**Robert Paston’s Whirlpool of Misadventures**

**Intro in the Barn:**

**H:** The story of the rise of the Paston family has often been told.

**Abbie:** ‘There was one Clement Paston and he was a good plain husband, and live upon his land that he had in Paston, and kept thereon a plough all times in the year.”

**Chris:** Then followed a long succession of struggles,

**Dora.** difficulties

**Ben:** and triumphs which brought the descendants of Clement Paston to opulence and power.

**Camryn:** The fights and wrangles and disputes;

**Shams:** the sieges of Gresham, Hellesdon and Caister.

**Rebecca P (Sarah E):** The shrewd capable calculating wives, seeing to affairs in Norfolk while their husbands and sons waited at Court, hoping for a chance word with the King.

**Robert P:** But this is the story of the End of the Pastons. The sudden collapse of the family at the end of the 17th century, so soon after Robert Paston, First Earl of Yarmouth, achieved the long sought power and place from King Charles II.

**Sarah L:** To tell Robert’s story, we return to 1660 with the Restoration of the Monarchy.

**Astrea Redux (Dryden)**

**Holly:** While our stars denied us Charles,

For his long absence Church and State did groan;

Madness the pulpit, faction seized the thrown:

Experienced age in deep despair was lost,

To see the rebel thrive, the loyal cross’d:

When by their designing leaders taught

To strike at power, which for themselves they sought,

The vulgar, gull’d into rebellion, arm’d;

Their block to action by the prize was warm’d.

**Ben:** The rabble now such freedom did enjoy,

As winds at sea, that used it to destroy:

Blind as the Cyclop, and as wild as he,

They own’d a lawless, savage liberty;

How great were then our Charles’ woes, who thus

Was forced to suffer for himself and us!

He, tost by fate, and hurried up and down;

Heir to his father’s sorrows, with his crown,

**Sarah E:** Thus banish’d David spent abroad his time,

When to be God’s anointed was his crime;

And when restored, made his proud neighbours rue

Those choice remarks he from his travels drew.

**Ken:** Methinks I see those crowds in Dover’s strand,

Who, hastened to welcome you to land,

How shall I speak of that triumphant day,

When you renew’d the expiring pomp of May!

**Sarah L:** Oh, happy prince! Whom Heaven hath taught the way,

By paying vows to have more vows to pay!

Oh, happy age! Oh times like those alone,

By fate reserved for Great Charles’ throne!

The world a monarch, and that monarch home.

**Song: (Holly)**

*Halcyon Days, now wars are ending, you shall find whene’er you sail,*

*Halcyon Days, now wars are ending, you shall find when e’er you sail,*

*Tritons all the while attending, with a kind and gentle gale*

*With a kind and gentle gale.*

*Tritons all the while attending with a kind and gentle gale.*

*Halcyon days now wars are ending, halcyon days now wars are ending*

*You shall find when e’er you sail.*

*Tritons all the while attending with a kind and gentle gale.*

**Sarah E:** And now abundance shone for our loyal Cavaliers, “a laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time,” with the gallant Charles II granting favour to those who remained loyal in the long years of exile. My lord John Dromore became the First Viscount of Scudamore, while John Granville became the first Earl of Bath, and Sir Robert Paston, knighted at the King’s landing at Dover, sought hard to gain more power and place for his family in the Brave New World of Restoration England.

**H:** Sorrow comes over night, but joy comes in the morning. With the death of his father, William Paston, Sir Robert Paston inherited the estate of Oxnead on the 22nd of February, 1663.

**Margaret Beddingfeld**: My Lady Rebecca Paston, I was strangely transported with the visit I made to Oxnead, which was at that time like a terrestrial paradise: so full of flowers and so pleasant. The house appeared so magnificent. Nor did I ever in my life find anything in poetry or painting half so fine as what I saw that day at your house where I wish you and your lord settled in peace.

**Thomas Henshaw:** My honoured patrone, I do from my heart congratulate your safe arrival at your own Oxnead, which must now be the very theater of your happiness. You should be satisfied with your lot, for few of mankind has God relished so much advantages of that felicity which yet seems to you but a dull quiet, above the troubles, turmoils, disquiets, and subjections of the *grande monde.* You should daily give God thanks on your knees for his accumulating so extraordinary favours upon you, for you as yet are one of the happy husbandmen, did you but know it.

**Paston:** I will commission a portrait with gifts from abroad showing to the wide world the treasure of the Pastons.

(*Actors bring around Grapes, Shells, Precious Jewels, Rich Tapestries, and a Lobster! With music accompaniment)*

**H:** Inventory of Jewelry July 30th 1663

**(*Halcyon Days song continues through jewelry list)***

An onix stone ring set round with diamonds and rubies £20

A blackamore in a sardonix set round with diamonds £10

A ring with a blackamore head & turbett set with 8 diamonds £15

A sardonix ring with 6 diamonds and a white head £15

A plain gold ring with a white and black agate £1

A free stone with diamonds round it £10

A ring with a dark emerald £1

An emerald ring with a face on it £10

28 rings about 15s a piece £21

A diamond ring with 3 great stones and four or more small stones £52

A diamond hatband £5

A turkey stone with two diamonds £10

A ruby ring set round with rubies and 2 diamonds £16

A long ruby and 2 table diamonds £10

And a prized opal with the sun set round with diamonds £10

Total fortune in jewels £587

**H:** Fortune favoured Sir Robert as a loyal friend of the new King. However, with money and spending being the fashion of the age, 1671 would prove to be a particularly expensive year at Oxnead.

**Margaret Paston:** Father, upon leaving the country, I am deemed to be somewhat bare in apparel in Town, and as Hannah Wooley writes, there is “a kind of privilege in youth for wearing fashionable clothes” and dressing well will only “add more beauty” to find me successfully matched. So my lady mother, and lord father, I will purchase accordingly to be seen as well apparelled as any in London.

**William Paston:** Mother, I have now seen the whole city of Paris and all that is curious or magnificent in it, and I find that our money does crumble away extremely. Therefore do send relief and pray present my humble duty to my father.

**Thomas Henshaw:** Oh my dear Patron, I much rejoice to hear your affairs are so prosperous! Since I came to town I have been extremely delighted with the chemical manuscript poem of one Edward Noell, who to my judgement understood the whole business of chemistry as well as that ever writ. He describes in a dozen places plainly what we have been so long upon. Though his writing is perhaps not so plain being written in verse, yet I am confident that with a little more money and labour, you will find it the most auspicious of our endeavours. God give you success in all your other affairs and in our great hopes for success in finding the red elixir we seek. Indeed sir, the philosopher’s stone is in our sight!

**RP:** My dear heart, the King intends me personal thanks and great promises I hear. I will manage my affairs with as much prudence and policy as my poor wit can design and I am plying my affairs for the good of our family. I have a great deal of business lying upon me and am in haste. I bid you a most passionate adieu. (*off RP goes to the bridge site)*

(*Narrators* *get the audience into their groups, set up how the show will work, who goes with whom, what is expected. Take your letters invites and coins to show at various places.*)

**Song: (Holly)**

*Hither this way, this way bend. Trust not trust not. Trust not the malicious fiend, trust not the malicious fiend.*

*Hither this way, this way bend. This way. Hither this way, this way bend.*

*Those are false deluding lights, wafted far and nearby sprites. Trust ‘em not for they’ll deceive ye, trust ‘em not for they’ll deceive ye, and in bogs and marshes leave ye, and in bogs and marshes leave ye.*

*Hither this way, this way bend. Trust not, trust not, Trust not the malicious fiend, trust not the malicious fiend.*

*Hither this way, this way bend. This way. Hither This way, this way bend.*

***Audience leave barn space, in front of the courtyard to bridge location Margaret Paston elopement section***

**Margaret Paston (*to audience member*):** Pray you, deliver this letter to Henry Rumbold, an ensign to Tangier.

**Margaret Beddingfeld (intercepts letter and takes it to Rebecca P):** Your ladyship, I was desired to keep this to myself, but I thought it might be a failure of friendship to conceal any thing I knew in this case, for wounds can never be healed till they be searched to the bottom.

**Harry Rumbold (*Shams*):** Margaret Paston’s friends have discovered all. Margaret, your family at Oxnead will surely apply all possible vigilance and care that we should not come together.

**Rebecca Paston:** My dear sir, my daughter is sorry for her folly and this business is now at an end. Go back to Tangier and do not seek out my daughter any longer.

**Harry Rumbold:** Your ladyship, I am resolved never to quit this business, unless I should hear from Margaret’s own mouth that she is repented of what she has done. Only then will I desist and never trouble her more. I have nothing but my life to lose, and that I am resolved to sacrifice.

**Margaret Paston:** (*coming towards HR and RP*): My dear heart, they cannot stop us. I will be your martyr, if I should suffer the reproach and contempt of my friends, all this would for your sake be but a pleasure and a glory to me.

**Rebecca Paston:** You will find my daughter proves an extravagant expensive wife,

**Margaret Paston:** ‘Tis true, I spend my father £200 a year, and why should I not as things are? But when I am your wife, I will be content to wear haircloth and be pleased with the coarsest diet in the world.

**Rebecca Paston:** Peg, desist in this. My ladies, remove my daughter to a place of protection from this outlandish behaviour not fitting a lady of quality.

**Harry Rumbold:** I declare my eternal constancy and fidelity, madam. Take heart and we shall be together hereafter.

**Margaret Paston:** My dear, stay true to me, and do not believe any letters contrived by my friends, they would all be counterfeit or forced, do not believe anything written, though you should see it under my own hand.

***HP and MP parted. Audience progress to the Bridge various actors speak to their audiences about the matter.***

***HP (to his audience) :*** Indeed,they have lately sent me a counterfeit letter from her maid. Sure they that sent it took me for a man of a gross understanding that could be imposed on by so palpable an imposture. But my lady assures me she has £4000 well secured to her in her grandfather’s will, and that money her family cannot deny her. She can marry whosoever and whenever she pleases once she achieves her majority. I sat up with her alone in her chamber the whole night after her first day’s journey homeward. What the combination of youth, love, darkness and solitude inspires in us all. Do not fear, we are resolved to be together.

***Lady Elizabeth Cary and other audience leaders:*** The young lady has been imprisoned by her family. However, she has managed to send to her secret betrothed an authenticated copy of her grandfather’s will, which you know will free such a conniving gentlemen from all scruple, that her £4000 is well secured. He would never have dared to make any address to one of her quality and fortune had he not been encouraged by a letter from her, that she constantly told him whatever was said of him by her uncle or others.

I have a great tenderness for Sir Robert and my Lady. And will not add to their grief of which I fear they have but too much already. Not any one that has heard this lamentable story hath any pity for their daughter, Margaret Paston.

***Audience go to Bridge Location***

*(Servants and estate people gossiping about mortgage and debt…)*

**Robert:** My darling, if ever flesh was tired out it is I that have taken more pains at Court than an horse. My Lord Chancellor Clarendon decided I was the very man to plea for two and a half million pounds needed for the King to finance the new war against the Dutch. They sought out ‘honest worthy men, looked upon as lovers of their country and great fortunes, and unsuspected to have designs at Court’. Rebecca, you should have heard my speech, where I said that they needed such a sum to strike terror into the enemy. My voice rang out to Parliament that day: ‘The machine of war requires strong hinges to play upon and would show us ill managers who to save a stake would venture the loss of the game.”

**Phanaticks** *(Shams and Abbie aside to audience***):** Paston, whose belly bares more millions than Indian carracks, and contains more tons.

**Robert:** The King told me, ‘Sir Robert Paston, your kindness to me at this time I’ll never forget. If my favour and respect may ever manifest itself in you, you are sure of a friend in me’. My dear, the service I have done the King is so great that I am looking on in a capacity of not being denied anything in his Majesty’s power. Pray God send us a merrie meeting and that all things may go well which is desired. The King’s visit to Norfolk is upon us, and with all in our power we will improve Oxnead to be fitting of a King’s visit. Let us build a banquet hall, let us improve upon the foundations, and with the plate, and the provisions, I will spend three times the dowry of an Earl’s daughter to entertain the King!

Oh my darling, I am more than confident when this business is settled, I shall have a lusty bidder that will in eight or ten years free us of all debt whatsoever.

***Audience go to Garden Maze, en route they overhear conversation over the King’s visit***

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** Your ladyship, the King’s visit will be the beginning of all good fortune for you in the county. I wish I could myself be present as a Paston, but being a poor papist, I can only serve you with a good heart, and whisper to my friends and acquaintances about Norwich to the advantage of your concerns and how they may pay their respects.

**Rebecca Paston:** I must confess, my dear cousin, I fear we will miss the honour of serving his Majesty as becomes him in our house. The Queen is now come into Norfolk too, and desires to attend on us at Oxnead. His lordship has spent a king’s ransom on the improvements of Oxnead, but it is not enough.

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** ‘Tis true that it is impossible to lodge both their Majesties at once with any convenience in your house. Lord Arlington has sent you the King’s guest list, you may rely on it that the Queen will go no farther than Norwich, otherwise he would not have failed to send you word of it.

**Rebecca Paston:**  Does her Majesty now speak uncertainly of her coming to us at all? I am confounded. Should her Majesty now deny and withdraw that honor totally from us, it would be our eternal disgrace and mortification to all this country.

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** Your ladyship, the Paston family are the most ancient of all the Norfolk gentry here without competition. To be slighted by the Queen in this manner, would be the undoing of all.

**Rebecca Paston:** We must ask Lord Arlington to speak in a most humble manner to the Queen, and beg the knowledge of the day or night her Majesty will honor us.

***Letter delivered to MB who passes it to RP***

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** Your ladyship, all has been resolved to everyone’s advantage for the King’s visit. The Queen will come to supper tomorrow, leaving the King’s stay at Oxnead as designed. I hear the music of the procession, the King is coming, let us join the entertainment.

**Song: (Matthew)**

*Music, music for a while, shall all your cares beguile, shall all, all all, shall all your cares beguile,*

*Wondering, wondering how your pains were eas’d eas’d eas’d and disdaining to be pleased, till Alecto free the dead, till Alecto free the dead, from their eternal, eternal band.*

*Till the snakes drop, drop, drop, drop, … from her head and the whip, and the whip from out her hand.*

*Music, music for a while, shall all your cares beguile, shall all, all all, shall all your cares beguile.*

*Shall all, all, all, shall all your cares beguile.*

(**Audience are seated in front of the garden maze)**

**Rebecca P:** Your majesty, it is a common notion that dedications in our age are only the effects of flattery, a form of compliment and no more. This humble offering, which I presume to lay at your majesty’s feet, does not only require the patronage of a great title, but of a great man too. If this piece finds but favour in your majesty’s eyes and gives you one hour’s diversion; that is the only honour and fame wished to crown all our endeavours.

**Robert Paston**: To please your majesty, known throughout the land as a most famous amour, we present you stories of Love from the playhouses of London!

**Sarah L**. This truth we can to our Advantage say,

They that would have no King, would have no Play:

The Laurel and the Crown together went,

Had the same Foes, and the same Banishment.

**Florinda (Sarah L):** What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery! How full of questions! Prithee, no more, Helena, I have told thee more than thou understand’st already.

**Hellena (Holly)**: The more’s my grief; I would fain know as much as you, which makes me so inquisitive; nor is’t enough I know you’re a lover, unless you tell me too who ‘tis you sigh for.

**Florinda:** When you’re a lover, I’ll think you fit for a secret of that nature.

**Hellena:** ‘Tis true, I never was a lover yet; but I begin to have a shrewd guess what tis to be so, and fancy it very pretty to sigh, and sing, and blush, and wish, and dream and wish, and long and wish to see the man, and when I do, look pale and tremble, just as you did when my brother brought home the fine English colonel to see you—what did you call him? Don Belvile?

**Florinda:** Fie, Hellena.

**Hellena:** That blush betrays you. I am sure ‘tis so; or is it Don Antonio, the viceroy’s son? Or perhaps the rich old Don Vincentio, whom my father designs you for a husband? Why do you blush again?

**Florinda:** With indignation, and how near soever my father thinks I am to marrying that hated object, I shall let him see I understand better what’s due to my beauty, birth and fortune, and more to my soul, then to obey those unjust commands.

**Hellena:** Now hang me, if I don’t love thee for that dear disobedience. I love mischief strangely, as most of our sex do, who are come to love nothing else. But tell me, dear Florinda, don’t you love that fine Inglese? For I vow, next to loving him myself, ‘twill please me most that you do so, for he is so gay and so handsome.

**Florinda:** Hellena, a maid designed for a nun ought not to be so curious in the discourse of love.

**Hellena:** And dost though think that I’ll ever be a nun? Or at least till I am so old, I’m fit for nothing else: faith, no, sister; and that which makes me long to know whether you love Belvile, is because I Hope he has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion. Nay, I’m resolved to provide myself this Carnival, if there be e’er a handsome proper fellow of my humour above ground, though I ask first.

**Florinda:** Prithee be not so wild.

**Hellena:** Now you have provided yourself of a man, you take no care of poor me. Prithee tell me, what dost though see about me that is unfit to love? Have I not a world of youth? A humour gay? A beauty passable? A vigour desirable? Well-shaped? Clean-limbed? Sweet breathed? (*Florinda goes off with Hellena chasing behind her*)Yes I do, and will; therefore lay aside your hopes of my fortune by my being a devotee, and tell me how you came acquainted with this Belville…

**Song and Dance (Holly)**

*Fairest Isle, all isles excelling, seat of pleasures and of loves.*

*Venus here will chuse her dwelling, and forsake her Cyprian groves.*

*Cupid From his favrite nation, care and envy will remove.*

*Jealousie that poisons passion. And despair that dies for love.*

*Gentle murmers, sweet complaining, sighs that blow the fire of Love.*

*Soft repulses, kind disdaining, shall be all the pains you prove.*

*Ev’ry swain shall pay his duty, grateful ev’ry nymph shall prove. And as these excel in beauty, those shall be renown’d for love.*

**Dorimant (Ben):** Music so softens and disarms the mind

**Harriet (Sarah L):** That not one arrow does resistance find.

**Dorimant:** Let us make use of the lucky minute then.

**Song (Matthew)**

*If Music be the food of love, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on.*

*Till I am fill’d am fill’d with joy.*

**Mrs Pinchwife (Holly):** Well, ‘tis e’en so; I have got the London disease they call love. I am sick of my husband, and for my gallant. I have heard this distemper called a fever but methinks ‘tis like an ague, for when I think of my husband I tremble, and am in a cold sweat and have inclination to vomit; but when I think of my gallant, dear Mr Horner, my hot fit comes and I am all in a fever, indeed, and as in other fevers my own chamber is tedious to me, and I would fain be removed to his, and then methinks I should be well. Ah, poor Mr Horner! Well, I cannot, will not stay here, therefore I’ll make an end of my letter to him, which shall be a finer letter than my last, because I have studied it like anything; O sick, sick! (*off she storms)*

**Valentine (Ben):** Well, Lady Galloper, how does Angelica?

**Mrs Frail (Sarah L):** Angelica? Manners!

**Valentine:** What, you will allow an absent lover—

**Mrs Frail:** No, I’ll allow a lover present with his mistress to be particular. But otherwise, I think his passion ought to give place to manners.

**Valentine:** But what if he have more passion than manners?

**Mrs Frail:** Then let him marry and reform.

**Valentine:** Marriage indeed may qualify the fury of his passion, but it very rarely mends a man’s manners.

**Mrs Frail:** You are the most mistaken in the world. There is no creature perfectly civil but a husband. For in a little time he grows only rude to his wife, and that is the highest good breeding, for it begets his civility to other people.

**Angelica (Sarah E):** Do you know me, Valentine?

**Valentine:** Oh, very well.

**Angelica:** Who am I?

**Valentine:** You are a woman; one to whom heaven gave beauty, when it grafted roses on a briar. You are the reflection of heaven in a pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every goose’s quill. I know you, for I loved a woman, and loved her so long, that I found out a strange thing: I found out what a woman was good for.

**Angelica:** Ay, prithee, what is that?

**Valentine:** Why, to keep a secret.

**Angelica:** O Lord!

**Valentine:** O exceeding good to keep a secret. For tho’ she should tell, yet she is not to be believed.

**Angelica:** Why this is nought but madness.I thought your love of me had caused this transport in your soul. (*she goes to leave)*

**Valentine:** You are not leaving me in this uncertainty?

**Angelica:** Would anything but a madman complain of uncertainty? Uncertainty and expectation are the joys of life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a wish discovers the folly of the chase. Never let us know one another better, for the pleasure of a masquerade is done when we come to shew faces. But, I’ll tell you two things before I leave you. I am not the fool you take me for, and you are mad and don’t even know it.

‘Tis an unreasonable accusation laid upon our sex. Men tax us with injustice, only to over their own want of merit. They would all have the reward of love, but few have the constancy to stay till it becomes their due. Men are generally hypocrites and infidels. They pretend to worship, but have neither zeal nor faith. How few, like Valentine, would persevere even unto martyrdom, and sacrifice their interest to their constancy. In admiring me, they misplace the novelty.

The miracle today is that we find

A lover true, not that a woman’s kind.

***Music instrumental***

**Sarah L:** Your Majesty, May Caesar live; and while his mighty hand

Is scattering plenty over the land,

With god-like bounty recompensing all,

Some fruitful drops may on the muses fall—

Since honest pens do his just cause afford

Equal advantage with the useful sword.

***Move the audience down through the garden maze to the alchemy section. Set it up.***

**Robert Paston**: My dear heart, this morning I took my leave of the King who above twenty times the day before repeated it to my friends that none was nearer his heart than myself, that he intended to mend my honor and fortune, the which I had this day from his own mouth. That he will speedily make me a nobleman of England and will grant me what I can find to make suit for, some politic considerations postponed the honor now, for the King thinks it will look too near a contract to have just done it at this time, but the words and ways of a Prince are not to be disputed. I hope I shall make the best advantage of both.

**Margaret Beddingfeld**: Your lord and ladyship, at last though through many sad changes Sir Robert has surmounted all difficultyes and gotten the King’s sweet hand, accompanied with many favourable expressions which entitle him to any further boon he shall ask. I wish your ladyship much joy as Viscountess of Yarmouth, and a long life to enjoy the advantage of this grant.

(**Musical Fanfare)**

**Margaret Paston:** Your lordship, I am very happy of my condition in Venice, and happy with my husband, Girolamo Alberti de Conti, were it not for the sense of your displeasure. I can assure your lordship, I am used with all respect imaginable by my husband’s friends, and command whatever I desire. I have money and clothes, and all things suitable to a woman of quality. Though I may have not met with a match so good my lord as you believe your daughter might have deserved, yet there is no reproach in it. I have married a gentleman, a man of parts, one who uses me worthily. Father, consult the generous inclination of your nature and after so long an absence I entreat you to give us your blessing and good wishes. It will give me and my husband the greatest consolation we are capable of receiving.

**Robert Paston:** I perceive my daughter Alberti is well situated and offer you good fortune. Things are well at Oxnead, and all our pursuits continue. I have taken on the Lord Lieutenancy in Norfolk.

*Shouting amongst the factions: (cheers for the new Lord Lieutenant, cries against him from the opposition*

**Royalists:** *Down with the Papist Monarch*

**Phanaticks:** God bless the King’s favour!

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** My Lord Lieutenant has such a triumphant passing through Norwich. I wish his detractors had but seen how filled the streets, doors, windows were with persons of all ages and sexes, the very highways and hedges were lined with men. And they tell me that there was so many got upon trees for a sight of my lord, that the poor boys hung on bows together as moles.

**Robert Paston:** I do not think, however, these favours done me so extraordinarily will relish with some of the country.

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** I hope their mouths are pretty well stopped for lying, the very night before, t’was reported at Norwich that none would meet your lordship but the papists with the rascality of people: and in this corner of the country that if Sir Henry Bedingfeld did not drive them his own self, none would go. But they’ll find my lord can stand on his own bottom, and substantial men carrieth most sway, many more you would have had if the justices had not set that very day upon the business.

**William Paston:** Your lordship, I doubt not but the honest part of our city of Norwich do still retain high esteem for your honour. But it is likewise as evident that other men, who neither wish well to the King nor to his interest, are still active as ever to deceive the people with all lies and tricks imaginable. They have done so much as to set the fanatic party already a bawling, and yesterday at North Walsham the cry for Hobart was very rife.

**Robert Paston:** My son you must build hopes of your fortune along with mine. We will spare no expense in our entertainment the loyal Norfolk gentry at Oxnead. We must work in opposition to the factions bacing my Lord Hobard and Townshend. I pray to god that we may not find some obstacles unforeseen. Let our expectations be answered. The Papists and those loyal to the King are on our side, it is only the fanatics against us.

**William Paston:** Your lordship, I know the faction has no bound, but notorious falsehoods appear in every direction.

**(*Crowd heckle Robert and William Paston)***

**William Paston:** The fanaticks in Norwich now threaten strongly to make opposition on Monday, but that will be to less purpose then that of the country.

(***Crowd Heckle Robert and William Paston cont…)***

**Robert Paston:** I must expect to have all the dirt thrown in my face that the privilege of the house can warrant.

**Fanatick (Abbie):** I wish Lord Yarmouth, rather than entertaining Papists, would think of paying his debts which he takes no care of.

**Rebecca Paston:** My dear, I know what difficulties and disappointments you lie under, and would pity you, but I believe you may surmount them all. We know so much of the want of money is, and what the straitness of a fortune is, that we must succeed or be ruined in the attempt.

**Robert:** I suggested the King buy our lands at Little Yarmouth,

**Rebecca:** Alas, the request has not been pursued, and we are left in great difficulties. Our family is on the brink of those necessities that no man of the nation of your quality or fortune is. Our revenue is seized for a mortgage on £10,000, and our family, indeed your very self, is hated and oppressed on every side. You must again approach the King.

**Thomas Henshaw:** Your lordship, I have sent the epistle to the King you asked for, though it cost me more pains than ever any I have had and I fear will have worse success with you. You know that a curled and painted style was ever disagreeable to my nature and I have no patience with either a swollen, bombast, affected, forced, or pedantick piece of rhetoric, nor can any please me that is not sober, perspicuous, close, nervous, free, and the words proper discreet, well chosen, not savouring either the English schoolmaster, or the French dancing master. If you ask me why I have not done this suitable to the character I affect, I answer it was either because I could not put myself in the right humour, or else because it was above my genius. Pray sir, you are the Viscount of Yarmouth, is that not enough? Does nothing satisfy you but to be made an Earl?

**Robert:** As your Majesty’s person is sacred to me, so is your royal word, I therefore humbly beg of your Majesty to remember your promise so long depended upon and renewed when I waited on you at Whitehall to make me an earl when you made any and not to forget me. Since this justice of your Majesty will enable me the better to serve you when the country sees me borne up as well as others by your Majesty’s favour so long expected. My own lameness at present of the gout hinders me from attending your Majesty, but I cannot doubt of a gracious answer in the present order for a warrant.

***(Instrumental Music Some celebration on becoming Earl)***

**Margaret Beddingfeld:** I wish you great joy as the Earl and Countess of Yarmouth!

**Robert:** We have achieved what we long sought, but our debts increase and no word from the King about our plight. No matter, I am a member of the Royal Society, and trust that the great alchemist, Thomas Henshaw, will find the red elixir at long last.

***Transition moving audience down through the Garden maze and through to Alchemy area***

**TH:** My Lord, after all these melancholy dispensations let us see if chymystry will afford us any better consolation. I thank you for your account of your latest experiments you have taken with a great deal of care and pains. Though things do not succeed yet according to expectation, I hope that we cannot long miss on such a good subject.

***Thomas Henshaw exists to Alchemy area, audience to follow with gossiping guides***

**G1 (Dora):** My Lord Yarmouthhas the most celebrated laboratory in England.

**G2 (Chris):** Alchemy is the practice of gentleman, whereas the base Chemistry is for nought but artisans.

**G3 (Abbie):** I heard that his Lordship’s brother in law, John Clayton, found a recipe for the Philosopher’s Stone from a monk of the right order. A Benedictine, the whole story is miraculous. The stone he tells me he has made, and the process was at length fished of him.

**G2 (Chris):** The whole business is grounded upon the purifying of common mercury for forty days to make the sulphur of philosophers and dissolve gold and silver.

**G1 (Dora):** I heard the secret was found in a book hidden in the bottom of a well, enclosed in soldered lead with a marble cover. The title of the book was made from silver and gold made out of the Philosopher’s Stone!

**G3 (Abbie):** I saw the book with my own eyes.The recipe was missing parts, alas, and filled with secret codes of ancient Alchemists, otherwise it could solve all of my Lord’s debts… and indeed mine.

**G2 (Chris):** Shh… hold your tongue!

***(Audience move to Alchemist location in front of water)***

**Alchemy Sequence**

**Thomas Henshaw *(****Muttering to himself away from the audience as if reciting his secret formula)*: You are first by a strong graduated fire to draw out all the humid part of your subject; in the rectifying of which you will have first a srong armoniacke spirit which by his description is just ours, then change your receiver and take the middle part of this humidity by itself and likewise the phlegme by itself. Then take the feces remaining in your retort, grinde them very small in a marble, put them into a body with a blind head, power on them of your middle part till it swim two fingers over, set them on warm ashes for 24 to 48 hours, till you see your liquor tinged, then decant neatly and power on fresh till you see the liquor no more tinged. When you have good store of the tinged liquid, digest it *in balneo* for four days, then distille by degrees in sand and you will bring over the sulphur. You will find the greatest volatile pearly *terrra foliate* which will all turn into a liquour. Jack Clayton told me last night that our doctor tells him by grindning all armoniacke he can create a sulphure as red as rubies and at last we have our Red Elixir!

(*Henshaw notices Audience)*

**Henshaw:** Greetings fellow members of the Royal Society. As you know we are in the pursuit of Alchemy, along with our honoured fellow members, Robert, Earl of Yarmouth, Christopher Wren, and our illustrious colleague and friend, Sir Isaac Newton. Unlike the lowly pursuit of chemistry which is growing in fashion amongst the baser sort of the populace, the genuine alchemist is absolutely firm in his belief that the emotional and spiritual state of the individual experimenter is involved intimately with the success or failure of our pursuits. We have made great progress in our pursuit of the Philosopher’s Stone. Our redeemed member, Elias Ashmole, has discovered a lightning stone fallen from the sky, for Intellects and Spirit of virtuous beings never communicate with mortals without a special grace of Divinity, through the Philosophers Stone. In the words of the illustrious Ashmole, “By the Magical and Prospective Stone it is possible to discover any Person in what part of the World forever, although never so secretly concealed or hid; in Chambers, Closets, or Caverns of the Earth: For there it makes a strict Inquisition. In a Word, it fairly presents to your view even the whole World, wherein to behold, hear, or see your Desire. More it enables man to understand the language of Creatures, as the Chirping of Birds, Lowing of Beasts, etc. To Convey a Spirit into an image, which by observing the Influence of heavenly Bodies, shall become a true Oracle; And yet this as E.A. assures you, is not any way Necromantical, or Devilish; but easy, ponderous easy, Natural and Honest.

In brief, by the true and various use of the Philosophers Prima Materia ( for there are diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit) the perfection of Liberal Sciences are made known, the whole Wisdom of Nature may be grasped; And (Notwithstanding what has been said, I must further add) there are yet hid greater things than these. In fifteen kingdoms had our Red Stone existed and we can, I believe, we can discover it once more!

(*Audience with actors are asked to solve their letter code puzzle for portions of the secret recipe of the philosopher’s stone. As they do so, Robert Paston eagerly goes around in desperation asking for portions of the recipe. He gets more and more frustrated as the formula does not yield results.*)

**H:** List of Payments by Robert Paston, Earl of Yarmouth 1672-1676

To Deborah Burton of the Exchange: £100

To Madam Sherrad £32

Mr Mr Lably £50

To John Le Roy alias King Jeweler £25

To Richard Allen £460

To Mr Goff Minister of Oxnead £105

To Lady Clayton £103

To Francis Rawlins £985

To Mr Gossling Caseman £366

To Mr Bullard for the charge of the Trial of Yarmouth £177

To Mrs Smith Linendraper £150

To Mrs Katherine Eaton £455

To My Lady Clayton for money advanced on the orange farm £304

To Mr Wak Exchangeman £100

Total Expenses: £1725

**RP:** My dear sir, where are the results you promised? I have been patiently awaiting them all these years, but indeed there are none. Where is the red elixir?

**TH:** My dear patron, I am very sorry to find that your passion is so much raised and your mind so disturbed. If your patience be so short breathed that you give over the race as soon as almost you entered it, if you despair because fruits do not ripen in the spring and you cannot stay till autumn, it is no wonder if all this time you have seen no effects of your great charge and trouble. I hope you will do me the justice to remember that twenty years since, Sir John Clayton is my witness, I earnestly deterred you both from entering on so hopeless a study, which is a lottery wherein there are so many millions of blanks for any ever so small a victory.

**RP:** John Clayton is the very devil, he is to be eschewed as a venomous creature that will infect all our friends with the leven of his malice which he has fermented so desperately against us. I would not take John Clayton’s word for a hundred others, we must stand upon a strict guard against his malice.

**TH:** Be that as it may, I did never pretend to revelations, secret demonstrations, or recipes found in abbey walls. If I had ten elixirs you had been master of them all long ere this time. Therefore in justice and equity you ought not to impute to me the ill success of your trial, nor the loss of your time and expense. I have often exhorted you to desist, but you could not live without a castle in the air. You may with much less charge and anxiety spend your afternoons with a chessboard. I have no hopes from chymystry but to obtain an extraordinary medicine which will cure most diseases and maintain a vigorous health. But your aims are so vast that you lose time and patience in the attempt. Desist my lord, desist. Your lordship should abandon this sooty employment unsuitable to the calling of a gentleman.

**(*Thomas Henshawe goes off, leaving Robert Paston alone with his debts)***

**Rebecca Paston:** My lord, do not despair. I hope God will dispose of all things for our good and then his will be done, and certainly my believe is that so good a martyr for his country as your lordship, can at last never bring forth other than good to his posterity, and surely at last it will be found that he is not damned but rewarded.

**RP:** My dear heart. I have so many sad thoughts that I think they will not let my health go on. I love you with all my soul, and take my chief pleasure in your counsel. Alas, it is a business of so great concern to me as I must be liable to everything by consequence they will demand, or else be threatened with ruin.

**Rebecca Paston:** My dear, do not be discouraged, but trust still in God for all our sake. The King hath promised he will never leave us or forsake us. Remember all the good you have done his majesty, in the past.

**Robert Paston:** I confess, I cannot be in love with histories without effects; I am old and men’s lives are not long enough to embark in affaires whose course is so tedious, and perhaps frivolous. I wish it may prove otherwise. I pray to God every day to crown our industry with such success as may make us experience the continuation of his miraculous preservations in many brinks of approaching ruin and contempt. This whirlpool of misadventures will hurt me worse than I could conceive.

**Rebecca Paston:** My lord-

**Robert Paston:** I have nothing more to say.

*(Robert Paston goes off, guides start leading the audience up the path towards the Church)*

**Margaret Paston:** Mother, I find the sad story of my father’s broken heart a thing I never dreamt nor would ever have imagined; the King’s ingratitude amazes me. And to speak the truth, he merits not to have so faithful a subject, nor so real a friend, but the old proverb fails not which says many in this world are incapable of knowing the good they do.

**Rebecca:** Your father is worse than I expected. His fainting was about three hours, and so cold in his hands and feet as nothing could be liker death but death itself insomuch as many strong cordials together with rubbing his hands and breast and feet with palsy water could very hardly at last bring him to heat.

**Church:**

**Song (Holly):**

*O, let me forever weep:*

*My eyes no more shall welcome sleep.*

*I'll hide me from the sight of day,*

*And sigh my soul away.*

*He's gone, his loss deplore,*

*And I shall never see him more.*

**Margaret Paston (*to her brother William during song):*** This makes me see the inanity of following Courts and makes me thank God that fortune has condemned me to lead a private life in which perhaps I have suffered less disquiet than you, sir.

**William Paston:** Perhaps if my dear father had contented himself with the wholesome air of Oxnead without troubling him with State affairs and following the Court, then our mother would not now be a widow.

**Rev Hildeyard (Holly):** “It is comfortable and glorious for a Christian to consider the joys of heaven; but when it is remembred that before his entrance into them, he must twice put off the old man, once with its lusts of the flesh, and afterwards with the flesh of mortality, it is good to remember that we must all lie down in the dust, and in the dishonour of the grave, is a great ally to all delight we have in the expectation of the glories above. But witness the spectacle before us; none can reverse the sentence, no man can escape the doom.

**Rebecca Paston:** I speak on this sad day a portion of the sermon by Dr. John Hildeyard for his great friend, and my loving husband.  **‘**If honourable birth and ingenuous education, if courage and greatness, loyalty and piety, if anything could have been given immunity against a sad day, this sad scene of sorrows had not been the entertainment of this assembly. We, with joy in our countenances, would welcome the arrival amongst us of the Right Honourable Robert Earl and Viscount Yarmouth Baron of Paston.

For my own part, he was pleased to give me so intimate acquaintance with him, and that so filled me with just arguments of his praise, that I am more at a loss to determine what to leave out, than what to say.

The place in which he was born was Oxnead. He was of a nature so kind, so sweet so courting all; of a disposition so prompt, so ready, so cheerful in receiving all that he had no enemies except such as deserved no friends. By advancing the King’s honour and interest, he gained the affections of the loyal party, made them all his own, and at his death left the number of them almost double to what he found them.

Thus by his Prudent Management, he acquired great Fame to himself, great peace to the county, and great satisfaction to all good and honest men. Nay hereby, even whether they would or no, he took possession of many hearts, to the admiration of all that would not love him: would not love him, did I say? Yes, ‘tis true, some did not, they lov’d not him, that did not love the King, they lov’d not him that did not love the Church and his Service to the King, and the Church, he valued more than he did their Love. Sure I am, they did not love him that vilified his person, lessened his parts, undervalued his Prudence, and recroached his religion; That mercilessly and unchristianly, without colour of the Laws of Man, or Conscience toward God, pierced the sides of his hearties friends to give him a wound, a stab. When his friends for his sake must be taken into custody, and squeezed in an arbitrary skrew, or hands as harsh and cruel: Yet, in all this I neer saw him daunted, his Countenance fall, or his courage fail.

I bury my husband today, a man I greatly loved, who was put into his grave by his love of honour, virtue, and loyalt to his King and country. My God grant him peace.

***Gossip in front of Graves, on the way up to the final position***

**William P:** Mother, as for the business with the King and the 20,000 since your Ladyship has not had the opportunity to speak with him, then it may be hard to have the money although he promises to.

**G1: (*To William Paston)*** The great Lady lays about her with her flaming sword. She has too much meddling in business.

*(****Rebecca goes up the path)***

**G2 (*To William Paston)*:**I had the luck to be upon the place when your mother made both her address at Windsor; know nothing could be more contemptuous. She is being held as an indiscreet and mischievous woman. Neither civility nor manhood will let me recount all I heard, but only so much as related to your lordship, to wit, that if you suffer yourself to be governed by her you would be a weak person and ruin your interests at court.

***To the Audience***

**G1 (*Abbie)*:** To speak plainly, for several reasons I hope that Yarmouth’s son will not succeed in the Lieutenancy. Oxnead hath personal animosities to many of the gentlemen of our County, and if not granted the position of his late father, will then not be in a capacity to offer those personal injuries and affronts which otherwise may reasonably to be expected from him. We may be able to reconcile those unfortunate divisions which have of late afflicted our County.

**G4 (Holly):** The Earl of Yarmouth at present lives very obscurely and yet increaseth his debts. His mother, who made a great bustle in King Charles the 2nds time, now boards in a thatched house; and although there she keeps up her pride to the height by suffering no one to set at meat with her and many other vain formalities, yet with difficulty enough finds money to pay for her board, and hath made her landlord so weary of her as to make use of all the civil ways he can to get rid of her; but she will understand none of them, not knowing where next to go. Her son gives her no respect or holds any correspondence with her, though she lives not above 2 miles from him.

**G3 (Ben):** The Early of Yarmouth is as low as you can imagine. He hath vast debts, and suffers everything to run in extremity; so his goods have been all seized in execution and his lands extended, so that he hath scarce a servant to attend him or a horse to ride abroad upon, and yet cannot be persuaded to take any method of putting his affairs into a better posture, which they are still capable of, if he would set about it.

**Narrator (Sarah L):** From this time, Yarmouth disappears from history. Debts and misfortunes crowded upon him, and he seems altogether to have lost heart. He drifted on, year after year, his estates mortgaged, his pension secured to pay some fraction of his debts, until everything was in hopeless confusion. His three sons died, none of them leaving issue. His beautiful Oxnead falling to ruin.

**Narrator 2:** Stories had been whispered in Norfolk, for generations past, of a curse laid upon the Pastons by a Prior of Bromholme.

**Prior:** Sir

**Narrator 2:** The Prior had said

**Prior:** Since you are thus cruel and inexorable to us, and our brethren and house, you shall certainly from henceforth always have one of your family a fool, till it is become poor.

**Narrator (Holly):** The second Earl of Yarmouth lived on until 1732, a pathetic and forgotten survival in a Norfolk dominated by the Walpoles and the Townshends. Paston perhaps sometimes recalled, amid the overgrown gardens and neglected woods of Oxnead, the words of his father’s old friend Sir Thomas Brown:

**Brown:** Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks.

**Song: (Matthew)**

Evening song

Now, now that the sun hath veil’d his light  
And bid the world goodnight;  
To the soft bed my body I dispose,  
But where shall my soul repose?  
Dear, dear God, even in Thy arms,  
And can there be any so sweet security!  
Then to thy rest, O my soul!  
And singing, praise the mercy  
That prolongs thy days.

Hallelujah!

On Lady Katherine Paston's Tomb at Oxnead by Michael Riviere

**Sarah L:** Sun set three hundred years,

These marble shadows on the wall still stand,

Fixed by her husband’s grief, and Stone’s hand,

Long vanished skill, and wealth, and tears.

Outside her dilapidated

Church the usual June again transposes

The graveyard offals into grass and roses,

Beauty and corruption equated,

Balanced principles,

Whereby this white memento-mori is

Now mere memoria pulchritudinis,

New summer dappling her walls.

We’re not the tomorrow, alas,

Of this lady’s wish; her treasures scattered for ever,

Her mansion now green mounds beside the river,

Not a Paston left to wear her flesh…

And since we put the resurrection

Even of annual crops to chance,

Eternity of blood’s no longer, as once,

Any man’s confident possession.

We do with less than that:

The uncertain hope that someone not yet born

May saunter here on a remote June morning

To find the key under the mat.

**End: *Some Final words about the letters found, etc… and invite audience to have a drink on the lawn and feel free to explore the grounds as they wish. If they want to speak to us more about the performance and Robert Paston, we will be available for comments, questions, and feedback.***