The John Clare Society

Newsletter no. 147 February 2023

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The John Clare Society

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February 2023

RONALD BLYTHE CBE (1922-2023)

It is a with a great sense of loss that we carry this remembrance of Ronald (Ronnie) Blythe, who died on 14 January, aged 100. He was one the Society's founding members and its President for some thirty-five years. In the first issue of the Society's *Journal* in 1982 he wrote that 'John Clare simply explained my own fields, my own people and myself.'

Photo: Caroline Morgan

The eldest of six children, Ronnie was born in rural Acton, near Lavenham, Suffolk, into a family of farm labourers. Although he left school at fourteen, his mother had already instilled into him a love of books. He was also blessed with a creative community in Suffolk, including Benjamin Britten, which recognised his nascent talent and embraced him. He 'longed', he said, 'to be a writer'. Most important was his close friendship with painter John Nash and his wife, Christine Kühlenthal, who encouraged his writing. When he was bequeathed their home, Bottengoms, he lived there for the rest of his life, writing tenderly about it in *At the Yeoman's House* (2011).

It was the publication of *Akenfield* (1969), an account of rural life based on the stories of people in Charsfield, Suffolk, that established his reputation. Its elegant prose was the hallmark of all his work. But Ronnie was never sentimental about rural life, emphasising its hardships and injustices, its 'glory and bitterness'. *Akenfield* was made into a film by renowned theatre director Peter Hall, with Ronnie cameoing as a vicar, and broadcast on television in 1975 to an audience of fifteen million.

But Ronnie's range of writing and audiences were diverse. People who had never read John Clare were moved by his social history of the interwar period, *The Age of Illusion* (1963), particularly its opening account of the First World War. Others were charmed by his weekly column in the *Church Times,* 'Word from Wormingford'. While he was a lay reader for many years, he carried his faith lightly, although there always seemed a sense of spirituality in his writing.

John Clare was never far from his work and invariably present in it. A highlight of the annual John Clare Festival were his exquisitely-crafted President's Addresses, a collection of meditations on Clare, some of them preserved in *Talking About John Clare* (1990), now available as a free download from Nottingham Trent University, and rather more in *At Helpston* (2011). They

were always different, always inspirational, always urging the listener to reflect on the poet further. The Presidential Address was a special occasion for him too; he described it as one of the best things to happen to him as a writer. His Clare, he said, was 'digressive and associative and deeply personal.'

Ronald Blythe's legacy is not simply his extensive cannon of writing but also the example he set us as he grew older. A kind, deeply thoughtful and gentle man, he preserved a 'spiritual vitality, a vividness, an imaginative sort of energy'. He will be hugely missed.

The free download of *Talking About John Clare* can be found at: www.ntu.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1100197/Talking-About-John-Clare-eBook.pdf. It also includes the text (pp. 39–42) of Ronnie's address at the unveiling of John Clare's memorial in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. The whole of this service is now available again on a John Clare Society CD, more details of which can be found later in this Newsletter. Also available from the Society bookstore, described in this Newsletter and highly recommended, is a booklet by his friend Alan Cudmore, *Journeys to Helpston: Ronald Blythe and the John Clare Society.* Ronnie's appearance on *Desert Island Discs*, 15 April 2001, can still be heard on BBC Sounds at www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00948y7

Mike Mecham

NORMAN LEE

Photo: Sue Holgate

These last few weeks have also seen the sad deaths of two of our recent long-standing Committee members: Norman Lee died on 10 December and Linda Curry on 6 January. Both Norman and Linda were instrumental in sorting out the situation a few years ago when our then treasurer failed to manage our finances. Norman joined the Society in 2005 and became treasurer in 2006. In 2013 he was instrumental in implementing more modern banking practices and internet banking. He was a safe pair of hands for the Society in this most important of roles, and kept the accounts in pristine order. He also served on the Festival Committee and was always supportive and encouraging, especially to the Festival Co-ordinator when she sorely needed it! He was kind, and a gentleman in the true sense of the word. His interest in John Clare and love of his poetry, together with being a member and officer of the Society, added enrichment to his retirement years. We will miss him and continue to be immensely grateful for all he has given to the Society.

Sue Holgate
Chairman and former Festival Co-ordinator

LINDA CURRY

Photo: Mike Mecham

Linda joined the Society in 1997. She was persuaded to become treasurer, and, despite her protests that she had no experience of keeping accounts, she did a wonderful job for several years before being made chairman in 2006, when Norman took over as treasurer. As chairman, she arranged for the JCS to become registered with the Charity Commission, built our first website, and started the Friends of the Festival scheme. When I took over as chairman she again became treasurer and kept our accounts in impeccable order until last year when she thought it would be wise to hand over to someone else. Linda was indefatigable. If there was a job to be done, she would do it. Despite periods of ill health she was unfailingly cheerful and free of self-pity. We send our deepest condolences to her husband, Bob (who came to many JCS festivals) and son, James.

Valerie Pedlar
Former Chairman

The John Clare Society Festival

Friday 14 – Sunday 16 July 2023

The Festival will take place as usual this year in Helpston, near Peterborough (the birthplace of John Clare) with the Midsummer Cushions Ceremony at the church on Friday 14 in the afternoon and the main Festival and AGM on Saturday 15 July. There will be a church service on Sunday 16 July. The theme for the Festival will be *John Clare and the Spirit of Place.* 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 this topic!

We are in the early stages of arrangements for the Festival and as yet have not confirmed a keynote speaker or musicians for our concert. There will however still be the usual stalls, folk dancing, village walks, open gardens, refreshments in the Village Hall and the Bluebell, with poetry reading in the church.

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 it enables you to pre-book your tickets and reserve a seat for the concert. You will also be sent a lovely poetry pack.

The Festival 2023 will be a happy and full celebration of our poet – please make a note of the date. Full details will be in our next Newsletter; we hope to see you there!

Ann Marshall
Festival Co-ordinator

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

It is becoming increasingly clear that the age of the cheque book and the high-street bank is drawing to a close. Here in Tonbridge (population over 40,000) we used to have all four major high-street banks. Barclays closed more than a year ago, followed recently by Lloyds. NatWest will close in March and HSBC a little later, so we shall have no banks. The Society banks with Barclays, so if I have to pay in a cheque I have to get on a bus or train to another town. I could pay cheques in at the post office, but that has closed too.

It would therefore be much appreciated if those members who still pay their subscriptions by cheque could make life easier for themselves and for me by taking out a standing order. This is a simple procedure; all you have to do is ask me for the relevant form. A standing order can, of course, be cancelled very easily.

New Members

We should like to welcome the following new members, who have recently joined the Society:

Peter Revill, Jacksdale, Notts
Elliott Bush, Ohio, USA
Tim Blanchard, Cambridge
Lily Dessau, Geneva

Robert Heyes
December 2022

JOHN CLARE: NATURE, TRADITION AND CHANGE. Part 1.

The Ronald Blythe Centenary Lecture
The John Clare Festival, Helpston, 16th July 2022

What does 'tradition' mean? The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests the root meaning is simply the action of handing something over, delivering or transferring something ('Tradition'; sb., 1). As we work through the *OED* definitions, 'something' becomes information or instruction, particularly oral instruction, accrued and passed down within religious traditions: thus each of the three major monotheistic religious traditions gets a numbered definition of its own, and in these it means a body of teaching transmitted down the generations orally. But then things start to get blurry: definition 5(b) begins with the warning phrase, 'more vaguely', and continues, 'A long established and generally accepted custom or method of procedure, having almost the force of a law; an immemorial usage'. This comes close to contradicting itself: it is 'generally' accepted, and it 'almost' has the force of a law. Though not quite: it is not a law, which is a very rigid concept, but something more like an expectation. Definition 7 applies the word to a person 'whose behaviour and goals are largely directed by social conventions'; that is to say, a conventional person.

If we turn to the cultural critics and historians, we find caution and scepticism. 'Tradition', in its 'most general modern sense', writes Raymond Williams in *Keywords*, is a 'particularly difficult word' (pp. 318–20). Eric Hobsbawm and

Terence Ranger in their 1983 edited collection of essays, *The Invention of Tradition*, declare in their very title a suspicion of tradition as a bearer of authenticity and credibility; for if a tradition can be 'invented', in what sense is it even 'traditional', as understood, for instance, by the conventional person of *OED* definition 7?

What was John Clare's attitude to tradition? In this talk I want to think about his approach to the traditions of the village culture and the rural world in which he grew up, and relatedly, how he saw the literary traditions of past and present. Clare is often characterised as a defender of traditions, a writer who bore witness to now lost village traditions often associated with the seasonal and agricultural year and the key moments in the life of a village, in its culture and ecology. Clare's preservation of them through words was a response to the huge threat to the village's way of life represented especially by enclosure. He lived in a time of unprecedented change, an 'age of revolutions' where such world events as the Napoleonic Wars reverberated even in the small world of his community, and where a local event such as the enclosure of Helpston seemed almost designed to change everything and threaten the traditions he remembered and valued. But how exactly did he see tradition? By examining the way he describes traditions in his poetry and prose, we can gain insight into what these traditions represented, both to him and to his community (which is not always the same thing).

Did Clare feel an equal need to 'preserve' traditions in poetry, the other kind of 'tradition' he engaged with? An avaricious devourer of print culture, Clare was one of the best-read poets of his age, yet we find that he was quite capable of changing and adapting, and even inverting the literary forms that he read and admired, to use them in his own particular ways: thus he invented new forms around the sonnet genre, re-wrote familiar eighteenth-century motifs in radical ways, and found his own ways to echo, imitate or parody favourite contemporaries like Wordsworth and Keats.[1]

So I am going to try to show some of the ways in which Clare embraced both tradition and change. And since this is the Ronald Blythe Centenary Lecture, I should point out that the idea I hope to develop here, of a writer who somehow both embraces tradition and welcomes surprise, change and the unexpected, came into my mind while reading Ronald Blythe's writings, especially his long-running *Church Times* columns.[2] For like John Clare, Ronald Blythe is a writer who looks both ways, to the old and the new, finding a kind of synthesis or dialectic between the two. I have said a little about this in this year's Festival booklet, and looking back I can see that I was heading in the same direction in another piece I wrote about Ronald Blythe for the *John Clare Society Newsletter*, some years ago. I also noted on that earlier occasion another vital thing that links John Clare and Ronald Blythe, namely the sheer sense of pleasure, the intense delight they both find in the act of writing.[3]

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[1] Lack of time precluded any real discussion of this side of things in the lecture, but see especially the first half of my *John Clare and Community* (2013), and major studies by Paul Chirico and Mina Gorji.

[2] Many of these columns may be found online, and they have been gathered into ten printed selections, from *Word from Wormingford* (1997), to *Stour Seasons* (2016). For Ronald Blythe's writings on John Clare see especially *At Helpston* (2011), and the earlier *Talking About John Clare* (1999).

[3] John Goodridge, 'Distinguished Clareans (1) Ronald Blythe', *John Clare Society Newsletter*, 96 (June 2007), pp. 3-4, and 'Ronald Blythe: A Centenary Tribute', *John Clare Society Festival: The Importance of Tradition* (Helpston: John Clare Society, July 2022), pp. 10-11.

For Clare, writing poetry is also a consolation, sometimes indeed almost a kind of therapy. In the opening poem of his mature collection *The Midsummer Cushion* he addresses 'The Rural Muse' – the personification of poetry itself – on the urgency and emotional intensity of his need to write:

> With thee the spirit of departed years
> Wakes that sweet voice that time hath rendered dumb
> & freshens like to spring – loves hopes & fears
> That in my bosom found an early home
> Wooing the heart to extacy – I come
> To thee when sick of care of joy bereft
> Seeking the pleasures that are found in bloom
> & happy hopes that time hath only left
> Around the haunts where thou didst erst sojourn
> Then smile sweet cherubim & welcome my return (p. 4)

'Wooing the heart to extacy' could not be clearer: poetry is a means to revive or inspire or conjure up pleasure, belief, and love. It can stir up feelings, and the comparison here is with spring, the subject of the second poem in the book. This is the John Clare that Ronald Blythe has so richly celebrated and to whom he has always been a kindred spirit.

When we talk about tradition in Clare, we tend to look at the things he celebrates, often remembered from childhood, or laments as things lost, especially through enclosure and the changes of his own life. These often follow the patterns of the rural year. In his prose writing there is a kind of catalogue of the festivals and special moments in the rural year (*By Himself*, pp. 34–6), and this seems to be at the core of Clare's sense of tradition. The festive year of what the Victorians would call calendar customs is itself a reflection, an echo of the natural year, the seasonal year, and so there is no division between the way Clare celebrates, say, Valentine's Day, or Harvest Home, or Martinmas, and the way he celebrates the progress of nature through the year.

So to return to that second poem in *The Midsummer Cushion* that I mentioned, 'Pleasures of Spring', we find no sense of division between the natural and the human-made world, between nature and culture. In fact he specifically and repeatedly links the two. In the opening paean of praise for the pleasures of spring he says that the 'veriest clown that hath a pulse to move' – the simplest rustic with any sort of feeling – 'Looks on her smiling face & falls in love': that is, looks on the face of nature, which makes one fall in love, and almost indeed become a poet:

> The veriest clown that hath a pulse to move
> Looks on her smiling face & falls in love
> He plucks the wild flowers scattered from her hand
> & feels warm rapture round his heart expand
> Joys of the soul which nature prompts to seek
> The all of poesy but its power to speak (p. 8)

So whilst the poet can put into words the pleasures of spring, anyone can experience the feelings, the sensations out of which his poetry springs, the 'all of poesy but its power to speak'. There is an interaction between the power of spring, and the human beings who experience it, so that 'tasselled catkins' are the 'woodmans genial prophecy of spring': they present themselves to a man who works in the woods as a promise that spring is coming. And Clare makes another, and perhaps surprising analogy between the opening of spring and the

opening of a new book (in the days when one cut open the pages of a newly purchased volume):

> There is a calm divinity of joy
> Breathes rapture round o'er everyone's employ
> The Poet feels it neath some forward bush
> The first in leaf to hide the singing thrush
> Where cutting open with heart beating speed
> Some book just purchased which he loves to read
> Some brother poets new engaging song
> Which warm anticipation sought so long
> The Lover feels it in some secret place
> Shut out from all but one endearing face (p.8)

Well, the lover we might have perhaps expected as spring comes to life, but the poet in the bush is perhaps more of a surprise. What he says is that the bush comes into leaf to hide the singing thrush – asserting its spring territory, the naturalist would say – but what is actually hidden in the new leaves is a poet, not asserting territory but excitedly and secretly cutting open the pages of a new book by a fellow poet – Clare himself being a poet, we remember from the autobiographical writings, who once climbed over a wall into Burghley Park so that he could read Thomson's *Seasons* without being seen (*By Himself*, p. 11). Hiding with his new book in the bush is in fact more akin to the lover who follows, than to the singing thrush whose love is very loudly public.

But the larger point, I think, is that in describing spring, a key moment in the annual cycle, Clare does not separate and compartmentalise experience, between human and non-human, between nature and culture. Cutting open a new book, kissing a loved one, is all of a piece with a tree coming into leaf, a thrush singing, or the bark of a tree changing its colour and texture: collectively these form the 'all of poesy but its power to speak', and the latter of course, the power to speak in verse, the poet supplies. All is predictable and expected, and yet somehow also surprising and dramatic. And I believe that this link between the expected and the unexpected is the foundation on which Clare's sense of tradition is built. As such, it is crucial also to his sense of identity, a subject that often comes up in his writing. It is not perhaps every villager who hides in a newly-leaved bush in order to cut open the new leaves of a book of poems, but the act is in harmony here with other experiences described, the 'veriest clown' thrilling to the changes of spring, the woodman taking pleasure in the catkins that show spring is coming.

The sense of a unified experience, a shared legacy and expectation, a commonalty of experience, is an important one, and one which Clare I think greatly valued, not least because it was so very frequently threatened and put into disharmony in his life. But it is important to understand how strongly he sought the harmony of common experiences, even though his own life-experiences often separated him from it. This indeed was a process which began early, as he started to enjoy reading and solitude:

> I began to wean off from my companions and sholl about the woods and fields on Sundays alone conjectures filld the village about my future destinations on the stage of life, some fanc[y]ing it symtoms of lunacy and that my mothers prophecys woud be verified to her sorrow and that my reading of books (they woud jeeringly say) was for no other improvment then quallyfiing an idiot for a workhouse (*By Himself*, p. 5)

The sense of separation from common experience was further exacerbated by his sudden dizzying success as an author, for example when he was bound for London on the Stamford coach:

> my mind was full of expectations all the way about the wonders of the town which I had often heard my parents tell storys about by the winter fire and when I turnd to the reccolections of the past by seeing people at my old occupations of ploughing and ditching in the fields by the road side while I was lolling in a coach the novelty created such strange feelings that I coud almost fancy that my identity as well as my occupations had changd that I was not the same John Clare but that some stranger soul had jumpd into my skin (*By Himself*, p. 134)

And there were other key moments in this separation and fragmentation of his sense of identity, notably the move to Northborough, so wonderfully described in the trilogy poems comprising 'The Flitting', 'Decay A Ballad', and 'Remembrances', all recommended reading for anyone interested in how Clare expressed complex and conflicted feelings about change and loss. An important aspect of this, and indeed a constant drumbeat through much of his writing, is the question of how enclosure had destroyed so much of the communitarian experience he celebrated, so that much of his poetry must needs celebrate *lost* rather than *living* traditions. The group of poems Johanne Clare called the 'enclosure elegies' are perhaps the most eloquent testimonies to these losses. And the sense of loss would continue into Clare's asylum years, in differing forms.

I want to look now at a few examples of how Clare describes traditional, that is predictable, cyclical phenomena in the natural world and in village culture – and incidentally I would not want to try to limit Clare to these areas. One of the difficulties in preparing a talk of this kind is that there are many and varied aspects to Clare's writing, making it hard to come up with something that shows the bigger picture fairly. I am merely suggesting that village traditions, reflecting agrarian and natural cycles, provided an anchor in his life, and a subject of special importance to him as a writer.

Clare's bird poems form a recognisable group, and yet when one examines them they are extraordinarily varied in what they do, as I noted in my book *John Clare and Community*, which discusses some of them:

> Like the enclosure elegies, Clare's nest poems have often been grouped together critically and in anthologies, sometimes with other bird poems, or bird and animal poems. Thus a sequence of thirteen 'nest' poems in Geoffrey Summerfield's Penguin Classics anthology effectively showcases the genre and dominates his themed 'Birds and Beasts' section. As Clare's Oxford editors explain, Clare 'intended a separate volume in which birds and their nests would be described in short poems of varying stanzas, the whole collection being called "Birds Nesting"'. But while Clare's nest poems have important elements in common, they also possess far more variety than this plan would suggest or might perhaps have allowed for.
>
> (*John Clare and Community*, p. 135)

I can see now that this variety of themes in the nest poems is an example of the phenomenon I mentioned at the start, of a writer who both embraces tradition and welcomes surprise, change and the unexpected. The different birds he writes about are, as it were, a fixed and known part of the natural environment, a group of creatures who go through a cycle of feeding and reproduction and (for some) migration through the year. Clare's poem 'The Raven's Nest' expresses this sense

of a reassuring, recurring natural cycle. The ravens build their nest 'year after year', and each year a new generation of boys tries to climb up to reach it, and incrementally a natural cycle becomes a cultural cycle; myths grow up about the one old man who as a boy had reached it. There is a reassuring stability about the nest reappearing each year:

every spring
Finds the two ancient birds at their old task
Repairing the hugh nest — where still they live
Through changes winds and storms and are secure
And like a landmark in the chronicles
Of village memorys treasured up yet lives
The hugh old oak that wears the ravens nest (*Major Works*, p. 219)

That ending is exactly what I mean by stability. The huge old oak, a traditional symbol of stability and strength, 'wears' the nest like a crown, and the birds and their habit are written into the chronicles of village memories, the oral record. Of course it helps that ravens are long-lived birds with deep mythical roots, so that Clare can depict them as being the same pair every year – unlike Keats's nightingale, for example, who is an 'immortal bird' only in the sense that one bird replaces another, its music continuous only through generational memory. But even if the ravens had not been the same pair, renewal would not disrupt continuity here. It would instead follow what we might call Keats's principle of the single transferable nightingale.

But as I have suggested, Clare does many other things with his bird poems, and as often as not they are about instability, change, surprise, and loss. There is, for example, the extraordinarily dramatic and tragic sonnet in octosyllables which the editors put at the start of the *Northborough Sonnets* collection, a nightingale poem that might have given Keats pause:

There is a cruelty in all
From tyrant man to meaner things
& nature holds inhuman thrall
Against herself so sorrow sings
A nightingale had built its nest
Low in my weedy orchard hedge
The kecks grew up to give her rest
& safety gave its secret pledge
That bye & bye her young should flye
But trouble was ordained to come
A magpie had her dwelling nigh
& like a robber found her home
& one by one it took away
& murdered musics little heirs (*Northborough Sonnets*, p. 4)

The personified 'safety' has offered its 'secret pledge', but this has been betrayed by another personified force, Nature's implacable and reflexive 'inhuman thrall', red in tooth and claw. So stability and continuity, traditions that renew and recur predictably, are not in any sense guaranteed, and Clare both understands and catalogues, often in great detail, the ways in which these reassuring phenomena that mean so much to him and his community, may fail.

Nor is this the only poem in which the bird is dramatically endangered. As I wrote in *John Clare and Community* (pp. 136–43), 'The Yellowhammers Nest' is filled from beginning to end with threats to the safety of the nest. So while the bird's nest is for Clare an image of safety, nurture and promise, it is equally seen

as fragile, ephemeral, unreliable. It is built or rebuilt every year as a potentiality, a 'secret pledge' of continuity and new life, but very many things can thwart the hope that it represents. It is perhaps for this reason that Clare writes his 'Nightingales Nest' in such a tone of excited whispering,[1] suggesting a sense of reverence, a sight of something rare and precious which must not be disturbed:

Up this green woodland ride lets softly rove
And list the nightingale — she dwelleth here
Hush let the wood gate softly clap — for fear
The noise may drive her from her home of love
(*Major Works*, p. 213)

Here the poet, and even the reader as his implied human companion, may be the threat that can make the bird desert her 'home of love', with all the sense in that phrase of something to be treasured and not carelessly put at risk

The bird poems do a great many things, and are not all about nesting. Two that particularly interest me are 'The Skylark' and 'The Skylark Leaving Her Nest', which along with the poem 'Fancies' (which comes just before 'the Skylark Leaving Her Nest' in *The Midsummer Cushion* manuscript) represent what we might call Clare's *aerial imagination*. Dreams, not of hunting down or climbing up to the nest, but of bird flight itself, are yet another way in which Clare embraces strangeness as well as familiarity. In 'Fancys', he imagines climbing higher and higher:

Yet up & up & higher still
The circling landscapes stretch away
Above the clouds — my pliant will
Seems mounting to a brighter day
While underneath my feet I leave
The fallen clouds & lowly wind
& still my fancys so decieve
The world itself is left behind (*Middle Period*, III, p. 550)

I am reminded of some of Carry Akroyd's images of landscape, which have a perspective that seems to be way up in the air, dreaming of looking down on the world, just as Clare does. In 'The Skylark Leaving Her Nest' he is doing just that, moving his perspective swiftly, from following her flight up to the zenith, to looking down at earth, perhaps through the bird's eyes:

My mind enjoys the happy sight
To watch thee to the clear blue sky
& when I downward turn my eye
Earth glows with lonely light (*Middle Period*, III, p. 551)

The poet seems to move instantaneously from looking up at the bird, to looking down through its eyes and seeing there a world made strange in the glow of its 'lonely light'.

John Goodridge

The second half of this Centenary Lecture will be printed in the June Newsletter

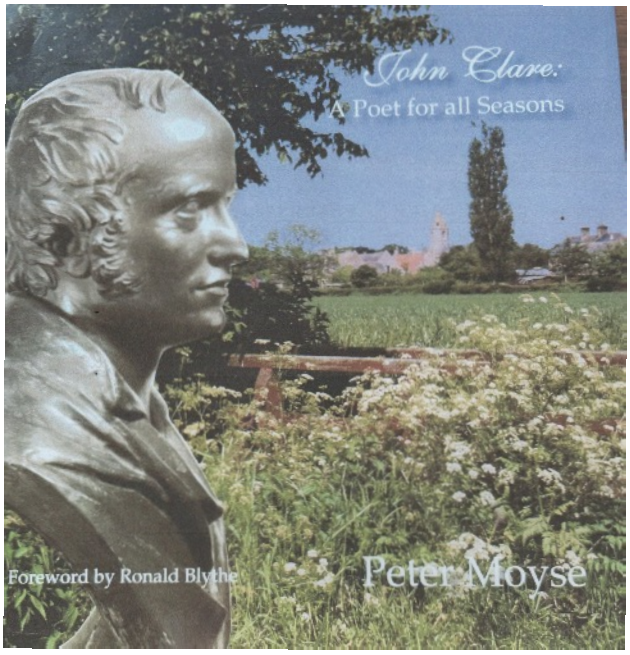
[1] Ted Hughes's memorable June 1989 Westminster Abbey reading of the poem, now reissued by JCS (see this Newsletter), may be recommended for its rich echoing of Clare's sibilants.

THE REAL JOHN CLARE

There is no doubt that the portrait of John Clare that was painted by William Hilton in 1820 is a fine work of art, but whether it portrays the poet as he appeared in real life is very much open to question. I feel that we have nearly all been indoctrinated to a certain extent by the portrait and that, for most people, this is the image that comes readily to mind when Clare is mentioned.

In order to understand what has happened I would suggest that it is necessary to consider the context in which the portrait was created. It was in fact commissioned by Clare's publisher, John Taylor, very shortly after the release of the poet's first book, and I feel that this should be seen very much as part of Taylor's marketing of his young protégé. I can well imagine the publisher letting Hilton know what he wanted the portrait to convey. John Tibble probably hit the nail on the head when he wrote in *John Clare: A Life* (1932): 'Hilton sloughed away the peasant in Clare and left us the poet and 'noble in disguise'. It also says something of John Taylor's rather complex character that he in fact charged the fifteen guineas that Hilton asked for the painting to John Clare when their accounts were settled many years later. An engraving based on Hilton's portrait was also used as the frontispiece to the first volume of Clare's second book, *The Village Minstrel*, further reinforcing this image of Clare.

For my own part, I consider that the plaster bust of John Clare that was created by Henry Behnes Burlowe in 1828 is a much more realistic portrayal of the poet, albeit eight years after Hilton's portrait. It is perhaps unfortunate that a photograph of the bust was used, for over twenty years, for the front cover of the *John Clare Society Journal*. To my eye, this photograph is lit in such a way to tend to suggest the rather tormented side of Clare's character. Against this, Peter Moyse used a photograph of the bust on the front cover of his book, *John Clare: A Poet for All Seasons* (2012). Peter was an excellent photographer and has lit the bust in such a way that a much more relaxed and interesting man is seen.



Because of the bust's rather fragile nature it has been suggested that the John Clare Society should arrange for it to be reproduced in a more durable material, and I for one would be very much in favour of that being done. After all, it is probably the only true image that we have of John Clare in his prime.

Noel Crack

I introduced an error when preparing Noel's article on 'John Clare's Hat' in the last Newsletter. I stated that the picture was dated to 'about 1809'. This of course is nonsense; Clare would have been only 16 at the time! Also, Noel suggests in the article that it could be the one painted by Francis Simpson in 1837. The text should in fact have read 'about 1840'. This error was confined to the printed edition of the Newsletter and I was able to correct it for the online copies.

Editor

ADVICE FROM A COUNTRY PARSON

John Clare encountered many different people – some meetings resulted in lasting friendships; other relationships were short-lived. Experiencing fame as a published and popular poet, he refers to casual visitors and correspondence from admirers, not all entirely welcome.

One such encounter was with the Reverend James Plumptre, who is dismissed in a few lines in Jonathan Bate's biography of Clare. Nevertheless, their short exchange of letters prompted Professor Eric Robinson to investigate further. He made a study of Plumptre's letters held at Cambridge University Library and published a paper. ('John Clare (1793–1864) and James Plumptre (1771–1832), "A Methodistical Parson*", Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* , XI no.1 (1996), pp. 59–88). He found that Plumptre and Clare shared a number of interests and held several things in common – a need to write, a love of books, poetry and literature, and in the outdoors.

This reference to the Revd Plumptre caught my attention because for twenty years (from 1812 to 1832) he was vicar of my adjacent parish, Great Gransden. Plumptre's contact with Clare was indeed brief – Robinson describes how he wrote to Clare, having received from a friend 'a native of Northamptonshire but residing in Rutlandshire' a copy of Clare's first book, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*.

Plumptre's first letter to Clare wished him well, but although kind and accompanied by several of his own publications, including a book of songs, it was not entirely congratulatory. Plumptre could not resist including counsel that one might expect from a Church of England minister of the time, that Clare should not speak of 'fate and fortune' or mention ghosts or superstitions. Clare evidently replied, for Plumptre wrote a second letter, which caused Clare to seek advice from his publisher, Taylor, who encouraged him to 'keep as you are'. Clare himself wrote to his friend Sherwill that he could not 'commend' Plumptre's works and his letter to Taylor suggests that he found Plumptre's unsolicited advice to him irksome. Perhaps the encouragement to write 'some instructive songs for the lower classes' was sufficient to irritate.

We know that they had certain acquaintances in common, such as Captain Markham E Sherwill, Octavius Gilchrist and General Sir Birch Reynardson; Clare's publisher John Taylor claimed to know Plumptre. Both Plumptre and Clare admired and corresponded with Robert Bloomfield, to whom Plumptre gave a small amount of financial help, something that he was not able to do for Clare. The two men owned or had read books by the same authors, such as William Cobbett, Daniel Defoe, and Thomas De Quincey.

Plumptre, like Clare, was a prolific, perhaps a compulsive, writer. As well as sermons and diligently keeping a journal, he wrote verse, books, religious tracts and chapbooks. As a young man he was fascinated by the stage; he wrote and published several plays, including one based on a real-life coal-pit disaster. They shared an interest in songs and ballads, and, perhaps for different reasons, both enjoyed the countryside, though Plumptre's knowledge of natural history was far inferior to Clare's. Plumptre completed several long-distance walks of the British countryside, chronicled in journals such as those edited by Ian Ousby (*James Plumptre's Britain: the journals of a tourist in the 1790s* [1992]) These included a short journey through South Cambridgeshire villages to the source of the

Great Gransden Church, South Side: Plumptre's unmarked grave is believed to be here.
Stephen Sullivan

River Cam, and he was acquainted with what we might now term 'Clare Country', for example Burleigh Park, Stamford and Barnack.

Over the 25 years since Robinson's paper was published much more research has been carried out into many aspects of Clare's writings and his life, including his attitude towards religion, the Christian church, and its ministers. Robinson, through Plumptre, gives an indication of the social and cultural influences that the church had on village life – aspects that are explored in greater detail by Sarah Houghton-Walker (*John Clare's Religion*, 2009).

But what of Plumptre himself? Ousby in his introductory chapter gives some of Plumptre's personal history. When Plumptre came to the Parish of Great Gransden to be vicar of St Bartholomew's Church, it was to a house that had been empty for seventeen years, run down and neglected, an example of the absenteeism that afflicted many parishes at the time. Plumptre duly set about renovating the vicarage and rebuilding his church community. At the age of 40 the new vicar was keen to marry, but it took him a few years to find what he hoped would be a 'helpmeet'. His journals leave an impression that his marriage did not turn out to be one of constant felicity. Nevertheless, he took his duties seriously and was committed to charitable and social works such as establishing a Friendly Society.

One is left with the picture of a sincerely devout minister of the church, a conventional man who undertook his clerical duties very conscientiously, an upholder of the law and believer in strict social hierarchy, moralistic. To some

he might seem to have been pedantic, prudish, rather dull, inflexible or even an interfering busybody, beset by an uncooperative churchwarden, and concerned for his ailing wife who was often too unwell to attend church.

It was something of a surprise to learn that Plumptre was a pioneer of animal welfare and incurred censure for preaching on animal rights. Quite likely he was influenced by the fact that his church's patron saint, Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, met his grisly end by being flayed alive, and was the patron saint of bookbinders, butchers, tanners and leatherworkers. Helped by a friend, Thomas Lantaffe, Plumptre wrote and published in 1816 *The Experienced Butcher* (Darton, Harvey & Co., London), described as 'showing the respectability and usefulness of his calling, the religious considerations arising from it, the laws relating to it, and various profitable suggestions for the rightly carrying it on'. It was 'designed not only for the use of butchers but also for families and readers in general'. As well as the Biblical and historical traditions of meat-eating, the book contains descriptions of the various breeds of livestock and their uses, and 'the most humane and effective methods of driving animals, their slaughter, and butchery'.

Whatever Clare or we may have concluded of Plumptre, there can be no doubt that he was held in respect, esteem and affection by many of his parishioners, whom he served so diligently. A stone plaque in the chancel of St Bartholomew's Great Gransden reads:

> 'To the memory of James Plumptre who was twenty years minister of this parish. He was born October 2nd 1771 died January 23rd 1832. 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.'

Sylvia Sullivan

Questioning 'The Mental Health Dimension' in Clare

I read with interest in *Newsletter* 146 Doreen Thakoordin's essay on 'The Mental Health Dimension'. In it she cites Jonathan Bate's biography, on Clare's committal to the Northampton Asylum in 1841, as follows:

> The person who signed the admission papers, Dr Fenwick Skrimshire, entered, as the reason for Clare's admission '...many years writing poetry' (Bate, *John Clare*, p. 409)

I have read or heard this, or something very like it, many times before in the forty years I have been a member of the John Clare Society – the idea that Clare was put away in an asylum for having written poetry for many years, or words to that effect. And with no disrespect to Doreen Thakoordin intended, who after all is only echoing many earlier and respected voices, I should like to use this opportunity to offer an alternative view.

I have a photocopy of the relevant document in front of me now. In it two doctors, Fenwick Skrimshire and William Page, separately attest that having each examined Clare they consider him to be 'in a state of Lunacy, and a proper object for admission into a Lunatic Asylum'. So it is not just Skrimshire, though his is the first signature, and we know that he had had many dealings with Clare. On the second and third pages of the document is printed a questionnaire. It is introduced as follows:

> It is confidently hoped, that all persons actuated by a sincere desire to alleviate the misfortunes of their fellow creatures, will cheerfully assist every endeavour to elucidate the nature and causes of Insanity, and to this end, their patient attention is earnestly requested in replying to the following Queries.

This is phrased in an open way so as potentially to draw in information, not only from the two admitting doctors (who we may assume actually completed the form they both signed), but 'all persons' who wish to help the patient, which would include the patient himself and members of his family, for example. So if the two doctors were doing their job properly (and we have no reason to suppose otherwise), they would have carefully evinced information and opinion from these sources, in completing the document. Just to be clear, it is a background questionnaire and not a committal document or an admission paper itself.

The relevant words on the document are these: 'after years addicted to Poetical prossing'. I shall consider what this means shortly. The first six numbered questions are largely matters of fact: age (49), employment (Gardening), marital status (married, 22 years), children (seven). Tucked in amongst these simple facts is a more subjective sort of a question, 'What have been the Patient's general habits of living?' But this has been left blank. The key question, though, is question 7, 'What are the supposed causes of Insanity?' And here the doctors are clear: it is 'hereditary'. This is followed by the question that biographers and critics all zoom in on, question 8: 'Was it preceded by any severe or long continued mental emotion or exertion?' The answer given, on 'Poetical prossing', I have already quoted. But clearly this is not the main question as to what is the cause of his insanity, merely information on its immediate context.

The questions continue; some are answered, others left blank. No, it did not follow any serious illness or accident affecting the nervous system. How long is it since symptoms of aberration were first detected? Fourteen years – i.e. since 1827, the year Clare was treated by Dr Darling. In fact we know that there were much earlier symptoms, and indeed some treatment, including treatment by

NORTHAMPTON
GENERAL LUNATIC ASYLUM.

D[illegible]

WHEN application is made for the admission of any Patient, which (excepting in very urgent cases) should be done previously to the Patient being sent, the following letter, signed by two respectable persons, acquainted with his or her situation, must be delivered, or transmitted free of expense, to the Medical Superintendent.

18

GENTLEMEN,

Having good cause to believe that *of*

has been for *past*

disordered in mind, we beg that he may be admitted a Patient in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, according to the regulations of that Institution.

We are, Gentlemen, your &c.

To the Directors of the Northampton
General Lunatic Asylum.

Also, the following Certificates of Insanity, by two Medical Practitioners, one of which, even in the most urgent cases, must be produced.*

18

I, Jonwich Shrewsbury Physician ~~(or Surgeon)~~,
in Peterborough ——— have separately visited and carefully examined
John Clake in the parish of Northborough and
I do hereby certify, that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, he is in a state of Lunacy, and a proper object for admission into a Lunatic Asylum.

To the Directors of the Northampton
General Lunatic Asylum.

December 28th 1841

I, William Page ——— ~~Physician (or Surgeon)~~
in Market Deeping ——— have separately visited and carefully examined
John Clare in the parish of Northboro ——— and
I do hereby certify, that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, he is in a state of Lunacy, and a proper object for admission into a Lunatic Asylum.

Wm Page
Surgeon &c

To the Directors of the Northampton
General Lunatic Asylum.

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* An Act of Parliament, lately passed, requires Certificates for Private Patients to be signed by two Medical Men, not being partners, on separate examinations; and that each examination be made *within seven days prior to the admission of a Patient* into the above or any similar Establishment: but if any special circumstance prevent two Certificates being obtained before a Patient is presented for admission, such circumstance should be stated below, to authorize his or her reception upon one Certificate; and the friends of the Patient must cause the other Certificate to be given *within three days after such admission.*

John Shrewsbury
Pl

QUERIES.	ANSWERS.
21. Is the Patient idiotic, mischievous, or dirty?	No
22. Has the Patient ever been placed in any other Asylum, and if so, Where? When and how long since his or her removal?	Attica Asylum High-beach Essex Escaped in July last.
23. Has the Patient been under medical treatment. If so, Whose, and how long since?	
24. Has the Patient suffered any relapse since the commencement of this attack?	
25. What is the proposed rate of payment?	

Likewise the following obligation by a responsible person:—

18

GENTLEMEN,

Upon your admitting into *the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, as a Patient, I hereby bind and oblige myself to pay the board fixed by you for the said* to remove *when required to do so by you; to bury* in case of death; to keep up a proper stock of *necessaries, as mentioned in a printed card delivered to me, and to renew them when destroyed or worn out; and if the aforesaid necessaries, or any of them, are not furnished when required by notice, in writing, from the Superintendent of the Asylum, the Directors or their Committee may, in ten days after such notice, order these necessaries to be provided at my expence, which I hereby bind and oblige myself to pay; and generally to fulfil all the obligations required by the Regulations of the Institution.*

I am, Gentlemen, your &c.

To the Directors of the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum.

When a Patient is admitted, the board, to be determined by the Committee, before whom the Superintendent will lay the above Certificates, Obligation, &c.—shall be paid in advance to the Treasurer, until next quarter day; and afterwards in advance, quarterly, on the 1st day of January, the 1st of April, the 1st of July, and the 1st of October.

The following is the present rate of Board, Washing, Medical advice, and Medicines:—

First Class, £.1 11s. 6d. *per week.*
Second Class, £.1 1s. 0d. *per week.*
Third Class, £.0 15s. 0d. „
Fourth Class, 12s. *per week.*
Fifth Class, 9s. „

In Special cases of First Class Patients requiring extraordinary attendance and accommodation, terms higher than the above may be proposed by the Superintendent, subject to the approval of the Committee at their next meeting.

Skrimshaw himself, but perhaps this is seen as a lesser health problem, rather than part of a pattern of major 'hereditary' mental illness. He has had 'several' distinct attacks, and the existing attack began four years ago, in 1837, the year he was taken away to Matthew Allen's asylum in Essex. To the question on hereditary predisposition to 'maniacal, nervous, or scrofulous affections', the answer is 'yes as above', referring back to question 7. However, the follow-up question to this, as to where in the family hereditary insanity has emerged, is left frustratingly blank. Perhaps this is why biographers have tended to discount or ignore the hereditary diagnosis.

No to any major physical illnesses ('epileptic, paralytic, contagious or other bodily disorders'). No, significantly, to whether the patient has ever attempted or threatened violence to himself or others. He is not idiotic, mischievous or dirty. Yes he has been in an asylum before: 'Allens Asylum / High Beach Essex / Escaped in July last'. And that is all that the questionaire reveals.

I hope I have described it in sufficient detail to make it clear that it is not accurate to say that Clare was incarcerated for having written poetry, no matter how many biographers repeat it – and his first biographer, Frederick Martin, is the most remarkable here, launching into an infuriated rant (see pp. 290–2 of his biography) about this 'new crime' of writing poetry, the 'punishment' for which is, for Clare, 'life imprisonment'. But no, the two doctors, informed by their examination of Clare and their discussions with such persons 'actuated by a sincere desire' to assist as they have seen, believed that Clare was suffering from hereditary insanity and needed to be moved to the county asylum. Whether they were right or wrong in this is a different matter.

What do we learn from the answer to question 8, about the 'years addicted to Poetical prossing'? The term 'prossing' (unless it is a mis-spelling), meaning tedious or prolix writing, is of Scottish derivation (Skrimshire had an Edinburgh background). It suggests that the doctors did not find his writing to be of interest or merit in itself, as perhaps medics from a later, psychoanalytic era might have done, and as at least one asylum attendant, WF Knight at Northampton, would do. They saw it rather as an obsessive activity to which he was addicted. Well, so it was, and so he was, although most of us regard the results rather more highly than the two doctors do. Clare himself reported to his publishers on his maniacal 'fits' of rhyming that would sometimes utterly exhaust him, and they worried about the effect of this on his often frail health. That is a matter of record. But it is not credible, on the existing evidence, to say that Clare was put away for writing poetry.

Thanks to Bob Heyes for his help.

FURTHER READING

Clare's committal is discussed in a careful and balanced way by Bate, pp. 466–9, though I have argued that his conclusions do not meet all of Clare's symptoms: see my piece on Clare and Cowper, listed below, and the Haldane essay, ditto. What was

in fact 'wrong' with Clare is a complex and difficult subject: the following give some starting points, and reference further sources.

Bate, Jonathan, *John Clare: A Biography* (London, 2003).

Clare, John, By Himself, ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Manchester and Ashington, 1996).

— Letters, ed. Mary Storey (Oxford, 1985).

Foss, Arthur and Kerith Trick, 'John Clare (1793–1864)', in *St Andrews Hospital Northampton, the first 150 years (1838–1988)* (Cambridge: Granta Editions, 1988), pp. 121–44.

Goodridge, John '"This sad non-identity": John Clare, William Cowper and 'Madness', *Cowper and Newton Bulletin*, 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2005), pp. 5–13, now online at academia.edu.

Haldane, Sean, 'Clare's Madness', *PN Review*, 30, no. 6 (2004), pp. 42–6.

Martin, Frederick, *The Life of John Clare* (London, 1865; 1964), text available online.

Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, committal document for John Clare, dated 28 December 1841: photocopy in the John Clare Society Archive, Northamptonshire Record Office (Clare ephemera, ring-binder 1: 1793–1960).

Porter, Roy, 'All Madness for Writing: John Clare and the Asylum', in *John Clare in Context*, ed. Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips and Geoffrey Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 259–78.

Thakoordin, Doreen, 'The Mental Health Dimension', *John Clare Society Newsletter*, 146 (October 2022), pp. 17–20.

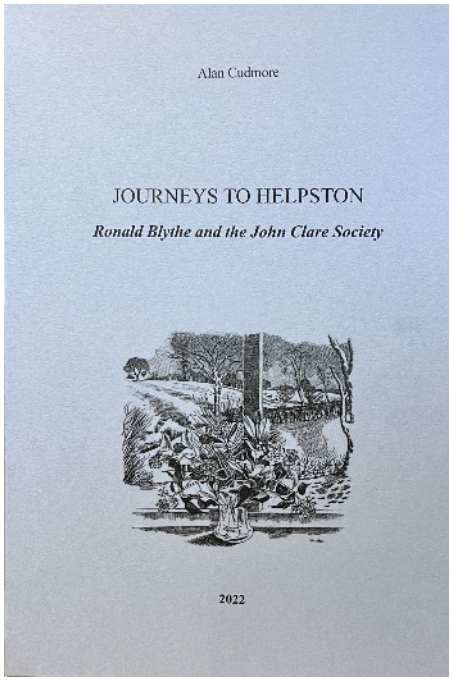
Trick, Kerith, 'Clare's Asylum Experience', in *John Clare, A Bicentenary Celebration*, ed. Richard Foulkes (Northampton, 1994).

John Goodridge

JOURNEYS TO HELPSTON by Alan Cudmore

This is a short paperback recently published by Alan Cudmore on Ronald Blythe and his long association with John Clare, Helpston and The John Clare Society. At Ronald Blythe's hundredth birthday event in Sudbury, Alan Cudmore was recognised as Ronnie's oldest friend, to which Alan was happy to admit, having first met Ronnie in 1951.

The book has several b&w photos, two colour plates and several b&w line drawings. Contents cover a resume of Blythe's life, more specifics of his family and his start as a librarian. Following this, of his becoming a writer, how he ended up living at Bottengoms Farm, Wormingford, and his love of Suffolk and areas of East Anglia. Of the friends he made while living near Aldeburgh. His deep and passionate involvement with the beginning and following years of the John Clare Society and his regular visits to Helpston, the Festival and his Presidential Addresses. We read about the suggestion and subsequent placing of John Clare's memorial in Poets' Corner, plus brief 'reminiscences' of others such as Edward Storey, Mary and Peter Moyse and Trevor Hold, to name a few.

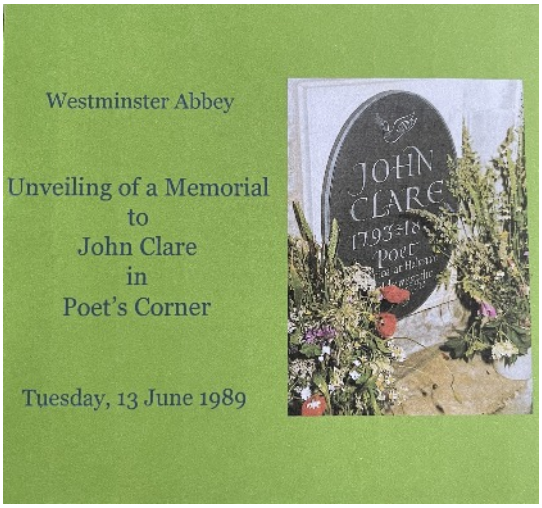


There is a list of the 35 books written by Ronald Blythe, including the favourites: *Akenfield* and At *Helpston*. but I shouldn't limit it to those two, because I really must include his latest volume: *Next to Nature.*

This brief outline does not do justice to the knowledge and detail contained in this short book about Ronald Blythe, a cornerstone of The John Clare Society. I thoroughly recommend it to all interested in the Society and connections to its history, as well as in Ronald Blythe himself. The book, *Jouneys to Helpston: Ronald Blythe and the John Clare Society,* is available via the Sales Officer of The John Clare Society, price £5.00 plus £2.00 postage.

David Smith

Unveiling of a Memorial to John Clare in Poets' Corner
CD re-issue of 1989 cassette



On 13 June 1989, a plaque was unveiled to John Clare in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. The memorial service was recorded and a cassette made available to members of the John Clare Society. This has been unavailable for many years and those in circulation are likely to be subject to distortion or simple breakages; and so it was suggested that we make a CD available. This has been done, in a limited quantity only, organised by Mike Mecham.

Briefly, the CD has the full ceremony, from the welcome by the Dean of Westminster, including John Clare's hymn, after which Charles Causley read his own poem: 'At The Grave of John Clare'.

Ronald Blythe gave the address and the plaque was unveiled by Ted Hughes, who then read 'The Nightingale's Nest'. A prayer: question and response, was followed by four Clare poems read by Eric Robinson and four more read by Edward Storey, Charles Causley read his own poem 'Helpston', before the blessing and conclusion.

The initial quantity produced is small and available from early January via the John Clare Society, Sales Officer. In the event of the small initial stock selling out we should be able to work a 'print-to-order' system but it may mean fulfilment is slower.

The CD, cased, will be £5 plus £2 postage. Contact the Sales Officer, David Smith, djsapt@gmail to order and for payment details.

David Smith

THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

SALES ORDER FORM 2023

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 and items on Clare.

You can email an order or question to me. We are now able to accept online payment, also 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 2023

CODE	ITEM	PRICE	WEIGHT
B20129 *New*	**Journeys to Helpston: Ronald Blythe and the John Clare Society.** By Alan Cudmore Illus & photos	£5.00	150g
B20023	*a JCS book:* **John Clare: New Approaches** rrp £7.95 ed. J Goodridge & S Kövesi ppr (essays on Clare)	£4.00	400g
B20028 *New*	**John Clare, the Northamptonshire Poet** ed. JL Carr (p/b pocket size poetry book) rrp £2	£1.50	20g
B20128	**Love's Cold Returning** by Hall & Somekh. Ppr (rrp£20) ppr	£18.00	900g
B20033	*a JCS book:* **The Wood is Sweet** poems selected by David Powell, illustrated by Carry Akroyd rrp £7.99 ppr	£6.25	200g
B20112	**By Ourselves** Book of the film of Clare from Epping to Helpston.... **Highly illustrated,** hardback ed. Andrew Kotting	£16	650g
B20113	**John Clare, the Trespasser** **r**rp£6.99 by John Goodridge & RKR Thornton ppr	£6.00	75g
B20114	**John Clare, A Poet for all Seasons** rrp £15.99 By **Peter Moyse** hrdbk, many colour photographs	£5.00	500g
B20115	*a JCS book:* **This Happy Spirit** Clare poems selected by RKR Thornton & Carry Akroyd, illustrated by Carry Akroyd. (rrp £8.99) ppr	£7.25	200g
B20116	**John Clare: A Collection of Songs, Airs and Dances for Violin (1818)** ed. Tony Urbainczyk **, vols 1 & 2:**	**Vol 1**: £9 **Vol 2**: £14 Incl. Post limited stock	
B20125	**John Clare Society Journals, 2020 & 21 & 23** (Special Extended Editions)	£4.00 incl. post	
B20118	**Hidden Treasures** (**of John Clare**) ppr. rrp £6. Both edited by. R. Rowe (Arbour Editions)	£5	125g
B20127	**Drinking With John Clare** ppr	£3.50	65g
B20119	**A John Clare Flora** Molly Mahoud ppr, colour photographs (rrp £14.99)	£17.50 Incl. post	
B20126	**THE MEETING:** Reading and Writing Through John Clare *a JCS book* ed. Simon Kövesi. ppr rrp. £4.	£4	Post free
B20122	**Torpel Manor: The Biography of a Landscape** by F Gosling, SP Ashby & A McClain. ppr	£12 Incl. postage	
B19971	*a JCS book:* **For John Clare** rrp £6.95 ed. John Lucas. An Anthology of poems about John Clare	£4.25 180g	

JOHN CLARE SOCIETY JOURNALS

1982-2019 Journal As available (some no-stock years). Please enquire for years wanted (see B20125, above for 2020/21)	£3.50 each post free
Journal Index (1982-2011)	£1.50 post free

MISCELLANEOUS/BOOKS/CDs/DVDs 2023

M20071	***In Clare's Footsteps***. Colour map of Helpston with notes Unlaminated, folded to A5 as above: laminated, flat A4	 £0.30 £1	 5g 25g
M20092	**John Clare leather bookmark**, gold on dark green.	£2	10g
M20031	JCS gummed labels 100 labels in pack.	65p	150g
M20028	**Tea-Towel - Scenes from Helpston**: High Quality Cotton	£4.50	Post free
B20030	**The Ballad of John Clare** by Hugh Lupton. ppr	£9.00	312g
B20124	**OUP : John Clare Selected Poems** rrp£12.99 Ox. Stdt Txts	£12.00	300g

M20060	**CD: 8 Clare songs** set by Terence Deadman with Clare poems read by Peter Moyse, Rodney Lines & Norma Weller.	£6	140g
M20062	**CD: Clare's Journey**. A musical journey through his life. Sung by Maida Vale Singers. Composer: Terence Deadman. Lyrics by Trevor Harvey.	£3.00	140g
M20061	**DVD: John Clare,** A 65min photographic journey with poetry readings by Peter Moyse.	£5.50	140g
M20063	**CD: Toby Jones** reading + music arranged by Julian Philips **Melodys of Earth and Sky** rrp£12.99	£12.00	Post free
M20064 *NEW*	**CD**: **1989 Memorial unveiling of John Clare Plaque in Westminster Abbey** (reissue from cassette)	£5.00	post 140g

POSTCARDS (Each card is 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	£0.35
P20026	Wood Anemone flower card with poem extract	£0.35
P20027	Cowslip flower card with poem extract	£0.35
P20028	Pasque flower card with poem extract	£0.35
P20029	The Hedge Rose flower card with poem extract	£0.35
P20030	The Primrose flower card with poem extract	£0.35
P20031		
P20032	The John Clare Rose	£0.25
P20103	The Midsummer Cushions around Clare's grave	£0.25
P20104	John Clare's grave	£0.25
P20105	John Clare's Memorial, Westminster Abbey	£0.25

SALES ORDER FORM 2023

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)** *post may vary

CODE	ITEM	PRICE	WEIGHT
Total purchase price and total weight			
Add p & p from table for the total weight			
TOTAL PAYMENT note: Paypal now available, via email.			
I enclose a cheque (sterling)payable to The John Clare Society for £			
NAME: **Date**			
ADDRESS: **POST CODE**			
In case of problem or query, please add **mobile/ phone number** and/or **e-mail address**:			

Return to: Sales Officer, John Clare Society, 3 Astwick Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, SG5 4AP Tel: 01462 631285 e: djsapt@gmail.com