

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

APRIL 2021

NEWSLETTER No. 121

FROLIC 2021 – NOW 13-15TH SEPTEMBER

The Frolic, postponed from September 2020, and rearranged for May 2021, has had to be postponed again. We have arranged a third date, Monday 13th to Wednesday 15th September 2021, again based at Holbrook Manor in Wincanton.

The gardens at Stourhead, always lovely, will be particularly attractive in September. We also hope to visit Alfred's Tower, which Woodforde witnessed being built, and then the coach will take us to Castle Cary and Ansford for a short visit.

The delayed AGM will take place on Monday evening. On the Monday and Tuesday evenings, our bookstall will be open. It is always popular with members who are building up their collection of the 17 volumes of the PWS unabridged edition of Woodforde's diary. On Tuesday evening, there will be a talk after dinner.

Those who had "expressed interest" via the form enclosed with the December mailing have already been contacted. If you did not fill in that form but are nevertheless now interested in the new date this coming September, please contact me (details on P4).

PORTRAIT OF REVD JAMES WOODFORDE

The restoration of the portrait of James Woodforde by his nephew Samuel Woodforde, R.A., has been completed; PWS members who contributed to its restoration will be pleased. Unfortunately it is still with the conservators because the PCC (who owns it) has decided that they cannot re-hang the portrait in Weston Church until the underlying damp problem has been resolved, otherwise they will only have the same problem to deal with in a few years time. They have therefore instructed their church architect to draw up plans to reduce the external ground level and drain surface water away from the wall in question and they will then have to apply for a faculty to do the actual work.

All this will inevitably take some time and so whilst the portrait is now in good condition it will not be possible to re-hang the portrait in the church for some time yet.

A SUCCESSOR TO SAMUEL WOODFORDE

The Revd Elizabeth Dudley (formerly Mortimer), the previous Priest-in-charge of Ansford and Castle Cary, departed in January 2020 for Christ Church & St Mary's, Frome. We can report the good news that a new incumbent has been appointed as Priest-in-charge of Castle Cary and Ansford, and will be licensed on 22nd April 2021. She is the Revd Dr Elisabeth Isted, until recently a curate in Yeovil, and formerly of Bath University. We wish her success in her new role.

BERESFORD VOLUMES FOR SALE

PWS member the late Mrs Zelda Venton has left her 5-volume set of Beresford's *The Diary of a Country Parson* to the Society to sell. The set is offered in Fine condition with Fine/Very Good dust-jackets, for £80 (incl p&p). They are available from Martin Brayne: contact editor@parsonwoodforde.org or tel: 01663-750354.

OLD JOURNALS AVAILABLE – BOUND

A set of Journals from the first twenty years of the Parson Woodforde Society, 1968-1987, is available for a modest donation. The difference about this collection is that they have been bound! They form a set of six volumes. They are bound in navy-blue, with silver lettering in the spines, and look very smart. If you are interested, please contact Jenny Alderson, on jenny@aldersons.plus.com, tel 01963-350765, to discuss either postage, or collection from Castle Cary, or collection at the Frolic.

GREAT WITCHINGHAM CHURCH

The *Wensum Diary* reports that in Great Witchingham Church, part of the Tower roof has fallen in, above the Vestry. Huge lumps of plaster

and lathe (riddled with woodworm) had come down. Fortunately no one was injured. We remember Great Witchingham for the well-connected Dr Henry Bathhurst, who got Woodforde to collect his tithes for him, and for the Revd Thomas Jeanes and his family. Parson Woodforde saw a good deal of them from April 1786 onwards, not always happily.

Nowadays, Great Witchingham is part of the same benefice as Weston Longville, centred on Reepham.

BRACON LODGE

On February 10th, 1794, Parson Woodforde met the newly-married couple Mr and Mrs Corbould. They had moved into Hungate Lodge, and James and Nancy became very friendly with them. In November 1795 Mr Corbould became Woodforde's Curate, until he left Hungate Lodge and the Curacy in the autumn of 1796. The *Eastern Daily Press* reports that the Georgian mansion, Bracon Lodge, once home to the Corbould family, is to be sold. An intriguing garden feature is a "crinkle crinkle wall" with serpentine curves.

THE EDP AT CHRISTMAS

The edition of the *Eastern Daily Press* which published on 19.12.2020 had a feature by columnist Keith Skipper on Norfolk Christmases past. It featured extracts from letters and diaries by Margaret Paston in 1459, Daniel Defoe in 1724, Revd James Woodforde in 1776, Revd Benjamin Armstrong in 1874, Henry Rider Haggard in 1898, and his daughter Lilius in 1939.

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO ...

In early 1771, the Revd Samuel Woodforde, the diarist's father, was approaching the end of his life. He had been to Bath in January 1771, but returned after three weeks "very little better for the waters", and James had accepted that the end was approaching. On February 19th, "My poor Father is I think much in the same way as my poor Mother was ... I played at Back Gammon with my Father in

the evening, it takes him in some degree off from thinking of his Pain." There were three more months of pain to come before Samuel died on May 16th. His death set in motion a series of events whereby Cousin Frank Woodforde became Rector of Ansford and James lost his job and his home.

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