

## Emily Shore at Potton and Woodbury

*From July 5<sup>th</sup> 1831, at the age of eleven, until June 24<sup>th</sup> 1839, two weeks before her death from consumption, Emily Shore recorded her reactions to the world around her. She wrote of political issues, natural history, her progress as a scholar and a scientist, and the worlds of art and literature. She wrote, too, of her feelings and impressions, ruminating finally on her own illness and impending death. In her brief life, this remarkable young woman also produced, but did not publish, three novels, three books of poetry, and histories of the Jews, Greeks and the Romans. She also published several essays on birds.*

In 1832 the Shore family moved from Brook House at Potton to Woodbury near Everton. In October 1836 Emily left Woodbury for the South Coast and eventually Madeira in a forlorn quest for a climate that would revive her health. Her writings at Potton and Woodbury on the borders of East Bedfordshire are a rich seam from which those with an interest in Local History, Insects, Plants and Birds will find much to enjoy. The following are entries that caught my eye:-

**July 5<sup>th</sup> 1831.** Potton contains no less than 13 public houses besides Beer Shops. There is a market every Saturday and a statute and Horse Fair once a Year and occasionally a show of wild beasts.

**Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 1831.** Gamlingay Heath is famous throughout England for the rare flowers to be found there. I wished we lived nearer to it. Amongst the prettiest flowers I have found on it, at least at this time of the year, are the *Euprasia officinalis* or the eyebright, and the *Polgala vulgaris*, or milkwort. The eyebright is a purplish white, with dark purple streaks and two yellow spots on the lip of the corolla; it is of the class of ringlet flowers. The milkwort is also a small slender plant; it grows in little clumps, and does not rise above three or four inches in height; the stalk is purplish red, and the leaves small and oval; the blossom varies considerably in colour, being sometimes blue, sometimes pink, and sometimes white. Of these I think that I prefer the blue. The *Erica tetralix* or cross-leaved heath, grows here in great abundance. It is bell-shaped, and of a beautiful pink.

**Oct 21<sup>st</sup> 1831.** In the morning papa took us all to see certain interesting operations in glass, performed by a man who travels about, and has come to Potton to exhibit for a day or two.

**Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1831.** It is not generally known that all kinds of plants have their particular moth or butterfly.

**June 15<sup>th</sup> 1832.** All the mob of Potton made a great riot to celebrate the passing of the Reform Bill and paraded the town with the most hideous yells.

**June 18<sup>th</sup> 1832.** I have been much interested in observing the operations of some ants in one of the garden walks.

**June 21<sup>st</sup> 1832.** I picked up on the grass a *palmer-worm*, which is a caterpillar, so named because its travels about like a palmer or pilgrim.

June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1832. Richard has found in the garden a beautiful caterpillar, which is now before me; it is nearly two inches long, with a number of thin tufts of hair on its body. There is a broad blue stripe on each of its sides extending from head to tail, and on every other part are alternate and narrow strips of orange and black, beside a white stripe along the top of the back. The face is grey, and the eyes are black; the hairs beneath the body are of an orange colour; it has ten rings on its body, and six legs before, besides eight holders near the tail. I have never before seen such a pretty caterpillar. I wish very much to know its name.

July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1832. Mr Cayley found the *Nummularia* or moneywort .... the chief flowers I found today were the .... meadow sweet, .... water speedwell ..... white water lady's bed-straw, privet and the everlasting pea.

July 18<sup>th</sup> 1832. ... in my walk I found the nest of some insect, I think it is a spiders. It is formed against the gorse bushes .... I shall never keep caterpillars alive again .... I took them prisoners .... It makes me quite unhappy.

July 19<sup>th</sup> 1832...we went to the sand rock ..This rock is much inhabited by sand-martins.

July 20<sup>th</sup> 1832. This evening as papa and mamma were out in the gig, they saw at the Biggleswade Turnpike road a man stretched out dead by the side of the road; but they thought he was asleep. It has since turned out that this was a case of cholera. If this dreadful disease reaches Potton it will I fear from the drunkenness that pervades the place (there being no less than thirteen public houses besides beer-shops) prove very fatal.

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1832. Papa in his drive to-day found the *Verbascum tetralix*, or mullein, an extremely beautiful plant ... found by roadsides in a sandy soil.

August 7<sup>th</sup> 1832. I again found the nettle-caterpillar .... slow in action.

August 15<sup>th</sup> 1832. We found a great curiosity, which few people have had the opportunity of seeing. It was discovered by mamma. The butcher bird is in the habit of killing insects and small birds, and sticking them (sometimes alive) upon thorns; now we found a poor humble bee stuck, living on the thorn in a hedge and as it is quite impossible this could be by accident (for the thorn came through his body), we have every reason to conclude that the butcher bird put it there.

August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1832. We saw a poor miserable woman in a tent by the roadside. Her name is Richardson; she has a bad drunken husband, who has quite starved her; and now they cannot pay their rent, they have been turned out of their house. To add to her miseries, she is very ill, having given birth to a child, and the rain has quite poured through the slender covering of the tent. Mamma has been once or twice to see her and has given her broth, etc.

October 14<sup>th</sup> 1832. .... we picked up a dead Norway Rat ....

October 17<sup>th</sup> 1832. It is surprising how many hornets we have seen in the last day or two... we caught a large one .. we tried to put it to death with oil ... I shall never forget the agonies it seemed to suffer. We should have set it at liberty but that it was so dangerous a creature that we could not do it safely. I have now got in my collection.

November 8<sup>th</sup> 1832. It was now settled that we are to do what we have long had in contemplation, viz to remove to Woodbury, a good house near Everton. The reason is that we find Potton agrees very ill with our health, while Woodbury is remarkably healthy, and is situated on the celebrated Gamlingay Heath.

December 14<sup>th</sup> 1832. There is going on a sale of Mr Wilkinson's furniture at Woodbury and papa went to attend it... The auctioneer, Mr Carrington, was at work when a cry was heard of 'There they are! ... the whole set of hounds pursuing the fox dashed through the garden .... the animal could only reach the greenhouse and there the hounds killed poor foxy .... Papa detests the general barbarity and cruelty of fox hunters.

December 24<sup>th</sup> 1832. This was the day we moved into our new house.....

December 25<sup>th</sup> 1832. This is my birthday. I am 13 years old ..... papa and mamma gave me a beautiful and most interesting book, Babbage's *Economy of Manufactures* which I have long wished for.

January ? 1833. We took a walk with mamma across the cow-pasture, the first of three fields leading to Everton. It is a very pretty little field, hilly and partly covered with broom. It slopes down to Foxhill Wood, the wood at the bottom of our garden. Here we saw a very handsome young bull. He seemed very quiet and innocent, and not disposed to hurt anyone; but bulls are never to be trusted.

February 9<sup>th</sup> 1833 I shall never thoroughly enjoy going out till there are wild flowers for me to find and botanize.

March 8<sup>th</sup> 1833. Mrs Keal mentioned a curious fact in natural history; a jack (a fish) had been sent to her and when it was opened a large rat was found inside him, quite whole and unmastered, and apparently just swallowed. It is not uncommon, papa said, to find frogs and small fish within the jack, which is very voracious.

March 12<sup>th</sup> 1833. I worked at my garden, which mamma has lately given me; it consists of two beds, but I shall only plant it with wild flowers. One bed is to contain flowers which like the damp; in it I making a little mound of earth and stones fro the beautiful potentilla to climb over. I shall also have the money-wort, the willow herb, the mouse-eared scorpion grass and, if I can get them, the flowering rush and the water violet.

March 19<sup>th</sup> 1833. ...I went with a spade and wheelbarrow to the bottom of the garden. Here we dug up two or three wild plants, two sorts of ranunculus, hyacinths and strawberry. We then went into the lower part of the cow-pasture .... from thence I got other plants ... some *Geranium Robertianum*, primroses, a cowslip, strawberries and others .....

March 20<sup>th</sup> 1833. To make a little shade I have dug up a few young trees and planted them among my flowers, and also stuck two long straight and supple sticks, crossing each other in the shape of half-loops, at whose feet I planted slips of ivy and honeysuckle, which I got from Whitewood.

March 26<sup>th</sup> 1833. In order to provide for such plants in my garden as want water, I have ordered a small tub .... which I shall sink into the ground up to the brim ... I shall plant flowers both in it and on the edge.

April 18<sup>th</sup> 1833. We know take most notice of the number of birds which frequent the garden. There are blackbirds and magpies but very few sparrows. The robins are plentiful and very tame .... chaffinches ... water wagtail.

April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1833. Mamma took us across the cow-pasture to Everton Church. On the way, in a beautiful broken field, which was very wet and marshy at the bottom, grew vast quantities of the marsh marigold, a splendid golden flower ....

May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1833. Richard contemplates buying a linnet and cage, much to my dissatisfaction; for it is miserable even to think of a bird, to which in nature we must assign a range of at least a square mile, confined to less than the space of two feet.

May 16<sup>th</sup> 1833. ... Louisa and I took an exquisite walk through Whitewood.... the nightingales were singing in great numbers .. there was also a blackcap .. I went a good way across the heath, with a trowel, to the bogs to get flowers. What grows here is chiefly cotton grass, which has a stalk about four inches high, tipped with a waving substance which envelops the seeds. I took .. *Drosera rotundifolia* or Sundew ... *Pedicularis sylvatica*, a pretty pink flower ..and a plant which looks like Creeping cistus (cereus?)

May 18<sup>th</sup> 1833. In the afternoon a lark, which Mackworth has long since wished to buy, arrived ..... He is very tame .... I pity him for being a captive.

May 19<sup>th</sup> 1833. ... the lark is let out of its cage every morning. ... the goldfinch when let out at the same time is unbearably impudent to him.

May 27<sup>th</sup> 1833. Unhappily I did not wake until ten minutes to five and consequently did not see so many birds as usual before breakfast. I wandered very far over to Foxhill wood ..... about here are immense quantities of bryony .....

May 29<sup>th</sup> 1833. I was reading in '*Architecture of Birds*' a fact that I never knew before, that tomtits with their beaks excavate holes in trees as nests.

May 30<sup>th</sup> 1833. .... I found some curious caterpillars' nests on the walnut tree...

June 1<sup>st</sup> 1833 .. I found a plant of the *Solanum Dulcamara* or woody nightshade.

June 5<sup>th</sup> 1833. I saw on a laurel tree a sweet little robin singing beautifully. On the same tree were a chaffinch and his wife, the former singing loudly and boldly, the latter looking on in mute approbation of her dear consort. At length she became wearied of doing nothing, and resolving that her mate alone should adorn the tree, drove off the robin.

June 7<sup>th</sup> 1833. ...found a curious parasitical plant, the *Orobanche major*, or broom-rape .... this one was growing on gorse .....

June 8<sup>th</sup> 1833. We have been watching the birds a great deal today. I chiefly observed the redstart ..... she constantly utters a soft sweet note, exactly like 'hweet hweet'. The chaffinch, tiresome aping bird! Imitated this ....he took us in finely once ....

June 9<sup>th</sup> 1833. There is a great variety of songs in our garden .... the loud vain chirp of the chaffinch, the sweet liquid warbling of the robin, the soft mellow note of the blackbird, the cooing of the wood pigeon, and above all, the deep varied song of the thrush who will sing for above an hour ...

June 13<sup>th</sup> 1833 I have discovered why the lark attacks me so violently. It is because I wear a different frock from what he has been accustomed to see me in. This shows a great deal of observation and intelligence.

June 14<sup>th</sup> 1833. .. the lark flew at me and bit me very hard ... this might be the consequence of my hands being dirty from gardening .... I washed them .... the larj was all gentleness.

June 26<sup>th</sup> 1833. ...we saw an immense number of mare's tails ...above a yard in height ...there are two sets of *Hippuris* ...

July 6<sup>th</sup> 1833. My poor little lark is quite ill today ... I suspect the cause is that I gave him a sow-thistle yesterday .... I gave him a little saffron and liquorice in his water, besides three fat spiders ....

July 8<sup>th</sup> 1833. ... a decided improvement took place .... I have great hopes of him...

July 9<sup>th</sup> 1833 ... Richard, when he went to Potton today applied to Mr Tebbutt ... By his advice I feed him with a mess of yolk of an egg, boiled very hard and chopped quite fine, mixed with bread crumbled, and bruised hempseed; he is also to drink toast and water the first day, plain water the next and on the third plain water and saffron. (Mr Tebbutt decidedly attributes his illness to sowthistle.

July 10<sup>th</sup> 1833. ..the bog pimpernel quite covers the ground ....the cross leaved heath grows in great numbers .... I valued most that rare plant, the asphodel. *Narthecium ossifragum* ...I found *Ranunculus flammula* ..which is superior to everything else to be taken in cases where poison has been swallowed ... the distilled juice is what I used. I gathered some more valerian ....

July 5<sup>th</sup> 1833. I am delighted to view the improvement in my lark's health.

July 29<sup>th</sup> 1833. A most sad misfortune has happened. The day being very hot, we as usual spent it under the weeping ash, and, as is customary with us, took the lark out of his cage .... he spread his wings and took a prodigious flight over the trees ... the first flight he has taken since he was born. .... my only consolation is that he will be happier at liberty than in a cage.

August 1<sup>st</sup> 1833. Mrs Steres has a young lark, very small, and only just fledged; on hearing of our loss she good-naturedly gave it to me.

August 5<sup>th</sup> 1833. I paid a visit to Foxhill wood, which I have not seen for a month or two. It is now beautiful with flowers. The two sorts of enchanters nightshade cover the ground buy hundreds, and so do many other flowers; in two places willow-herbs and meadow sweets, taller than mamma grow in such thick profusion as to look like forests .... After all there is but a small part of this wood which can be walked in.... even the walkable part is now much overgrown with plants; especially the wild rose.

August 17<sup>th</sup> 1833. What I prize most of all my discoveries today is a most curious bees nest. I found it at about the height of my waist from the ground, placed between the upright and slender stems of some young trees. It was about three parts as large as a wrens nest ... the bee was brown, black and orange, sometimes like a humble-bee. I think it is a carder bee. If so it is a most unusual position for its nest.

September 28<sup>th</sup> 1833. I found a honeysuckle leaf rolled up in a curious way by means of a gummy substance and six or seven beautiful lady-birds comfortably lodged within...

October 25<sup>th</sup> 1833. A man brought to the door a great curiosity, a live stork, which he had caught near Gamlingay Lake, in a meadow. This bird is very rare in England .... It is a most noble looking bird; it was very fierce ...

January 10<sup>th</sup> 1834. Mr Cust, who called today, told us that they had twenty-four kinds of flowers in their garden at Cockayne Hatley in bloom already. This seems so very astonishing so I looked in our garden and counted 18 sorts in flower:- China rose; Indian rose; *Pyrus japonica*, hepaticia, primrose, polyanthus, daisy, heath, polygala, *Cineraria purpurea*, gentianella, heart's ease, auricula, snow-drop, American groundsel, stock, double and single, double wallflower and laurustinus. I never knew such a forward spring before; but we have neither aconites or crocuses, which I am rather surprised at....

February 1<sup>st</sup> 1834. ...the birds appear to have been deceived by the mild weather, and to have taken it for spring; for actually a thrush, near Bedford, has a week ago hatched its brood...

February 13<sup>th</sup> 1834. .. yesterday I saw a wryneck. This is a bird of passage, which commonly appears about the end of March, a few days before the cuckoo.

March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1834. It is curious to observe how every bird chooses a particular place to sing in ....thrush ..blackbird ...cuckoo ... nightingale ..blackcap ...yellow-hammer ... titmouse ...it is very remarkable that there are no water birds that sing.

Another thing to be observed is the habit of birds in their nests ... fauvette .. robin ..yellow-hammer ... chaffinch ... lark ... wagtail ...redstart ... chimney swallow ...house-martin ...ox-eye ...tom-tit ....thrush ...blackbird .... nightingale...ring dove ..rook ...jay ....magpie ... sparrow.

**March 17<sup>th</sup> 1834.** I have been much vexed today by hearing a song without being able to find out certainly what bird made it. What can this bird be? I know all of the English songsters, except four or five, that have one or two notes. .. it cannot be the tree lark because that birds seek ascending; nor the titlark, since that bird has not much variety ... as for the woodlark it sings only on summer evenings. It must be either the redpole or garden warbler.

**March 25<sup>th</sup> 1834.** I discovered in my walk today a very pretty little spot, in a kind of a hollow below the cow pasture and the other fields between Woodbury and Everton. It was a large orchard on a high grassy island surrounded by a piece of water ... the banks are very high all round, on the outer side shaded with blackthorn and filbert: on the inner side they are thickly covered with dog's mercury, primroses, bluebells, a few cowslips and splendid dark blue violets ... this spot is haunted by a great many birds:- blackbirds, missel-thrushes, rooks, carrion-crows, robins, wrens, fauvettes, long tailed titmice, a handsome kite and above all willow wrens.

**March 26<sup>th</sup> 1834.** I know by sight as many as 31 of the smaller birds, including all not bigger than the missel-thrush. They are :- Starling, missel-thrush, thrush, blackbird, nuthatch, creeper, green gosbeak, sparrow, goldfinch, chaffinch, spotted fly catcher, skylark, the three wagtails, nightingale, redbreast, redstart, fauvette, blackcap, white throat, willow wren, common wren, ox-eye, tomtit, long tailed tit, swallow, martin, sand martin, swift; 23 of which frequent the garden.

**June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1834.** I have seen the titlark for the first time ....

**June 24<sup>th</sup> 1834.** The carrion plant grows in Whitewood; we constantly smell it ... it is a species of fungus ...its remarkable part is its odious smell ... it presently filled the whole house and it was scarcely possible to go where it had been ....

**August 8<sup>th</sup> 1834.** I gathered several beautiful flowers ... rest-harrow, succory, mullein and purple spiked willow herb...

**September 6<sup>th</sup> 1834.** The golden-crested wren seems to be pretty plentiful in the garden .... I saw one not two yards above my head, hanging from a twig, and it did actually sing, and that too, very sweetly, through the song was excessively low and soft. White of Selbourne did not know that it sung ... he said it had only somewhat of a note; Bewick says it is said to have a very melodious song; Mudie, that is sings early in the year, so that he at least knew it.

**September 8<sup>th</sup> 1834.** Miss Emms Paroissien told me a curious anecdote of a squirrel, which she saw in a nut tree, weighing a good nut and a bad nut, one in each paw, to try by the weight which was good, and the bad one he invariably dropped, till he had formed a little heap of them at the bottom of the tree....

September 19<sup>th</sup> 1834. This evening was most exquisitely calm and delightful; not a breath of wind stirred the leaves of a tree, a scarce a cloud was visible in the heavens, while the clear, silvery light of the moon contrasted beautifully with the dark shadows of the thick foliage. The bats were flying silently about in the twilight before the moon shone forth, and the wakeful robin had not yet ceased his sweet plaintive song, while at a distance in the wood sounded the deep hoot of the owl. The occasional falling of the rose leaves, which looked as white as snow in the darkness, added much to the interest of the scene. I could not persuade myself to go to bed, but sat up a long time looking out of my window.

September 26<sup>th</sup> 1834. Amongst the plants I brought home from the bogs on Tuesday was .....*Menyanthus trifoliata* or marsh buckbean, an uncommon plant and one of the most beautiful of English flowers. .... I am very proud to have found it.

October 1<sup>st</sup> 1834. ... a little solitary golden-crested wren .... flutters over the ...twigs like a butterfly. ...it is hardly like a bird; even the little chirp that it occasionally emits bears more resemblance to that of an insect. *(Two or three years after, this account was expanded into an article which, with one or two others, appeared in the PENNY MAGAZINE. The editor of that magazine had the idea of publishing her 'Notes on Birds' in a separate work. ... see Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1837 ... (original editor)*

October 8<sup>th</sup> 1834. ... the chimney swallows sing quite up to the time of their migration, a fact which seems unknown to White.

October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1834. I have got the *geranium cicutarium* and *Robertianum*, or hemlocked-leaved crane's bill and herb Robert, two of the prettiest of our pretty native geraniums. The hemlocked-leaved has very long awns, as they are called, to the seeds. These are long points, like thick needles, which have a very singular appearance. They have a curious property of twisting up like corkscrews in dry weather; in damp weather they are quite straight, so that they serve as a kind of barometer. The little red pimpernel always closes up before rain; I have not observed that any other flowers do so.

November 15<sup>th</sup> 1834. ... Great flights of rooks, mixed with jackdaws, fly over the garden.....

December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1834. Mt Tebbutt, the hair-dresser and bird-fancier of Potton, was here today, and I obtained from him a good deal of interesting information about birds. He says that birds of all kinds, if taken from the nest at ten, or even six days old, and are brought up where they can hear no bird sing, will sing their own natural song, but they may be taught any bird's song by being placed near it, except only the skylark, which, although it will readily learn another song, will always have a little of its own ... a very curious fact. Bullfinches and linnets are the easiest to teach. My idea is that all birds sing from imitation, as they can be taught any song, but there are many facts for and against this notion. Mt Tebbutt has never known a bird dumb which has never heard a song. He says that there are Snow-Buntings to be seen in summer on Gamlingay Heath and that at Muggerhanger, seven miles off, aberdevines are not uncommon. At Gamlingay there are many rare and curious birds, amongst which are the reed-sparrow and kingfisher ....

December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1834. ... there were blue-tits, ox-eyes, long-tailed tits, cole tits and even the marsh tit which I never saw before .... I now know every kind of tit except the crested and bearded tit, which are very rare .... skylarks and titlarks assemble in vast flocks .... Flights of Jays, eight or ten at once, sometimes enter the garden to make war on their great enemy the missel-thrush.

December 25<sup>th</sup> 1834. ...I heard a nut-hatch uttering his deep loud cry ...though clumsy and heavy in shape, is brisk and lively, and very active in creeping up the branches and boughs of trees ....

February 10<sup>th</sup> 1835. I shall study botany this year in a very different way from that which I have been accustomed to pursue, for I find that I have been a very superficial Botanist attending to little beside the classification, and not studying the habits, properties and uses of plants .....

June 19<sup>th</sup> 1835. As my ear gets more practiced in distinguishing the songs of birds, I am surprised to find how many little differences there are between songs of individuals ... I am persuaded that, were my ear acute enough to hear it, I should find that no two individuals sang exactly alike.

June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1835. The hay is beginning to be cut .... the redstarts collect and peck about the ground .... I have seen as many as three together, an unusual number in so shy and solitary a bird.

July 11<sup>th</sup> 1835. A tabby moth ... which I set with pins and supposed quite dead ... actually laid eggs all last night. I shall preserve them till next year, that they may hatch, for I believe that the caterpillar is unknown to naturalists.

July 20<sup>th</sup> 1835. For two or three days I have observed a species of wasp come frequently into my room, and enter the keyhole of my dressing table drawer, where it stayed a considerable time. This morning I found two green caterpillars in the lock, each rolled up in a particular position and both alive. .... I was much puzzled to account for their being there. Soon after the wasp returned, bearing, to my surprise, one of these caterpillars amongst its feet; it carried it into the interior of the lock, and there spent some time rolling it up into a ball, so that still alive, it had not the power of moving. I then discovered that it was the *Odynerus mucarinusi*, or mason wasp, which always hoards up caterpillars in its nest for its progeny to eat. Soon after disposing of this caterpillar, the wasp returned with a pellet of sand between her four feet, and carrying it into the lock, proceeded to form her nest. In two hours she made thirteen visits .... after this she was disturbed, so that I am afraid that she has deserted her nest .... This predilection for locks is curious, but quite explainable. It saves the insect the trouble of boring a hole several inches deep.

July 21<sup>st</sup> 1835. ... a humming-bird hawk moth ... unfurled its long slender trunk and sucked the honey, itself suspended in the air, spreading out its tail and the white tufts on its sides.

**July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1835.** .. (a visit to Lord Ongley's Swiss Garden at Warden) ... a very curious place ... in the opinion of most people very beautiful, but I do not myself like it much ... The whole of this garden is in very bad taste, and much too artificial. Even the Swiss Cottage is ill imagined and the quantity of linen furniture in the arbours and tents looks ridiculous. In winter it must look cheerless. In short, considering the thousands that have been laid out on it, it is surprising that so little has been made out of the garden.

**August 9<sup>th</sup> 1835.** In the evening I walked to the heath to see some poor people of the name of Betts, whom I sometime teach a little. They are miserably poor, and live in a mud cottage, built by the man himself, and containing only two rooms for themselves and six children. The man can read and is tolerably intelligent; the woman is deplorably ignorant, and knows nothing whatever of the doctrines of the Christian religion, so that she requires the very simplest instruction. Another family of Barford, lives close by .... they have just lost a daughter .... whom I go and read to sometimes ... I saw her corpse ... a very affecting and melancholy site. It was the first I have seen.

**August 19<sup>th</sup> 1835.** Five days ago I saw two young swallows sitting on the edge of a water spout under the roof, where probably was their nest. The mother, meantime, was hawking for flies, and several times, in our presence, gave some to one of the young ones; this she did on the wing by a quick and almost imperceptible motion. Papa called my attention to a very curious instinct on her part. She hawked in circles, enlarging the circles every time, by which means she avoided the possibility of going again over the same ground.

**September 9<sup>th</sup> 1835.** In the study of natural history it is particularly important not to come too hastily to conclusions .... I greatly suspect I was mistaken in attributing the sound 'chick-check' to the marsh tit, and I am pretty sure it is the chiff-chaff ....

**September 10<sup>th</sup> 1835.** I am quite versed in the imitations of rain given by the swallows...what I observe of their conduct previous to rain is this:- that they fly about in great multitudes, with unusual swiftness .. they are very fearless, and fly within a yard of you .... I find when they act thus, I may be quite sure, not merely that rain is very shortly coming, but hard and continued rain . had I time I would devote myself to discovering the influence which the weather possesses on the songs and actions of birds.....

**September 16<sup>th</sup> 1835.** Papa has been setting up in the kitchen garden a meridian line ....it is a line of extremely fine wire, suspended from a south wall. At the end is a piece of lead, fastened, dipping into a cup to keep it steady. On the wall behind is a broad wooden peg, about an inch and quarter in diameter. Papa took his watch to Bedford and had it set exactly by real or mean time; then, having found by the almanac the difference that day between mean and apparent time, he knew at what time by his watch the sun ought to come to the meridian; and accordingly, observing the shadow of the line on the peg behind it, he marked the exact spot where it fell at the time pointed out by the almanac as apparent noon. Thus for the future, observing the time when the sun's shadow again reaches the mark, and then calculating what o'clock it ought to be by his watch, papa can always find out whether his watch went regularly

September 13<sup>th</sup> 1835. .... I was extremely delighted to see, for the first time in my life a live kingfisher .... it was quite like a flying sapphire ....

December 31<sup>st</sup> 1835. .. when our lease is out at the end of 1837 I wonder where our abode will be ...

January 27<sup>th</sup> 1836. A most beautiful day .... the coal tit sang a little; the buntings, lark and robin were in full song ... the ox-eyes were particularly busy; they are noisy and boisterous birds and comparatively clumsy in their movements .....

March 7<sup>th</sup> 1836. I have been confined to the house, and partly to my bed by a cough,.. a thing which I have not had for many years, except for my last fever ... I am afraid that I shall miss the first singing birds of passage .....

April 30<sup>th</sup> 1836. I now conclude the fifth volume of my journal ... I find it such a useful practice, and so entertaining, that I am fully resolved to continue it all my life. It was first suggested to me by the possession of a small pocket book, given to me by a pupil when I was ten years old. I have ordered a sixth volume to be made by Fraser at Potton .... I have long been convinced that the use of the pen is amongst the most invaluable means of improving the mind.

June 6<sup>th</sup> 1836. To me, all this spring, and part of the summer are quite lost ... during this year I have been in a state of very indifferent health. ... so that I have been debarred ... from rising at four or five o'clock and walking in the woods at will to watch the birds and hear their songs.

June 29<sup>th</sup> 1836. ... there is certainly the chance of my lungs being affected, but we trust that, if it please God, the sea will restore me to health and remove the possibility of consumption. I know, however, that I must prepare myself for the worst ....

September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1836. I now really pride myself on my weather wisdom. I can, always, by observing the sunset, accurately predict the weather of the following day. I trust the sunset even more than the barometer. The sunset this evening was the most glorious I ever beheld. At the moment the sun (an orb of gold) was setting, the western horizon was glowing with a fiery copper pink, sprinkled with small rich purple clouds of surpassing brilliance. But after he was quite set, the scene was far nobler. The whole western sky was one mass of various colours; red, lemon, orange, pink, lilac melting together and continually increasing in brightness. Then the light decreased in extent, and amalgamated more and more; the western horizon glowing like a furnace, till no colour remained but a belt of bloody scarlet as I had never seen before. The scarlet colour contrasted strangely and harshly with the intense dark purple of the distances; a contrast which, if seen in a painting, would be pronounced very ugly and unnatural. In the earlier part of it the eastern sky was blushing with curled and streaky clouds of a delicate pink, as if the sun was rising.

**October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1836.** This is my last day at Woodbury:- my last morning, I should say; for we set off at eleven o'clock. I took a long farewell of house, garden, wood, heath and every other object of which I am familiar. It was a direful morning; every object was obscured by rain, and all the country appeared to the least possible advantage, yet still I looked on it with great regret. But it was far more painful to part with papa and my brothers and sisters.

**March 31<sup>st</sup> 1837 at Exeter.** ..... That very same golden moon, which is gleaming at this moment before my eyes, I have often watched at Woodbury with equal delight, and at this moment, perhaps, is watched there with equal delight by my dear absent relatives.

**April 7<sup>th</sup> 1837 at Exeter.** .... I was attracted by the cry of a bird quite new to me .. and I instantly commenced a pursuit. .... I tracked it from tree to tree, from hedge to hedge, from field to field; I crossed and re-crossed lane, meadow and stream, following it by sound and voice, sometimes far, sometimes near. The eager delight with which I engaged in the chase reminded me most strongly of past days, when in full health and strength, I used to ramble for hours amongst the woods and fields of dear Woodbury, in unwearied search of some unknown warbler. Alas ! I can never hope again for these enjoyments at Woodbury, which perhaps I may never see no more....

**April 17<sup>th</sup> 1837 at Exeter.** It is impossible for language to describe my sensations when I was first drawn out in a little garden chair on our lovely lawn, unable to walk, but with my heart bounding with ecstasies at all I saw and heard and felt. Oh for summer! Oh for Woodbury! ....

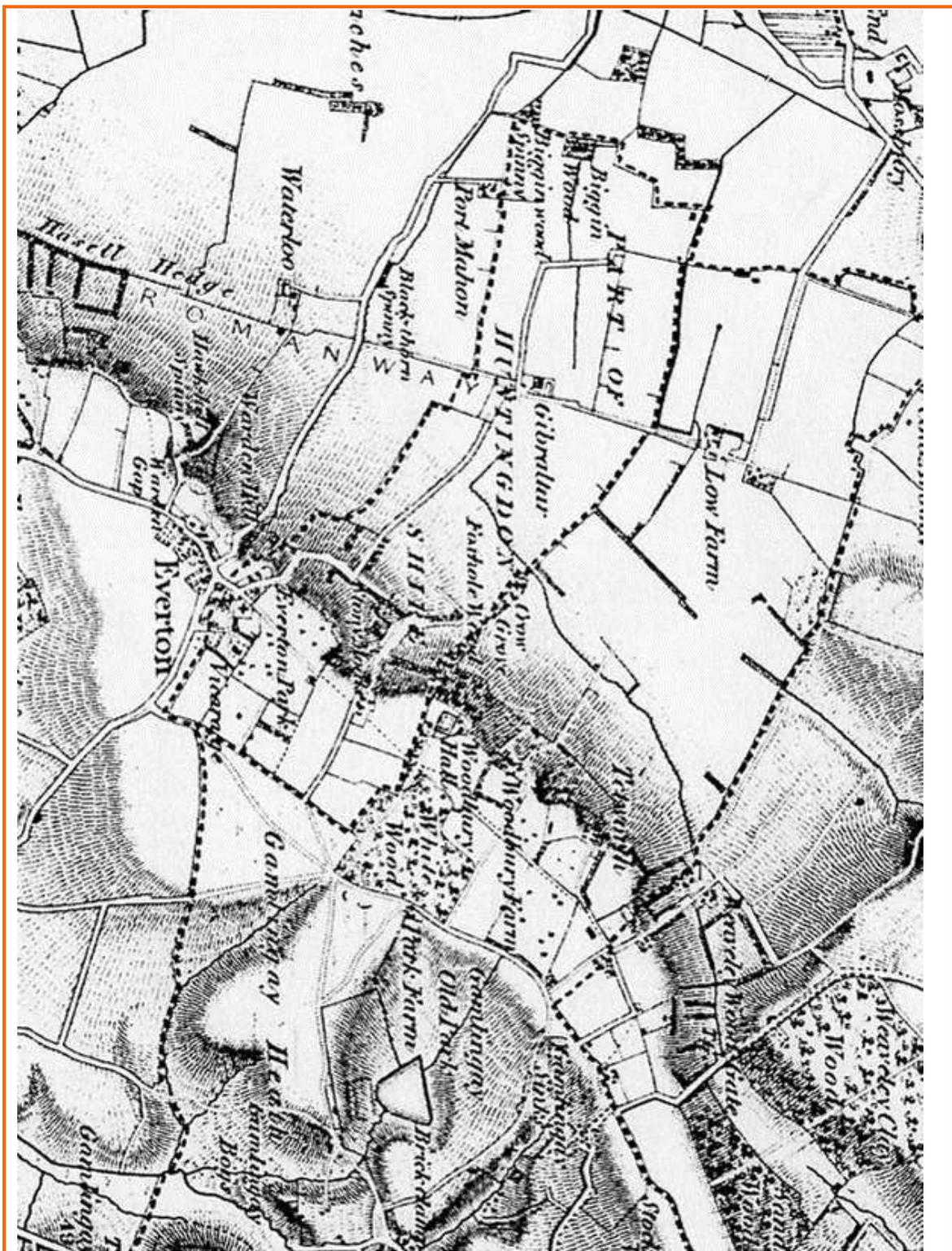
**Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1838 on ship to Madeira.** .... I looked out of the little side window, and saw a bright double light on the horizon. This was the light on the Lizard Point, the last glimpse of Old England. It long continued steadily in sight, then it seemed occasionally to dip into the water, then by degrees it only emerged now and then as the vessel rolled, and at last it wholly disappeared. And so farewell to my native land, perhaps for ever.

**Jan 13<sup>th</sup> 1839 on Madeira.** ... At Woodbury ... almost every object was familiar to me. Madeira I admire with intense admiration, but she is to me a beautiful stranger; England I knew, and loved fondly. Oh, there are moments when visions start up before me of sweet well known spots – woods where the anemone and bluebell grow; streams shaded with ash-trees and hawthorn, where I have wandered alone in early spring mornings, on violets and primroses and grass drenched with dew, myself the happiest of the happy, listening to the songs of the birds, and shaking over me a shower of bright drops as I gathered the branches of the willow or bullace; lanes too carpeted with green turf and sloping meadows covered with broom and marsh – marigold .....

**May 18<sup>th</sup> 1839.** On the 4<sup>th</sup> April I broke a blood-vessel and am now dying of consumption, in great suffering, and may not live many weeks....

*(Emily's last words were written on June 24<sup>th</sup>, a fortnight before her death)*





## **In Search of Margaret Emily Shore Part 1**

**The following article appeared in the Potton History Society Newsletter 15 in the Autumn of 1993. The Society Treasurer, Anita Lewis holidayed on Madeira and went to see if she could find the grave of Emily Shore.**

*Emily, who lived for a while at Brook House, Potton, was one of the daughters of the Rev. Thomas Shore and died of consumption, aged only 19, at Funchal, Madeira on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1839 and was buried in the New British Burial Ground on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1839. She left behind her Journal (published in edited form by her surviving sisters in 1891), giving us an insight into her observations on the social and natural world around her.*

We started asking questions almost as soon as we had unpacked our suitcases. Where was the Visitor's Cemetery or was it the English Cemetery? We learned that there was an English church and an English Vicar. We must certainly meet him.

We found the English Church – Holy Trinity; it had been there at 22 Quebra Costas since the early 1800's. Emily Shore had certainly worshipped there. The door was opened to reveal a medium sized church with the most beautiful flowers arranged on the altar, A lady was sweeping the floor; we asked for the vicar. We would have told you that everybody in Madeira speaks English, but not this lady and moreover, she was most suspicious of us and did her utmost to send us away. We asked if the Casa was where the vicar lived – yeas it was. We knocked on the door and again she came to move us away. However we were not to be discouraged; we were on the trail; the bit was between our teeth; we would press on. Up the hill and on and on we were told to go, until you see the bishop's house. It is opposite there. Sure enough, there it was, a cemetery behind a high stone wall and big green gates. We had been told to ring at the little gate and the caretaker would let us in. Again no English but we recognised that he was saying "familias" .. he thought we were looking for our family. We couldn't tell him otherwise.

He lead us through the chapel into a side room and opened up the safe and there were three or four ledgers waiting for us ..... joy of joys. The first was dated 1870 .... Not old enough! We turned to the next. It was in alphabetical order and there, where it should be, under the S was the entry for Margaret Emily Shore (even with a cross reference). The plot number was 66. On the wall were several plans of the layout of the graves, printed at different times. Next to 66 there was no name. The caretaker lead us to the graveyard. How different it was! The stones were just like in an English churchyard but all around grew this sub-tropical vegetation. Hibiscus, Jacaranda, Oleander, Bourgeanvillea, giant Gladioli, Palm Trees ....bright green colours so unlike the sober greens of England. He lead us to plot 66. The coffin shaped flat stone bore initials but they were not M E S. This was not it. He took us to another stone marked 66. The inscription was almost illegible but running my fingers over the stone I could not feel a J. This was not it.

The graves were not in chronological order and so we went all over from side to side. No Emily Shore. Many of the stones were no longer legible, many were buried under a sea of agapanthus plants. Finally he took us to the walls where there were tablets set in; again not in chronological order. We walked right round and it made fascinating reading. So many of them were young people in their 20's; many were women, some were military men. Again our luck was out, we could find no stone that commemorated Emily Shore. We took photos of all sides of the cemetery for certainly

there, somewhere, amid the agapanthus plants and the giant strelitzia (bird of paradise) under the palm trees lay the mortal remains of Emily Shore.

We did make contact with the vicar, the Rev. Arthur Brown, by telephone a few days later. He didn't know the story of Emily Shore and was most interested when I told him all about her and her diary. Unfortunately he was unable to cast any further light upon the whereabouts of the grave.

### **On the Trail of Emily Shore Part 2. A Boat Trip on Madeira in 1839**

**The following two articles appeared in Potton History Society Newsletters in 2014/5. The Society Programme Secretary, Peter Ibbett holidayed on Madeira and went to see the great sea cliff Emily had a picnic under and the English Church where was laid to rest./**

Emily, who lived for a while at Brook House, Potton, was one of the daughters of the Rev. Thomas Shore and died of consumption, aged only 19, at Funchal, Madeira on 7th July 1839 and was buried in the New British Burial Ground on 9th July 1839. She left behind her Journal (published in edited form by her surviving sisters in 1891), giving us an insight into her observations on the social and natural world around her.

An article appeared in the Potton History Society Newsletter 15 in the Autumn of 1993 written by the then society treasurer, Anita Lewis, who holidayed on Madeira and went to see if she could find the grave of Emily Shore. She found a record of her burial but no evidence of a surviving gravestone.

English visitors arriving in Madeira in 1838 would have found no modern tourist hotels at Encosta Cabo Girao on the south coast of Madeira not far from its capital of Funchal. Today, in 2014, as the sun shines down on a calm May day at my holiday oasis, a faint wisp of white cloud is the only break in the azure blues of sky and sea. From my balcony, through the trees, are the first of the days tourists walking out onto the glass platform at the top of the 1,902 feet (580m) of the sea-cliff face of Cabo Girao. Beneath is the sea, strangely lacking any kind of boats or ships. These were the life blood of the island, bringing its discoverer, Zarco, and back in December 1838, a young woman of 18 aboard the 'David Lyon' to be part of the English community on the island.

Emily Shore, whose father was the Rev Thomas Shore, M.A., (Wadham College Oxford), began her Journal in July 1831, at Brook House in my home town of Potton (Bedfordshire). She wrote about some of the local events and also about the plants and bird life of Gamlingay Heath around Woodbury where she lived for a few years. Her short life was one of gentle physical decline, moving to the South Coast, before being taken to Madeira, whose climate was known to be beneficial to those suffering from consumption. In contrast to her health the quality of her writings on the natural and social world around her went from strength to strength. I took on my Madeiran holiday my copy of 'The Journal of Emily Shore', the final portion of which deals with the last six months of her life in the island's capital of Funchal. The entry for Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup> 1839 contains the following:-

"At breakfast time came a note to me from Miss Freeman, saying, "*Dear Emily, The morning is so fine we hope you will be able to go with us in a boat to Cabo Girao; we will send the horse for you about nine o'clock.*" I forthwith put on my bonnet, and in great delight mounted the horse as soon as it arrived. We pursued our way to Cabo Girao. Miss Freeman made me lie down on a sofa of cushions they had made for me

at the bottom of the boat, and I reposed in luxury, watching the tall cliffs that gradually opened to our view as we glided towards this celebrated headland.

Gabo Girao is the loftiest precipice in Madeira and is said to be the loftiest in the whole world. The height (measured to the highest point a little inland) is rather more than two thousand one hundred feet; but the height immediately from the brink is not much less). We rowed out a little way into the sea, and I gazed with extreme admiration on the stupendous precipice. Looking up is much the least favourable way of viewing a lofty object, because you then see it only contrasted with the sky, which looks the same everywhere; whereas in looking down and seeing the difference in the sea, or whatever object may be below, you obtain an adequate idea of the distance you are above them. We were not nearly as much impressed as we should be at the height of Cabo Girao until we spied some men on the narrow beach below, and the excessive smallness of their figures immediately exalted in our ideas the rock beneath which they stood. The same effect was still more strikingly produced by a ladder, left part-way up the rock after an unfortunate explosion of gunpowder, by which twenty men were killed.

There is a narrow strip of cultivated beach lying beneath Cabo Girao on which are grown the finest vines, figs, and peaches in Madeira. These, contrasted with the huge rock, look strangely tiny; the vine trellises are like nets, the peach trees in blossom like small almond bushes, and the fig-trees like plants which you can walk over. Here there is one little hut, the most perfect image of utter and dreary solitude that I ever beheld; shut in on the land-side by the tremendous precipice under which it is built, and with the mighty waste of waters before it, the inhabitants are excluded from all sight of intercourse with their fellow-creatures except by the accidental and uncertain means of boats. I should think it a most melancholy abode on a howling night of storms and darkness.

The hue of Cabo Girao is chiefly a dark red; but there is a great variety of dark and purple tints, and streaks of many forms; there are also many tufts of plants and flowers springing out of its inaccessible sides, and the distant summits are crowned with pines and low vegetation.

We are now determined to land on the beach. This was a difficult matter, for there is a very steep bank of shingles, on which the waves, even this calm day, broke with sufficient force to drag away the rope from the hands of the two men who had waded ashore, and were trying to drag us up. So we proceeded to another part; the men managed to regain the rope, and pulled the boat up upon the black shingles. We now proceeded to eat the cold dinner which we had brought with us. As Mrs Hoskyns and I were the two invalids of the party, the rest busied them-selves in the most good-natured way to make us comfortable; they spread cushions and cloaks on the shingles for us to sit upon, and propped us up with cushions, supported against piles of great stones. The sun luckily went in just then, so that we were not scorched with heat. We took off our bonnets; the gentlemen opened the provision baskets; and here, under Cabo Girao, we did enjoy our picnic-dinner. My first picnic was in the Bradley Woods, in Devonshire, the last was in the New Forest; and now – how little then I should have expected it! – I am at one in Madeira.

Some one – Mr. F., I think – set the example of dipping the hand into the pleasant cool water, upon which we all took to dipping. He next told us that it was very refreshing to wet one's temples with the same; immediately we all began applying our wet fingers to our temples, till a sense of the ridiculous struck Miss F., and she burst out laughing!"

A few months later Emily died of her consumption leaving behind a lasting reminder of the power of words to provide an insight into the response of human beings to the world around them and leave future generations a link with our heritage.

So if you take a holiday in Madeira and visit the tourist site on top of the great sea cliff do make the effort to walk onto the glass platform jutting out over the sheer drop of nearly 2000ft. Look down to the neat little fields at the base of the cliff and listen for the sound of laughter from Emily and her party echoing through the mists of time.



### **On the Trail of Emily Shore**

### **Part 3. The English Church in Funchal**

My 2014 visit to Madeira included a day's sightseeing in its bustling capital of Funchal. I had taken my copy of Emily's Journal with me as holiday reading and noted:-

**24<sup>th</sup> December 1838.** "The English place of internment is at some little distance from the Church .... It has the appearance of a beautiful garden, with winding walks enclosed between the thickest hedges of geranium, four or five feet high, and so solid and massy that they appear quite different plants from the stunted and (comparatively) leafless specimens we see in England. I gazed around this silent cemetery, where so many early blossoms, nipped by a colder climate, were mouldering away. I felt, too, as I looked at the crowded tombs, that my own might, not long hence, be amongst them. What greatly enhances the melancholy appearance of this one, is the circumstance that almost all of the inscriptions are partly, some entirely effaced; that is, part of paint or ink has disappeared, whether owing to the dampness of climate or to bad execution I do not know."

This last observation may well explain why Emily has no apparent memorial today. I hoped have a look at the cemetery and set out from the bustling centre of Funchal en-route to my pick-up point to Cabo Girao and found that the English Church was located further away than I thought. I had expected to find a miniature of an English Parish Church providing a contrast to the more solid and heavy style of the local churches. It was a surprise to find at the end of the entrance path, guarded by a pair of

metal gates, a rectangular box of a building with a pair of columns flanking each side of the entrance. Inside was an even greater surprise for the interior was circular with a domed roof!



Outside the church I walked in the quiet and green church gardens as Emily had done:-

**March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1839.** After church I took a turn in the gardens ... it was one of the most serene, delicious evenings I have known, and the air was sweet with flowers. The narrow walk up to the church is shaded with two beautiful cedars. There was something quite soothing in the calmness of the air, broken only by the splash of a little stream, and the tinkling note of the goldfinch. The tall datura, covered with its trumpet like blossoms, now half faded, the gigantic growth of geraniums and scarlet salvias, and the huge convent that towers above, all tell that we are not in England. The interior was even more of a surprise being oval in design with a balcony and miniature St Pauls dome lighting the plain exterior. It was beautifully maintained and movingly silent for its two visitors. It was here that Emily was once stirred into indignation:-

**March 17<sup>th</sup> 1839.** I went to church as usual in the afternoon. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s two sermons were both intensely High Church and Puseyite; the most intolerant notions delivered dogmatically and positively, without any attempt at reasoning and argument. In point of fact, he actually anathematized all who did not strictly conform to every rule and ceremony of Mother Church; and much of both sermons was distinctly aimed at excellent Mr Langford, who is in the habit of holding meetings for prayer and religious instruction. A great sensation was created by these sermons, which seem to have excited universal disapprobation; every one whom papa met burst out in condemnation of them. How melancholy that religious feuds and factions should be introduced, even into this remote place! Papa has rather been defending Mr \_\_\_\_\_ to his enemies, on the grounds that, as he thinks these opinions are matters of vital importance, he is perfectly right to insist on them from the pulpit, but that it is the intolerant, dictatorial spirit which is so much to be regretted.

Sadly I did not have the time to seek out the Burial Garden and wound my way back through two city parks full of the beauty that had accompanied Emily's final months, far away from the wood and heathland of Woodbury that had stirred a love of nature in her heart.

If you should visit Madeira do take the trouble to seek out the English Church quietly tucked away from the Tourist Trails.