

Places, pathways and performances: the urban routines of a clergyman in eighteenth-century England

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In the spring of 1796, the Reverend Thomas Woodforde (1740–1803) visited Norwich with his niece, Nancy. After leaving his small carriage at an inn on St Giles Street at 7.30am, they walked the short distance to the house of a friend, Mr Corbould, where they breakfasted. Woodforde then went to St Giles Gate to watch the entry into the city of one of the candidates for the County's two seats in Parliament and followed the election procession as it moved to the Market Place and thence to the Shire Hall. The elected candidates were then chaired around Castle Hill and the Market Place. "After the whole was over", Woodforde noted, "I walked about the City and paid some Bills &c.", including those of his wine merchant, ironmonger, lawyer and bookseller. He then returned to his friend's house at around 3.00pm for dinner and spent the rest of the afternoon with the Corboulds and his niece before leaving for home at 6.00pm.¹

This account of a day in the city highlights many of the themes that I wish to explore in this chapter: how an individual moved around the city whilst pursuing a range of ordinary and sometimes extra-ordinary activities; which places were central to their experience (and which were marginal); how their chosen routes served to draw together particular locations, and how these actions and experiences relate to the broader construction of the city as a real and imagined space.

Streets and specific prominent buildings loom large in Woodforde's account of his day in Norwich, then a city of about 30,000 people. They also dominate how (historical) geographers frequently imagine and model urban space, forming

¹ John Beresford (ed.), *The Diary of a Country Parson: The Reverend James Woodforde*, vol. 4 (Oxford 1968) p. 282–283.

the vertices and nodes on a spatial system that can be engineered to structure the cityscape.² Such perspectives afford a key role to planners, architects and the socio-political elites who between them created what Henri Lefebvre referred to as ‘representations of space’.³ These codified representations often drew on a grand plan that incorporated the city as a whole, but they also involved the detailed engineering of streets and buildings.⁴ In the eighteenth-century town, this often involved the construction of key civic and leisure infrastructure, and the improvement – through paving, cleaning and lighting – of the streets connecting them together: part of an urban renaissance first noted by Peter Borsay and traced by others in a range of European countries.⁵

Movement can be mapped onto the urban space in a variety of ways. Space syntax analyses spatial layout and human activity, drawing on measures of accessibility to provide a picture of ‘the spaces *practised* by people’ in their collective movements through the city.⁶ Whilst the techniques deployed are rather different, space syntax shares a common goal with Torsten Hägerstrand’s time-geography: an understanding of how the quotidian paths traced by people in their everyday lives related to spatial and social structures. Hägerstrand pictorialised movement using diagrams showing paths, nodes and bundles in space-time – a device subsequently adopted by Alan Pred to map what he termed the ‘choreography of existence’.⁷ Crucially, his approach was more empirical, tracing the lifeworlds of individuals as they negotiated and shaped the modern city and using similar pictorial techniques to map these onto urban space.⁸ This focus on individuals, lifeworlds and movement also lies at the heart of the ‘Freedom of the Streets’ project

² For a useful discussion and critique, see Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Towns* (Cambridge 2005).

³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford 1991). For further discussion, see Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann & Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1680–1830* (London 2007) p. 21–22.

⁴ See, for example, Christophe Loir & Thomas Schlessler, “Sidewalks and alignment of the streets: the gap between large-scale planning and the building scale in the 18th and 19th centuries”, in Alida Clemente, Dag Lindström & Jon Stobart (eds.), *Micro-Geographies of the Western City, c.1750–1900* (New York & London 2021) p. 87–104.

⁵ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford 1989); Joonas Korhonen, ‘Urban social space and the development of public dance hall culture in Vienna, 1780–1814,’ *Urban History* 40:4 (2013) p. 606–624; Dag Lindström, “Leisure culture, entrepreneurs and urban space: Swedish towns in a European perspective, eighteenth–nineteenth centuries”, in Peter Borsay & Jan Hein Furnée (eds.), *Leisure Cultures in Urban Europe c. 1700–1870. A transnational perspective* (Manchester 2016) p. 140–160.

⁶ Sam Griffiths & Katrina Navickas, “The micro-geography of political meeting places in Manchester and Sheffield c.1780–1850”, in Alida Clemente, Dag Linström & Jon Stobart (eds.), *Micro-Geographies of the Western City, c.1750–1900* (New York & London 2021) p. 184.

⁷ Torsten Hägerstrand, “What about people in regional science?”, *Papers and Proceedings of the Regional Science Association*, 24 (1970) p. 7–21; Alan Pred, “The choreography of existence: comments on Hägerstrand’s time-geography and its usefulness”, *Economic Geography*, 53:2 (1977) p. 207–221. See also Alan Pred, *Lost Words and Lost Worlds. Modernity and the Language of Everyday Life in Late Nineteenth-Century Stockholm* (Cambridge 1990).

⁸ For recent studies adopting a similar approach, see Gudrun Andersson & Jon Stobart (eds.), *Daily Lives and Daily Routines in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York & London 2022).

which seeks to explore the manifold ways in which early modern people engaged with, experienced and shaped the street.⁹

Such approaches align with Lefebvre's argument that urban space could be (re)constructed and transformed through 'spatial practices': the activities and routines of people's everyday lives. For Lefebvre – and arguably for Pred as well – the impact of these routinised activities was subconscious and performative in nature. Yet even everyday actions can be read as more conscious performances. Borsay certainly saw the dramaturgical potential of eighteenth-century towns, arguing for the importance of ritual and ceremony in shaping urban space – something we can see in Woodforde's account of the election procession in Norwich, which was performed on the city's streets and at its key political and commercial spaces.¹⁰ As Michel de Certeau argues, the city is created by people's movement through and appropriation of space: "their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together".¹¹ In other words, people's pathways are just as important as their destinations in shaping their experience of the city and creating the city itself.¹²

This chapter draws on these three broad approaches: mapping destinations, tracing pathways through the city, and exploring the practices and performances that this involved. It examines how each offers insights into James Woodforde's experience of Norwich and how this throws light on the ways in which (individual) action shaped urban spaces. Clearly one man cannot represent everyone, but Woodforde was exceptional only in the detail with which he recorded his daily routines. He was unmarried and, from 1780, his niece lived with him at Weston; but such arrangements were by no means unusual and in most respects his life was similar to that of many other country parsons in Georgian England and, indeed, many others in a broad and expanding middling sort.¹³

His diaries tell us about his daily life: his aches and pains, visits to and from friends, his parish duties, where he went and what he bought, what he ate and drank, and so on. They encompass the whole period of his occupancy of the living of Weston Longeville – a parish about ten miles from Norwich – from his arrival in 1776 to his death in 1803. My analysis focuses on the years shortly after he moved to Weston (1777–1781), when he was getting to know Norwich and establishing relationships with retailers and professionals in the city; the following three years (1782–1784), when he was firmly established in his parish and familiar with the city and many of its service-providers; and the years 1793–96, by which time Woodforde was in his 50s yet remained active and mobile. The detailed

⁹ <https://www.freedomofthestreets.org/> (accessed 1 May 2024).

¹⁰ Peter Borsay, "All the town's a stage: urban ritual and ceremony, 1660–1800", in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600–1800* (London 1989) p. 228–258.

¹¹ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles 1984) p. 97.

¹² See <https://www.freedomofthestreets.org/> (accessed 1 May 2024).

¹³ For more on clergy lifestyles in eighteenth-century England, see Jon Stobart, *Life in the Georgian Parsonage: Morals, Material Goods and the English Clergy* (London, forthcoming, 2024).

nature of his diaries makes it possible to trace the geography and nature of his engagement with the city in much greater depth.

My essay is structured around the different approaches outlined above. I begin by mapping the places that Woodforde visited in Norwich in these three periods to identify the nodes that structured his engagement with the city. Building on this, I recreate a sample of his journeys through the city, sketching out the routes which linked together the places he visited and assessing the ways in which these reveal key pathways. Thirdly, I consider how Woodforde's movement through the city might be read as performances of self before finally considering the ways in which these journeys served to create the city as a lived space. Combined, these different micro-historical approaches provide new insights into how individuals experienced and created their own version of the city.

Destinations: the geography of engagement with the city

Perhaps the simplest way of seeing how Woodforde related to the city is to map the distribution of all the places with which he engaged. Weighting this by the number of times he visited each location gives us a picture of which places were most important.¹⁴ He quickly established the King's Head as his base when visiting Norwich. This was a coaching inn, conveniently situated on the Market Place and with stabling for his horse and gig. He dined there on day trips, slept there if he chose to stay overnight, and used it as a place to meet friends and tradesmen. It thus formed both a commercial and social space.

In his early years at Weston, he visited relatively few locations when in Norwich. Most of his shopping took place in or close to the Market Place, and his engagement in sociability and the public sphere centred on the theatre and friend's houses around St Stephen's church and on Surrey Street, most notably that of Mr Francis (figure 1). The cathedral was central to his religious/professional activities, although these took up remarkably little of his time in Norwich. Woodforde was, in essence, a parish priest not an ambitious churchman; he dutifully attended the periodic Bishop's Visitations, but otherwise had few dealings with the diocesan hierarchy. What is most striking about his use of the city in the late 1770s is that most trips into Norwich involved going to only two or three places. On 7 December 1778, for instance, he drove into Norwich and put up his horses at the Kings Head. The only other place he went was the Angel Inn, where he put his nephew onto the London coach. The following day he dined at

¹⁴ A broadly similar approach can be found in Robert Shoemaker, "Gendered spaces: patterns of mobility and perceptions of London's geography, 1660–1750", in J.F. Merritt (ed.), *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype* (Cambridge 2001) p. 251–275. However, the level of detail in Woodforde's diaries is much greater than is available in the court records used by Shoemaker.

Mr Priest's house and went with his friend to the Castle Hill.¹⁵ The result was that most locations were visited just once or twice in a five-year period.

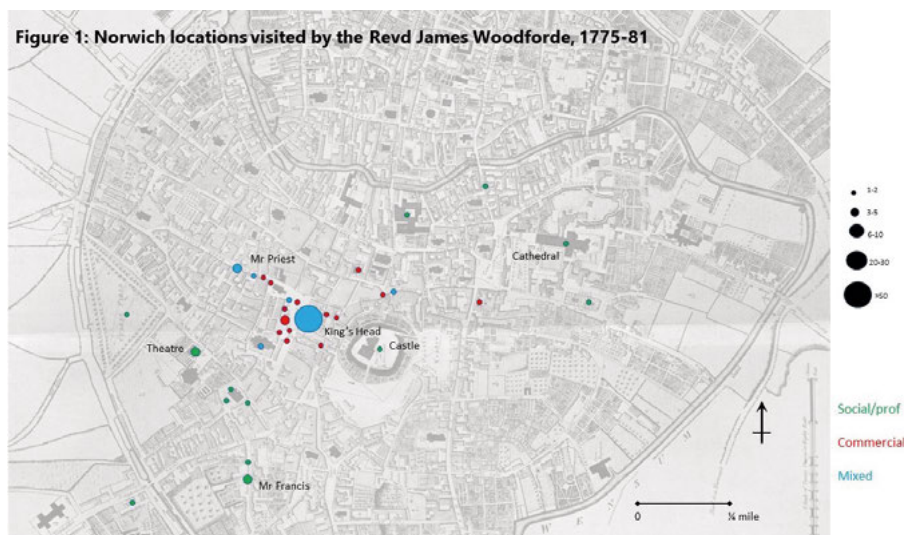


Figure 1. Norwich locations visited by the Revd James Woodforde, 1775-81. Map the author.

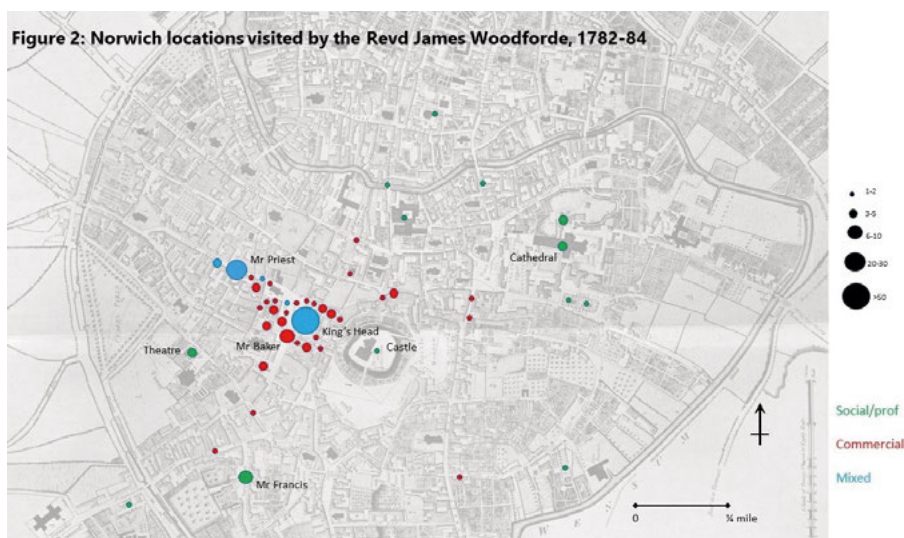


Figure 2. Norwich locations visited by the Revd James Woodforde, 1782-84. Map the author.

This changed as Woodforde became more familiar with the city: the geography of his engagement spread, but also intensified (figure 2). The King's Head remained his base, used on almost every visit, and the Market Place strengthened its position as the key locus for his shopping. There were still plenty of shops that he patronised only occasionally, including John Oxley, a hatter on the Market

¹⁵ Beresford (1968), vol. 1, p. 239–240.

Place, and Miss Brown, a milliner on Rampant Horse Street (most likely for Nancy's needs rather than his own). Others, however, emerged as key points of supply and were visited each time he went to Norwich: Mr Mileham, his barber; Henry Baker, his butcher, and especially Mr Priest, his wine merchant.

There is, of course, a gender dimension to some of these engagements: a barber was most definitely a male need and the fact that his wine merchant was also a close friend with whom he often dined or took tea would appear to blur the boundaries between commercial and social bonds in a way that was far more likely for men than women.¹⁶ However, the extended Priest family also included neighbours in Weston Longeville, making his friendship with and patronage of the Norwich Priests more nuanced. Such private sociability also took Woodforde to Mr Francis's house with greater frequency than before, and he visited a range of public venues, including the theatre and two pleasure gardens at the edge of the city. His visits to the cathedral and close also grew in number, although church business remained a minor feature of his engagement with the city.

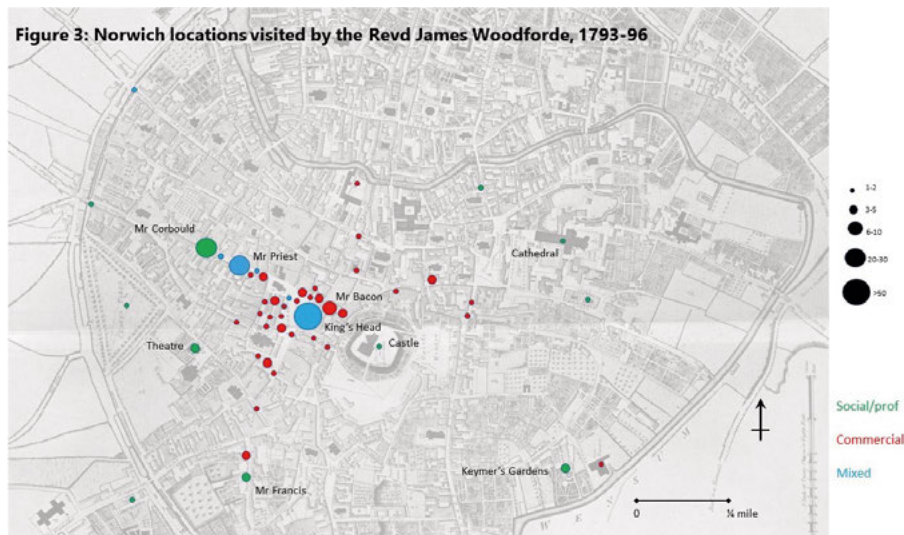


Figure 3. Norwich locations visited by the Revd James Woodforde, 1793-96. Map the author.

Into the 1790s, Woodforde's shopping was still centred on the Market Place, but Cockey Lane at its northern edge had emerged as a key location (figure 3). It contained the shops of his upholsterer, bookseller, brazier and tea merchant, each of whom he visited at least annually – often to settle his accounts. His visits to Mr Priest on St Giles Street remained important both for business and pleasure, but he went less often to the Francis household, perhaps because Mr

¹⁶ For more discussion of relationships between gentlemen and their suppliers, see Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home with the Georgians* (New Haven & London, 2009) p. 119–126. On retailer-customer relations more generally, see Nancy Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: a Study of Retailing, 1550–1820* (Aldershot 2000) p. 116–145

Francis had died and Mrs Francis was more Nancy's friend than his own, another indication that gender relations were significant in his socio-spatial world. Instead, we see the Corbould's house on Broad Street emerging as a key location and shifting the geography of Woodforde's sociability to a new part of the city.¹⁷ Also of note is the emergence of Keymer's Gardens as an important venue for public sociability which he visited for a public breakfast and concert, and to watch boating on the river.¹⁸

Overall, three things stand out about Woodforde's engagement with Norwich. First, although some places loom large in his experience of the city, Woodforde visited most of them – be they shops, pleasure gardens or civic buildings – only once or twice in a five-year period. This suggests rather superficial engagement, but their cumulative effect and spatial clustering created very clear patterns of engagement with the city – much as Gudrun Andersson finds with Anders Adolph Kihlberg's engagement with his home town of Arboga in Sweden.¹⁹ Second, the geography of these visits showed remarkable consistency from the mid-1770s to mid 1790s: the Market Place and surrounding streets were central to his shopping practices whilst sociability was centred on the houses of two or three friends. Naturally, this spatial lock-in reflected the retail geography of the city, but it is striking that patterns remained stable even when the favoured supplier changed. Third, this spatial clustering of everyday engagement meant that much of the city lay beyond Woodforde's experience: the manufacturing districts north of the river, but also peripheral areas to the west, south and east. These districts contained a variety of shops, but not generally of a type that would attract polite consumers such as Woodforde. Norwich was thus familiar, yet much of it was uninteresting, unvisited and probably unknown.

Walking: pathways through the city

The places that Woodforde visited form nodes that were linked by the itinerary followed on particular days. Focusing on this movement allows us to see an individual's engagement with the city as a series of pathways through time and space: Pred's 'choreography of existence'.²⁰ Yet tracing these pathways is by no means straightforward. Woodforde's diaries are generally clear about the sequence of places visited, but only occasionally are they explicit about the route taken or even the spatial relationship between them. A rare example

¹⁷ Mr Corbould senior had been a hatter, but was styled gentleman by the 1790s. His son was a clergyman who lived in a parish close to Woodforde's Weston living.

¹⁸ Beresford (1968), vol. 4, p. 128, 194.

¹⁹ Gudrun Andersson, "Around and about: the daily routines of a councilman in early nineteenth-century Sweden" in Gudrun Andersson & Jon Stobart (eds.), *Daily Lives and Daily Routines in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York & London 2022) p. 169–189.

²⁰ For a similar approach, see Hannah Greig and Amanda Vickery "The political day in London, c.1697–1834", *Past and Present*, 252: 1 (August 2021) p. 101–137.

is the visit he made on 15 June 1796 (figure 4). He wrote in his diary that "I got out of my Cart just before we entered the City, and walked down to Trowse Mills to speak to Mr. Blome" (his corn merchant). He then walked into Norwich along King Street as far as Tombland before turning west towards the Market Place.²¹ His journey into Norwich was thus unusual, in that it took place on foot; but from then his movements provide important clues about how he behaved on other trips.



Figure 4. Shopping and paying shop accounts in Norwich, 15 June 1796. Map the author.

Places are mentioned in the order in which they were visited and generally form a logical sequence: he moved down Cockey Lane, passing from Mrs Brewster (who supplied his tea – number 3 on figure 4) to Edmund Manning (brazier – number 4) "in the same street but nearer the Market ... From thence to Oxley's, Hatter, in the Market Place" (number 5) and thus on to "my Mercers, Smith, almost next Door to Oxley's" (number 6).²² From this, it appears that Woodforde organised the places he needed to visit into sequence and took the shortest route between them. This was a common-sense approach, built on familiarity with the geography of the city and a clear mental plan about where he intended to go in the day. That said, Woodforde was not always a rational 'economic man' and sometimes made unexpected detours or doubled back on himself, as when he moved from Mr Priest's (number 8) to Mr Corboun's (number 7/10) and back again in the afternoon of his 15 July trip (figure 4).

²¹ Beresford (1968) vol. 4, p. 286–287.

²² Beresford (1968) vol. 4, p. 287.

Each of Woodforde's visits to Norwich had its own choreography, structured by the activities planned for the day. Here, I explore six circuits in detail, selected to represent different purposes and spatial sequencing, and to demonstrate the increasing complexity of his use of city space. None are taken from the first period because his visits then either involved just two or three places or the descriptions of the sequence of calls made is too vague to allow precise mapping. The most straightforward comprised simple circuits and often involved Woodforde paying his accounts with shopkeepers. On 6 December 1782, for instance, he began at his lawyer's house on Rampant Horse Street before making his way to Mr Priest's on St Giles Street (number 2 on figure 5).²³ From there he looped north to his coal merchant (number 3) and back along Cockey Lane to the Kings Head where he dined. In the afternoon, he walked across the Market Place to his mercer (number 7) and then north to his tailor in Tombland, before returning to pay bills at his upholsterer and ironmonger (nos. 10 and 11). This was clearly a journey he had planned in advance: the two loops centring on the Kings Head and mid-day refreshment.



Figure 5. Paying shop accounts in Norwich, 6 Dec 1782. Map the author.

To an extent, the same was true of a trip made the following June (figure 6), although this time he was acquiring goods rather than settling accounts. The day began with Woodforde making a social visit to Mr Francis and then returning to the Market Place to visit a number of shops. Despite doubling back on himself, this formed a fairly efficient use of time; but he then walked almost half a mile to pay a mid-morning visit to Quantrell's Gardens (number 6) for a glass of gin

²³ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 47.

and water before returning to his saddler and upholsterer, both situated in lanes east of the Market Place. His diary offers no explanation for the detour to the pleasure gardens, which took him well out of his way and may have been a choice he made in the moment rather than a planned part of his morning.²⁴

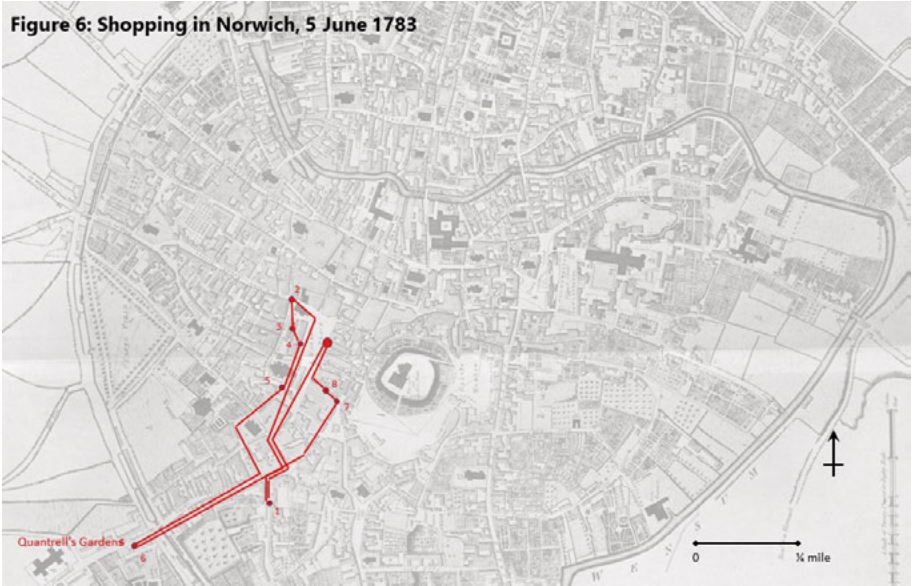


Figure 6. Shopping in Norwich, 5 June 1783. Map the author.



Figure 7. Paying shop accounts and socialising in Norwich, 18-19 January 1785. Map the author.

²⁴ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p.76–77.

Two-day visits to Norwich inevitably made Woodforde's perambulations more complex, with routes sometimes overlapping or being retraced. On 18 January 1785, he began the day at Kerrison's Bank, where he obtained a draft for £30, and then walked north to the Post Office (number 2) to post the draft to a colleague in Oxford (figure 7). He visited two nearby shops before heading back to the Market Place, where he called into two more shops. Moving on to his upholsterer (number 7) and Nancy's mantua maker (number 8), he ended his day at the theatre with his friends. The following morning, he visited Mr Priest, then walked south to his lawyer's house before returning to the Market Place and his linen draper (number 14). He spent the afternoon with his friend, Mr Francis, and in the evening went to the Rampant Horse to view an exhibition (number 16) before returning to the Kings Head.²⁵



Figure 8. Paying shop accounts in Norwich, 2-3 April 1793. Map the author.

²⁵ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, vol. 2, p. 169–170.

Figure 9: Shopping and paying shop accounts in Norwich, 13 May 1795

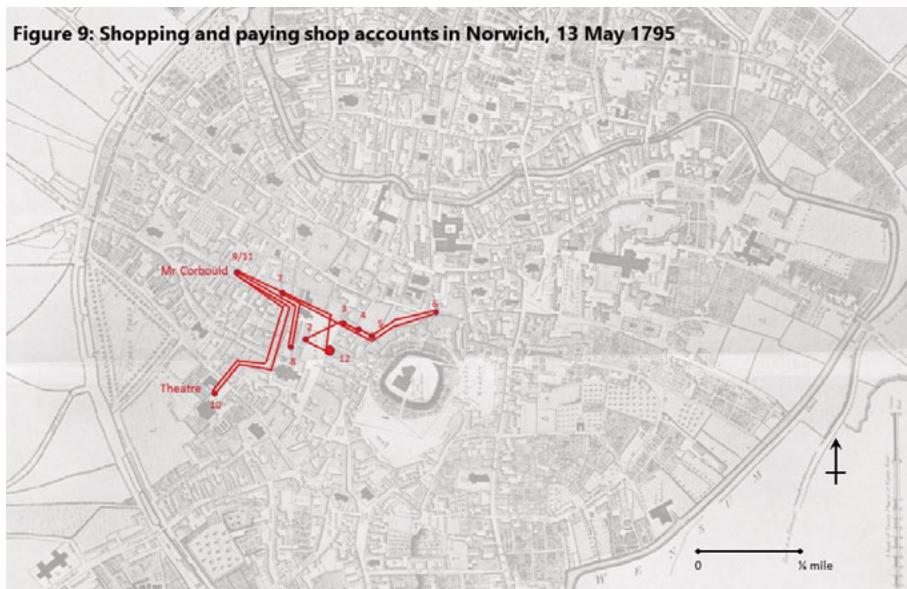


Figure 9. Shopping and paying shop accounts in Norwich, 13 May 1795. Map the author.

A similar process of retracing steps characterised many of Woodforde's later journeys through Norwich. He began the morning of 2 April 1793 by calling at his ironmonger on Haymarket, then walked south to his lawyer's house before heading north to Cockey Lane and the Market Place (figure 8 – number 3–5). All this activity preceded breakfast, which he took with Nancy and Mrs Francis on Surrey Street (number 6), just a few doors down from his lawyer. After attending an auction of household goods on the same street, he headed back to the Market Place and the Kings Head. An evening trip then took him to the theatre and back, again in the company of Nancy and their friends.²⁶

A couple of years later, on 13 May 1795, he noted in his diary that "From breakfast till dinner time walked about Norwich, shopping and paying Bills, &c.": a process which again involved retracing steps (figure 9).²⁷ He started in the Market Place, walked north along Cockey Lane and on to London Lane (number 6), but then doubled back along the same streets and on into St Giles Street before returning to the Market Place and then retracing his steps to Mr Corbould's house for dinner (number 9). In the evening, they went to the theatre, returned briefly to Corbould's and then went back to sleep at the Kings Head. In all, he probably walked along St Giles at least five times. With their detours and doubling back, these movements through the city feel less planned than other trips. Rational routes and decisions were made secondary to friendship and politeness, and to engagements that involved both him and Nancy: his decision to walk back

²⁶ Beresford (1968) vol. 4, p. 18–19.

²⁷ Beresford (1968) vol. 4, p. 196.

to Mr Corbould's from the theatre 'with the ladies' was a courtesy which he probably extended without a thought.

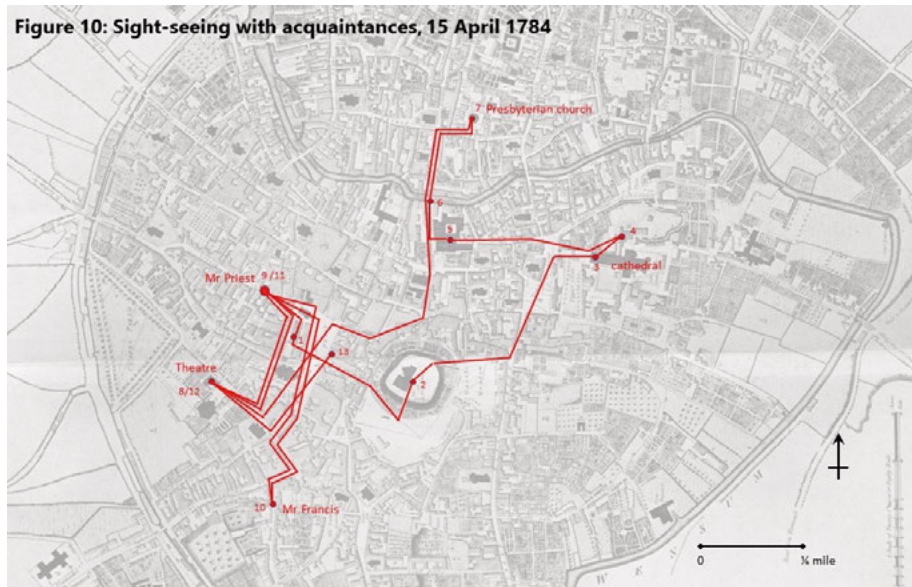


Figure 10. Sight-seeing with acquaintances, 15 April 1784. Map the author.

The possibility for meandering and re-treading the same route is brought out most clearly in the polite male sociability in which he engaged on 15 April 1784 (figure 10). Starting from Mr Priest's house on St Giles Street, where he had spent the night – no doubt rooms were very hard to come by as it was election time for the county MPs – Woodforde walked to the Sawn Inn on Upper Market Street and collected a group of "New College Gentlemen".²⁸ He then took them on a lengthy sight-seeing tour taking in the castle, cathedral, St Andrew's Hall, Presbyterian church and theatre before returning to Mr Priest's house (number 9). In the afternoon, he made a series of return journeys: dining with Mr Francis (number 10) and returning to for tea with Priest before visiting the theatre (for the second time that day) and eventually returning to the Kings Head (number 12). There is a sharp contrast between the long meandering loop of his morning walk and the intense there-and-back journeys as he socialised with two sets of male and female friends in the afternoon and evening. This underlines the way that movement through the city might vary with the purpose of the journey.

²⁸ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 131.

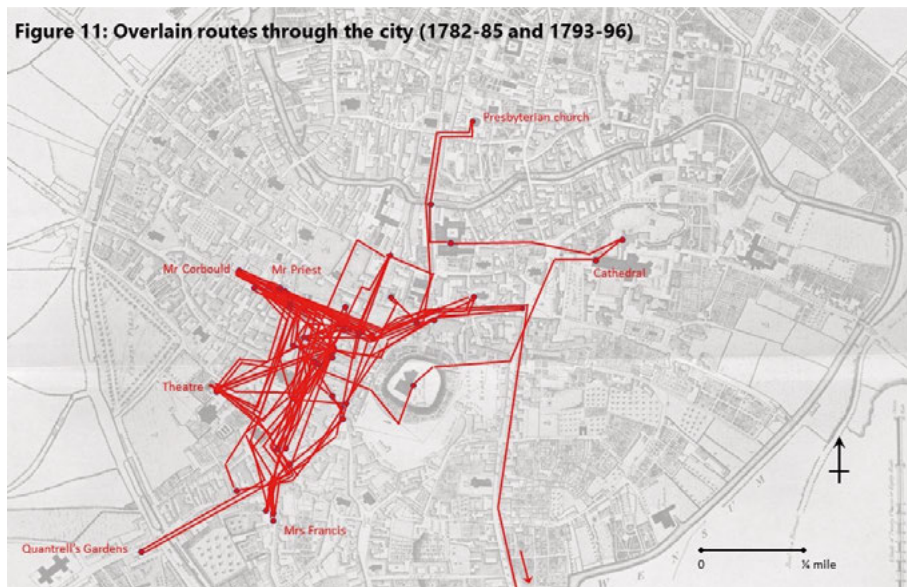


Figure 11. Overlain routes through the city (1782-85 and 1793-96). Map the author.

Overlaying all of these journeys – in the manner deployed by Pred – produces a dense web of routes and nodes (figure 11).²⁹ The cathedral, presbyterian church and Quantrell's Gardens form outliers in a spatial network centred on the Market Place. Given that shops accounted for a large proportion of the places visited by Woodforde, this focus is unsurprising; but what also emerges is the importance of the theatre and his friends' houses (Mr Priest and later Mr Corbould on St Giles, and Mrs and Mrs Francis on Surrey Street) in framing his movement through the city. These created the bundles of journeys emphasised by Hägerstrand and Pred.³⁰ There were intense pathways of movement across the Market Place and south to Haymarket and Surrey Street, and especially along St Giles Street and Cockey Lane to the north of the Market Place. These reflected and shaped Woodforde's experience of the city. They linked key destinations, including friends' houses on St Giles and Surrey Street and favoured shops on Cockey Lane and on the Market Place; but they also privileged these much-frequented streets as places to which Woodforde might look for other suppliers, encouraging spatial lock-in.

²⁹ This forms the aggregation of journeys made by Woodforde on 6 December 1782, 5 June 1783, 15 April 1784, 18–19 January 1785, 2–3 April 1793, 14–15 May 1794, and 13 May 1795.

³⁰ Hägerstrand (1970); Pred (1977).

Doing: practices and performances

We should be wary of seeing these pathways as being followed automatically and unthinkingly: Woodforde clearly thought ahead and planned out the best sequence in which to visit shops. This process would have been informed by the physical layout of buildings and streets, but also by his familiarity with the infrastructure of the city. In this sense, routes were performative and iterative. The bundles of journeys noted earlier were thus both a reflection and influence on the routes that Woodforde followed: he might choose the same route each time because it was the shortest, but also because it was familiar.³¹ Walking the streets of the city was also a performance, especially when combined with the social and economic activities enacted at each stop along the way: paying bills, choosing shop goods, taking tea, watching plays, and so on.

Each of these activities involved playing a role – as customer, shopper, friend or polite citizen – which was performed on ‘stages’ comprising shops, parlours and theatres. But the streets were also stages on which everyday routines as well as performances of polite promenading were acted out.³² Such performances are central to John Gay’s *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716), which not only told readers about the various dangers that might befall them – from wig thieves to falling masonry – but also gave guidance about what they should wear (including strong shoes and a good coat) and how they should walk the streets (for example, when to cede the wall).³³

Gay’s poem was not intended as a practical guide but, like all good satire, it was bedded firmly in real social experience. Woodforde certainly appears to have been wary of going “where winding alleys lead the doubtful way”, as Gay put it, and his repeated use of certain streets indicates similar caution about “long perplexing lanes untrod before”.³⁴ Where he departed from Gay’s advice was in visiting (rather than warily avoiding) numerous shops as part of his perambulations. These were part of a series of social, professional and commercial performances that characterised his visits to Norwich.

The first of these involved visits to the theatre, pleasure gardens and, above all, friends’ houses where politeness was enacted at each of these locations in the form of mixed-gender social rituals such as dining, drinking tea and playing cards. Woodforde was particularly assiduous in noting who was present at these events, what was eaten for dinner, who played cards, and how much he had won or lost.

³¹ This kind of repeated behaviour is central to arguments for the performative construction of identity. See, for example, Mimi Hellman, M. “Private space: performing the home”, in S. Sloboda (ed.), *Interiors in the Age of Enlightenment: a Cultural History* (London 2024) p. 102–126.

³² For further discussion of the street as a stage for performance, see Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann & Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680–1830* (London 2007) p. 86–110.

³³ John Gay, *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (London 1716), 3, p. 16–17. See also Clare Brant and Susan Whyman (eds.), *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay's Trivia* (1716) (Oxford 2009).

³⁴ Gay (1716).

For example, on 8 January 1783, he visited Mr Priest where they dined on "a boiled Pike, a Turkey roasted, Tarts, &c. &c.". After visiting the theatre, they returned and "had for Supper some cold Turkey, Ham, &c.". A decade later, in June 1794, he called on the Corboulds after attending the bishop's visitation: "I drank Tea with them in the Evening and played one Pool at Quadrille. I won 0.1.0. Nancy also won one Shilling".³⁵ As well as these events, Woodforde's movement between them can be as (social) performance. This is most apparent in his sight-seeing trip with the group of gentlemen from New College, undertaken on 15 April 1784.³⁶ His diary simply lists the places visited, but the walk would have been accompanied by conversation. This was a central element of polite interaction and it is unthinkable that the group would have walked in silence.³⁷ Most likely, they would have talked about the recent election in Norwich and the things they saw as they trod the city streets.

Professional performance, such as attending the cathedral for the bishop's visitation, required appropriate clothing. Woodforde invariably dressed in his gown and wig, although he noted how expectations shifted over time, writing of the 1792 visitation that 'the Bishop was in purple Coat and a short Cassock. Some of the Clergy in their Gowns but most without'.³⁸ Such events were highly theatrical and carefully choreographed, both in the cathedral and at the dinner that followed; but the performance also involved walking with fellow clergymen as they went from their inns to the cathedral and later to an inn to dine in company with the bishop.³⁹ The distances were short, but the spatial congregating of clergymen both underscored their individual and collective status and gave additional meaning to the spaces they occupied. The streets they walked along and the room they dined in became, for a while at least, clerical in character.

Commercial performances took many forms. As noted earlier, Woodforde's perambulation on 6 December 1782 (figure 5) involved paying his accounts with a range of retailers, each of them visited in turn. We are left to imagine the transactions in the shops themselves, but the whole outing appears very business-like, with little scope for polite interaction or sociability. In contrast, his trip on 5 June 1783 was more about choosing and buying things. Despite being completed by 1.00 pm, it feels more leisurely and socially engaged. He started by tasting and ordering port wine at Mr Priest's, then chose some soles, crabs and lobsters which he sent home to Weston with his servant as they were for dinner that day. He then moved on to buy scissors and pins from his haberdasher; ordered a large lock for his back door from his ironmonger and a pillion for Nancy from his

³⁵ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 55; vol. 4, p. 119. On polite card playing, see: Janet Mullin, "We had carding': hospitable card play and polite domestic sociability among the middling sort in eighteenth-century England", *Journal of Social History*, 42:4 (2009) p. 989–1008.

³⁶ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 131.

³⁷ On politeness and conversation, see Lawrence E. Klein, "Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century", *Historical Journal*, 45 (2002) p. 869–898.

³⁸ Beresford (1968) vol.3, p. 366.

³⁹ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 136–137.

saddler, and ended the morning at his upholsterer where he "bespoke a Bolster Tick and some Paper to paper one of my Garretts".⁴⁰ Each of these transactions involved looking and choosing, and thus playing the part of the knowledgeable consumer. His familiarity with the shopkeepers no doubt imbued each transaction with a social aspect, and his lengthy detour to the pleasure gardens for a glass of gin and water suggests that this was a pleasurable and sociable as much as a commercial trip, despite being undertaken alone.

Woodforde generally shopped alone, often recording – as he did on 8 January 1783 – that he "went by myself about the City, a shopping".⁴¹ Yet, in buying things for other people, especially Nancy, these trips were vicariously shared. And he thought of her needs and wants as well as his own, for example when he "walked out with Nancy to Miss Brownes to see the Fashions", which surely interested her more than him. On another occasion, when shopping alone, he bought her "a very handsome Sash &c.", for which he paid 18 shillings.⁴² In an imagined sense at least, she was travelling with him as he walked the streets and visited shops, making these a shared and less obviously gendered experience.

On several occasions, Nancy physically accompanied her uncle. On 24 May 1793, for instance, they travelled together into Norwich and began their day with a visit to the Priests before walking to Oxley, the hatter, where they both chose and bought new hats. Nancy then went to Francis Barth, her stay and habit maker, whilst Woodforde visited a bookseller, china shop, upholsterer and haberdasher to buy a series of small items; his mercer where he "bespoke a Coat, Waistcoat and Breeches", and his tailor to order a livery suit for his servant. They met up for dinner in the Woolpacket inn after which Nancy returned to Barth to try on a new habit. At 5.00pm, he called for her and they walked back together to St Bennet's Gate at the edge of the city.⁴³ Through the day, their paths diverged and came together in a series of social and commercial performances that involved walking and riding as well as shopping and dining.

These different types of performance frequently overlapped and combined, as when he encountered some fellow clergymen at his haberdashers on 20 November 1783. The day had started badly, Woodforde having been kept awake all night by the unruly behaviour of "a very noisy Club (called the Thumb Club) being directly under me and making a very great Noise all the Night long" – an incident that highlights the porous boundaries of politeness, which allowed conviviality to spill into rowdiness.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, he ventured forth, first to a china shop and then to Baker, his haberdasher. It was there that he met, "by chance, one Mr. Campbell a Clergyman in these Parts, and has the Living of Weavingham,

⁴⁰ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 76–77.

⁴¹ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 54.

⁴² Beresford (1968) vol. 4, p. 108.

⁴³ Beresford (1968) vol. 4, p. 30–31.

⁴⁴ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 105. For more on the limits of politeness, see Kate Davison, "Occasional politeness and gentlemen's laughter in eighteenth-century England", *Historical Journal*, 57:4 (2014) p. 921–945.

an old Acquaintance of mine of Oriel College and afterwards of Worster Coll: He asked me kindly to come and see him, I did the same to him, and we exchanged our Addresses. With him was a Mr Parr a Clergyman and who lives at Norwich and was formerly of Magdelen Coll: Oxon".⁴⁵

This chance encounter in a shop again shows how commercial and social circles might intersect, sometimes entirely by coincidence. Just as telling is the way that Woodforde situated these men in space and time by careful noting both their present position and background. However, he then moved on to describe in lively detail his afternoon and evening at Mr Priest's which included many of his male and female friends in Norwich drinking tea, sharing supper and enjoying a domestic concert and dancing – presumably without any rowdiness.⁴⁶

Outcomes: producing the city

The overlap between social, professional and commercial spheres both reflected and helped to construct Woodforde's multi-layered identity as polite, sociable, religious, acquisitive, business-like and male. He did not shift identities as he moved from inn to shop to parlour and so on; rather, what we see is different aspects of his character (public and private, professional and gendered) coming to the fore.⁴⁷ All these aspects of self – and the various practices, performances and pathways with which they were associated – were important in shaping his relationship with the city. They also served to shape the city itself. This brings us back to Lefebvre's notion of lived space, produced through the everyday actions of ordinary people, and more particularly to de Certeau's assertion that the city is made through the movements that these everyday actions involved. Following this reasoning, the destinations to which Woodforde walked were key to moulding his interaction with the city, but it was footsteps along the city's streets that gave "shape to spaces".⁴⁸ They wove places together and constructed the city as a lived experience.

Returning to his shopping expedition of 5 June 1783 (figure 6), a range of retail premises were stitched together through Woodforde's patronage and visits. A wine merchant's parlour, a stall on the fish market, a millinery shop, and the workshops of an ironmonger, a saddler and an upholsterer were linked in space

⁴⁵ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 105–106.

⁴⁶ When Campbell subsequently turned up unannounced at his house in Weston at 10.00pm on 4 August 1784, Woodforde was not impressed: "I remember him at Oriel Coll: but not so intimate as to expect that he would have taken such freedom especially as he never made me a Visit before" (Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 145–146). He clearly felt that Campbell had overstepped the bounds of politeness and hospitality.

⁴⁷ For fuller discussion of character, identity and consumption, see Colin Campbell, "Understanding traditional and modern patterns of consumption in eighteenth-century England: a character-action approach", in John Brewer & Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London 1993) p. 40–57.

⁴⁸ De Certeau (1984) p. 97.

and time as he passed from one to the next. This process is made explicit in the way he precisely traced his movements on 15 June 1796: moving down Cockey Lane, from one shop to the next, then walking a few yards to visit neighbouring shops on the Market Place.⁴⁹ These shops were connected by pavements that were well maintained and illuminated by street lights, physical improvements that characterised the English urban renaissance and which were crucial in easing and channelling movement – as Borsay and others have argued.⁵⁰ Pedestrians were further guided by directories and shop signs, which John Gay described as “faithful Land-marks to the walking Train”.⁵¹ However, it was the movement of the individual shopper that brought together shops, both mentally and experientially. This was just as important as paved walkways, elegant shopfronts and glazed windows in creating shopping streets.

Woodforde’s footsteps tied together the places he visited. Sometimes, these links were loose and potentially fragile; but the routes he trod on a regular basis strengthened ties and brought places closer together. The Market Place and surrounding streets thus formed a tight nexus of familiar places and pathways. By contrast, those parts of the city that he did not visit were effectively detached and occupied a separate and unknown space: an urb incognita. Here, Woodforde’s experience on the ground was repeated on the pages of his diary and, in all probability, in the map of the city that he held in his head and which guided his footsteps.⁵²

These footsteps, and the paths they traced, were sometimes shared with others. When he took a sight-seeing tour with the group of Oxford gentlemen in April 1784, their route carried them along streets that Woodforde did not otherwise visit (figure 10). In some ways, this made the city anew – or at least expanded his version of the city – by adding new spaces and pathways onto those already familiar. However, the lack of repeated journeys along the same routes suggests that they remained marginal for Woodforde. A single visit was not enough to bring places like the Presbyterian church into ‘his’ city; nor was it sufficient to weave together such places, as de Certeau argues. In contrast, the paths that he trod in company with friends and family were already familiar routes; walking them with others served to strengthen the thread and thus wove them more closely together. To illustrate, on 15 August 1794, he went with Nancy from Mr Corbould’s on St Giles Street to visit Mrs Francis on Surrey Street. Most likely, they walked along Upper Market Street, through Haymarket and along Rampant Horse Street – a familiar route for Woodforde, but one that was reinforced by sharing it with his niece.

⁴⁹ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 76–77; vol. 4, p. 286–287.

⁵⁰ Borsay (1989) p. 60–79. See also Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 87–92; Cle Lesger, *Shopping Spaces and the Urban Landscape in Early Modern Amsterdam, 1550–1850* (Amsterdam 2020), p. 113–19, 182–207; Loir & Schlessler (2021).

⁵¹ Gay (1716) p. 17. On the use of directories, see Penelope Corfield, “Giving directions to the town: the early town directories”, *Urban History Yearbook* (1984) p. 22–34.

⁵² For discussion of this process, see P. Gould & R. White, *Mental Maps* (New York 1993).

It is important to remember that footsteps were not simply an abstract way of imagining how an individual moved through the city. Gay makes clear that walking through the city was a visceral experience, warning his readers of cold and rain, mud or worse underfoot, the jostle of crowds, and above all the physical effort involved. He was optimistic about all this, writing "Has not wise Nature strung the Legs and Feet / With firmest Nerves, design'd to walk the Street?"⁵³ Nonetheless, Woodforde sometimes complained about the effects of all his walking, noting on 18 January 1785 that he was "quite lame this Evening walking so much on the Stones".⁵⁴ Yet the physical effort involved in walking the streets surely served to strengthen the links between places: it made the connections real and experienced, both at the time and in hindsight. In walking the streets, Woodforde could take in the sights, sounds and smells that surrounded him (much as Gay described in his *Trivia*); his aching feet would remind him of the paths he had trodden through the day. Footsteps, then, are much more than simply a convenient metaphor; their visceral nature made the city in a very real sense.

Conclusions

This essay has explored several different approaches to understanding the ways in which an individual experienced, related to and helped to shape the city. Each approach offers different and complementary insights. Mapping key destinations provides a spatial matrix that reflects and frames action. Tracing the routes along which an individual moved between these key locations in the course of their daily life (Pred's "choreography of existence") reveals both the many pathways followed and the bundling of movement along key routes. Reconstructing practices and performances both at destinations and on the street shows how movement served to integrate the city – weaving together places into a single experiential unit.

How we think about individual or group engagement with the city often depends on the story we wish to tell: whether it focuses on destinations or pathways, perceptions or experiences, performances or practices. Andersson, for example, is interested in uncovering the everyday life of a particular individual and exploring what this tells us about early modern mentalities, so her focus is on where Kihlberg went (destinations) and what he did (experiences and practices). In contrast, Bob Shoemaker was more concerned with how urban space was used and viewed; accordingly, he focused on the pathways and perceptions of women in London.⁵⁵

But the approach taken is also conditioned by the sources we select. Personal diaries like those of Kihlberg or Woodforde allow us to track individuals as they

⁵³ Gay (1716) p. 42.

⁵⁴ Beresford (1968) vol. 2, p. 170.

⁵⁵ Andersson (2022); Shoemaker (2001).

move through space; court records provide glimpses of individuals that can be combined to discover rhythms and patterns of mobility, and illustrations situate people in relation to each other and their spatial environment, albeit frozen in a moment of (imagined) time.⁵⁶ The models and theories with which I started, and which have framed my analysis, draw out both of these issues. The time geographies modelled by Hägerstrand and Pred are essentially empirical. By aggregating myriad everyday spatial activities, they provide a way of assessing and modelling how an individual's movements mapped onto the city. Applying the ideas of Lefebvre and especially de Certeau is more conceptual and challenging, especially in terms of finding and deploying empirical material that illustrates and tests the notion of lived space.

Woodforde's diaries proved capable of meeting this challenge. His experience of Norwich was shaped by his status, profession and gender, although these combined in different ways according to the activity and company. It involved destinations, pathways and performances; joining with other people in shared practices, and engaging a range of senses: the sight of crowds on the street during elections, the taste of port wine, and the aching of feet as they trod the streets and wove together his version of the city. This reflects the complexity of the city itself: the web of streets, lanes and alleyways that had grown over the centuries offered numerous routes between places, and Norwich's commercial and cultural vibrancy at this time afforded myriad opportunities for shopping and (public) sociability. Any individual (including Woodforde) would therefore need to make sense of this complexity, not least by cultivating particular friendships, finding favoured suppliers, and discovering the best routes to take when moving between them. We have seen how these pathways can be viewed as a pragmatic response – the result of iterative behaviour that reinforced established practices – but also that they comprised social and commercial performances such as shopping and promenading with friends. Both performatively and as performance, the pathways trodden by Woodforde helped to shape the city as a mental construct and a lived experience. He thus created his own version of the city, in his mind, on the pages of his diary, and on the ground.

⁵⁶ Bob Pierik, "From microhistory to patterns of urban mobility: the rhythm of gendered mobility in eighteenth-century Amsterdam", in Gudrun Andersson & Jon Stobart (eds.), *Daily Lives and Daily Routines in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York & London, 2022) p. 105–124; Gamze Saygi & Marie Yasunga, "The digital urban experience of a lost city: using mixed methods to depict the historical street life of Edo/Tokyo", *Magazén*, 2 (2021) p. 193–224.

