



THE
JOHN CLARE SOCIETY
Newsletter

October 2015

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THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

This issue of the newsletter contains reports of the Festival, which, blessed by lovely weather, was a great success. On behalf of the committee I must express our enormous gratitude to Sue Holgate, who organised the Festival in addition to her other duties, which this year have been more than usually onerous. Thank you, Sue, and thanks to your working group, who have supported you so well.

Our evening entertainment this year was provided by Chris Harrison, who, accompanying himself on guitar, sang songs based on the poetry of his great-great-grandfather, Joseph Skipsey. In between the songs he told us about the life and achievements of this remarkable man, who worked in a colliery for most of his life, but from 1889 to 1891 was custodian of Shakespeare's birthplace. It was a fascinating and moving performance.

Kelsey Thornton has written an interesting article about Skipsey in this year's Journal. It is one of several pieces written in honour of Professor John Goodridge, who retires this autumn from Nottingham Trent University.

Finally, my grateful thanks to this newsletter's contributors, and my apologies to those whose contributions I've been unable to include this time. They will make their appearance in the February 2016 issue. But I will also be grateful for further material – reports or reviews, pictures or poems – whatever you think would interest other members of the Society.

Valerie Pedlar

The John Clare Society AGM

As last year, the AGM was held in St Botolph's church and, after welcoming members, Linda Curry, our Chairman, outlined the schedule for the day and drew attention to the Journal, which this year, is dedicated to and celebrates the work of Professor John Goodridge, who retires later this year.

Sue Holgate, who took over from Jim Heppell as Membership Secretary from May, had to report that the membership statistics were not very satisfactory. In part, this was due to his handling of the role, but there also seems to have been a decline in membership. Sue outlined the measures she is taking to get things into better order. There was some discussion about the reasons for falling membership with various suggestions put forward, which Sue duly noted. It was agreed that the next membership year, commencing July 2016, would see a simplification of the different membership categories, abolishing the retired rate to give: £15 for individuals, £20 for joint membership and £5 for students.

Jim Heppell's roles having been taken over by Norman Lee (as Treasurer) and Sue Holgate (as Membership Secretary), the other officers and committee members were re-elected en bloc. Noel Crack (co-opted onto the committee since January 2015), Erin Lafford, Ana Bow-Bertrand and Stephen O'Sullivan were all elected as committee members.

Linda announced that Ronald Blythe, after so many years as our President, has said that he will retire after the next Festival. A report on his talk this year about Edmund Blunden is on pp.8-10.

The Chairman's report follows below.

The 2016 Festival will be **15-17 July 2016.**

Valerie Pedlar

Chair's Report to the John Clare Society AGM 2015

Building on the events held in 2014 to commemorate the 150th anniversary, Clare has achieved various mentions in the media, including as a specialist subject on *Mastermind*, the topic of various questions on *University Challenge*, *Flog It* on a visit to Clare Cottage, and *Bargain Hunt* at the Clare Collection in the Peterborough Museum. I also managed to get 'The Invitation' read out on *Poetry Please*. So, if you want to hear more Clare on the radio, why not send in a request to *Poetry Please*?

On a more serious note though, this year the Society has experienced a bit of a crisis – which, I must stress, has now been resolved.

Following various issues with the way in which Treasury and Membership business was being operated, our Treasurer/Membership Secretary was removed from his joint role (being replaced by Norman Lee and Sue Holgate). At this point, it was discovered that most of the Society's working capital/reserve funds had been 'borrowed' and supporting documentation since 2012 (audited accounts, bank statements, etc.) had been falsified in order to disguise this activity.

Immediate action was taken to lodge a Serious Incident Report with the Charity Commission (CC), and report the fraud to the Police. This has resulted in a long case investigation by the CC, which has now reached a satisfactory conclusion, with the JCS trustees having done all that they could to resolve the issue and to instigate new procedures to help to prevent this from happening again. The Police action resulted in the ex-Treasurer receiving an official caution.

Our main concern was to (a) keep publicity to a minimum, but primarily (b) ensure the Society's viability. With the latter in mind, a solicitor's debt collector was commissioned to retrieve the monies taken. This was successful, and all the money (including our incurred costs) is now back in the bank. Our current bankers, Barclays, took nearly three months to get us up and running again and I am in the process of lodging a formal complaint with them, before proceeding to the Financial Services Ombudsman.

The immediate question I am sure you will ask is how could we let this happen? Anyone coming into this role in the Society spends a year on committee first, so that we can all get to know one another and they can learn how we work. In addition, a financial report is presented to each committee meeting, and the end-of-year accounts are independently examined (not a requirement of the CC but something we do in order to protect the Society and the person doing the job). With the agreement of the CC, we changed our constitution to allow for single signatory online banking – after advice by the ex-

Treasurer/Barclays that dual approval was not possible. This has subsequently been changed. We genuinely felt that there was no cause for concern.

Older and wiser, and with new financial procedures in place, I can assure you that we will do all that we can to not let this happen again. In the meantime, I would like to express my grateful thanks to Norman and Sue for taking on board the sorting out of the accounts and membership data – particularly at a time when Sue was coping with the organisation of festival.

If any members are still concerned and would like to discuss this further, you can email or telephone me.

Linda Curry, Chair

The Seeds of Change: JCS Festival 2015

The theme of the 2015 John Clare festival was The Seeds of Change, changes which had in many respects blighted Clare's life: enclosure and the loss of the common land, the coming of the railways, the rapid loss of his fame and the eventual loss of his liberty when he saw friends forsaking him 'like a memory lost' and those he loved dearest becoming more strangers than the rest. But other changes affecting Clare's life and our understanding of him were equally far-reaching and often positive, making the poet the man he was: the man celebrated at each annual festival.

Both keynote speakers at the 2015 festival – Society President Ronald Blythe and Dr Robert 'Bob' Heyes – offered their own reflections on the seeds of change. A crucial one for the Society as a whole was the announcement that Ronald Blythe intended to stand down as President after thirty-five years at the helm. Yet he took the opportunity to share his memories of poet Edmund Blunden, a typical rural poet of the time who could be found in pubs, in his case The Bull in Long Melford. Blunden, said, Ronnie, 'brought the twentieth century and Clare into our understanding'; and the seeds of change into our thinking. One of the great Georgian poets, Blunden had taken Clare's poetry into the trenches of the First World War. Later, in 1928 he published his small book, *Sketches in the Life of John Clare* with its introduction that, said Ronnie, enables us even now to think of another world. Nobody, in his view, had written of Clare with such love and understanding. Sometimes a village is portrayed as an 'entrapment' with people not going anywhere, but Blunden understood that there was always movement in village life. Clare's own ancestors from Scotland had brought such seeds of change to the countryside, as indeed two centuries later did the American servicemen of the Second World War. Ronnie urged a republication of Blunden's book, perhaps by the Society.

Bob Heyes was to pick up Ronnie's notion of entrapment when exploring a few moments of change, perhaps the turning points, in Clare's life, which had far reaching consequences for him. One could possibly have been the death of his twin sister which most writers on Clare had made little of. Yet research had shown that it could have been enormously significant, and he cited the work of Joan Woodward in *The Lone Twin* (2009) that it was significant if the loss was in early life. Indeed, that there was evidence of a connection between the loss of a twin and mental illness later in life. It had left a weakness and a vulnerability. Much speculation already exists about the roots of Clare's mental illness, most of it without real foundation. But Clare himself gave some clues in his writing when he reflected on the impact of the death of a farm worker who fell from a load of hay and broke his neck. This, argued Bob Heyes, also carried the seeds of

change and had all the hallmarks of what we now see as post-traumatic stress disorder.

But perhaps the great turning point in Clare's life and the seeds of all subsequent change was his discovery of reading which gave him a 'new mental landscape'. David Vincent has written of this more generally concerning working class autobiographers, in *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom* (1982). For Clare it had the force of religious conversion. His life was transformed and nothing would ever be the same again. It is likely that Clare's ambition to learn preceded his interest in poetry. At that time education resulted in reading coming first, followed by writing. But much of the reading came from second hand or borrowed books with often little choice as to the subject. His schooling also had another valuable function as revealing to him that he was more able than other pupils and therefore different from them. He won prizes without trouble. The ambition, the drive to excel came from this realization of his difference and was therefore another important seed of change.

Yet this pursuit of difference was not an easy road for Clare to follow and needed an iron will and self-dedication when it meant being cut off from his contemporaries. Consequently, meeting somebody else from the working class, Thomas Porter, who shared the same ambitions and the same privations, as well as sharing books, was crucially supportive of Clare's endeavours. But perhaps the most important person in Clare's literary life was Edward Drury of Stamford and the recognition he received from him. While money was an important interest for both there was much more to the relationship than that. While Drury was part teacher he was also in awe of Clare and it is arguable that without Drury, Clare might never have got into print at all, or developed as a writer and found a London publisher. Though Drury's initial portrayal of Clare's character to the London publisher John Taylor as womaniser, drinker and hating work was quickly retracted after consulting those closest to him, it still persists today.

Finally, Bob Heyes threw out what he described as a 'poser' for his audience. He speculated on the fact that Clare's mother visited Stamford frequently and was well known. Did she, therefore, have a business there and did Clare accompany her, thus opening a child's eyes to future possibilities? More possible seeds of change.

While, as Blunden observed, Clare was so 'skilled in natural observation', the shaping and expressing of his observations and ultimately bringing them to the reader grew from these scattered seeds of change. As Geoffrey Summerfield observed, in his growing maturity Clare's 'discoveries derived not so much from sheer

observation as from sustained painful reflection, centred on his experience of changes and contradictions' (*Selected Poems*, p46).

Mike Mecham



Ronald Blythe R. with Rodney and Pauline Lines. Photo: Valerie Pedlar.

Midsummer ceremony and poetry competition

This year's Midsummer ceremony and poetry competition easily maintained the excellent standard set in past years, with splendid contributions from all age-ranges at the John Clare School.

The quality of presentation, handwriting and skill in writing poems on the theme of 'Seeds of Change' impressed the judges greatly and gave us many hours of deliberation, before finally – and unanimously – agreeing on our choices. So I want to thank the children for all their efforts, the teacher for their encouragement, and the parents who have always fully supported this significant event in the school's calendar. Thanks also to Councillor David Over for again presenting the prizes, and to my fellow judges, Mavis Leverington and Pauline Lines. The poems – winning and highly commended – are printed below.

This year, the Peterborough Poet Laureate, Peter Irving, brought the prize-giving ceremony to an end by addressing the children – in rhyme.

Rodney Lines



Midsummer cushions. Photo:Peter Moyse.

BUTTERCROSS

Spring

Spring! Spring! Spring!
Is here today.
It will come to Maisy and Freddie,
We will play outside.

Winner: Maisy Plant (Age 4)

Spring

Spring! Spring!
Yellow chicks are finally here,
Baby lambs too.
Spring, Spring is finally here.

Highly commended: Rosie Tighe (Age 5)

WOODGATE

The Four Seasons

Spring, the season of baby animals
being born and dandy lions blooming from the ground.

Autumn, the cold time when it is dull at night.

Summer, a hot part of the year birds
singing like a music box.

Winter, the time Santa gives you presents
and fires are bursting with flames.

Winner: Joshua Akintomide

Seasons of the year

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter.
The flowers are pushing up, there is blossom growing in the
trees.

Summer, Autumn, Winter.
Everyone is sunbathing and going on holiday.

Autumn, Winter.
The leaves are falling off trees and the children are playing in
the leaves.

Winter.
The children are making snowmen and turning up the heat to
keep warm.

Highly commended: Amelia Rogers

BROADWHEEL

Change through the years

The bell is ringing, calling the scholars to school
Clasping brown-paper bags of bread and cheese.
Walking along dirty tracks, dust all over the place.
Frisly bonnets bustle through the school gate.
Wearing waistcoats the boys doff their caps and girls curtsy.
Using scratchy slates they learn the three R's hoping to use dip pens.
The Mistress playing the harmonium, scholars look to the blackboard focusing on the white chalk words.

Alarm clock wakes drooling children
Rushing to lunch boxes and books.
Walking, driving, cycling on dark tarmac roads.
Red sweat shirted people walk through the door
Greeting their teacher "good morning".
Squeaky white boards, soft pens,
Computers and technology.
Clubs of cookery, chess and sport.

Winner: Sharifa Hughes

Change in school history

Alarm clock wakes up lazy pupils. Get changed, eat breakfast, get in a car.
At school teacher says hello and your day begins.
Laptops, hudls, chrome books.
Felt tips, crayons, high tech white board.
Pencils, rubbers, trays and lockers.
Bright classrooms of yellows, pinks and greens. John Clare is watching over us.

Bell ringing! Scholars need to get to school fast!
Grabbing their baked potato and an apple, dossing their caps and curtsying, greeting their teacher.
Black boards, chalk rags, dip pen, harmonium and prayers.
Dull classrooms of greys, blacks and blues. Queen Victoria watching over the children.

Highly commended: Mia Hammond

TORPEL

John Clare Memories

I walked through the door,
Knowing no one at all,
A little seed waiting to be fed knowledge,
The start of my journey going to college.

Meeting the headteacher, Mr Fry,
He was my hero, this memory will
Never fade as time goes by.
Maths and literacy skills to be learnt,
Responsibilities and privileges earned.

I walk through the door and meet my buddy.
I'll help them play as well as study,
Now I have to go after encouraging my buddy,
Who I have seen develop and flourish.

I go through the years like
A baby bird learning to fly,
I'll spread my wings I'm ready to say goodbye,
The moment of reception was the start of my journey to
college,
I'll look back and thank John Clare for my knowledge.

Winner: Alex Nicolson

Moving on

When I was six I moved to John Clare,
When I first walked in it felt like
A nightmare.
I can see bigger children and colourful walls,
I can hear loud shouts and loud calls.

One of my best memories from John Clare was when I was in
year two,
The whole school went to the beach
There was a huge queue,
Sandy sandwiches and ice cream too,
Even the sky was light, bright blue.

One of my best memories from
John Clare was when Torpel went to Blist Hill,
It was really brill.
The shops were different and old,
They were very small and very cold.

Now I am moving on, I have found my
Way out of the maze,
I am not lost anymore after all
These days.
I am excited and anxious at the
Same time,
But I am ready to learn and I am
Ready to climb.

Highly commended: Stephen Bliss

The John Clare Society Festival: Helpston Village Quiz

1. Where would you find a Midsummer Cushion today at the JC Festival?

Answer – Around John Clare’s grave in St Botolph’s churchyard.

2. 'He who pelted o'er/ was reckoned on a mighty man'. What were they pelting at?

Answer – The Weathercock.

3. John Clare was born in 1793. Which monarch was on the throne at that time?

Answer – George III

4. What was added to The Golden Drop/Eastwell Spring water to make it more pleasant to drink?

Answer – Honey

5. 'Winnows in the air – till in the airs she sings'...

What bird with one of the most evocative countryside songs is Clare describing?

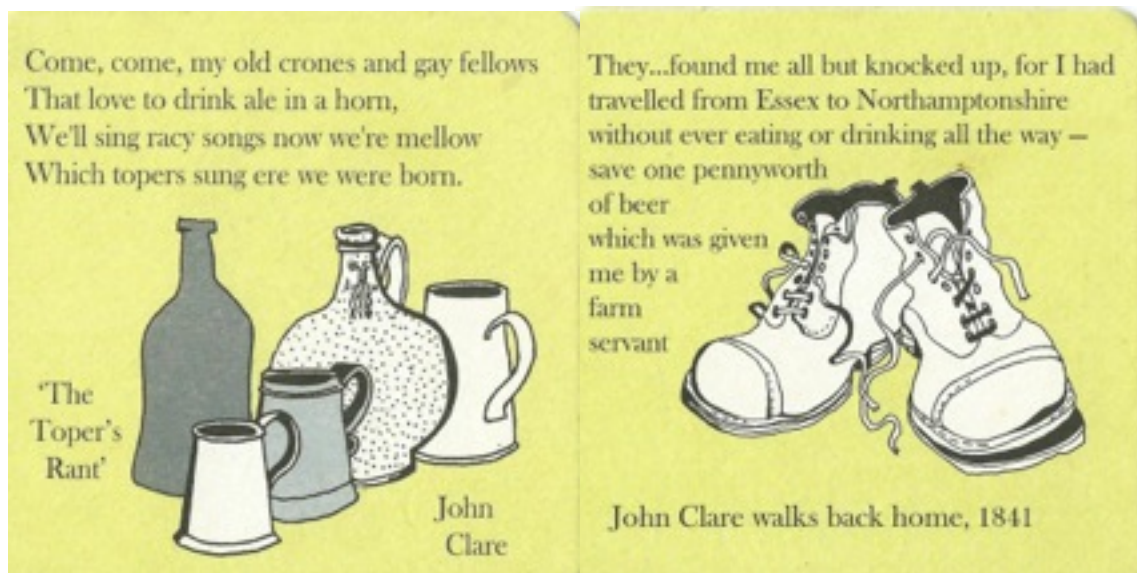
Answer – The Skylark

6. What unusual shape is the base of the Market/Butter Cross?

Answer – Heart shaped (though would accept 'Teardrop' shaped)

7. The Bluebell Inn. What is painted on the inn sign?

Answer – One side a Blue Bell – the other side a little girl holding a bunch of bluebells.



Beeremats designed by Carry Akroyd were freely available in the Bluebell, on the tables at the Village Hall and in Annakin's shop/gallery. The project was supported and funded by Lesley, the landlady at the Bluebell, the JCS and committee member Anna Kinnaird.

8. What was a wooden tool called a flail used for?

Answer – Threshing

9. What was the name of John and Martha's first child?

Answer – Anna Maria born 2 July 1820

10. John Clare married Martha Turner in Great Casterton. Which county is it in?

Answer – Rutlandshire

11. In 1921 a plaque was unveiled on the John Clare Cottage by which poet and author born in 1896?

Answer – Edmund Blunden

12. Which bird is usually associated with Michaelmas?

Answer – The Goose

13. Rice/Royce Wood was Clare's favourite wood. He mentions '*Wind Flowers*' carpeting the woodland floor in early spring – By what name are they better known?

Answer – Wood Anemones

14. In 'The Journal' 4 June 1825 Clare wrote: 'Saw three fellows at the end of Royce Wood laying out the plan for an 'iron railway'. Which year did the railway come to Helpston?

Answer – 1846

15. At the Festival the John Clare Primary School was celebrating when it first opened – What year did it open?

Answer – 1965

16. A 'Clock-a-Clay' is a welcome sight to any gardener – What is it?

Answer – A Ladybird

17. 'Little Trotty Wagtail' describes the antics of a favourite bird. What colour is a 'Pied Wagtail'?

Answer – Black and White

18. The Almshouses in West Street were endowed by Sir James Bradford a local boy who found fame and fortune working for the new railway. Which pub, still open today, is where he was born in 1841?

Answer – The Bluebell, Woodgate

19. To commemorate the Centenary of Clare's death a tree was grown and planted on the village green. From what seed/nut was it grown?

Answer – Acorn (oak tree)

20. The John Clare Memorial stands on the site of the village pond. The pond was the focus for fairs and feast days where a greasy pole was laid over the pond and young men would compete to cross it to win the prize. What was the prize?

Answer – A Pig



Arthur Pedlar and Bob Curry take a break from the village walk and quiz.
Photo: Valerie Pedlar.

A Journey with John Clare

I came to John Clare through ornithology. I can't remember when I first became fascinated by birds but I do know that before I was ten years old I would be out in the countryside, with my 'Observer's book', trying to identify what I saw.

In 1966 James Fisher published *The Shell Bird Book* and in it he described the important part that birds have played in inspiring our artists, composers and writers over the centuries. In his book he devoted two pages to John Clare; it was a revelation. Here was an ordinary, working-class man who felt as I did but who could describe and convey his feelings and what he saw with an authenticity and a clarity that I had not seen before. The more I read of Clare, with his ability to see nature and man as they really are, the more I felt empowered to follow my own sense of what was true.

Over the next fifteen years, whilst gathering together my small library of books by and about Clare, I gained an interest in natural history books in general and my collection of these also mounted. So much so that I then decided to try my hand at bookselling. During this time I had worked as a builder, but as things evolved this became part-time and was then gradually dropped all together. I should say that on becoming a full time bookseller, for reasons which I don't fully understand, I decided that I would not buy and sell John Clare but keep my Clare collecting and bookselling completely separate.

Early in 1981, soon after entering the bookselling fraternity, I saw an appeal in the *Daily Telegraph* for people interested in the formation of a John Clare society. I applied at once. For the next twenty years, until my wife died in 2002, we enjoyed what I can only describe as a very fulfilling way of life, travelling the country, doing bookfairs, buying books and sending out catalogues. During this time we had motor-homes and so were able enjoy the outdoors and remain close to nature.

After my wife's very sudden death in 2002, I went into a very low place and eventually succumbed to severe depression. I was in hospital for five months and had to give up the books. There followed a long slow climb back into the light. However, I eventually met my new partner in 2006 and a whole new adventure started to unfold. She had just bought a property on the Isle of Arran and we moved there. Having spent four years on Arran, we came to realise that the severe weather and the relative isolation were not for us and we moved down to the more gentle countryside and warmer climate of the Frome valley in Somerset.

Here I have returned to bookselling, on a part-time basis, but with a difference. I am gradually running down my stock of natural history

books and have started to specialize in books by and about John Clare, as well as those on the effects of changes in agriculture on the common man in the last several hundred years. So you can see, things have gone full circle. I no longer want to keep Clare to myself but to share him with as many people as possible. Already I have discovered the big change that there has been in the general public's awareness of Clare in the years that I was out of bookselling. People are coming to Clare from many different angles. Clare, the superb poet, of course but also Clare the ornithologist, Clare, the until now almost unheard voice of the agricultural labourer from before the Industrial Revolution and Clare, the advocate of a new relationship between man and nature. It is an exciting time and I want to be a part of it, which is why I decided to apply to join the committee of the John Clare Society.

Noel Crack

October Flowers

I'm watching earth take back
its everything, not hurriedly,
not choosing this or that
but taking all.

It seems that some will be reprieved
when flowers still try to make a show,
but Campion's pale, watered red
and Meadowsweet's faint scent
only belie this late sun's warmth.

They're not tough enough
to make a stand against the elements.
their hold will loosen,
their fabric quietly distilled
anonymously.

Mike Sharpe



Hollyhocks at John Clare Cottage. Photo: Peter Moyse.

Into The Stars CD The Fairhaven Singers conducted by Ralph Woodward.

Introducing a new and delightful CD by the renowned Fairhaven Singers.

For Clare Society members the special tracks to enjoy are the two Clare poems 'Graves of Infants' and 'Insects' set to music by the remarkable Somtow Sucharitkul. A Thai-American educated in England, he is a science fiction writer, a horror novelist, a composer of operas, musicals and ballet, a conductor and founder of the Siam Philharmonic! We were very fortunate that he was willing to compose settings of two contrasting poems by John Clare. These were commissioned to mark the 150th anniversary of the poet's death, and first performed at a concert hosted by the John Clare Society in Peterborough on 17 May 2014.

When the Fairhaven Singers gave the second performance in Cambridge Ralph Woodward said that it was one of the most difficult songs they had ever sung. This is not apparent on the CD as they sing with their usual professionalism and sensitivity. The two poems chosen by Sucharitkul illustrate Clare's capacity to write with the deepest feeling on the one hand and also his acute observation of nature as, for instance, he notices 'These tiny loiterers in the barley's beard' ('Insects').

There is much more to enjoy on this CD of new compositions. A memorable poem by Andrew Motion is set to music by Thomas Hewitt Jones to mark the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten. Will Todd's 'Songs of Peace' is an amalgam of ancient Latin liturgical words, an Anglican hymn and new lyrics by the composer. Especially beautiful is the fifth part, 'A Song of Peace'. The final piece is an arrangement by Ralph Woodward of the traditional 'Drink to me only'.

CD available from Ralph Woodward, price £14. Contact him via email: ralph.woodward@btinternet.com, or I could arrange (01480811608 or mobile 07592029826).

Ron Ingamells

Forthcoming events

- The book of the Clare film *By Our Selves* will be launched at the Bloomsbury festival in London on **Friday 23 October 2015**. The film itself is now being shown at selected cinemas around the country.
- Ron Ingamells has commissioned Ralph Woodward to compose a setting of Clare's poem 'Summer Happiness' in memory of his wife, Janet. The first performance will be at Queen's College, Cambridge on **9 July 2016**.
- John Clare Society Festival, Helpston **15-17 July 2016**.

New Members

We welcome the following new members:

Tony Gowan from Redhill, Surrey; Rosamond Richardson from Saffron Walden; Cate Walker from Leeds; Charles Barlow from Macclesfield; Valerie Williams from Wrexham; Roger Keyes from York; Elizabeth Coombs from York; Nicola Gooch from Monks Eleigh, Suffolk; Polly Feversham from Aberford, Leeds; Catharine Weaver from Stamford; Joanne Mildenhall from Sevenoaks; Phillip Wearne from Barking; Nigel Kellman from Coventry; Paul Gale from Southampton; Peter Toctan from Sheffield; Richard Mann from Royston; David Evans from Bristol; Andrea Mason from Barnsley; Peter Misselbrook from E. Lothian; Gary Rowley from Peterborough; Jennnifer Cramb from Peterborough; Peter Batten from Hove; Seth Reno from Montgomery, USA; David Parker from Calgary, USA; Donald Parker from Greenwich, USA; Michael Nicholson from Santa Monica, USA; Emily Howard from Ann Arbor, USA; Mary Ellen Smith from Portland, Oregon, USA.

Renewal of Membership 2015-2016 - Reminder

If you have a Renewal of Membership form in your newsletter it means that you have not yet renewed for the forthcoming year. I would be most grateful if you could renew as soon as possible by sending me a cheque to the address on the form. Those who have not renewed by the beginning of December will be removed from our database and will no longer receive newsletters or the Journal. Our Society relies on our faithful members and we would be grateful if you would consider renewing your membership for a further year.

Sue Holgate, Membership Secretary

The following poem was inspired by the blank p.20 in the last hard copy issue of the newsletter. The number of pages is always in multiples of four, and all are usually occupied. The e-newsletter, of course, is not constrained by the exigencies of print, and the question of blank pages doesn't arise, but readers will no doubt enjoy this poem, which appeared on p.20 of the October newsletter; here, however, occupying p.23.

Wot No Page Twenty!

John would have been most distressed.
Such an emptiness was surely meant
To be made use of, certainly not wasted.

How he'd have treasured such a blank last
Sheet, guileless, staring invitation sent
Like a missive's silent reverse posted

To him, from distant City grey, now past,
Perhaps by some rare admiring friend
Over the same dusty miles he'd ghosted

Himself across. That journey home to bright
Flights of words, chimed with rhymes, rent
Out of shared over-arching blue, or wrestled

Up from deep within his own life's plight.
John would surely have turned a present
Need to windfall use, good fortune rustled

Up for his own everyday musings. Nights
Following days, following nights spent
Alone; moons, suns, stars, wind-hustled

Clouds, all those endless orisons of light.
Whilst all nature, source of his lost plenty
Glared alarmingly back upon his wasted

Familiar emptiness, the bereft poet
Himself staring into that white eternity
Of his life's page. "I have nothing more to..."

Bob Tristram