Entries referring directly to Thomas Gray appear in bold type-face.


1662  Publication of Butler’s “Hudibras” begins. The Royal Society is chartered. Death of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), mathematician and philosopher. Charles II marries Catherine of Braganza and receives Tangier and Bombay as part of the dowry. Peter Lely appointed Court Painter. Louis XIV commences building at Versailles with Charles Le Brun as chief adviser.


1668  Publication of Aphra Behn’s “Oroonoko”. Newton constructs a reflecting telescope. Leeuwenhoek describes red corpuscles.

1670  Birth of William Congreve (1670-1729), dramatist. Publication of Milton’s “Historie of Britain”. John Dryden made first Poet Laureate (from 1670 to 1689). Publication of “Pensées” by Pascal and “Tractatus Theologico-politicus” by Spinoza. The Hudson’s Bay Company is chartered. Minute hands are added to watches.


1673  Death of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, better known as Molière (1622-1673). Production of Wycherley’s “The Country Wife” and Dryden’s “Marriage à la Mode”. Test Act excludes Catholics from office.


1680  Death of Samuel Butler (1612-1680), author of “Hudibras”. Death of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester (1647-1680), poet. Birth of Susanna Freeman (1670-1723), actress and dramatist, known as Mrs. Centilevre. Publication of Robert
Filmer’s “Patriarche, or the Natural Power of Kings”. Death of Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), artist. Death of Bernini (1598-1680), architect and artist. Louis XIV founds the Comédie Française.

1681 Le Salle explores the Mississippi. Birth of Telemann (1681-1767), composer. Death of Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), dramatist, successor to Lope de Vega. Wren completes the Tom Tower, Christ Church, Oxford.

1682 Dryden’s “Absalom and Achitopel” completed. Otway’s “Venice Preserv’d” is performed. The Advocate’s Library in Edinburgh is founded. Louis XIV moves the French Court to Versailles. Huguenots are persecuted in France. Sir Edmund Halley observes the comet which is named after him. Peter I “the Great” becomes Czar of Russia (reigns 1682-1725). Deaths of the artists Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), Murillo (1617-1682) and Jacob van Ruisdael (1628-1682).


1686 Dryden converts to Roman Catholicism. Vanbrugh joins the army. Birth of Thomas Tickell (1686-1740), poet and translator. Birth of Allan Ramsay (1686-1758), poet.


1689 Death of Aphra Behn (1640-1689), dramatist. Birth of Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), novelist. Swift enters the household of Sir William Temple, to educate Esther Johnson (“Stella”). Thomas Shadwell succeeds Dryden as Poet Laureate (from 1689 to 1692) as Dryden falls from favour. John Locke restored to public office by William III, Samuel Pepys thrown out. The Bill of Rights is enacted. Louis XIV declares war


1691 Death of Robert Boyle (1627-1691), scientist. Death of Sir George Etherge (1634?-1691?), dramatist. Congreve studies law in England. Production of Purcell’s “King Arthur” with words by Dryden. Production of Racine’s “Athalie”.


1700  Death of John Dryden (1631-1700) following the publication of his “Ancient and Modern” and “Secular Masque”. Publication of “The Way of the World” by Congreve, Birth of John Dyer (1700?-1758), poet. Birth of James Thomson (1700-1748), poet. String orchestras are established at about this date and the horn is introduced. Berlin Academy of Science founded with Leibniz as President.


1702  Publication of “The Shortest Way with Dissenters” by Defoe results in his imprisonment (and changes his name from James Foe to Daniel Defoe). The death of William III and accession of Queen Anne. Marlborough appointed Commander-in-Chief of Allied forces. The War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) begins in support of the Grand Alliance. The “Daily Courant” is published, the first daily newspaper.


meets Scarlatti in Venice. The birth of Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), who devised the system of binomial classification. Publication of Sir Hans Sloane’s “Natural History of Jamaica”.


1710 Sir Robert Walpole serves 2 year period as Treasurer of the Navy. Publication of Congreve’s “Works”. Publication of Berkeley’s “Principles of Human Knowledge”. Appearance of “The Examiner”. Approximate date at which the Kit-Cat Club is active, which included Addison, Congreve, Steele, Vanbrugh, Jacob Tonson (the publisher) and Sir Samuel Garth (physician) as members, and which met at the London House of Christopher Cat, pastry cook, whose mutton pies (or kit-cats) were widely praised. The Kit-Cat Club was immortalised by Kneller’s portrait of the group (which started a fashion for less than half length, or Kit-Cat-sized, portraits). Handel becomes Kapellmeister to the Elector of Hanover. Births of the composers Thomas Arne (1710-1778), William Boyce (1710-1779) and Pergolesi (1710-1736). Wren completes rebuilding of St. Paul’s Cathedral. Meissen Pottery works established.

1711 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele collaborate to produce “The Spectator” (1711-1712). Publication of Pope’s “Essay on Criticism”. Pope and Addison become friends. Publication of Swift’s “The Conduct of the Allies” and “Miscellanies”. Birth of David Hume (1711-1776), philosopher. Matthew Prior serves as secret agent in Paris. Marlborough is dismissed as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces. Publication of Shaftesbury’s “Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times”. Handel’s “Rinaldo” is the first of his operas to be performed, at Queen’s Theatre. Queen Anne opens the first races at Ascot.


1712 (continued)


1716 Thomas Gray (1716-1771) born at No. 41, Cornhill, London, the son of Philip Gray, a scrivener, and his wife Dorothy (née Antrobus) on 26 December 1716. Their fifth child, he was the only one of twelve to survive infancy. His father is a brutal tyrant, beating his wife and refusing to support either wife or child. Gray’s mother keeps a milliner’s shop with her sister, Mary Antrobus, at the same address to provide means for herself and her son who lives in Burnham, near Stoke Poges, with his uncle (Dorothy’s brother) Robert Antrobus, a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, assistant master at Eton. Death of William Wycherley (1640?-1716), dramatist. Publication of Benjamin Hoadly’s “The Principles and Practices of the Non-Jurors”, which causes tumult in the Church of England. First recorded visit of an English theatrical troupe to America (to Williamsburg, Virginia). Foundation of the Dr. Williams Library. Establishment of the “Sinking Fund” to reduce Britain’s National Debt. John Law founds the Banque Générale in Paris. Death of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), mathematician and philosopher. Birth of James Brindley (1716-1772), father of the English canal system. Vivaldi completes “The Four Seasons”. Peter the Great tours Europe. Britain signs the Treaty of Westminster with the Holy Roman Emperor. Mineral springs discovered in Cheltenham. Birth of Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1716-1783), landscape gardener.

“The Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ” sermon stating that sincerity is the only requirement of the Christian Minister and tests for conformity should be abolished. In consequence, Parliament prorogues the Convocation which does not meet again until 1852. Birth of Jean Le Rond D’Alembert (1717-1783), writer. The combination of wool-workers in the West Country starts move towards unionisation of workers. The Triple Alliance formed between England, France and Holland to uphold the Treaty of Utrecht. Peter the Great visits Paris.


1727 (continued)

1728 Birth of Thomas Warton (1728-1790), scholar poet. Birth of Charles Burnley (1728-1814), musicologist. Johnson at Pembroke College, Oxford, but leaves after four terms due to poverty. The poet William Shenstone is also at Pembroke College,


10 Downing Street built.


Zoffany (1733-1810), artist. Latin language abolished in English courts.

1734 Gray enters as a pensioner (4 July) at Peterhouse, Cambridge and gains formal admission (9 October). He continues there until 1738. Thomas Ashton has already been admitted to King’s (11 August) and Walpole also joins King’s in 1735. Gray concentrates on history, modern languages and European Literature. He is ridiculed by his fellow students for his supposed effeminacy. Gray completes “Lines Spoken to John Dennis”, his first extant poem, and sends it to Walpole. Death of John Dennis (1657-1734), poet and dramatist. Pope concludes publication of “An Essay on Man”. Thomson’s “Liberty” is published (1734-1736). Voltaire’s “Lettres Philosophiques” are published. Publication of Charles Johnson’s melodramatic “The Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen”. George Sale translates the Koran into English. Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement concluded. The University of Göttingen founded by King George II. William Kent completes the Treasury, Whitehall. Births of the artists George Romney (1734-1802) and Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797).


1740 **Gray and Walpole’s Grand Tour continues with a year spent in Italy. Gray commences “De Principiis Cogitandi”. Birth of James Boswell (1740-1795), biographer and friend of Johnson. Publication of Cibber’s “Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian”. Publication of “The Ruins of Rome” by John Dyer. Fielding called to the Bar. Publication of “Treatise of Human Nature” by Hume. Thomson thought to be responsible for “Rule Britannia” in Arne’s masque “Alfred”. Death of Thomas Tickell (1686-1740), poet and translator. Peg Woffington achieves fame as Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar’s “The Constant Couple”. Anson’s first voyage round the world (1740-1744). Austria, Prussia and Russia all have new monarchs. Accession of Maria Theresa of Austria (reigns 1740-1780), Frederick the Great of Prussia (reigns 1740-1786) and Czar Ivan VI of Russia (reigns 1740-1741). Frederick the Great begins first Silesian War against Maria Theresa. Hogarth paints portrait of Thomas Coram, joint founder of the Foundling Hospital, and experiments with free brushwork in “The Shrimp Girl” at about this date. Domenico Scarlatti visits London. Haydn becomes a choirboy at Vienna Court Chapel. Birth of Jean Antoine Houdon (1740-1828), artist. Death of Ephraim Chambers (1660-1740), lexicographer. William Stukeley publishes “Stonehenge”, drawing attention to the ancient ruins on Salisbury Plain.**

1742  Gray spends much of the year in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, with his uncle, Jonathan Rogers. Gray writes Odes “On Spring”, “On a Distant Prospect of Eton College”, “On Adversity” and the “Sonnet on the Death of West” (in memory of his friend, the poet Richard West who died on 1 June). Gray commences “Elegy in a Country Churchyard” at about this time (finished 1750). Gray’s widowed mother moves from Cornhill to West End House in the small village of Stoke Poges, about three miles from Eton and close to Windsor. Gray commences “Agrippina”, a Latin Tragedy, and “Hymn to Ignorance”. Gray returns to Peterhouse. A new version of Pope’s “The Dunciad” published with Cibber in place of Theobald as the mock hero. Swift committed to a lunatic asylum. Publication of “Persian Eclogues” by William Collins while an undergraduate at Magdalene College, Oxford. Publication of Fielding’s “Joseph Andrews” mocking Richardson’s “Pamela”. Death of William Somerville (1675-1742), poet and author of “Field Sports”. Death of Richard Bentley (1662-1742), famous for his “Sermons” and his role in the Ancient vs Modern debate. Wesley’s first Methodist hymn tunes appear. Garrick is engaged to play at Drury Lane following his great success as Richard III at Goodman’s Fields, and his career never looks back. Sir Robert Walpole decides to resign due to his opposition to the War with Spain and is made Earl of Orford. The Peace of Berlin ends the first Silesian War. Handel completes the “Messiah”. Celsius invents the centigrade thermometer. William Kent completes Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall.


1746 Horace Walpole takes an apartment within the precincts of Windsor Castle and entertains his friends there. Publication of "Odes" by William Collins. A second collection of Joseph Warton's "Odes" published. Death of Thomas Southerne (1660-1746), poet. Publication of Diderot's "Pensées Philosophiques". After a further victory at Falkirk, the Young Pretender and his forces are defeated at the Battle of Culloden. Birth of Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), artist. Canaletto visits England (1746-1755). The College of New Jersey is founded (becomes Princeton University).

Gray writes "Ode on the Death of a favourite Cat" (in memory of Horace Walpole's cat). Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" is published by Robert Doddsley in an anonymous pamphlet. Walpole settles at Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, and fashions it into an exotic gothic mansion. Birth of Samuel Parr (1747-1825), classical scholar and theologian. Thomas Warton's "Pleasures of Melancholy" appears. Publication of Johnson's "Plan" for the Dictionary. Publication of "Zadig" by Voltaire. David Garrick takes over management of Drury Lane theatre (for thirty years to 1776) and makes it a success. The Biblioteca Nazionale founded in Florence.


1749 The death of Mary Antrobus, a favourite aunt of Gray's prompts him to continue work on the Elegy. Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes" and "Irene" published. "Irene" performed by Garrick. William Collins completes "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland". Publication of "Tom Jones" by Fielding. Publication of Diderot's "Lettres sur les aveugles". Birth of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

1749 (continued)


1753  Robert Dodsley publishes “Designs by Mr. R Bentley for Six Poems by Mr. T Gray”, the first authorized attributed volume of poetry by Gray, including the Eton Ode, the “Ode on Spring”, the “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat”, the Elegy, a “Hymn to Adversity” and “A Long Story”. Gray’s mother dies (11 March) at Stoke Poges and is buried there. Death of George Berkeley (1685-1753), philosopher and cynic. Edward Gibbon studies in Lausanne (1753-1758). Publication of Hogarth’s “Analysis of Beauty”. Publication of Smollett’s “Ferdinand, Count Fathom”. Voltaire leaves Potsdam for Switzerland. Birth of Samuel Crompton (1753-1827), inventor of the spinning “mule”. Publication of “Species Plantorum” by Linnaeus. Birth of Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), engraver. Death of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), virtuoso and collector, who had served as President of the Royal Society from 1727 to 1741, succeeding Sir Isaac Newton. Act passed enabling Sloane’s great library to be bought for the nation, providing the foundation of the British Museum with the Cottonian and Harleian collections and the Royal Library.

1754  Gray completes “The Progress of Poesy”. Cowper called to the Bar. Death of Henry Fielding (1707-1754), journalist and novelist. Richardson’s “Sir Charles Grandison” completed (1753-1754). Death of Edward Cave (1691-1754), publisher. Publication of Rousseau’s “Discourse on the Origin of Inequality” and Diderot’s “Pensées sur l’interprétation de la nature”. Birth of

1755

Gray declines offer to become Secretary to the Earl of Bristol in Lisbon. Publication of Johnson's "Dictionary of the English Language" including rebuke of the Earl of Chesterfield (continues to 1772). Publication of Fielding's "Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon". Goldsmith travels in Europe (1755-1756). Birth of Sarah Kemble (1755-1831), actress (becomes Mrs. Siddons). Shenstone's "Pastoral Ballad" is published. Publication of Tobias Smollett's translation of "Don Quixote". Kant completes his doctoral thesis on "The True Measure of Forces" and becomes a lecturer at Königsberg (1755-1770, then becoming Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, 1770-1804). Gilbert White settles in Selborne. Birth of John Flaxman (1755-1826), artist and engraver. Death of Montesquieu (1689-1755), philosopher. Birth of Marie Antoinette (1755-1793). British forces defeated at Fort Duquesne. Paoli's first revolt in Corsica against the Genoese rulers. Lisbon is destroyed by an earthquake and 30,000 are killed.

1756

Gray moves to Pembroke College, Cambridge, leaving Peterhouse after an undergraduate prank was played on him (not for the first time, acting on Gray's fear of fire, students call "Fire" late at night and Gray is embarrassed by appearing in the quad shaking with fear and wearing only his nightgown). Gray's friend, William Mason, is a fellow at Pembroke. Completion of "The Election" series by Hogarth. Appearance of "The Critical Review" (1756-1817), first edited by Smollett (1756-1759). Birth of William Gifford (1756-1826) journalist and critic. Birth of William Godwin (1756-1836), writer and political theorist. Death of Stephen Duck (1705-1756), poet. Publication of "Theatrical Records" by Robert and James Dodsley. Publication of "A Vindication of Natural Society" by Burke. Publication of Sherlock's "Sermons" and Wesley's "Twelve Reasons Against a Separation from the Church" arguing against splinter groups of the main Methodist movement. Beginning of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) with Britain and Prussia (under Frederick the Great) opposing the French, Saxons and Russians. Tragedy of the Black Hole of Calcutta. British forces, under General Braddock in Ohio, are heavily defeated. Casanova escapes from prison in Venice. Birth of Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), satirical artist. Birth of Mozart (1756-1791). Sévres porcelain factory founded.

1757

1758


1759


1760


1761


1761 (continued)

Architects of the King's Works.


1765


1766


1767


1768

**Gray appointed Professor of History and Modern Languages at Cambridge. Gray’s poems republished in London by James Dodsley in a small octavo, and Glasgow by Robert and Andrew Foulis in quarto. Both editions are entitled “Poems by Mr. Gray” and contain the same poems**


1770 Bonstetten leaves England. Gray visits the West Country with Norton Nicholls. Births of the poets William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and James Hogg (1770-1835), the “Ettrick Shepherd”. Death of the poet Mark Akenside (1721-1770). Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), poet and brilliant fraud (the fabricator of the Rowley poems and documents which are not exposed as forgeries until 1777 – including a bogus “History of Painting” sent to Horace Walpole), is reduced to despair by poverty and takes his life by imbibing arsenic poison. Publication of Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village”. The printers of the “Junius” letters are tried for libel. Anonymous publication of “Thoughts on the Causes of Present Discontents” by Burke concerning the American colonies. Goethe begins “Faust” (not completed until 1832). Birth of Hegel (1770-1831), philosopher. Wesley attacks Calvanist beliefs. General Baptist New Communion is first put into practice. The French Dauphin marries Marie Antoinette, daughter of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria. Grafton resigns and Lord North takes over for a 12 year term (1770-1782) as Prime Minister. Lord North repeals the Revenue Act to pacify the colonists but institutes a Tea Duty. The Boston Massacre takes place, increasing tensions in the American colonies. Joseph Banks names Botany Bay as Cook skirts Australia. Birth of Beethoven (1770-1827). Deaths of the artists François Boucher (1703-1770) and Giovanni Tiepolo (1696-1770).


1775 (continued)

1776  Publication of first volume of Gibbon's "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" and Adam Smith's "An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations". Death of David Hume (1711-1776), philosopher. Sheridan takes over Garrick's share in the Drury Lane Theatre. Completion of "L'Encyclopédie" under the direction of Diderot (from 1751 to 1758) and D'Alembert (1758 to 1776). "Hamlet" becomes the first Shakespearean play to be performed on the German stage, by Schröder. Birth of Jane Porter (1776-1850), novelist. Major Cartwright's "Take Your Choice" outlines radical reform proposals including universal suffrage. Publication of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" and the beginning of his pamphlet series (1776-1783) on "The Crisis". The British forces are evicted from Boston and, on the fourth of July, Congress issues the "Declaration of Independence". British forces regain control of Canada and Howe takes New York and Rhode Island. Captain Cook commences third voyage with HMS Resolution and HMS Discovery (1776-1780). Birth of John Constable (1776-1837), artist. Sir William Chambers builds Somerset House, London.

1777  Johnson embarks on "Lives of the Poets" (published 1779-1781). Sheridan produces "School for Scandal" and "A Trip to Scarborough" at Drury Lane. Birth of Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), poet. Thomas Tyrwhitt exposes the fraud concerning Chatterton's "Rowley" poems, increasing the interest in them and resulting in their publication a year later. Completion of the Trent and Mersey canal system. Voltaire returns to Paris. Robert Adam's shop-lined Pulteney Bridge is built in Bath. The British defeat the American colonists at the Battle of Brandywine, but Burgoyne's troops are forced to surrender by the colonists at Saratoga.


1782 Publication of “Cecilia” by Fanny Burney. Publication of “Poems” and “John Gilpin” by Cowper. Publication of Joseph Warton’s “Essay on the Genius and Writing of Mr Pope” is completed (1756-1782). Coleridge sent to Christ’s Hospital (1782-1791). Lamb at school at Christ’s Hospital (1782-1789). Maria Edgeworth moves to her paternal home in Ireland. Rockingham dies, after a brief spell as Prime Minister replacing Lord North, and is replaced in turn by the Earl of Shelburne. Grattan’s Bill passed repealing British power over the Parliament of Ireland. Death of Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), composer. Death of Richard Wilson (1714-1782), landscape painter.

1783 Death of Anna Williams (1706-1783), writer. Death of Henry Brooke (1703-1783), poet. William Blake’s “Poetical Sketches” published. Death of D’Alembert (1717-1783), philosopher. “The Village” by Crabbe is published. Scott attends Edinburgh University. Hazlitt in America (1783-1787). Publication of Kant’s “Prologomena to every future Metaphysic of Ethic”. Fox introduces his India Bill which is passed by the Commons but thrown out of the Lords. The Duke of Portland has a nine-month spell as Prime Minister, replacing Shelburne, but is then succeeded by the 25 year old William Pitt the Younger who serves as Prime Minister for 18 years until 1801. The Treaty of Versailles is signed between America, Britain, France and Spain, formally ending the American War of Independence (1775-1783) Independence (1775-1783) and restoring Florida and Minorca to Spain. First human flight in hot air balloon by the Montgolfier brothers, Births of Stendhal (1783-1842), novelist and Washington Irving (1783-1859), writer and humorist.

1785  

1786  
Publication of "The Poems of Mr. Gray. With Notes by Gilbert Wakefield". Publication of "Vathek, an Arabian Tale" (1786-1787) by William Beckford, a pioneer “gothic” novel describing grotesque and terrible events in an oriental setting. Birth of Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846), artist. Publication of Kant's "Metaphysical Rudiments of Natural Philosophy". Lord Cornwallis is sent to replace Warren Hastings as Governor-General of India. Death of Frederick the Great. He is succeeded by Frederick William II (reigns 1786-1797). Invention of the threshing machine by Andrew Meikle in Scotland. First performance of Mozart’s “Marriage of Figaro”. Death of George Hepplewhite (1726-1786), cabinet-maker. Goethe visits Italy (1786-1788).

1787  

1788  


1792

1793

1794

1794 (continued)

Brest. Revolution in Poland put down. Paris commune abolished. Danton, Desmoulins, Robespierre and St. Just all executed as is Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794), scientist. First telegraph line operational from Paris to Lille.

1795

1796

1797

1797 (continued)


1798
Publication of “Lyrical Ballads” by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Hazlitt and Coleridge meet. Publication of “The Castaway” by Cowper. Birth of Auguste Comte (1798-


**1803**

**1804**

**1805**

**1806**

**1806 (continued)**


1810 Wordsworth and Coleridge quarrel. Appearance of "The Reflector" (1810-1811) by Leigh Hunt. Keats, aged 16, is orphaned by the death of his mother and is taken under the guardianship of Richard Abbey. Publication of Scott's "Lady of the Lake". Birth of Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-


1822 (continued)

John Martin paints “The Destruction of Herculaneum”.


1827 Death of William Blake (1757-1827), visionary artist and poet. Publication of Clare’s “Shepherd’s Calendar”. Publication of Heine’s “Buch der Lieder”. Death of Samuel Crompton (1753-1827), inventor of the spinning “mule”. Canning and Goderich were successively Prime Minister for brief spells, replacing Lord Liverpool. Combined British, French and Russian fleets destroy the Turkish and Egyptian fleets at Navarino Bay and end the Greek War (1821-1827). Baedeker starts publishing travel guides. Death of Beethoven (1770-1827).


1830 Death of William Hazlitt (1778-1830), critic and essayist. Cobbett’s “Rural Rides” collected and published. Thomas Hood commences “Comic Annual”. Appearance of “The
1830 (continued)


1831


1832


1833

Death of Hannah More (1745-1833), poet. Death of William Wilberforce (1759-1833), abolitionist, philanthropist and, together with Hannah More and Bishop Porteus, a leading member of the Evangelical Movement. Publication of Prometheus Bound by Elizabeth Barrett. Act passed to abolish slave trade in all British colonies. The First Factory Bill passed. John Keble’s sermon on national apostasy is later said by Newman to have started the Oxford Movement. Keble’s “Tracts for the Times” begin to appear. Death of Edmund Kean (1787-1833), actor.

1834


1835


1836


1837

George IV dies and Queen Victoria accedes to the throne. Invention of electric telegraph.

1838

Publication of “Oliver Twist” by Dickens.

1840

Death of Fanny Burney (1752-1840), novelist. Leigh Hunt’s “A Legend of Florence” produced at Covent Garden.
1842  Publication of “Poems” by Tennyson.

1843  Death of Robert Southey (1774-1843), Poet Laureate. He is succeeded by William Wordsworth (from 1843 to 1850).

1844  Death of William Beckford (1760-1844), pioneer of the gothic revival.

1845  Death of Thomas Hood (1799-1845), poet. Death of the Reverend Sydney Smith (1771-1845), writer and wit.

1846  Death of Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846), artist. Dickens becomes editor of the “Daily News”.

1847  Leigh Hunt awarded a pension.

1848  The Year of Revolutions in Europe. Women admitted to London University.

1849  Death of Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), novelist.

1850  Death of William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Poet Laureate. Laureateship is declined by Samuel Rogers and there is a seven year gap before Wordsworth is succeeded by Alfred Tennyson (from 1857 to 1892). Death of the Reverend William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850) who helped to make the sonnet form popular again.

1851  Death of Mary Shelley (1797-1851).

1854  Publication of “The Correspondence of Thomas Gray and William Mason”, edited by John Mitford.

NOTES ON THE CHRONOLOGY

This chronology does not claim to be exhaustive in coverage of all spheres of human endeavour. Rather it is intended to provide some idea of the context of Gray’s writing, of the period in which his formative influences thrived, and of the period in which his poems had their reception and influence. The main focus is on the period 1710-1825 with only summary details given outside of these dates. Where birth and death dates are given for individuals a category (e.g. “poet”) has also been added as an aide memoire, but no more than this. It is often impossible to summarise the talents and interests of individuals in one or two words.