

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

AUGUST 2023

NEWSLETTER No. 128

AGM AND FROLIC 2023 – 27-29TH SEPTEMBER 2023

The AGM of the Society will be held at 5.15pm on 27th September, 2023, at the Victoria Hotel, Lowestoft. Our President, Margaret Bird, will chair the meeting, following Martin Brayne's retirement as Chairman (while remaining as Journal Editor). All members, whether booked for the Frolic or not, are welcome to attend the AGM. If you are thinking of attending but are not coming to the Frolic, then it might be best to contact me (details on page 4) in case there is any change of time.

Places may still be available for the Frolic. A Booking Form was enclosed with the April mailing, but if you need one please contact me (details on p4).

NEXT YEAR IN OXFORD

"Made a Scholar of New College". With this proud entry Woodforde opened his diary on 21 July 1759. Destined for a clerical career, he had already spent a year at Oriel; wealthier New College offered better prospects in the hunt for a good living. The move from Oriel bore fruit. Weston Longville proved a rich prize indeed: one of the best-endowed in Norfolk and, unusually, possessing a rectory.

Oxford is always a popular venue for our Frolics; we were last there in 2019. Because New College gets booked up well in advance for conferences, we have already booked our Frolic for 2024. The newly-formed Frolics Sub-committee has booked New College for the two nights 9th-10th September, 2024. Its members are already investigating possible trips and visits, and preliminary details will be sent out with the December 2023 mailing. Put these dates in your 2024 diary as soon as you have one!

TWO LOSSES

Many members will be sorry to hear that Dr David Case has died. Descended from the Case family of Weston Longville, which included James Woodforde's yard-boy Robert Case, he wrote for the Journal on Weston Longville's history, and on Samuel Woodforde's muse, Jane Gardner. In 1994 he published his Index to the Journal in the form of a paper booklet, covering 1968-1993. It was this that inspired me to create the spreadsheet Index on the website. He was Treasurer of our Society for 20 years, stepping down in 2015 and becoming Vice-President. He will be greatly missed.

Another loss: the Revd Paul Illingworth died at the age of 88 in May. Long-time members will remember him as a former Rector of Weston Longville, and the last incumbent in the New College succession. On my first visit to Weston, he preached a sermon on the Archangel Michael which rather struck me.

PHYLLIS STANLEY MEMORIAL PRIZE

The late Phyllis Stanley was a major figure in our Society, and a great encourager of young people. The first "Phyllis Stanley Memorial Prize for History" has just been awarded to a Year 12 student of A-Level history in Norwich, Tess Andrews, who achieved Grade A in her Mock A-Level history. The prize was a book-token, plus a copy of "Walks around James Woodforde's Norwich", with text by Phyllis Stanley. We wish Tess success in her future career.

NEWS FROM CASTLE CARY & ANSFORD

The Bruton and Cary Deanery is having to make serious changes in its organisation, reducing the number of paid incumbents from eight and a half to seven, because of lack of money and falling congregations. As a result Revd Elisabeth Isted, Vicar of Castle Cary and Rector of Ansford, is having to take on responsibility for the Six Pilgrims group of parishes, consisting of Alford, Babcary, Hornblotton, Lovington, North Barrow and South Barrow. This is obviously a lot more work and responsibility for her, but hard

decisions are having to be made, and there may be more hard decisions coming along in the future. Babccary, readers will remember, was the first of James Woodforde's curacies, in 1765.

MODERNISATION OF THE WEBSITE

In recent months, our Committee has been discussing modernisation of the Website, and digitisation of past Journals, in line with other historical societies. The website will be given a more up-to-date "look and feel", and will be usable from mobile devices and tablets as well as traditional platforms. Digitisation of past Journals will allow readers to see old articles without the need to find old copies. More news on this in due course!

AN AUDIOBOOK OF THE DIARY

We have learnt that there is an Audio-book of the Diary, freely available on various podcasts. It is 12 hours long, and read by an American, John Greenman. Unfortunately, it only goes up to 1781.

You may find the Audio-book at one of these sites:

<https://classicaudiobooks.podbean.com/> and search for "Diary Of A Country Parson" or <https://librivox.org/the-diary-of-a-country-parson-by-james-woodforde/> or <https://podcasts.google.com/> and search for "Diary Of A Country Parson".

GEORGE III's CORONATION – A COMPETITION

In the last Newsletter, we invited you to mark the Coronation of King Charles III, to elaborate on James Woodforde's diary entry describing how he celebrated the Coronation of His Majesty King George III on 22nd September 1761. Woodforde, on vacation from Oxford, was at home in Ansford with his parents and Sister Jenny. He only wrote:

"This day his Majesty King George and Queen Charlotte were crown'd in Westminster Abby. There were great rejoicings at Ansford and Cary this day, That is Bonfires, Illuminations, etc – for the Coronation."

The winning contribution, a pithy addition, was simply:

“Brother Heighes was merry and Brother John was drunk as a lord.”

Congratulations to Brian Richardson of Hull for this entry.

A longer entry was received from someone who chose to use the (almost certainly pseudonymous) name of Joanna Cheeke:

“This day King George and Queen Charlotte were crown’d in Westminster Abbey. All over Ansford and Castle Cary there was merry dancing and singing, and a great Ox was roasted. I ate well of it. There was moreover plenty of Ale. Brother Heighes and Brother John drank too well and were disrespectful to all, even the Gentles. My Father and Mother tried to quieten them but to no avail. Brother John is only in his seventeenth Year and should not take Brother Heighes for a Guide.

“Some Ruffians made a great Disturbance. They bore Placards saying “George – Go back to Hanover” and “Not my King” and other seditious sayings, and kept up a great Chant for too long. I think they came from Bruton. I was sorry to see it. They were driven out at last.”

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