

# Suffolk Poetry Society



NEWSLETTER SPRING 1995

## Chairwords

Dear Members

Our AGM, at the beginning of April, gets the Society's year off to an early start. A glance at what's on offer in the months to come reveals an engrossing selection - with talks on Christina Rossetti, Ezra Pound and Geoffrey Grigson as well as readings by Fleur Adcock and the two Crabbe adjudicators, Jeni Couzyn and Lawrence Sail. All these events promise to be full of interest and, as ever, I urge you to attend as many as you can.

In 1994, for the first time in many years, the Society held a meeting in the north of the county, at Gulton Broad. The venture was so successful that we are repeating it this year on 14 May. Please do not be deterred by distance: the A12 is conveniently fast. And those coming from the south or west of the county could always make a day of it. If transport is a problem and you would like a lift, please contact any member of the committee and we'll see what can be arranged.

Moving on from meetings to members... During the winter the Society learnt of the death of three members. Two - Norman McLeod and Derek Caswell - belonged to the portfolio. Derek was a relatively new, but very keen, contributor; Norman, of very long standing, will be remembered for his lively criticisms - characteristically made in verse. The other was Mary Winram, associated with the Society for years and, at one stage, a valued member of the committee. Our sympathy to their families.

There are also changes to report on the committee. Kate Woodward is not seeking re-election; our grateful thanks to her for all she has done over the years. Likewise Mary Biggs, after a long tenure, is relinquishing her role as secretary. I remember Mary's taking over as secretary, back in 1980, when my mother became ill. Then, and in the years that followed, she has always had the Society's best interests at heart and has carried out her many duties as secretary with commitment and enthusiasm. I know you will wish to join me in saying a big thank-you to Mary for all her work on behalf of the Society.

And, of course, thank you to everyone - committee members and other helpers - involved in running the Society and its affairs.

With all good wishes

Catherine Dell

**IN MEMORIAM**

MARY WINRAM: 1 June 1915 - 10 January 1995

Mary Winram was a long-standing member of the Society and served on the committee for a number of years. She was also an active member of the Aldeburgh Group. During her war service as a Wren, she met and married a naval officer. She and her husband farmed at Martlesham from 1953-1974.

Mary had many interests and was a religious person in the widest and best sense of that word. She was a member of the Church of England and was also interested in the Quaker movement. As a great believer in prayer as an aid to healing she at one time ran a group to pray for the sick. Apart from poetry, her first love, she wrote in her later years an autobiography entitled, Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary.

In 1974 she retired to Benhall. She still played tennis and the piano and put her mezzo-soprano voice to good use in the church choir. At her memorial service, Hugh McKinley read the last third of Shelley's poem, The Sensitive Plant, a fitting tribute. Mary is buried in Benhall churchyard.

For love, and beauty, and delight,  
There is no death nor change....

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**THE 1994 CRABBE MEMORIAL POETRY COMPETITION**

Last year's results were late, so I was unable to include them in the Spring Newsletter. There were 388 entries. If you haven't got a copy of the Competition Anthology, I recommend you send £1 to Douglas Wood (see 1995 Programme) right away.

**PRIZE-WINNING POEMS****FIRST**

The Private Life of Saint Etheldreda John Withers

**SECOND**

Right of Way John Watts

**THIRD**

At the tomb of a Knight and his Lady-  
Wimborne Minster Richard Maslen

**COMMENDED POEMS**

Skin from the Bone	Charles Diquens
Dunwich During a Storm	Martin Green
Convalescent Home	Rosemary Merry
Hill Town in Sicily	Theresa Turk
Missolonghi Cemetery	Theresa Turk
Doll in a Window	John Watts

## NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Bernard Jasper, a fairly new member, says he has been writing 'seriously' for about two years. He obviously has not been letting the grass grow under his feet as he has placed poems in several anthologies: Eros and Agape in Poetry Now East Anglia 1994, Christ's Hands in A Sparrow's Worth: Christian Poets of Eastern England (Triumph House), The Sarajevo Sniper in Echoes of Yesterday (The National Library of Poetry, USA) and The Siren Anthology of Poetry (Siren Books) and finally Judas in Christian Poetry 1994 (The Christian Fellowship Writers). Bernard says that Christ's Hands has been put to music by the organist of St Margaret's Church, Ipswich, as an anthem sung by the choir during communion services.

Jo Westren also has a poem, Bombed Church, in A Sparrow's Worth and had some Thoughts in Norwich Market thus finding herself in Norfolk in the Poet's England series.

A song cycle, The Time of Waiting, consisting of seven poems by Jennifer Andrews set to music by Mary Chandler, is to be performed by Ian and Jennifer Partridge, tenor and piano, at the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester on 22 August 1995 at 11am. The cycle was created especially for the artists who will perform it and includes A Hedge Destroyed, which won the Crabbe Competition in 1980. Naturally, Jennifer is very excited, and with the prospect of the ghosts of Elgar and Holst looking benignly on, who can blame her? The recital includes other contemporary works, and songs by Purcell and Ivor Gurney. The formation of the Ivor Gurney Society is being marked by various events at the Festival, which runs from 19 -26 August. Information from Festival Office, Community House, College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LZ.

A good review of Marguerite Wood's collection, A Wall Cracks, published by the National Poetry Foundation in October 1993, appeared in Issue 179 of Outposts (October 1994), the first notable quarterly to mention it. It's a slow process getting published and then, if lucky, reviewed! On 12 April 1994, her song sequence, The Calling, music by Donald Bousted, had its first performance at the Purcell Room, London. In November, Marguerite and Gillian Bence Jones, gave a reading of their poems at Woodbridge Library in aid of the RNLI, for which £46 was received. With few books to sell, Marguerite had ten sea poems printed in a booklet, some from her previously published booklets now out of print, which she illustrated with thumb-nail sketches. If anyone would like to buy one she would be delighted. The title is Seascape and the cost is £2 including postage, of which £1 goes to the lifeboats. It is also on sale at the Swan, Southwold, and the Aldeburgh Bookshop.

Meanwhile, down in Kent, Caroline Price has been watching Video Games (Acumen 18, October 1993) and a Roofer at work (Orbis 92/3, Spring/Summer 1994).

Finally, let me congratulate SPS members for taking all the honours in the 1994 Crabbe Competition.

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### NATIONAL POETRY DAY ON BBC RADIO SUFFOLK

Cassettes of SPS poetry readings as broadcast by BBC Radio Suffolk are now available. The recording contains an introduction by Catherine Dell in the form of an interview by John Eley, followed by six poems read by Gill Phillips, Alan Clough, Alan Wells, John Withers, Michelle Fonnereau and Marguerite Wood. The cassette costs £3 and is available from Alan Wells at The Old Stores, Ufford, Woodbridge IP13 6EQ.

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You must accept my poems - they're brilliant! - A would-be contributor

## WHO'S WHO IN THE SPS DIARY FOR 1995

**Ivan Howlett** (2 April 1995, 2.30pm: Red Cross Centre, Theatre Street, Woodbridge) has spent most of his professional career in broadcasting. Born in Lavenham, he returned to his native county in 1990 to set up BBC Radio Suffolk. He has written documentaries and plays for radio and more than a dozen pieces for the theatre, including stage portraits of Edward Fitzgerald, Aubrey Beardsley and George Gershwin.

**Frances Thomas** (14 May, 3pm: Old Church Hall, Commodore Road, Oulton Broad) was born in Aberdare, South Wales in 1943, educated at Queen Mary College, London University, is married to Professor Richard Rathbone, SOAS, London University and has two daughters in their twenties. For the last few years she has divided her time between writing and teaching dyslexic children. Frances Thomas has written for adults and children. Her children's novels have won Welsh Arts Council awards, and her first novel, Seeing Things, was runner-up for the Whitbread First Novel Award in 1986. In 1994 she acted as consultant to the National Portrait Gallery for their centenary exhibition on Christina Rossetti. Her most recent books are Who Stole a Bloater? (Seren Books, 1991), Mr Bear and the Bear (Andersen Press, 1994) both for children, The Fall of Man (Gollancz 1989), a novel, and Christina Rossetti - a biography (1992) (Self Publishing Association and Virago 1994), of which in the Independent on Sunday in 1992, Claire Tomalin wrote of its being 'finely researched and written....a valuable contribution to Rossetti studies'.

**Fleur Adcock** (11 June, 3pm: Library, 29 High Street, Hadleigh), was born in New Zealand but has lived in England since 1963. She worked as a librarian until 1979 but is now a freelance writer. Her most recent publications are: Selected Poems (OUP 1983, reissued 1991), The Incident Book (OUP 1986) and Time-Zones (OUP 1991), the last two being Poetry Book Society Recommendations. She has also published translations of medieval latin poetry, The Virgin and the Nightingale (Bloodaxe, 1983) and work by two modern Romanian poets, Grete Tartler, Orient Express (OUP 1989) and Daniela Crasnar, Letters from Darkness (OUP 1991). She has edited the Oxford Book of Contemporary New Zealand Poetry (1983) and the Faber Book of 20th Century Women's Poetry (1987). Peter Porter has said that Fleur Adcock's poems 'rest on the page with a special lenient grace'. Her witty and pithy poetry deals with a wide range of subjects ranging from support for Green causes to wry observations about sex.

**Roland John** (16 July, 3pm: Library Lecture Hall, Old Foundry Road, Ipswich) was born in 1940. After travelling in Europe and the Middle East, he returned to England and founded the Hippopotamus Press, a small, independent poetry publishing house specializing in full collections from the new or unfashionable. His poetry, critical articles, translations and review work have appeared in Acumen, Agenda, Poetry Review, Poetry Wales and many other magazines and periodicals both here and in the USA. He is particularly interested in the poetry of Ezra Pound and has recently completed a critical book on The Cantos that explores the major themes of Pound's master work and examines every canto and fragment in detail. A Beginner's Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound was published by the University of Salzburg Press in 1994. A major selection of his poems, Believing Words are Real, was published in 1985 and a new collection, To Weigh Alternatives was published by Headland Publications in 1994. In October 1986, Roland John took over the editorship of Outposts, the poetry quarterly, probably the longest surviving, independent poetry magazine in the UK. Following the death of Outpost's founder, Howard Sergeant, MBE, in February 1987, he changed the format, enlarged the magazine and improved its contents and standards of reviewing by printing work by Roy Fuller, John Heath-stubbs, Elizabeth Jennings, Peter Redgrove and many others. He has introduced a translation section and examined the work of contemporary poets. He also set up the Howard Sergeant Memorial Award for Services to Poetry.

Caroline Grigson (10 September, 3pm: The Priory, Stoke-by-Nayland) is the eldest daughter of **Geoffrey Grigson**, poet, man-of-letters, autobiographer, critic, editor, anthologist, and topographer. **Geoffrey Grigson**, a writer as versatile as he was uncompromising, first made an impact as founder-editor of New Verse (1933-9), an aggressive magazine formed as a homage to Auden's promise and as the scourge of Georgianism and hyper-romanticism. His autobiography, The Crest of the Wave (1950) is required reading for students of the inter-war British literary scene. The Harp of Aeolus (1947) is a subtle study of romantic poetry and its excesses, while Poems and Poets (1969) contains revealing essays on some of the poets he admired, including Clare and Hopkins. His earlier poetry, Collected Poems (1963) reveals his interest in craftsmanship, in all kinds of natural objects and in the various ways that people have chosen to represent them, but he was to write most of his best poetry later. His more recent collections, A Skull in Salop (1967) and Sad Grave of an Imperial Mongoose (1973) are wider in scope and deeper in feeling. Geoffrey Grigson has also edited several anthologies, including The Faber Book of Nonsense Verse (1982), The Faber Book of Love Poems (1983) and The Oxford Book of Satirical Verse (1983).

**Jeni Couzyn & Lawrence Sail** (15 October, 3pm: Church of SS Peter and Paul, Aldeburgh): Jeni Couzyn brings a cool, unflinching gaze to subjects ranging from human suffering and atrocities to sexual relationships, but in poetry which is powerful, compassionate and deeply moving. She published her selected poems, Life by Drowning in 1985 (Bloodaxe), drawing on work from her collections: Flying (1970), Monkeys' Wedding (1972), Christmas in Africa (1975) and House of Changes (1978), as well as new poems. She edited The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets (1985) and a teenage anthology, Singing Down the Bones (Women's Press) in 1989. Her latest collection, The Skin House (Bloodaxe) was published in 1993. Born in South Africa, she lives in London where she works as a psychotherapist.

Lawrence Sail's witty and perceptive poetry combines great delicacy with strength. His collections include The Kingdom of Atlas, Devotions, which focuses on the tensions between hope, doubt and faith and, most recently, Out of Land: New and Selected Poems (Bloodaxe, 1992), of which Douglas Dunn writes, 'Unalloyed good writing....Sail's work is certainly tender. Disturbances, threats and doubts are confronted in his poems, but there is an equally vivid tendency towards celebration....There is a genuine presence of affection in his writing, of world-love and enjoyments'. Lawrence Sail has also edited several anthologies, including First and Always. He is a freelance writer and Chairman of the Arvon Foundation.

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#### KEY NOTICE

OULTON BROAD, 14 MAY, 3pm - HOW TO GET THERE

Follow signs from the A12, or whichever route, to Oulton Broad. In Oulton Broad, landmarks to look for are the Wherry Inn and, nearby, a chemist's shop. Commodore Road turns off beside the chemist's. The Old Church Hall, a white building with green woodwork, is on the right. Car parking is available at the Commodore pub and at Hoseason's (adjacent); there is on-street parking further down Commodore Road.

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#### THE 1995 CRABBE MEMORIAL POETRY COMPETITION

Closing Date: 31 May 1995. Prizes £150 (together with one year's responsibility for keeping the Crabbe Memorial Silver Challenge Rose Bowl well polished), £100 and £75. Adjudicators: Jeni Couzyn and Lawrence Sail. Details and entry form from Competition Secretary: John Watts, Kingfisher Barn, King's Lane, Weston, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 8TX

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Poetry is relaxation from the labours of inebriation. - heard after a reading

FESTIVALS 1994

## THE SIXTH ALDEBURGH POETRY FESTIVAL: 4-5 November 1994

Several members of the SPS went to Aldeburgh to hear readings, workshops and talks by a variety of poets. Highlights were Herbert Lomas on T S Eliot, a dramatized dialogue on Christina Rossetti between the biographer Jan Marsh and Anne Harvey and readings by Roger McGough and several poets from abroad. (I'd like to mention, especially, Dana Gioia from New York, the so-called new formalist! - ed) The poet in residence this year was Peter Sansom. As well as travelling around the county to schools and writing groups, he also held a surgery at Ipswich Library for individuals wanting to consult him about their writing - a free half-hour booked in advance. This was very worthwhile. I was invited to join three other poets from local groups at an open workshop on Sunday morning lead by Selima Hill. Copies of the poems under discussion were available for everyone, and the audience was encouraged to take part. Two of the four were Poetry Ipswich members; surprising, considering our county-wide membership and thriving local groups. Maybe portfolio members could consider giving occasional readings to publicize the writing side of our Society.

Incidentally, Michael Laskey's magazine, Smiths Knoll, welcomes local contributors. He is a key figure in the organization of the Festival.

Marguerite Wood

## SOLE BAY LITERATURE FESTIVAL, SOUTHWOLD: 11-13 November 1994

## SPS FRINGE EVENT

I called it Heart to Harts, since the venue was Hart's Wine Bar, adjacent to the Swan. The following people read their pieces: Maureen Long, Russell Baines, Lewis Watling, Marianne and Laurie Johnson, John Watts and Joan Galwey. I read my own poems and those of Derek Caswell who, sadly, was ill. There was also an absorbing reading by a sailing writer, Peter Hancock, which was really gripping.

Everyone appeared to enjoy the event. I am hoping that we can make this venue a place for regular meeting of this N E Suffolk grouping.

Richard Maslen, 12 November 1994

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FESTIVALS 1995

## THE HARWICH FESTIVAL: The Tower Hotel, Dovercourt 5 July, 7.30-9.30pm

Fleur Adcock reads her poems. The only poetry reading. Details of full festival from Mrs Ann Palmer, 2 Old Custom House, West Street, Harwich CO12 3DG.

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EDWORDS

Not room for many. Once again, no purple passages in the prose, but watch out for the paper in the Autumn issue. If you'd like a list of current poetry competitions drop me an sae. I'll reply when I've had time to type it. Plenty of material this time, I'm glad to say. Keep it coming. No response to my request for contributions to Poet's Bookshelf (see Spring 1994 issue). In future, I intend to widen its scope by calling it Poetry Bookshelf. Information about books on poetry which you have found invaluable, or even merely useful, is required.

FRANK WOOD

27 March 1995