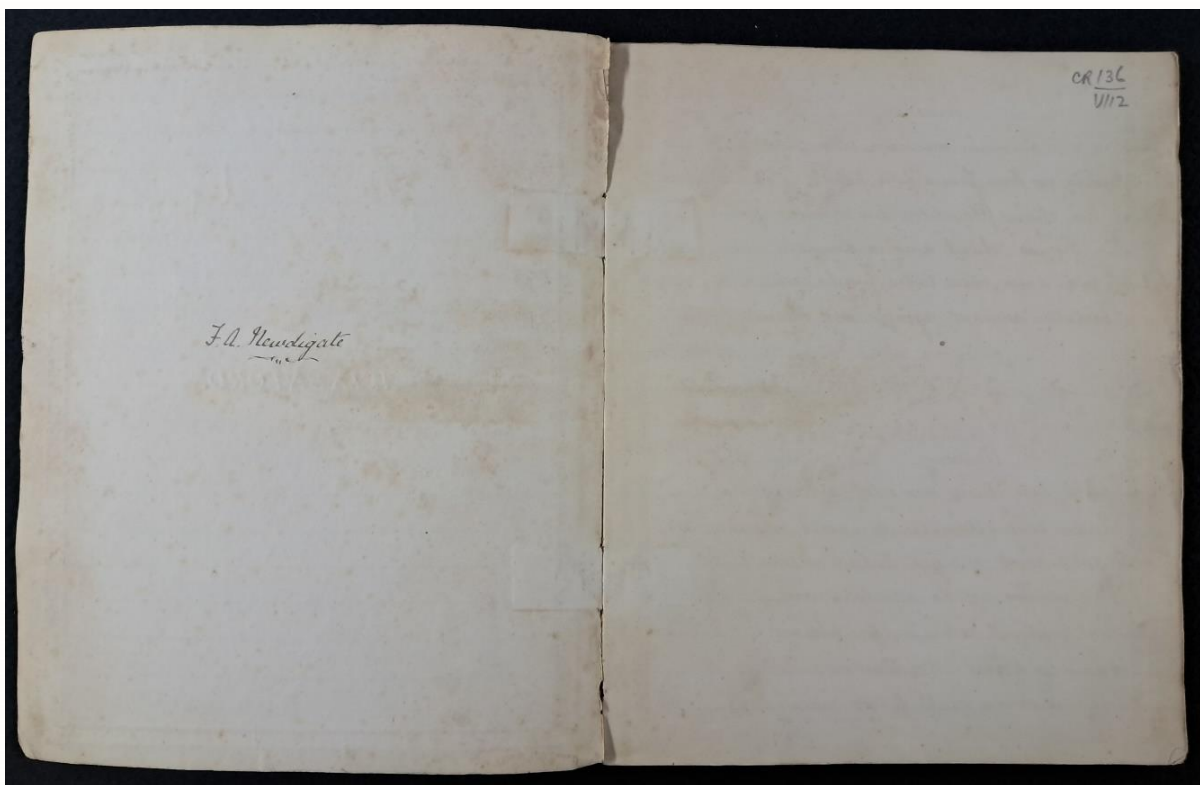


F. A. Newdegate: Latin exercise book

CR0136/V112

The Document of the Month for September is a Latin exercise book belonging to the Newdegate family collection, speculated to be owned by Sir Francis Alexander Newdigate Newdegate during his childhood education. He is known for his role as governor for both Tasmania and Western Australia after previously being commissioned in the Grenadier Guards in 1883.<sup>1</sup> The date of the book is unknown, but we estimate it to be somewhere in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Francis was born on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1862. His initials (F. A. Newdigate) can be found on the inner front cover of the book, indicating it was probably of his ownership.



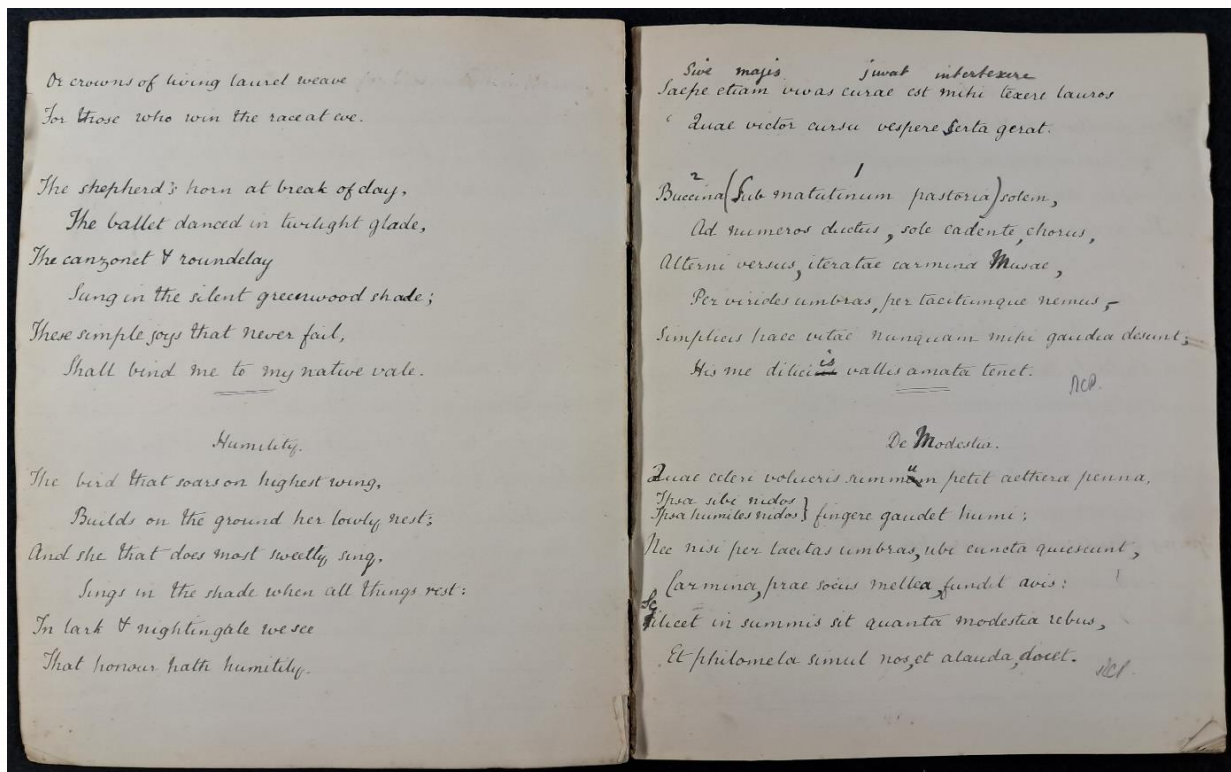
(Image courtesy of Warwickshire County Record Office, CR0136/V112)

<sup>1</sup> Australian Dictionary of Biography, 'Biography – Sir Francis Alexander Newdigate Newdegate'. Available at: <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/newdegate-sir-francis-alexander-newdigate-7824> (Accessed on 08/08/2024)

### Wixenford School and the Old Wixfordians

With the cover titled Wixenford, the book likely belonged to attendees at Wixenford Preparatory School (founded in 1869), which served as a feeder school for Eton College. Sources have suggested this was the area in which Newdegate was educated.<sup>2</sup>

The dates match this theory well, as he would have been around six at the time of its opening, but as it served children up to the age of thirteen, Francis might have attended at a later point in time. Some other confirmed notable attendees of Wixenford, referred to as 'Old Wixfordians', include George Nathaniel Curzon (future Viceroy of India and British Foreign Secretary); Sir Wilfrid Lawson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet of Brayton; and Lord Alfred Douglas, who was a friend of prolific author Oscar Wilde.<sup>3</sup>



(Image courtesy of Warwickshire County Record Office, CR0136/V112)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Wikiwand, 'Wixenford School'. Available at: [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Wixenford\\_School](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Wixenford_School) (Accessed on 09/08/2024)

This exercise book contains verses of song, one version in English and another in Latin, each on adjacent pages. Parts of the verses are numbered, which upon further investigation, may have aided in structuring the correct sentence order when translating to and from Latin. You can also find various crossings out, as well as corrections above; whether this was a teacher correcting the Latin wording or the student himself is unknown, but likely the former.

The book is only partially filled, but holds a lovely sentiment, as do the songs themselves. Additionally, the handwriting is quite sophisticated, especially for someone as young as the author would have been. It marks the elite level of education received and the high standard that Wixenford boasted. Indeed, the school has been described as “successful and fashionable”.<sup>4</sup> One of the boys, Albert Baillie, recalled its first headmaster, founder, and cleric Richard Cowley Powles as a “genuine educator and a remarkable man”, also noting that he wore his hair “neatly brushed up into two horns above his ears”.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Newdegate Family**

The Newdegate (formally Newdigate) family collection is held here at the Record Office, spanning over five hundred years. Since 1586, the family have owned the Arbury estate in Nuneaton, a Tudor/Elizabethan house Gothicised by Sir Roger Newdegate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It has been regarded as the ‘Gothic Gem’ of the Midlands.<sup>6</sup> In the words of representatives of the estate, Arbury Hall “now stands in the midst of beautiful 18th century landscaped gardens and surrounded by over 100 acres of lakes and parkland”.<sup>7</sup> This estate was inherited by Sir Francis in 1893 when his father died, and later passed to his eldest daughter in 1936.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Donald P. Leinster-Mackay, *The Rise of the English Prep School* (1984), p. 141: “Cowley Powles’ school, Wixenford, was successful and fashionable.”

<sup>5</sup> Albert Baillie, *My First Eighty Years* (1951), p. 24: “Powles... wore his hair neatly brushed up into two horns above his ears — a fashion you can see in Cruikshank’s illustrations of Dickens — and from time to time he would stroke those horns with his fingers.”

<sup>6</sup> Historic Houses, ‘Visit | Arbury Hall’. Access at: <https://www.historichouses.org/house/arbury-hall/visit/> (Accessed on 09/08/2024)

<sup>7</sup> Arbury Estate, ‘Arbury Hall and Estate’. Access at: <https://arburyestate.co.uk/arbury-hall-and-estate/> (Accessed on 09/08/2024)

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, ‘Francis Newdigate’, Last edited on 7 July 2024 at 10:38. Access at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_Newdegate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Newdegate) (Accessed on 09/08/2024)