

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

SPRING 2015

NEWSLETTER No. 101

FROLIC 2015

This year's Frolic will be in Wells, Somerset, based at the Swan Hotel where we stayed in 2007, between Friday 11th September and Sunday 13th September 2015. On the Saturday, we hope to visit locations associated with James Woodforde: Cole in the morning, to visit one of the Pounsett homes, then Castle Cary for lunch. In the afternoon we hope to arrange to go inside the Old Parsonage, James Woodforde's birthplace. A booking form accompanies this mailing.

Those who watched the recent television adaptation of "Wolf Hall" may be interested to know that street scenes were filmed in Wells, and that the Cathedral Library, (associated with Parson Woodforde's uncle "the Treasurer"), was also used in filming.

SQUIRE CUSTANCE - A TALK IN HAMPSHIRE

On Saturday, May 9th, 2015, at 2pm, there will be a talk at Chawton House Library, near Alton, Hants, on "The Essence of a Georgian Gentleman". It takes as its starting point "Squire John Custance of Norfolk and his friend, the diarist Parson James Woodforde, and looks at the domestic life of the Georgian gentry, from the contents of their pockets to the food on their tables." The speaker, Dr David Allen, an independent scholar, is not a member of our Society.

Tickets are £15, to include tea and cake. I am told the cakes are very good. To book, visit www.chawtonhouse.org, or call 01420-541010.

Chawton House is worth visiting in its own right: it was once owned by Jane Austen's brother Edward Austen Knight, and was the "big house" near her much smaller home, Chawton Cottage.

A WESTON FUNERAL

Last December, the funeral took place in Weston Longville of Richard Gray of Drayton, formerly of Alderford. He was descended from many of the Weston families of James Woodforde's time, including the Dunnells, Bates, Bucks and Spraggs. Member Linda

Winterbone, a first cousin once removed of the deceased, was at the funeral. She reports that Canon Peter Halls, who took the service, told the congregation that Mr Gray had been keenly interested in the diaries of Parson Woodforde and in his own family graves in Weston churchyard. At the graveside Canon Halls spoke the words which would have been familiar to Woodforde.

Following the departure of the Revd Selwyn Tillett, Canon Halls is taking many of the services at Weston during the interregnum before a new Priest-in-charge of the Wensum benefice is appointed.

THREAT TO CASTLE CARY

Under the headline "400 new houses would wreck our quaint town", the *Daily Mail* reported a threat to Castle Cary in the form of four proposed housing developments. The figure of 400 referred to the South Somerset District Council's estimate of the minimum required by 2028. But more recently, the town council's own Newsletter reported that current planning applications for Castle Cary and Ansford total 454 new homes, "too many, too fast" according to the council. A Castle Cary member who visited a public display of the plans reports that many of the proposed developments, by various builders, are on green-field sites. Many townspeople are very concerned by the scale of the developers' proposals.

WESTON WINDFARM TEMPORIS COMMUNITY FUND

Between 2010 and 2012, the two proposed new wind turbines created much controversy in Weston Longville. Now, however, the villagers of Weston and surrounding parishes may see the promised benefit. For the life of the turbines, "Temporis Wind" will pay £9000 p.a. into its Community Fund. Small community groups, locally organised and operating on a "not for profit" basis, are invited to apply for funds for activities which provide economic, environmental, educational, social or cultural benefit for the Weston area.

"THE FORTUNE TELLER" APPEAL

In the Autumn mailing, an appeal was launched for "The Fortune Teller", a large oil-painting by Samuel Woodforde, R.A., which the

Society has purchased. The painting was reproduced on the cover of the Journal for Summer 2014. The appeal has now raised £1439 including Gift Aid, from 59 members. Your generosity is much appreciated.

PRISCILLA WYATT – PRINTS

Members who attended Frolics in 2012 and 2013 will remember seeing the original of the lovely portrait of Mrs Priscilla Wyatt, by Samuel Woodforde, R.A., which was bequeathed to the Society. It was reproduced on the front cover of the Journal for Summer 2013.

High-quality photographic prints, size 6" x 5", have been produced, and may be ordered from me (details at the bottom of page 4), at a cost of £2.65 including p&p. Please make cheques payable to "The Parson Woodforde Society".

PITCOMBE BELLS – NEW PLAQUE

Last summer we reported on the peal of six bells newly installed at Pitcombe Church, thanks in part to contributions from Society members in response to the appeal in the winter of 2013/14. There is now a smart new plaque on the wall of the ringing chamber, which lists contributors to the appeal, and includes the name of the Parson Woodforde Society. We may be able to view it at the Frolic next September.

WOODFORDE IN THE CHURCH TIMES

Last Autumn, a column by Ronald Blythe in the *Church Times* quoted Parson Woodforde's Diary from 10th September 1783, which included the Christening of the Custance's daughter Frances Alice, as well as an eclipse of the moon. Many members will be familiar with Ronald Blythe as the author of the Introduction to the readily-available one-volume selection from *The Diary of a Country Parson*.

"STAND AND DELIVER" IN THE WENSUM DIARY

Last autumn the Wensum Diary, the parish magazine of Weston Longville, included Parson Woodforde's Diary entry from 21st November 1780, in which two highwaymen were arrested. A month later, the Editorial team published an spin-off article entitled "Stand

and Deliver” picking up on Woodforde’s entry and adding details of the Highwaymen, who were four in total, using research from the *Norfolk Chronicle* of 1780, the *Norfolk Public Houses History*, and *Norfolk Villains*. Three of the villains were hung in Norwich on 7th April 1781, and Will Coleman was there watching.

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