



# The John Clare & Society

Newsletter no.145

June 2022



## **THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY**

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The John Clare Society Website: <http://johnclaresociety.wordpress.com>

The John Clare Society maintains a Facebook page, open to all.

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## Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the John Clare Society will take place on Saturday 16 July 2022 at 10.15 a.m. in St. Botolph's Church, Helpston. All members and those attending the Festival are cordially invited.

### A note from the Chairman:

I look forward to welcoming many of you to the AGM and I hope that this year we shall be electing some new members on to the committee. The membership of the committee has been static for the past few years, but changes will be necessary this year and it is vital for the wellbeing, indeed for the continuance of the Society that we recruit new committee members from time to time. There are only three committee meetings a year, but we do expect committee members to take part in the work of running the society as well as contributing to discussions. We are happy for anyone who might be interested to come to a meeting or two to see how things work before making any commitment.

If you are unable to attend the AGM but are interested in joining the committee, or if you would like to attend a meeting to see what it's like, please contact our Secretary, Sue Holgate: [smholgate@outlook.com](mailto:smholgate@outlook.com).

**Valerie Pedlar**



## The Importance of Tradition Friday 15 – Sunday 17 July 2022

The Festival will take place as usual this year in Helpston, near Peterborough (the birthplace of John Clare) with the Midsummer Cushion Ceremony at the church on Friday 15 July at 1.30 p.m. and the main Festival and AGM on Saturday 16 July. There will be a church service on Sunday 17 July. The theme for the Festival will be *The Importance of Tradition*. Each year the children from the John Clare Primary School take part in a poetry competition on our theme and it will be interesting to see what they make of Tradition!

We are very fortunate to have Professor John Goodridge as our keynote speaker. He has written extensively on tradition and we look forward to hearing him. There will be the usual stalls, open gardens, refreshments in the Village Hall and Bluebell, and folk dancing, village walks with poetry reading in the church. Our concert this

year will be given by Innocent Hare, a small group of folk singers who promise us a varied range of John Clare's tunes and songs.

The Festival will be open from 10.00 a.m. on the Saturday with the AGM starting at 10.15 a.m. in the church. As those of you who have been before will remember, we have a Friends of the Festival Scheme. This is a way of offering your support for the Festival whilst ensuring you have a programme beforehand and enabling you to pre-book your tickets and reserve a seat for the concert. You will also be sent a lovely poetry pack on 'The Countryside'. You can become a Friend of the Festival by completing and returning the form included in this Newsletter.

So Festival 2022 promises to be a happy and full celebration of our poet – we hope to see you there!

**Sue Holgate**  
**Festival Co-ordinator.**

## **Sales Officer's Report**

This report covers the period July 2021 to end April 2022.

From a Clare point of view there have been several chapbooks from Arbor Editions, a very successful book by Robert Hamberger and a new CD of John Clare readings by Toby Jones with new music arrangements by Julian Philips of some of Clare's collected folk tunes. None of which have yet been available directly through JCS sales! However, I am happy that the latter will be available during the Clare Festival in July, at the JCS stall in the Scout Hut (or to order if sold out) and the others in Botolph's Barn.

The last ten months have been slower than the previous ten but the opportunity this year for visitors to Helpston, with Clare Cottage, the surrounding Clare walks and especially the Midsummer Cushions and Festival in July, should offer the chance to connect with Clare and his writings once again.

Sales through me after postage, compare at £710 for the full year 2020/21 and £412 for a ten-month period 2021/22.

The 2021/22 period is shorter and has seen fewer sales to Clare Cottage (still due to pandemic and limited opening hours). This year has seen no *Journal* or *Meeting* sales either, the value of which is noticeable in the comparison. Other of the Clare ranges have sold modestly over the months but to a smaller number of customers.

I suspect there will be some orders in the next few weeks to boost the final figures before we start our new financial year. Obviously I am looking to a successful Clare Festival to start the new financial year of 2022/23.

**David Smith**  
**Sales Officer**

## **Membership Renewal Invitation**

Those members who do not pay their subscription by standing order will receive, with this newsletter, a renewal invitation form; please complete this and return it to me with your cheque. Alternatively, you can pay by bank transfer (details are on the form). The rates are £15 for individual members, £20 for joint membership, and £5 for students. It will be possible to pay subscriptions at the Festival.

**Robert Heyes**

## **Gill Goodridge, 1926–2022**

My mother, Gill Goodridge, died very peacefully at her home in Lancaster on 21 February, aged 95, after a decade-long battle with Alzheimer's, through virtually all of which she remained completely lucid. She joined the John Clare Society the same day that I did, back in 1985, and attended many Clare events: indeed she helped me to set up and run 'The Independent Spirit' conference in Nottingham in 1994. With her twin brother John, Gill was the first in her family to go to university, reading English at St Hilda's College, Oxford, where she rowed for her college. She ran a folk club at Strawberry Hill for some years. Before she retired thirty years ago she was an immensely popular and charismatic school English teacher, who among other things brought Ted Hughes to the school to read, took a mini-van-load of kids to the top of Shap Fell in a rainstorm to show them 'what Wordsworth meant', ran endless school trips to the theatres of Stratford and Manchester, and shared her deep love of poetry, Chaucer and Shakespeare with many appreciative cohorts of youngsters. The family will be celebrating her life at an event in Lancaster later this year.

**John Goodridge**

*Below: Gill reading a Seamus Heaney poem to me, the week before she died. She once drank whiskey with him late into the night at the Duke's Playhouse in Lancaster.*



## Roger Sales 1949–2022: 'A language that is ever green'

Professor Roger Sales died on 17 March this year. He was a celebrated scholar of the Regency period with a particular interest in Clare, and was an enthusiastic member of the John Clare Society. Roger was one of the first people whose writing on Clare I read as a postgraduate, in his book *English Literature in History 1780–1830* (1983), and it delighted me with its pithy, mischievous, intense engagement with the poet and his world. I learned from it how to read Clare politically, and always to consider things like the systems of patronage he worked within, and the upheavals of enclosure that changed his world so much. Roger often used humour and irony to make his points, and this rhetorical style made for a very sharp, vivid and readable analysis of the poet.

When he came to write his book on Clare, *John Clare: A Literary Life* (2002), Roger took some of these methods further, and went for deep context. He had written his doctoral thesis on labouring-class poets, so he was strongly placed to analyse Clare's position in relation to this phenomenon and its restrictions, as well as those of patronage, and the world of the asylum. A picture



emerges of Clare as someone who thrived as a poet against social restrictions and indeed difficulties of all kinds. Roger also pioneered the important idea of Clare as a Regency poet – again stressing the need to look at political and cultural context. I feel that his book has not yet been adequately absorbed into the scholarship – it was perhaps rather eclipsed by the widely reviewed but less challenging Bate biography that came out two years earlier. But I think Roger's approach offered something uniquely valuable in Clare studies, and I hope this is increasingly recognised.

I was glad to meet and befriend Roger at academic conferences and at Clare Festivals. He had reviewed and enjoyed *John Clare the Trespasser*, and we found we had much in common. He wrote some very kind words about me in the 2015 *John Clare Society Journal*, the essence of which concerned research and scholarship as a sharing activity, something over which we were in total agreement. Roger also became a regular attendee at the Cambridge Clare events in his later years.

When Roger's family asked me for a Clare poem to be read at his funeral, held in Cambridge on 5th April, I suggested 'Pastoral Poesy', from *The*

*Midsummer Cushion*, and looking it up in Roger's copy, the family discovered that he had underlined the wonderful first line of stanza 4: 'A language that is ever green'.

The poem begins –

True Poesy is not in words  
But images that thoughts express  
By which the simplest hearts are stirred  
To elevated happiness

Roger will be greatly missed by all of us in the Clare community.

**John Goodridge**



## ***Plum Lines* – Poetry from the Vale of Evesham and beyond**

Poet Bob Woodroffe is a long-time member of the Society, and his latest publication contains a diverse collection of poems created from a variety of stimuli over the years. It includes poems about nature and the seasons in the Vale of Evesham. There are also poems about family, the pandemic, Evesham dialect poems and others inspired by myth and legend.

***Plum Lines*** completes a trilogy of Vale of Evesham-based poetry books. The 64 page Hardback book is priced at £10 + £1.50 p&p.

The previous books in the series are:  
***Pick of the Crop*** – published 2017  
***Another Lad of Evesham Vale*** – published 2020

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## **Bob Woodroffe, *Plum Lines***

In a brief introduction to this book, Bob Woodroffe declares that this is not a themed collection of poems, saying that the poems owe their inspiration to a variety of stimuli. Nevertheless, the Vale of Evesham, the place of his birth, upbringing, and where he now lives, is a constant presence in the book. One poem looks back at the ancient tribes that used to inhabit the place ('Bodvoc'), another mourns the loss of a favourite pub ('Brandy Cask'), and several humorous poems use the Asum dialect (yes, I had to look that one up). Plums of course are important; in the title poem he describes not the look or the taste of them, but the picking of them, writing, it seems, with the knowledge of someone who has actually done it.

As one might expect from a writer who delights in word play, the poem opens with a pun: 'No need to find the depth or the vertical,/feel the weight on the end of the line.' Or a poem about Dolly, the cloned sheep, is titled 'Dolly mixture'. Less amusing is 'Garbage patch', a poem about our desecration of the planet through our use, or more precisely our disposal, of plastic. This is just one of several poems that look toward or focus on contemporary preoccupations. 'Silent Spring', for instance, recognises the continuing relevance of Rachel Carson's famous book of 1962, and the final poem, 'Isolation Island', taking its inspiration from recent events, considers how islands can be somewhere to escape to or somewhere to escape from. Adopting the voice of a bee in 'Shelter', Woodroffe introduces the reader to the very unusual beehouse in Arpury – and when I found photos of it on the Internet I could see what an extraordinary structure it is.

Animals have their place in this collection (Albert, the albatross, as well as Dolly the sheep), but there are plenty of poems about people: inhabitants of Evesham and members of his family. The opening poem, 'Spirit of the moor', entwines his memories of a 'very special person' with descriptions of the moorland scenery in a way that reminds me of Hardy's poems to his first wife. Woodroffe's observations are those of someone who looks closely at the natural scene, describing the flora and fauna in all their particularity. His sensuous descriptions of a late snowfall in 'April showers', or late warmth in 'September Sun' I found particularly appealing.

Woodroffe's writing is as varied in its use of verse forms and punctuation as it is in subject-matter, but he is consistent in his appreciation of the natural world, and of the mysteries of existence.

**Valerie Pedlar**

## **Spirit of the moor**

my wild free spirit of the moor  
you ran to me opened the door  
opened my eyes with them I saw  
what we could share and so much more  
in me you found a better side  
coaxed it out before it died  
with new ideas freshly sown  
wide horizons once unknown  
spread upon the world's floor  
for us to share in life's grand tour  
your healing touch brought me life and love  
you showed me happiness peace's dove  
through heather's purple bells we strolled  
watched grouse whirr away over hills rolled  
lost in lowered skies draped in mist  
water droplets on bare skin kissed  
the sun lights a scape of clouds  
tumbling over fields in crowds  
how can you find words to say  
to describe these visions every day  
that you throw down upon our earth  
the feelings they evoke their true worth  
the peace you bring to all who see  
through this world's transparency  
back to nature to the roots  
the basics of life you know it suits  
wild and free wind in hair  
how I long to run with you there

## **April showers**

the thrush serenades us in morning rain  
as he has done since late february  
we look for him on favourite perches  
maybe sheltered somewhere  
trying to keep his feathers dry

and then the rain slowed down  
I don't mean that it eased off  
but its descent slowed down  
before our eyes it changed

it whitened slowly to snow  
flakes coalesced in clumps  
almost weightless they drifted  
floated softly down  
coasted to the ground

the sight even silenced the thrush  
all you could hear was the  
soft rustle of the flakes  
as they jostled each other  
in their slow descent

we went outside to try to catch  
these fragile featherweights  
but somehow they evaded  
our outstretched hands  
to melt away on the ground

**Bob Woodroffe**

## **Introductory Film on John Clare**

John Snape has long been a friend of Norfolk Wildlife Trust, serving first as a Trustee and latterly as a Vice President. Over the last fifteen years he has made a series of wildlife films, which have variously been described by RSPB *Nature's Home* as 'beautiful, moving and uplifting' and by the *Eastern Daily Press* as 'delightful and informative'.

John's films have been shown to many local audiences and have been sold to raise funds for NWT's Children and Nature Fund. The fund was founded by John in 2015 and it has gone on to raise over £50,000.

John has recently given a number of his films to Norfolk Wildlife Trust to make available online at no charge, and these will be of interest to John Care Society members, particularly 'John Clare: Our Peasant Poet'. It's a straightforward 15-minute introduction to the life and work of John Clare, with poems read by the nature-writer, Richard Mabey, and some extremely atmospheric photography. The simplest way to find it is to look for <https://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/johnsnapefilms>

## The Religious Dimension

*This is an abbreviation of Ch.2 of Doreen Thakoordin's M.A. Dissertation, 'How does an exploration of John Clare's writing about politics, religion and mental health enhance his reputation?' (Open University, January 2021)*

*Curst affectation worse than hell I hate  
(The Parish, l.33)*

The interdependence of Church and State formed the basis of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society. Until 1836 the parson dominated the village, from whose occupants he received a tithe, the dreaded Parish Rate, as with Clare's Parson in *The Parish*. Village society centred on the Church and many employers insisted that their employees attend church.

In 1830, as Clare had just finished writing *The Parish*, the Whigs came to power and set about dealing with corruption in the Church of England, particularly the grossly unfair distribution of its wealth. In 1835 a Commission was set up to reform the church and rid it of the worst of this inequality. So, although in Clare's lifetime (1793–1864) the Church of England was a powerful force indeed, change was underway. According to Pounds (*A History of the English Parish*, p.502): 'a religious census of 1858 indicated that the membership of the Anglican community had fallen to less than fifty per cent'.

Clare undoubtedly questioned the establishment stand on religion as he did on politics. For example, in *The Parish*, he writes:

Churchwardens, Constables and overseers  
Makes up the round of commons and peers  
With learning just enough to sign a name  
And skills sufficient parish rates to frame (l. 1220-23)

In other words, all they are good for is to decide on extortionate taxes from the people with just enough skill to mark their decisions into the Parish Laws.

Clare used *The Parish* as a vehicle for attacking the corrupt politicians of his time, but he is never more vitriolic and, at the same time, never more lyrical than when he is dealing with religious figures – not in the least surprising when one remembers 'The Church' as such a powerful cultural and political force.

We can only understand Clare's particular relationship with 'The Church' if we appreciate his responses to the factors implicated in its fall in popularity, with the rise of what Sarah Houghton-Walker (*John Clare's Religion*, p.35) describes as 'Alternative Denominations and Groups'.

Clare took a great deal of interest in John Wesley, who wrote that 'there is no difference between Methodism and the plain, old religion of the Church of England'.

This assurance, however, did nothing to halt the invective levelled at Wesley's new religious group. The Methodists were described as a 'wilderment of popular religion whose ignorance and anti-establishment rhetoric makes them thoroughly undesirable' by no less a personage than the Bishop of Lincoln, George Pelham. Little wonder that Clare took an interest in what Wesley had to say!

Having had a considerable impact on the working class in the decades which saw its development, both rural and urban, the Wesley brothers' practice of eschewing luxuries and, instead, visiting the poor and sick to teach about

Christianity, would have certainly met with Clare's approval. In addition, one of the main tenets of Methodism is that people need to be involved in 'social holiness'; people could only grow as Christians in a community surrounded by those of similar faith and conviction. This idea is the antithesis of how the church of *The Parish* is organised and, insofar as this Methodist teaching is concerned, Clare would find that it matched what the perfect organisation of religion would be.

I think Houghton-Walker is absolutely correct when she suggests that:

Clare samples various non-conformist sects because he is looking for a denomination that literally follows the doctrines of Wesley ... because, knowing the 'ideal' to be inaccessible, he recognises in that denomination the closest extant approximation to it. (p.54)

In spite of this, Clare does not 'become a Methodist'. Houghton-Walker suggests why:

It would be wrong to present Clare as an adherent of any one Church. His is never religious apostasy, but always assimilation.... But it is also the result of Clare's thinking about his own faith and about contemporary Christianity and his remaining acutely aware that in Heaven 'there will be no Methodists, no {dissenters} Independants no church folks or Chatholics'. (p.55)

In his search for his Truth, Clare dabbled with the Ranters, one of the groups which made up The New Religion. Whilst he enjoyed the atmosphere, which was so different from the methods of worship he had been accustomed to, he came to the conclusion that religious characteristics ought to comprise 'calmness, quiet, cheerfulness and love' (*The Parish*, l.563)

Furthermore, as Jonathan Bate points out:

Clare was too private and restrained – ultimately too intelligent and introspective for the excesses of religious enthusiasm.

(*John Clare: A Biography* p.255)

Referring back to *The Parish*, we can see why Clare pours contempt on those who use religious pretence to mislead the rural working class. With undisguised sarcasm, Clare tells us of Old Ralph's belief:

Ralph's good doctrine was the best of all  
From him they found their old religion's stuff  
Was naught but a play at 'blind man's buff'  
A pathless journey in a starless night. (l. 600–3)

That Clare should use the word 'pathless' is significant as he believes that life is a path to be followed towards his idea of Eden – a place of eternal peace where every believer is welcomed irrespective of the denomination which they followed on Earth.

Clare uses the antithesis of Ralph's good doctrine being the best of all. The tone is somewhat hectoring and one can hear the harsh words which reflect the regular, military beat. One wonders if Clare employs this device to echo Ralph's believers marching to Hell. Iambic pentameter is the dominant feature, but, in the third line above the reader stumbles over the first beat and there is further distortion on the rhythm by use of the anapaest 'but a play'. In order for the line to regain the rhythm of the first of the extract, we must put a strong accent on 'was'. This is, I am quite sure, a deliberate ploy on Clare's part to draw the reader's attention to the triviality with which Ralph and his followers regarded the original teachings of the Church of England, described as 'stuff'. The phrase 'blind man's buff' reflects

the starless night into which Ralph and his followers are stumbling in their ignorance.

To redress the balance in some way, Clare praises a few contemporary religious figures:

Yet there are some whose actions merit praise  
The lingering breathings of departed days  
Though in this world of vainness thinly sown  
Yet there are some whom fashion leaves alone  
Who, like their Master, plain and humble go  
And strive to follow in his steps below. (l. 1716–9)

At the same time, Clare recognises that those who follow the Master's steps are 'thinly sown' – there are not many true believers.

This excerpt has as soft and conciliatory tone as the previous one was harsh. As well as the regular aa bb cc rhyming scheme, Clare employs the in-line half-rhyme of 'lingering breathings' suggestive of softly-remembered life as it was in his happiest days. Juxtaposed with this ideal are the harsh tones of 'vainness' and 'thinly'. For one who cares so little for punctuation in his writing, Clare's use of the capital letter for Master emphasises his reverence for Jesus Christ.

Certainly in his huge volume of nature poetry, Clare's concept of sublimity is ever-present – because all nature is the work of God, in his view. It follows, then, that he should use the natural sublime in his religious poetry. Let us consider one of Clare's most popular poems, 'The Peasant Poet':

He loved the brook's soft sound  
The swallows swimming by  
He loved the daisy-covered ground  
The cloud bedappled sky  
To him, the distant storm appeared  
The very voice of God  
And where the Evening rock was reared  
Stood Moses with his rod  
And every thing his eyes surveyed  
The insects i' the brake  
Where Creatures God almighty made  
He loved them for his sake  
A silent man in life's affairs  
A thinker from a Boy  
A Peasant in his daily cares –  
The poet in his joy.

For me, this is Clare's signature poem. He is both a peasant and a poet, yet neither exclusively. One identity brings him the cares of ensuring survival: the other brings him freedom, happiness and relief. The world to which Clare allows us access is where this lost, confused man lived for most of his life. It is a reflective, an ageing man locked up for being, supposedly, insane, recollecting his boyhood strengths of mind as a 'thinker'. Those thoughts, ideas and dreams stayed with him for the rest of his long life: Indeed, some of his finest poems – like this one – were written during his dark days of incarceration. What is overwhelming in this poem is Clare's devotion to God the Creator of insects, of daisies, of everything. Crucially, it is because God made them that Clare loves them – he is offering his own knowledge, expertise and lifelong study of the natural world as a sacrifice to God.

Clare's God is at once gentle, the Creator of the harmless babbling water, the swallow, insects, and the daisies. But then, when thunder roars out its fury, the metaphor is the threatening, awe-inspiring image of Moses the lawgiver, the chieftain. Clare loves this God, too. I wonder if, for Clare, this latter image represents the burden of his work in the fields and the earlier God is a personification of his love of nature and poetry. Clare uses assonance to great effect in the first three lines: the blank sky is given a charming image of being cloud be-dappled in direct opposition to the leaden colour when it thunders.

Clare can be said to be a member of the Romantic School, even though he was so much more than a 'Romantic Poet'. However, his skill in writing in this genre was great, especially when referring to death and his ideal Paradise, a return to Eden: in short, what to expect when 'pride, and power, and king, and clown / Shall be Death's slaves at last'. ('On Death')

Clare recognises the difficulty of searching for the true meaning of Christianity. In an honest, moving and witty observation, Clare writes, in 1821 in his prose work *Sketches*:

It may be said that ignorance is one of the sweetest hopes that a poor Man carries to his grave, when his manhood muses oer the exclamation of his dying saviour asking & offering the same plea for the worst of sinners. Father forgive them they know not what they do.

(*By Himself*, ed. Robinson & Powell, p.6)

**Doreen Thakoordin**

## **The John Clare Cottage**

The John Clare Cottage is currently organising several events such as Poetry Nights and Music Nights for the Summer months; we have also planned another Craft Fayre for people to come along and sell goods they have made. Details, including days and times of our normal opening, will be found on our website, <https://www.clarecottage.org/>. We will also be open throughout John Clare Festival weekend 16th–17th July.

We have arranged another Outdoor Theatre event for this year; Pantaloons are performing *Wind in the Willows* for us on 18th August 2022 at 7.00 p.m. Tickets are now on sale.

The gardens are now coming to life; we have been very well supported since reopening and look forward to another busy year.



## Trespass

I have a shelf full of books containing John Clare's poetry, which allowed me to further my interest in his work, become a fan, and join the John Clare Society. During that time I had the luck to present Clare's poetry to GCSE English Literature students – they loved it.

However, recently, another John Clare book arrived in the post, containing poems selected by Paul Farley. A nice surprise for me was that a poem was included in his selection that I didn't know existed – the poem 'Trespass', a sonnet. Of course my interest was heightened as I've always been an enthusiastic and active trespasser. Why? In order to explore and enjoy my local rural environment to the full.

Prior to writing this poem, Clare recorded the delights of 'Emmonsales Heath' an un-enclosed common enjoyed by the locals:

Grasses that never knew the scythe,  
Wave all the summer long,  
The wild weed blossoms waken blythe  
That ploughman never wrong.

Another stanza that expressed Clare's love for the common:

The wild rose scents the summer air,  
And woodbines weave in bowers  
To glad the swain sojourning there  
And maidens gathering flowers.

The above was the scene Clare remembered and had enjoyed which was lost to him at an early age. So, he wrote 'Trespass' to describe the situation after his beloved common had been enclosed. His opening lines:

I dreaded walking where there was no path  
And pressed the cautious tread the meadow swath  
And always turned to look with wary eye  
And always feared the owner coming by.

I conclude by describing a recent experience when I was challenged by the new owner who'd bought a farm – now of course unfarmed. The previous owner, a genuine farmer, had allowed reasonable access. No problem!

A 'Christian' bought the farmers' fields  
No more cows, no more milk yields  
He grew a fence some seven feet tall  
Topped with barbed wire like the Berlin Wall.  
The common folk denied entry,  
'This land is PRIVATE and not free'.

To emphasise – the 'Right to Roam' is a noble cause. Please support!

**Pete Relph**

## Arbour Editions for 2022

My Chapbook adventure continues; since the last Society Newsletter there have been two more titles added to the list. No.22 is an exploration of Clare's writing about that fabled heavy horse 'Dobbin', whilst No.23 is much more serious – Clare's trenchant opinion about the Workhouse.

### Dobbin

An ordinary cart-horse – hardly a productive subject for a Chapbook, one might think? And yet, Clare had much to say about one heavy horse of his day in particular:

There was an Elegy also on an old Cart Horse an early poem which I altered and made a tolerable thing of the old Horse was in great fame in the Village for his gentleness and strength and readiness at all sorts of jobs

The Shire, the heavy horse, is hardly mentioned save in passing, in centuries of poetry and prose, yet probably the most irreplaceable worker on the land and in local travel for half a millennium.

Poor faithful Dob[b]in I regret to see  
The last sad end of such a horse as thee  
For every drop of thine was noble blood  
Nor didst thou own a hair but what was good

The tall, muscular, heavy horse was the major source of power for farming, hauling freight and moving passengers from the Conquest to late in the 19th century. In this book we can share in Clare's view of Dobbin's extraordinary character.

### The Workhouse

Charles Dickens described a visit to a workhouse in 1850:

The faces... were depressed and subdued, and wanted colour.... There were weird old women, all skeleton within, all bonnet and cloak without, continually wiping their eyes with dirty dusters of pocket-handkerchiefs; and there were ugly old crones, both male and female, with a ghastly kind of contentment. Upon the whole, it was the dragon, Pauperism, in a very weak and impotent condition; toothless, fangless, drawing his breath heavily enough, and hardly worth chaining up.

A generation earlier, Clare saw the enclosures as the main cause of rural poverty, a kind of robbery, the laws being laid down by a parliament of property-owners and lawyers. His frustration and anger, with what he called 'workhouse prisons' arising from the fate of the dispossessed.

Thus came enclosure – ruin was her guide  
But freedoms clapping hands enjoyed the sight  
Tho comforts cottage soon was thrust aside  
And workhouse prisons raised upon the site

As always, these and all of the back numbers may be obtained direct from me at arborfield@gmail.com – or at the Festival in July where I will have my usual book-table in Botolph's Barn. I am currently working on No.24 which is to be entitled *On the Heath* and is due in June 2022.

**Roger Rowe**

*We apologise for accidentally omitting Roger's contact email address from the end of his article in the February Newsletter.*

# The John Clare Countryside Project



Langdyke  
Countryside Trust

Plans led by the Langdyke Countryside Trust are progressing well to restore nature across John Clare country to how it would have been when the poet was alive.

The John Clare Countryside vision encompasses parishes between Peterborough and Stamford involved in different restoration schemes.

A full-time team has been installed – led by a Langdyke board member – to manage the project, thanks to a financial grant. As a result it is wonderful to see so much habitat creation going on across the John Clare Countryside. Some of this is the direct result of the energy of the partnership team, led by Mike Horne.

Over the last few months, they have planted trees, hedges, bulbs and wildflower seeds across many villages. The evidence can be seen by new hedgerows along the Helpston – Glington Road, opposite the road into Etton. And we are also seeing large stretches of new hedgerow being planted by our local farmers, most noticeably north of the Maxey Cut, along the road to Helpston.

Trust chair Richard Astle said, 'It's all great to see and a significant contribution to nature recovery'.

The Trust has also signed a new 10-year lease on the Bainton Heath site with National Grid, securing the site's future for nature. This new lease heralds a much closer relationship with National Grid, who are investing significantly in the future of the reserve, providing funding over the 10 years to help nature.

Projects will include new fencing to exclude deer and allow the scrub to regenerate and perhaps tempt Nightingales to return to the site.

Richard said: 'We will also be improving the viewing facilities from the adjacent public footpath and creating open ground for rare annual plants, lichens and mosses and invertebrates, including the lovely Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, while maintaining plenty of Wood Small-reed for the rare Concolorous moth'.

The Trust is also in discussions for the establishment of two more nature reserves locally. These opportunities could help us to expand the land managed for wildflowers at Vergette Wood Meadow at Etton and another wetland site.

Over the last few weeks, the JCC team have been busy hosting events for both local volunteers and corporate friends, resulting in hundreds of metres of new hedgerow and scores more trees being planted.



*Photo: Sarah Lambert*

Mike Horne explained: 'We're also busy meeting with councillors of some of the nineteen parish councils we're working with, to find new opportunities for planting wildflower bulbs and putting up bird and bat boxes within the villages this autumn. We're planning on attending as many of the village meetings and fetes as we can this summer to help spread the word about the JCC project, and how folks doing just a few small things in their own gardens will be a big help to their local wildlife'.

There have been two meetings of the JCC Verges Working Group, where we discussed how best to improve the condition of our most important road verges using a pot of money secured by Peterborough City Council from developers. This is likely to involve an additional cut-and-collect to try to control the vigorous growth of rank grass resulting from warmer, wetter winters and increasing levels of aerial nitrogen.

You can find out more of the work of Langdyke at [langdyke.org.uk](http://langdyke.org.uk)

**David Rowell**

## **New Title Launch: available at the Festival's John Clare Society Bookstall**

A new collection of photographs from Gloucestershire-based photographer Fred Chance will be available during the John Clare Festival in Helpston this year. The title of the book, *Where Man Never Trod & Woman Never Smiled or Wept*, is taken from John Clare's poem 'I Am' and the photographs were all made in and around Helpston. They are about place and identity and lament



the loss of both. The lines accompanying the photographs are taken from four of John Clare's poems and the combination of pictures and words re-tell some of the themes which occupied Clare and still resonate today.

The book is £10.00 a copy.

See [www.fredchance.co.uk](http://www.fredchance.co.uk) and [www.yewtreepress.co.uk](http://www.yewtreepress.co.uk)

This photograph from the collection was made at the site made famous by John Clare in his poem 'Langley Bush'.

**David Smith**

# Melodys of Earth and Sky

A new album of poetry and music

Released March 2022

Music: Julian Philips

Reader: Toby Jones

Violin: Ionel Manciu

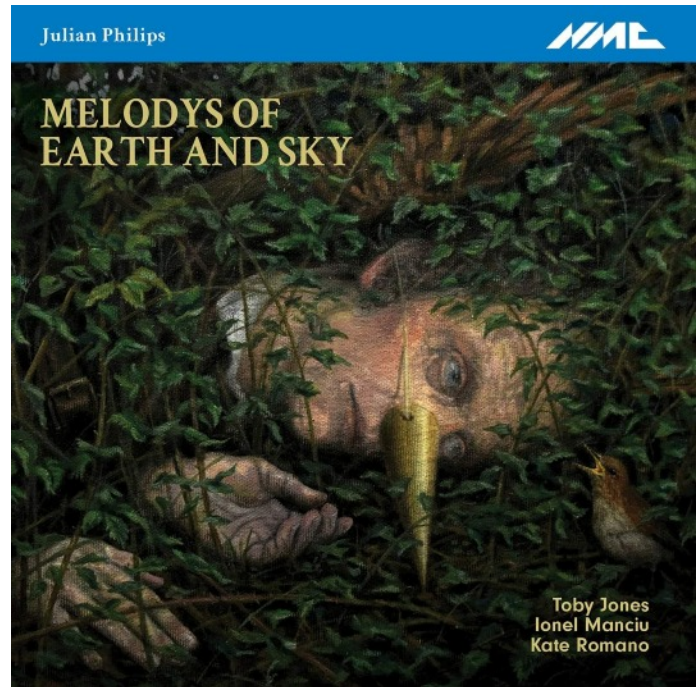
Clarinet: Kate Romano

Project lead & poetry editor: Simon Kövesi

BAFTA Award-winning actor Toby Jones reanimates John Clare through his poems and prose, paired with nine creative transcriptions from Clare's book of fiddle tunes – conceived for clarinet and violin by Julian Philips.

John Clare straddled both words and music in his creative work. Alongside his vivid depictions of rural life, Clare was also a prolific fiddle player and avid collector of folksongs, ballads and dances. He sought to capture an oral tradition by 'plucking out' tunes on his violin.

This project was initially intended for a 2020 bicentenary celebration of Clare's *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, led by Clare scholar Professor Simon Kövesi, Toby Jones, and clarinettist and producer Kate Romano, and funded by Arts Council England, the John Clare Society and Oxford Brookes University.



L to R: Kate Romano, Julian Philips, Toby Jones and Simon Kövesi

On this album, Julian's compositions are creative transcriptions of Clare's capturing of traditional folksong in his own handwritten musical notation. Each song is set with poems chosen to echo and respond to similar themes and tones. Overall the *Melodys* have a sense of shared, communal experience – of melancholy (*The Gardengate*), innocence (*Young Huzzar*), foreboding (*The Storm*), restlessness (*Morgiana*), inebriation (*Polka*), a wedding (*I'll be married on Sunday*), sorrow (*Black Ey'd Susan*), intrigue (*Morgan Rattler*), and exuberant joy (*Hornpipes*). The poems read by Toby Jones include 'Song's Eternity', 'First Love', 'Written in a Thunderstorm July 15th 1841', 'The Toper's Rant', 'The Mother's Advice', 'How can I forget?', an extract from *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and two prose passages covering the 'edge of the orison' episode and Clare's fiddling sprees with gypsies.



*Ionel Manciu*

The stripped-back instrumentation of Kate Romano's clarinet and Ionel Manciu's violin creates an intimate, domestic atmosphere reflecting the authenticity of Clare's fascination with these fiddle tunes. Simon Kövesi worked with Julian Philips to assign texts to each *Melody*, before both words and music were recorded together, allowing for a natural and organic synergy between spoken word and instrumental music. A project close to Toby Jones' heart, he says: 'My father Freddie Jones was a fervent reciter of Clare's poetry. He played Clare more than once and identified with the struggle and ardour of the poet's extraordinary journey. This recording has enabled me to extend that road a little further'.

The front cover of the album features art by Brian Shields: [brianshields-artist.co.uk/about](http://brianshields-artist.co.uk/about)

Available on CD and all streaming platforms

To purchase, and for more information, visit the NMC website:

[nmc-recordings.myshopify.com/collections/new-releases-2022/products/julian-philips-melodys-of-earth-and-sky](https://nmc-recordings.myshopify.com/collections/new-releases-2022/products/julian-philips-melodys-of-earth-and-sky)

## ***Melodys of Earth and Sky:*** **Album launch at the Stapleford Granary**

Date, 31st March. Arrival time, after 18.00 for a glass of wine and usual chatter, plus the opportunity to buy a copy of the NMC album before an 18.45 stroll upstairs to the performance room.

As a first-time visitor to the Granary, I found it easy to get to, easy to park and a lovely bright and attractive venue. The walls are highlighted with a selection of fascinating prints.

But back to the launch: About fifty of us settled in the large room with a vaulted ceiling. We were welcomed by Simon Kövesi with a brief rundown on the original idea of celebrating the bicentenary of the publication of John Clare's first book, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, and how this element came about in conversation with composer Julian Philips. Coincidentally Julian had been pondering on Clare and his folk collection. Long story short, it became a collaboration of Clare words connected by compositions that Julian based on nine of the folk tunes Clare collected. NMC completed the idea by recording all for the CD.

A selection of nine was refined from his 263 collected tunes ('In a good musical hand', Julian noted) to fit on the CD, between the texts. The 'texts' are read by Toby Jones, a long-time admirer and reader of Clare (as was his father) so it was particularly pleasing that he was able to be there, completing a full CD line-up.

So, we had Toby Jones, Ionel Manciuc and Kate Romano entertaining us with thrilling words and music for an hour. Sections were introduced by Julian. Not all the CD content, but almost. As Toby read, each following musical piece traced the mood of his words through such varieties of love or storm or humour.

I found the words and music integrated beautifully. Toby's readings brought out the beauty, quality and variety of Clare's words, whether on 'Eternity', 'First Love', 'Thunderstorms', 'a Toper's Rant', 'A Mother's Advice', or 'Gypsies'. Finishing with an excerpt from 'August' (*Shepherd's Calendar*)

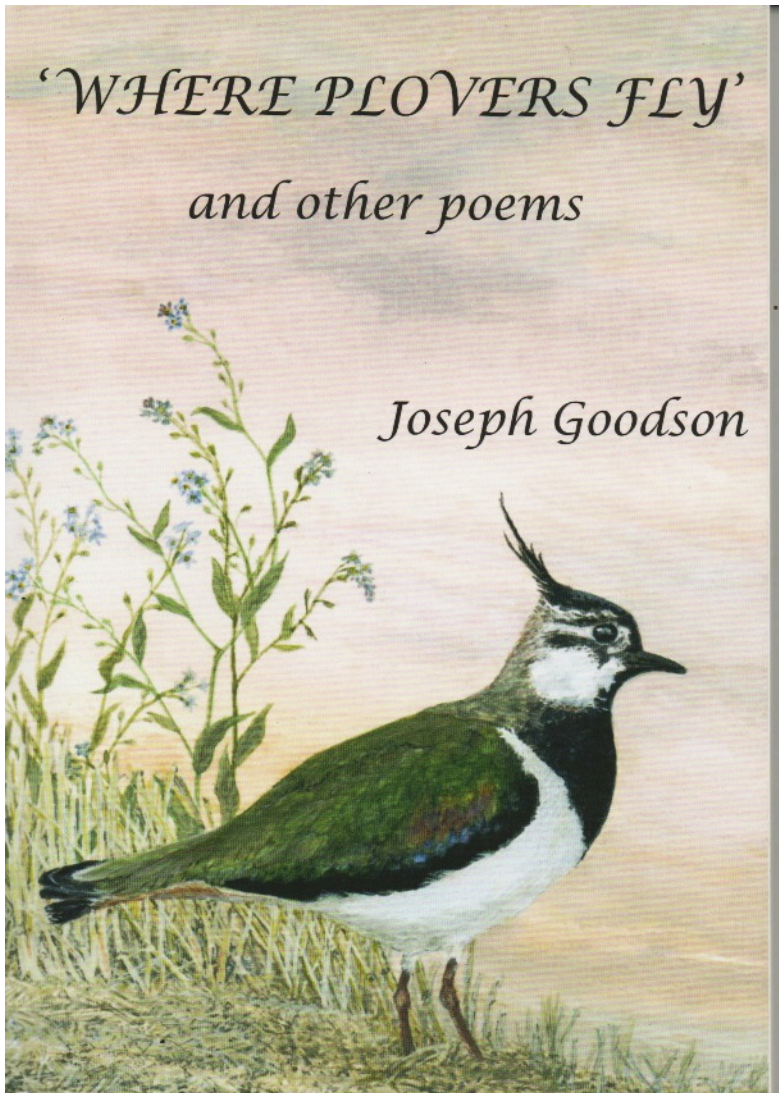
These exceptional readings were separated by violin and clarinet, playing with and teasing each other in Julian's original settings of: *Garden Gate*, *Young Huzzar*, *Morgiana in Ireland*, *Polka*, *I'll be Married on Sunday*, *Morgan Rattler*, and finally three hornpipes merged into one.

Apologies for listing lists but space is short. And each item is valued for itself to create a brilliant evening. Okay, I have to add a side-line here: The hornpipe, the finale, might well be my favourite as it was using the bass clarinet throughout. I especially like hearing and seeing the bass clarinet. But don't tell anyone.

The whole evening was tremendous – so glad I was able to sit in the front row. Yes, I would happily see it all again and am delighted to have the CD with its additional music and text.

**David Smith**

***WHERE PLOVERS FLY and other poems***  
by Joseph Goodson. ISBN 978-1-83853-080-8



Our member, Graham Bell, had an uncle, Joseph Goodson (1916 –2004), who wrote attractive and powerful poetry, and whose idol was John Clare. Together with his brother, Stephen, Graham has published a collection of his uncle’s work.

Joseph Goodson was a Northamptonshire poet, a tough guy who was somewhat coy about his gift, though the *International Who’s Who in Poetry* awarded him the Certificate of Merit ‘for distinguished contributions to poetry’. This collection has been published as a labour of love for others to enjoy, and to seek the recognition that he deserves. ‘Helpston’, written in honour of Clare, is the first poem in the collection and is printed below, with permission of the editors.

The book (144 pages) costs £9.99 including postage, and is available from Graham Bell at [bellgood@talktalk.net](mailto:bellgood@talktalk.net).

**HELPSTON**

Come now the flowers of Eastertide  
with ladysmock and cowslip bloom;  
and the lily, like some Easter bride  
to wait beside the poet’s tomb.

Come morning dew like maidens’ tears  
to fall beside this honey’d stone,  
where supreme among his peers  
lies Clare – now honoured and alone.

**THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY - 2022 FRIENDS OF FESTIVAL BOOKING FORM**

<b>Name: (please print)</b>	
<b>Address (please print)</b>	
<b>Email address if available:</b>	

Please complete as applicable:

<b>Please tick</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Cost</b>
	Friend of 2022 Festival (£12.00 per person) to include free programme and poetry pack		
	Priority booking and reserved seat for the Concert 6 pm to 7 pm in St Botolph's Church (£6.00 per person)		
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED</b>			

I understand that my programme, poetry pack, and any tickets I have ordered, will be posted to me in advance of the festival.

**(If applicable)**

I am a UK taxpayer and I agree to the Society reclaiming Gift Aid on my Friend of 2022 Festival contribution.

Signed .....

Date .....

**This completed form, along with a cheque made payable to The John Clare Society, should be returned to Sue Holgate, 9 The Chase, Ely, Cambs CB6 3DR, by 30 June 2022.**

# THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

## SALES ORDER FORM 2022



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

*Please support our activities via this catalogue which also includes a small selection of other books on Clare.*

*You can email an order or question to me. We are now able to accept PayPal and debit/credit cards for payment via email. Orders by post and cheque still welcome. Full address and ordering information below.*

*David*

*David Smith, Sales Officer*

## BOOKS 2022

CODE	ITEM	PRICE	WEIGHT
<b>B19971</b>	<i>a JCS book:</i> <b>For John Clare</b> rrp £6.95 ed. John Lucas. An Anthology of poems about John Clare	£3.95 limited stk	180g
<b>B20023</b>	<i>a JCS book:</i> <b>John Clare: New Approaches</b> rrp £7.95 ed. J Goodridge & S Kövesi ppr (essays on Clare)	£2.75	400g
<b>B20028</b>	<b>John Clare, the Northamptonshire Poet</b> ed. JL Carr (p/b pocket size poetry book) rrp £2	£1.50	20g
<b>B20030</b>	<b>The Ballad of John Clare</b> Hugh Lupton. ppr	£9.00	312g
<b>B20033</b>	<i>a JCS book:</i> <b>The Wood is Sweet</b> poems selected by David Powell, illustrated by Carry Akroyd rrp £7.99 ppr	£6.25	200g
<b>B20112</b>	<b>By Ourselves</b> following Clare from Epping to Helpston.... <b>Highly illustrated</b> , hardback ed. Andrew Kotting	£16	650g
<b>B20113</b>	<b>John Clare, the Trespasser</b> rrp£6.99 by John Goodridge & RKR Thornton ppr	£6.00	75g
<b>B20114</b>	<b>John Clare, A Poet for all Seasons</b> rrp £15.99 By <b>Peter Moyse</b> hrdbk, many colour photographs	£5.00	500g
<b>B20115</b>	<i>a JCS book:</i> <b>This Happy Spirit</b> Clare poems selected by RKR Thornton & Carry Akroyd, illustrated by Carry Akroyd. (rrp £8.99) ppr	£7.25	200g
<b>B20116</b>	<b>John Clare: A Collection of Songs, Airs and Dances for Violin (1818)</b> ed. Tony Urbainczyk, <b>vols 1 &amp; 2:</b>	<b>Vol 1: £9 Vol 2: £14</b> Incl. Post limited stock	
<b>B20125</b>	<b>John Clare Society Journals, 2020 &amp; 21</b> 200 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of 'Poems Descriptive' and 'Village Minstrel'	£3.50 each post free	
<b>B20118</b>	<b>Hidden Treasures (of John Clare)</b> ppr Both edited by. R. Rowe (Arbour Editions)	£5	125g
<b>B20127</b>	<b>Drinking With John Clare</b> ppr	£3.50	65g
<b>B20119</b>	<b>A John Clare Flora</b> Molly Mahoud ppr, colour photographs (rrp £14.99)	£17.50 Incl. post	
<b>B20126</b>	<b>THE MEETING:</b> Reading and Writing Through John Clare <i>a JCS book</i> ed. Simon Kövesi. ppr rrp. £4.	£4	Post free
<b>B20122</b>	<b>Torpel Manor: The Biography of a Landscape</b> by F Gosling, SP Ashby & A McClain. ppr	£12 Incl. postage	
<b>B20123</b>	<b>Selected Poems of Robert Bloomfield</b> Trent Edition paperback (rrp£7.99) Ed: John Goodridge and John Lucas	£7.99 Inc. postage	

### JOHN CLARE SOCIETY JOURNALS

<b>1982-2019 Journal</b> As available (some no-stock years). Please enquire for years wanted (see B20125, above for 2020/21)	£3.00 each post free
<b>Journal Index (1982-2011)</b>	£1 post free

## MISCELLANEOUS/BOOKS 2022

<b>M20071</b>	<b><i>In Clare's Footsteps.</i></b> Coloured map of Helpston with notes Unlaminated folded to A5 as above: laminated flat A4	£0.30 £1	5g 25g
<b>M20092</b>	<b>John Clare leather bookmark</b> , gold on dark green.	£2	10g
<b>M20031</b>	JCS gummed labels 100 labels in pack.	75p	150g
<b>M20028</b>	<b>Tea-Towel - Scenes from Helpston:</b> High Quality Cotton	£4.50	Post free
<b>B20128</b>	<b>Love's Cold Returning.</b> by Hall & Somekh. ppr. rrp£20	£18.00	900g
<b>B20124</b>	<b>OUP : John Clare Selected Poems</b> , rrp£12.99 Ox. StdT Txts	£12.00	300g

### DVDs and CDs

<b>M20060</b>	<b>CD: 8 Clare songs</b> set by Terence Deadman with Clare poems read by Peter Moyse, Rodney Lines & Norma Weller.	£7 Limited stock	120g
<b>M20061</b>	<b>DVD: John Clare</b> , A 65min photographic journey with poetry readings by Peter Moyse.	£5.50	post free
<b>M20062</b>	<b>CD: Clare's Journey.</b> A musical journey through his life. Sung by Maida Vale Singers. Composer: Terence Deadman. Lyrics by Trevor Harvey.	£3.00	120g
<b>Joint special offer: CDs: M20060 and M20062</b>		<b>£9.00</b>	<b>240g</b>

### POSTCARDS (Each card is 5g in weight)

<b>P20020</b>	Helpston, birthplace of John Clare	£0.30
<b>P20021</b>	Clare's cottage, Helpston	£0.30
<b>P20022</b>	John Clare (Hilton portrait, 1820)	£0.30
<b>P20023</b>	John Clare (Behnes bust)	£0.30
<b>P20024</b>	John Clare (Grimshawe portrait, 1844)	£0.30
<b>P20025</b>	Orchid flower card with prose extract *	£0.35
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<b>P20030</b>	The Primrose flower card with poem extract *	£0.35
<b>P20031</b>	<b>Set of six flower cards*</b> <b>post free:</b>	£2.15
<b>P20032</b>	The John Clare Rose	£0.25
<b>P20103</b>	The Midsummer Cushions around Clare's grave	£0.25
<b>P20104</b>	John Clare's grave	£0.25
<b>P20105</b>	John Clare's Memorial, Westminster Abbey	£0.25

# SALES ORDER FORM

2022

## POSTAGE & PACKING (P&P)

	UK	Europe	Elsewhere*
0-100g	£1.10	£3.70	£5
101-250g	£2.15	£4.50	£6
251-500g	£3.20	£5.50	£10.50
501-750g	£4.10	£7	£12.50
751-1000g	£5.50	£9	£15
1001-1250g	£6.00	£10	£18
Greater than 1251g	£9.00	£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 price for this weight in above table. **(note: some items listed as Incl.post/post free)** These\* are anticipated prices.

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Add p & p from table for the total weight			
TOTAL PAYMENT note: Paypal now available, via email.			
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<b>NAME:</b>			
<b>Date</b>			
<b>ADDRESS:</b>			
<b>POST CODE</b>			
In case of problem or query, please add <b>mobile/ phone number</b> and/or <b>e-mail address:</b>			
Return to: Sales Officer, John Clare Society, 3 Astwick Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, SG5 4AP      Tel: 01462 631285      e: djsapt@gmail.com			