

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

SPRING 2014

NEWSLETTER No. 97

FROLIC AND AGM 2014

This year the Frolic will take place from 3rd to 5th October. We will be based at the Mercure Hotel in north-west Norwich. Plans include a Saturday visit to the coast and then on to Reepham; Sunday includes Weston Longville Harvest Festival, followed by lunch at the Parson Woodforde pub-restaurant in Weston. Further details and a booking form are enclosed with this mailing.

NELLIE STEYNOR

In the last Newsletter we reported the death of Nellie Steynor of Beccles. She will be remembered by those members who attended Frolics in the past. She had been a member for 20 years, and used to give Woodforde talks to small groups such as W.I.s. Her daughter Joy tells us that she was excited when her daughter Catherine and son-in-law bought the old vicarage at Mattishall Burgh in 1993.

In her final years, as her sight failed, the Society's Journal was read to her, first by her husband, then after his death by a local schoolgirl, then by member Cyril Ford of Brooke, Norfolk, and since 2008 by member Jane Shephard of Beccles. Cyril recalls her enjoyment of the Journal, her understanding of James Woodforde and his human frailties, and her sense of fun, while Jane remembers her lively mind and their mutual appreciation of stories like "Julia Woodforde and the Trappist Monk".

THE REMARKABLE MR FENN

In December, Norwich member Phyllis Stanley attended an excellent talk given by Lucy Care on "The Remarkable Mr Fenn", part of a series run by the Paston Heritage Society. Mr Fenn, later Sir John Fenn, was the editor of the Paston letters. James Woodforde saw an early copy of the published letters in March 1787 – probably Mr Custance was an original subscriber.

Sir John Fenn has been the subject of two articles in our Journal, in Summer 1994 and Spring 2008. His wife, Lady Ellenor Fenn, deserves to

be better known, for she was an innovative advocate of child-centred education who produced almost 50 books. The *Eastern Daily Press* recently reported on two new blue plaques at Hill House in Dereham, commemorating Sir John and Lady Ellenor Fenn respectively. James Woodforde met both of them in October 1783 at the Custances.

NORFOLK CHURCH BELLS

A book originally published in 1990 has recently been reissued, and may be of interest to members.

Church Bells and Bell-Ringing: A Norfolk profile, by Paul Cattermole, may be purchased from the Church Times Bookshop for £22.50. The book surveys those Norfolk Churches which have interesting sets of bells, and also charts the development of change-ringing. It includes a study of Norfolk bell-founders, starting with Godfrey le Belleyetere in 1220.

All Saints Church, Weston Longville, has 6 bells, the earliest from around 1410. They were renovated in 1976.

CASTLE CARY NEWS

Last autumn we reported on the major project to turn the "Shambles" area of Castle Cary Market House into a community area. That work is now complete, including a new glass roof. It was officially opened by the Lord Lieutenant on 1st March. Adjoining the Shambles is the Undercroft, roofed but open-sided, available for gatherings. From this Spring, there will be a regular Tuesday market. Castle Cary will be featured on BBC1's "Countryfile" on 16th March.

Castle Cary has been unaffected by this winter's terrible floods on the Somerset levels, and the Bruton flood scheme has prevented the river Brue flooding.

THE POUNSETTS AND COLE

The hamlet of Cole, near Bruton, was very familiar to James Woodforde after his Sister Pounsett moved there in 1780. After that date, it was at Cole that Woodforde stayed during his summer holidays in Somerset. Castle Cary member Derek Matthews has researched the Pounsetts' homes, and he believes that they moved

three times during their married life: from Ansford Parsonage to Ansford Lodge by 1777, then after Mr Guppy's death in 1780 to Cole Manor (Cole Mill), and finally, after Mrs Edith Pounsett's death in 1793, to Cole Place (now, confusingly, called "the Manor House"), a less rambling and probably more manageable house.

Cole Manor is now a Tea-room! Two of our members had tea and cakes there last summer, and can highly recommend it.

PARSON WOODFORDE AND FOOD

Commenting on the "Beefan" apples paragraph in the last Newsletter, a member reminds us that the eighteenth-century cook Martha Lloyd recommended them, and that Jane Grigson's "Food with the Famous" refers to Beefans in her chapter on Jane Austen, and moreover has a whole chapter devoted to Parson Woodforde.

CHORAL EVENSONG FROM NEW COLLEGE

During James Woodforde's years at New College, Oxford, he often went to Evensong, and in March 1762 recorded that "Norris the singing Boy sung (in our Chapel this Evening) a very fine Anthem." In August 1763, Woodforde even played the organ in the Chapel for Matins. Imagine then his delight when on February 6th, 2014, BBC Radio 3 broadcast Choral Evensong live from New College. At least one society member appreciated it greatly.

TATE BRITAIN'S NEW LOOK

Recently I visited Tate Britain, which has been extensively and expensively refurbished. The main collection is now displayed in chronological order, a great benefit to anyone interested in a particular century. I was glad to see that they have found space to hang Sir William Beechey's painting from 1793, *Sir Francis Ford's children giving a coin to a beggar boy*. Two well-dressed children, perhaps 6 or 8 years old, are reaching out to an older boy, who looks most wretchedly cold and ill. It is surely a more realistic depiction of what it meant to be a beggar than John Sell Cotman's attractive *Beggar boy* which is in the Castle Museum in Norwich. James Woodforde, who often gave money to beggars, must have had some awareness of their desperate situation. Sir William

Beechey also painted Mr and Mrs Custance with their daughter, now in the Castle Museum.

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