

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

SUMMER 2015

NEWSLETTER No. 102

COULD YOU SERVE ON THE COMMITTEE?

Peter Jameson, who brought to fruition the task of editing and publishing the Society's edition of the unabridged Diary in 17 volumes, has been a Committee member for fifteen years. Sadly he has now had to step down from the Committee because of the twice-yearly travelling involved. Committee members have expressed their appreciation of Peter's work.

David Case, who has been the Society's Treasurer for twenty years, has decided to retire from the role after the next AGM in September. His work as Treasurer has been outstanding.

There are now vacancies on the Committee, and if you are interested in helping to run the Society, please contact Martin Brayne. A separate letter enclosed with this mailing gives further details. **Please read it very carefully – it affects the future of the Society.**

FROLIC – WELLS 2015

Bookings are coming in for the AGM and Frolic at the Swan Hotel in Wells between 11th and 13th September 2015, but there are still places available. A special highlight of the weekend will be the visit to the Old Parsonage at Ansford, the birthplace of James Woodforde. The after-dinner talk on Saturday night will be on Castle Cary's historic inns, and will be given by the chairman of the town's Museum Society.

A booking form was enclosed with the Spring mailing, but if you need information, please contact Jenny Alderson on 01963 350765, or email jenny@aldersons.plus.com.

Please note that the telephone number for the Swan Hotel was given wrongly on the booking form – it should be 01749-836300.

All Society members, whether registered for the Frolic or not, are invited to attend the AGM, which will take place at 5.30pm on 11th September in the Oak Room at the Swan Hotel.

CHAWTON HOUSE – A WOODFORDEAN TALK

In May, something of a mini-frolic took place at Chawton House, near Alton, Hants, where ten members attended a talk and “hands-on” display on “The Georgian Gentleman”, as exemplified by John Custance and James Woodforde. “Quite a unique experience” wrote one member. “It was good to meet up with fellow members and have a chat and pose for a group photo.” You can read a report of it in the accompanying Journal.

We apologise that the late despatch of the Spring mailing may have meant that some members who would have liked to go were too late to book.

LORD LEICESTER OF HOLKHAM HALL

In April 2015, the 7th Earl of Leicester died at the age of 78. The *Eastern Daily Press* wrote that “Norfolk is mourning a farmer, nobleman and conservationist who turned his stately home into a national treasure.” As Edward, Viscount Coke, in 1976 he embarked on a lifelong project to modernise Holkham Hall and its farming. Classical concerts were held in the Marble Hall, and open days were transformed by the removal of ropes and the addition of flowers in the state rooms. Determined to give the public the greatest possible access, he opened the park and six-acre walled gardens all year round. He succeeded to the Earldom on his father’s death in 1994, and now his son, Thomas, Viscount Coke becomes the 8th Earl of Leicester. Frolic-goers will remember our visit to Holkham Hall in 2008.

The late Earl was a direct descendant of Thomas Coke of whom James Woodforde dreamt on 12th September 1796: “*I dreamt last Night that I was at an Entertainment given by Mr Coke at his House, amongst other dishes there was a Faun roasted but cold – and plenty of Hares roasted, and cold also, &c. Mr Coke was very civil to me ...*”.

DIARISTS FROM PEPYS TO POOTER

The Mitcham Library Club is a book group which has been running continuously since 1938. In March it held an evening on “Diarists: real-life and fictional”. Diarists discussed included Anne Frank, Chris Mullins MP, Frances Partridge of the Bloomsbury group, Pepys,

Charles Pooter, and James Woodforde. Several extracts were read from Woodforde's diary: they included an alcoholic night at Oxford; his examination for Deacon's orders answering many "hard and deep" questions; the ball at Wincanton in 1767 where Woodforde danced all night; his induction into the Freemasons in 1774; finally, his frightening trip in a boat at Wells-next-the-sea and his visit to Houghton Hall in 1779.

A VISIT TO SPITALFIELDS

On 26th June, 1786, Parson Woodforde and Nancy were in London, and walked to Osborn Place, Spital Fields, to deliver a letter from Mrs Bodham to Miss Elizabeth Donne. "We went thro' a most black-guard Place going to the above House."

"Osborn Place" is now Chicksand Street, off Brick Lane. Last April I visited the formerly "black-guard" area for a tour of the Dennis Severs House in Folgate Street, Spitalfields. Once a silk-merchant's home, the whole house is preserved as it would have been in the eighteenth century. There is no electricity in the building, and my daytime visit featured candles and open fires in some of the rooms. The house is filled with furniture and artefacts of the period, the rooms disordered as though the occupants are nearby. Like Norwich, Spitalfields was a community where there were many Huguenot weavers.

DIARY VOLUMES AVAILABLE

As well as the recent edition of Volume 11, the Society holds stocks of the other volumes in print, volumes 1-6, 8, and 10-17. Volumes 7 and 9 are currently out of print, although a new edition of Volume 7 is currently being prepared by Dr Heather Edwards and should be available this year. Contact Jenny Alderson for prices on jenny@aldersons.plus.com, or at Newland, Park Street, Castle Cary, BA7 7ED.

DON'T FORGET THE INDEX

Are your Society Journals gathering dust because it is too much bother to look back through them to find a particular article? If you have access to the internet, then you can use the Journal Index to find when a

particular article was published. On the website *www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk*, go to “Publications” and scroll down to the link to the Journal Index. You can trace articles by subject, name, place or author. If you can’t find what you are looking for, then try “search” or “find” for a distinctive word in the title.

Society’s website: www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk
