

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal



WESTON LONGUEVILLE CHURCH, NORFOLK

By 'Nephew Bill' 1780

Volume I Number 3

Autumn 1968

To the Reader:

"In James Woodforde's daily records we see the simple expression of a man who lives for us in his every action. They show us how people ate, the interests that kept them busy and amused from year's end to year's end. Through them we come to know Parson Woodforde as we know few people: his gentleness, his tempers, his generosity, his love of food - and of his neighbours - in fact, a character than whom few, in fiction or in historical fact, have been more beloved."

John Beresford.

ISSUED QUARTERLY TO MEMBERS OF THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY, BY

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(A specimen of our Christmas Card will be found unattached between pages 8 and 9)

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EDITORIAL

The Society has had two Expeditions since the last issue of the Journal and, apart from the enjoyment of visiting so many places associated with the Diary, the gatherings provided the opportunity for many friendships to be made. For both occasions we were blessed with good weather. Mrs. Pickering (well known to Norfolk members under her pen name of Elizabeth Harland) has written an account of the Weston Expedition for us in this issue.

The Ansford visit was on a smaller scale, but those that came were richly rewarded in being able to see at leisure the restored Ansford Old Parsonage, so tastefully furnished with lovely old furniture by Mr. and Mrs. Mewes. It was gloriously fine and we were able to have tea on the lawn. We then went down to visit the church, inspect the registers of Woodforde's time and lay flowers (grown in the Old Parsonage garden) on the grave of Nancy and Nephew Bill. Our grateful thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Mewes and to the Rev. R. Hebditch (Priest-in-charge of Ansford) for making the visit a memorable one.

This month, I am publishing (by permission) a letter addressed to Parson Woodforde from "our very valuable and worthy friend, the Rev. Mr. Du Quesne". Readers will remember that Mr. Du Quesne had spent most of July 1789 at Cole with the Pouncetts, where Parson Woodforde and Nancy were also staying. It was whilst he was there that the memorable

visit after 'almost fifteen years' to Frank Woodforde at Ansford Old Parsonage took place (July 11th, 1789). What a momentous occasion it must have been.

Mr. Du Quesne left Cole on July 29th to go to St. Davids in Pembrokeshire to fulfil his obligations as Canon Treasurer of St. Davids. The letter in this issue of the Journal tells us of his uncomfortable journey and his equally uncomfortable first few days there. Parson Woodforde's caustic comment on receipt of this letter is recorded in his entry of August 2nd!

Our next issue will be devoted to Mr. Du Quesne and will contain extracts from his remarkable Will, which filled twenty-one pages of folio copy!

PARSON DU QUESNE'S 'GHASTLY
JOURNEY' TO ST. DAVIDS AND THE
TRIALS OF HIS SOJOURN THERE AS
CANON TREASURER!

To
The Revd. Mr. Woodforde
at Mr. Pounset's
at Cole

near Bruton
Somerset

Sunday 26 July

My good Friends

According to my promise I steal a few minutes to acquaint you That, after numberless Disappointments, Difficulties, Dangers, Distresses, & Vexations, I arrived here on Fri-

day at 2 o'clock, with dislocated Joints, sore Bones, Bruises & black & blue arms & sides, & concussions of the Brains, from the most rough & disagreeably Hill Roads that ever were passed, besides in the Continuance of rainy weather, & indeed I am afraid that my Eyes have suffered some injury from the straining of them by looking at the dangerous Road which we passed over during 2 or 3 hours Observation of them & our Safety, out of the Chaise windows when it was nearly dark, till 11 o'clock; for when we came into Kidwelly, to the Candle light, every one's face that I lookt at seemed to me to be a mixture of red & black, nor did I know some gentlemen who travelled with me in a Post Chaise from Black Rock on the Welch side of the New Passage. This affection in my Eyes continues still upon me at the bringing in Candles, & the Countenances of the Company appear variously hued, & my Shoes appear sometimes white to me & my Hands blackish. These Circumstances brought me here in very depresst Spirits, & very unfit for the Company, Business &c that I was to meet here & in & with which I was to be for some time engaged, For when I arrived into my Friend Holcombe's House, I found a Party in it of 16 Ladies & Gentlemen in the Drawing Room, & a concert playing in the Hall of Vocal & Instrumental Music, after Tea they struck up to Dancing, & after That we went, in the Rain, down to the Chapter Supper at some distance from this House, hot as we were, we made it late, & I got but little Sleep

that night with heat & feverish restlessness, & the confounded Snoring that our new Canon made in the Chamber adjoining to mine, where he & his wife laid, & last night we made it very late having had a grand Concert in the Hall with 14 Hands & Voices & all kinds of Instruments, after That a Ball, & after that a Supper, & though so sleepy & fatigued rather, with all this could get little or no Sleep from the confounded Horn that my Corpulent Neighbour kept blowing, all the night & once I thought he was taken very ill & that I heard him Groan lamentably, on which I got up & knocked at the Door, But his Wife answered me That it was only his snoring. I expect no sleep again to night, so that if he is to stay here as long as I do I shall be quite ill for want of Sleep, & my Cold increasing it makes me rather miserable than otherwise, not to mention 16 Ladies & Gentlemen in this House, which is to many to make it comfortable to me, Besides there is so much feasting, eating, & drinking, hurry & Bustle, besides Chapter Business, that I am in a constant State of Fatigue, & can scarce support it.

Monday 27 July

We are to have a Concert, & Ball & Supper again to night which, ill as I am with a bad Cold & feverish, I dread, not to mention little sleep from all these doings, & my Snoring Neighbor who will not let me rest; I feel very unwell indeed & a few days more of this kind of Life would completely knock me up; I keep daily & nightly Coughing, & being under a kind of necessity to eat & drink &c: much

beyond what should be, in a feverish Cold & Cough, I am necessarily much disordered; I heartily wish I had been these 3 days at quiet Cole House instead of here; How & when I shall return I dont precisely know yet, but will acquaint you as soon as possible with the time of being to be in London, if possible, & how I shall order it, for it is impossible from the exceeding bad Roads to set a day for it, & from the frequent disappointments which I experienced in my way here of getting Chaises on the Road. We continue to have Rain here, So that I shall be probably all my time under the same rainy Planet, during all my Excursion, which also contributes to the lowering, as well the human as the mechanical Barometer!

I have scarcely been able to steal Now & Then an Interval moment to perform my Promise to you & my good Friends at Cole being but just come from Chapter business, (3 o'clock) & scarce time to dress for dinner, hope you will give me leave to close this hurried Letter with the every good Wish to all my good & worthy Friends at Cole, Ansford, & Cary, of Dear Sr

yours & theirs

most friendly & Cordially

T.R.D.Q.

I hope Mrs. Pounset's state of Health & Spirits is in an improving one & that Mr. Pounset keeps the Gout at bay, & able to walk & look after his Hay; Miss Woodforde I hope continues also as stout, merry, & jolly as when I left her & dont forget me to the

good old Lady over the way, & the little Sprite. The Ladies & Gentlemen went out this morning on a fishing Boat party, & brought home some Fish of various kinds; my Cold prevented me being of the party. I had rather have good Trout fishing with you. I shall be glad to return to a more quiet & moderate kind of Living; For one may have too much of a Good Thing:— Between 20 & 30 at Dinner with us to Day; Adieu—

THE FIRST EXPEDITION
of the PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY
to WESTON and DISTRICT

July 6th, 1968

(Mrs. Margaret Pickering of Norfolk)

The Society's first Norfolk expedition was a great success, and a most satisfying occasion. Well over 60 members attended, among them descendants of 'Nephew Bill', the Custance family, and the Donnes, and our Convenor, Canon L.R.Wilson, without whom the Society would still be only a happy thought. With us, too, one could not help feeling, was a benevolent ghost, commenting almost audibly at every turn.

At Weston Church - "Now Prodigious Neat, owing to the Exertions of the churchwardens, Mrs. Clutsom and Mr. Coughtrey, and their helpers" - The rector, Mr. Wynne Roach, gave various interesting details of its history and the Diarist's incumbency. The mediaeval screen, the Georgian box pews, the brass to Elizabeth Rookwood (d. 1533) - wife of Fir-

min Rookwood, who rebuilt the Old Hall, the Communion plate, the Custance register, the fair copy he made in 1801 of particulars for what constituted the first industrial census - all these and more must have been familiar to Parson Woodforde. And whilst he would, perhaps, have looked twice at his portrait by Nephew Sam, presented by the late Mr. Charles Clutson and now hanging at the west end of the church, he could doubtless recall the day when the sketch from which it was painted was made in 1785. But the murals - the newly-discovered one on the south wall is of 13th-century date, the Jesse vine on the north wall about 50 years later - were still 'lost' in his day.

What an entry he would have made in the Diary if they had come to light when he was there. And how touched he would have been to see a member of the Custance family lay flowers today on the grave of his beloved Squire and his wife, and Miss Wendy Woodforde place roses from Mr. Du Quesne's one-time garden on the stone that marks his own in the chancel - beneath the tablet erected to his memory by Nancy and Bill.

How many times the old Hart - or "Heart" as Parson Woodforde often wrote it - appears in the Diary. Over 30 years old when he knew it, it was still an inn until recently; but is now a private house, over which members were shown by its owner, Miss Stella Bradshaw.

We then went on to Weston Old Hall, of which portions belong to the 14th and 16th centuries - the murals discovered a few years a-

go belonging to the latter period. Later it became the home of the Custance family; and now belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Sayer, who allowed us to roam over house and grounds, whilst Mrs. Sayer and Canon Wilson gave particulars of their history (see also Volume 1, No.2, of the Society's Journal).

The 'New Hall', into which the Custances moved in August 1781, was pulled down about 40 years ago. But stables and coach-house were left and were converted into a charming house in 1952 by the late Mr. Charles Clutsom. Here we looked at the site of the vanished house - by courtesy of Mr. Benson, its present owner - and were also able to see a photograph of it, whilst Mrs. Clutsom and Canon Wilson talked to us of both houses (see also the Society's Journal, Volume 1, No.2). We then went on to Mrs. Clutsom's 'New House', Weston Covert, for an excellent buffet luncheon and "much pleasant chatter", mainly of Woodforde matters. More members availed themselves of the opportunity to secure a copy of Miss Peck's Weston Map. And we were delighted to learn that a new edition of the 5-volume 'Diary' had been published that day by the Clarendon Press.

Far too soon it was time to set out again (I wonder what the Diarist would have thought of our Horseless Chaises?). Passing the rectory that replaced Parson Woodforde's thatched one in 1805 (though his pond and well are still there), our next stop was Hockering Rectory - with its memories of the Howes and the catches of fish from its pond.

Already overdue - for, as usual on such expeditions, everyone wanted to linger longer than was practicable - we next made for Mattishall Church, where Mr. Smith (rector for 22 years, who died within 4 months of the Diarist) is buried, as are Mr. Bodham and his wife Anne, née Donne (who survived him for 50 years), and others mentioned in the 'Diary'. Here the rector, Dr. Thorne, gave us a most interesting talk - recalling, too, that it was in this church that Archbishop Parker married Mary Harleston (the wife who inadvertently provoked Queen Elizabeth I's famous salutation).

South Green, one-time home of the Bodhams, is now Mattishall Hall. Here Miss Mary Barham-Johnson, a connection of Anne Donne's, expanded her notes on South Green and the Bodhams (Soc. Journal, Vol. I, No. 2), and recalled the wedding visit the Diarist paid them, recording merely that the bride was 'very elegantly dressed'. It is to Niece Nancy that we are indebted for the information that the dress was of pink brocade edged with ermine, and that the bride also wore a gauze apron with 2 flounces, white shoes with silver buckles, and a gauze cap with painted ribbons (these last, Miss Barham-Johnson told me, were made at Coventry, and had country scenes etc. painted on them).

At East Tuddenham Church we were met by the Vicar, Mr. Hodgson, and saw, among other interesting items, the 13th-century stone figure of Sir Edmund de Berry with his heart in his hands; Mr. Du Quesne's monument;

and a register in the latter's handwriting, which contains an account of the 'altercations, objections, evasions, reluctance', etc., connected with his fight to keep his tithe. Then on to Berries Hall - once Mr. Du Quesne's rectory - where its owners, Mr. and Mrs. Meynell, allowed us to explore the delightful house and gardens; and I thought of the 'altercations' in which Mr. Du Quesne would have indulged on learning that North Sea Gas pipes are scheduled to cross within sight of them. I can imagine what the Diarist would have said, too.

Then back, via France Green, to Weston Village Hall, where we partook of a welcome Dish of Tea, generously provided by Mrs. Clutson and some members of the Weston W.I., with more 'pleasant chatter', and many "thank-you's" to all who had done so much to give us such a wonderful day - not least our Convenor, whose labours, before and during our expedition, kept him busy indeed.

Even the weather, if cooler than we liked in the morning, was fine and dry. And all could echo the Diarist's comment upon another summer occasion: in 1791 - "We spent a very agreeable day indeed".

THE KING'S HEAD

and THE ANGEL INN

(John Cooper of Shotesham, Norfolk)

Both important hostelries, the King's Head and the Angel Inn experienced their hey-day in the nineteenth century. This was the bon-

anza caused by the great upsurge in national coaching facilities. No longer was a journey to London a journey into the unknown - arduous, beset by many and great dangers, of which highwaymen were not the worst, it is true, but feasible and growing in popularity. These inns quickly geared themselves to their new-found method of raising revenue.

As the *raison d'être* of these inns was the coaches, it would not be out of place to look a little closer at the main services. The steady increase in the provision of coaches is a barometer of the inns' prosperity. Coaches of one sort or another had definitely started working regularly in England by 1657. By 1681 there was a stage coach that plied between Norwich and the Saracen's Head, Aldgate. This was followed by another in 1696 which ran from the Four Swans, Bishopsgate Street, to Norwich. In 1745 there is found an announcement of the usual London trip at Christmas time, carrying parcels and turkeys as well as passengers from the Castle Inn in the Market Place. This took one and a half to two days and cost per person £1.2s.0d. By 1769, coach services costing £1.8s.0d. per person were advertising the journey as being covered in one day. Finally, in 1802, the Norwich Mail Coach Office at the King's Head was announcing two mail coaches to London every day: one running via Ipswich to the Swan with Two Necks, the other via Newmarket to the Golden Cross - fares by this time having nearly doubled in thirty years to 42/- per place inside, but only 22/- out-

side. This service continued until 1846.

The King's Head was situated at No.11, The Market Place. Little definite is known of it before 1727 other than that it was already an inn of some importance in Norwich, being a much-favoured posting establishment. In that year, following improvements to the inn, this advertisement appeared in the Norwich Mercury: "John Durich at the King's Head in the Market Place in Norwich having agreed with his landlord to have his house made more Commodious for the Entertainment of Gentlemen, Travellers and others, and taken a new lease, takes this Opportunity to acquaint all his Customers, that he has now taken in a fresh Parcel of Neat Wines of all Sorts, which he will sell at Reasonable Prices to oblige his Friends and Customers, where they shall meet with a kind Reception, civil Usage, and a hearty Welcome." Obviously this improved custom, for we read in an article of December 1729 that the King's Head Play House opened with the Norwich Company of Comedians presenting "Mackbeth, with all the witches, Original Songs and Dances". Among the facilities supplied by a good inn were spectacles for the curious; the King's Head was not lacking in these. Its shows included natural curiosities, giants, boxing matches, and other grotesques. For instance, it is recorded that in 1797 the giant O'Brien paid a visit to the inn - he was said to be 8'4" high. Not surprisingly, the King's Head gained itself a superlative reputation, especially as William Leach, the proprietor, had post-chaises and three daily ser-

vices to London. However, the King's Head was doomed. It was demolished in 1813 to make way for a new pedestrian precinct called Davey Place to immortalize the name of the Alderman who constructed it, and so removed what would surely today have been a major asset, both practically and historically, to the City of Norwich.

The Angel Inn occupied premises at No. 16, The Market Place, a mere stone's throw away from the King's Head. The name was a very common one at that time; and is said to be derived from the salutation of the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It was an inn in the time of Queen Elizabeth I, and probably earlier - a Katherine Dysse owning it at the beginning of the 15th century, when it was described as being in Cordwainer Row. In the year 1530 its owner, a Richard Grymes, is described as an innkeeper, which was unusual at that time. During the time that Parson Woodforde lived in Norfolk, it changed hands several times. When he first comes to Norfolk, it is under the new management of William Wetherill who, when he died, left the property to William At-hill. On his death, in 1789, it was sold to William Coleman, from whom it passed in 1799 to Jonathan Davey. That it was a building of some size is known by a reference to the window tax of the 1700's, which was payable on thirty windows at this establishment, and also that the rent was £115 per annum. The Angel had its share of distinguished visitors. The Duke of York stayed there in 1794, while

in 1820 both Viscount Castlereagh and Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, stayed there en route for Yarmouth. The honour of Freedom of the City was conferred on these two distinguished gentlemen, following which everybody sat down to a "cold collation" at the Angel. Many entertainments were provided, vying with those of the King's Head. During Parson Woodforde's day, but more so after his death, the Angel began to become important politically. In the 1830's, it became the Whig headquarters, and elections were run and rigged from there. In fact, before its end, it was said to be the centre of political corruption in Norfolk.

The Angel was, in fact, the principal hotel in the city. In 1840, following the fashion of rather dubious merit that was sweeping the country, it was renamed the Royal Hotel. Oh! that one coat of paint could sever so many links with the past. This was the beginning of the end for the old inn. In 1897, the new, commodious and hideous Royal Hotel was built in Bank Plain - a short distance away - to which the licence was transferred. In 1899, the Victoria horror of the Royal Arcade was opened. The Angel, alas, had become another victim of the ideology of neatening and straightening within our cities - another link with the past had been severed.

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- Norwich Inns - Thompson.
- Collected Press Cuttings.

HARDEN IS HARPENDEN

(Lt.Col. J.H.Busby of London)

The reference, in the first article on Ansford Old Parsonage, to the Diarist's father's visits to Mrs. Powell of 'Harden Hertfordshire', is of interest to many members. Harden was an abbreviation for Harpenden in common use in the 17th and 18th centuries. Mrs. Powell, who had inherited the advowson of Ansford and Castle Cary from her mistress, Mrs. Etrick, in 1759, leased Bowers House, Harpenden, from the Wittewronge Family of Rothamstead. Her name appears in the Rate Books - the entry for 1772 reading 'Mrs.Powell for her house and lands £2.11s.4d.'. The Diarist's father paid a visit to Harpenden in April 1767, and his uncle in March 1767 and again in 1773. In 1764 the occupant of Bowers House was the Rev. Octavian Reynolds MA, Prebendary of Lincoln and Rector of Wheathamstead with Harpenden, and he was succeeded by Mrs. Powell. She died in 1782, but had left Harpenden before that date, her successors as tenants being the Wetheral family - one of whom, Charles Wetheral who died in 1782, is described on his tomb in Harpenden Churchyard as 'late a merchant at Port Royal, Jamaica'. There is one entry only in the Parish Registers referring to Mrs. Powell: the burial on 11 December 1767 of 'Madam Powell's manservant'.

Bowers House still exists, hidden behind a row of modern shops. The house contains 16th-century brickwork, and one small room has some 17th-century oak panelling.

CHRISTMAS CARD

We enclose a sample of the Christmas Card which has been specially drawn for us by Miss Peck, to whom we are very grateful for a charming picture. It has not been possible to reproduce a drawing of what was perhaps the old Parsonage at Weston.

The cost of the card with envelope is 9d.,
or 2/- for 3 cards and envelopes,
3/6 6 cards and envelopes,
6/- 12 cards and envelopes,
including postage.

Orders should be sent to Canon Wilson by October 31st, though we can send some copies now if you require them for overseas posting.

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