



# The John Clare & Society

Newsletter no. 149

October 2023



# THE JOHN CLARE SOCIETY

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*Cover artwork: Carry Akroyd*

## PLANNING THE 2023 FESTIVAL

I put my heart and soul in to the 2023 John Clare Society Festival. Whilst acknowledging the support and help I had from the planning committee of six willing volunteers – and particularly Revd. Gary Alderson and Karen Lakey, who went above and beyond anything expected of them – it was often a lonely job. I was starting from scratch, albeit with a timetable which has often varied only in small details over the years, as chief organiser of an event with a reputation to uphold thanks to the dedication of previous co-ordinators such as Sue Holgate, and Ron Ingamells. The responsibility seemed tremendous at times, weighing heavily on my mind way in advance of the first planning meeting on October 2022 until days after the Festival in July 2023.

The process was doubly hard due to the illness and subsequent death of our former Treasurer Norman Lee. Norman came to the first planning meeting and had dealt with his

illness with such fortitude that I saw no reason why he would not be present at the main event. He was always there with advice and companionship, and had been my dearest friend,

occasional travelling companion and biggest supporter in life for the previous ten years. With no family of his own I was

officially his next of kin, so his death in December was an enormous blow at an already stressful time. In the process of phoning his friends and contacts I called Linda Curry, who very sadly died only a couple of weeks after our conversation, and then on the day of Norman's funeral on January 16 I learned of the death of Ronald Blythe two days earlier.

My own family also brought additional challenges – a daughter and granddaughter moved in with me between house moves, and another daughter was working from home (my home) at the same time, and came with a dog in tow two full days a week. Was life chaotic? Possibly!

After Norman's funeral and whilst preparing his house in Ely for sale, I started work on the printed Programme, which took more than three months of research and contacting many different people and organisations before it was ready to send to the printer. In the meantime, there were more planning meetings to



*The Midsummer Cushions arranged around John Clare's grave.*



*Carry Akroyd gives the Presidential Address*

arrange, with agendas and minutes to plan and write up, participants to book and venues to arrange. Months after starting the process I came across some additional notes which Sue Holgate had left in my file, but by then I didn't need them. I was on a roll! However, I do have to thank her for reminding me to

ask Helpston Parish Council for permission to use the village green – just in time for their June meeting. Phew!

The printed Programmes arrived in May – the usual very professional job done by Ely Printers – and Sue Holgate ran a successful Friends of the Festival scheme in June. One final push by Stamford Poet Laureate Scott Coe and planning committee members Gary Alderson, Karen Lakey and David Smith brought the poetry competition to a conclusion with their visits to John Clare Primary School and then the judging, whilst I ironed the medal ribbons, wrote the book plates and prepared the prizes for distribution by Cllr. Over.

In the few days before the Festival there was great concern over the weather forecast, which was for torrential rain, high winds and little, if any, sunshine. Friday's Midsummer Cushions' Ceremony was beautiful if brief, in the somewhat damp churchyard, but the bonus was helpful conditions for the trays of flowers. The poetry prize-giving which followed took place inside St. Botolph's Church, no harm done, whilst the Choral Evensong in the Church and the Folk Evening in The Bluebell, both full to bursting, were indoors and not weather-dependent.

Saturday, although marked by some heavy showers, turned out to be nowhere near as bad as expected. The worst of the rain came in the morning while most visitors were in the Church for the AGM and President's Address, and fortunately it wasn't cold. In the afternoon there were plenty of places to retreat to – Botolph's Barn for books, and the Bluebell Inn where the new landlord, Paul, was experiencing his first Festival, complete with the Morris dancers who never fail to attend and perform. There were plenty of visitors to the Welcome Tent, the Scout Hut and the Cottage too, and the Village Hall was crammed with folk enjoying the home-made food, served by Kate Hinchliff and the ladies of the village. I heard someone comment that the puddings would not have been out of place in a top restaurant, and they were right!

The afternoon walks, one in the village and the other at Maxey Cut, went ahead and were greatly enjoyed. There were plenty of blue skies and sunshine,



*Alan Franks giving the Keynote Talk, 'The Poetry of Place'.*

not what we expected, and it taught me a valuable lesson – don't ever be put off attending an event by a forecast because it may well, as in this instance, be more wrong than right. There was some wind but it wasn't a gale, there was some rain but it wasn't heavy for very long and there was no thunder or lightning. Fingers crossed for a drier, sunnier 2024 – but if we do get more of the same, just come with suitable clothing and umbrellas and you'll have a good time whatever the weather.

Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make the Festival 2023 happen, including all the enthusiastic participants and those who

supported us whole-heartedly in the months before and on the day. Finally, thank you to the Morris dancers for the £57 presented to the Society, raised from the Friday night raffle, and for the magnificent £90.30 given in donations for some of Norman's books and destined for the Arthur Rank Hospice who cared for him. And for those who did attend the Festival, despite the doom-mongers at the Meteorological Office, thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming and making it such a happy and memorable weekend.

**Ann Marshall**  
**Vice-Chairman, Publicity Officer and Festival Organiser**  
**Photographs: Mike Mecham**



*Evensong on Friday was sung by the choir of All Saints, Northampton, seen here with the Revd. Gary Alderson (centre) and Fr. Oliver Coss (right).*

## **John Clare Festival 2023: A WALK BY MAXEY CUT**

It was unfortunate that what seemed to be the heaviest rainfall of the day should happen just as we were gathering at the welcome tent to meet Richard Astle of the Langdyke Trust to go for a walk along Maxey Cut. But it was fortunate that the village ladies were ready with tea and delicious home-made cakes in the Village Hall, so that we were able to indulge ourselves while we waited for the rain to stop.

Since our time was limited, Richard took us to an area beside the Cut (rather than

Christ's College Pits as advertised) where the Langdyke Countryside Trust is restoring the landscape so that the wildlife that Clare would have been familiar with can flourish. It was lovely there, seeing swifts wheeling round and hearing birds that I (living in the north-west) am not so familiar with. Richard is a wonderfully knowledgeable guide and we were further beguiled by the poetry of Langdyke's poet in residence, Will Thompson.



**Valerie Pedlar**

## **MEMBERSHIP NOTES**

As members who attended the AGM on 15 July will know, I have taken over from Robert Heyes as membership secretary. My contact details can be found on the inside cover of the newsletter.

There are still some members who haven't yet renewed their membership. I can email the renewal form on request, and any cheques should be sent to me. But as you probably know, payment by standing order or direct banking is much preferred.

We should like to welcome the following new members, who have joined the Society since the last issue of the Newsletter:

William Irwin and Imogen Crisp, London NW5.

Jean Ward, Manningtree.

Joanna Gray, Bury St Edmunds.

Phyllis Maiden, Lincoln.

Sue and Keith Perkins, Boston.

Terry Sherwood, Rushden, Northants.

Peter Daldorph, Girton, Cambridge.

Stephen and Lesley Little, Barnt Green, Birmingham.

Sue and Michael Bristow, Rubery, Birmingham.

**Valerie Pedlar  
Membership Secretary**

## SALES REPORT

I am writing in the last week of August, for the autumn newsletter when the dog-days of summer have slunk away. I suppose I should be more cheerful, as the harvests are already happening. To be followed by whatever the sequence is, of harrowing and drilling. Do we plough very often these days? Forgive the ignorance of a town-dweller who never gets to grips with much more than a pair of secateurs and strimmer. (The lawn-mower has taken a bit of a back-seat these days.)

What's this got to do with sales? You ask. Mostly it is time to consider what sold at the Clare Festival in July, supplying the odd item to postal/online orders and pondering what needs to be re-ordered for the future.

I have to admit the festival bookstall was quieter than usual. I suspect people kept away from the event because of dire weather warnings. The weather was pretty good except for a few minutes of blustery wind and heavy rain which just added to the spirit of the day.

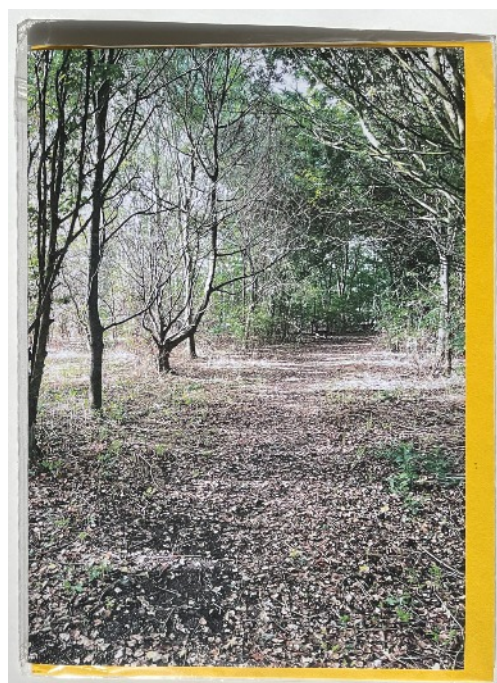
The John Clare Society supplies an assortment of books and bookmarks and other items to Clare Cottage in Helpston and these months are particularly busy. The shop is generally open Mondays and Thursday, 10 – 3. all year but check their website for any variations. An August delivery to the cottage was for our *The Wood is Sweet* and *This Happy Spirit* and leather bookmarks. New for their stock, was our CD: *Memorial Service to John Clare in Poet's Corner*. This is a recording of the event and includes several well-known writers and poets reading Clare's poems. Also, were delivered two 'blank' cards with envelope (A5 approx), one of the 'John Clare rose' photo by Peter Moyse and another entitled 'Autumn', which can be used as greetings cards or as a colourful way to write a letter.

To the end of August we have sales of £438.00.

When you read this, autumn is weeks old, and I may have delivered to Helpston again. You may have visited the Cottage, bought something on John Clare but now, (will I regret saying this?) be thinking about little gifts for Christmas, reminders of Clare. Check through the order-form in this newsletter, maybe we have something new for you, or that we can send on for you. But, oh dear, I can't do gift-wrap!

Is it too early to wish you a ...?

**David Smith  
Sales Officer.**



## **CURRENTLY IN COMMITTEE: June 2023**

Hello everyone, and welcome to our first 'Currently in Committee' article. So, why have we decided to add this to our newsletter? Well, the Committee thought that you, our lovely members, may find it interesting to hear about the types of things we talk about in our Committee meetings and so, in my role as Secretary to the John Clare Society Committee, I'm delighted to be able to share this with you.

Firstly, you may wonder how often we meet. This is typically three times each year (February, June and October) plus at our AGM, which is an integral event on the Saturday of The John Clare Festival weekend.

A separate group (known as the Festival Planning Group) works tirelessly to plan the Festival each year, and is made up of members of the John Clare Society Committee, and local residents from Helpston and the surrounding areas.

The Festival took place on the weekend of 14 to 16 July this year, and it was great to meet some of you there, despite the 'challenging' weather! Our theme was 'John Clare and the Poetry of Place' and, as always, it was lovely to see some of the poems written by the children of the John Clare Primary School on the subject of 'My Favourite Place'.

Once again, we asked attendees to the Festival to provide us with feedback on how we could continue to improve the weekend events. A big 'thank you' to everyone who took the time to complete our feedback forms, which will help to make next year's Festival even better!!

As well as 'standard' agenda items, such as a review of the actions from the previous meeting, correspondence received, Officer's Reports etc, our June agenda included the following items:-

### **Venue for Committee Meetings**

Given the geographical spread of our Committee Members (some living in Scotland, Kent, Southport and Hertfordshire), we discussed at our February meeting whether Peterborough is still the most suitable location for our meetings. Meetings have traditionally been held in Peterborough because it is the nearest city to John Clare's birthplace and his countryside. It also has excellent transport links to many parts of the country. The Committee pondered the idea of holding meetings in Helpston as our John Clare Festival Planning Group holds their meetings in the village; However, as some of our members rely on public transport to travel long distances to attend, it was decided to continue to hold our meetings in the centre of Peterborough; but we did not discount the possibility of using an alternative location where there is a compelling reason to do so. However, for our June meeting we also added the option for Committee members to join by video conference. Overall (after a few initial technical difficulties!) this was deemed a success. Not only does this enable committee members to attend when they would otherwise be unable to, but it also reduces costs, and is kinder to the environment.

### **Membership Fees**

The recent cost of living crisis has had far-reaching effects on businesses and families alike, and charities are no exception. The costs associated with running the Society and our annual Festival, and providing services to our members, have all increased this year; and this situation was tabled for discussion. One solution considered was to increase membership fees, which have not changed for 12 years. However, it was felt that increasing costs at a time of hardship for some of

our members does not align to our purpose and our values. Instead, we will be continuing to encourage members to accept electronic copies of the Newsletter, and pay subscriptions by Standing Order, which will reduce production and administration costs. If you are able to support us in this by arranging a Standing Order, we would be most grateful.

### **Remembrance – Committee Members**

Our February meeting could not pass by without the Committee fondly remembering not only Ronald (Ronnie) Blythe, our founding president; but also our lost friends and fellow committee members Linda Curry and Norman Lee, both former officers of the Society. Our discussions regarding how we could best commemorate them continued into our June meeting, when it was decided to plant oak trees in remembrance close to where trees have previously been planted for Ronnie Blythe, John Clare and Edmund Blunden. The Committee is now working with The Langdyke Trust to facilitate this, and will provide more information when we can.

The following two items were raised in our 'Any Other Business' section of the meeting – so there may be more to come on both.

### **Nature Poetry Revival**

Committee Member, Jonathan Wonham, shared a paper he has recently written entitled 'John Clare and the New Poetry of Environmental Emergency'. The paper discusses (amongst other things) the revival of interest in environmentalist/nature poetry, which was prompted by a newspaper article in July 2012 by George Monbiot, the leading environmental writer and environmental activist. In this article, Mr Monbiot referred to Clare as 'the poet of the environmental crisis – 200 years ago'. The paper included a list of Nature Poets and Poets creating Art Objects based in the UK, who we may consider involving in our Festival in future.

### **Future Events/Projects**

- Now that the Festival is over for the year, the Committee are focussing on organising additional events with the first being on Friday evening, December 8 this year. Please look out for more information on our FaceBook page or our Instagram account. Save the date!!
- Sponsorship of post-graduate students to undertake research on behalf of the Society, which will attract younger people into the Society.
- John Clare / George Crabbe study day planned in collaboration with the Suffolk Poetry Society. This will be held in Helpston and members will be invited to attend.

As well as hearing about our Committee meetings, we thought you may like to know more about the people who make up the Committee. When I first became involved with The John Clare Society, through the Festival Planning Group, my initial impression was that the John Clare Society Committee were a serious, and rather mysterious group! This is certainly not the case. These amazing people are hugely committed to preserving and promoting the work and biographical interest of John Clare, and are passionate about fulfilling this objective.

Over the next few newsletters, it will be my pleasure to introduce to you some of the Committee Members by asking them three questions, starting with the newest member – Me!!

**Introducing:** Karen Lakey

Role: Secretary to the John Clare Society Committee

Q: Why did you join the John Clare Society Committee?

A: I originally joined the Festival Planning Group in 2019 in order to broaden my (limited) knowledge of John Clare and his work, and also to support an event which is so important to our community in Helpston. Those of you who attended the Festival in 2019, 2022 and this year may remember me from the Welcome Tent! I was asked if I would like to consider the appointment of Secretary and, after attending the June 2022 meeting as a guest, I was delighted to be elected to the post at the AGM in July 2022.

Q: What do you enjoy about being on the Committee?

A: I enjoyed studying poetry at school, but didn't continue to broaden my knowledge after completing secondary education. Supporting the John Clare Society Committee and the Festival is a great way of re-kindling my interest in poetry and specifically my knowledge of John Clare and his work, whilst doing something useful! Just being in the same room as people with such a vast knowledge and passion for John Clare is truly inspiring and fascinating. I also love the Festival, and look forward to being on the Welcome Tent and meeting so many new and interesting people. This year, it was exciting (and a bit scary!) taking minutes at the AGM for the first time – hopefully I will be a little less daunted next year!

Q: What do you do outside of the John Clare Committee and Festival?

A: I work as a Human Resources Project Manager, and am a member of my employer's ESG&S (Environment, Social, Governance & Sustainability) Forum. I practice yoga, enjoy reading, and spend most of my free time out in the John Clare countryside around Helpston either running, or with my dogs and my horse.



I do hope that you have found this short article interesting and informative, and I look forward to being able to update you again after our October meeting.

**Karen Lakey**  
**Secretary to The John Clare Society Committee**

**BOB WOODROOFE: *Four Quarters & More.***  
**Greenwood Press, 2023. 56pp.**

Bob has given us permission to print two of the poems in his collection, reviewed by Valerie Pedlar in our last Newsletter:

**Moth**

Beat the night,  
silently,  
on scaled wings,  
trawl air seas for scent.

Relentlessly  
search, rest at dawn,  
and as dark drops  
launch yourself once more.

Probe for the molecule,  
the gaseous atom  
that registers on feathered antennae,  
that your heightened senses track.

Trail the waft that tantalises,  
home in till you trace  
the source, and the vapour  
explodes in your brain.

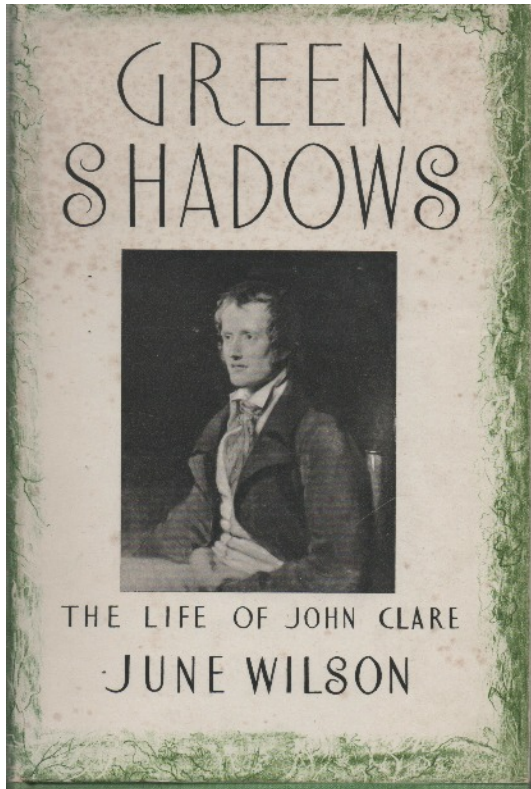
**Into the light**

A curlew bubbles awake.  
Silently, from far out  
at sea, the tide flows  
afresh to the land.  
A red sail drifts in,  
a dinghy skims behind.

Wave flickered light  
glistens everywhere,  
heightened by a breeze  
that plays, lifts the birds  
that skim the wavelets,  
as the ring of waders  
tighten around her  
diminishing shore.

**Bob Woodroffe.**

## JUNE WILSON



I assume that many readers will be familiar with the biography of John Clare entitled *Green Shadows*, which was written by a June Wilson. The book, which was published in 1951, gives no details at all about the author, and I have long wondered just who she was. However, I have recently managed to obtain her own pre-publication printer's copy of the book, which contains many of her corrections, alterations and additions. The book also includes, mounted on the front cover, a photograph of a large, imposing country residence, and this rang a bell for me. The property stands in its own grounds and looks to date back to at least the eighteenth century.

From this photograph, I have been able to track down the author's identity and discover something of her life and achievements. June Wilson – this was her maiden name – was born at Norton Manor in the village of Norton, near Malmesbury, Wiltshire, in 1927. She was the daughter of an affluent land-owning farmer, and took to writing at a young age. She had already had two novels published in the late 1940s before her Clare biography came out.

This indicates that she must have researched and written the book in her early twenties. In her 'Author's Note' in *Green Shadows* she makes it clear that she had used previous works on Clare in writing the book, but also that she did much copying from manuscripts at Peterborough and Northampton. She also states:

Apart from a little punctuation ... the spelling is his and in every other respect the manuscript passages are copied exactly.

Although the book has been criticised for repeating some earlier, rather dubious, statements made by previous authors, it is still a very detailed and knowledgeable account, with much personal comment and insight.

It was just five years after *Green Shadows* was published that June Wilson became a Countess when she married Count Jan Badeni in 1956. Jan was an airman with the Polish Air Force and from an aristocratic family. He joined the RAF at the end of the war and had a very successful career. Very highly regarded, and with the right connections, he became the High Sheriff of Wiltshire. Settled at the Manor, the couple set about restoring their ancient property, and June wrote a short piece for *Wiltshire Archaeology*, entitled 'Norton Manor, near Malmesbury: a House Transformed' in 1966. She also continued her writing and, being very interested in local history, wrote two books on past people in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, which were both successful. Another of her books that was well-received was *The Slender Tree* (1981) – a very good life of the poet Alice Meynell.

Count Badeni died in October 1995, but the Countess continued to live at Norton Manor, with an Indian manservant, until her death on 13 October 2022 at the age of 95.

**Noel Crack**

# JOHN CLARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Poetry Competition 2023

**This year's theme: "My Favourite Place"**

### THE BRAMBLE PATCH

I can see  
The green  
Tractor  
Moving  
Very  
Slowly.  
I can smell  
The  
Smoke  
Coming From the  
Fire.

**Ellie P  
Buttercross Class (1)**

The bramble patch  
Is a lovely place  
So I had a happy face  
We made  
Yummy bread  
We went  
Home  
Went to bed.

**Violet  
Buttercross Class (2)**

I can see a bramble  
I can hear the flowers  
I can smell bread cooking  
I can taste the bread  
I can touch the flowers

**Oscar  
Buttercross Class (3)**

## **PLANET ICE**

Blades so sharp, but some dull  
The rink so spacious and daring.  
Some people have speed  
Some people don't.  
Hot in the café but chilly on the ice!  
While I'm skating I can hear the scratches of people in the distance.  
Everybody scoring goals but also tackling.  
Finally, the end of the day  
Everybody taking their kit off  
Ready to go  
Home.

**Josh  
Woodgate Class (1)**

## **BIG BEN**

Big Ben is very tall  
Because inside is cool.  
Big Ben is in London  
It is close to the dungeon.  
Big Ben chimes a bell.  
Is it twelve o'clock?  
I can't tell.

**Archer  
Woodgate Class (2)**

## **AUSTRALIA**

Australia is nice and glowing with beetles  
So hot but with a swimming pool in every field.  
So lovely meals and fantastic places  
Such as forest and land with a hot summer breeze.  
Oh, you will love it, so come with me!  
Don't say you hate it and don't complain.  
You will be in luck.

So can you come? You won't be cut.  
It's my favourite place.  
I want to be there.  
Oh, help me. Come on, help me share.

**Charlotte  
Woodgate Class (3)**

## **COLORADO**

Crackling thunder,  
Sizzling lightning.

Splashing, rushing, raging torrents,  
Creeping through rocks  
And splashing down vertical drops.

High peaks of towering mountains,  
Snow, forest and bare rocks,  
Wild animals like moose, elk and bears.

The great Gold Rush.  
All the mines, all the businesses,  
Building little communities.

Small weaving railroads  
Down in the heart of the valley  
Joining town to village,  
Village to town.

Little towns like  
Frisco, Georgetown and Idaho Springs.

When lightning strikes,  
Wildfires start,  
Sizzling and crackling,  
Destroying the forest.

**Rowan Wright  
Broadwheel Class (1)**

## **OLD TRAFFORD**

I can see the crowd  
Bouncing, cheering and screaming, full of joy and happiness.

I can smell the great wonderful smell  
Of hotdogs and cheeseburgers.  
The smell fills the stadium with its great stench.

I can touch the great-feeling seats  
All around me.  
I can just sit back, relax and watch.,

I can hear the crowd cheering and chanting.  
It makes my eardrums want to EXPLODE  
So much but in a good way.  
I love it every time I go.

I can taste the warm gooey cheese  
Melting down all burgers inside the stadium.  
It's so nice it makes your taste buds want to fall off.

**Milo Harding**  
**Broadwheel Class (2)**

## **STABLES**

My first time riding, I felt scared, nervous and free.  
When I got on, I felt super, full of glee.

As I ride out with the smell of the wet, dewy grass,  
I can feel the time pass.

As I sit there watching the sunset's orange, yellow glow,  
I can feel my pony's energy flow.

As I listen to the sound of galloping horses,  
As they are galloping with all forces,

As I hear the birds chirping  
And the horse hooves galloping, I feel relaxed.

When I ride I feel wild and free.

**Mae-Rose Smith**  
**Broadwheel Class (3)**

## **MY FAVOURITE PLACE**

In New York, the drivers do not care,  
We have fun at the funfair,  
I also like the bustling designer shops,  
The sirens blaring from the cops.

In New York, the smells are great,  
And Central Park is where my mum meets her mate.  
I'm in awe of the bright lights by night,  
And all the amazing sights!

In New York, I can hear people talking,  
And so many people walking.  
At Madison Square Gardens there are so many cheers,  
And so many enjoying their beers.

**Oscar Ellis**  
**Swaddywell Class (1)**

## **AT THE FARM**

At the farm, where the cows graze,  
And at night they stand and stare in a daze.  
The grass is lush, long and green  
And in the fields the sheep day-dream.

At the farm, I touch the soil  
Where day by day the farmer toils.  
The hay is soft to the touch,  
We mustn't let the horses eat too much!

At the farm, I hear the tractors working,  
Ploughing the fields, the rabbits lurking.  
Little lambs, cute in my hand,  
Makes me feel so very grand.

**Freddie Plant  
Swaddywell Class (2)**

## **THE PICNIC TREE**

The picnic tree grows lush and tall  
It makes the birds look quite small.  
The long grass sways in the wind  
Hoping never again to be trimmed.

The picnic tree is a home for all,  
Where birds sing and call.  
When I sit beneath the tree  
I can hear the buzzing bees.

The picnic tree is somewhere I go,  
It is also where lots of things grow.  
I can smell the freshly-cut grass.  
I am at my favourite place at last.

**Amber Johnston  
Swaddywell Class (3)**

## **THE LIBRARY**

Calm  
Peace  
Quiet  
The old leather book-covers soft in my hands  
Calm  
Peace  
Quiet  
Inked words painting an incredible story in my mind  
Calm  
Peace  
Quiet

The only sound the soft turn of a page in a book  
Calm  
Peace  
Quiet  
Bright colours and illustrations enticing me on  
Calm  
Peace  
Quiet  
The lemony scent of a thousand pages putting me at ease

**Walter Smith  
Torpel Class (1)**

### **MY FAVOURITE PLACE**

My most favourite place in the whole world is space,  
Where I can see planets all over the place.  
And although I haven't been in this place (but in future I might do)  
I'd like to fly on the rocket to the moon.

And if I only had a chance to go to the space,  
I would feel calm, happy, excited and a bit stressed.  
Also, in the space, there are many interesting things to do:  
I can go and explore Mars or fly near Saturn.

And I also can fly near Jupiter, or have a little look at Pluto,  
But it's nothing according to the black hole.  
Black holes are amazing, big, marvellous things  
But they also can be dangerous by eating stars, planets,

And, believe it or not, even space!  
So, as you see, our galaxy is breathtaking like rings on Saturn,  
But just imagine how small and tiny we are according to the whole world:  
There are trillions of galaxies, which are bigger than the Milky Way....

And it's amazing: just think a bit deeper about it and you'll see what  
I mean: our world is beautiful, amazing, unique.  
And my message to you would be:  
Look After It!

**Anastasia Kadciavets  
Torpel Class (2)**

## THE VILLAGE SHOP

Packed full, the village shop,  
Filled with fun, fizz and pop,  
The endless sales come to a sudden stop.  
What caught my eye was a bundle of lollipops.

I took some here, I took some there,  
But little did I know what I was about to bear.  
The buzzing of the fridges in my ears,  
The shop has been there for so many years.

Touch the card and you're going to pay,  
Touch the cash you're going to lay.  
All the things you're going to buy take time.  
To be served, you wait in line.

Overwhelmed with sweets, beer and wine,  
The village shop is not for a fine dine.  
All the things you need to buy  
Are in there, you just need to try.

**Aaron Armstrong  
Torpel Class (3)**

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Once again, it has been our pleasure and privilege to print the prize-winning poems from the John Clare School. Or rather, to print the *words* of the poems. Readers may not realise that the originals are bright and colourful, decorated to match the subject. For the Festival this year, the entries were displayed around St Botolph's Church, as seen in these photographs by Mike Mecham and the Rev. Gary Alderson:



## ARBOUR EDITIONS CHAPBOOKS FOR 2023

In my absence from the Society's Festival in July due to a broken femur and open fracture of my elbow – sustained in a bike accident, I'm afraid – I became a bit behind with my 2023 Clare Chapbooks, which now number some 27 volumes.

The latest are: no.25, *Wood Pictures*; no.26, *The Wish*; and no.27, *Love Songs*.

As I was not able to give my usual 'Festival discount' this year, each of these volumes are available post free to Society members, so just £4 each. A possible Christmas gift, perhaps?

### **No.25 - *Wood Pictures***

England is home to many more ancient trees than anywhere else in Europe, and these living monuments stand mostly naked against a myriad of threats. So it was in John Clare's day too, most particularly from the enclosures. Clare's boyhood was full of trees. Indeed, from time to time they became his refuge from the weather and his place of retreat from disapproving eyes:

About this time, I began to wean off from my companions, and stroll about the woods and fields on Sundays alone; conjectures filled the village about my future destination on the stage of life, some fancying it symptoms of lunacy, and that my mother's prophecies would be verified to her sorrow, and that my reading of books (they would jeeringly say) was for no other improvement than qualifying an idiot for a workhouse. This little collection is arranged according to the seasons of the year, each beginning with Clare's series of *Wood Pictures* poems. The vast number of possible candidates for inclusion would have filled a weighty tome, so the selections reflect rather the tastes and enthusiasms of the compiler.

### **No.26 - *The Wish***

Into a generation of poets who simply toyed with nature poetry, unexpectedly a true nature-poet whose exhaustive knowledge of English flora and fauna, observed in minute detail, appears like the scent of a mown hayfield. Who else but Clare could have written 'The Primrose':

Welcome pale primrose starting up between  
Dead matted leaves of ash & oak that strew  
The every lawn the wood & spinney through  
Mid creeping moss & Ivys darker green

In his introduction to *Early Poems of John Clare*, Professor Eric Robinson writes:

It is a miracle that John Clare ever became a poet. Everything was against him: an illiterate mother and barely literate father, agricultural poverty in a small village on the fringes of Northamptonshire, a strictly hierarchical society made more rigid by the tyranny of parish officials, and schooling limited to a dame-school and a nearby parish classroom, an education sporadic and incomplete.

*The Wish* is an excellent example of Clare's juvenilia, either ignored or overlooked by Taylor. It is fluent and interesting in content and contains a description of Clare's 'ideal' future. So here we have a small collection of some of Clare's early works which show the amazing gift he possessed from the earliest days.

## No.27 - Love Songs

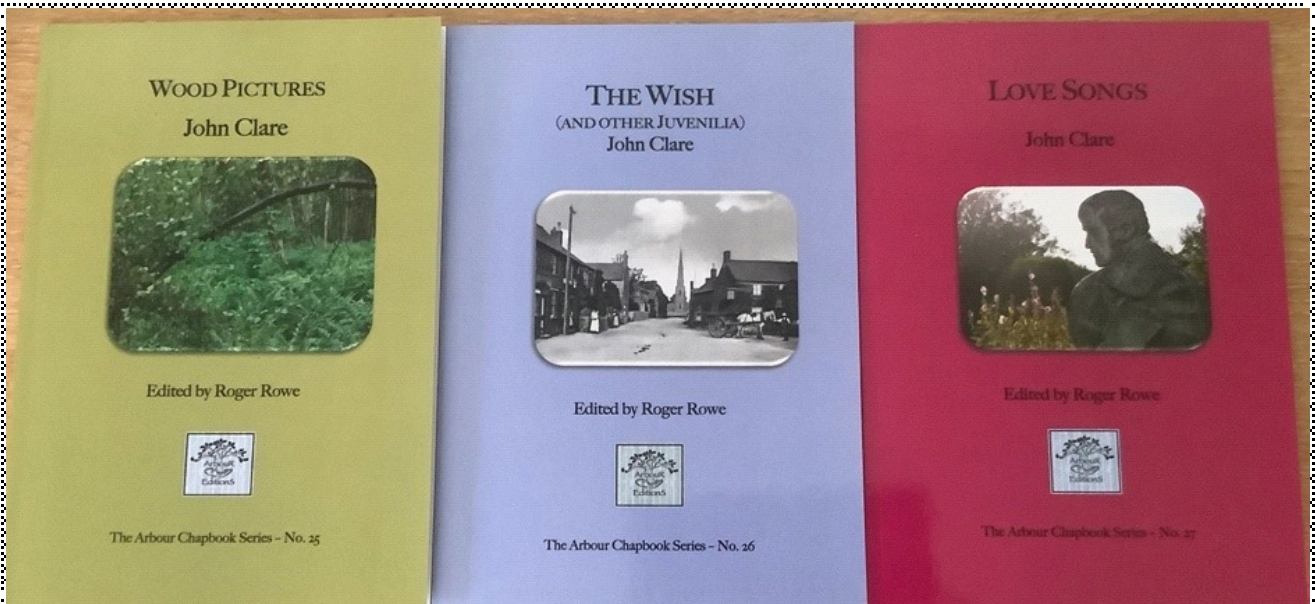
Probably because the market for the 'Peasant Poet' had died before he was 30, instead of the deadening effect of meeting the demands of his supporters, editors and publishers, Clare continued to produce the most original and beautiful work right up to his death in 1864.

Clare tells us of his youth that 'when a face pleased me, I scribbled a Song or so in her praise.' With all pretty women he was always a little in love and though Mary Joyce was first in time and first in intensity, 'other Marys & excited my admiration, & the first creator of my warm passions' was lost in a perplexed multitude of names.

Many of his love songs and ballads have never been published outside the Clarendon editions, which is a pity as there is much beauty to be found in the most unexpected of places. Here are a few, I hope you like them as much as I do.

Orders to me at [arborfield@pm.me](mailto:arborfield@pm.me) . More information on the whole series can be found on <http://arboureditions1.blogspot.com>

**Roger Rowe**



## CHRISTMAS AT HELPSTON

We're putting this newsletter together in August, so we are a long way from Christmas! However, plans are being made for a Christmas Event in Helpston on Friday 8 December. The Church, the John Clare Cottage and the Blue Bell will all be involved.

Initial plans are for an hour of winter and Christmas poetry (by John Clare and others) from 6.30 at the Cottage, followed by carol-singing at the pub. Other events are likely to be included, and final details will be published on the Facebook and Instagram pages.

Make a note of the date now.

## THE POACHER

He bellowed up the embers. Threw some sticks upon the fire  
And tapped against the side of it, his ancient unlit briar.  
He looked across the sparse lit room where his faithful lurcher lay  
Then said to her, It's time for work, before the break of day.  
The dog stood up and stretched her limbs, then padded quietly to the door,  
For she knew she was out to hunt, done many times before.  
The church clock struck the hour of one, the wind was in the west.  
We'll approach along the eastern side, he knew that it was best,  
For the keeper's dogs won't sense or hear and to their master call.  
When a pheasant shot from larches high, to the ground does fall.  
Come on, old friend, the time is nigh, we have a way to go.  
The daylight will not wait for us if we are too slow.  
Unlatched the door and out into the dark night he did stride,  
The lurcher bitch forever present, right there at his side,  
The gun strapped underneath his coat, so if he met a soul  
Would look as if he was just out for a nightly stroll.  
Stealthily by hedgerows stooped and by the rushing stream  
Never in the open fields, for there he could be seen.  
At last the wood did loom up high and he stood outside the ride,  
He bent and touched the lurcher's neck before he went inside.  
No hackles raised, no muffled growl. All it seemed was clear.  
So silently, just like a ghost, he quietly disappeared.  
In the shadows of the trees he moves, eyes searching branches high.  
Then he spies a roosting bird, a silhouette against the sky.  
He raises up the rifle, careful not to make a sound. The slightest phut, a fluttering,  
The pheasant falls to the ground.  
The lurcher bitch retrieves it, brings it to her master's side  
And in the sack the pheasant goes. They move on down the ride.  
Three more birds are quickly shot and put into the sack.  
Thinks he, I'll take just one more before I'm heading back.  
Then in the larches to his left, startled pigeon takes to flight,  
A clattering of flapping wings shattering the night.  
He hears a distant barking. The keeper's dogs did hear  
And they will warn their master, so it's time he wasn't here.  
The rifle strapped up by his side and shouldering the sack,  
Out of the wood, down by the stream, never looking back.  
Along the hedge he hurried on, then stopped before his door.  
He stooped and touched the lurcher's neck, but all was as before.  
He let himself into his house and drew the curtains tight,  
Then took a spill from near the fire for the lamp that he did light.  
He cleaned and oiled the little gun, which he hid under the floor  
And hung the birds up in the loft, where there were five more.  
He sat down by the fireside and lit his ancient briar.  
He'd only have but just one bowl, for it's time he did retire.  
And as he lay upon his bed, he gave the dog a stroke.  
Then as he gently closed his eyes, the new dawn chorus broke.

## 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 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 on the order-form.*

*David*

*David Smith, Sales Officer*

## BOOKS 2023

CODE	ITEM	PRICE	WEIGHT
<b>B20129</b> <b>*New*</b>	<b>Journeys to Helpston: Ronald Blythe and the John Clare Society.</b> By Alan Cudmore Illus & photos	£6.00	160g
<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)	£4.00	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>B20128</b>	<b>Love's Cold Returning:</b> Hall & Somekh. Ppr rrp£20	£18.00	900g
<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>B20115</b>	<i>a JCS book:</i> <b>This Happy Spirit</b> poems selected by RKR Thornton & Carry Akroyd. Ilusts. by Carry Akroyd Ppr rrp £8.99	£7.25	200g
<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> hdbk, many colour photographs	£5.25	500g
<b>B20124</b>	<b>OUP: John Clare Selected Poems</b> Ox. Std Txts. rrp £12.99	£12.00	300g
<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:</b> £10 <b>Vol 2:</b> £14 Incl. Post limited stock	
<b>B20112</b>	<b>By Ourselves</b> ed. Andrew Kotting Book of the film of Clare from Epping to Helpston.... <b>Highly illustrated, hardback</b>	£17.00	650g
<b>B20118</b>	<b>Hidden Treasures (of John Clare)</b> ppr. rrp £6.00 Both edited by. R. Rowe (Arbour Editions)	£5.00	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	£4.00	Post free
<b>B20122</b>	<b>Torpe Manor: The Biography of a Landscape</b> by F Gosling, SP Ashby & A McClain. ppr	£12.50.	Post free
<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	£4.50	180g

### JOHN CLARE SOCIETY JOURNALS

<b>1982-2019 Journal</b>	<b>As available (some no-stock years). Please enquire for years wanted</b>	£3.50 each Post free
<b>B20125:</b>	<b>John Clare Society Journals, 2020 &amp; 21 &amp; 22</b> (Special Extended Editions) State which dates required	£4.00 each Post free
	<b>Journal Index (1982-2011)</b>	£2.00 post free

## MISCELLANEOUS/BOOKS/CDs/DVDs 2023

<b>M20071</b>	<b><i>In Clare's Footsteps.</i></b> map of Helpston with notes Unlaminated, folded to A5 as above: laminated, flat A4	£0.30 £1.00	5g 25g
<b>M20092</b>	<b>John Clare leather bookmark</b> , gold on dark green.	£2.00	10g
<b>M20031</b>	JCS gummed labels 100 labels in pack.	£0.65	150g
<b>M20028</b>	<b>Tea-Towel - Scenes from Helpston:</b> High Quality Cotton	£4.50	Post free
<b>B20030</b>	<b>The Ballad of John Clare</b> by Hugh Lupton. pprbk	£9.00	312g
<b>M20061</b>	<b>DVD: John Clare</b> , A 65min photographic journey with poetry readings by Peter Moyses	£5.50	140g

<b>M20060</b>	<b>CD: 8 Clare songs</b> set by Terence Deadman. Clare poems read by Peter Moyses, Rodney Lines & Norma Weller.	£6.00	140g
<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	140g
<b>M20065</b> <b>*NEW*</b>	<b>CD: John Clare, Words and Music.</b> (re-issue from cassette) Tunes from his collection, words from his poems and writings	£6.00	140g
<b>M20063</b>	<b>CD: Toby Jones</b> reading + music arranged by Julian Philips <b>Melodys of Earth and Sky</b> rrp£12.99	£12.00	140g
<b>M20064</b> <b>*NEW*</b>	<b>CD: 1989 Memorial Service of the unveiling of John Clare Plaque in Westminster Abbey</b> (re-issue from cassette)	£5.00	140g

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

<b>P20020</b>	Helpston, birthplace of John Clare	£0.35
<b>P20021</b>	Clare's cottage, Helpston	£0.35
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<b>P20023</b>	John Clare (Behnes bust)	£0.35
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<b>P20030</b>	The Primrose flower card with poem extract	£0.35
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<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 (illustration)	£0.25
<b>P20105</b>	John Clare's Memorial, Westminster Abbey	£0.25

**SALES ORDER FORM**

**2023**

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