them on several occasions; she rejoices at their pleasures (letter 24); she readily sympathises with their diseases or ill fortunes (letter 15). For instance, one of her letters deals almost exclusively with the consequences of Lord North's broken arm after he had fallen from his horse, and she tackles the issue again in her next letter (letters 10 and 11).

Both correspondents are aware of their mutual concern for their relatives and occasionally acknowledge it. For instance, Lord Guilford writes: "Your politeness makes you say very handsome things of my Grandsons" (letter 19). Moreover, some of Lord Guilford's relatives beg their compliments to Mary Delany in their letters as Lord Dartmouth does on 17 October 1767, in a letter to his step-father.[42] Others also meet Mary Delany and write about it. Louisa Peyto (who signed "LW" for Louisa Willoughby-de-Broke) accounts for her meeting of her father's friend in London in 1783, 1786 and 1787.[43] Similarly, several letters exchanged between Mary Delany and other correspondents of her circle testify to the woman's interest in and affection to Lord Guildford's family. For instance, letter 41 voices both Mary Delany and the Duchess of Portland's compliments to Lord Guilford. It begins with: "The Duchess Dow[r] of

[41] For similar examples, see letters 19, 23.

[42] Bodleian library, MS North, d. 11, fol. 74.

[43] Bodleian library, Ms North d. 19, fol. 108: "We had Mrs Delany at the Ancient Musick last night & she seem'd much pleased;" MS North, d. 21, fol. 75 (dated 7 Nov. 1786): "There was literally nothing but the King & Queen & Mrs Delany & part of the evening the princess's… we drank tea and converst till after tea when the Queen got up and dismist Mrs Delany and I;" MS North, d. 21, fol. 136 (dated 8 May 1787): "I saw Mrs Delany yesterday. She was pretty well & intends going to Windsor tomorrow. Her niece Miss Port is to come to her there in about a fortnight at latest."

Portland & Mrs Delany present their best complim[ts] to Lord Guilford..." Several letters written by the Duchess of Portland were annexed to the present edition because they express Mary Delany and the Duchess's shared feelings.[44]

The familiarity between the two family circles is also frequently combined with weather concerns. A great number of letters (nearly half of them) contain at least one allusion to the weather. And however trivial or conventional it may seem, in most cases it reinforces the degree of familiarity of the message.

Firstly, the two ageing correspondents are deeply concerned by the effects the weather conditions have on their health. As a consequence, Lord Guilford seems to be comforted when learning that "cold weather does not affect [Mary Delany's] health" (letter 34) and he worries about the Duchess of Portland's suffering: "I hope the cold weather coming will quite recover my Lady Dutchess, who I am extreamly concerned to hear has sufferd so much by a cold" (letter 19). Similarly, Mary Delany "rejoyce[s]" about her friend's health (letter 14).

The two correspondents often stage their own adaptation to the weather, Lord Guilford pointing to his prudence, "I am sadly pinched by the weather, but get out a little in my coach, exceedingly wrapped up, in the warmest part of the day" (letter 35), Mary Delany adding further detail about her clothes: "I who only go out in a morning when the sun shines, in a rugg great coat, and boot-stockings, and with a thick rugg at the bottom of my coach, feel the cold very piercing." (letter 37) If they share the same defiance of winter days in the previous examples, in their other letters a distinction clearly appears between the weather more suitable to each of them. In July 1777, Lord Guilford notes: "I had a very wet journey, & found everything here cold, damp, & dismal; but am thank God pure well. The Sun shines, & glass rises..." (letter 12); two weeks later, Mary Delany worries about the effect of too hot a day (letter 14), and, in September 1777, she notes that she "was roasted with the hot sun for two hours" (letter 15). Whereas he is more liable to appreciate a warm day, she likes the cold better: "This cold clear weather seems quite made for the Ladies at Bulstrode, & I not only flatter my self that they are enjoying it, but reaping every possible benefit from it." (letter 25) Conversely, Lord Guilford does not feel well under those circumstances: "the weather was so miserably wet, & cold, that I think you would not [have] been glad to

[44] See Appendix A, p. 125.

see me" (letter 13). These health concerns point to the excellent knowledge of the tastes and feelings of their correspondent.

Secondly, the weather has direct consequences on their journeys and opportunities of meeting, which is closely to be associated with the writing process since letters then constituted the best substitute to a meeting. On several occasions, the weather is an obstacle to the encounter: Lord Guilford considers himself to have been "so long detained in town by bad weather" (letter 12); Mary Delany regrets "the extream sharpness of the weather [...] has benumbed all my faculties — and I am reduced to nursing at home for this but two days" (letter 42). Moreover the old woman knows that a bad weather makes the travelling conditions difficult for her: "But during the time I was there, a great deal of very heavy rain falling, made the roads, which are mended with stone, so jumbling, that I was extreamly fatigued" (letter 23). Yet Lord Guilford encourages her to come to his place: "If the weather having grown so cool, should have given you strength, and Courage to undertake your journey; I fancy by the middle of next week I may have no company left but Lord & Lady Willoughby, & be able to receive you in a quiet way" (letter 16).

In many cases, the meteorological considerations are also directly connected to the estates where the letters are written or received. They permit to establish links in space. They also point to the familiarity of the two correspondents and their ability to picture familiar places in the distance. Mary Delany thinks of the beneficial effects of the rain on "the verdure of Bulstrode" (letter 6) and of the impact of the "fine weather" on Lord Guilford's fruit trees (letter 11). Lord Guilford is satisfied to see that a bright sun favours "prosperous hay-making" (letter 13). While both agree that Wroxton is a very agreeable place to live outdoors, "which is always a very desirable circumstance at Wroxton" (letter 23), they appreciate living indoors at Bulstrode: "You have so much agreeable amusment at home, that tho' Bulstrode is such a charming place, I have not so much compassion for you as for most people, in bad weather" (letter 12). The Duchess of Portland also praises the Wroxton estate in a letter sent to Lord Guilford in 1772 when she states that it really rivals Blenheim, one of the greatest estates of the period (letter A2).

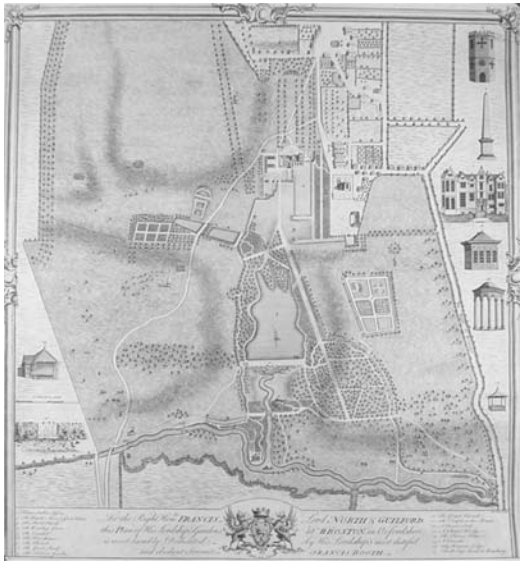


Fig. 6. The gardens at Wroxton Abbey (55.5 x 52.5 cm)
engraved by James Green (c. 1750)

In this intimate atmosphere, a relatively reduced place is left to more public locations. A few allusions are made to watering places which provided their visitors with treatment and entertainment.[45] Lord Guilford suffering from "a little gout in one foot" (letter 34), he visited Bath regularly.[46] In 1782 and 1783, Mary Delany alludes to the beneficial effect of the Duchess of Portland's stay at Margate, a fashionable seaside resort with pier, assembly rooms, bathing rooms and parade (letters 26 and 28). A few snapshots of the road traffic are found in Lord Guilford's letters in which the bad condition of the roads is highlighted. To him, the roads are

[45] See Annick Cossic, and Patrick Galliou, eds. *Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006).

[46] He was in Bath for health reasons from the beginning of the 1770s: In 1771 (MS North d. 24, 110), in 1772 (MS North d. 24, fol. 147), in 1774 (See MS North d. 15, fol. 233, letter from Frederick Montagu which highlights the benefits gained from the Bath waters), in April 1777 (MS North d. 25, fol. 131), in April 1778 (MS North d. 26, fol. 3), in May 1783 (MS North d. 19, fol. 107 and fol. 110), in April and May 1784 (MS North d. 20, fol. 21, 26, 28, 31), in May 1787 (MS North d. 21, fol. 129, 134, 137, 142; MS North d. 26, fol. 121), in April 1788 (MS North 22, fol. 10 in which his suffering from a foot is mentioned, and fol. 12).