

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

AUTUMN 2011

NEWSLETTER No. 87

FROLIC 2011

As I write, the Dorchester Frolic is still two weeks away. By the time you read this, it will have taken place, and will, we hope, have been as successful as usual. A report of it will appear in the Winter Journal.

PROFESSOR NORRIE EVERITT

We are sorry to announce the death of Professor Norrie Everitt. In 1968 he was one of the founder-members of our Society. He passed away peacefully on 17th July, aged 87. Our Chairman Martin Brayne and our Secretary Ann Williams represented the Society at the funeral in Solihull, which was a warm celebration of his life. Professor Everitt was a polymath, whose interests included music, the English language and the outdoors. After service in the RNVR during the war, his first degree was in Electrical Engineering. Subsequently he took a D.Phil at Balliol College, Oxford, and had a long and distinguished career in mathematics. He was a specialist in Differential Equations – equations which explain and predict physical systems that are changing, such as a violin string.

Norrie was a generous benefactor to the Society, and it is thanks to him that the proposed Woodforde memorial is to be erected at New College. He was a regular attendant at Frolics, the most recent being the Salisbury Frolic in 2009. We send our condolences to his family.

CASTLE CARY MARKET HOUSE

The Market House in the centre of Castle Cary is to be updated. Some members will remember this Victorian building from visits to the town during annual Frolics, and may have visited its Museum with its Woodforde display. The exterior will be unchanged, but the interior is to be modernised so that it becomes a more welcoming place. “The Shambles” at the rear of the Market House, formerly used for hanging and selling butchered carcasses, is currently a semi-open space. It is to be glazed over to create a warm but light area. It is hoped that the first phase will start this autumn.

A DEDICATION TO JAMES WOODFORDE

A new novel named "The Legacy" has just been published, and it has an exciting dedication:-

"For James Woodforde (1740-1803), whose serendipitous diary had languished unread on my bookshelves for over thirty years before I had the idea for this book, but who now feels like someone I once knew."

The author is Jill Searle, a member of our Society, who writes as Jill Rowan. She says of her book:-

"The book is about someone from the present day who finds herself in 1779 and is rescued by the local parson, so you can guess that the Diary was of enormous help to me! It would have been a very different book if I hadn't found the Diary on my shelves."

The novel is set on the Welsh borders. "Life in 1779 is more about church, chilblains and chamber pots than dancing, dressing-up, and Mr Darcy, but love can be found in the most unlikely places."

"The Legacy" by Jill Rowan is published by Snowbooks Ltd, ISBN 978-1907777554.

A PLAGUE OF RABBITS

The garden of James Woodforde's Rectory in Weston Longville was overrun with rabbits earlier this summer, and extreme measures had to be taken to deal with them. Woodforde experienced plagues of toads in his great pond, and regularly employed professional rat-catchers and mole-catchers, but does not seem to have been troubled by rabbits. By the time you read this, all the rabbits should have been shot, an appropriately Woodfordean method of dispatch.

NORWICH BRIDEWELL MUSEUM

The Bridewell Museum in Norwich city centre was originally a merchant's house which became a House of Correction, and more recently a museum of local trades and industry. It is currently undergoing redevelopment, and will include new displays about the city's people and their everyday lives. It is due to reopen next summer. The Friends of Norwich Museums have asked if Society members would consider contributing to the redevelopment project. If you are able to do so, cheques should be made payable to the Friends of

Norwich Museums, but please include a note saying it is for the Bridewell Redevelopment Project. They should be sent to: The Friends of Norwich Museums, Shirehall, Market Avenue, Norwich, NR1 3JQ.

THE “WENSUM DIARY” & THE “RINGLAND RUNNER”

The *Wensum Diary* is the Parish Magazine of Weston Longville and covers two of the five parishes in the Wensum Benefice. As from July 1st, it has covered a third parish, Ringland; it has absorbed the readership of the *Ringland Runner*, whose editors are retiring. As some of you will know, the *Wensum Diary* contains a regular monthly page featuring extracts from Parson Woodforde’s Diary for the appropriate calendar month, and the year is currently 1777. Possibly for the first time, residents of Ringland will learn about James Woodforde through these extracts.

PRESS REPORT

In May the Eastern Daily Press reported on a walk around Weston Longville; their regular walking correspondents, Charles and Joy Boldero of Thurning, described a 5.5 mile walk, illustrated with photographs and a map. A side panel mentioned Parson Woodforde, how to join the Society, and the historical features in All Saints Church. The walk itself covered field paths on the western side of the parish. Starting up Post Office Lane, the two walkers and their dog struck out across fields to Greensgate just west of the Old Rectory, then northwards to Morton Lane and back to the village centre.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

*Thus at our Friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.*

In June I attended a performance of Sheridan’s “The School for Scandal” at the Barbican Theatre, London. First produced in 1777, James Woodforde saw it in Norwich in February 1779: “The Play was well performed & is a very good Comedy”, and he saw it again in 1784. Did the scheming Lady Sneerwell or the duplicitous Mrs Candour remind him of his Castle Cary antagonist, Mrs Joanna Melliar?

A NORFOLK WORKHOUSE IN 1771-2

The Norfolk Record Office's latest Newsletter reports on a recently-discovered workhouse governor's report book, dating from 1771-2. It was compiled at Heckingham Workhouse, which served the Loddon area. The report book suggests that workhouse life was not overly harsh. In 1771, the governor reported that five inmates had spent an evening at the King's Head in Loddon, returning in the early hours. It sounds as though Heckingham Workhouse was a less grim place than the Dereham House of Industry, which James Woodforde visited on 20th March 1781 and found quite disturbing.

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