

# THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

APRIL 2022

NEWSLETTER No. 124

## FROLIC 2022 – NOW 26-27TH SEPTEMBER

This year's Frolic will take place in Norwich, at the Maid's Head Hotel opposite the Cathedral, between 26th and 27th September, 2022.

The most recent Frolic at the Maid's Head was in 2018, and of course we remember the hotel for its association with James Woodforde. Our excursion will take us to Weston Longville, then to a museum in Dereham which will interest those who know the Paston letters, and then to the House of Industry which Woodforde visited, where he was concerned by the inhabitants: "About 380 Poor in it now, but they don't look either healthy or cheerful"... More details are given on the booking form enclosed with this mailing.

## FIRST EDITION 5-VOLUME BERESFORD FOR SALE

John Beresford published his original abridgement of Woodforde's diaries between 1924 and 1931. A set of the historic 5 volumes is now for sale, and it is hoped it will be of interest to a Society member. The volumes are in good condition, with only some fading of the titles on the spine. Some volumes include illustrated plates.

It is suggested that £200 would be an appropriate price; anyone interested must discuss this and postage/collection with the vendor. For more information, contact Mr Norman Lee, email [normali.arabella@gmail.com](mailto:normali.arabella@gmail.com), or ring 01353-667648.

## JOHN HEIGHES

John Heighes, whose death is announced on page 4, will be much missed. Many Frolickers will remember him and his wife Janet. He contributed both to the Journal and the Newsletter over many years, most recently in December 2021. There will be an Obituary in the August Journal.

## **HOUSE-PRICES IN WESTON LONGVILLE**

According to the *Eastern Daily Press*, house-prices in north Norfolk are up by 10%. Peter Bulman, the Broadland District Councillor for Great Witchingham, discussing the rise in prices, said that Weston Longville was a particularly lovely place, and has the added attraction of a Dinosaur Park!

## **DID WOODFORDE EVER SEE AN EAGLE?**

In the last Newsletter, inspired by the plan to release white-tailed or sea-eagles in north-west Norfolk, we asked for fictional entries from Woodforde's diary on the subject of eagles. The competition winner was Edward Rothead of Hampshire, with the following entry:

1793, March 22nd, Wednesday: We breakfasted, dined, &c. at home. Very cold, strong E. Wind & cloudy. Took a walk with Nancy this Morning to Weston House. We stayed an Hour with Mrs Custance and saw the 5. youngest children. Mrs Custance looked very well indeed, altho' she has been fatigued of late. On our return home, at the bottom of the Croft, we spotted near the Oak with the nest our White-Tailed eagles, a most astonishing sight as the two eagles were flying together as if dancing, with each having a talon entwined with the other. The whole was accompanied by the most fantastic screeches. Dinner today Calfs Fry and Leg of Mutton roasted.

Many congratulations to a worthy winner. The ornithological description of this courtship behaviour may be verified in <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/white-tailed-eagle/breeding/>.

## **WESTON LONGVILLE BATS AT RISK**

On BBC1's regular Sunday programme "Countryfile", on December 5th 2021, there was a feature about the colony of rare Barbastelle bats in the area of the planned "Norwich Western Link" road, which will pass very close to Weston Longville.

In the already-built “Norwich Northern Distributor” road to the north, “Bat-bridges” or “Bat-gantries” have apparently not worked, and there is local concern that if the same techniques are adopted in the Weston Longville area, they will not work there either.

Bats, of course, are one of the difficulties associated with re-hanging the restored portrait of James Woodforde in All Saints, Weston Longville, another difficulty being the damp walls. However, members who attend the Frolic this coming September will see the photograph of the portrait now installed in the Church, while the original remains with the conservators.

## **HOGARTH AT TATE BRITAIN**

Over the winter I visited Tate Britain’s exhibition “Hogarth and Europe”. It contrasted Hogarth’s works with his contemporaries on the Continent. I particularly noticed “Lord Hervey and his Friends”, also known as “The Hervey Conversation Piece” from 1738-40. It shows a group of six men, including Stephen and Henry Fox. The former was to become Lord Ilchester, and the Woodfordes’ local aristocrat in Somerset. His brother Henry became Lord Holland and Paymaster-General to the Forces, and was the father of Charles James Fox, the Whig politician. The painting may normally be seen at Ickworth, Lord Hervey’s seat near Bury St Edmunds, now a NT property.

Those members of the PWS who have read “The Quest for Joanna Cheeke” by Derek Matthews (2007), will be familiar with Lord Ilchester and his ambiguous relationship with Joanna Cheeke, whom James Woodforde knew as Mrs Melliar; she apparently became an enemy of Woodforde’s in the 1760s and 1770s.

## **TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO ...**

In the spring of 1772, James Woodforde was living at home and acting as Curate of Ansford, and, under a different incumbent, Castle Cary. But he was all too aware that as soon as his young cousin Frank Woodforde was ordained, he would lose both his job and his home. He didn’t confide his anxieties to his Diary, but fills it with lengthy entries

on his very busy life. This period of the diary may be contrasted with his more carefree life at Oxford, and his more constrained life in Norfolk.

On 30th March, 1772, Woodforde was one of a party of six who went to “a kind of concert” at the Ansford Inn. He took the party in the chaise inherited from his father. He paid two shillings for the concert, “a good deal too much”. The concert was only 2 violins, a flute, and a singer, but well-performed, and “We had wax Lights however for our Mony.” [As opposed to tallow candles.]

Woodforde does not often mention his chaise, but it evidently held six people. He discontinued its use in the spring of 1773, selling one of the horses and giving the other to his brother John. What a pity he didn't have something similar at Weston Longville – it would have been such a benefit to Nancy.

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**Society's website: [www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk](http://www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk)**

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