

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

WINTER 2011

NEWSLETTER No. 88

GEORGE BUNTING

We are very sorry to announce the death of George Bunting, the President of our Society. On 30th October he died suddenly but peacefully at the age of 86, at his home in Hadspen, near Castle Cary. His funeral was held at St Leonard's Church, Pitcombe, and conducted by the Rector of Bruton. The church was filled with George's extensive family and many local people. Society members who attended included Martin Brayne, who read diary-extracts; Ann Williams; Suzanne Custance; Derek & Mollie Matthews; and Jenny & Peter Alderson. He is buried nearby in beautiful Somerset countryside which would have been well-known to James Woodforde.

You can read an Obituary in the accompanying Journal.

He will be greatly missed, and we send our condolences to his widow Mabs, and to his family.

FROLIC 2012 – LONDON WEEKEND

Some members were disappointed when our Chairman announced at Dorchester that the Committee was planning a Frolic in 2012 for one day only. So members will be happy to hear that we are now arranging a weekend Frolic in London, from Friday 31st August to Sunday 2nd September. We shall be resident in Bloomsbury, making visits to The Foundling Museum (see Woodforde's Diary entry for 20th October 1793), the British Library and other local attractions. Please note the dates in your 2012 Diary now; booking details will be given in the Spring mailing.

SUZANNE CUSTANCE STEPS DOWN

Suzanne Custance, a descendant of Mr and Mrs Custance of the Diary, has been a Committee member for very many years, and for a considerable time she was the Secretary. Due to family commitments, she has had to resign from the Committee, although of course she remains a life-member. We would like to thank Suzanne for all her hard work for the Society, which has been greatly valued.

Her place on the Committee has been taken by Charles Milnes, previously a co-opted member.

DIARIES & JOURNALS AVAILABLE

Dr Peter Leftley of Romsey, Hants, is “downsizing”, and wants to pass on his full set of Diaries and 120 Journals. If you are prepared to collect them from Romsey, you may have them in return for a donation. Please contact me (bottom of page 4) for details of how to get in touch with Dr Leftley.

WESTON LONGVILLE – NEW ATTRACTIONS

The Village Hall Committee in Weston Longville is considering ways of making the village’s association with James Woodforde more visible to visitors. In co-operation with the Society, features such as display-boards or a “Parson Woodforde trail” will be discussed.

In the meantime, the project for rebuilding the Village Hall has received funding from the Veolia Environmental Trust and the new hall should be finished within two years.

NEWS FROM ANSFORD

The Rev. Liz Mortimer, Rector of Ansford, has sent an update on activities in Ansford. They had a successful Harvest Festival followed by a “Songs of Praise Tea” which attracted many extra people to church. In October, there was a “wedding blessing” between the son of a local florist and his Japanese wife – part of the service was in Japanese. What would James Woodforde have made of it!

ISSUES OF CONSCIENCE IN SUFFOLK

On October 3rd there was a well-attended talk in Woodbridge, Suffolk, on “Parson Woodforde’s Diary: an English rural parish as viewed from an 18th century Norfolk parsonage”. It was given by Mark Mitchels of Saxmundham, a member of our Society. Mark reports: “There were lots of questions, most of them about the issue of conscience. People were struck by his ability to show concern for the various parishioners in their hardship but also by his useful skill of being able to get on with his comfortable life!” Illustrations included pictures by the Norwich School of Painters.

DESCENDANTS OF DUNNELLS, CARYS, BATES AND SPRAGGS

Two members of the Society who are cousins, Linda Winterbone and Midge Holmes, are working on their family tree. They are descended from many of the residents of Weston Longville of James Woodforde's time, including the Dunnell family who figure in the Diary on many occasions, the Cary family who ran the shop and carrier service, the Bates family and from William Spragg, Woodforde's gardener. We hope to hear more of their research in due course!

BUST OF JAMES WOODFORDE

Sculptor Linda Preece has modelled a life-size head of Parson Woodforde, which was initially offered to the Parson Woodforde pub, but the price of £1500 has proved to be beyond their means. The bust is therefore now available for purchase. If you are interested in buying it at this price, and you are on email, contact me and I will give you a link to a photo of it.

FRANCIS STEER – ARCHIVIST

A member of the Society was visiting Chichester Cathedral, and discovered that the coat of arms of Francis Steer was incorporated into a restored reredos in the Chapel of St Thomas & St Edmund. She remembered that he had been a founder-member of our Society in 1968. Francis Steer (1912-78) was the Archivist of New College, Oxford, and published a guide and catalogue of the College archives in 1974. He was also the Archivist and Librarian of Chichester Cathedral, and of Arundel.

Also to be found in Chichester Cathedral is the memorial to Harry Peckham, who was a fellow-student of Woodforde at New College; his letters from the Continent were published by Martin Brayne in 2008 as *Harry Peckham's Tour*.

PRESS REPORTS

In October the *Oxford Times* had an article about James Woodforde's time at Oxford, both as an undergraduate and later as sub-warden. The article described "the joy of the diary", and how even his less significant entries may be interesting and entertaining to us today. It highlighted

undergraduate drinking but also referred to Woodforde as sub-warden making drunken students translate “stupendously difficult Latin texts”.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Norwich Bridewell Museum is due to re-open next summer after its lengthy refurbishment. We hope to have a more definite date soon.

A Society member recently visited the Holburne Museum in Bath, and found a display of tableware with a quotation from Woodforde about breakfast.

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