

Bust of James Losh by David Dunbar in the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society

## The Diary of James Losh

**6th August 1804** Ball in the evening. Cecilia, Margaret, Miss Bonner and Sara, who appeared for the first time and was very much admired.

**January 1811** I am still harassed by the affairs of Losh Wilson and Bell, but as they are prudent men and have a good business I trust we shall overcome their difficulties. George appears to be doing well and John, though he has temporary pecuniary embarrassments, has a large fortune and great reserves.

**23rd March 1813** It is always pleasant for me to wander about this snug and well wooded place and to recollect the haunts and amusements of my childhood. Woodside is now a very comfortable and handsome place, and the woods around it thriving and extensive.

**28th March 1814** About ½ past 11 o'clock this night an express arrived announcing the death of my brother John. He was a good and amiable man: he had great talents fine taste much improved by reading and observation. A very handsome person, and pleasing manners. With these advantages and an independent fortune what is there he might not have been. But he was indolent and had suffered habits unfavourable to steady application to grow upon him.

**30th March 1814** Had a very affecting interview with my niece Sara, who spoke to me with great candour. She seems to suffer from those doubts and anxieties which are too common to minds of sensibility. It shall be my constant and earnest endeavour to be the comfort and friend of this excellent young woman.

**31st March 1814** I yesterday took a last look at the remains of my Brother . . . he was buried near his late wife in the Chapel yard at 58 years old.

**1st April 1814** We found a will . . . leaving his whole property to his daughters and making Mr Gaskin and myself Exors.

**3rd October 1814** My sister Margaret and nieces, Sara and Catherine, arrived at Jesmond - upon a visit of some days, after an excursion to Holland, Brabant and France for about two months. They gave a good account of the civility, cleanliness and good morals of the Dutch and a very bad one of the ferocity, profligacy and filthiness of the French.

**27th May 1819** In the evening I rode my pony out way of Woodside where I stayed all night. My sister is there alone. I rode by way of Blackhall and as the evening was fine had a very pleasant ride, the country being picturesque and in a state of great freshness and beauty. I was much struck with the change since I had seen one part of this road some twenty years ago. What was then bare land covered with ling and heather is now either cultivated or has thriving plantations of larch or Scottish fir.

**27th March 1822** Breakfasted at the Blue Bell with Mr Norman. I engaged him to act as agent for my nieces at £40 a year. My visit was in connection with the failure of the East Lothian Bank, threatening loss to Sara and Catherine.

**30th September 1825** I passed some days upon this occasion in Cumberland, and was, of course, a good deal at Woodside. It always gives me pleasure, though sometimes of a melancholy kind, to visit my native place. My relations there are good and amiable women, but lead a life of too much retirement. Sara has great qualities of mind but an over delicacy of feeling has prevented her from taking that rank in society to which she is in all respects qualified.

**September 1828** I drove up to Wreay to look at the new schoolhouse built by Sarah and Katharine. It is built with great taste and is well calculated for the purpose both in appearance and reality.

**7th August 1831** My old friend Wordsworth the poet, dined with us at Woodside. He is now an old and somewhat infirm man, but retains all his activity and energy of mind, and has got quit of much of his pompous and declamatory manner of conversation. I avoided politics and all subjects likely to cause irritation on either side, and we passed a pleasant and tranquil evening.