

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

APRIL 2018

NEWSLETTER No. 112

FROLIC 2018

This year's Frolic will take place in Norwich, at the historic Maid's Head Hotel opposite the Cathedral, visited by James Woodforde more than once. You will find further details and a booking form enclosed with this mailing.

It is four years since a Frolic was held in Norwich, and sixteen years since we were last at the Maid's Head. Frolickers with long memories will know that the Maid's Head is well situated, not only for the Cathedral and other Norwich attractions, but also for the picturesque Elm Hill, and, across the River Wensum, the antique and vintage shops in Magdalen St.

If you visit the Cathedral, you may remember the Sunday when James Woodforde preached there, 8th February 1784. "The Cathedral was not crowded owing to the cold." He received a guinea for the sermon, but had to pay a shilling "for the use of the Hood".

THE SOCIETY'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Parson Woodforde Society by Canon Leslie Rule Wilson. It will be marked in some form yet to be disclosed!

The most recent significant anniversary was the 40th in 2008, when the Society published the booklet "Walks around James Woodforde's Norwich", with a text mainly by Phyllis Stanley, sketches by Mary Price, and maps by Dr David Case. Copies are still available at £6 plus postage.

The Society's silver anniversary, 25 years, was celebrated in 1993. The Frolic in May 1993 was at Holbrook House, Wincanton, and included an anniversary sermon, preached by member Revd Brian Pateman in St. Peter's, Hornblotton. A member who had just been co-opted onto the Committee, one Martin Brayne, wrote the report of the Frolic for the Journal for Summer 1993, which concluded with the expectation that we would "ensure that twenty-five years from now James Woodforde

and his diary will continue to be celebrated with similar enthusiasm and style.”

IN MEMORIAM: THREE MEMBERS

Members will be sad to learn that Shirley Hinkly died on 27th January. Her funeral was on 14th February at Sidlesham Church, near Chichester, and was attended by John and Janet Heighes of Christchurch. Shirley and her husband Peter were regular attendants at Frolics, and they will be much missed. Shirley was the Editor of *From Guano to Gold: the Diary & Letters of Vicary Gibbs 1883-5*, produced in 2014.

We have recently learnt of the death of Keith Bloomfield of Uppingham, Rutland, who died in May, 2017. He was a geologist by profession, spending 30 years abroad in Malawi and many other countries. In Summer 2005 he contributed an article to the Journal entitled “The Baker family of Weston Longville”, about his Baker ancestors, who lived there in Woodforde’s day, and who figure in the Diary, John Baker as a farmer and Harry Baker as a carpenter.

We are also sad to report that former member Cyril Ford died on 3rd December 2017, at the age of 92. He did much to promote the Society, and many members will possess the booklet he produced in 2005, *A Parson Woodforde Companion*, published in memory of his wife Joan who had recently died.

HARRY PECKHAM’S TOUR

In 2008 our Chairman Martin Brayne published “Harry Peckham’s Tour”, an epistolary account by Woodforde’s New College friend Harry Peckham of his travels in the Low Countries and northern France. At a meeting of the “Mitcham Library Club” over the winter, on an evening when the topic was “La Belle France”, some extracts from his letters were read. They included Peckham’s observations on Louis XV, *Le Bien Aimé*, at a hunting-party near Choisy: “The moment the King had fired, another gun was put into his hand, which was instantly discharged. I had the curiosity to observe his first thirty shots in which number he missed only twice ... Nature certainly intended him for a gamekeeper but, as a satire on mankind, let him be a King.”

SPENCER HOUSE AND BENJAMIN WEST

In February I had a guided tour of Spencer House, in St James's Place, off Piccadilly. It was built in 1755-66 by the first Earl Spencer and his wife Georgiana. They were to become the parents of Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire. The tour covered eight fine rooms, and I noticed several pictures by Benjamin West, one a striking depiction of "The Death of General Wolfe". Apparently it caused surprise at the time because the participants were in modern dress, in their uniforms, rather than in classical costume.

Benjamin West also painted the wedding portrait "Mr and Mrs Custance with Hymen" now in the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City, which is a classical representation. Mrs Custance wears a floating white dress and a dark-gold toga. Mr Custance wears his own hair and a russet-brown toga with a green lining. Below it, he rather incongruously wears a stock and a close-fitting coat in light-gold silk. Hymen is a well-grown youth – Mr Custance has one hand on his shoulder while with the other hand he draws Mrs Custance towards him. If you have access to the internet, you can see this picture at <http://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/11489/mr-and-mrs-john-custance>.

LECTURE AT UEA IN NORWICH – NEW VENUE

The lecture advertised in the last Newsletter, to be given by member Margaret Bird on "From Brewing to Gentry: Creating small country estates" is to take place as scheduled on Saturday 14th April, 2.30 p.m., but the venue has changed. It will now take place in the Thomas Paine Lecture Theatre, part of the Norwich Business School at U.E.A. For detailed directions to the building follow this link and see the foot of the notice: www.nahrg.org.uk/lecture.php.

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO ...

In the spring of 1768, young curate James Woodforde was living in the Lower House, Ansford, with his out-of-control brother John. His widowed father was living in the Parsonage with his unmarried daughter Jane. On April 19th James gave a party at the Lower House, where there was country dancing which went on till 2 a.m. In his later years in Norfolk he seldom stayed up so late.

On 13th May 1768, Woodforde reported on the “Terrible Riots in London”. He referred to the riots on May 10th in St George’s Fields about John Wilkes, who had been outlawed, then on his return elected as MP for Middlesex, but imprisoned. Middlesex twice re-elected him, but both elections were quashed.

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