

From Claypole to writing the first Canadian novel to the Planet Venus

It's a big journey from Claypole to Venus - anywhere between 38 and 261 million kilometres (23 - 162 million miles - both planets have elliptical orbits so it varies over time) but Frances Moore made that journey and is one of Claypole's distinguished daughters who deserves a greater recognition.

Frances was born 12 January 1724 to Reverend Thomas Moore and his wife, Mary. Her father was curate at St Peters Church and Frances was the first of three daughters. She was baptised in St Peters on 24th January 1724.

Earlier generations of her family were based in Carlton Scroop, Hougham and Stubton. Her great great grandfather purchased the Manor of Stubton in 1633 together with 300 acres of land and that property remained in the family for four generations. Her maternal grandfather was Rector at Hougham and Marston.

In her early 30s Frances moved to London to work as a poet and playwright. As if that wasn't sufficiently demanding, she also edited her own weekly periodical with the title 'Old Maid' using the pseudonym of Mary Singleton, Spinster.

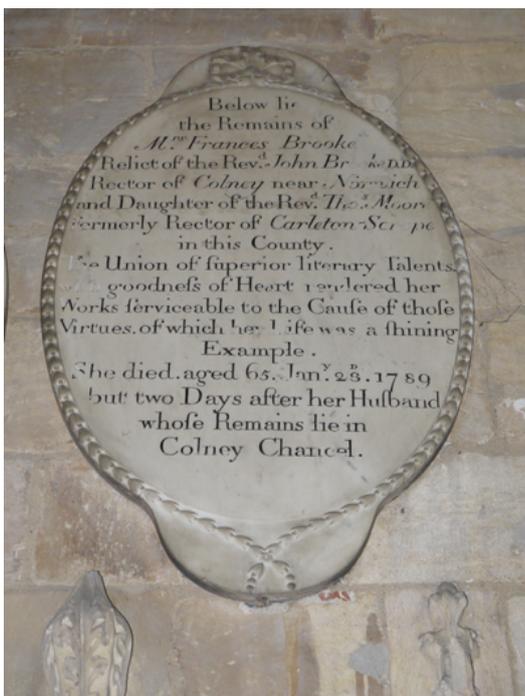
In 1756 she married Rev. Dr. John Brooke, rector at Colney, a village on the outskirts of Norwich, Norfolk. They had a son in 1757, and in the same year her husband went to British North America as an army chaplain, first at Louisbourg and then at Quebec in Canada. Frances remained in England, where in 1763 she wrote her first novel, 'The History of Lady Julia Mandeville'. Later in the year she joined her husband in Canada where he was now the chaplain to the British garrison. Whilst there she wrote the first Canadian novel 'The History of Emily Montague'. In autumn 1768

she returned to London and Essex, where she continued her literary and theatrical career. She wrote operas which were performed at Covent Garden, one of which 'Rosina' was reportedly one of the most successful and popular British operas of the eighteenth century.

She later moved to Sleaford where she died in 1789, two days after her husband. There is a memorial plaque in the chancel of St Denys Church in her remembrance. In Canada Frances is regarded by some people as the equivalent to Jane Austin in the UK.

In 1985, the International body that names features on planet surfaces (IAU) honoured Brooke by naming a crater on the planet Venus after her. All craters on Venus are named after women.

The crater is at 48.4 N 63.4W and is 22.9 kms in diameter. Venus will be just above the horizon at 9pm on 1st April - with luck we should be able to see it from



Claypole, by looking towards the west. If you can see Venus that night, spare a thought for an intriguing and enterprising lady from Claypole.

While researching this information my wife Karen had spotted that there was a plaque in Sleaford church, so we made the journey one wet Thursday. In St Denys church were three people who were very helpful, and we got chatting. In the course of conversation we discovered that one of the ladies was by the daughter of the Claypole School Headmaster in 1941-1945 - Mr Wilmore. Gwen Wright lived in the Old Rectory on Rectory lane whilst her father was Headmaster and she was a great friend of Geoff Holmes sister. Geoff was at the school when Mr Wilmore was Head. Gwen has kept in touch with several people in the village after moving with her family to North Lincolnshire, marrying a vicar and finally living in Sleaford. It's a small world with lots of coincidences. Terry Pratchett, author of the Discworld novels, says in one of his stories that "Million to one chances happen nine times out of ten." He's not wrong.

Many thanks to Gwen Wright, and Margaret and Geoff Holmes for help with this article. The next is planned to be about Hartington House which was on Main Street, so any memories, photos or history that could be used would be gratefully received.

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