

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

SUMMER 2012

NEWSLETTER No. 90

AGM AND FROLIC 2012 IN LONDON

This year's Frolic weekend takes place in Bloomsbury between 31st August and 2nd September. Members who have already booked will receive details of the weekend at the beginning of August. There are still places available, but do let Ann Williams know as soon as possible if you want to come. A booking form was enclosed with the Spring Newsletter.

During the Frolic, we shall visit the Foundling Museum; its Picture Gallery includes Hogarth's 1740 portrait of Captain Coram, surely his best portrait, and, some may think, one of the greatest of English portraits. On the Sunday morning, members may visit other attractions in the area: one of my own favourites is the Enlightenment Room in the British Museum; originally the King's Library, it now contains eighteenth-century collections, commemorating the spirit of eclectic enquiry associated with the founding of the museum in 1753.

All members are welcome to the AGM whether or not they are attending the rest of the Frolic. It will start at about 8.30pm on Friday 31st August, at the Goodenough Club and College, 23 Mecklenburgh Square. The nearest underground station is Russell Square, but Euston, Kings Cross/St Pancras and Holborn are also close.

NEW COLLEGE PLAQUE

The erection of a plaque to James Woodforde in the Cloisters at New College has been under discussion for a long time, but it now seems a step closer to fulfilment. The College has approved the Society's wording and chosen the sculptor, Antonia Hockton. She has produced an impressively-sized design which has been approved by our Committee. The cost is fully covered by the late Professor Everitt's generous donation. It is hoped that the plaque will be unveiled at an Oxford Frolic in 2013.

NORWICH MUSEUMS

The Norwich Bridewell Museum is to reopen on July 3rd after a very lengthy refurbishment. The Society has made a financial contribution, as discussed at the AGM last year. The Museum, in Bridewell Alley near the Market Place, is a museum of trade, commerce and industry. It will feature shops and shopping, an activity which James Woodforde often enjoyed during his visits to Norwich.

In another redevelopment, the stores of the Costume & Textile Association for Norfolk Museums have been moved from Carrow House to a new home in the Shirehall, on the eastern side of the Castle. Everything is now re-organised in hanging bags and boxes. A member who had a conducted tour believes that most types of clothing mentioned in the Diary can be found there, and most can be handled and photographed in the Shirehall Study Centre.

In the longer term, Norwich Castle itself may have a major makeover, if funding can be found. Staff from the Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service hope to achieve changes by 2014/5 that create a “wow” factor in the Norman interior.

In February, Norwich Castle Museum suffered a serious theft of memorabilia associated with Admiral Nelson. Items stolen included a valuable mourning ring and some commemorative medals.

CASTLE CARY NEWS

In the Autumn Newsletter, we reported on plans for the refurbishment of the Market House in the centre of Castle Cary. Phase I of the project has been completed and gives improved access to the front of the building. The Museum with its Woodforde displays is upstairs as before. Work on Phase II – the roofing-over of the Shambles area – will begin soon.

There has been good news about the town’s library. Opening days were reduced to two days a week, but have now been restored to four days, a real victory for the people who mounted a campaign against library closures in Somerset.

In May, the *Guardian* had an article about Castle Cary and its attractions as a residential area, but without any mention of Parson Woodforde!

VILLAGE HALL, WESTON LONGVILLE

The *Eastern Daily Press* and the *Wensum Diary* have both reported on the demolition of the old Village Hall in Weston Longville, in preparation for building a new one. On March 25th, a "Farewell to the Old Hall" tea-party was attended by over 80 people. The new, environmentally-friendly hall, which should be finished in mid-September, will also serve Morton-on-the-Hill and Attlebridge. A "time-capsule" is to be buried underneath the new hall containing mementoes of Weston as it is today.

THE BOLDERO AWARD

Norfolk members will remember the "Walks" by Charles and Joy Boldero, which were a regular feature in the EDP. They often featured countryside around Weston Longville and other villages which would have been well known to James Woodforde. Following the death of Charles Boldero, the CPRE has created a new award in his memory. "The Boldero Award" will recognise work which improves access to the countryside, including creating new paths, or repairing bridges and signposts. The first recipient will be chosen in 2013.

"ONE OF THE PRETTIEST THINGS I EVER SAW"

On 4th September 1783 James Woodforde and the Custances went to a very grand dinner given by the Bishop of Norwich, Dr Bagot. Woodforde wrote appreciatively and at length about the table-decoration, an "artificial garden" with a "temple" in the centre. This "temple" was an epergne, and Woodforde's phrase describing the whole effect, "One of the prettiest things I ever saw" was used in 2011 as the title of an exhibition at Temple Newsam, Leeds, about epergnes and other eighteenth century fashions for dressing tables. It was mentioned in the *Art Quarterly* of Winter 2011.

WESTON HALL

Weston Hall, "the Old Hall", the sixteenth-century moated house just south of Lenwade Bridge and west of the Custance's home at Weston House, has come onto the market. It was the property of the founder of Anglian Windows, George Williams, who had lived there since 1972, and who died in 2010. Described as "palatial" by the *Eastern*

Daily Press, it dates from 1558, and was the manor house of the Rookwood family. During James Woodforde's early years in Weston, it was tenanted by a Mr Browne and part of the Custance property. The EDP claimed that Woodforde dined there in 1778, but I can't find any such dinner in the diary.

"MISS READ"

Dora Jessie Saint, who as "Miss Read" was the author of the Fairacre and Thrush Green books, has died at the age of 98. She was a devotee of Woodforde's Diary, and the Journal for Spring 2002 contained a lengthy quotation from her book *Summer at Fairacre* on the inside of the front cover. It described the *Diary of a Country Parson* as her "ever-present bedside book", and recounts how she laughed at an entry in February 1796, when Woodforde gave "to an old decayed Fisherman 0 1 0. He was the Man that brought me once some very indifferent Sprats."

NEW MEMBER

Mrs M. A. Pitchford, W. Yorkshire

DEATHS

We are sorry to announce the deaths of W. H. Carlin and D. H. Bott

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