



THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

Newsletter no. 128

October 2016



THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

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Peter Moyse at the Festival in 2009

Photo: Peter Leverington

I am so saddened by Peter's sudden death. His coming to Helpston made him a host for all of us who arrived there every July to celebrate John Clare. He was in fact the perfect resident for all of us who visited that quiet countryside, and his own interpretation of it both by photography and in that modest voice of his was perfect. It will be strange and a huge loss to be there without him. I treasure those quiet but authoritative books of his. He made us see things which brought us close to Clare and to my mind his reading of the poems was remarkable. Not that he knew it. Myself – all of us – gained something from Peter in our search for Clare which was truly remarkable and I am so sorry that we have lost him – both he and Mary, for she too was such a great friend. What was it that Henry Vaughan said? – 'They have all gone up into the world of light'.

Ronald Blythe

Peter Moyse: One More Picture for the Album

Should it be of on my first
John Clare birthday
At Helpston when I arrived late
And he rescued me from confusion
To get me to the church on time
For the AGM?

His gift of helping.

Or the newer image early
This year in John Clare Cottage
When he signed my copy of his book,
Talked of photography following
Our poet and revealed the wellsprings
Of his vision?

His gift of sharing.

But this sad news has snapped into
Focus a view touched with the joy
Of Spring, of a man doing the thing
He loves, with those he loves: our
Adventurer setting off, camera
At the ready.

His gift of being.

Alan Ross

My association with Peter goes back to the early 1990s when he came to Daventry to give an illustrated lecture on the life and poetry of John Clare to the Friends of the Museum group.

Such was Peter's enthusiasm for his subject that he then provided me with leaflets, postcards and other information about the Society. I was keen to join the John Clare Society there and then, and I subsequently acquired a considerable library of Clare's work.

When I met Peter that evening, I was the Secretary of Daventry Natural History Society, a post I held for 38 years (who wants to replace a secretary?) until its dissolution in 2005. During that period I organised many field trips and recorded the wildlife of many of the places where (as I realised after joining the John Clare Society) Clare would have sat and observed the butterflies, insects, flowers and birds that we were keen to see. So Castor Hanglands, Barnack Hills and Holes, Swaddywell Pits and other locations became more meaningful to visit.

Through Peter I was introduced to Anna in Annakin's Gallery, who kindly provided me with the opportunity to display some of my illustrated calligraphy of Clare's poems, which were then used in displays at the Festival in 2013. Contact via Peter with the Headteacher at the John Clare School led me to illustrate the individual winning poems composed by the children in 2012; these were sent to be presented to the children.

Like many others who knew Peter, I shall miss his friendship, his kindness, his willingness to help, and his devoted enthusiasm for all things connected to the Clare Society. A huge loss – but how happy to have met him.

Leslie Tooby



The dwindling list of people who
I send my Christmas greetings to
Reminds me that the time is short
Before it dwindles down to nought,
When lists will be no use at all
Except to give some friends a call
To invite them to my funeral.
The time will come for crossing through
Our names, and lastly all lists too.
Today, sad news that Peter Moyses
Is lost from our short list of joys.
Unpretentious, friendly, kind,
A man who foreigners would find
Who'd visited without a guide
A friendly presence by their side
To tell them where the cottage was
And where Clare walked and drank,
because
He knew the place and loved to share
His knowledge and his love of Clare,
And caught the nature of the fens
So sharply with his camera's lens.

It's odd that we can find so dear
Someone we met just once a year;
But all those words that Clare loved best,
'I love to', 'life', 'heart', 'nature', 'nest',
Were dear to him; especially 'joys',
A word that sums up Peter Moyses.
His cheerful voice no longer shall
Welcome us to the Festival;
Who gave to everyone a part
Of his enthusiastic heart.
He's gone; but seeds that he has sown
For love of Clare and life have grown
In many hearts and there will last
The things he planted in the past.

Of those who made, it seems to me,
The world a better place to be,
Peter stands high up in the list.
He was much loved. He'll be much
missed.

RKR Thornton

On being befriended by Peter Moyse

13 July 2002: I was scared, curious, and tentative.

For several years I'd been voice-recording back issues of the John Clare Journal onto audiotape, for a blind nature-and-literature lover, via CAMREAD, then a local charity. She and I had made tape copies available to the Society.

The John Clare Society committee had recently given me honorary membership – wow! I felt so honoured – and I had turned up to my first John Clare Festival, armed with my necessary sun hat, all my meals in a big cool box, and my anxieties.

Well, that is history now. One by one you welcomed me, and invited me to feast: on literature at Helpston Primary School (as I think it was named in those days); at the WI Hall for delicious banquets; in St Botolph's Church for the poetry reading and evening concert.

None more so than Peter Moyse, who greeted me like a newly found friend, especially when he found out that we had lived in the same Hertfordshire town (during my teens). He was still raw from his Mary's death. I like to think that by sharing that she had been a science technician at St George's School, Harpenden, he could let go a tiny part of his grief; certainly it was a bond between us from then on. He sat next to me at the evening concert and gave me a *sotto voce* commentary between the acts.

In all my subsequent annual visits to Helpston, no longer with cool box, with the confidence I was among friends, and now with my partner, Jim – who loves the poetry and music even more than the lunches – Peter always embraced us both, and we both loved and love him.

A true local friend and advocate of that most local of poets; ambassador of what is so open, curious and intimate about John Clare's legacy.

Perhaps if John Clare were here, he'd write: *I love to hear the soft dialects of Peter Moyse...*

Perhaps he is.

Kathy McVittie

On the way to Westminster Abbey for the 2014 Poets' Corner ceremony.

Photo: Peter Leverington



2016 FESTIVAL: 'Digging and Delving: Unearthing John Clare'.

I'm sure there must have been exceptions, but it seems to me that Clare's birthday weekend, our Festival, is almost always blessed with good weather, and this year was no different. There was of course a very significant absence, with the recent death of Peter Moyse, and I have re-cast the format of this Newsletter slightly to reflect the fact that no editorial that I could write would add anything to the tribute to Peter written by Ronald Blythe, which stands on the first page. Ronnie himself chose not to come to the Festival, on this his first post-Presidential year, but passed on his thoughts and good wishes in an address given by his friend and driver, Alan Cudmore, which is reprinted in this Newsletter. On behalf of the Committee I shall express our great thanks to Sue Holgate, who is the Festival Co-ordinator as well as the Society Secretary, and to her group of helpers, for all that they achieved. I shall also anticipate the appeal to members, particularly to those who live reasonably near to Helpston, for help with next year's Festival – Sue and the Committee would be delighted to hear from you.

At the Midsummer Cushion ceremony at St Botolph's Church on Friday, a tray of wild flowers was placed with the other Cushions as a tribute to Peter Moyse, against Clare's grave. One of the delights of the October Newsletter is reading the winning poems in the School's Poetry Competition; these were as usual enthusiastic and enlightening, and to be found after this account (a picture of the medal which is now given to the winners is in the last Newsletter). Pete Shaw was unable to play for the Folk Evening, and Mark Swingler and Mike Stevens very kindly stepped in to make it a success.

At the AGM on Saturday morning, we remembered Brian Blade, Greg Crossan and Peter Moyse, and other members who have passed away during the year. A Book of Commemoration was available for members who wished to write their own tributes to Peter. Linda Curry stood down as Chair and Valerie Pedlar was elected in her place. Linda has been on the Committee for 18 years and has served as Treasurer and Membership Secretary as well as holding the post of Chair for the past 11 years. She remains a member of the Committee.

In her final Report from the Chair, Linda emphasised that last year's financial problems had been sorted out, and that Barclays Bank have paid us a small amount of compensation. During her time as Chair, Linda had arranged for the Society to become a Registered Charity. To mark Ronald Blythe's retirement as President, we have commissioned three oak trees, which are planted at Swaddywell, a place beloved by Clare. These commemorate John Clare, Ronald Blythe and Edmund Blunden. Transport in the form of two beautifully-restored vintage cars was provided later for our Guest Speaker, Margi Blunden, and her party to make the journey to Swaddywell to see them.

Linda reported that the Committee are in the process of producing a new publicity leaflet, a new logo and an up-dated website. We would be holding a John Clare/George Borrow event in Epping on 8 October, and members were invited to take part in the Alliance of Literary Societies' next annual meeting, hosted jointly by the Wilfred Owen Association and the Siegfried Sassoon fellowship, at Napier University, Edinburgh, on 2 – 4 June 2017.

Thanking the Committee and the Festival organisers for their hard work during the year, Linda emphasised that we need a new Sales Officer to replace Mavis Leverington, who intends to stand down at the 2017 AGM, a new Festival Co-ordinator to replace Sue Holgate, and replacements for Rodney and Pauline Lines, who are standing down from the poetry competition judging panel.

Other committee members were re-elected, the main changes being that *Journal* editor Simon Kövesi becomes Vice-chair and Stephen Sullivan becomes Newsletter editor, both posts having previously been filled by Valerie Pedlar. The Financial Statement, reprinted in this Newsletter, showed that we have a healthy sum in the current account. The date of the next AGM was announced, 15 July 2017 at 10.15 am at Helpston.

Valerie's first duty as the new Chair was to introduce the new President, Carry Akroyd. Her Presidential address expressed the great honour that she felt to be the successor to Ronald Blythe, under whose Presidency the Society has substantially contributed to the enlargement of Clare's reputation, even to the extent that his poems are now studied for GCSE and A Level. However, the most frequently anthologised poem is still 'I Am', the most frequent public response is still to reflect patronisingly on 'poor Clare'; and we as a Society have a duty to show what a tough, observant, diverse, clever and rapturous individual Clare was, versatile in his writing and with many voices.

Many different types of people are drawn to Clare, and for many different reasons. Carry began by considering Clare's thoughts about society and politics as expressed in 'The Parish', and setting them into their historical context. Carry came to Clare initially through history, especially of course landscape history and the effect of enclosure, but also social and domestic history. Ecologists, Natural Historians and bird-watchers are attracted by Clare's observational and descriptive talents. Academics provide the magnifying glass, and make us notice the details of Clare's skills as they pick away at the intricacies and layers in his poetry. People with an interest in mental health are also drawn to Clare (although Carry specified that she tries to keep a distance from this aspect of his work). Musicians, folk musicians and fiddle players come to Clare for his inspirational imagery, his collection of folk tunes and songs, and the huge number of poems that he simply entitles 'Song'. Carry illustrated the musicality of Clare's work by giving us her unaccompanied but very accomplished version of the 'Song' *Swamps of wild rush beds* to the tune of 'The Ash Grove', the first time I believe that a contributor to the AGM has used song. She continued her survey of those attracted to Clare with those interested in self-education, who enjoy the opportunities of sharing their discoveries and enthusiasms. When the level of debate in the media is so patronising, lowering, fogged with sensation, speculation and gossip, then the value of poetry goes up: 'Poetry is the antidote'.

So we, as 'keepers of the flame' still have a mission, and Carry used her Presidential Address to inspire us to help people to hear Clare's voice – Clare's voices – more firmly and more clearly.

Lunches were available in the Village Hall thanks to the ladies of the Church, and also in the Blue Bell and at Clare Cottage. Peterborough Morris Dancers and the Peterborough Folk Dance club were performing around the Village. Botolph's Barn was thronged with booksellers and artists and the Society Sales and Membership stands were kept busy. Other attractions included the Countryside Restoration Trust caravan and an open garden at Vicarage Farm House later in the afternoon.

The Guest Speaker for the afternoon was Margi Blunden, daughter of Edmund Blunden ('EB'). Since the death of their mother, EB's third wife, in 2000, Margi and her sisters have been sorting through their father's archive. They have been impressed by their father's fascination with John Clare and have embarked on what she describes as a 'Literary detective trail'.

EB decided while still a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital to find the 'lost' asylum poems of John Clare. *Poems Chiefly from Manuscript*, jointly edited by Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter, appeared in 1920 and could claim to be the first 'modern' edition of Clare. Although the editors had of course served through the Great War, they were still undergraduates at Oxford at the time. They researched 2000 poems by Clare, two-thirds of which had not been previously published, and the printed edition includes 90 poems printed for the first time.

Margi presented herself as 'a complete beginner in Clare studies' – but her audience thought otherwise! The edition has an introduction in which EB outlines some of his fascination for Clare (he called his first two children Clare and John). We were totally convinced by the connections that Margi drew between EB and Clare. Blunden's truly frightening poem, 'Clare's Ghost', speaks of Clare's eyes piercing beyond what we can see, 'Lit with a burning deathless discontent' and is clearly an insight gained by the vision and contemplation of suffering explored in Blunden's autobiographical *Undertones of War*. Margi emphasised Clare's yearning for childhood as not a matter of nostalgia, but of 'straining for the privilege of the child's clarity'. It is in the end the connections that we hold with others that keep us sane, and the lengthy, detailed and humane account of Clare's years in the Northampton Asylum that EB gives in the introduction to his edition will still repay the reading. In the poem 'To John Clare', printed with Margi's permission in our Festival programme, Blunden describes himself as 'one that sees thy triumph whole', and Margi demonstrated some of the ways in which this was true.

In the afternoon there was a tour of the Church, and the Poetry Reading, organised with his usual persuasive enthusiasm by Peter Cox, took place. The evening's concert was provided by the Big Fiddle Band, a community fiddle group from Northampton, directed by Jenny Newman, that welcomes players of all ages and abilities. The band has a particular interest in the music collected by John Clare and preserved in the Northampton MSS, and we were impressed by the fact that most of the programme came from this collection; but there were a number of less traditional pieces that nevertheless added to the delight of the evening.

The Festival closed with the Sunday family service in St. Botolph's Church, led by Canon Haydn Smart. The Festival is the high point of the John Clare Society year, and it was pleasing to see so many people joining in the celebration. If you were not able to be there this time, we hope to welcome you next year, on the weekend of 14 – 16 July 2017.

Stephen Sullivan

Copies of the 2016 Festival Programme are still available while stocks last from Sue Holgate at 9 The Chase, Ely, Cambs. CB6 3DR. It is very much more than a timetable of events; it includes Blunden's poem 'To John Clare', an extract from James Canton's *Out of Essex*, Rodney Lines's account of our Society's first year, messages from our new President and Chairman, tributes to Peter Moyses including that by Peter Cox given at the Memorial service on May 17 and an account of his receipt of a Lifetime Achievement Reward in February, Ronald Blythe's reflections on retirement, and more – and all for the reduced price of £1 plus 60 pence postage. The Swadwell Oaks Commemorative booklet is similarly available, at £2. Cheques should be made payable to 'The John Clare Society' please.

JOHN CLARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prizewinning poems from this year's Festival

Butterfly

A butterfly flies in the sky like a shooting
star
They lay their eggs on a leaf
And then they die.
Caterpillars eat their way out of their eggs
They shed four layers of skin
And then they grow into a handsome
butterfly.

(1) Maisy Plant Age 5 (Buttercross)

Dragonfly

By the lake when it's sunny
Greeny-blue see-through wings
Gliding slow
Where does it go?
A dragonfly.

(2) Orla Hutcheson Age 4 (Buttercross)

Searching, Searching, Digging and Delving

Searching, searching, digging and delving.

Searching for my horse is like a worm
Searching through the mud,
I'm searching for something like green grass.

Eyes looking for weeds, seeds and water,
A watering can is found to make a flower look like a
butterfly.

Spring comes to make the sun shine,
Shoots escape from big brown bulbs.

Green spiky weeds are looking for places to go.
Spiky weeds are like annoying little sisters.

Searching, searching, digging and delving.

(1) Florence Hutton-Smith (Woodgate)

Digging Digging

Digging digging down and down
we find stones underground.

Digging digging, dogs like digging,
Digging digging, people like digging.

Digging digging in the mud
is sticky and wet but also good.

Digging digging, lots of holes,
Digging digging, finding treasure in holes.

Digging digging and throwing mud,
Digging digging I like digging

(2) Elspeth Robertson (Woodgate)

The Old Toy

Long ago a little girl played with her toy,
She enjoyed playing and was full of joy.
Her mother called her and she fled,
But she forgot her toy to take to bed.

A hundred years later along came a girl,
A pretty, beautiful girl named Pearl.
She dug and dug and found the hidden dolly,
She decided to call the dolly Molly.

Now she is grown up and has children of her own,
Polly sits on a chair in her home.
Her children play with the dolly each day.
In their hearts she will always stay.

(1) Lorri Fleming (Broadwheel)

The Continuous Toy

A hundred years ago there was a boy,
Who was thankful for his favourite toy.
That very day his mum called him in,
To do his jobs and empty the bin.

A hundred years later another boy
Found the toy and was full of joy.
Later that day he went out to play
On a sunny day in the middle of May.

The boy was digging in the dirty soil,
When he discovered the toy as dirty as oil.
He pulled it out, so happy was he,
How lucky, he thought, it is to be me!

The toy was cherished now it was found,
Rescued from that filthy ground.

(2) Cameron Cook (Broadwheel)

John Clare's Life

I was planted,
He was born,
Let's go back to his first dawn,
His grave with flowers we adorn.

I am planted,
He was born,
We hoped he'd survive his first morn,
The only survivor of the twins born.

He reads a book from his uncle under my leaves,
Our first encounter with poetry,
A spell of poems come into his mind,
He discovers he's part of the gifted kind.

A delusional adult he became,
While he's trying to make himself a name,
The bills mount up but not his fame,
In ale he seeks to hide his shame.

An oak coffin; one of my kind,
Where the peasant-poet lies – his life still in our
minds.
'What is life?' Clare once said to me,
It's 'An invite to eternity'.

(1) Alex Nicholson (Torpel)

Sapling to a Poet

A bonnie baby so spindly and small,
A minute little sapling will grown to be tall.
Clare's life began in 1793,
And so did I – a young oak tree.

As he grew, I grew too.
He started writing as young children do.
Reading poetry along with his dad
He did not know that one day he would be mad.

As he lay on my trunk's side,
Poems began to pop into his mind.
Clare met a very nice wife
And lived with his family for the rest of his life.

Called the 'Peasant Poet' in an asylum he was put,
Eighty miles he walked back home on foot.
Soon afterwards he passed away
Years later, I still think of him each day.

Midsummer cushions are made with everyone's best,
They lay flowers by his grave where he was laid to rest.
People all round the world will still know his name,
But I am sure that he knows not of his world-wide fame.

(2) Sharifa Hughes (Torpel)



Midsummer Cushions 2016

Photo: Sylvia Sullivan

Talk given in St. Botolph's Church, Helpston, by Alan Cudmore – Saturday 16th July 2016.



At the 2007 Festival. Photo: Peter Leverington

This is the first year since the Society's inauguration that I haven't brought Ronnie to the Helpston Festival. Our friendship goes back to 1951 when he was the Reference Librarian at Colchester Public Library and I had joined a local firm of chartered surveyors as an articled pupil. Ronnie thought I should have a more varied diet than property law, valuation principles and building construction, so he invited me to meetings of the Colchester Literary Society, which he had founded, where amongst others I met my old English master, the poet Ralph Currey, and a neighbour from my village, Kay Gilmour, Gerald Finzi's sister. She had written *Eighteen Months In The War*

Zone, the record of a woman's work on the Western Front. It was at this venue that Ronnie first met Edmund Blunden.

For the first time in thirty-four consecutive years the journey here did not start on the Essex-Suffolk borders at Bottengoms Farm following a very early breakfast. Instead I have come from my home in Stevenage, just a stone's throw from where John Clare on his 'Journey Out of Essex' in 1841, spent the night of the 20th July on a truss of clover in a hovel, and he recalled that he slept well. At daylight he awoke and thanked God for his kindness in procuring such lodging, and then set off to Baldock, to arrive back here in Helpston four days later – a disillusioned man!

Speaking to you in this lovely place of worship I am reminded that *to everything there is a season, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing*. Here on earth life is transient, all good things come to an end, there has to be change. So in this vein it is my privilege to be here today, informally, representing your past president. I stress the word 'informally', for I don't want you to think that the chauffeur is trying to become an orator.

You will know from Ronnie's writings and the many years he celebrated this festival with you that these days were the highlight of the year for him – to come here and discuss Clare and other writers, to share time with old friends, and with those who had just had John Clare's door opened to them, and to enjoy the hospitality the village offers to visitors. Yesterday saw an amazing publishing feat, the 8000th issue of the *Church Times*, and in it Ronnie reminisces of Helpston:

John Clare's immortal village, where the buildings do not moulder as they do in Suffolk, but stay grey and rigid, and are propped up by hollyhocks, the tallest imaginable.

Equally impressive to me as the hollyhocks are the lavender bushes that flank the church path as one approaches the south porch, with the summering bees, working so busily. I am reminded of the liturgy for Holy Saturday:

For wax that melteth doth but feed the flame, for thereunto have God's creatures the bees brought it forth, that it should give light in darkness.

For a good number of years we brought with us Ronnie's dear friend Jane Garrett. Her father was Christopher Perkins and as a family they spent time in New Zealand where he is an acclaimed artist; her uncle was the composer Martin Shaw, and her husband Dennis, from the engineering family the Garretts of Leiston, was a great botanist, who held the Chair of Mycology at Cambridge. Jane would provide us with

dinner at her home at Cherry Hinton on our return journey. Bottengoms would be reached at midnight; then a traditional whisky night-cap before retiring. As a member of the Perkins family, Jane knew the Peterborough area extremely well, loved meeting people and liked a good day out.

Ronnie likes to tease me by saying, 'Surveyors retire, Alan, but Writers never put their pen away.' Ronnie's work as a writer continues – only two books off the press so far this year! *In the Artist's Garden*, volume 9 in the 'Word From Wormingford' series, recently followed by volume 10, *Stour Seasons*. He has also written for The Friends of Forster Country an introduction to their guide to the Hertfordshire landscape north of Stevenage which embraces Howards End, an area of farmland threatened by housing development.

Ronnie has a new role: he appears as a character in Jill Dawson's latest book, *The Crime Writer*, which relates to the Patricia Highsmith days at Bridge Cottage, Earl Soham, when he was living at French's Folly, Debach, and writing *Akenfield*.

Norman Scarfe, the Suffolk historian, left Ronnie his collection of books and papers on Edward Fitzgerald. He has always admired Colm Tobin's portrait of Henry James, *The Master*, and thought he would write an historical novel taking Fitzgerald as his subject; but in his research he was amazed at the wealth of material written about 'Fitz'. So he is currently focusing on Gallipoli. His father left the farm to volunteer for the Suffolks and was drafted to Gallipoli, Rupert Brooke died there from septicaemia, John Masefield wrote an account of the campaign which Ronnie has just read – so as they say, 'watch this space'.

Ronnie's work as a Lay Reader and Canon at St. Edmundsbury continues and you will find him Sunday by Sunday at Wormingford or Little Horksley, talking to the neighbours following the Christian festivals through the year. At ninety-three years he should be entitled to fewer engagements in his diary, but I detect as regards today that having relinquished the role of President he did not consider it to be good form to be present at the Festival this year – he is a man with a sensitive nature.

Bottengoms, 'The Yeoman's House' can be idyllic as it lies in its own valley, with two acres of garden, orchard, and woodland, together with its own stream flowing to the Stour. It is a haven of tranquillity that can belie the amount of work a medieval building demands, especially if you don't drive a 'Chelsea Tractor'. Geographically we are in Essex, but to Ronnie the vista is very much towards his native Suffolk, crossing the river where his memories are sharpest. He still has a strong desire to write creatively and here are credits from the dust jacket of his latest book:

The finest rural historian of our time.

Ronnie's minute observation of places, people and plants, his ear for scraps of dialogue, and his feeling for poetry and painting, make everything...immediate.

The Yeoman's House is a wonderful meditation on our place in the landscape, the marks we leave on it, and the different ways we relate to it, whether cultivating it, painting it or merely walking across it.

Blythe's prose is full of quiet wit, keen observation and sober reflection.

Ronnie is delighted with your decision that an oak tree should be planted as a tribute to his many years' service to the Society. I shall look forward to seeing it along with its two companion trees this afternoon. That you have chosen to commemorate Edmund Blunden in addition to John Clare could not be more appropriate.

On behalf of Ronnie I express gratitude to you all. In conclusion I give you Ronnie's love and good wishes – to you, the dear ones at Helpston.

Alan Cudmore

'O WOT ORRID LANGWIDGE' – A Personal View.

Early in June I attended Simon Kövesi's inaugural lecture as Professor of English Literature at Oxford Brookes University. Simon is well known to members of the John Clare Society, he has been a committee member for a long time and our journal editor since 2008. Born in South East London, Simon studied at the Universities of Glasgow and North Carolina at Chapel Hill, followed by a PhD on Clare with John Goodridge at Nottingham Trent University. An enthusiastic student of John Clare, he has co-edited two collections of essays on the poet, has edited two selections of Clare's poems, and has written widely on Clare and Romanticism.

Simon's lecture, on 'Working class life and the pursuit of literature, from John Clare to James Kelman', was originally entitled 'What Happens when Literature Swears?'. However, a change to 'O Wot Orrid Langwidge' seemed to me to be much more in keeping with the speaker's forthright and down-to-earth delivery. While being careful not to offend his audience with overly explicit language, he screened several examples of how the working class has been portrayed by writers during the last two hundred years. One of these he accompanied with his own excellent impression of an elderly manservant, with a broad Yorkshire accent – Joseph, from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. It was good also to be introduced to the authentic and direct expression of James Kelman for the first time.

But it was an extract from Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* which really struck home with me, reminding me of my own twenty years in the building industry. In the scene read by Simon the combination of the narrator's description and the dialogue of the characters was, I thought, most effective. The danger is, however, that in emphasising the difference between the modes of expression of the workers and 'Standard English', the accepted norm, they can be under-valued by being not fully heard. I can only say, from my own experience, that in my youth I was more inspired by characters that I mixed with in everyday life than I ever was by any of the teachers during my five years at grammar school.

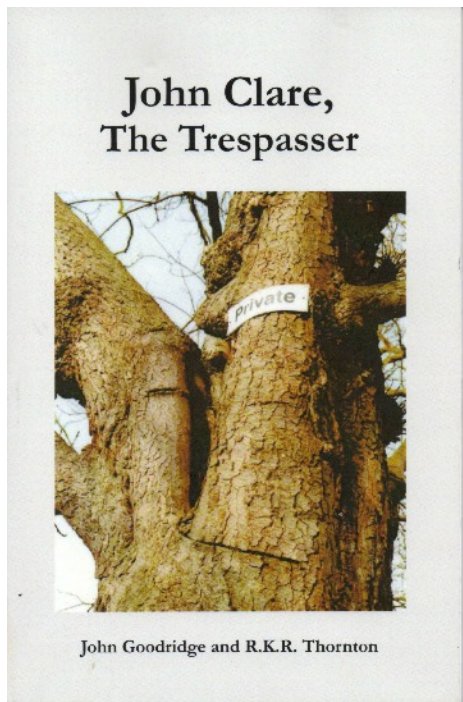
At the core of the lecture was the question – Should there even be such a thing as working class literature, or is it just a relic of the days of privilege and servility? Should not writing be judged solely on its merit, regardless of source and whatever the language, with everyone able to express themselves and be received without prejudice? We would do well to remember that the working-class literature that we have from the past is not the best that was potentially there but the best written by those who were able, because of privilege, connection or just luck, to overcome the obstacles to getting into print. Now in an age when almost anyone can send their thoughts out across the world on the internet, with hardly anyone knowing their roots, do we need to categorise in the same old way?

All in all I found Simon's lecture most rewarding, raising as it did important questions about equality and freedom of expression, including the freedom not to be labelled.

Noel Crack

SALES October 2016

I would like to draw your attention to the two new books we have added to our sales list.



JOHN CLARE, THE TRESPASSER by John Goodridge and R.K.R. Thornton.

This book sets out to show how, 'In his poetry, autobiography and letters, Clare challenged the damaging misuse of property rights and how he admired and learned from the nomadic Gypsies and drovers who loved the land as he did.' £6.99 plus p&p.

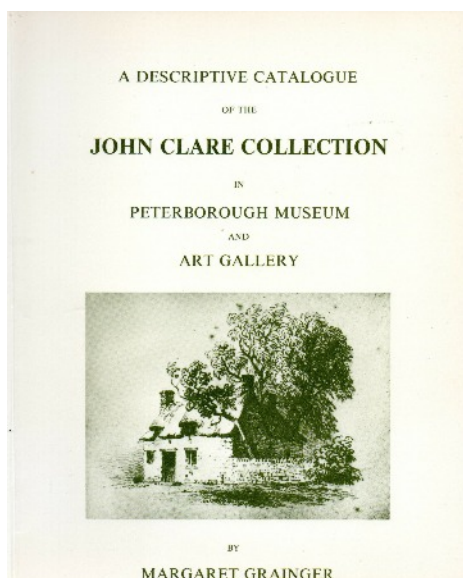
BY OUR SELVES, edited by Andrew Kötting.

This is an account of the making of the 83-minute monochrome feature film of the same name, directed by Andrew, with Toby Jones taking the part of John Clare on his long walk home to Northborough from Epping Forest. It also features work by Iain Sinclair, Alan Moore, Simon Kövesi, David Aylward, Anne Caron-Delion, MacGillivray, John Clare and an interview with Freddie Jones, who has himself played the part of John Clare. It is a

hardback book, selling in the bookshops at £25, although we are able to offer it at £20, plus p&p. There is an in depth review of the book in our current *Journal*.

The sad loss of our dear friend Peter Moyse has revived interest in our DVD 'John Clare, A Photographic Journey with Peter Moyse' which is still available. We also have copies of Terence Deadman's CD '8 Song Settings from John Clare' which has prose readings from Peter, Rodney Lines and Norma Weller.

Mavis Leverington



The Peterborough Museum Society have copies of Margaret Grainger's *Descriptive Catalogue of the John Clare Collection in Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery* (1973) for sale at £10. This is a research tool rather than an exciting read in itself, although Grainger's 'descriptions' are vivid and scholarly, and there are 13 illustrations, including the MS of perhaps Clare's last poem, 'Birds Nests', and a comprehensive index of all the titles and first lines of the poems in the Peterborough collection. Bob Melville, the Secretary of the Museum Society, recommends that you contact him on 01733-561263 if you would like a copy.

Alliance of Literary Societies AGM Weekend Haworth, 21 – 22 May 2016

Since this year is the 200th anniversary of Charlotte Brontë's birth, the Brontë Society volunteered to host the AGM of the ALS this year at Haworth. This meant that members had an opportunity to visit the Parsonage before it was open to the public on the Saturday, and to be shown some of the Society's treasures. All the same, there were still quite a lot of us milling round this very attractive house. But it was a pleasure to be able to pore over some of the objects in the glass cases without other people breathing down your neck! I think the objects that fascinated me most were Charlotte's 'mourning' shoes, which she had darned with Emily's hair.

Arriving on the Friday afternoon, I had time to look around Haworth itself, which was free of the hundreds of tourists that arrived on the Saturday and Sunday. Nineteenth-century Haworth, and its writers, was the topic of the Saturday afternoon speaker, Ian Dewhirst. His amusing and informative account of the various and numerous amateur writers in Haworth made me think that not only was it not surprising that the Brontë sisters had written, but it would have been surprising if they hadn't.

The Saturday morning speaker was Juliet Barker, well-known of course for her biography of the Brontës. Her talk, a revisionist approach to Mrs Gaskell's biography of Charlotte, was very interesting – and aroused quite a lot of comment from members of the Gaskell Society.

A formal dinner in the evening was a good opportunity to chat to members of other literary societies. And this year activities were arranged for the Sunday. But the steam railway proved an irresistible attraction for some, and I decided to imagine myself as one of the Brontë women and to walk on my own to the so-called Brontë waterfall and Top Withens (the supposed inspiration for *Wuthering Heights*).

This is the second ALS weekend that I have attended and I found both to be friendly occasions. Our own Linda Curry is Chair of ALS and other JCS members have been present too. But any member of our society is also a member of ALS and therefore entitled to attend the AGM weekend.

Valerie Pedlar



Looking down Main Street, Haworth

Stephen Sullivan

THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES ANNUAL EVENT

Each year, the ALS takes its AGM weekend to a different venue, to be hosted by one of its affiliated societies (of which John Clare is one). In 2017, we will be at Craiglockhart in Edinburgh, 2 – 4 June, hosted by the Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship and the Wilfred Owen Association. Craiglockhart was the old psychiatric hospital which treated shell-shocked officers in the First World War – now a conference centre for Napier University. We don't yet have a programme for the event but the usual format is: a small registration fee of around £5 to cover tea/coffee, talks and any guided walks; lunch charged separately; Saturday evening meal charged separately; and any external trips (e.g. coach) charged at cost. Everyone is welcome. So, if you have not been to one of these events before, do try it. You can read reports of past events on the ALS website at allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk. They are great fun.

Linda J Curry
Chair, ALS



Craiglockhart Hydropathic; the modern campus building is rather less dignified.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons ('Brideshead')

CENTRE FOR JOHN CLARE STUDIES Discussion Group.

This group continues to meet in Cambridge, just off Queens Road ('the backs'), from 1 to 2pm on a monthly basis during Term time, to a programme published on their website at www.english.cam.ac.uk/research/johnclare/. All those interested in John Clare are welcome, and in the last year speakers have ranged from Kathryn Parsons, the artist and story-teller, who explained how her work related to John Clare and then led a workshop in which we created models from polymer clay, to Professor John Goodridge, who led a discussion on Clare's bird poetry. However, if you wish to take part, you need to be aware that topics can be announced, and meetings cancelled, very much at the last minute, and it would be best to register with the group so that they can keep you informed. Remaining meetings for this year have been announced on 18 October and 15 November, speaker and topics to be determined.

Stephen Sullivan

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome the following members who have joined since the last Newsletter:

Susan Wedgwood Harper, Hay-on-Wye
Angela Firth, Stamford
Pat Coutts, Oundle
Philip Douglas, Wellingborough
Ian Hughes, Oswestry
Robert Beckinsale, Taunton
Richard Potter, Havant
Richard Boon, Holmpton, Yorkshire
Jennifer and Stephen Ball, Blakesley, Northants
Linda Black, Peterborough
Joyce Gemmell, Kneesall, Notts
Graham Gibson, Liverpool
Eric West, Helpston
Malcolm Bailey, Luton
Francis and Barbara Williams, Plymouth
Johanna Jones, Burwell, Cambridgeshire

If you have a 'renewal of membership' form in your Newsletter, it means that you have not yet renewed for the current year (our membership year runs from 1st July). It would be helpful if you could renew as soon as possible, by sending a cheque to the address on the form. Our Society relies on our faithful members and we would be grateful if you would consider renewing your membership for a further year. Those who have not renewed by the beginning of December will be removed from our database.

At the Festival, I took the opportunity of checking the email addresses of some of our members. A disconcerting number of the addresses on our database proved to be wrong. This was mainly because the addresses we held were obsolete, although in a few cases they had been transcribed incorrectly. In order to help me keep an accurate record, it would be helpful if those who have an email address could send me an email, simply giving their name and the village/town/city where they live. All the information contained on our database is used only for conducting Society business, and is not shared with anyone.

Robert Heyes

NEWSLETTER

You can save the Society a considerable amount of money, especially if you live in Europe or North America, if you elect to receive your John Clare Newsletter by e-mail. There is also the advantage that you will be able to view and print the Newsletter in colour. Please will existing members consider this option, and let Robert Heyes or Stephen Sullivan know if you would like to take it up. It is possible to change back to a printed copy if the e-mail version does not suit.

A very brief note from your new editor: Contributions likely to be of interest to other members are always welcomed. I'd prefer electronic documents in Word format and pictures as .jpegs, but pen and ink will be fine if I can read it. My contact details are at the beginning of the Newsletter.

Stephen Sullivan

News from the John Clare Cottage

We have continued this year opening on Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays to the public. This has allowed us to use the other days for private bookings, of which there has been a significant number, and so our volunteers have been very busy. This opening policy will continue through the Winter, though we will be closing an hour earlier when the clocks go back.

Outside of general visitor business we have held a number of very successful events throughout the summer. We had two performances by the outdoor theatre group The Pantaloons, who are always popular. This year they gave their versions of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Canterbury Tales* in the Cottage Gardens.

We have had a series of Art Workshops lead by local artist Sally Hammerton. These have been fully subscribed and appreciated by those who attended, and we are looking to run another series in 2017.

As part of our Art in The Cottage series this year we have had works on display from the artists Deborah James, Sally Hammerton and Alan Oliver. We are planning the 2017 program.

A poetry workshop with Peterborough Poet Pete Cox was very popular and introduced poetry writing to a number of people; a booklet of their works has been printed.

As usual we were very busy on the Saturday of the John Clare Society Festival and this year we also opened on the Sunday to allow members who had stayed for the church service to visit the Cottage. We opened our photographic exhibition, 'Clare Through the Lens' in the Dovecote. This is an exhibition of pictures inspired by Clare's work and landscapes taken by Tracy Bullen and Mike Hobson, both passionate about photography with a great appreciation of John Clare.

Our annual Open Crafts Day attracted over 200 visitors. Craft work included silver and copper jewellery, pottery, needlework, porcelain, jams and chutneys, and handmade soaps. This will be run again next year. Look out for details on our website.

Music continues to be a popular attraction with the monthly Acoustic Café, run in conjunction with the local vicar, Rev Dave Maylor. This is an open mic event and anyone can come along to perform or just listen to the music. We are planning 2017 and details will be released on our website – www.clarecottage.org.

David Dykes
Clare Cottage Liaison Officer

John Clare: Landscape and Learning at the University of Northampton Avenue Campus 10am - 4pm Friday 11 November 2017

A day of short presentations and discussions relating to aspects of John Clare, culminating in the John Clare Lecture given by Professor John Goodridge

Free: bring lunch or use cafeteria on site.

Further details available from carry@carryakroyd.co.uk

JOHN CLARE SOCIETY ACCOUNTS 2015/16

Unaudited Statement of Income & Expenditure and Balance Sheet as at
30/06/16

EXPENDITURE	2015/6		INCOME	2015/6	
		£			£
Printing/photocopying		77.46	Subscriptions		
Postage		143.31	UK	4953.40	
Telephone		82.30	N America	737.27	
Stationery		372.21	Europe	20.88	
Travel		1329.78	Total		5711.55
Affiliation Fees		20.00			
			Donations		
Newsletter Printing	925.60		General	309.70	
Postage	464.56		Gift Aid	1771.94	
Total		1390.16	Total		2081.64
Sales Purchases	1144.54		Sales		
Post & Stationery	181.98		General	835.00	
Total		1326.52	Books	2103.72	
			Postage	22.10	
Journal Printing	3250.00		Total		2960.82
Postage	916.99				
Total		4166.99			
Events: Festival		1279.29	Events: Festival		1055.50
Committee Room Hire		205.00	TOTAL INCOME		11809.51
Sundry		193.00	Loss (profit)		(1223.49)
EXPENDITURE		10586.82	INCOME		10586.02
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30/06/16					
Current Assets					
Bank and Cash in Hand:					
Current a/c:	5126.03				
Commercial a/c:	11999.37				
Total:		17125.40			
Prepayments:					
Festival 15/16:		809.12			
Current Liabilities					
Creditors & deferred income					
Advance Subscriptions	1586.00				
Festival 15/16 income	717.00				
		(2303.00)			
TOTAL FUNDS:		15631.52			

THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

SALES ORDER FORM

OCTOBER 2016



The John Clare Society, founded in 1981, publishes books, CDs, DVDs, pamphlets and postcards, an annual Journal and a member's newsletter every four months.

Please support our activities by purchasing from this catalogue. Each sale helps the society to continue our work.

BOOKS

CODE	ITEM	PRICE	WEIGHT
B20023	<i>John Clare: New Approaches</i> eds. J Goodridge and S Kovesi (p/b essays).	£2.50	400g
B20028	<i>John Clare, the Northamptonshire Poet</i> ed. J L Carr (p/b pocket sized poetry book).	£1	20g
B20030	<i>John Clare: The Living Year. Prose and poetry of 1841</i> , ed. Tim Chilcott.	£7.99	350g
B20033	<i>The Wood is Sweet. Clare poems</i> edited by David Powell & illustrated by Carry Akroyd.	£6	200g
B20112	NEW <i>By Ourselves</i> ed. Andrew Kotting	£20	650g
B20113	NEW <i>John Clare, The Trespasser</i> by John Goodridge & R.K.R. Thornton	£6.99	75g
B20114	<i>John Clare, A Poet for all Seasons</i> , Peter Moyse.	£12	500g
B20115	<i>This Happy Spirit. Poems by Clare</i> selected by R.K.R Thornton & Carry Akroyd, illustrated by Carry Akroyd.	£7	200g
B20116	John Clare, A Collection of Songs, Airs & Dances for Violin (1818). Bk. 1, N'ton MS12. Camel Music. Edited by Tony Urbainczyk. Volume 1 Volume 2	£9 & £14 inc. p&p	
B20117	John Clare, <i>Poems Descriptive</i> , 1986 Edn.	£5 inc p&p	

JOHN CLARE SOCIETY YEAR JOURNALS

1982 - 2015	£4 for each year inc p&p
Journal Index (1982-2011)	£1 inc p&p

MISCELLANEOUS

M20071	<i>In Clare's Footsteps. Coloured map of Helpston with notes. Unlaminated folded A5</i>	£0.30	5g
M20092	John Clare leather bookmark, gold on dark green.	£2	10g
M20031	JCS gummed labels 100 labels in pack.	£1	150g
M20028	High quality cream cotton tea towel with scenes from Helpston.	£3	50g
M20029	The John Clare Society pen green with gold text.	£0.60	5g
M20001	John Clare Perpetual Calendar.	£2	150g

DVDs and CDs

M20060	CD 8 songs by Terence Deadman with Clare poetry read by Peter Moyses, Rodney Lines & Norma Weller.	£5	200g
M20061	John Clare, A 65min DVD photographic journey with poetry readings by Peter Moyses.	£5 inc p & p	
M20062	<i>Clare's Journey</i> . A musical journey through his life, sung by Maida Vale Singers. Composer: Terence Deadman. Lyrics: Trevor Harvey.	£9	200g
Joint special offer : M20060 and M20062 £10 plus £2.50 p & p.			

POSTCARDS (for each card allow 5g in weight)

P20020	Helpston, birthplace of John Clare.	£0.30
P20021	Clare's cottage, Helpston.	£0.30
P20022	John Clare (Hilton portrait, 1820)	£0.30
P20023	John Clare (Behnes bust).	£0.30
P20024	John Clare (Grimshawe portrait, 1844.)	£0.30
P20025	Orchid flower card with prose extract.	£0.30
P20026	Wood Anemone flower card with poem extract.	£0.30
P20027	Cowslip flower card with poem extract.	£0.30
P20028	Pasque flower card with poem extract.	£0.30
P20029	The Hedge Rose flower card with poem extract	£0.30
P20030	The Primrose flower card with poem extract.	£0.30
P20031	Set of six flower cards allow weight 10g	£1.50
P20032	The John Clare Rose	£0.30
P20103	The Midsummer Cushions around Clare's grave	£0.30
P20104	John Clare's grave	£0.30
P20105	John Clare's Memorial Westminster Abbey	£0.30

POSTAGE AND PACKAGING (p&p)	UK	Europe	Elsewhere
0 -100g	£1	£3.50	£4
101 -250g	£2	£4	£5
251 - 500g	£3	£5.50	£8
501 - 750g	£4	£7	£12
751 - 1000g	£5.50	£9	£15
1001 - 1250g	£6.50	£10	£18
Greater than 1251g	£9	£13	£22

To work out cost of p&p for your order note the weight given in grams for each item in the weight column on the ORDER FORM below. Total up and find the price for this weight from the above table.

ORDER FORM

CODE	ITEM	PRICE	WEIGHT
Total purchase price and total weight			
Add p & p from table for the total weight			
TOTAL PAYMENT			
<i>I enclose a cheque payable to The John Clare Society for £</i>			
NAME:		MEMBERSHIP NO:	
ADDRESS:			
POST CODE			
<i>Return to: Sales Officer, John Clare Society, 36 Peakirk Road, Glinton, Peterborough PE6 7LT tel. 01733253263</i>			