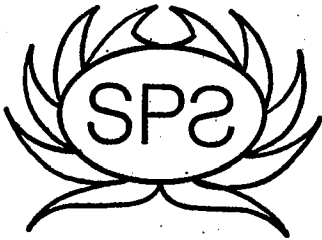


# Suffolk Poetry Society



NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 1994

## Chairwords

Dear Members

The definitions of poetry are legion: 'a drainless shower of light' (Keats); 'memorable speech' (Auden); 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge' (Wordsworth); 'the best words in the best order' (Coleridge); 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (Wordsworth, again)...

Whatever poetry means to you and however you enjoy it - reading, listening, writing, or all three - I hope you perceive the Society as making a positive contribution to your enthusiasm for poetry.

In its several activities, the Society must accommodate a range of interests. Thus the annual programme provides an ambitious mix of traditional and contemporary, talks and readings. Clearly such a programme cannot please all of the members all of the time - your priorities are too diverse - but hopefully it succeeds in striking an acceptable balance and offers sufficient stimulus to foster and further your love of poetry - and to bring you back for more.

The Portfolio, catering uniquely for writing members, is by definition more focused. Yet, it too revels in variety. Each collection of poems is a kaleidoscope of different styles, themes, thoughts, images and vocabularies.

Finally, the local groups - where the Society's inherent diversity is, perhaps, most evident. Each group has a life of its own, defined by the preferences of members who decide the programme themselves.

The diversity that characterizes the Suffolk Poetry Society applies to the wider poetry arena and this will be the focus of attention on 6 October, National Poetry Day. All over Britain - on radio and TV, in schools, libraries, bookshops and other venues - there will be readings, promotions, exhibitions and talks highlighting the range and quality of poetic activity throughout the United Kingdom.

As part of this national endeavour, the Suffolk Poetry Society will be featured on Radio Suffolk - probably as a run-up to 6 October. The Society is also holding its own celebration in Woodbridge on National Poetry Day. Do join us. Details appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

Making arrangements for National Poetry Day and for all the Society's other activities in 1994 has demanded time and energy. On your behalf may I thank the Committee and other helpers - among them the editor of this newsletter, Frank Wood - for their on-going commitment to the Society.

With all good wishes

Catherine Dell

This has nothing to do with debs, coming out, or the hunt ball, it is just a general heading for news about our own brand of society; so it is worth reading.

### The Society in Winter

During the winter the Society meets more informally, in local groups. Details of the first meetings are as follows:

#### HADLEIGH

when/where: 3pm on Saturday, 5 November at The Long House, Coram Street, Hadleigh (home of Jean Newble)

subject: Workshop - bring a poem (your own or someone else's) to read and discuss

contact: Terry Turk on 0449 740890

#### WOODBIDGE

when/where: 2.30pm on Saturday, 12 November at Sandy Hill, Sandy Lane, Woodbridge (home of Marguerite and Douglas Wood)

subject: Bring a Ballad for group reading; extra photocopies of your chosen ballad would be useful, if possible

contact: Marguerite Wood on 0394 382435

#### LOWESTOFT

when/where: 7.30pm on Monday, 26 September at The Gables, 525 London Road South, Lowestoft (home of June Nice)

subject: John Betjeman; bring one of his poems to read and discuss

contact: Maureen Long on 0502 740539

This group meets throughout the year on the last Monday of the month.

Catherine Dell

### The Poetry Library

For some years Dorothy Mann carried a suitcase of books to meetings for members to borrow. This was the SPS Poetry Library. It was a heavy task. She deserves, and has, our warm thanks. Now Marguerite and Douglas Wood are able to hold books for the Society in their home. The address is: Sandy Hill, Sandy Lane, Woodbridge. IP12 4DJ. Tel. 0394 382435

A few books are too valuable to lend out but members are welcome to read undisturbed. Please telephone beforehand to make sure someone is there to let you in. A book-list will be available in due course, and if a book is borrowed you will be asked to enter your name, address, date of borrowing and book title in a note-book. If you have books of, or about poetry that you would like to donate or loan to the Society we would be delighted. The collection is small at present.

Marguerite Wood

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### WRITING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

Carol Ann Duffy is conducting four short writing seminars for all poets interested in contemporary poetry. She guarantees that beginners and published poets alike will come away inspired. She also guarantees excellent food, superb wines and huge log fires, and as the courses are being held in Dartmoor and Snowdonia in October, November and December, the latter will probably be needed. The cost is £150 per person. Phone 0822 890581 for details.

IN MEMORIAM

MARY USHERWOOD

Members will be sad to learn of Mary Usherwood's death, suddenly, on 8 July. Mary played an active part in the doings of the Society as a member, Portfolio contributor, committee member and, in 1993, Crabbe Competition secretary. We shall miss her enthusiasm, commitment - and kindness.

In his funeral address Canon Wells gave an overview of Mary's many-faceted life: her nursing service in the war, her work as an ophthalmologist, her singing in local choirs, her writing, and her love of wildlife - especially birds. In connection with the latter he recalled visiting Mary and witnessing her concern for two fledglings that had flown against the window. Mary wrote a poem about this incident on 3 July - possibly her last poem - and submitted it to the Portfolio. We reproduce it here, with her family's permission, in affectionate remembrance.

Big Bang

Like smitten shuttlecocks  
two 'prentice Long Tailed Tits  
struck the window-pane  
and crashed.

For one Bumbarrel  
it was the end.

The other's see-saw tail  
just mentioned a silent tick;  
then, with opened eyes  
and many cheeps,  
impulsively the wings spread  
and it cheeped and tumbled  
like wind-blown litter  
in a senseless flutter between the petunias.

Briefly I held  
this hedge-flitting fleck,  
this fellow active fall-out  
from the Earth's parturition  
to re-set its compass.  
Then rested and controlled  
it flew up to the nearby spruce.

Even now,  
reasoning Man is rising  
to grasp  
the germ of life  
concealed by the dusty cloud  
that once veiled our cooling Planet.

(Copyright H M Usherwood, 1994)

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Walter de la Mare said to me 'How do I know if I have written a poem...?  
.....They are words no creator can answer. When you are young you want to  
answer; as you grow, you listen to the cocksure crowing up different dawns. -  
Patric Dickinson: The Good Minute

We have the largest brass letter box I have ever seen. I got it specially for  
returned manuscripts. - Patric Dickinson: ibid

**IN MEMORIAM**

**STELLA CURREY: died 9 June 1994**

Members will be sad to learn of the death of Stella Currey. Stella, known to most members as a poet, was a writer of wide-ranging talents who wrote mainly short stories and novels in her early years and later took to writing plays, all under her pen-name of Stella Martin Currey. She possessed an acute sense of humour that showed through all her writing.

Her first novel, Paper Chase End, about a complicated series of takeovers in the newspaper business, was written while she was working on the Bristol Times & Mirror. Of several later ones, a wartime novel, Following Charles, was the most successful.

Stella wrote several plays for the Colchester Repertory Theatre in the period immediately before it became the Mercury Theatre. Her biggest success was Love and Miss Figgis, about a girl student's choice between university and early marriage, and the advice she receives from her teacher. It was later broadcast on the radio and subsequently received two productions on television. Amongst a further five plays written for Colchester Rep, including one about novelist George Eliot, was a popular Christmas play, The Treasure. Another success was French Polish, written for Birmingham Rep, a play that only missed the West End stage because of a change in sentiment that brought a rush of realism to the theatre in the late fifties. The three titles mentioned appeared in acting editions.

Stella's father had told his children and grandchildren stories for many years and he eventually typed them out. She decided to edit these and recall others from memory, and after being rejected over and over again, the first volume of the Uncle stories was published by Jonathan Cape. Stella went on to produce five more, and they became one of the most successful children's fantasy series ever, but with an edge of satire that appealed to adults.

Stella did much work behind the scenes for the Society and adjudicated the Crabbe Competition in 1960. She is survived by her husband, Ralph, a past-President of the Society.

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**FESTIVALS**

**ALDEBURGH POETRY FESTIVAL: 4-5 November 1994**

Theme: beliefs. Includes Matthew Sweeney, John Agard, Meg Peacocke, Peter Sansom, Robert Ety, Selima Hill, Don Paterson, George Szirtes, Roger McGough, Dana Giola, Herbert Lomas on T. S. Eliot, poetry workshops, and surgeries for those whose verse needs doctoring. Brochure from Michael Laskey, Goldings, Goldings Lane, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4EB.

**WAYS WITH WORDS: SOLE BAY LITERATURE FESTIVAL,  
SOUTHWOLD: 11-13 November 1994**

P.D. James, Edward Pearce, Malcolm Bradbury, Mary Wesley, Blake Morrison, Fiona MacCarthy, Ned Sherrin and Jan Marsh (on Christina Rossetti). Brochure from Ways With Words, Droridge Farm, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6JQ.

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**Haikus**

Anything sufficiently short and solemn  
or portentously trivial  
will be much admired by many - Gavin Ewart

## NEWS FROM MEMBERS

I received an interesting letter from new member, Rosemary Merry, enclosing a copy of her first collection of poems, A Crack In a Wall, published by Envoi Poets Publications, Pen Ffordd, Newport, Dyfed SA42 0QT at £3.50 pb. The book carries recommendations from Craig Raine and Peter Sansom and is reviewed in the Orbis Spring/Summer issue and in Envoi 108. All similarity between this title and Marguerite Wood's, A Wall Cracks (see Autumn 1993 Newsletter) is purely coincidental. I know I complained, in relation to this section, that I couldn't produce bricks without straw, but this is ridiculous! This must be the time to state that my so-far abortive first collection has had the provisional title, A Shadow on a Wall since November 1992 - must re-read Koestler's, The Roots of Coincidence. In Envoi 108, Rosemary was also given a five-page feature. She has also this year been awarded a runner-up prize in Poetry Digest's Apricot Gold Medal national poetry contest and was a finalist in the Orbis Rhyme International Competition for the seventh time. She tells me this pour encourager les auteurs, and when she says she moved house after 32 years I realize that my move after 20 can no longer be justified as an excuse for neglecting my writing. So pick up your pens, ye who have abandoned hope.

Another first collection, this time from John Watts, is being published on 18 October to coincide with his birthday. All the poems have been written since he and his wife came to live in the Suffolk countryside, and though only a handful of them make any direct reference to the local surroundings, they do, as a whole, offer a personal response to his experiences since coming here. The title is Hearings and it contains line drawings by Alice Palser, who lives near Beccles. Look out for it in bookshops and galleries throughout East Anglia, price £5.99, or you could pick up your pre-publication copy at the Crabbe meeting at Aldeburgh. John will be signing copies at the following places:  
 Raveningham: The Frederick Gallery, The Raveningham Centre: November 2nd.  
 Beccles Public Library: November 11th  
 Southwold: Eastern Co-operative Craft Shop: November 19th.  
 Felixstowe: Magpie Bookshop: November 25th.  
 Signed copies will also be available at The Riderless Horse bookshop, Yoxford.

Roxane Houston, also new to these columns, has had two poems accepted for publication in America, and one in Poetry Now (East Anglia). In April, she won second prize in the Literary Review and first prize in Poetry Life, which she describes as a new and interesting magazine which runs regular competitions.

Poet's England 15: Suffolk is the latest county anthology to be published by Brentham Press. It contains poetry by poets from various periods, including such names as George Crabbe and Anthony Thwaite, and Society members David Dawrent, Joan Galwey, Olive Jackson, Maureen Long, Hugh McKinley, Richard Maslen, Hardiman Scott, John Watts, Alan Wells, Frank Wood and Marguerite Wood. Details from 40 Oswald Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3AQ, or 0727 835731.

Caroline Price, well-known to readers of this newsletter as a prolific prize-winner, writes in the ORBIS Spring/Summer 1994 issue about a Roofer and a Hitchhiker; much-travelled Theresa Turk visits Sevagram and The Last Synagogue in Rhodes in OUTPOSTS 177. In OUTPOSTS 174/75, Hardiman Scott, well-known to regular readers as our President, word-processes a Variation on a Theme by Jimenez, and in OUTPOSTS 178, which celebrates fifty years of that commendable magazine, is visited by a ghost from the past, 1944 to be exact, in the shape of a poem reprinted from OUTPOSTS 2, price one shilling or 1/1d post free. My poem, After the Last Post, eventually appeared, also in OUTPOSTS (176), after a two-year wait. Maybe the title had something to do with the delay.

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 'Poets? Anti-war wimps for the most part since 1914!'-ex-soldier/novelist in pub

**KEY NOTICES**

Now booking

National Poetry Day, 6 October

The Society is holding an informal gathering-cum-reading for members and guests. Please bring two favourite poems to read. (NB There may be time to read only one poem each.)

7.30 - 9.45pm on Thursday, 6 October at The Library, New Street, Woodbridge

Admission, by ticket, £1.50 per person. This includes a welcoming glass of wine and, served later in the evening, coffee and cakes.

Please buy your ticket in advance. Send a cheque, payable to Suffolk Poetry Society, with SAE, to Douglas Wood, Sandy Hill, Sandy Lane, Woodbridge IP12 4DJ. Last date for applications: 30 September.

Aldeburgh lunch, 16 October

The Society's annual lunch, preceding the Crabbe Awards meeting, is open to members and guests. Details as follows:

when/where: 12.15 for 12.45pm on Sunday, 16 October at The Brudenell Hotel, Aldeburgh

menu: choice of starter, roast pork/roast chicken/vegetarian option, choice of dessert, coffee; also included is a glass of wine or soft drink

price: £11.95 per person

To book a place please send a cheque, made out to the Suffolk Poetry Society, to Douglas Wood (address above). Please state if vegetarian, and please enclose SAE if you require a receipt. Last date for bookings: 7 October.

**EDWORDS**

Apparently a tremor ran through the Society when the Spring Newsletter appeared on white paper. Was this the end of colour in our members' otherwise drab lives? Was the editor who introduced that delicate green confection that so nicely matched the spring of 1988 to cover all memory of rainbow hues under a snow-like blanket of white sheets? Not at all! Let me at once assure you, dear reader, before the last tint of rose drains from your almost bloodless face, that colour will return in 1995 as it will to your pale features.

The main idea behind my introduction of colour was to distinguish between editions of what was then a yearly publication by using a cycle of colours over the years. When the Newsletter became bi-annual, the most discerning of our readers, of which I am sure you are one, would have noted that the idea of a colour for a year had been continued, but with a variation of shade between spring and autumn editions. This year, so as to cleanse the clogged senses of our colour-coddled membership, I decided on a change, albeit sticking to the two-tone seasonal approach. This will help all who love colour to appreciate its return even more, as I continue with my grand cyclical design.

The truth is, I love colour. I am not in the least colour-prejudiced. My heart leaps up when I behold, etc. I remember singing Red Sails in the Sunset as a small boy, and even preferring a sanguinary set of words dedicated to the murderer, Dr Buck Ruxton; I'd even read The Colour Purple if I had the time. The only reason I haven't used that colour yet is because I couldn't get the paper. So rest content, dear reader, for the greyness will revolve on the great wheel of change. As someone said...the rainbow comes and goes.

Thoughts and information to me at 20a Lynwood Avenue, Felixstowe, IP11 9HS.

FRANK WOOD

7 September 1994