

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

SUMMER 2011

NEWSLETTER No. 86

“WOODFORDE IN DORSET”: AGM AND FROLIC

If you have booked for the Frolic in Dorchester from 16th - 18th September, you will receive detailed information about the hotel, the programme, and other details before the end of July.

We will be based at the King's Arms: “A spacious bow-window projected into the street over the main portico, and from the open sashes came the babble of voices, the jingle of glasses, and the drawing of corks.”

The anticipated gathering of our members for the first evening of the Frolic? – certainly – as well as being Thomas Hardy's description of the King's Arms, “the chief hotel in Casterbridge”.

Besides Dorchester's connections to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the Frolic outing on Saturday 17th September will visit several other places connected with Hardy's novels: Weymouth is “Budmouth”, the Isle of Portland is the “Isle of Slingers”, and Sturminster Newton Mill-race was the location for “Shadwater Weir”, the scene of a tragic drowning in *The Return of the Native*. Of course many Frolickers may prefer to concentrate on James Woodforde's visit to the area, as the title “Woodforde in Dorset” suggests.

There are still a few places left for the Frolic. The information about booking was given with the Spring mailing, or you may contact Martin Brayne or me for the details.

All members are of course welcome to the AGM which will take place on the Friday evening, 16th September, at 8.30pm in the Casterbridge Room, King's Arms Hotel, Dorchester.

ANOTHER VIEW OF DORCHESTER

In 1874, the Rev. Francis Kilvert travelled by train to Dorchester:

... we sped down into Dorset by the windings of the Frome and the elms of Castle Cary ... Mr Henry Moule ... met me at the Dorchester Station ... and took me round the beautiful avenues of luxuriant sycamore and chestnut which surround and adorn the town with delightful boulevards foursquare and exquisite shaded walks over-arched by trees which give the place the look of a foreign town.

The Rev. Henry Moule (pronounced Mole) was the elderly father of Hardy's mentor Horace Moule.

FRIENDS OF THE NORWICH MUSEUMS

On 26th April our Chairman, Martin Brayne, was the guest speaker at the AGM of the "Friends of the Norwich Museums" in Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery. Martin addressed in a full Town Close Auditorium on the subject of 'James Woodforde's Norwich'. Members will remember that in 2004-5 we collaborated with the Friends to acquire Henry Walton's fine portrait of John Custance for the Castle Museum collection. Quoting Woodforde's famous remark about Norwich being 'the fairest City in England by far', Martin felt obliged 'as a Coventrian' to point out that Woodforde had never travelled north of a line from the Bristol Channel to the Wash! His talk was nevertheless very well-received. The afternoon concluded with tea in the Rotunda.

REV. PAUL ILLINGWORTH

In the Spring Newsletter it was reported that the Rev. Paul Illingworth, former Rector of Weston Longville, had moved to Dereham. In May the *Wensum Diary* had a photograph of him in his new bungalow, together with his new "calendar-clock", a gift from his former parish. The clock changes colour twice a day, from yellow in the daytime to blue at night! It was delivered to him by Margaret Briggs, the Treasurer of Weston P.C.C., who reported that he is happy and has not lost his wry sense of humour.

A ROYAL WEDDING

Two hundred and fifty years ago this summer there was a Royal Wedding in London ...

9th September 1761: "The King was married this Evening at 9 o'clock in St James's Chapell to Charlotte Princess of Mecklenburgh."

The wedding of George III and his 17-year old bride was quickly followed on 22nd September by their Coronation. Woodforde reported "Rejoicings", with bonfires and illuminations in Ansford and Castle Cary. The Royal couple went on to have 15 children, the tenth being Adolphus who became the 1st Duke of Cambridge and the direct ancestor (through the late Queen Mary) of the new Duke of Cambridge.

MR DU QUESNE AND THE BLOGOSPHERE

In March I had an unexpectedly fascinating tour of the College of Optometrists, a professional body for Opticians. We saw some eighteenth-century spectacles, including those worn by Dr Johnson, and some fine portraits of gentlemen in wigs wearing them. Indeed, it was possible to wear “wig spectacles”, with side-pieces which tucked into your wig rather than round your ears.

I mentioned the following diary-entry to the Curator who conducted the tour:

2nd May, 1793: “Mr Du Quesne is far advanced in Years but he will not own it. He is by no means fit to drive a single Horse Chaise. His Servant Man that came on horseback with him, was afraid that he would overturn coming along, he cannot see the ruts distinctly, he will not however wear Spectacles at all. He cannot bear to appear old, but must be as young in anything as the youngest person.”

As a result of my visit, this passage appeared in the Curator’s “blog” of 22nd March, where it may be read by optometrists and by anyone else who is interested in the College and its Museum.

Mr Du Quesne’s inability to see the ruts was serious. Unmade back-roads remained deeply rutted all year round, and it was important to drive with your wheels right down in the ruts rather than teetering on the edge. Standard axle-widths helped.

PRESS REPORTS

In February the Eastern Daily Press had a long article on Mattishall Hall, its new owner and his plans for the building. It referred to visits by Parson Woodforde, as well as by the young William Cowper, who was Mrs Bodham’s cousin (not her nephew, as the EDP erroneously stated). In the last Journal, Spring 2011, a letter from Cowper to Mrs Bodham dating from 1790 was reproduced. At a much later date, Queen Alexandra was a visitor to Mattishall Hall.

In May the EDP’s restaurant critic reported on her visit to “The Parson Woodforde” pub in Weston Longville. In a generally very good review, she mentioned the recent refurbishment which had successfully retained original features, the welcoming atmosphere, and the gourmet restaurant meals with an accent on local produce and real ales.

GREEN MEN

In March I attended a 1-day course on “The Green Man”, used for inn-names and in legend, but most particularly in churches. The term describes a stone or wooden carving of an older man with foliage coming out of his mouth, or occasionally his ears or eyes. There are some exceptionally fine examples in the Cloisters in Norwich Cathedral, and there is one in All Saints, Weston Longville, above the sedilia (seats in the Chancel), a rather sinister and toothy figure. During the Frolic, we may be able to spot the example in St Peter’s Church, Dorchester.

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