

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

SUMMER 2014

NEWSLETTER No. 98

FROLIC AND AGM 2014

The Frolic will take place on October 3rd – 5th, in Norwich at the Mercure Hotel. Places are still available, so book up for what promises to be a most enjoyable Frolic. Booking details were enclosed with the Spring mailing, but if you need another copy, then contact the Secretary, Rob Bates, on robertmbates@hotmail.com, or write to him at 38, Hambalt Road, London, SW4 9EG.

All members are welcome at the AGM, whether booked for the Frolic or not. It will take place at 6pm on Friday evening before dinner.

SATURDAY EXCURSION

On the middle day of the Frolic, Saturday 4th October, we will visit Reepham and tour the two churches in the same churchyard, enjoy refreshments and have some time to see the town, where both Briton and Woodforde's clockmaker came from. We shall also visit one of the resorts on the north coast. In 1779, James Woodforde visited Cromer, with which he was "highly delighted", then went on to Cley and Wells. There he had a boat-trip which he didn't enjoy at all, especially "the Waves so large that frightened me." Some years later, in 1787, he again visited the coast, at Brancaster, where he stayed with Mr Shute the Rector. He recorded "Mr Shute is building a new Parsonage House of Brick." That house is now for sale at over £2 million!

"PRISCILLA WYATT" BY SAMUEL WOODFORDE, R.A.

The late Paul Minet generously bequeathed the Society a portrait of Mrs Priscilla Wyatt by James Woodforde's nephew Sam. It was the cover picture on last year's summer number of the PWS Journal. Very good quality full size reproductions are now available, and they will cost £20 each. Any required will be brought in the first place to the Frolic next October, but they need to be ordered in advance. Please let Peter Jameson know if you would like one. His address is Colemans, Warren Lane, Heathfield, TN21 0TB, email peter.jameson@virgin.net.

Orders need to be placed by the end of August.

NANCY WOODFORDE IN TAVERHAM

Sheila Harrison, a popular speaker in East Anglia, has recently given another talk to the Taverham History Society. It was entitled "The Parson's Niece: Nancy Woodforde 1757-1830". The talk focused on Nancy's life and the lives of the women who made up her social circle in Norfolk.

PITCOMBE CHURCH BELLS

Last winter, we reported on the Appeal by the Friends of Pitcombe Church for contributions towards renovating their bells and upgrading their three bells to a full peal of six, to which the Society made a small donation.

We are happy to report that the three new and three renovated bells were dedicated on 4th May. The church was full for the service of Choral Evensong and the Archdeacon of Wells dedicated the bells towards the end of the service, then the bells rang out for the first time. A video camera had been set up in the belfry so that people could watch the bells swinging as they rang. After the service there was general ringing for the other bellringers at the service – everyone agreed that they were a very fine set of bells, a huge improvement on the old mournful minor three, and would be a great asset. Then everyone moved to Hadspen village hall for tea and thanks to everyone involved. On the following day, our members Jenny and Peter Alderson of Castle Cary rang in the first quarter peal, 1260 changes of three methods of Doubles.

"EAVESDROPPING ON JANE AUSTEN'S ENGLAND"

This book by members Roy and Lesley Adkins was reviewed in the Journal for Autumn last year. It is now available in paperback, published by Abacus, at £6.43. It makes generous use of Woodforde's diaries.

The book was recently reviewed by the Jane Austen Society Newsletter; the review featured a quotation from Woodforde about a grand dinner. "*Eavesdropping ...*" itself makes a more balanced use of the diary, covering many aspects of life other than food.

“FROM GUANO TO GOLD”

Shirley Hinkly, a Society member, has recently researched and edited “From Guano to Gold”, the diary and letters of Vicary Gibbs from 1883-5, who travelled on family business in North America, New Zealand, Australia and Ceylon. It will be reviewed in the Autumn Journal, but is already available from Crawcour books at £18.50.

OTHER NORFOLK DIARISTS

Mary Hardy, a contemporary of James Woodforde, was one of two diarists featured in the Presidential Address by Professor Richard G. Wilson at a Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group (NAHRG) meeting in Norwich on 26th April. His talk was entitled, ‘Two Norfolk Diarists: Benjamin Armstrong and Mary Hardy’.

Revd Benjamin Armstrong was Vicar of East Dereham 1850-88. His fellow diarist Mary Hardy lived in the town in the early years of her marriage

Professor Wilson is the former Head of History at the University of East Anglia, and a well-known business and brewing historian. He reviewed new editions of both diarists in recent journals of the Parson Woodforde Society.

CASTLE CARY ON “COUNTRYFILE”

In March, Castle Cary made an appearance on “Countryfile” on BBC1, in a feature presented by John Craven. After a brief shot of the town and the Roundhouse lock-up, the film was disappointingly only about the horsehair factory, rather than the town’s most famous diarist.

PARSON WOODFORDE’S POSTAL SERVICE

A member has sent details of a book published in 2011, *“Masters of the Post: the authorised history of the Royal Mail”*, by Duncan Campbell-Smith, which contains a reference to Woodforde:

“In the famously detailed country diaries that he kept from 1776-1802, Parson James Woodforde made no criticism at all of his local post office in Norwich. Living in a small village some ten miles from Norwich ... he made his own arrangements for collecting his letters, and presented the Norwich postmaster with a Christmas box each year. Woodforde, a Somerset man, wrote regularly to relatives he had left

behind in the West Country and was seemingly content that a letter from them would usually take several days to reach Norwich ...”.

As has often been observed, James Woodforde was “seemingly content” with many aspects of his life, just as we are today with ours.

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