

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

AUGUST 2019

NEWSLETTER No. 116

AGM AND FROLIC 2019 –

NEW COLLEGE 23–25th SEPTEMBER

On Monday 23rd September, the Society's AGM will take place at **5pm** in New College, Oxford (not 6pm as previously notified). All Society members, whether registered for the Frolic or not, may attend the AGM. It is scheduled to take place in the Red Room, which is upstairs on the first floor, but there is a lift.

There are still two places left for the Frolic. If you are interested, contact me (details on page 4).

On Tuesday 24th September, we will have a guided tour of the Bodleian Library, and a special viewing of Woodforde's manuscript Notebooks, the Diary itself.

WESTON LONGVILLE REMEMBERS ANN BRAYNE

At Easter, in All Saints' church, Weston Longville, a beautiful flower-arrangement of tulips was displayed "In memory of Ann Brayne, Treasurer of the Parson Woodforde Society". Martin Brayne would like to express his heartfelt thanks for this gesture.

WOODFORDE PORTRAIT IN WESTON LONGVILLE

The portrait of James Woodforde by Samuel Woodforde, R.A., which hangs in All Saints' Church, Weston Longville, is the only known likeness of Parson Woodforde. It is a cause for concern, therefore, that it is thought to be suffering from damp. The PCC has decided to instruct an expert to investigate the matter further to see if any remedial action needs to be taken.

OLD JOURNALS AVAILABLE

Member Eric York, whom some of us will remember from the Frolic of 2002 when he played the part of Parson Woodforde in wig and gown, sadly died last July. His collection of Journals is now available to any

interested member who is prepared to collect them from Old Hunstanton, N.W. Norfolk. If you are interested, then in the first instance please contact Martin Brayne on 01663-750354, or email him at editor@parsonwoodforde.org.

CASTLE CARY CHURCH- MAJOR REPAIRS NEEDED

All Saints' Church in Castle Cary has been found to need major repairs to the roof and the tower. Bell-ringing has had to stop for safety reasons, in case the reverberation of the bells affects the stone pinnacles on the top of the church tower.

DAVID WOODWARD – A NEW BOOK

Member David Woodward of Beccles is remembered in East Anglia for his role as Parson James Woodforde in the annual tour "All Preachers Great and Small", although it is 10 years since he hung up his wig. He has recently published a book on his time in the Fleet Air Arm, *An Illustrious National Service*, the title referring to his ship, HMS Illustrious. During his time on the ship, he wrote letters home which have contributed to his book. He says "Although my time in the Navy was short, it was a period of my life I have never forgotten." *An Illustrious National Service* is published by Mousehold Press in Norwich, ISBN 978-1-874739-86-9. It costs £6, and £1 will be donated to the Sea Cadets for every copy sold.

"WESTERN LINK" THROUGH WESTON LONGVILLE

In the last Newsletter we described the four options that Norfolk County Council are considering for a major new road very close to Weston Longville, linking the A47 to the A1067. The *Dereham Times* reports that public opinion had favoured Route D, the eastern-most option near Ringland, but the County Councillor for Costessey favours Route C, much nearer to Weston. A decision is not now expected until late summer.

WOULD JAMES WOODFORDE HAVE BEEN ON FACEBOOK?

Well, he is now! Committee member Brian Richardson, who set up the Society's Facebook presence, admits unashamedly that it is 'a work in progress'. Do feel free to visit and leave suitable comments, as feedback is always welcome, particularly of the flattering kind!

Photos can be attached, and there is also a link to the Society's website.

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WORKHOUSE

In April I visited the oldest surviving eighteenth-century workhouse which is open to the public, the Vestry House in Walthamstow. In 1723 a new law, the Workhouse Test Act (Knatchbull's Act) provided parishes with greater authority to establish workhouses. In 1730 the Walthamstow workhouse was built, designed to house 30-40 paupers. Vestry House is now a museum about its life as a workhouse and the history of what was then a rural part of Essex.

On 27th September 1785, James Woodforde visited the Poor House at Sparham Hill, and was favourably impressed: "They all appeared comfortable, and the House cleanly kept ...". He had been much less happy with the Dereham "House of Industry" in March 1781, and reported "About 380 Poor in it now, but they don't look either healthy or cheerful ...". Members who attended the Norfolk Frolic in 2002 will remember our visit to the House of Industry, now the Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse museum.

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO ...

In the Summer of 1769, curate James Woodforde was living at the Lower House, Ansford. On July 24th he made an unusually altruistic excursion of behalf of his middle sister Mary White: her daughter Jenny was staying with their Farr relatives at Stock House, near Stoke Gaylard, Dorset, and Sister White was anxious about her. Woodforde, together with Sister Jane and friend Miss Rooke, took a post-chaise all the way to Stock, where they found little Jenny White "very hearty and well". It was a total of 32 miles round-trip, not the sort of spontaneous journey Woodforde would have made in later years. "Sister White was

greatly rejoiced at our Excursion, when she knew it." Sadly, little Jenny White was to die two years later, aged 10, from what may have been diphtheria.

Stock House, the Farr/Yeatman home, was the venue for a Frolic visit in 2011. A Journal article, "Yeatman, Farr and Burland" (Winter 2010 reprinted from Winter 1983) explains the relationship to Woodforde.

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