



Suffolk Poetry Society

NEWSLETTER Spring 2000

DIARY DATES..

Annual General Meeting April 9 2000

Garden Party June 17 2000

With not a little trepidation, I sit at the editorial desk; I have feelings much like those experienced on my first day at Grammar School - everything is new; I am not sure where things are, and there are unfamiliar, but friendly, faces. And now, I am surrounded by pieces of paper, various pieces of advertising material and one or two written contributions from the committee members, and helpful notes - from Frank Wood - strewn across the desk.

To my predecessor, I would offer thanks for a job well-done over many years. I have always appreciated reading the Suffolk Poetry Society "News Letter" as a busy, "newsy" magazine, knowing that - from experience in looking after another news letter - it is not always easy to gather material with which to fill the allotted space. Frank always managed - though I think sometimes it has been difficult. Thank you, Frank, for your loyalty to poetry in this county.

I have no new-broom-sweeping plans; but would like to see more contributions from members. An editor's function is to edit - not to make the news ! So if, during the warm and lazy days of the summer-yet-to-come, members would not stray too far from quill and parchment, the Autumn "News Letter" will be a rich and mellow fruition. I live at 4 Saxon Way, Woodbridge, IP12 1LG, where I would be pleased to receive sacks full of written offerings..a.s.a.p, please.

From the Membership secretary comes this plea... Could I take this opportunity of thanking 50% of the membership for the timely payment of their subscriptions - and of reminding the rest of you to seek out your cheque-books before the holiday season takes over ? With many thanks, Judy Ryland. And not content with that, Judy adopts the belt-and-braces policy of prose and poetry..

This briefish note is to enclose/Encouragement to all of those/Whose cheques are still awaited here/To pay for their poetic year.

"WHO BUT YOU" is the title of the second collection of poems written by member RENEE HARRIS, which is due to be published this month. Exact date is not known, but please regard this as preliminary notice of the official launch.

TRANSLATION AS WORK AND PLAY.

Do you ever try your hand at translation ? It's a wonderful way to increase your awareness of the possibilities of poetry and to polish your verbal skills.

For an addict like me, it's a form of kleptomania: you steal someone else's poem and feel as proud as if it were your own. Of course you have to admit it's not yours, although you have a sneaky feeling it is

I noticed there were two books of poetry-translation up for the Whitbread Prize in 1999(though they **are**,suprisingly enough, by Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney).The Board says translation ought to be considered as creative as any other literary genre.

I don't go quite as far as that.It's creative without the agonies of self-discovery, the responsibility for standing naked,the joy. It's like reading, only more so. Reading is itself creative, but translation adds an extra level of attention, definition and formulation.

It's the best and for me the only way to study a foreign poem. I don't feel I've grasped,say, a Verlaine, till I've translated it. There's a special charm in foreign poetry: exoticism,new voices, but also the freedom from the stereotypes and inhibitions of your own culture. Of course, the foreign language will have its own stereotypes; but not being your own they point to new thinkabilities.

It's work,not toil. It's labour done for love. You develop your technique.You have to find the word that conveys the exact connotation.You have to consider rhyme,stanza-shape,line-length,tone,atmosphere. You enter into a communication with the original poet.You're closer to her than her husband.The poet often realises this too. Spiritual links are forged,even if no other contacts are made, and, however tenuous they are, they're part of a growing recognition that we're all members one of another, even if we do speak different languages.

It will undoubtedly change your own writing. Yeats said "No work is ever wasted", and this is especially true of translation. I always begin with a literal translation. Then I consider how I can make it into an English poem - something close to my inner template(the ideal poem that's never achieved).And a knock-on effect is that it makes me look at the first drafts of my own poems as if they were "the literal translation". Then I can work at them and test them against my phantasmal template.

Herbert Lomas

DID YOU KNOW..that we have two Laureates in literature in the United Kingdom ? We have, of course, the Poet Laureate; and we have a recently appointed Children's Laureate, QUENTIN BLAKE. Illustrator extraordinaire, he promises to focus the nation's attention on children's literature. ('PUN' News Letter)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk Poetry Society will be held in the Red Cross Hall, Theatre Street, Woodbridge, at 2.30 pm on Sunday April 9 2000.

AGENDA.

- 1. Chair's welcome.
- 2. Apologies.
- 3. To approve the Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting.
- 4. To consider matters arising from these Minutes.
- 5. Chair's Report 2000 (herewith)
- 6. Treasurer's Report.
- 7. Election of the President **
- 8. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 9. Election of Officers and Committee ***

** The Committee recommends the nomination of Herbert Lomas as President.

*** The Committee recommends the nomination of Michael Stagg for the post of News Editor. The Committee invites nomination(s) for Press Contact Officer.

Committee Members/co-optees willing to stand for re-election are :

Mike Bannister	Chair
Ionne Hammond	Vice-Chair
John Withers	Secretary
Terence Butler	Treasurer
Judy Ryland	Membership Secretary
Kay Craufurd-Benson	Portfolio Secretary
John Watts	Crabbe Secretary
Beryl Sabel	Speaker Secretary
Vacancy	News Editor
Vacancy	Press Contacts Officer

At 3.00pm, the A.G.M. will be followed by "A Spasmodic Revolution" which will be presented by John Watts.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 9.4.2000 - CHAIR'S REPORT

(Discussion of this report is invited at the Annual General Meeting)

I have great pleasure in presenting this, the forty-sixth Chair's Report to the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk Poetry Society. This has been a busy year, and one of consolidation, as the largely re-constituted committee settled itself into the traditional round of organisational goals, with other, extraordinary additional projects.

In the twelve-month we mourned the passing of Eric Sandon, and Hardiman Scott, both poets of stature, both faithful servants of the Suffolk Poetry Society. A celebration of the Life & Work of Hardiman Scott was held in January at Saint Bride's. Michael Stagg represented the Committee along with other close friends and members.

Our Membership, and membership of the **Portfolio Group**, has held good, and in financial terms we have maintained a steady position without recourse, so far, to any rise in rates of subscription. The winter groups in Hadleigh and Woodbridge remain well-attended, while in Bungay, two groups are running; both involving SPS members. A need exists for a further group somewhere in the Stowmarket/Bury area, and we would be pleased to advise any volunteer members, who are interested in forming a nucleus for a new group.

The 1999 Summer Programme provided a series of interesting events, which began with the captivating lecture by David Dixon, on Virgil. The first meeting in recent years, to run into extra time, due to the contagious enthusiasm of the speaker. At Felixstowe we were privileged to receive Robert Greacen, from Dublin, who read from his own work, interlacing the poetry with anecdotes from his literary life in London and Dublin. Moniza Alvi, at Aldeburgh gave a refreshing perspective on The West from the point of view of a young woman growing up in two cultures with two languages. It was striking to realise how many members of the audience had survived similar, if converse experiences, a fact that added a special frisson to the ensuing discussion. Betty Mulcahy returned to us at Beccles, with a moving and dramatic miscellany of her lifelong favourites. Like a true professional, she out-performed the string ensemble in the next room; confessing, later, that her hearing 'on the side' was none too good at the best of times. This was the best of times. To Stowmarket, came Julian Stannard, to read a selection of poems around his Italian experience "Rena's War". It was the smallest of audiences, and the wettest of days, and yet the probing discussion, handled with sensitivity by Julian, and continuing through the most splendid refreshments (thanks to J.G.R) turned this into one of the most satisfying of all the meetings.

Finally, to Stoke-by-Nayland where members enjoyed, once again, the generous hospitality of Mr and Mrs Engleheart, at The Priory; the original home of Francis Engleheart, the Society's founder. The event was particularly poignant. Most of the audience were conscious that the programme "SUFFOLK, A CELEBRATION IN VERSE" had been researched and planned by our recently retired president, Hardiman Scott, who in the event, was far too poorly to attend in person. It was particularly fortuitous that Catherine Dell, with her close friendship with Peter, and her own ancestral links with the Society, should accept, at short notice, the daunting task, of turning the plan into a very fitting tribute, not only to The Poetry of Suffolk, but to one who had done so much, over a period of twenty years, to keep the flame.

A very successful fund-raising garden party was held at Sandy Hill, thanks to the most exceptional generosity and dedication of Marguerite and Douglas Wood and family, the Woodbridge Group, Bert Keele and Hazel Wood. Music was provided by "Stacks of Sax" and a very pleasant evening transpired in spite of the foul weather. The committee has earmarked July 15th 2000 for a similar "afternoon buffet" event. We are at present inviting members to help with an alternative venue for this. can you offer an idea? If so, please let us know.

The Crabbe Memorial Poetry Competition, sponsored by Suffolk County Council, and Vosts, the Fine Art Valuers of Newmarket, attracted slightly more entries than in the previous year. Julian Stannard and John Mole, the adjudicators, gave one of the best appraisals of recent times. The anthology of winning and commended poems (still in print) is a fine testament to the continuing poetic excellence which is, annually, brought to light by this competition.

On National Poetry Day, forty friends of poetry gathered at The Bull Hotel, Woodbridge, for a splendid one-man show, PRIVATE KIPLING; by the Geoff Hales

Travelling Theatre. Arrangements for the show took on a surreal quality as the hotel management and the committee battled it out, in an "on or off" sequence, worthy of so many international peace conferences. The "ons" won. The show did go ahead, and the Society made a rare financial gain. Plans are afoot for a similar event, probably on the theme of Thomas Hardy, in 2000.

Aldeburgh Poetry Festival. The Society organised an open debate on 'The Condition of English Poetry' at The Pears Gallery" as part of the Fringe Programme. Admirably chaired by John Watts, the event attracted almost forty, including half a dozen S.P.S stalwarts; catalysts, and gadflies as appropriate. The event was pronounced a success. We hope for further developments.

The Ring of Poetry, our summer programme for 2000, of talks and readings is sponsored by Eastern Arts, and now published. As usual, we attempt to cover a wide range, intellectually and geographically. The Chair asks all members to proselytize for poetry. Please bring out as many friends and new members as you can, and help to make these events worthy of The Society's aims.

Present developments include (a) our adoption, for the millennium year, of the William House sheltered accommodation scheme in Ipswich. On three afternoons during the year, S.P.S readers will join with William House residents to share poetry, old, new and remembered, and to celebrate The Spring, Mid-Summer and Harvest Festivals. This project is in collaboration with Ipswich Arts. If you, as a member, are interested in taking part, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair. (b) The introduction of a Young Person's Award section in the Crabbe Competition for 2001.

In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute from the Chair, to our sponsors, Vosts of Newmarket; Suffolk County Council, to Emma Drew, Literature Officer, Eastern Arts, and not least to every member of the Committee for their unstinting efforts to ensure that the Society remains a vigorous force for the support of poetry within the region.

Mike Bannister.

SPOTTED BY MEMBERS....."Ninety per cent of people writing poetry in this country don't read it. Poetry is an outlet for people who feel depressed, undervalued, ignored, marginal. It appears to be an easy route to fame, success, recognition and doesn't involve boring things like learning how to play a musical instrument or getting access to equipment. Unfortunately, this is not so ". (The author is a member of a publishing house)

Reading poetry....."is an anthropological necessity. Because if you did not have poetry, everything would slip back into media-speak. Poetry is religious in its contemplation of experience under the eye of eternity. It helps us to live our lives in the face of destruction. It can give us a spiritual strength" (This is Seamus Heaney speaking; the words are taken from an interview with the poet, earlier in the year)

(Members' responses and opinions are welcome. If you read something which you feel SPS members might wish to share - or on which to comment - please send it to me. The Editorial address is 4 Saxon Way. Woodbridge. Suffolk IP12 1LG. My telephone number is 01394 387280. Articles and opinions are always welcome.

IN PRAISE OF THE PORTFOLIO.

Since joining the Society, the greatest pleasure I have had has been as a member of the Portfolio section. This monthly postal workshop connects poets of various tastes in a common interest. It takes courage to submit your work to the critical scrutiny of your peers. Once in, however, it has the twofold benefit of being educational and deeply enjoyable, almost addictive.

The section is managed by the Society's greatest asset, Kay Crauford-Benson. Her quiet efficiency ensures that our monthly fix of home-grown culture is administered. In time, one looks upon the fellow members as old friends and eagerly await the chance to read their latest offerings. There are some shortcomings of course; the criticisms are written by hand. Some are impossible to read and therefore worthless as the handwriting is too bad. A terse retort such as "too long" never seems an adequate response to someone's hard work. On the whole, though, the criticisms are fair and very helpful. I for one, feel that I have improved a little as a poet, my fellow members are the judge and jury in that respect. Certainly my appreciation of poetry and poets has been enhanced beyond measure.

More power to Kay's elbow, and continued inspiration to our Society's poets.

Terence Butler

NEWS FROM MEMBERS.

From Jennifer Andrews....On February 17th at Worcester Royal Grammar School, the soprano, Susan Anne Jenkins, with Jennifer Partridge, piano, gave the first performance of my poem, "The Way Through" set especially for these artistes by the composer, Ian Venables. Words cannot convey the thrill of hearing the song for the first time - the composer has given my poem everything and more. After an enthusiastic response from the audience, I am hopeful that Ian Venables will set to music, the other six poems in my sequence, "Where The Green Sunlight Beckons".

From Rupert Mallin.....I would like to convey thanks to the Society for their hospitality at the Crabbe Memorial event at Belstead; and also to the Judges, John Mole and Julian Stannard - not for picking my poem ! - but for their reports, which were fascinating and inspiring.

(Any member wishing to read the judges reports and comments; please send a large SAE to me please, for copies. Editor)

And from new member, Russell Robertson....I am particularly interested in East Anglian poetry, and I have copies of all Peter Hardiman Scott's books, including a signed, limited edition of "Adam and Eve and Us", published in 1946 - his first book of poetry. There are a few copies of Peter's last book of poetry "Where Shadows Fall", published in 1998 - but now out of print - available at Halesworth Bookshop.

From Helen Burke...resident in York....I have been asked to read with Andrew Motion and Simon Armitage, in June of this year, in Beverley. This event will be the first of three events which are being arranged through "Subtle Flame", a group working in Beverley and Hull to promote poetry in this area. I am pleased to be asked to do this - the other two events will involve reading the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy and U.A.Fanthorpe. The second York Poetry Festival will be held in October this year. Anyone wishing to have further details, please contact me at: 21 Melbourne Street, York, PO10 5AQ.

"Sir, what is poetry ?" "Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is." This is the reply from Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) And, with regard to the article on page 2 from Herbert Lomas - "Poetry is what gets lost in translation". This remark comes from Robert Frost (1874-1963) (Critical essays, and other offerings of not less than 20,000 words on these two quotations, to me please, for inclusion in the next "News Letter" !! Ed.)

The SAISON POETRY LIBRARY (Level 5 Royal Festival Hall, London) is open seven days a week from 11am until 8pm. The library contains reference books, poetry magazines, poetry by children, poetry on cassettes, records and videos, poetry exhibitions and information and listings of competitions. A special feature of the library is the "Lost Quotation" noticeboard. And of course there are poetry readings from the well-known and from new talent. (071 921 0943/0664) Local poet, Michael Lasky, has produced "THE TIGHTROPE WEDDING" published by Smith/Doorstop Books, @ £6.95. It is a Poetry Book Society recommendation, and can be ordered from the publishers(The Poetry Business, The Studio, Byram Arcade, Westgate, Huddersfield HD1 1ND), from bookshops, or the author. In May, Peter Abbs will be our programme guest; he has recently published "LOVE AFTER SAPPHO". Copies may be obtained from: Halfacrown Poetry, 198 Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5 3DY; price £6.99 (include £1.25 p&p; cheques made payable to 'Halfacrown') TARTARUS PRESS (5 Birch Terrace, Hangingbirch Lane, Horam, East Sussex TN21 0PA) offers help to those who wish to see their verse in print. If you would like help in becoming a successful poet, then THE WRITERS COLLEGE (FGP87, 7 Dale Street, Manchester M1 8DJ) invite you to contact them for details of their home-study course. HELICON POETRY MAGAZINE (Cherrybite Publ; Linden Cottage, 45 Burton Road, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4AE) is produced quarterly, costing £2.50. A stamped addressed envelope will give details of their current competitions. "SCANNING THE CENTURY" - The Penguin Book of the Twentieth Century in Poetry is edited by Peter Forbes, and published by Viking in association with the Poetry Society. Its 640 pages cover "the century's triumphs and disasters, its style and everyday moods"

"POETRY...is the opening and the closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment." This is from the American poet, Carl Sandburg, born 1878, who devised "Ten Definitions of Poetry". This quotation is number ten.

"INTERSECTIONS" is the new collection of poems by MICHAEL HAMBURGER, to be published by ANVIL PRESS. They also published this poet's much larger "COLLECTED POEMS 1941-1994". MICHAEL HAMBURGER together with ANNE BERESFORD will be our guests on July 9 2000, at The Friend's Meeting House, Beccles.

The death occurred, earlier in the year of JO WESTREN. Her poems were published in Harvest 1978 - and she also contributed to Anthology of Suffolk Poetry. Two of her poems appeared in the Oasis selection, "More Poems of the Second World War". An obituary will be published in the next "News Letter".

PARTYGARDEN PARTY....GARDEN PARTY....GARDEN PARTY....GARDEN PARTY....GARD

There will be a Garden Party on SATURDAY 17 JUNE 2000, The venue will be...

M I L L H O U S E : H E N L E Y : I P S W I C H

by kind permission of Mrs JENNIFER ANDREWS

This will be held in the afternoon, and will be a fund-raising event for the Suffolk Poetry Society. Further details will be sent to all members as soon as possible.

Please keep your diary free and ensure your attendance at this event.

And another reminder.....

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on Sunday April 9 2000 at 2.30 pm

This is the first event of the 2000 programme - and the Meeting will be followed by "A SPASMODIC EVOLUTION...." with member, JOHN WATTS. The venue is the RED CROSS HALL, THEATRE STREET, WOODBRIDGE.

DO PLEASE....make every effort to attend the varied and attractive PROGRAMME 2000. Membership support is vital to the well-being of the SUFFOLK POETRY SOCIETY, and to poetry in the region.

"There is a word...which rouses terror in the hearts of the vast educated majority of the English-speaking race...I myself have seen it empty buildings that have been full. Even to murmur it is to incur solitude, probably disdain, and possibly starvation, as historical examples show. That word is POETRY"

(This advice is from ARNOLD BENNETT - just ignore it, and attend !)

Articles, news and opinions to me MICHAEL STAGG, please, for the next edition.
