

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER No. 126

AGM AND FROLIC 2022

You will find a report of the September Frolic in Norwich in the accompanying Journal. Those who participated found it very enjoyable, despite numbers being low.

During the AGM, Chairman Martin Brayne announced that he would be stepping down from the chairmanship before the next AGM, having carried out the role for eighteen years. We will have to find a replacement Chairman. However, we are very pleased to report that Martin will remain as Editor of the Journal.

Martin appealed for more contributions to the Journal and Newsletter, and for members to volunteer to serve on the Committee, although we have just welcomed one new Committee member, Alan Ovenden of Poringland, Norfolk. Committee Meetings are normally held twice a year, one at the Frolic and one six months later online via Zoom.

We have provisionally decided on a Frolic in Suffolk in 2023, in the second half of September or the beginning of October, although organising it requires some dedication. If you have not attended a Frolic in recent years, then what might persuade you to do so? Could you volunteer to help organise it? If so, please contact Brian Richardson on e4ubrian@hotmail.com.

Please let us have your views. Contact Martin Brayne on editor@parsonwoodforde.org.uk, or my details are on page 4.

STOP PRESS: The Frolic will be on 27–28th September 2023 at the Victoria Hotel, Lowestoft.

ACCESSIONS OF GEORGE III AND CHARLES III

I am sure members will, like me, have been saddened by the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We shall not see her like again. The televising of the Accession ceremony of Charles III reminded me of

Woodforde's Diary entries for 1760, when he was an Oxford student:

October 25th, 1760: "N.B. King George the 2nd died this Morning at nine o'clock; there being an Express just arrived from London here this Evening at 5 o'clock."

October 31st, 1760 "Went and saw King George III proclaimed King of England in High Street."

A NEW HEAD FOR WINCHESTER COLLEGE

James Woodforde's old school, Winchester College, has recently appointed a new Head, to start in September 2023. She is Ms Elizabeth Stone, who taught at Winchester earlier in her career, and since then has been Vice Principal of Cheltenham Ladies College, and Head of Queenswood School, Sydney. The appointment is consistent with the direction of travel at Winchester, which now welcomes girls into its Sixth Form.

THE BACHELORS CLUB, TARBOLTON

In the summer I had a "Robert Burns holiday", in Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire. The two counties contain many places associated with the poet, who was born in Alloway, Ayrshire, in 1759 and died in Dumfries in 1796. One of the most evocative sites was the Auld Kirk, Alloway, where Tam O'Shanter saw "Warlocks and witches in a dance", but the building that I liked best was the Bachelors' Club in Tarbolton, Ayrshire. It is a simple upstairs room, furnished with a table and chairs, and seemed untouched since the eighteenth century. Here Burns founded a club where he and his friends could talk, recite poetry, and drink. I felt Woodforde might have been at home there in his younger days.

A PASTON NOVEL

As I knew very little about the Paston letters, I decided to prepare for the recent Frolic by reading an historical novel, "*The Royal Game*", by Anne O'Brien (2021). Most members of the PWS would have approached it in a more scholarly way, by reading the

Paston letters themselves, as indeed James Woodforde did on 14th March 1787, but I found this novel an easy introduction. It is well-written, presented as first person narratives by three Paston women: Margaret Mautby, who married John Paston I and had a large family, is the main narrator; secondly, her sister-in-law Elizabeth Paston, who became the mother of Sir Edward Poynings; thirdly, Anne Haute, the cousin of Queen Elizabeth Woodville, who was courted by Sir John Paston, the son of John Paston I and Margaret. I recommend the book to anyone interested in society at the time of the Wars of the Roses.

Following the excellent after-dinner talk by Lucy Care at the Frolic in Norwich in September, some of us should be inspired to tackle the letters themselves.

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO

In the autumn 1772, the unmarried Woodfordes were all in Ansford: James and Jenny at the Parsonage, and John at the Lower House. James had some friends in Cole a few miles away: Mr Guppy, the Lord of the Manor of Cole, his sister, widow Mrs Edith Pounsett and her bachelor son John. On 26th November, John Pounsett was one of a group who dined at Ansford, and on January 21st, a group of Woodfordes and Whites went to dine with Mr Guppy at Cole: "Mr Guppey's Gardens are very pretty indeed. We walked over them & saw his House." Those PWS members who attended the Wells Frolic in 2015 can concur with this.

We see something of Nancy during the autumn of 1772. On October 31st she presented her Uncle James with "A silk purse of her own Netting.", and he gave her three shillings. Nancy was fifteen at this time, and quite often accompanied her father Heighes when he dined at Ansford.

Christmas festivities that year included the visit of the Carol Singers on Christmas Eve, and a party on St Stephen's Day at Mr Creeds, where Blind Mans Buff was played. It was played again at Ansford Parsonage on January 11th. Lest any reader thinks of this as a children's game, we also find it played in "A Christmas Carol" at Scrooge's nephew's party.

This year 1772, was to be Woodforde's last Christmas in Ansford; there were to be no more games of Blind Mans Buff for him in the years to come. Did he miss them, or at any rate, the merriment which accompanied them?

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

After a difficult year for the Royal family and for our politicians, let us hope that that the New Year brings peace and a less turbulent year ahead. I send all PWS members my best wishes for the festive season. Soon I shall be going out to look for "Hulver-boughs well seeded with red Berries" as James Woodforde's people did on Christmas Eve, 1788.

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