

# Suffolk Poetry Society



NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 1996

Chairspeak

Dear Members

Our fortieth anniversary in 1992 prompted considerable interest in the Society's origins - especially its previous incarnation, the Suffolk Poetry Club. As a result, some fascinating reminiscences about the SPC appeared in last autumn's newsletter and in the autumn '92 issue. A recent purge of my full-to-bursting filing cabinet revealed a few more pieces of the SPC/SPS jigsaw. It seems that the SPC began in the summer of 1928 when Captain Herbert Hudson 'advertised in the EADT for kindred spirits who would join with him in writing verse and exchanging it by means of a quarterly portfolio. About 25 people joined...'

As we know, the SPC faded out during the war but a note from the late Kay Turner shows that its regeneration began in May 1952 when, at a course on modern poetry at Belstead House, she happened to meet Francis Engleheart again. Together they decided that in the autumn they would try and resurrect the poetry club in some form or other. The rest, as they say, is history.

It was surely appropriate that that chance meeting took place at Belstead House. During its first decade the Society often held meetings at Belstead House and, more recently, sponsored a weekend poetry course there. This year, Belstead House is again on the Society's agenda - as the venue for the Crabbe lunch and awards meeting. By now, all members will have received a separate mailing with details of the arrangements for lunch and travel directions. Please do make your lunch booking by 23 September as requested. If, for some reason, you are unable to join us for lunch (it promises to be an excellent meal), don't miss out on the awards. The 'Crabbe meeting' has long been a highlight of the Society's calendar and this year it will be as memorable as ever.

Another highlight occurs just before the Crabbe meeting. Thursday 10 October is National Poetry Day. The Society's local groups are making plans - support them if you can and also look out for other poetry events in Suffolk. It is, after all, the one day of the year when 'poetry rules, OK'. Let's make the most of it.

Last, but by no means least, may I take this opportunity to thank the Committee and other helpers for all their hard work on the Society's behalf.

With all good wishes

*Catherine Dell*

---

Mr Escot passed a sleepless night, the ordinary effect of love, according to some amatory poets, who seem to have composed their whining ditties for the benevolent purpose of bestowing on others that gentle slumber of which they so pathetically lament the privation. - Thomas Love Peacock, Headlong Hall

## GRABBE MEMORIAL POETRY COMPETITION 1996

FIRST PRIZE	Bawdsey	Julian Stannard
SECOND PRIZE	The Scarecrows	Julian Stannard
THIRD PRIZE	Natasha	Alan Wells
COMMENDED	Go	Helen Burke
	The Prepared Room	Helen Burke
	Mum's Jumpers	R G Chandler
	C V	John Chapman
	Mia Cara	Julian Stannard
	Oy	Neil Warmisham
	Autumn 1995	Madeleine Watts

There were 580 entries.

Prizes will be awarded at an Open Meeting of the Society at Belstead House, Ipswich, at 3pm on Sunday, 13 October, where the adjudicators, Susan Wicks and William Scammell, will speak of their findings and read some of their own work.

### THE ADJUDICATORS' REPORT

Every judge of every competition seems to begin by saying - partly no doubt to flatter the whole body of competitors, and partly perhaps to pre-empt criticism - that this was not an easy competition to judge. This was not an easy competition to judge. There were many interesting poems, many which might have been included in the anthology and, for one reason or another, were eventually discarded. There were also many weaker poems, which may have blunted our sensitivities to the stronger ones. Even though two judges are safer than one, our eventual choices were inevitably still subjective.

Our initial joint shortlist was a combined shortlist which accommodated all the favourite poems of both of us. It was a long one! From that first list, we gradually homed in on a shorter, less unwieldy selection, and then on the agreed winners. I think we were both surprised, initially, at how widely our tastes diverged. Yet the final anthology list of 11 poems does manage to represent our areas of shared conviction, as well as one or two possibly more maverick enthusiasms. All the poems on it are poems that 'survived' the discussion process. Though the qualities that ensured that survival are different in almost every case, there was always a certain 'something' that refused to allow each of these poems to be passed over.

It was remarkable that the winning poem was always so clearly the winner for both of us. 'Bawdsey' stood out immediately for its mysteriousness, its challenging viewpoint, its subtle creation of unease and implicitly tragic sub-text. Its discreet metaphors ('gulls liberated by the winds'; 'fire reticent with its flames') let the reader in to a world that is past, but somehow, through the conjectural past conditional tenses, completely present. Is the last line weaker? Or is it the strongest of all? We leave you to argue about that as we did! This is a poem that has the unsettling power to touch its readers by leaving important questions unanswered - as life does.

'The Scarecrows' is a poem that uses words as if for the first time. There is music in the lines, and interest in the stanza-breaks. But there is more than that. There is a kind of strangeness that makes us see these guys with a half-naive, half-childlike vision, transforming them into something far sadder and more threatening. They are 'exasperated by wing feathers//without ale.' The language is playful enough to make us smile, but the whole poem is ultimately 'more down than up'. None of us has any 'forwarding address' to leave.

What was special about 'Natasha', apart from the poignancy of its subject, was the way the deceptively simple pattern was used to such good effect. The repeated line begins quite straightforwardly, as little more than a comment, an assessment. Increasingly, as the reader becomes aware of the story behind the poem, the tone of the final line begins to shift - carrying a weight of real emotion - until at the end it takes on a wider, universally human meaning: a kind of inaudible cheer goes up, and, through this quiet use of the refrain, we find ourselves becoming part of it.

All the other chosen poems had strong points in their favour - from the quietly controlled voices of 'Mia Cara' and 'Autumn 1995' and the sustained resonance of 'The Prepared Room' to the outrageous tone of 'CV' and the grating humour and formal rhymes of 'Oy'. We hope you will like them all, as we did.

---

#### NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

##### WOODBIDGE GROUP: 10 October 1996

Special meeting for National Poetry Day at 7.30pm at Woodbridge Library (side entrance in little St John Street). Bring a poem - newly discovered, or newly written (including your own), some wine or soft drink and something to nibble. Contacts: Brenda Grainger 01394 383526 or Marguerite Wood 01394 382435.

##### HADLEIGH GROUP: 10 October 1996

Celebration of National Poetry Day at 7.30pm. Come prepared to read a poem of your own choice. There will be music and refreshments. First contact Hazel Wood on 01473 827738. The group meets monthly on Saturday afternoon.

---

#### MAGAZINES

**POETRY NOW:** unashamedly populist; likes work which is straightforward and communicates. Not likely to appeal to intellectuals, but a very valuable platform for fresh, unscholarly poems. Nice relationship with readers. Buy a copy first to see if you can stomach the undemanding standards. Editor, Ian Walton, 1-2 Wainman Road, Woolston, Peterborough, Cambs PE2 7BU

**IRON:** replies promptly and gives a sentence or two of helpful advice or encouragement. Editor, Peter Mortimer, 5 Marden Terrace, Cullercoats, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4PD

**POETRY DIGEST:** An excellent platform for beginners. Standard varies, but includes some good work, including humorous verse. Regular competitions. Annual get-together of staff and contributors. Has a pleasant family air. Editor, Alan Forrest, Bradgate Press, 28 Stainsdale Green, Whitwick, Leicester LE67 5PW

**THUMBSCREW:** described in Poetry Review as the best new poetry magazine in a decade. Copy £3.50. PO Box 657, Oxford OX2 6PH

**SPOKES** has a special interest in writing from the counties served by Eastern Arts. Alistair & Gina Wisker, 319a Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 2QT

**NAVIS** attracts submissions from a range of well known and less well known writers. Contains 50% poetry. Definitely worth a try. Copy £3.50 (payable to R Bush) from 124 Heathwood Gardens, Charlton, London SE7 8ER

**AGENDA:** efficient, courteous; encouraging, concerned people with a serious purpose: 'We like lyric poetry; occasionally long poems. We look for poems showing more than usual emotion, more than usual order'. Special issues on neglected poets. Agenda has been going a long time and is excellent and well-produced. Copy £4. William Cookson & Peter Dale, 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE

**THE ZEPHYR ENSEMBLE**

Several Members have asked for a copy of the programme presented on Saturday 13 July at Aldeburgh Church Hall. Here it is:

Passacaille.....	Adrien Barthe
Engineers' Corner.....	Wendy Cope
And Now Goodbye.....	Jaroslav Seifert
Six Diversions on a Well-known Tune.....	David Gow
The Ruined Maid.....	Thomas Hardy
Novellette.....	Poulenc arr. Emerson
from Tintern Abbey.....	William Wordsworth
Les Soirees de Valfere.....	Louis Durey
The Pot Geranium.....	Norman Nicholson
The Geranium.....	Theodore Roethke
Polka.....	Fridolin Dallinger
A Lesson in Music.....	Alastair Reid
Pastorale.....	Gabriel Pierne
The Lips that Touch Liquor.....	Harriet Glazebrook
Dance Suite: Waltz-Bossa Nova-Charleston....	Norman Hallam
Slumber Song.....	Siegfried Sassoon

**THE ZEPHYR ENSEMBLE**

FLUTE	Alan Smith
OBOE	Judith Weale
CLARINET	Mike Vorndran
HORN	Marion Hellen
BASSOON	Lewis Dann

READER	Janet Dann
--------	------------

---

What Beethoven meant by his symphony, or Turner by his picture, was not something which you can name, but the picture and the symphony. Meaning they have, but what meaning can be said in no language but their own: and we know this, though some strange delusion makes us think the meaning has less worth because we cannot put it into words. Well, it is just the same with poetry. But because poetry is words, we vainly fancy that some other words than its own will express its meaning. And they will do so no more...than words will express the meaning of the Dresden Madonna. - A C Bradley: Oxford Lectures on Poetry, 1909

## IN MEMORIAM

ELAINE BOND: died 3 April 1996 aged 91 years

Elaine Bond was one of the original members of the Society and attended meetings faithfully. During most of this time she kept up her writing, winning a third prize in the Crabbe Memorial Competition with a poem entitled Hibernation, but she remained unassuming about her poetry. Shortly before her death, she finished writing a series of reminiscences of her girlhood, with especial emphasis on Christmases spent with her cousins.

Elaine attended Girton College, Cambridge, where she read English, before becoming a teacher. She taught for some years at Northgate Grammar School, Ipswich. Elaine had a great love of books and though her favourite poets were probably Shelley and Keats, she had very catholic tastes that encompassed a number of contemporary poets. She had a particular liking for the poems of fellow Society Members, Francis Engleheart and Marguerite Wood.

Elaine never married. In later life she suffered from severe arthritis, which she refused to let stifle any activities she thought important. During her last two years she lived at Wingfield in an annexe to the farm of a nephew and his wife.

---

### NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Congratulations to **Alan Wells** for taking third prize in the Crabbe Competition and to **Helen Burke** and **Madeleine Watts** on having poems commended.

**Gill Phillips** says that last summer she attended an excellent six-day workshop in Bury St Edmunds, where some mini operas were written, produced and sung. Now she is wondering whether it would be possible to organize a similar workshop where poets and musicians could get together with the idea of producing songs. At this stage she is only putting out feelers but if anyone is interested in any way, please get in touch with Gill at 20 New St, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6JB or telephone 01787 377 802.

Owing to a phonological inexactitude, the anthology, Marigolds Grow Wild on Platforms, which contains **Marguerite Wood's** poem, Past the City Cemetery, appeared in the March Newsletter as having been published by Castles. This should, of course, be Cassells. Well, that's one way to get an extra plug!

---

### COMING EVENTS

UEA CREATIVE WRITING MA CLASS OF '96: a reading to celebrate the launch of their anthology: fish tank. Tuesday 1 October 1996 at 7pm, UEA Studio. Free.

UEA: ARTHUR MILLER CENTRE 1996 LITERARY FESTIVAL: Grace Paley, William Gibson, Jonathan Raban, **Irina Ratushinskaya**, Edna O'Brien, Ruth Rendell, Melvyn Bragg, Stephen Fry, A S Byatt & Margaret Drabble. 7 October to 4

December. Irina Ratushinskaya is performing on Wednesday 30 October. Season tickets £24/£14. Individual events £3.50/£2. Call 01603 592810 for details.

ALDEBURGH POETRY FESTIVAL: Brian Patten, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, Peter Finch, Lemn Sissay, Fleur Adcock, Stephen Knight, Patricia Pogson, Hugo Williams, Jane Duran, Duncan Forbes, Stephen Stuart-Smith, Natalie Wheen, Gwyneth Lewis, Vernon Scannell, Charles Simic, Robert Crawford, Adam Czerniawski, Sharon Olds, Tadeusz Rkozewicz plus William Scammell on Ted Hughes & Sylvia Plath, a masterclass and poetry workshops. Details 01728 453543.

SUFFOLK BOOK LEAGUE: Andrew Motion, poet, biographer and Professor of Creative Writing at the UEA, will introduce and read his own poems. Tuesday 5 November, Ipswich School Library at 7.45pm. Non-members £4, students/UB40s normally free. Details from Sandy Bennett 01473 250675 daytime.

---

Ugly words are the words not fitted to the company in which they find themselves - T S Eliot

**HELP WANTED****WRITING EAST ANGLIA**

Julian Earwaker & Kathleen Becker are researching and writing a literary guide to East Anglia (modern-day Norfolk, Suffolk & Essex) to be published in 1997. It will serve equally as a readable narrative, reference book, touring guide and critical exploration of the spirit of East Anglian literature.

They are seeking any literary associations - whether writers who have lived in/visited the area, writings (poetry/prose), anecdotes or historical facts - anything that helps explore East Anglian literature. In particular, they are looking for contemporary literary references and any writers whose work is influenced by or set in East Anglia. On a secondary level they are also interested in films, paintings, photographs, ephemera and other memorabilia related to the area and, specifically, its literary links.

They would be delighted if Members could assist in any way by providing information or writings from our Society relevant to Writing in East Anglia.

Anyone able to help, or who needs further information, should call 01473 258447.

**BEGINNER'S BOOKSHELF**

Paul Hyland, Getting into Poetry (Bloodaxe); Peter Sansom, Writing Poems (Bloodaxe); Peter Finch, The Poetry Business (Seren); Johnathon Clifford, Vanity Press & the Proper Poetry Publishers (National Poetry Foundation).

Several of these books are available in the SPS library.

**COMPETITIONS**

NATIONAL POETRY COMPETITION 1996: £4000, £1000, £500. 10 x £50. Paul Durcan, Jo Shapcott, Paul Hyland. Fee: 1st poem £5, others £3 per poem.

1.10.96. Details: The Poetry Society, 22 Betterton Street, London WC2H 9BU.

THE POETRY BUSINESS COMPETITION 1966: Publication in book or pamphlet form. Sean O'Brien, Peter Sansom, Janet Fisher, Duncan Curry. Submit 24 pages of poems (Max 40 lines per page). Fee £16. 31.10.1996. Details: The Poetry Business, The Studio, Byram Arcade, Westgate, Huddersfield HD1 1ND.

For details of other competitions send me a stamped, addressed envelope.

**EDSPEAK**

In the Spring NL, I mentioned the Poetry Institute of the British Isles and urged avoiding action. I entered a poem in their free competition, thinking I had nothing to lose but when upon acceptance I was told the anthology would be a 'classic book designed to last a lifetime', that it would 'make a beautifully distinctive gift, a highly valued keepsake or a notable addition to any library' and that it would cost £30 together with an extra £12 if I wished to read my own cv, I soon came to my senses and let it go by default. Expensive doorstops are not in my line. I'd much sooner spend the same or a lesser sum on some acknowledged master than £30 to see my own poem in a book. As it happens, the Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy in hardback (Macmillan) costs exactly that. So my advice to new poets is when you feel an urge to lash-out on your own raw efforts, rush to your nearest bookshop and order a book of the real stuff. Paradoxically, it seems, one should beware of free competitions and think carefully before handing money over to a publisher.

It is of course everybody's right to spend money as they wish, but if I were a beginner again I'd spend my hard-earned cash on good collections of past and present poets of real worth and subscribe to a few contemporary poetry magazines which are the showcases in which one should first aspire to place ones work, as I did - and still do! Remember that without your support these showcases will disappear. I usually present a selection in the NL.

Some years ago, I printed a list of all Crabbe Competition first prize winners. I have long wished I could publish lists of second & third prize winners, also. I wonder if anyone out there has a complete or partial list, or a good memory.

Any information would be welcome, even odd names without the dates.

FRANK WOOD

20a Lynwood Avenue, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9HS