



Alliance of Literary Societies
President: Claire Harman
www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk

Newsletter: Spring/Summer 2019

Not Only, But ALSO...

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**1. The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS)
AGM Weekend in Nuneaton
hosted by
The George Eliot Fellowship
celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of George Eliot**

Friday 17 – Sunday 19 May 2019

Programme

Friday 17 May

6 - 8pm Welcome drinks and nibbles hosted by the George Eliot Fellowship at Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre, Avenue Road, Nuneaton CV11 4LU, where there is plenty of free parking (please indicate on the booking form).
See notes below for suggestions for local restaurants.

Saturday 18 May

at the Town Hall, Coton Road, Nuneaton CV11 5AA

10 am Registration, coffee and an opportunity to browse the society stalls.
Our friends from Handheld Press www.handheldpress.com will be available all day.

10.45 am Welcome and introduction by the President of the ALS, **Claire Harman**

11 am Welcome and presentation from **John Burton**, Chair of the George Eliot Fellowship

11.15 am **John Burton**: *George Eliot: Centenary to Bicentenary*

11.45 am **Kathryn Hughes**: *You can take the girl out of Nuneaton...George Eliot, literary superstar and expert dairymaid*

12.30 pm Buffet lunch and chance to chat, browse stalls and buy raffle tickets!

1.30 pm Raffle closes

1.45 pm ALS AGM

2.45 pm Raffle prizes

3 pm **Emma Claire Sweeney**, co-author with Emily Midorikawa of the literary biography *A Secret Sisterhood : The Female Literary Friendships of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf*.

3.45pm **Beverley Rilett**, Assistant Research Professor and lecturer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln: *Introducing the George Eliot Archive*.
Beverley is the editor of the newly-launched George Eliot Archive www.georgeeliotarchive.org, a digital edition of Eliot's complete non-fiction, fiction and poetry, as well as all known portraits of the author and an extensive collection of writings about her by her contemporaries.
Visit www.georgeeliot.org for more information on Beverley's work

4.30 pm Dramatic extracts by Sudden Impulse Theatre Company, who have staged a number of adaptations of George Eliot's works, including a highly successful production of *Felix Holt*, which they took to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

5 pm Talks close.

7 pm Dinner and readings at Bedworth Civic Hall, High St, Bedworth CV12 8NF.
Transport to and from the evening venue can be arranged; please email Elaine on epeake@madasafish.com for advice and information in advance.

Sunday 19 May

- 10 am Meet at Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre for coffee.
- 10.30 am Depart for visit to Astley: medieval church (www.astleychurch.org), views of the Landmark Trust's award-winning refurbishment of Astley Castle, then on to the biggest second-hand bookshop in the Midlands, Astley Book Farm (www.astleybookfarm.com). Depending on numbers, transport will be in private cars or minibus – if the latter, there may be a small charge. The visit will officially begin and end at the Heritage Centre, but transport to accommodation and/or the railway station can be arranged.

Alternatively, the George Eliot collections at Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery and at Nuneaton Library will also be available on Sunday.

Opening times are:

Library 10am-2pm, Museum 2-4.30pm

Note that this programme might be subject to slight change. Attendance at this event is at your own risk.

Booking. The conference fee including talks and refreshments is £10. The cost for the buffet lunch at Nuneaton Town Hall is also £10. The Saturday evening meal is £25.

Please indicate your choices on the booking form.

The deadline for booking is **30 April 2019**, but the sooner the better!

Raffle Prizes. It is part of the ALS tradition that, if possible, societies bring items to be included as raffle prizes. This is often a good way to advertise your particular author to others! These can be left at the registration table on arrival on Saturday morning. Raffle tickets will be on sale from the start of the day until 1.30 pm, and the raffle will be drawn at 2.45pm, immediately after the AGM.

Friday evening. Our welcome at the Heritage Centre will include drinks and nibbles. There is a Beefeater attached to the Premier Inn at Griff, the Griffin Inn pub directly opposite Griff House; also Ego, The Bull(Indian) and the Millenium Balti, all within a short distance of the Heritage Centre.

Saturday evening dinner. Traditionally, we have provided our own entertainment at the Saturday evening dinner. Diners bring along favourite passages (prose or poetry) to read out. If you would like to join in, please tick the box on the form and bring your reading with you. Readings should be short, three minutes is about right – please check your timings to give everyone a chance!

Table space. There will be table space to display member societies' promotional material.

Please indicate on the booking form if you would like to take advantage of this.

Any merchandise/cash brought by a society is that society's responsibility.

Getting there. Saturday is market day in Nuneaton! There is a multi-storey car park directly opposite the Town Hall in the Ropewalk shopping centre which is open 7am – 7pm: 4 hours @ £4, 24 hours @ £6.50.

The Town Hall is only ten minutes' walk from the railway station.

Accommodation. The Premier Inn at Griff House (George Eliot's childhood home!), Travelodge Nuneaton Bedworth and Holiday Inn Express Nuneaton are all within a short distance of the venues, or visit www.northernwarwickshire.com/places-to-stay/.

**The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS)
AGM Weekend in Nuneaton**

Friday 17 – Sunday 19 May 2019

Registration Form

Title:	First name:		Surname:	
Address:				
Email:				
Tel No:				
Society name:				

Please tick the relevant boxes below and enter the number of people wishing to attend each.

Yes	Number	Item	Cost per person
		I would like to attend the welcome drinks and nibbles on Friday evening	Free
		I shall be attending the ALS AGM only – Saturday at 1.45pm	Free
		I wish to register for the Saturday event	£10
		I would like to be allocated table space	£10
		I would like the buffet lunch (see below* re: special dietary requirements)	£10
		I wish to attend the Saturday evening dinner at Bedworth Civic Hall (3-course set menu with tea/coffee; drinks extra). Please view the menu below and indicate here your choice of main course: Chicken/Mushroom Stroganoff and dessert: Cheesecake/Fruit salad There is provision for other dietary requirements – see below *	£25
		I would like to read at the Saturday evening dinner. (Please note that readings should be short, e.g. one short poem, or no more than three pages of text)	
		I would like to visit Astley, gathering for tea/coffee at Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre on the Sunday to depart at 10.30 am.	No entrance fees See programme
*Dietary requirements: (e.g. vegetarian/vegan/ coeliac)		Vegetarian options will be available. Please contact Elaine Peake epeake@madasafish.com if you would like to discuss other dietary requirements.	
Total to pay			

Payment: Please send a cheque (made payable to The George Eliot Fellowship) **by 30 April 2019**
to:
Juliet Hopper, 5, Caldecote Close, Nuneaton CV10 0ET
To book online go to www.georgeeliot2019.com
If you have any questions about the event, please email Elaine at epeake@madasafish.com

Saturday 18 May 2019

M E N U

oOo

Duo of Fanned Melon served with summer fruits and a fruit coulis

oOo

Roast Breast of Chicken served with cranberry and orange sauce

or

Mushroom Stroganoff served with lemon basmati rice

both served with a selection of vegetables and marquis potatoes

oOo

Baked New York Cheesecake topped with strawberries and clotted cream

or

Fruit Salad

oOo

Tea, coffee and mints.

2. Final call for articles for ALSO 2019.

Our theme for this year's ALS journal is 'When Writers Attack: Authors in the Public Sphere', and I am looking for contributions. About 1,000-1,500 words by mid-March or the beginning of April in Word format preferably. As always, it is a fairly broad theme but could include writers ranting about changes in law (e.g. John Clare and the Enclosures Act); attacks on social mores, women's rights, etc. (e.g. Austen, Wollstonecraft, Dickens); fighting censorship, law suits (e.g. Oscar Wilde, D. H. Lawrence); writing to deliberately shock, in protest. Lots of stuff here - and it is a good way to 'flag up' your writer.

Linda Curry (allianceoflitsocs@gmail.com)

3. A Walk on the Wilde Side

Twenty-six members of the Oscar Wilde Society gathered together at 10.30 on a Saturday morning at the Café Royal in London. The Domino Room is a beautiful gilded extravaganza of red seating, mirrors and sculptures. It's now known as the Oscar Wilde Lounge and is used as a venue for expensive afternoon teas. Why such a decadent setting so early in the morning? Several reasons: to drink champagne, of course, and to begin our guided walk around London's West End in the footsteps of Oscar Wilde.

We are lucky in the Oscar Wilde Society to have many talented and knowledgeable members. Leading the walk were Robert Whelan, the author of *The Other National Theatre: 350 Years of Shows in Drury Lane* (as well as editor of our academic journal *The Wildean*); and Neil Titley, the writer and actor who toured his one man show about Oscar Wilde, 'Work is the Curse of the Drinking Classes', around the world for 30 years. They used their knowledge of history and trivia to compile the information for the two hour walk, which brimmed with interesting content and entertaining tales and seemed to pass extremely quickly.

Over a glass of champagne and under the decorated ceiling, Robert Whelan welcomed us and related something of the history of the Café Royal. Founded in 1865, by the 1890s it had acquired the reputation as being a haunt for writers, artists, intellectuals and bohemians. Neil Titley read an account by Frank Harris of a fateful meeting that took place not in the Domino Room itself but in one of the private dining rooms upstairs, between Frank Harris, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar and – joining them later – Bosie Douglas. Oscar was nearly persuaded by Frank Harris not to go ahead with his libel case against the Marquess of Queensbury, but instead to go abroad with his wife. Bosie Douglas arrived and after hearing the arguments repeated for his benefit: 'got up at once and cried with his little white, venomous, distorted face: "Such advice shows you are no friend of Oscar's.'" Oscar left with Bosie and continued with the fateful court case, and the sequence of events which ended with his two year prison sentence.

Neil's deep mellow actor's voice took us right back to the 1890s. This set the tone for the rest of the walk. After the reading, several hundred photos were taken, particularly of the corner seat where Oscar sat drinking champagne with his boys. He liked to face the room so that he could see and be seen.

Following our Pied Piper Robert Whelan, we headed off along Piccadilly where Society member Geoff Dibb told us about the Prince's Hall. Geoff wrote the book, *Vagabond with a Mission*, and knows all there is to know about Oscar's money-making tour around the

UK. He explained that the Prince's Hall was the home of the Society of Watercolourists and the scene of Oscar's first British public lecture in 1883. It is a grand white building and was one of the most important London lecture halls in its day. Clearly there was money in watercolours. In his lecture, Oscar talked about his 'Personal Impressions of America' with exotic tales of his travels around the USA. Apparently the lecture went on too late and many of the audience left before the end. However, it was deemed sufficiently successful to warrant its presentation throughout the English provinces.

We followed our guides and headed to Albany, where the fictional Jack Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* had rooms. Another real-life occupant of Albany was the publisher John Lane, of whom more later. Although Albany is now very exclusive, it was at a low ebb by the end of the 19th century when many sets (or rooms) were unoccupied. In the original draft of 'Earnest' Miss Prism says of Jack's fictitious brother Ernest: 'I should fancy that he was as bad as any young man who has chambers in the Albany, or indeed even in the vicinity of Piccadilly, can possibly be. And that is saying a great deal nowadays, when Sin, I am told, has reached the suburbs.'

Moving on, we paused opposite Hatchards bookshop which appropriately has just re-issued *Oscariana* – the selection of Oscar's epigrams originally edited by his wife Constance. In the courtyard of the Royal Academy, we stopped to hear Oscar's views on Art and specifically Royal Academicians: 'Their approach to Art is hilarious. They try hard to induce the public to judge a sculptor, for instance, not by his statues, but by the way he treats his wife, a poet by his ties, and a painter by the amount of his income.'

When planning the walk in advance, we had found a delightfully quiet corner of the courtyard with space to stand while listening to the reading and admiring the architecture. Unfortunately, being a busy Saturday morning even Neil Titley's well-practiced vocal projection was drowned out by a Polynesian haika taking place across the courtyard in front of the entrance to the RA. The full scale costumed performance of chanting, singing and drumming to celebrate the opening of the 'Oceana' exhibition was very good! Background noise became a bit of a theme throughout the walk as we were treated to fire engines and pneumatic drills as well as the expected heavy traffic of the West End. Being Wildeans, we simply shrugged it off and carried on enjoying ourselves.

Behind the Royal Academy in Vigo Street we saw the site of John Lane's publishing company, The Bodley Head. (John Lane handed the company over to his nephew Allen Lane who founded Penguin Books, a fact commemorated by a plaque on the wall of the building.) Oscar Wilde frequently dropped into the Vigo Street office – whether to visit his publisher or to seduce one of the Bodley Head's office boys is debatable. He certainly gave the surname 'Lane' to the slavishly deferential man-servant in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

We then walked to the site of the extraordinary Grosvenor Gallery at 135-137 Bond Street. The 'Greenery Yallery Grosvenor Gallery' of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* was a temple to aesthetic art but is now a Belstaff clothing store. The gallery opened in 1877 and the Grosvenor became associated with the aesthetic movement, exhibiting artists like Whistler, Walter Crane and Edward Burne-Jones who were unlikely to be accepted at the Royal Academy. It was very luxurious, beautifully decorated and furnished, and the pictures were hung singly as in a private home, not stacked to the ceiling, RA style.

Oscar's review of the opening for the Dublin University Magazine was his first published prose work. Although changes to the building have taken place, by checking some of Robert Whelan's fascinating pictures, we were able to match up the grand pillars on the

present frontage with the Grosvenor Gallery of the 1880s. The gallery is one of those amazing places that Wildeans like to think we would have visited if we were around in Oscar's time.

Moving on to the corner of Bond Street and Grafton Street, we stood and gazed up at the window of Henry Irving's flat. Oscar Wilde was a huge admirer and friend of the actor who he described as 'a marvellous and vivid personality'. One of Irving's contemporaries commented that 'nowhere could be found a more perfect example of the confusion and neglect of order in which the artistic mind delights'. The rooms included a cigar room, a drawing room and a study where the actor planned his performances. The lower floor is now a Givenchy store with the bizarre juxtaposition of a beautiful model's face on the ground floor window and a plaque to Sir Henry Irving above.

The Albemarle club where Lord Queensbury left his mis-spelt card accusing Oscar Wilde of 'posing as a sodomite' was completely covered in scaffolding and wrapped in builders' plastic. Despite the lack of anything to see, we stood on the opposite pavement – presenting the odd sight of 26 Oscar Wilde enthusiasts staring at a plastic shroud. The Albemarle Club was founded in 1874 specifically to have both women and men as members. The Albemarle was slow to establish itself as this was such a radical idea that few people wanted to join. But Oscar Wilde and his wife were both members, as he refused to join any club that his wife could not also join. *The World* referred to it as 'the new bisexual Albemarle Club'.

By the 1890s the Albermarle was a successful club. On 18 February 1895, four days after the opening of 'Earnest,' the Marquess of Queensberry (who was staying in Carter's Hotel next door) burst in demanding to see OW. His way being blocked by the porter, he left after handing over the famous card. Oscar didn't come into the Club until 28 February, when he was handed the card by the porter. The fact that the porter had read the card before placing it in an envelope meant that the libel had been published. The Club was very badly damaged by its association with the scandal and membership declined. In 1909 it moved to other premises to try to escape the Oscar Wilde connection, but it eventually closed in 1941.

Crowded onto the pavement near Whites' Club – the noisiest part of the walk – we heard about the occasion in May 1895 when Lord Queensbury and his son Percy were arrested nearby for fighting in the street. Queensberry encountered his third son Percy Douglas, who loathed his father even more than his brother Bosie did. Percy bellowed: 'Are you going to cease writing those filthy letters to my wife?' whereupon Queensberry punched him in the eye. A cheering crowd gathered as the two men settled into a free-for-all fight which ended with both being arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. Many of us were also rather pleased to hear that Bosie Douglas automatically ceased to be a member of Whites' Club when he was made bankrupt.

We next visited the site of the St James's Theatre in Angel Court off King Street where George Alexander put on *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 1892 and *The Importance of Being Earnest* which premiered on the snowy night of February 14th, 1895. The latter play was taken off after Oscar was sent to prison. Our theatre expert Robert Whelan told us how Alexander created the idea of a 'St James play' and made the theatre a great success until his death in 1918. Laurence Olivier and Vivian Leigh played *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Caesar and Cleopatra* there for the Festival of Britain in 1951. Our Chairman Don Mead remembered attending both productions. In 1957 when the St James was threatened with demolition, the Oliviers led a protest march through the West End and Winston Churchill offered £500 for a campaign to save the theatre. As there was no legislation in place to protect theatres the campaign failed and the building was replaced by an office block called

St James's House. Four bas-relief plaques were carved by Edward Bainbridge Copnall on the front of the balconies of the 1959 building. These carvings represented Gilbert Miller, the Oliviers, George Alexander and Oscar Wilde. When the present building was erected in the 1980s they were moved to their current site in Angel Court and are well worth a visit. In passing, we noticed the shops of St James's which were familiar to Oscar, and where he ran up debts on hats, shoes, alcohol and cigarettes.

There were two dramatic readings en route, both thankfully up quiet side streets. In St James's Place we listened to an extract from the trials. Oscar Wilde was questioned in court by Edward Carson about whether a young man called Charlie Parker had entered his bedroom in the rented rooms at Numbers 10 and 11 St James's Place when he came to tea. There were the familiar tales of silver cigarette cases, and Oscar's well documented delight in the society of the young, idle and careless. Neil Titley as a defensive Oscar Wilde and society member Darcy Sullivan as Carson gave a suitably theatrical reading. Hearing the story unfold outside the very door where it took place was thrilling and felt like a brush with history.

We all felt like applauding when Oscar Wilde answered one of Carson's impertinent questions with: 'Do you ask me what a young man does when he comes to have tea with me? He has his tea, he smokes cigarettes and I hope he enjoys it.'

Coming at the end of our walk, the second piece of acting was appropriately enough at the stage door of the Haymarket Theatre in Suffolk Street, next to the green plaque unveiled by Sir John Gielgud. The Haymarket, under Herbert Beerbohm Tree's management was where Oscar Wilde's second comedy *A Woman of No Importance* was premiered in April 1893. In January 1895 *An Ideal Husband* was also first performed here.

To celebrate this and to end the walk on a dramatic note, Darcy Sullivan and Neil Titley acted a scene from Act III of the play, where the dandy Lord Goring and his manservant Phipps discuss the perfect buttonhole. 'Fashion is what one wears oneself. What is unfashionable is what other people wear.' Darcy's ringing delivery of the line, 'to love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance!' will not easily be forgotten by those of us who experienced it. There is a video of both dramatic readings on the Oscar Wilde Society Facebook page if anyone wants to see for themselves. The performance, like the buttonhole being discussed, was a delightfully stylish and trivial end to a wonderful morning. It was only left to thank our wonderful guides and actors for their efforts, both in compiling and leading the walk.

As befitted Oscar Wilde Society members, many of us then headed off for a drink and a lengthy chat in a nearby pub. We like to think that Oscar would have approved or perhaps even joined us.

Vanessa Heron
The Oscar Wilde Society.

Credits: '[The Other National Theatre: 350 Years of Shows in Drury Lane](#),' by Robert Whelan; 'The Oscar Wilde World of Gossip,' by Neil Titley, available from Neil's Oscar Wilde blog www.wildetheatre.co.uk; *Oscar Wilde - a Vagabond with a Mission: The Story of Oscar Wilde's Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* by Geoff Dibb. Available from the Oscar Wilde Society website which is: oscarwildesociety.co.uk

4. News from Societies

a. Friends of the Dymock Poets 25th anniversary weekend, held on 6-7 October 2018, Dymock.

‘Back out of all this now too much for us...’ wrote Robert Frost in ‘Directive’, and although Dymock and the neighbouring town of Ledbury are very much part of modern Britain, visiting there does seem a little like going ‘...back to a time made simple by the loss of detail’, when in 2018 we are all but overwhelmed by too much information. In this case, we went back to a time on the eve of the First World War, when for a few years, poets gathered in this beautiful corner of Gloucestershire, adjacent to Herefordshire and the Malvern Hills. They included Lascelles Abercrombie, Wilfrid Gibson, Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater and, most famously, Robert Frost and Edward Thomas. They became close friends and it was Frost who encouraged Thomas to begin writing poetry, which he did all too briefly until his death in France in 1917.

So, congratulations to the Friends of the Dymock Poets (FDP) who are flourishing after 25 years. I was invited to join in their celebrations and was delighted to do so, especially because of my interest in Frost and Thomas. On Saturday, we enjoyed a day-long feast of talks and readings, which took place in Dymock Village Hall. Robert Moreland and Barbara Davis talked about the development of interest in the poets – they had been perceived by the locals of the time as wastrels! Linda Hart described the founding of the society in 1993. At that time, Little Iddens, the cottage where Frost and his family lived, was up for sale and it was hoped to purchase and develop it as a museum and poetry centre. This was not possible, but the people brought together by that endeavour formed the FDP. Librarians and archivists from Gloucestershire Archives, the University of Gloucester Special Collections and Herefordshire Libraries spoke on their collections relating to the Dymock Poets. Documents are being transcribed and digitised, with the help of volunteers from the FDP, in an effort to make this important material as accessible as possible. Ledbury Library (beautifully converted from the medieval Master’s House in 2014) holds the John Masefield Society archive and the Ledbury Poetry Festival is based there; in March, Linda Hart gifted her collection of about 300 books, articles, and other material to the library and this special collection was launched there in November. All the librarians stressed the need to make their collections as accessible as possible, and to work together because of the connections between these poets, as well as other figures like Ivor Gurney and W.H. Davies.

Virginia Smith, Professor of Chemistry at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and a former president of the Robert Frost Society, was the keynote speaker. She has recently published *A Scientific Companion to Robert Frost* (Clemson University Press/Liverpool University Press 2018). Frost’s life (1874–1963) was a period of incredible development in the sciences. He was, of course, a keen observer of nature, but he was also a serious student of science, reading *Scientific American* and owning many science books, including Young’s *Astronomy* (1888), which was then the standard work in the field. The Frosts home-schooled their children; their daughter Lesley wrote in her journal, when aged only 5, about studying sunspots and the northern lights. Over 100 plant species are mentioned in Frost’s poetry and he uses imagery from astronomy, chemistry, geology, meteorology and human anatomy. Virginia concluded her talk with a discussion of Frost’s ‘Iris by Night’, written in commemoration of his friendship with Thomas, which describes what might have been a moonbow:

...we stood in it softly circled round
From all division time or foe can bring
In a relation of elected friends.

We ended the day with birthday cake and local cider (a drink these poets were very fond of!).

One of my reasons for visiting was to learn more about the FDP. It currently has about 200 members, of whom approximately 90 live locally. Its chairman, Richard Simkin, and membership secretary, Clare Church, expressed concerns about ageing membership, a need to recruit new members, and the fact that too few people in the society shoulder the burden of running it. I told them that these concerns seem to be universal among ALS societies. Richard also said that he would like to forge stronger links with other societies, including those devoted to Ivor Gurney and Edward Thomas.

On a beautiful autumn Sunday morning, many of us gathered again in Dymock for a walk through the countryside these poets loved so much. It was good to chat with members of the FDP while meandering over fields and past cottages, whose gardens were full of apple trees, laden with ripe fruit. Richard read us part of Lascelles Abercrombie's 'Ryton Firs', looking across the valley to where the firs once stood. The loss of them in the poem is compared to the loss of the young men in the First World War. Midway, we stopped at the Garland Hut, belonging to Barbara Davis, which is open to cyclists and walkers, and contains information about the Dymock poets, as well as cycle and walking route maps. Barbara provided warm hospitality, in the form of hot drinks and nibbles, and good conversation. I am very sad to say that she died in late November, but I am glad to have memories of meeting and talking with her in that sunlit garden.

The Friends of the Dymock Poets have worked tirelessly to preserve the memory of their poets and have also fostered that atmosphere of fellowship that the poets enjoyed in their brief period together before the First World War overtook them. Wilfrid Gibson, in 'The Golden Room', looking back after the war, wrote of the scattering and loss of his friends, but concluded:

...still, whenever men and women gather
For talk and laughter on a summer night,
Shall not that lamp rekindle; and the room
Glow once again alive with light and laughter;
And, like a singing star in time's abyss,
Burn golden-hearted through oblivion?

This fellowship is a part of the attraction of all our literary societies, and something that cannot be replaced by virtual conversation and meetings (however, stimulating and important they may be at times). May the FDP continue to flourish for the next 25 years and beyond!

Marty Ross, ALS secretary

The Society website is: <https://dymockpoets.org.uk/>

b. S.R.Crockett at 160 - A big year for Galloway.

The Galloway Raiders is all but overwhelmed with anniversaries this year (although acceptance of S.R.Crockett even in his own heartland continues to be underwhelming!). The 150th anniversary of his birth was completely ignored in 2009 due to an almost ubiquitous long time error regarding his birth, placing it in 1860 rather than 1859. This error still persists even on his public monument in Laurieston. Imagine how his family must have felt when it was unveiled in 1932! Still, 2019 sees the 160th anniversary of his birth, on 24th September at Little Duchrae Farmhouse in rural Galloway. The Society plans celebrations including a 'High Tea' on the day.

During the year there are plenty of publication anniversaries to attend to. March 10th sees the 125th anniversary of Crockett's first (and still most famous) novel *The Raiders* and during 2019 there are 125th anniversaries of the short works *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills*, *The Playactress* and *The Lilac Sunbonnet*. 1894 was a truly significant year for Crockett and his success meant that he left the ministry to embark on a stellar career as popular writer in serial publication for the rest of his life. His great success saw some jealousy and critical backbiting – but his work remained popular right through till before the Second World War – and is credited with bringing about the first (and so far only) tourist boom to Galloway.

As the father of literary tourism in the area it is amazing that one still has to work so hard to get him 'recognised' at home. 2019 also sees the 120th anniversary of other works set in Galloway: *Kit Kennedy* is set in the Glenkens of the mid-19th century, while *The Black Douglas* is set at Threave Castle in medieval times. *Ione March* shows his versatility and is set amidst the Swiss Alps, offering insight into early mountaineering practices as well as social commentary and a love story. That's Crockett through and through, offering a heady combination of history, adventure and romance. There's never been a better time to connect by reading – and once you've read the books you might feel inspired to visit Galloway for your own Crockett adventure. Both Galloway and Crockett are 'forgotten gems' and offer the perfect antidote to the city bustle described above in the Oscar Wilde walk. We are lucky that, with hindsight, we are all able to appreciate such different writers and different landscapes – with a little imagination and an adventurous spirit there are worlds to be discovered.

Cally Phillips

The Galloway Raiders. The Society website is: www.gallowayraiders.co.uk

c. The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society.

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society was founded in 2000. The Society *Journal*, edited by Professor Peter Swaab (UCL), is now available in both digital and print versions. The online Journal is hosted by Science Open, and articles from the 2015, 2016 and 2017 issues are available at <https://www.scienceopen.com/collection/sylvia-townsend-warner-soc> From 2018 onwards there will be two issues per year. It includes fugitive and unpublished works by Warner, memoirs, interviews, and critical essays on her work and milieu.

The semi-annual newsletters (print only), besides society news and member contributions, include uncollected letters, poems, non-fiction and appreciations of Warner and her circle. If any member of the ALS would like a free copy of the next newsletter, please contact the newsletter editor, Jay Barksdale, at sylviajay311@yahoo.com

The Society website is: www.townsendwarner.com

d. John Hammond (1933 – 2018): A Personal Tribute

It is fitting that John Hammond should die within 48 hours of the AGM of the James Hilton Society which he founded in 2000, exactly 100 years after Hilton's birth.

Without in any way denigrating the work of other committee members or implying that John was keen on self-aggrandizement (he was actually one of the most modest men I have ever met) I think it is fair to say that for many years John *was* the James Hilton Society (there is even a neat coincidence of initials). Besides normal secretarial duties, he compiled the Newsletter, which initially came out every quarter, edited the Society's academic journal, *The Hiltonian*, which he published annually between 2005 and 2012 (now it is every other year) and even found time to write two much-needed books on Hilton, *Lost Horizon Companion* (2008) and *A James Hilton Companion* (2010).

Over 40 years ago I was organising courses for the Workers' Educational Association in Nottingham and John became a part-time tutor for the WEA in literature. That's how we met. During the 1970s he was the manager of a second-hand bookshop in Nottingham which must have been heaven for him – and for his customers. Then I moved to Lincolnshire and we lost contact for a couple of decades.

We resumed our friendship in the early 2000s, however, when I joined the James Hilton Society and sought his advice about writing an author chronology, advice he willingly and skilfully gave me. It should be said that during this time John himself was a prolific author publishing over 20 books – author chronologies, biographies, literary criticism – in about 30 years. Given his full-time jobs and work for literary societies (he founded the H.G. Wells Society as long ago as 1960), this represents a magnificent achievement.

In 2011 I was privileged to be part of a team which travelled to Newcastle to discuss the work of Hilton with the Literary and Philosophical Society there. John's talk was on *Lost Horizon*, surely his favourite Hilton novel. He revealed fascinatingly that what ultimately attracted him to the work was the character of Hugh Conway. Again, there is a nice coincidence: John was born the very month in 1933 (March) when Hilton began work on the book.

So what motivated John to write so much, found literary societies and ensure that they became established? I think it was his fundamental belief that *literature is to be enjoyed*. He often told me how he enjoyed writing. I believe he saw it as a means of communicating to others that enjoyment and love of literature. It follows that he had no time for literary fashion. He frequently in his letters to me mentioned how he was enjoying a particular author. It was invariably a forgotten or obscure writer, not the Ali Smiths or Hilary Mantels of today. For example, he got me reading Warwick Deeping (I do hope he saw the article on Deeping published in *The Oldie* magazine not so long ago). And not only novelists: there were plenty of poets whom he regarded as unjustly neglected, Walter de la Mare being a case in point.

Literature as a career – nit-picking, point scoring, doing down your colleagues who are inevitably seen as rivals – all that would be anathema to John. Literature is to be enjoyed, to be loved, an enhancer of life – and that is John's legacy. In his life and work he embodied the last line of Philip Larkin's lovely poem 'An Arundel Tomb':

What will survive of us is love.

Roger Norburn

The James Hilton Society

The Society website is: <http://www.jameshiltonsociety.co.uk/>

5. New Publications

Please check the website for the current range of [Quick Guides](#).

We have recently added the GDPR guide, completed by the sterling efforts of Dominic Edwardes (Trollope Society) and David Leigh- Hunt (Keats-Shelley Memorial Association).

Once more Unto the Shelves will be available in time for the AGM weekend. This exclusive long guide will offer advice on how (and why) literary societies should consider (re)publishing their authors in society editions. It is compiled by Cally Phillips, who has republished more than 70 works by and about S.R.Crockett and J.M.Barrie over the past five years.

6. Comings and goings

We say goodbye to the Hawker Society and welcome to IBIS (Imaginative Book Illustration Society) and the Hugh Walpole Society.

7. Last but not least

Housekeeping - This is a plea regarding making sure you get our emails. Due to data protection we can only store the email contact address you consent to, so it is up to each society to make sure they supply us with an up to date email address for contact. Some webhosts/email service providers have overzealous spam settings which means that emails such as ours which go out to a large number of addresses, are unceremoniously booted into spam. To avoid this, the best thing you can do is add our email address to your 'address' or 'contacts' list. The contact addresses below are for personal, direct correspondence with the appropriate committee member but for general society business, the email address you need to have is allianceoflitsocs@gmail.com. If you are having difficulty (or are not) receiving e-newsletters from us, this is the email to use to let us know.

It is worth remembering that anything you get through email newsletters (via Mailchimp) is also on the website. So if you are looking for past *ALSo* Journals, or 'Not Only but *ALSo*' newsletters, these are all readily available on the website under Publications.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Alliance. Please send copy for the next issue by 1st August to Cally Phillips at callyphillipsis@gmail.com. We reserve the right to edit copy for space. The autumn newsletter will be published in early September 2018.