



Suffolk Poetry Society Newsletter

March 2005

editor; Gerard Melia

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Welcome to another edition of the Newsletter.

One of the jobs that poetry does very effectively is to comment on contemporary social issues. Recently I observed a group of elderly ladies watching and commenting on a bride and groom being photographed outside our Parish Church. It reminded me of a poem by Anne Stevenson called "The Marriage" which I thought might give the newsletter a bright and positive opening.

The Marriage.

They will fit, she thinks,
but only if her backbone
cuts exactly into his rib cage,
and only if his knees
dock exactly under her knees
and all four
agree on a common angle

All would be well
if only
they could face each other.

Even as it is
there are compensations
for having to meet
chest to scapula
groin to rump,
when they sleep.

They look, at least,
as if they are going in
In the same direction.

Anne Stevenson.

Anne is the author of over a dozen volumes of poetry, including **Granny Scarecrow, the Collected Poems 1955-95**. Born in Cambridge she was educated in America but returned to England after her master's degree. She has held writer-in-residence at Oxford, Reading and the University of Edinburgh. She now lives in Durham.

The Summer Programme 2005

Maureen Butler writes;

I do hope the programme this year pleases you, there are few changes.

Regrettably we will not have the Hadleigh Poetry Festival this year as the venue is undergoing extensive refurbishment. There is no other venue with the capacity or the availability but the Festival will return to our programme next year.

We are having another evening in May of poetry and music at **The Old School, Hadleigh. (May 14th 7.30pm)** This was well attended last year and we are back again by popular demand. Do come and join us if you missed last year.

The Garden Party will take place in June in Marguerite's garden in Woodbridge. The music will be provided by 'Quintessential'. Any offers of food for this event will be gratefully received; just let us know your intentions closer to the date.

We are including Halesworth in our schedules this year. We hope this will encourage the members in the north of the county to attend. I realise that members cannot attend all meetings but I would appeal to you to attend as many as possible -- after all why do you become members?

Please note that the date for the meeting at Stoke-by-Nayland has been changed from that shown in the Autumn Newsletter. Our hosts needed the earlier date. I look forward to seeing you all in the coming months

Maureen Butler.

George Crabbe and the Poetry of Place.

Samuel Johnson opened his satire "The Vanity of the Wishes" with the majestic lines

"Let Observation with extensive view
Survey Mankind from China to Peru"

Yet in spite of the specific naming of those two widely separated countries (that is if you extend your view from West to East), his poem is far from specific as to place. The reason for this is that it is a moral poem, as was thought proper for a poet in that Augustan age. When Pope wrote, "The proper study of Mankind is Man" (they were very keen on "mankind" were those Augustans), he was not referring to any specific man but to man in general. Pope's aim, as was Johnson's, was generalisation. It took Blake, a little later, to start the rebellion, saying famously that General Knowledge was the Knowledge of Fools.

Outside the eighteenth century we find plenty of poetry that is only apparently specific, while remaining abstract in actuality: examples range from Milton to Eliot. ("Little Gidding" is not *about* Little Gidding). The truly specific in poetry, on the other hand, has a long pedigree and is arguably the most popular form of poetry. Consider the opening of "Beowulf" with its graphic depiction of the monster Grendel and the great hall of Hrothgar. Here we find the roots of English narrative poetry, which itself traces its ancestry to Homer. The English narrative poem specific to person and place, flowered in Chaucer and continues down a long line via Spencer, to George Crabbe, Byron (when he stood on the Bridge of Sighs in Venice), Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Hardy and in the twentieth century with such poets as C. Day Lewis, Ian Serrailier and Thomas Tuthill. Of these it must be our own Crabbe who was most consistent, producing long narratives with

exact indications of place, none being more clearly conceived than "The Borough", which included the terrible story of Peter Grimes (not the heroic figure of Britten's opera, but the degraded fisherman of Aldeburgh). It is in "The Borough" that we find what is surely the fullest and frankest account of life in a small town, set in specific time and place. Some critics have accused Crabbe of being prosaic and even plodding, but this is probably the result of a public now accustomed to fast and overdramatic narrative. If we put aside the snappy short story and the rapidly changing imagery of most film and television, we can see Crabbe like a cleaned painting and take our time in reading him. If we take the trouble to settle down and enjoy Crabbe as a long read, he will yield his rewards.

John Watts

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Letter from Russell Robertson.

He writes to inform all Society members of the activities and meetings of the Poetry Group in Bungay.
A programme has been arranged for 2005 as follows;

Monday March 21 st	Nina Roffey
Monday April 25 th	Russell Robertson
Monday 23 rd May	Betty Warnes
Monday 27 th June	Two poems each member

Other dates yet to be arranged.

All meetings take place in Bungay Library, Wharton Street, commencing at 7.30pm.

The format for every session is for each reader to select and read six poems followed by a break for tea and biscuits. After the interval members who have written poems are invited to read them
Parking is free in Wharton Street immediately opposite the Library.
Inquiries; Russell Robertson 01986 895508

University of the Third Age.

Currently, there are U3A Groups in many parts of the County.

Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, East Bergholt, Ipswich, Hadleigh and Halesworth are the groups with which I am familiar. (writes the editor)

Each branch organises group activities,(the Hadleigh group offers eighteen options ranging from bird watching to Elgar and Candide!) Each of the branches offers creative writing and usually a poetry group either as poetry appreciation or as a poetry writing group.

Should the Suffolk Poetry Society form some link with these groups? Could the Society offer to host an afternoon to which all these poetry groups could be invited to give readings of their work?

Why not broach this topic at our next A.G.M.

The A.G.M.

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at The Red Cross Hall, Theatre Street, Woodbridge at 2.30pm on Sunday 10th April 2005

The committee is currently under - strength and therefore nominations for members would be most welcome.

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End Piece.

"I thought I'd begin by reading a poem by Shakespeare, but then I thought ... why should I?" He never reads any of mine."

Spike Milligan.

East Anglian Poet wins T.S.Eliot Prize for Poetry.

The Budapest-born poet George Szirtes was presented with a cheque for £10,000 at the Senate House, London by Valerie Eliot, the poet's widow.

Although born in Hungary, Szirtes was educated in England and has always written in English. He has been described as among the most technically skilled poets in English.

The panel of judges was chaired by Douglas Dunn who described Szirtes book, "Reel," as the best collection of new poetry published in Britain and Ireland in 2003.

Szirtes, a translator of Hungarian literature, has published four collections for Secker and five with OUP.

He lives in Norfolk and teaches at the Norwich School of Art and Design.

The prize is awarded by the Poetry Book Society.

Two stanzas from the poem 'Courtyard.'

Think of a glove turned neatly inside out;
think of your hand running along a rail
as children run down galleries grown stale
with refuse; think of hands reversed; of keys
and locks; think of these blocks as hollow trees
still echoing to something inchoate;
think of fear, precise as a clean hand
searching the dark corners, with the skill
that years of practice manage to instil;
think of locks where keys will never turn;
of rooms where it takes an expert to discern
a movement that the eye can understand.

George Szirtes *from "Porch"*

Portfolio Group Report

From Peter Davey.

The membership of the group stands at 21.

Since our last meeting David Mead died on the 7th December and I attended his funeral.

David was a navy man who later worked on fishing boats out of Lowestoft. For many years he served in the Prison Service and a councillor for the Kesgrave Ward. He was a member of the "Victim Support Committee".

I'm sorry to lose Celia Miller who was the winner of the 2004 Portfolio Competition. She finds the folio takes up more time than she thought ; she has written many fine poems.

We have one new member, Mr A. John Savory who joined this month.

There are ten portfolios in circulation. Number 315 has been dismantled as all portfolios will, in future, be dismantled after twelve months. As a new portfolio is built every month excepting December there will always be enough in circulation.

The number of new poems in the folio file stands at 47, however these are the work of five members.

Members are entitled to 8 folio sets per year, or one every six weeks. If members would prefer less I am offering six folio sets or one every two months . Please let me know your preference.

In my last newsletter I proposed the idea of sending members submissions to local papers and publications in the hope of promoting poetry and the Suffolk Poetry Society. All poets, with one exception, have given blanket permission for publication.

I have sent poems and accompanying letters to seven publications. I await their response.

The 2004 Portfolio Competition results have been finalised and all those who took part have been notified and sent a result sheet.

The expenditure incurred by the Portfolio last year amounted to £244.95

The 2005 account starts showing no debit or credit.

Peter J Davey.

Portfolio Secretary.

Publication of members work in National magazines and other publications.

Joan Smith, Ipswich, has been published in 'Envoi', 'Acumen', 'Pennine Platform', and the monthly magazine 'Reach,' published in Portishead Bristol.

Maggie Andrews, Ipswich, has had poems published by 'Pulsar', and 'Black Rose', and together with Wendy Partridge and Jean Yard gave readings of their poetry to The Hadleigh Group and to the Hadleigh U3A.

The late Judith Cramond's first collected poems have just been published. We offer a brief appreciation of her work in the hope you will purchase a copy of 'Early & Late'.

Ebb tide

**This is how it will be
after tides and storms
have washed up and over me.
ropes will untie
and my boat will be taken
by the running ebb
and leave
a hollow water print
of moving sky**

Judith Cramond.

An Appreciation of her first collection.

The late Judith Cramond was a member of our Woodbridge Group and a poet who had

won a commendation in the Crabbe Memorial Competition.

Her childhood experience in Queensland, Australia and her subsequent education in Carhampton, Somerset, gave early indications of her artistic talents and at the age of eighteen she won a poetry competition organised by a Japanese Airline whose first prize was a world tour.

After attending Reading University she became a Graphic Designer and Deputy Art Editor of 'Harpers & Queen' magazine. Her work appeared in other mainstream publications and at one time she worked for the British Museum.

Snape, Orford, Blythburgh and Woodbridge feature in her work which is supported by Sylvia Kantaris, (a poet and lecturer whose work has been published by Secker & Warburg and Bloodaxe).

She writes;

"This book haunts the reader with its distillation of an intense engagement with life and a celebration of the natural world. This is luminous poetry, crafted with poise."

'Early and Late' is a first collection of 44 poems. The range of subject matter is comprehensive; Suffolk beaches, churches, Australia and a view of Arsenal football ground give the reader lots of surprises. Some of the poems were written when it would appear she was aware of her approaching demise.

**" My body has written me a sick note,
served notice to leave the kit behind.
I shall make the most of what's left
of my appetite
and go on a pickle bender of
walnuts, gherkins, onions, beetroot,
herrings"**

Her visits to churches provoked some playful comments,

**"Such a blessing
when we lie on our monumental bed,
sleeping a still Gay Gordons hand over hand
foot under ankle
and weighted by our heraldic cat,
such a blessing
to think of Dennington"**

Her observation of the Suffolk countryside is detailed and perceptive.

Snape Interval.

**One hour, two hours and they are still coming,
flying from inland fields
of ploughed clods.
A heavy day earth bound.
And now
a chequered flight,
white against trees
black against cloud,
these birds are pulled out of the air
down
to a sky of water.**

I have chosen to present her poems rather than attempt a detailed criticism which would have deprived her poetry of an airing to Poetry Society members. I hope that the quoted pieces encourage you to purchase a copy. "Early & Late.' It is available at £6.99 from 'Woodbridge Books', 'Browsers' and at the Aldeburgh Bookshop... or mail order from e-mail joy@dialstart.net

Proceeds are donated to the Hospice in Ipswich and to date sales have enabled her husband to donate £1000.

Editor.

The George Crabbe Memorial Poetry Competition.

The poetry competition for this year is now well under way with some entries already received. This year, the fifty-first of the competition, sees a small increase to the first prize. Thanks are due to our sponsors, Fairweather, Stephenson and Co and as last year, the Chadwick Trust. It is hoped that our membership will be inspired to take part and to attend the excellent lunch and prize-giving to be held in Belstead House, Ipswich on 9th October.

The adjudicator this year is the much published poet **Danielle Hope** who lives in London. Danielle is an experienced adjudicator and we hope a large entry will test her prowess. We shall again produce an anthology of the prize winning poems together with the ten recommended poems from the competition.

Glancing through previous anthologies makes one realise the depth and variety of talent that exists in our exclusive county competition. Remember that the competition welcomes entries from people born in Suffolk, educated in Suffolk, working in Suffolk or just living in Suffolk. Please encourage those involved in writing groups to consider an entry.

The closing date is 31st May and I look forward to receiving your entries.

Terence Butler.
Hon Competition Secretary.

Definition;
"A liberal; a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel."
Robert Frost.

The Suffolk Book League, through the publication "Book Talk," have inform us about the closure of the **Poetry Library in the Royal Festival Hall**. The library will be closed to visitors from April 2005 till January 2007 because of the refurbishing of The Royal Festival Hall.

The Poetry Library will continue to provide an information service via three web sites.

The sites will provide a virtual notice board of poetry events, courses, and flyers for magazines and publishers.

Many services will continue, such as acquisitions and cataloguing, the postal lending service and the service for visually impaired users. Work with school and colleges will continue as before.

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News from around the county.

Pauline Stainer writes;
I lead the Hadleigh U3A Poetry Appreciation Group. We are a small group, and read and discuss poetry of all kinds. Since September, we have been looking at individual poems in some depth, to gain a grounding in our literary heritage. So far, we have studied Keats, Donne, Hardy, and Yeats. I feared that reading the whole of "The Eve of St Agnes" with some members who had never read any Keats, might prove too much. Not so. Their enthusiasm answered my own.
On April 27th I am giving a reading at Keats' House in Hampstead, in connection with their current programme on poetry and healing. As Keats was a huge influence on my early imagination, I hope his poignant ghost won't overwhelm me.

Treasurer's report for 2004

Thanks once again to careful housekeeping, a constant membership and the generosity of certain individuals, the accounts have concluded with a healthy balance. The books have now been audited and I will be able to present a pleasing statement of account at the A.G.M. in April.

Our balances both in the current account and our reserves in the building society reflect two years of budgeting which we have undergone. Since the crisis when we lost our funding from Eastern Arts and any form of sponsoring seemed lost, the society has rallied round to enable us to present summer programmes. Mainly funded by the generosity of members and supporters of the society we have enjoyed events of high quality. Artists have performed either free of charge or at a much lower fee. The garden parties hosted by Marguerite Wood and Gillian Bence-Jones were both well attended and were not only good fund raisers but most enjoyable too.

It is with a note of confidence that we have organised a further programme for the coming summer. Our biggest fear is that the events might not be supported, engendering in your committee a feeling of frustration that good poets' readings might be poorly attended.

It is pleasing to be able to report that it will not be necessary to raise the subscriptions for next year. Your continued support remains essential and we hope you will try to derive considerable satisfaction from the activities of the Society in the coming year.

Terence Butler

Hon. Treasurer

Message from Michael Atherton.

Michael is currently a member of the BBC's 'Get Writing' website which is closing in April.

Michael is starting an alternative web-site modelled on the BBC site and he is now gathering material for it. The site will be run by volunteers and will be non-profit-making organisation.

Proposed categories of work are;

Short stories, poetry drama scripts and work for children.

Michael's e-mail address is;

"Michael Atherton"

<michael@morphosismedia.com>

Portfolio Competition.

For the second year we ran the portfolio competition in which twenty member submitted entries. Each member submitted three poems which were sorted out into folios of twenty poems and circulated within the folio group

Thanks to prompt voting by the members we were able to publish the results by early December. The voting ran close for a time between five members but in the end we had a clear winner.

1 st place.	Celia Miller	419 pts
2nd place	Frank Wood	396 pts
3 rd place	John Watts	392 pts.
4 th place	Marguerite Wood	390 pts
5 th place	Angela Pickering	373 pts.

The winners will be presented with their awards during the AGM and will be invited to read their poems.

We hope to run a portfolio competition this year depending on the level of interest. The format will be different; entrants will be asked to submit two poems. These entries will be for the competition only and will not circulate in the normal portfolios.

The competition poems will be sent to participants who will be invited to award points of 1-10 as before this time the three poems which receives most points will be rated 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

Entry forms will be sent out by the end of March and the closing date for entries will be May 31st.

Peter Davey

The three winning poems are printed overleaf

The Gift of Hindsight

Unexpected, she stood in my doorway
holding a bundle of lilac on thick woody stems
wrapped in a twist of newspaper, clutched in her hand.

And I, preparing to take out the rubbish,
for once hadn't heard her cursing in the hall,
or her feet on the communal stairs.

I admit I disliked her. Raw-boned,
with mean eyes, she smelled of Oxfam coats,
and her manner was belligerent.

Then she offered the flowers. Fat cones
part-open, the scent just starting to breathe,
and the cross-marked buds tight closed at the tip.

Misreading an intention of friendship
in the satisfaction she couldn't conceal,
when I took them, I thanked her,

admiring the great smooth hearts of the leaves,
and was suddenly caught in a fantasy
of old-fashioned Saturday mornings:

a billow of curtains on a dreaming street,
where somebody is playing a piano,
while a bicycle glides slowly past,

and the long afternoon stretches ahead,
into the rest of the weekend, and no boundaries
to the electric and perfectible future still waiting to open.

I saw that she looked at me oddly, then,
but the superstition about lilac in the house
did not occur to me until long afterwards.

CERIA MILLER

SURFACES

'If anything happens to me
papers and books will cover every surface
every table, cabinet, chair – even the floor.
You put things down anywhere
instead of putting them in their proper place.'
I laughed, 'I love you too,' I said.

But it's true. Every morning I pick things up
from the coffee table, the audio cabinet
the long, low table under the window, the sofa,
even your beloved mid-Victorian hall chair,
but never the floor, that's clear.
I occasionally vacuum that.
Everything is pretty tidy though and fairly clean,
but don't, I beg you, haunt my study.
Even though I love you still.

But the dining table, where I clear a corner
to eat my home-cooked farragos –
there I admit defeat. As one pile disappears
another replaces it. There still are the letters
of condolence I've just reread
and am acknowledging, slowly, but not steadily.
In my convoluted thoughts
nothing is straightforward.
Except that I love you still.

Everything is fine on the surface:
the beds are changed regularly,
the lawn gets mowed now and then.
There are no newspapers lying around.
I don't read them any more.
The real news stopped
when you stopped talking to me.

Were our surfaces too littered
to let our love show through?
I remember when they were one in love.
Surfaces rule our lives. Maybe,
as someone is supposed to have said,
'Deep down I'm a superficial person'.
I'll never know, but one thing I do know.
Never will I find such love again.

FRANK WOOD

St.Simeon Stylites Reenacted.

I look down from my lofty perch and see
the baffled watchers waiting way below.
One or two seem to wish that they were me,
or think of me as proxy for their sins,
but others think that they already know
who loses in this drama and who wins.

A gang of heretics throw rotten eggs
and hope to see me tumble to the ground:
I bear their jeering, fold my arms and legs,
and shut my ears to such barbarity,
seeking to hear another, richer sound -
the distant voice of divine charity.

It cannot be enough just to endure
the daily bore of basic deprivation,
the tedium that death alone will cure:
both I and those down there deserve a cause,
one that outlives any degradation,
and lets us tolerate life's aches and sores.

They don't expect that I will work a wonder
(unless one counts some magic sleight of hand;)
more like they wait to see if by some blunder
I'll be exposed as a time-wasting fool,
with nothing shown to help them understand
the lessons to be learnt in life's great school.

To fast away my time in a glass box,
however great the media response,
however many watchers in their flocks
wait for they know not what to come about,
will never minister unto their wants
or ever touch the mystery of their doubts.

No longer can I hope to demonstrate
that lonely man is man alone with God,
how suffering is the path to heaven's gate
and that desires can only bring us pain.
For in this world, pole-squatting is thought odd,
and self-denial ultimately vain.

JOHN - WATTS

Death of John Keats.

Doctor James Clark attended the College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. As a youth he became assistant surgeon in the navy and served aboard "The Thistle" surviving a wreck off the coast of New Jersey after which he returned to Edinburgh where he received his M.D. in 1817.

In 1818 he received a commission as a doctor to a gentleman suffering from advanced consumption whom he accompanied to the South of France. His patient died but Clark became interested in the effects of climate on the disease. In 1819 he settled in Rome where he married and became a well known physician to the English colony.

As a consequence an arrangement was made for him to attend Keats on his arrival in Rome.

Dr Clark was sitting in his rooms in the Piazza di Spagna beginning a letter to a friend in Naples asking for news of Keats when a carriage containing the poet drew up at his door. Clark had made arrangements to rent rooms for him adjacent to the famous broad stone steps leading to the church of Trinita' Dei Monti, known as the Spanish Steps.

Clark realised immediately that his patient was in an advanced state of consumption but he was determined to do his utmost, "for he is too noble an animal to be allowed to sink."

The Doctor used the methods of the day, the letting of blood and fasting to the point of exhaustion. In all probability he used the new stethoscope that had become available in London just a year before. In the course of his treatment Clark came to consider that the poet's problem was centred in his stomach and his mind.

At this time Keats suffered so much that he begged a friend to let him have a bottle of laudanum, a morphine derivative and dangerous if taken in excess. Clark removed the bottle.

On the 23rd December, Clark told a friend that there could be no hope of recovery. Keats died at 11 o'clock on the night of the 23rd February.

After the death it was Clark who took charge of the arrangements. Casts were made of Keats face, hands and feet on Saturday 24th and the following day Clark performed an autopsy revealing the complete destruction of Keats lungs.

The burial took place before dawn on Monday 26th February and remembering Keats last wishes, Clark had the grave diggers put turfs of daisies on the filled grave.

Dr Clark returned to London where he published a number of papers on pulmonary consumption and he subsequently became physician to Queen Victoria. He was awarded the F.R.S and was knighted

He died in 1870 at the age of 81 and is remembered mostly for his association with Keats

Peter Davey.

Welcome to the Poetry Café.

Situated in a quiet residential street five minutes from the centre of Covent Garden, it is easily accessible with a wonderful creative atmosphere. Last year Poetry Café was voted one of the top ten cult cafes in 'Elle Decoration', and this year was included in the Guardian/café /guide to London's most funky, stylish and interesting cafes..... "atmosphere of Frenchness, smokiness, loneliness – and most people have penned the occasional ode over a half- empty stretto. But here poetry is performed and shared."

The café holds regular events and every Tuesday they have an "Open Mike" session. Poetry and Jazz, meetings of writers in exile and opportunities for new young writers are regular features of their programme.

Menu includes best marmite and cinnamon toast, Portuguese custard tart, and great English cheeses. Afternoon tea and toast cakes and a selection of herbal teas are available.

Details; poetrycafe@poetry.society.org.uk.

Where are they now?

In 1987 a book of poetry by school children was published called "**The Common Ground**". It contained the poetry of pupils at Halesworth Middle School and their extraordinary teacher Jill Pirrie.

In 1987 Jill Pirrie entered 60 pupils in the W.H.Smith Young Writers Competition. Of the forty prizes on offer Halesworth Middle School won eleven from a total submission of 31,000.

Ted Hughes was one of the judges and he was so impressed that he wrote the foreword to the book.

Quote;..... two most striking features of her results- their sheer quantity and their sheer quality set them clearly in an historical as well as a national perspective. No other context could give such a vivid sense of the educational implications of what she is doing. Her pupils have triumphed as brilliantly in other competitions..."

Ted Hughes continued to praise the efforts of teacher and pupils ending the introduction with these words;

"She not only supplies them with a superior kit of language techniques, she lifts them into a special state of mind where new resources become accessible, and where their brains perform, quite naturally, feats of interconnection and perception which were previously unthinkable for them."

Jill Perrie, who was at that time the Language Co-ordinator of Halesworth Middle school was awarded the M.B.E for her services to education.

The question I would pose through the medium of the pages of our newsletter is **what happened to these successful writers?** Are there any members of the S.P.Society whose work was published in this book? Did some pupils go on to develop the skills and insights of poetry in adult life? Did it influence choice of degree, career or furnish them with an abiding love of poetry?

Are they still writing poetry and perhaps entering the Crabbe Memorial Competition.

If you are one of these lucky pupils or you know of someone who was influenced by the teaching of Jill Pirrie, please contact the editor so that we can recount their experiences in the next edition of the newsletter.

Poetry Competitions for Young Writers

- 1 Foyle Young Poets of the Year Awards
For pupils aged 11-18 yrs. Closing date July 31. Results announced on National poetry day.
- 2 Rialto Young poets Competition

Consult web site;
<http://www.therialto.co.uk>.

One of the tasks which any Poetry Society is bound to set itself is the encouragement of its members to write poetry and to attend courses designed to improve the quality of their work.

The Arvon Foundation offers three centres throughout the country which tutor poets at every level of achievement.

Totleigh Barton, Sheepwash, Beaworthy, Devon, EX 21 5NS tel. 01409231 338

Lumb Bank Heponstall, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire. Hx7 6DF tel 01422 843714


The Hurst Clunton, Craven Arms Shropshire SY 0JA. Tel; 01588 640 **Editor's Note;**

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"A life spent making mistakes is not only more honourable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing." G.B. Shaw.

Please remember this if errors creep unnoticed into the text of this newsletter.

Should you wish to submit letters or other material for our next newsletter send your contributions to;

**G.T. Melia, 56 b Aldham Rd.
Hadleigh Suffolk IP7 6BS**

Date: Thu, 3 Mar 2005 14:40:06 +0000 (GMT)
From: ☺ "Beryl Sabel" <berylsabel@yahoo.com>  Add to Address Book
Subject: worldwidetour
To: Gerard.melia@btopenworld.com

MY WORLD-WIDE TOUR

Well, that's how it was described on my tickets when I booked in Feb. 2004. Now it's Feb. 2005, and a year of excited anticipation and even more excited participation is over. But as several of you have asked me to write about my experience for the Newsletter I shall relive it now, using a chairman's privilege to contribute an article that has nothing to do with poetry. Still, as Gerard suggested in the last Newsletter, it's possible a poem may come out of it.

I spent 3 months with my brother Geoffrey and his wife Judy in Caldwell, near Boise, Idaho; then 2 months with my friend Eunice Roberts and her partner Angus Stirling (some of you will know him from art classes in Woodbridge) in New Zealand; then a final month with Geoff and Judy for Christmas and the New Year.

Geoff and Judy emigrated to the US 8 years ago when Geoff, who'd led the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra for 15 years, became concertmaster of the Boise Philharmonic. During his summer breaks he plays in a music festival in Sun Valley, Utah, and this year I went with them. We stayed in the house of Jane and Chuck Boyer, multi-millionaires who play host to Geoff and Judy each summer. Their house, designed by themselves, is amazing. Much of it is open-plan both horizontally and vertically, if you can imagine that, with a massive living/dining/kitchen area, 8 bedrooms each with a bathroom and a patio or balcony to every single room. Chuck and Jane are lovely people, natural and easy, who made us feel that their home was ours. They also come to all the concerts, and there are concerts nearly every night for 2 weeks. These are free (!) and are held in a huge tent that seats 2000. It's all very informal and up to another thousand people can be found seated outside the tent picnicking with their children and dogs. The fine weather is, of course, taken for granted. The concerts are very varied, everything from Souza to Shostokovitch, and the orchestra is superb, made of musicians from such famous orchestras as the San Francisco Symphony. Judy and I often attended rehearsals too, sitting at the back of the tent eating ice-creams. Long walks early in the morning, before it got too hot, burnt off some of the calories!

http://uk.f865.mail.yahoo.com/ym/ShowLetter?MsgId=4618_54491_6109_1582_788... 03/03/2005

We hadn't been back in Caldwell a week when we set off on our travels again, this time covering 3100 miles in 10 days. Well, it's a BIG country and this was the grand tour with a vengeance. First stop was Yellowstone and a whole day spent walking round all the geysers until the stink of sulphur permeated not just our clothing but our skin. Some of the geysers are beautiful, especially Old Faithful which we were lucky enough to see blow twice. Most are truly weird and wonderful, emitting these unearthly – or should it be sub-earthly? – bubbling, burbling, slurping sounds. Next day we explored the Park by car. It's huge, and the mountain scenery is truly impressive, particularly the area known as the grand canyon of Yellowstone - like mountains going down instead of up!

Early next morning we started the long journey south to Arizona and the Grand Canyon, the Rockies bordering the road all the way. We avoided the freeways, taking roads that wound up into the foothills until all you could see was range after range after range of massive, snow-capped mountains. We detoured to Bryce Canyon, where the cliffs are striated in every shade of red imaginable, from pale coral to deep salmon, and where the action of the water over millenia has carved out figures so lifelike it's difficult to believe they were not sculpted by man.

Our first view of the Grand Canyon was a dramatic one - we'd arrived in a thunderstorm. With a lowering sky over us, we looked down on swirling mist and patchy cloud in the Canyon below us, lit every so often by a jagged slash of lightning while thunder echoed and reechoed from rock to rock. Then all at once it was as dark as night and the rain came. We made good our escape and as soon as we left the Canyon the skies cleared and the desert heat returned. We drove to Wupatki, the ruins of an Indian village dating from the 1100's - and the Americans say they have no history! It's quite extensive and we found it fascinating. But what impressed us most was the palpable sense of peace the place generated; we all felt it. Next day the sun shone and we saw the Canyon in all its grandeur. It is, as they say, awesome. One mile deep and ten across it's so immense you lose your sense of perspective, though Judy's superb binoculars enabled us to see the bright green Colorado river far below and get some sense of the force of its many rapids and waterfalls.

On our return journey we detoured to Zion Park, reaching it late in the afternoon. To me it was the most awe-inspiring of all the amazing sights we'd seen. Huge cliffs loom over the narrow ribbon of a road. At one point a tunnel is carved through the cliffs with holes cut out in places so you can glimpse the towering mountains all around. With the sun now low on the horizon the contrasts between light and shade were vivid and dramatic. As the light began to fade everyone on the shuttle bus fell quiet as the massive mountains seemed to close in on us. And then the bats came out. We returned to Zion the next morning, taking a long, steep uphill walk to a viewpoint overlooking a breath-taking valley. There I saw a little lizard, basking on a rock as if posing for his photograph - so I obliged! Later we saw deer grazing at the side of the road right by our shuttle bus, totally unafraid. One last thing to mention: on our way home we stopped at a Perkins, a chain of cheap and cheerful restaurants, where we discovered that our waiter had been to school in Snape!

And so to New Zealand. You couldn't have a greater contrast to land-locked Idaho, with its barren mountain ranges and huge tracts of black volcanic rocks (Craters of the Moon), than the lush tropical rain forests and exotic flora of New Zealand, 2 tiny promontories amid thousands of miles of

ocean. Eunice and Angus emigrated 3 years ago. They live on North Island, a hundred miles or so north of Auckland, in a little village on the Pacific coast called Ngunguru. Their house is perched on a cliff above the village, just high enough to look over the roofs of the houses below to Ngunguru Bay and the Pacific beyond - a stunning panorama. It is simply magical. The sea seems always to be blue, the beach is of fine white sand and there's hardly ever anyone on it. The house stands in its own large garden which is full of indigenous shrubs and trees. Village and bay are ringed with green hills. Everywhere is green. Ngunguru was once a gold mining village. The men left their families in Auckland and came to Ngunguru to prospect for gold. They built small shelters for themselves known as "baches" - bachelor homes. Much of the older property here started life as baches and 10 years ago these could be bought for a song. Today houses on any of the bays with a road leading to it are much in demand. Construction is going on at a furious pace everywhere along the coast. Soon there won't be any bolt holes to escape to.

For someone like Angus, artist, yachtsman and fisherman, Ngunguru must be paradise on earth. But magical as it is, I couldn't live there. It's not just that it's remote, it's that if you're not into ships and the sea there's not much else to do. Even Whangarei, the nearest town, which is quite delightful, has a huge marina and again all the activities seem to be sea-related. I've never been on so many boats in my entire life as I did in my 7 weeks in N.Z! I've no doubt there are societies like SPS as well as amateur drama groups, choirs, bands, etc. There's certainly a lot of artistic activity - the quality of the light is incredible. But to get to theatres, concerts or any sort of night life you'd have to go to Auckland, a 2-3 hour drive away.

While I was there Eunice and Angus took the opportunity to tour South Island, which they hadn't done before. We flew on a tiny 19-seat turbo-prop to Christchurch, a most attractive city with broad streets lined with mainly English trees, planted by the early settlers to remind them of home. Even the river is called the Avon. We took a cruise round the harbour and saw cormorants, sooty petrels and a Hector's dolphin, the smallest in the world, leaping and diving alongside the boat. A magical moment.

From Christchurch we took the Trans-Alpine railway west to Greymouth through the Southern Alps but sadly the weather closed in and we caught no more than a glimpse of the Alps through the cloud and mist. The Tasman coast is wild and rugged, less hospitable than the Pacific coast but, on a good day, stunning: bay after bay stretching as far as the eye can see, while inland are the snow-capped Alps.

We didn't have many good days. Driving south to Fox Glacier, the lowest glacier in the world, we trudged across rough terrain in the pouring rain to see it, though we were stunned by its blueness - ice-blue, I guess. In deteriorating weather we reached Queenstown and spent the day in shops and restaurants - not the object of the exercise - taunted by picture postcards of the glorious scenery all around which remained invisible to us. In view of a dismal forecast for the far south, we cut our losses and headed north for Dunedin where we actually had a dry day. It's a small city with some lovely architecture (especially the station!) and a beautiful botanic garden set out quite informally on several hills with a river running through.

In Blenheim - Marlborough country - we did the almost compulsory wine tour which I found a bit of a dead loss. I mean, I like wine - but at 10 in the morning?! By the time we reached Picton, the northernmost point of South

Island, the weather was glorious. So we sailed across Marlborough Sound to the Charlotte Track, which can be reached only by boat, where we did a 5-mile walk up and over the hills to another bay where the boat picked us up. It nearly killed me! But the views from the hilltops defy description.

Next day we sailed on the car ferry, the Inter-Islander, through the stunningly beautiful Cook Strait, to North Island and the capital, Wellington. It's a small city, probably no bigger than Ipswich, hemmed in by green hills. We were disappointed to find that most of the 19th century buildings have been replaced by hideous high-rises, though we did have a fascinating tour of the Beehive, the parliament building. Finally we made it to Auckland, at one and a quarter million by far the largest city in N.Z. (There are only three and a half million in N.Z. altogether.) It's a vibrant modern city with a cosmopolitan feel to it, set round a huge harbour spanned by a lovely bridge, the only way into the centre, which makes for horrendous traffic jams. Most of the suburbs are dotted round little bays, very attractive. There's no doubt about it, New Zealand is defined by the sea.

After we got back to Ngunguru I went off on my own for a week on the beautiful Coromandel peninsula. Late one afternoon I was driving down from the mountains towards Coromandel Town. The quality of the light as I looked down on to the town and the bay beyond made sky, sea, islands and rocks seem not quite real, like a faded black-and-white photograph, heart-stoppingly beautiful. For that moment alone it was worth the visit.

Yet I was not sorry to return to the US for the last few weeks. In my time in Idaho I took in the Idaho Shakespeare Festival ('As You Like It' and a thought-provoking 'Julius Caesar'), held outdoors; several modern plays, amateur and professional; the Boise Film Festival, which showed mainly foreign films; countless concerts, both orchestral and chamber; a 'Nutcracker', a 'Messiah', and an outstanding exhibition of Degas bronzes. In addition Judy and I helped coach the cast of 'Jekyll and Hyde', the musical, (I kid you not!) in their English accents.

Call me a culture freak (my brother does!), but I could not live in New Zealand. In Idaho I'd settle down happily - were it not for a certain George W. B. So it seems like Suffolk's where I'm meant to be. And Suffolk's where SPS is, after all.