

Eastern Illinois University

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Samuel Pepys

Newton Key



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most detailed biographies, though hardly one that renders all others obsolete. The search for the well-rounded biography of the human William Penn goes on.

—Jacob L. Susskind

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On 26 May 1703, John Evelyn noted, "This day died Mr. Samuel Pepys, a very worthy industrious and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the Navy. . . . He was . . . learned in many things, skilled in music, a very great cherisher of learned men" (quoted in Tanner). This summation, the earliest biographical sketch, was the general estimate of Pepys until the early 19th century. From 1819, however, a different Pepys emerged, when SMITH began deciphering Pepys's shorthand *Diary*. Richard Lord Braybrooke published editions of Smith's deciphering efforts between 1825 and 1848–49. The *Diary* remained abridged and expurgated until editors Mynors Bright (1875–79) and Henry B. Wheatley (1893–99) published successively more of Pepys' frank entries. By 1900, as Ollard notes, one could "know more about Pepys than about any other individual Englishman of his time." He has become the most well-known 17th-century diarist, and the number of biographies attests to his popularity.

Before 1900, only WHEATLEY had provided a book-length life. While Smith merely prefaces his edition of Pepys' correspondence with an introductory sketch (as does Lord Braybrooke in his editions of the *Diary*), Wheatley studies the wider world in which Pepys moved, including chapters on the Court, the Navy, contemporary manners, and on Pepys' life before, during, and after the *Diary*. Wheatley's work was the standard for many years, and it went through at least five editions by the early 1900s.

After publication of the relatively unexpurgated *Diary*, several analyses of the "private" Pepys were published between 1900 and 1925. Most are based almost entirely on the *Diary*. MOORHOUSE's relatively full and clear life owes much to Wheatley and to published collections of "Pepysiana." It is useful as a balanced introduction to many aspects of Pepys' professional life. LUBBOCK's book is part of a standard biography series (as are Ponsonby and Taylor, described below). In addition to the usual chronicle of the *Diary* years, Lubbock discusses his later life, with the Popish Plot and Pepys' library receiving attention at the expense of his official career. BRIDGE uses the *Diary* to portray Pepys as a musician (vocalist, composer, and listener), while he discusses mainly other Restoration composers and players. BRADFORD relies on Moorhouse and on the *Diary*. This self-styled "psychographic," topical study includes an important examination of Pepys' enigmatic religious beliefs but is otherwise unmemorable. LUCAS-DUBRETON, a biographer of Napoleon, offers an overwritten novelistic foray into Pepys' moods and actions during the *Diary* years. Though the volume asks insightful questions, its readiness to resort to guesswork makes it useful only as a guide to further research.

Between the First and Second World Wars Pepys was revived as "Savior of the Navy," or, rather, the witty and open Pepys of the *Diary* was reunited with his later, more prosaic incarnation as Secretary of the Admiralty. TANNER paved the way, first with an important series of lectures (*Samuel Pepys and the Royal*

Navy, 1920) and catalogs of Pepysian manuscripts, which highlight his important role in the Naval Office. Tanner inherited Wheatley's notes and "engaged upon a larger life," but the brief introduction cited here is the only book-length biography he produced. Tanner mainly considers the *Diary* years topically, including: Pepys' position, wife, friends, food, books. Several chapters, that on Pepys' sermon-going and that comparing his official and private styles for example, remain the most thorough discussions of particular aspects of the diarists' life. The last chapter, "Later Life of Pepys," is more than a "sketch." It quotes extensively from important sources, and it notes mistakes in earlier editions of correspondence. Tanner is a delight to read and proves the author to be, as Ollard says, "the doyen of Pepysian scholars." What is lacking is extended discussion of Pepys' beliefs and motivations.

A much fuller narrative is found in the three volumes (1933–39) of BRYANT, the other major work of the Augustan Age of Pepys studies. Bryant's well-documented narrative remains the standard work of reference. Bryant employs the vast array of personal manuscripts and admiralty documents that reveals Pepys' day-to-day actions (uncovering, for example, the extent of his near-blindness *circa* 1670). Because he also provides a clear narrative of high politics, his lengthy study is accessible to students minimally familiar with the period. But it is not a complete biography; it ends with Pepys' dismissal in 1689 and includes nothing on the last decade of his life. Bryant's *Pepys and the Revolution* (1979) is simply half of the third volume of the trilogy followed by a few pages of uninformative epilogue. Unlike the original volumes, it is not self-contained (including, for example, unexplained references to his Tangier voyage). The failure to incorporate recent revaluations of the Glorious Revolution by J. R. Jones and others date this repackaged work.

Compared with Tanner and Bryant, other interwar biographies are less substantial. PONSONBY and DRINKWATER rely heavily on Tanner. Ponsonby, a scholar of 17th-century diaries, sticks closely to the *Diary*. His discussion of the contemporary assessment of Pepys both before and after publication of the *Diary* is useful. Drinkwater is a good, readable, and popular-style biography of the "public" Pepys, buttressed by some research in manuscripts that were more fully mined by Bryant. Finally, KIRK and MARBURG are companion monographs (the authors are husband and wife) that are limited in scope but rewarding. Kirk briefly and clearly covers Pepys' governorship of a mathematical school for poor boys. Pepys' stormy relationship with the schoolmasters adds insight into the mind and morality of the first modern bureaucrat. Marburg examines the friendship and correspondence of Evelyn and Pepys more exhaustively than Ponsonby had done. The diarists' intertwined "public" roles and private lives are discussed in two lengthy chapters.

By the 1950s, many aspects of Pepys had been recovered: the *Diary* published more or less intact, his reputation as founder of the modern navy established, much of his correspondence published, and the extent of his famous library documented if not fully cataloged. With this scholarly apparatus, and with Bryant as a guide to his life, a flurry of monographs on Pepys from particular points of view have appeared. Least satisfactory of these studies are Cleugh, Taylor, and Wilson. All are based on the *Diary*. CLEUGH offers a popular, if unexciting, study of the

earthy side of the *Diary*. TAYLOR, a topical study looking at Pepys on the Court, music, theatre, and other subjects, is marred by extremely poor editing. WILSON's narrative is notable only for a final chapter on the life of Mary Skinner, Pepys' companion during his final years.

EMDEN and HUNT both look chiefly at the *Diary* years. Emden's is a brief study of Pepys' character that neglects to use Bryant's more thorough exploration of this period. Hunt also provides some insight into his character in a collection of "Pepysiana." NICOLSON's volume, composed of three distinct lectures, is a profound investigation of Pepys' interest in science during the early years of the Royal Society. The narrative of Pepys' connection with the Royal Society, however, remains unwritten.

Recently, a Renaissance of Pepys studies has begun, led by Robert Latham, the Pepys Librarian. A new, definitive *Diary*, edited by Latham and William Matthews (1970–83), has a *Companion* (vol. X, 1983) of some 1700 entries, including many substantial essays. The essay on "religion" adds to Bradford, that on "music" supplements Bridge, and "Royal Society" expands on Nicolson. Latham has also begun editing a new multi-volume *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College* (1978–). Yet the last 20 years, with one important exception, has not been a boon period for biographers. The life prefacing the new edition of the *Diary* is wan and uninformative. HEARSEY appears unaware of the new edition of the *Diary* in progress. Despite the title, it studies mainly the young man of the *Diary* years. Barber and Trease are notable more for their illustrations than for their texts. BARBER, an exhibition catalog, links portraits with the narrative of the life of Pepys. The student will value this brief visual "making of the man." TREASE is a brief and clear updating of Wheatley and is an undemanding pictorial introduction to Pepys.

The most recent biography and the first to make use of the new edition of the *Diary* (then in progress) is by OLLARD. The author, an expert on the Restoration navy, is well qualified to provide a fresh Pepys. Ollard builds on the work of Wheatley, Tanner, and Bryant and presents a full-length biography of Pepys' complete life. It often defers to Bryant's fuller descriptions, while correcting minor points within the notes. To Ollard, Pepys was a great man whose "deepest springs of action were artistic" and whose greatest work of art was "the professionalising of the naval officer." But this is no idealized portrait. It shows the young man of the 1660s swaying to the winds of "faction" and "crude personal gain"; and Ollard is at odds with Bryant in stressing the hard edge of Pepys—his "mercilessness" could at times be "repellent." The work includes a splendid recreation of naval affairs, but its greatest feat is to illuminate Pepys' thought. Unlike Bryant, Ollard assumes some knowledge of the period and remains focused on Pepys. The constant use of anachronistic, metaphorical illustration and namedropping—"rush-hour traffic of middle age," Le Corbusier, *A Doll's House*—is perhaps less than scholarly; but it makes for "a very worthy, industrious and curious" biography.

—Newton E. Key