



THE  
*JOHN CLARE SOCIETY*  
*Newsletter*

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## THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

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## Editorial

Once again it is my pleasure, on behalf of the committee, to extend grateful thanks to the Festival organizer and his working group. Only this time, the organizer isn't Ron Ingamells, who did so much over several years to extend and enrich the Festival, but new committee member, Ian Jebbett. Ian had a difficult task, since it was no longer possible to use the marquee in which the AGM and the main talks have been held, as well as the Saturday evening entertainment, and consequently different arrangements had to be made.

It was decided to use the church instead and in the event this worked beautifully, providing cool shelter from the blazing heat outside (the marquee would have been unbearable!). Ian and his supporting group worked very hard, but their work paid off, and the Festival was a great success.

Several of the pieces that follow describe different aspects of the Festival, so I hope that members who were not able to attend will get a good idea of what went on. But there have also been Clare-based events down in Essex, in which member Pete Relph has played a large part. There will be more about them in the next (February) issue, but on p.22 there is an account of one of the events by Peter Cox.

As usual I must express my gratitude to the many people who submitted material for this newsletter. In fact I had so much that not only have I made this newsletter longer than usual, but I have had to hold over some non-festival pieces until February. But please don't let that stop you sending in articles, photos, news items, poems...It is always good to have new contributors, but if you would like to contact me before sending something in please do phone or email. Next deadline: 3 January 2014.

Valerie Pedlar

## Poetry Competition

Although I have been involved with the children's poetry competition since its inception, this is the first year that I have acted as spokesman for the three judges following Peter Cox's decision to relinquish his role after his wife Pat died earlier this year. Janet Ingamells also felt she could no longer continue for health reasons, so my wife Pauline nobly volunteered to step in. The third (continuing) judge was Mavis Leverington. As usual, Peterborough City Councillor David Over presented the prizes.

Rodney Lines

### First Prize: Buttercross

#### Daisies

Beautiful daisies remind  
me of Spring  
They have yellow pollen middles  
White petals look like  
drops of snow  
Altogether in the field they look  
like lovely white cloud.

Lily Hutton-Smith (age 6)

### Commended: Buttercross

#### Fantastic Daisies

Daisies shine in the moonlight  
They dance to the wind  
How the wind sways them  
In their yellow hearts  
The pollen stays for the bees.

Ffion Humphreys (age 5)

### First Prize: Woodgate

#### Daffodils

Daffodils waving in the wind  
And swinging around in the ground  
Fabulous daffodils springing in the moonlight  
Fluttering in the sky  
Opening up and closing down  
Daffodils here and there  
In the sun they shimmer  
Lost in the field  
Swaying in the wind

Izzie Robertson

**Commended: Woodgate**

**Daffodils**

Daffodils daffodils all in a field  
A carpet of yellow and white  
First a small sprout into a beautiful sight  
Flowing wonderfully next to the trees  
Other animals can take daffodils nectar and pollen  
Daffodils waving at the sun  
In the sun they collect their food  
Lovely giant daffodils like mini suns  
Sometimes big sometimes small but always a beautiful sight

Sharifa Hughes

**First Prize: Broadwheel**

**Flowers all year round**

See the winters change to spring  
As flowers burst through the ground.  
It's morning in the meadow and summer in the land  
The blossom is out swirling till it lands.  
It's like snow, but not snow, for its petals are like flakes.  
It lifts your spirits seeing the dew around  
A maple tree's leaves fall to the ground autumn has come.  
Shades of brown, red and purple fills the air.  
Finally little drops as white as the clouds sing...  
"Winter is here!"  
Suddenly a tiny catkin sprouts out of the land.  
Spring has come again!

Beth Jackson

**Commended: Broadwheel**

**Beautiful things**

A beautiful landscape with lovely  
Green rolling hills.  
The fluffy bright green leaves fill the old trees.  
When the horizon meets the land.  
The field furrow like pillars.  
And the cropped fields all ready.  
The dark brown earth breathing into the ground.  
The dotted daisies with bright yellow  
Faces and snowy petals.  
Red poppies give sadder times.

Ella Compton

**First prize: Torpel**  
**Satisfying seasons**

Spring

Flowers come up and bees come out,  
The air is fresh without a doubt.  
Spring has come out of its shell  
And has done its job so well,  
The reassuring sight of a bluebell.

Summer

The summer's sun creeps upon us all,  
The plants like soldiers stand so tall.  
The colours are bright like rainbows in the sky,  
The green, green grass, its delicate guest a dragonfly  
Finally settles to make its way home nearby.

Autumn

As colours change with tumbling leaves,  
The majestic bare cold trees  
Stand beautifully with the sun so bright  
Dominating the earth tonight,  
Elegantly surrounded by roses red and white.

Winter

Snow falling so heavily in the cold breeze  
The twisted branches start to ease,  
The delicate white snow as bright as the sun  
The battle to over the ground now won.  
The beautiful landscape admired by everyone.

Abbie Quinn (age 11)

**Commended: Torpel**

As Helpston changes,  
In the glorious, summer sun,  
I looked over the fields of Helpston.  
A blanket of poppies; red and green,  
Trees stand tall like soldiers, protecting a scene.  
The sun is a bar of gold,  
Glistening brightly; beautiful and bold.  
As poppies, dandelions and tulips grow high,  
They reach, searching into the summers sky.  
The breathtaking delight as the breeze flows past,  
Oh I do wish forever summer could last.

Tweeting birds sing their song,  
The autumn doesn't last for long.  
Falling leaves twirling, twisting about,  
Oh, it's autumn now, there is no doubt.  
The smell of rain and flowing water,  
The stream passing through fields, by a farmer's daughter.  
Tractors stand proud as the machines move around.  
Autumn time is fading away,  
Winter is signaled by the sky turning grey.

Rhiannon Tilah (age 11)

## Two Photographs



Ronald Blythe giving his address in Helpston Parish Church.  
Photograph by Tom Ryder.



In Helpston Parish Church. Photograph by Sue Young.

## Jim Hepple's first Festival as Treasurer

As I drove away from Helpston Kelsey Thornton (in the poetry reading in the church) had just read:

...And there he wiles the pleasant shower away  
Filling his mind with store of happy things...  
The cramped horizon now leans on the ground  
Quiet and cool and labours hard employ  
Ceases while all around  
Falls a refreshing joy

'The Summer Shower' (*MP* III.425)

And there had indeed been a pleasantly refreshing shower. I saw a beautiful rainbow – a colourful harbinger perhaps of the joys of the festival. The shower was welcome to many festival goers, who had experienced the record breaking heat, and welcome no doubt to gardeners – not least perhaps the John Clare garden from the RHS Chelsea flower show installed with Professor Robinson's benediction at the John Clare Cottage.

I was sorry to have to leave before the evening concert but I had at least heard the pre-concert tuning and loosening up of harps and vocals. It had been an early start that morning as I wandered round Helpston performing some Treasurer's duties. One committee member had had the foresight to bring a bike – useful for traversing the festival and associated sites; for me no doubt the walking was good exercise. It was gratifying to see the attractions in the school well attended in spite of the split site, with the church acting as focus for formal festival sessions: but of course the village is always a major part of the John Clare Festival. The participation of the village was underlined by the appearance of wild flowers in several windows accompanied by Clare verses. An etymologist might say it was a veritable '*antho* – *logy*'!

Peterborough Folk dancers in period costume presented a fascinating series of images – I commented on the skill and enthusiasm displayed by the dancers and expressed the hope that a large number of spectators would see the obvious enjoyment: I was told that the most important thing is that the dancers 'satisfy the ghost of John Clare' since this and all aspects of the folk tradition was of great concern to Clare.

The colourfully bedecked troupe of Peterborough Morris dancers complete with a human sized cockerel put on another exuberant display of the old art. I have learnt that many Morris sides have an animal; Peterborough's has been a large cockerel since 1989 (previously a deer named Sylvester); Clare mentioned 'The Morrice Danse' participating in Mummings' Plays.

What could be more pleasant than to duck in from the heat to the cool and atmospheric church once again to listen to the Greenwood Quire?\* I can understand the President's approving comments on being back in the church, the site of the John Clare Society's inaugural meetings!

So much to savour and I did not have time to make it back to Botolph's Barn for tea and toast, or the Swaddywell Artists. Not even a cup of tea at the village hall – and I still have not managed a coach trip; nor could I attend the Friday or Sunday activities. There is always next year and I hope many more festivals to add to the memory banks:

O poesys power ....  
& these associations of the past  
Like summer pictures in a winters blast  
Renews my heart to feelings as the rain  
Falls on the earth & bids it thrive again  
                  'The Moorhens Nest' (MP III.468)

Jim Heppell

\*If you are interested in reading about the concert given by the Greenwood Quire, have a look at Valerie Pedlar's blog: [choralsinging.wordpress.com](http://choralsinging.wordpress.com). Although the blog is mostly about choral singing in Southport, the post on 16 July 2013 is about West Gallery Quires and the concert at the Festival.

Ronald Blythe in St Botolph's, Helpston, 13 July 2013



Kelsey Thornton

## The President's Address

In his 2013 President's address, Ronnie Blythe reflected on the life of the John Clare Society, as one of the 'great literary societies' of Britain, and of those individuals who had championed the poet, notably Edmund Blunden. This year's festival was returning to St Botolph's Church where the Society had begun. Clare had also gone there himself, often apologetically as Sunday was his day for writing. The contribution of literary societies was immense in enlightening all kinds of people about their subject as well as attracting artists and scholars. However, it was not a question of simply singing the praises of their subject but rather of bringing the brilliance of great writers and artists into the present. 'When we read Clare', he reflected, 'we translate him into our own condition and it fits perfectly.'

Recalling the presence of his great friend Edmund Blunden, Ronnie spoke of the poet's love of John Clare which had grown before the First World War. He would eventually take the (1908) Symons collection with him into the trenches of the Somme teaching his comrades about the poet, even when they were going through gas practice. It was also a poet of the Second World War, Sidney Keyes, killed in the western desert in 1943 aged 21, who championed John Clare particularly through his poem 'A Garland for John Clare', with its haunting opening lines 'Whether the cold eye and the failing hand/Of these defrauded years ...' (see *For John Clare: an anthology of verse*, edited by John Lucas and published by the Society).

July 13 was the actual birthday of John Clare and his twin sister, and Society members came together both to honour him and with an inner knowledge of him. It was equally important to come together in the village where he had walked and worked, and where he was laid to rest. With poetry there was a kind of stream running all over the place, never failing. Through literature, and the public reflections on John Clare by great poets such as Seamus Heaney, there was a knowledge of Clare's inner vision, his world, his loves and his life in Helpston before he was shut away. Yet, he took with him in his mind inventories of his own departed place and in that sense he never went away.

It seemed appropriate, therefore, that Ronnie should also read Edmund Blunden's poem 'Lonely Love' (*The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse*, selected by Phillip Larkin, 1973, page 308) whose opening verse reads:

I love to see those loving and beloved  
Whom Nature seems to have spited; unattractive,  
Unnoticeable people, whose dry track  
No honey-drop of praise, or understanding,  
Or bare acknowledgement that they existed,  
Perhaps yet moistened. Still, they make their world.

Mike Meacham

## Festival 2013 – Guest Lecture

On the Festival's hot Saturday, and Clare's birthday, a healthy crowd flowed into St Botolph's church, seeking the cool, accessible intelligence of this year's guest speaker, Dr Sara Lodge, of the Department of English at St Andrews University. Dr Lodge is an expert on nineteenth-century literature and among her many publications, is her book on Thomas Hood – editor, journalist and humourist, and one of the major figures working at that still awkward fulcrum between what we now call Romantic and Victorian periods; Hood was a significant figure in the *London Magazine* circle too. In her talk, entitled 'John Clare's Sonnets: Talking Back to Tradition', Sara used her profound grasp of Romantic and Victorian literary cultures to inform her analysis of Clare's qualities and status as a sonneteer.

Sara's convincing argument established that Clare knew the formal traditions of English poetry as well as any sonnet writer of his day. And he was deft and experimental with the form, in an idiosyncratic manner, yet often in parallel with many of his contemporaries. His sonnets made up of seven or so couplets – sometimes disparaged as a corrupted, simplified version of the more classical sonnet forms (centrally, Shakespearean and Petrarchan) – in fact establish just how sophisticated Clare's knowledge of early English practitioners and experimenters was. Dr Lodge meticulously revealed how central Clare was to Victorian anthologies of sonnets, and how well appreciated his sonnets were across the nineteenth century, and how anthologists – through their selections and editing – rendered Clare more devout and orthodox than the vast array of sonnets he actually wrote now prove him to be. The lecture made insightful comparisons with sonnets by John Keats, William Wordsworth, Felicia Hemans, John Keble and the now unknown yet fascinatingly experimental sonneteer Henry Ellison (1811-1880), and his *Mad Moments* collection of 1833.

The limits of the time available meant that Dr Lodge could not engage with the many scholars who have studied Clare's sonnets; there is at least one PhD on his engagement with the form, and it would have been interesting to hear her contribution to the recent mini-spat in our *Journal* between John Lucas and Ben Hickman over 'Mouse's Nest' (2011 and 2012) – though she did spend some valuable time charting the intricacies of this poem. In much of the existing scholarship, Dr Lodge would have found support for her substantial and well-wrought points. For the purposes of this poignant birthday, Dr Lodge was right to stay focused on the rhythms and sounds of Clare's radical designs on this most traditional of forms. Indeed it was refreshing to hear a scholar celebrate – through considered and closely-textual explorations – the sounds, rhymes and rhythms of this master of the sonnet. The talk had Dr Lodge's audience completely enchanted.

Society members who missed Dr Lodge's talk, can access aspects of it in print: 'Contested Bounds: John Clare, John Keats and the sonnet', *Studies in Romanticism*, 51:4 (2012), 533-555.

Simon Kövesi

## Poetry and Wildflower Trail



On a scorching hot afternoon we followed a specially devised poetry and wildflower trail between the school and the church. Twelve stone-built houses, which would have been known to John Clare, were chosen to show in their windows a selection of flowers and grasses, beautifully arranged in antique bottles and vases.

Alongside each display was a poem which echoed the flowers displayed, sometimes directly (red clover matched with 'To a Red Clover Blossom', *photo right*), often more subtly (cranesbill, purple dead nettle and hedge rose 'To — on May Morning'). As far as we could tell, no flower was repeated, quite a feat, and their number and diversity were striking – reassuring too, given current anxieties over the threat to wild flowers and grasses from pesticides, fertilisers and other pollutants.



Inevitably there were some that we did not know, but other flowers noted included white clover, buttercups and foxglove (Church Cottage) alongside an extract from 'The Primrose Bank'; three cultivated orchids - 'a beautiful flower, that bedeck'd a mean pasture'; a spectacular show of grasses in an antique jug ('To an Insignificant Flower Obscurely Blooming in a Lonely Wild'). As a bonus, some of the children's winning poems from last year's competition were presented on cards alongside the displays. These were rendered in

fine calligraphy by Society member Mr Tooby, who had made illustrations of the birds depicted: robin, red kite, or owl. Pressed daisies fixed to the cards had been collected in late May from around John Clare's grave.

The trail was the brainchild of Anna Kinnaird, and Linda Curry chose the poems. The flowers were collected from Swaddywell Pit, the churchyard and nearby woods and verges by Anna, Mavis Leverington, and Jean Stowe of the Langdyke Trust. Anna then created the arrangements with her usual artistic flair. In a final flourish, she had arranged for the garden at Vicarage Farm House, which we have admired many times while waiting for the Stamford bus, to be open to visitors at the end of the afternoon.



Words: Susan Savva and Robert Heyes  
Photographs: Jean Stowe

## Festival Concert

The end of Saturday's formal proceedings at 7pm saw a large audience gather in St. Botolph's, Church for a concert given by two harpists, John Dalton (right) and Mark Harmer, joined by singer Stef Connor (below left). This was a new experience for many of us, including me, who had never been to a solo performance on the harp. John, who lives in Glastonbury and gives talks all round the West Country, played and sang during the first half.



John treated us to some really beautiful music, which he accompanied with commentary on the history of the harp, one of the oldest instruments known to humankind, and the kind of music played on the instrument. His harp was a French made Celtic harp, a very versatile instrument on which he plays music from all around the world. John gives talks on the history of the harp. Many kings, queens and saints (and no doubt a few sinners) played the harp. In the past it was the mark of the gentleman to play the harp and it was forbidden for serfs and lower orders to play it. In Ireland every gentleman was expected to play the harp (Ireland is represented on maps by the symbol of the harp). It was like the crown of kings - the hollow crown through which divine inspiration came.

The harp was seen as an instrument through which divine music could come. Apollo played the harp and the harp represented humankind —we were the instruments of the gods so the harp came to be seen as representing humankind in the hands of the gods. One of Mark's pieces was the oldest piece of written music known to us, found on a Greek tombstone near Ephesus and dated from 2000 years ago. It would originally have been played on a lyre. One small point that took me by surprise was when Mark played a few musical phrases in beautiful harmonics, which take great skill to get right, which he did by very gently touching the plucked string with the hand that was plucking using either the flats of the tops of his fingers or the thumb muscle. I knew about harmonics on violins and guitars — now I know about harmonics on harps!



Mark Harmer, from Cheltenham, teaches the lever harp and plays an American mass-produced Ravenna 34 which is big enough to sound very nice but small enough to put in a car, so it is very practical. He played a couple of solo pieces, including the lovely 'Carolans Dream', before being joined by Stef singing songs from Clare. Mark and Stef arranged all the pieces for this evening's performance. It was very beautiful and Stef (who has a PhD in music from York and whose main instrument is the piano) has a lovely voice.

To finish, both harpists and singer got together for something completely different - 'Summertime', from Porgy and Bess - a really great end to the John Clare Festival on Saturday!

Noël Staples

There is a video clip on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFIKx3YPL5I&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLDE8BD98DAC43477F> if you would like to be reminded of Mark's playing, and there are several other tracks on the site. Another YouTube clip has Stef singing John Clare's Lullaby, which was first performed at the Festival <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ9LyykMEd4>

### **RHS Chelsea Garden opened at John Clare Cottage**

As part of the John Clare Society Festival on July 13<sup>th</sup> Councillor Marco Cereste, Leader of the Peterborough City Council, officially opened the new garden at the John Clare Cottage. The garden has been designed by Adam Frost, who won a gold medal for it at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2012. Adam used the works of Clare and the countryside around Helpston as his inspiration for the design.

'You will see that in the last 8 weeks, we have almost completed a major community and volunteer project which has created a lovely garden which in a year will be a haven for wildlife and visitors', said Sara Blair-Manning of the John Clare Trust.

Professor Eric Robinson gave a short talk about John Clare and his relationship with nature. This followed a poetry recital by pupils from the Voyager School in Peterborough.

The garden is now open to visitors and over the next few months we will see it grow and develop, providing another reason to visit the John Clare Cottage.

David Dykes



John Clare's cottage. This year visitors to the Festival needed to shelter from the sun. Photograph by Valerie Pedlar.

## The 2013 Festival Service – St. Botolph’s Church

For the 7<sup>th</sup> year I was very privileged to write and lead the Festival Service, and I was thinking about a theme when I heard that a new collection of poems would be published at the Festival, *This Happy Spirit*, edited by Carry Akroyd and R.K. R. Thornton. I then had no choice but to base the service on *This Happy Spirit*. We had some good joyful hymns, a Clare paraphrase of a psalm, a responsive prayer adapted from Mother Theresa’s writing, the dedication of the new display and an address.

The address emphasised how easy it is and how wrong to label people. The label for Clare is often ‘depressive’, ‘sad’, ‘confused’, but we are reminded in the selection of poetry in *This Happy Spirit* of the enjoyment and happiness he found in nature, in the village life, in the seasons. Peter Moyse read the lesson and ‘Ploughman Singing’ and Carry read ‘The Skylark leaving her nest’. I also spoke of the place of the parish churches in our land and how much poorer would be the towns and villages without them. Even today it is in the parish church where many ‘rites of passage’ take place and in Clare’s day, together with the pubs, the churches were often the centre of community life.

It was therefore appropriate to upgrade the old display at the back of the church and to highlight Clare’s many connections with St. Botolph’s. My aim was to have something of the same quality as the panels in Botolph’s Barn. I think that this has been achieved. I thanked our President Ronald Blythe for his introductory letter on the display, Peter Moyse and Rodney Lines for their advice, John Lincoln for the design and Ken Girvan for printing. It is good that the church agreed to have this display as many visitors now come not only to the cottage but also to the church.

Ron Ingamells

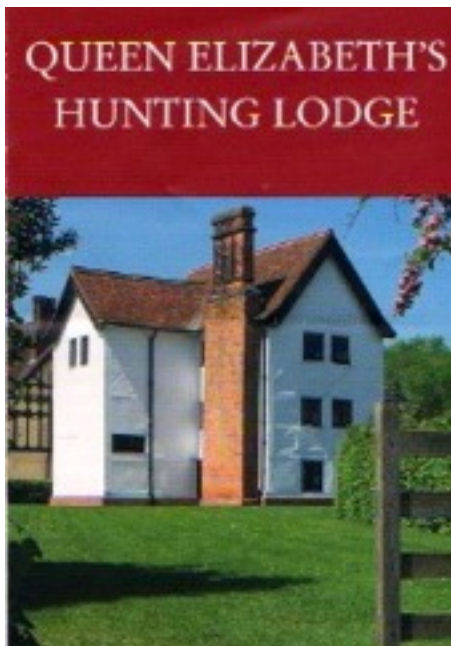


Ron Ingamells and the new display.

### John Clare: Forest Poet

The City of London manages Epping Forest, and arranges community activities in several venues, for local residents and visitors. These events include a series entitled *Past Time and Tipple*. On the evening of 17 July *Past Time and Tipple* hosted a talk by Pete Relph about John Clare's four years in the Forest, 1837-41. Pete knows a great deal about the local and natural history of the Forest and, of course, about Clare and his sojourn in Matthew Allen's asylum at High Beach. He also has a good stock of maps and images, old and new, of the Forest. The audience of about 40 people enjoyed his idiosyncratic and informative illustrated talk and Pete's readings from Clare's poetry. The talk and the poems aroused great interest. Several poems had been reproduced on A4 sheets which hung, like giant leaves, on the tress in the courtyard.

We met in The View, which is a visitor centre created in what was once the stable block of the magnificent Victorian Gothic Royal Forest Hotel, now a Premier Inn! It contains an exhibition about the Forest, small gallery for art exhibitions, a shop and meeting room, and a delightful courtyard where the 'tipple' was consumed, excellent ales, wine, tea and coffee.



The View is next door to Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, a wonderful timber framed grand-stand from which Henry VIII and his daughter could watch deer hunts. The View and the Hunting Lodge look out across Chingford Plain and the Forest, northwards towards Fairmead and High Beach, just over a mile distant from where Clare lived in Allen's asylum 170 years ago. The owner of Leppitt's Hill Lodge, once the main house of the asylum, was present at this talk, and he now has a plaque at the entrance of his house, about Clare's time there.

Epping Forest is well worth a visit at any season, and is easily approached from the M11 or M25 (post code E4 7QH), or by train from Liverpool Street to Chingford.

Peter Cox

**John Clare, *This Happy Spirit: Poems of Clare*, selected and edited by R.K.R. Thornton and Carry Akroyd, illustrated by Carry Akroyd. Helpston, Peterborough: The John Clare Society, 2013. 129 pp. £10. ISBN 978-0-9564113-3-4**

This is a lovely book, a pleasure to look at and leaf through, and a great pleasure to read. There is a good reason for this, and that is that it is based on the principle of pleasure, as its title suggests. What we have here is not the familiar 'Poor Clare', treading his dark path from humble poverty to brief success, village suspicion, intrusive enclosure and alienation through to the asylum wail of 'I Am'. Instead we are presented with – wait for it – happy Clare! Over 120 pages we see the poet taking pleasure in the diverse riches of nature, and shaping words and verses to describe them. In his Introduction, Kelsey Thornton writes that the anthology began as a collection of some of the many poems beginning with the words 'I love' (my online index of Clare's first lines lists 60, if you include 'I loved...'). It developed into a much richer and less schematic version of the same idea.

The book is spaciouly laid out, aptly and generously illustrated throughout with linocuts by Carry Akroyd, and edited with a deft hand by Professor Thornton. Both artist and editor have spent much of their lives studying and thinking about Clare—and it shows in every aspect of this book. If Clare's poetry suggests that genius may make even the tremendously difficult task of precisely describing sense and feeling in nature seem simple, then this edition provides an object lesson in the exceptionally tricky job of presenting the resulting poems fairly and without clumsy editorial or visual intrusion. Like Scott, Byron, Keats and many other writers of his age, Clare relied upon his editors to punctuate and tidy up his texts, but few could (or can) do so without distorting them in some way. And the pervasive obsession with Clare's lowly social class and supposed lack of education has always made the issue a hot potato, in a way it would never be for, say, Scott. The trouble now is that the reaction against what was later seen as the Victorian mangling of Clare's poems, produces a text that is uncomfortable to read (especially on the eye). The bare modern editing style, sometimes called 'textual primitivism', also seems mannered and is perhaps equally unfair to Clare's true intentions. A compromise style of 'light' punctuation and verbal standardising was devised by Geoffrey Summerfield and demonstrated in his excellent Penguin selection (1990). Here, this approach has matured into a careful and consistent method, and the editors have cleaned up the text without much compromising Clare's distinctive dialect and grammatical forms. They also deserve credit for adding simple titles where these are lacking. This breaks another taboo of primitivist editing, but as with their textual editing it is managed sensitively, in Clarean style and with the lightest of touches, and enables much clearer textual navigation.

The volume is uniform with the second edition of David Powell's Clare anthology for children, *The Wood is Sweet*, first published in the 1960s and reprinted a few years ago by the Clare Society with new linocuts by Carry Akroyd. (The present volume is thoughtfully dedicated to David, who sadly died last year after a lifetime of editing and curating Clare.) I do hope that this series continues, since it seems to me a model of how best to present Clare to a contemporary wide readership. It can be recommended as a starting point for Clare beginners (and, like *The Wood is Sweet*, for youngsters), but still has plenty to offer experienced Clareans. It may be comfortably enjoyed by all Clare's readers.

There is a good clear contents list and a first-line index, and like the Summerfield anthology this one has themed sections (again useful for navigating), together with an Introduction, Chronology and Glossary. There are six sections:

'The Poet of the Fields'	[11-30]
'Flowers'	[31-46]
'Forests, Woods and Trees	[47-62]
'Birds'	[63-80]
'The Seasons'	[81-104]
'Village Life'	[105-122]

There is very little to criticise. I wasn't sure why the seasons were always capitalised, and I favour Clare's archaic forms like 'childern' and 'awthorn', both standardised here, though plenty of others are kept as Clare wrote them. Minimal footnoting is sensible since little explanation is needed beyond the simple glossary, but I should probably have footnoted 'friendly Campbell' (p. 48) as Thomas Campbell, son of a once-famous poet of the same name. Thomas junior was an inmate and regular fellow walker with Clare at High Beach. His friendships with Clare and the occasional house-guest/inmate Alfred Tennyson are noted in Jonathan Bate's biography of Clare and give the strongest evidence that the two great poets probably met during Clare's four-year stay in Matthew Allen's asylum in Epping Forest. Campbell pops up in the opening lines of one of those 'I love' poems: 'I love the forest and its airy bounds / Where friendly Campbell takes his daily rounds'. That Clare could find it in himself to write with such natural and companionable pleasure, even in the depths of his stay in what he called 'Allen's hells', strongly validates the editors' primary aim: to let the pleasure principle rule. This is an exemplary, beautifully produced, joyful (say it), and strongly recommended selection.

John Goodridge  
Nottingham Trent University



Carry Akroyd and wildlife artist John Davis promoting their new books, *This Happy Spirit* and *Jewels Beyond the Plough*, at the JCS Festival in the Annakinn Gallery Helpston. Photograph by Sue Young.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### **Clare's Journey: Terence Deadman CD**

I was fortunate to be at the premiere of this work in Buckden in 2012 and at the second performance in Helpston at the Helpston Festival later that same year. I am so pleased that there is now this admirable CD to sustain the memory of it.

Terence Deadman has produced a remarkable composition which does not fit into any particular category. A mixture of narrative, written by Trevor Harvey and several poems, it is an evocation of the journey from Epping to Helpston. There is sadness but some humour creeps in, for example in 'The Drovers' Song'. The picture of the gypsies galumphing along to the rhythm of the tango still makes me smile.

Mr Deadman has chosen a strong group of singers who mainly have solos, but who perform the ensembles with great sensitivity. The accompaniment is provided by piano and harp which seems a strange combination but which works very well as soon as it is heard near the beginning in the poem, 'To Mary', creating a quite magical effect.

The CD is accompanied by an excellent leaflet in which it is stated that the CD is dedicated to Peter Moyse. The full words are reproduced, together with a short biography of Clare by Rodney Lines and two pictures of Clare.

Janet Ingamells

The CD is available to Society members at the discounted price of £9.00, of which £6.00 will be donated to The John Clare Society – see order form.

### **Carry Akroyd calendar**

Carry Akroyd has made a calendar for 2014 with 9 of her linocut illustrations to 'This Happy Spirit' and 3 from 'The Wood is Sweet'. The format is similar to her earlier 'The Shepherd's Calendar' calendar, black on grey, with short quotations from the Clare poem associated with each illustration. £9 including postage, a perfect pop-in-the-post present. Order from [www.carryakroyd.co.uk](http://www.carryakroyd.co.uk) or email [carry@carryakroyd.co.uk](mailto:carry@carryakroyd.co.uk).

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**17 May 2014: Anniversary Concert**, including a new setting by Ralph Woodward of one of Clare's poems, to be given by the Fairhaven Singers conducted by Ralph Woodward. 7.00 pm at St. John's Church, Peterborough.

Tickets £12.50 reserved seat £10 unreserved may be ordered from the concert organiser Ron Ingamells: [rjingamells@btinternet.com](mailto:rjingamells@btinternet.com), 01480 811608.

## **John Clare in Space: Poetry, Nature and Contemporary Culture 150th Anniversary Conference**

**30–31 May 2014, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK**

This two-day conference at Oxford Brookes University seeks to explore the work, life, contexts and culture of the English poet, John Clare (1793–1864), and to investigate the reasons Clare might be increasingly relevant to contemporary culture. Confirmed speakers include Jonathan Bate, Richard Mabey and Iain Sinclair.

Further information at <http://www.english-languages.brookes.ac.uk/conferences/2014/John-Clare/>

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## **The Friends of Festival Scheme 2013**

Our thanks go out to those who contributed to the Friends scheme again this year. It enabled us to raise £400 (plus the extra we are able to claim in gift aid), for which we are extremely grateful.

Subscribers were: Reginald Roberts, Nancy Titman, Dr S Sullivan, David Day, Mr & Mrs D Jones, Mr M Hiscock, Mr L Tooby, Michael Davis, Bob Heyes, Susan Savva, Mrs D Rose, Norman Lee, Mrs C Morgan, Colin & Marion Marshal, Thomas Long, Dave Greenwood, Mike Dunne, Oscar Turnill, William Williams, Bob Kelly, Mr D Reed, Mrs J Finch, Mrs P M Jenkins, Judith Rytina, Mrs D Ward, Peter Bainbridge, Lionel Little, Leslie Reason, Chris & Jill Holmes, Linda Curry, Tony Richards, Paul Johnson, Robert Ingle, Jenni Bancroft, Peter & Sue Woodsford, Bridget Smith, Christine Carlin, Peter Cox, Geoffrey Bruce, Jim Heppell, Michael Sharpe, Geoffrey Cleave, Mrs C Noyes, Jim & Kathy McVittie, Mrs L M Wright, Cherry Durrant, and Rodney Lines.

## **Facebook Group**

If you are on Facebook, you might want to consider joining the John Clare Poet Facebook group. They currently have 114 members and are active discussants. Just search for 'John Clare' and 'group' once you are in Facebook.

## MEMBERSHIP

### Reminder for Renewal of Subscriptions – 2013/14

If you have a Membership Renewal Form with your newsletter it means that you have not yet renewed for this year. We rely on your subscription to keep the Society going so please renew as soon as possible, by sending the form to me together with your cheque made payable to the John Clare Society **and a stamped self addressed envelope** for the return of your Membership Card. Those who have not renewed by 1 December 2013 will unfortunately be removed from our membership database and will no longer receive Newsletters and information from the Society.

Thank you – Sue Holgate, Membership Secretary.

### New Members

We welcome the following new members since our last newsletter.

Mohan Bahra from London.

Linda Baldock from Sandhills, Oxford.

Professor and Mrs. Blackie from Thrapston.

Hazel Carlin from Oakham.

Paul Colbert from Kempston, Bedford.

Philip Dunkerley from Bourne, Lincs.

John Dunn from Filgrave, Bucks.

Pauline Hannon from Darlington.

Charles Jagers from Glynneath.

Michael Jones from Childrey, Wantage.

Tony Lanfranchi from Taunton.

Helen Lebreton from France.

Anthony Lewis from Townill, Swansea.

David Morley from Warwick.

Alan Sell from Milton Keynes