

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

WINTER 2015

NEWSLETTER No. 104

FROLIC 2016 – A CALL FOR SUFFOLK MEMBERS

The annual Frolic in 2016 will be held in Suffolk, the scene of James Woodforde's excursion with Washbourne Cooke in 1775 and of his tour in 1786. Our Chairman, Martin Brayne, who is organising it remotely from his home in Derbyshire, would be very pleased if any member who lives in Suffolk could provide some local assistance or knowledge, for example visiting hotels or recommending local refreshment places for the Saturday outing. If you think you could help, contact him on *editor@parsonwoodforde.org*, or telephone 01663 750354.

BERESFORD 5-VOLUME EDITION FOR SALE

The Revd Janet Stewart of Sheringham has a first edition of the Beresford 5-volume set of abridged diaries, which belonged to her late father. She hopes to sell them through the Society. If you are interested, please contact her to discuss the price and collection/delivery. She will be happy to receive prospective buyers.

Her details are: Revd. Janet Stewart, 30 St. Joseph's Road, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8JA, tel: 01263 824497, mobile: 07909 928739, email: *janet.stewart10@btinternet.com*.

TAVERHAM HISTORY SOCIETY – WOODFORDE'S VILLAGERS

The September meeting of the Taverham History Society saw a record attendance when Sheila Harrison presented the third in her trilogy of talks based on Parson Woodforde's Diaries. Entitled "Village People", the talk featured many of the lesser known characters in the Diaries – Jack Warton the skipjack, Harry Dunnell, neighbours Downing, Clarke and Gooch, the washerwomen, Mr Holland the chimney-sweep, and Cobb the Ratcatcher. (A member of the audience recalled that there was a ratcatcher in the village as recently as 1962.) Crime, accidents and suicides were part of the fabric of village life, together with interludes of leisure – travelling freak shows and puppet shows, wrestling and ploughing matches and the customary beating of the bounds.

Amongst the audience at Taverham were people with connections to Weston – a retired farmer, a group of ladies who had attended the village school in the 1950's and a descendant of families mentioned in the Diaries.

GEORGIAN DINING AT STRANGERS HALL, NORWICH

In September an informative and entertaining presentation on "Georgian Dining" was given, appropriately enough, in the Georgian dining room of Strangers' Hall, by Bethan Holdridge of the Norwich Museums Service. She spoke about the development of the dining room as a permanent fixture and the consequent impact this had on the design of furniture, and the etiquette of Georgian dining. Ms Holdridge is a mine of information and her knowledge and enthusiasm were infectious.

Of particular interest was a portrait from 1786 by Sir William Beechey of Mr and Mrs Custance with a daughter, normally on display in the Castle Museum. The portrait seemed realistic, and, from a twenty-first century point of view, not flattering. Mr Custance held a hunting gun and a pheasant; Mrs Custance, who was seated, wore a frilled mob-cap and had an outdoor hat on a nearby stool; their perhaps 3-year old daughter had a closely-printed book. Clear social messages are apparent in the family portrait.

DISAPPOINTING NEWS FROM THE WENSUM BENEFICE

Canon Peter Halls, who is taking church services at Weston Longville during the interregnum, writes in the November edition of the *Wensum Diary*: "The latest news about a new incumbent for our group of parishes is a little disappointing. We had one person who was very interested in looking after our parishes. We were very hopeful but in the end she decided against accepting the post. So we are looking again for some-one else!"

PITCOMBE BELL-RINGERS

Did you attend the Somerset Frolic in September, and if so, did you take a photograph of the bell-ringers in Pitcombe Church? Kieren Berry, who is an admirer of Pitcombe and a new bell-ringer there,

wonders if any of us took a photograph of the ringers during our visit on September 12th. If so, please contact Kieren Berry on *kberrye4@gmail.com*.

THE BELL SAVAGE

Roy and Lesley Adkins circulate an e-Newsletter covering an eclectic range of historical interests. The latest has some paragraphs about the “Bell Savage” or “Belle Sauvage” Inn in London. Woodforde’s own experience in 1786 with “buggs” is quoted, along with other historic reports, including that of the diarist Benjamin Silliman in 1805.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2016

The Annual subscription for 2016 is due on January 1st. It is **£16** for ordinary UK members, **£25** for Overseas members, and **£10** for Students under 25. If you pay by cheque, please use the form below (which can also be found on the PWS website). If you would like to set up a standing order, or gift-aid your subscription, then contact Mrs Brayne, or print the forms from the Website under “Contact”.

To the Treasurer, Mrs Ann Brayne, Long Croft, Whitehough Head, Chinley, High Peak, SK23 6BX

I enclose my cheque for £..... payable to the Parson Woodforde Society, for my subscription for the year commencing 1st January 2016.

NAME (Please print)

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ADDRESS

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THE WINTER OF 1765/66

Two hundred and fifty years ago James Woodforde's mother was very ill. On December 26th, 1765 she showed some improvement and came downstairs for the first time for six weeks, but in January a more serious decline set in. "The Parsonage is a very melancholy House now indeed" wrote Woodforde on February 6th, 1766. She died two days later, aged 60.

Five weeks earlier, on January 1st 1766, James Francis Stuart, the Old Pretender, had died in Rome at the age of 77. He was known to Stuart loyalists as James III, and was the widower of Princess Clementina Sobieski, after whom Woodforde's Sister Clarke had been named.

BBC1 TO FEATURE PARSON WOODFORDE

On Wednesday 20th January 2016, at 15.40, BBC1 is to transmit a short film about Parson Woodforde! It will be part of an episode of "James Martin – Home Comforts". Put this date in your 2016 diaries, and set your TV recorder if you have one!

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