Suffolk Poetry Society

Newsletter

March 2007

Editor ; Gerard Melia

Welcome to another edition of the Newsletter. Remember that news items, letters, reviews or reports from your local group are welcome. The closing date for material for the next edition is October 2nd.

This edition has lots of contributions from members. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Gerard Melia, editor.

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Each member should have received a copy of the pamphlet, "The Pleasure of Poetry" which details the Summer series of programmes in the County of Suffolk.

Members will notice that a significant number of events take place in the north of the county at Beccles, Brandon and Halesworth.

In addition, **Russel Robertson** informs me of the following meetings which will take place organised by the Bungay Group.in Bungay Library, Wharton Street at 7-30pm.

March 26th	Nicola Highes
April 30th	Rosalyne Price
May21st	Beverly Ellis
June 25th	Russell Robertson
July 30th	Fred Ellis
September 24	Members choice
Oct.29th	Elizabeth Bracken
Nov. 26th	Kaaren Whitney.

The Café Poets will also meet in Pinky's Café in the Market Square, Halesworth on the third Friday of alternate months. (May 18th, July 20th, September 21st and Nov 16th.) starting at 7 pm each evening. If you've made a mark on paper that you imagine might be a poem then come and read it to a friendly and informal audience of poetry lovers. Tickets are £3-50 from Pinky's. Early arrival is recommended as the place is full to bursting by 7.00pm.
R.R..

Just Published.

Collected Poems :
Louis MacNeice.

Edited by Peter MacDonald
Faber and Faber

Louis MacNeice (1907-1963) was a friend and contemporary of W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender at Oxford and his poetry has often been linked to their own. Whilst sharing certain characteristics with them, including a sharp political awareness, in recent years MacNeice's poetry has been re-evaluated on its own terms, particularly by a new generation of Northern Irish poets such as Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon who've acknowledged him as a major influence. MacNeice's family were from the West of Ireland but he was born in Belfast to a Protestant clergyman father and a mother whose mental illness and premature death disturbed MacNeice for the rest of his life. These early years were recalled later as a time of darkness and loneliness presided over by the strict figure of his father. MacNeice was sent to England for his schooling, to Marlborough, and he then went on to read classics at Oxford. His professional life began as a lecturer in classics but in 1941 he joined the BBC and for the next twenty years produced programmes for the legendary Features Department, including his own celebrated parable-play, *The Dark Tower*. He died from pneumonia in 1963 following an expedition to the pot-holes of Yorkshire to record sounds for a radio play.

(From Poetry Archive)

Louis MacNiece contd

P.J Kavanagh writing a review in the 'Spectator' says;

"It would be wrong to try to pin down a man who resisted categories, who so attractively detested certainties who, above all wanted art to be accessible. His problem, however, his life-long argument, was with the certainties of his father a Church of Ireland Bishop.
He writes of his father often, with affection and respect, but there was a shadow between them. A late poem deals with the relationship.

The Truisms.

His father gave him a box of truisms
Shaped like a coffin, then his father died;
The truisms remained on the mantelpiece
As wooden as the playbox they had been packed in
Or that other his father skulked inside.

Then he left home, left the truisms behind him
Still on the mantelpiece, met love, met war,
Sordor, disappointment, defeat, betrayal,
Till through disbeliefs he arrived at a house
He could not remember seeing before,

And he walked straight in; it was where he had come from and something told him the way to behave,
He raised his hand and blessed his home;
The truisms flew and perched on his shoulders
And a tall tree sprouted from his father's grave

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.Report on 'Poetry Ipswich' by Joan Sheridan Smith.

Poetry Ipswich is not, as far as I can judge a Society. There seems to be no committee and there is no membership fee. Meetings, organized by 'Derina' or 'Dave' take place every third Wednesday in the month from 7-30pm in the Lecture Room at Ipswich Central Library. There is an admission fee of £6 (concessions £4) presumably to cover the expenses of the invited poet, and the wine which is always provided.

Usually a published poet gives a reading which is preceded by an 'open mic' at which members of the audience read one of their poems. Guest poets have included Myra Schneider, Kate Foley, Matthew Sweeney, John Lucas of Shoestring Press and Catherine Smith. The audience isn't very large – about twenty people at the most.

Meetings are friendly occasions and Derina welcomes everyone but the venue is not good acoustically. The room is too large; there is a kind of echo, and a persistent hum from the air-conditioning. Readers from the audience are often inaudible, partly because they don't know how to project their voices, and even invited poets are sometimes difficult to hear. (I admit this is partly my problem as my hearing isn't as good as it was.)

Meetings are organized through a mailing list. Derina's tel no is 01449 781401.

I don't get to many meetings as Wednesday is a rehearsal night of a choir I sing with but I have enjoyed those which I have attended, especially when the evening meeting is preceded by a workshop led by an invited poet, as happens from time to time. Derina must go to a good deal of trouble to engage poets to come and give a reading.
Joan Sheridan Smith.

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Quote;
A new firm of publishers has written to me proposing to publish 'the successor' of *A Shropshire Lad.* But as they don't also offer to write it, I'll have to put them off.
A.E.Housman.

Keats the Radical

By Peter Davey

During the years following the French Revolution the Tory government of the time became paranoiacally fearful of a repetition in Britain. Any questioning of the status quo, any attempt to give the labouring classes a voice was immediately labelled "sedition", a term repeatedly heard in the years of relative peace after Waterloo, when poverty and unemployment festered deep in middle England polarising the nation.

The seeds of Keats Liberalism had been planted years before during his attendance at Clarke's School in Enfield, its principal a loose supporter of the Whig political party.

Keats latter association with Leigh Hunt sealed his fate! Leigh Hunt the poet and radical, owner and editor together with his brother John of the periodical hated by the establishment, "The Examiner". In 1813 the Hunt's were imprisoned for two years for their attack on the Prince Regent with an article in The Examiner. On Leigh Hunts release from prison in February 1815, Keats composed a poem in celebration, which Hunt published in his magazine, thereby ensuring the identity of Keats to the government of the day as a seditious enemy.

When Keats second volume of poetry, including "Endymion" was published, the establishment press went straight for the jugular, Keats was labelled a member of the "Cockney School of Poetry", intimating that he was also associated with another damned group, the "Cockney School of Politics". "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" printed an article directed against Keats and his poetry, that contained thinly veiled political hostility, an attack that would haunt his poetical work for the rest of his days.

Keats stood by the roadside to watch the radicals hero, another Hunt, Henry Hunt, enter London at the head of a multitude of supporters after the "Peterloo Massacre", his involvement and escape from which would lead to his own imprisonment.

Remarks amongst Keats letters confirm that he would have liked to have made some direct contribution "I hope sincerely that I shall be able to put a 'mite' of help to the liberal side of the question before I die!"

After his death, an anonymous correspondent in the "Morning Chronicle" wrote; "His love of freedom was ardent and grand, he once said; that if he should live a few years, he would go to America, and write a Poem on Liberty.

Although John Keats actions can only be applauded today, his attitude too authority was to prove damaging, and it would be more than fifty years beyond his death before his poetry received any recognition.

Written on the Day that Mr Leigh Hunt Left Prison.

What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
In his immortal spirit, been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.

Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
Think you he nought but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
In Spencer's halls he strayed, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air:
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights, Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

Article by Peter Davey. Jan 2007

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Pulsar

The poetry magazine of the Ligden Poetry Society.

The editor , David Pike, kindly placed the last edition of this Newletter on the internet.

Several Suffolk Poetry Society members are regularly published in the magazine. Its distribution includes, UK Central libraries, named colleges and universities, Poetry Library, Festival Hall, Scottish Poetry Library, Features Editor Carlton T.V. Jessica Ward Penguin Books London, The Poetry Kit , Wallasey, Chatto and Windus, Carcanet Press ltd. and many poetry outlets in the USA and Canada.

Poetry submission information;
send up to six poems via the post with stamped addressed envelope.
No more than three poems by e-mail
To pulsar.ed@btopenworld.com
Internet site for news and reviews
www.pulsarpoetry.com

CAFE POETS

meet on the third Friday of alternate months. Our first meeting of 2007 was held at Pinky's in Halesworth Market Square on Friday 19th January. Seventeen poets from across Suffolk and Norfolk came in to read their work: Funny, Sad, Nostalgic, Satirical, Outrageous and Philosophical. We were transported to Venice in the rain, to the high ridges of Nepal, to IKEA (for the riot !) to a Greek village dance, the far Hebrides, the mysterious landscapes of memory, and many more besides.

A poem truly BECOMES a poem, when it is spoken out loud and with feeling, to an attentive, yet critical audience. That is what Cafe Poets' are all about. If you write poetry, or you like listening to poetry, you would be most welcome.

Reservations ring 01986 874 243. If you would like to read, ring (or e-mail) **Mike Bannister** on 01986 872 981.

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Suffolk Poetry Society Library.

Our excellent collection of poetry books is now on permanent loan to Suffolk College in Ipswich. They have been catalogued and are available to members through the public Library borrowing system. All you have to do is put in a request at your local library for the book you wish to borrow, add the name of the College , and that it

is one of the SPS books. You will need a copy of the Society library list to do this , which is obtainable from Marguerite Wood (01394 382435)and she will mail one to you. Hopefully this will be a great help to members living far from Ipswich, and is very good publicity for a Society seriously interested , not only in writing, but also in the study of poetry. **Marguerite Wood.**

Marguerite has written a note which brings matters up to date.
She writes; " By now members may have tried to loan poetry books on the present system. Has anyone tested the system through their branch library? Does it work? Only four members have requested a library list from me. ....
Your committee believe the College will make better use the books and the new system will make borrowing easier for a widely scattered membership"

Have you seen the Societies lost archives?

Marguerite adds a note to her library piece which states as follows;
" For my sins I also have the Societies' archives here at Sandy Hill. Some-one has **THE HAND-WRITTEN MINUTES BOOKS** which they borrowed some time ago. Their name is not entered into the Library lending book as they were not part of the library collection. **PLEASE** would all members check their shelves as they should be with other archival items. They are simple Exercise Books , easy to mislay, packed with interesting records of past meetings – invaluable. If you have them could you let me know, please? **Marguerite Wood**
Tel; 01394 382435
e-mail; woodmn@btinternet.com
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'Second Light' book launch.

What a lovely way to spend my last day of being 69, at the Art Workers Guild, Queen Square, London. First , a morning workshop with Esther Morgan on "Inheritance". Very inspiring – I've got a poem out of it all called C.O. 1914- look out for it in the folio. A hurried lunch (the morning session had started late because of a fatality on the Northern Line) then an afternoon discussion with the lively and talented Pascale Petit on whether we thought that men's and women's poetry was different.
Five–o-clock saw the real business begin – the launch of two books by an organization called Second Light, run by Myra Schneider and Dilys Wood, for women poets over 40. The first book is called 'Images of Women' And includes poets such as U.A Fanthorpe Fleur Adcock and our own Pauline Stainer and Jill Dawson. The brilliant cover features a sculpture by Pascale Petit. The second book is called 'My Mother Threw Knives' and includes what Dilys describes as feisty poems by up and coming women poets, one of whom is me! (I am proud of the fact that out of 7000 submissions, only ninety were chosen)

The launch took place in a downstairs room lined with paintings of scholarly gentlemen! And several of the poets read their work. Here, I thought, the professionals definitely scored over the 'up-

and-comings'. I was particularly impressed by Mimi Khalvati, who looked so elegant and read beautifully, and by U.A Fanthorpe and Rose Bailey whose readings I always enjoy.

At the end of the evening I had a short chat with U.A.Fanthorpe about, of all things, 'Old Tyme Music Hall' (Oh I can drop names now!)

A really wonderful day, rounded off by my daughter treating me to a celebratory dinner at Carluccios where we stayed until we were thrown out, ever so slightly merry.

Gill Napier Phillips.

Notes on The Folio Organisation that you may wish to join.

Just a few facts about the Portfolio. The annual membership fee is £10 which covers the cost of postage and stationary. The object of the folio is to encourage and, if possible, assist members who are writing. Members contribute their poetry and offer a written criticism of the poems within the folio. (usually about 15-18 poems per folio); the aim is for every member to receive eight folio sets within a twelve month period. When a folio has been in circulation for a year it will be dismantled and the poems together with the comment papers are returned to the poet.
As at 9th January 2007 the membership stands at twenty so there is room for more. There are twelve folios currently in circulation.

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Polly Clarke writes to inform the members of a group of poets who meet regularly to translate poems from their original languages.

The Camden Mews Translators.

We meet four times a year in Ruth Ingram's house in London. We travel from London, Essex, Kent and Surrey. Our ages and backgrounds are various, but we have one thing in common; we love foreign languages and enjoy translating poems from the original

A few days before meeting we e-mail a (French or German) into English. Some of us have German as a mother tongue.poem of our choice, with our translation of it , to other members. This gives us time to read each one carefully and think about the translation before we meet. Then we sit in a circle and take it in turns to read out our poem and translation, working through it together as a group, we offer suggestions and amendments, trying out other ways of expressing it. Sometimes one small word can take ten minutes to resolve. The native Germans among us are able to spot loaded words, allusions or double meanings which a non-native speaker might miss. Many eyes can also notice mistakes or misunderstandings; even one small letter overlooked in the original can alter the meaning of a whole sentence. The process is rather like a smokey screen – between us we can wipe it clean to reveal the whole picture.

Our meetings are much more than a translation workshop, however. Over lunch and tea, our consciousness raised by the great minds of the poets we have

visited, the conversation ranges far and wide. We are a random gathering of people who have in common a love of foreign poetry and a fascination with the strange process of carrying across- *ubertragen* – not only the meaning but also the essence of a poem from one language and culture to another.

And here comes the commercial! At the beginning of March we brought out an anthology of some of our work. Eight members submitted five poems each, and every translation has been through the scrutiny of our group.
The publication is called "Over The Water," ISBN: 1-9050822-8-2 Price; £6-50. Published by The Hearing Eye, 99 Toriano Avenue, London, NW5 2RX. With a forward by Kenneth Steven, the Scottish poet and translator who visited the Hadleigh Poetry Festival last year.

Polly Clarke March 2007

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A new member of our Society who seems to share some of John Betjeman's enthusiasm for old railways and rhyming verse writes as follows;

Clare.

On empty platforms – (hard to hear)
I stood alone with straining ear
To capture sounds of stopping train
Vanished diesels – once again.

By reedy Stour they've gone away
Around the very day
When lamps went out – to closure mark
This station now a country park.

No more dark blue enamel signs
For railway years the poet pines.
All swept aside –oh tragic loss!
Buildings gather lichen – moss.

The station backdrop is the willow glades
And houses painted pastel shades
What memories I'd like to share
Turning back the clock at Clare.

Steven Glason

Moving On

Wendy Partridge, a SPS member who has moved from a village in Suffolk to Bromley in Kent, sent us her impressions of her new environment. She is still a member of the Hadleigh Poetry Writing Group and has been recommended in the Crabbe Memorial Competition on three occasions. Some of you may remember her poem entitled "Peacocks in Polstead"

Leaving Suffolk (or moving on)

I had such moments of panic after I had decided to leave my home in Suffolk; many years living in comparative seclusion on the edge of a field. I liked the wide horizons and the quiet with no distractions to invade my thoughts. I painted, I wrote, - with varying degrees of success, but with that wonderful feeling of space in which to do both.

The red sun sinking says
goodbye to a milk moon
early in the sky, the

frosted fields between
and bleached grass under
my boots, walking home
in November twilight
to firelight and tea.
Silence , except the stutter
of a startled pheasant
and my mind going wild
with words.

When I move to the comfort
Of community, the proximity
of people, will my mind –
imprisoned in the musak –
have nowhere to escape
for inspiration?

Two years ago I moved to an apartment on the second floor of a block of flats, where my view is of magpies slaloming across the roofs, the branches of trees with their itinerant inhabitants, the vapour trails of aeroplanes crisscrossing the sky. The pervading difference is the constant noise of traffic; I am beginning to 'allow' it a background non-intrusive place in my life and to be able to think in spite of it.

The sun still shines and the rain still falls … and I "fly in my imagination /out of my high window", And after all when you write, your imagination flies wherever you are.

As a postscript: several of my poems used to be "from my kitchen window" or "through my bedroom window" which used to make my friends laugh: then we discovered the poem "MONDAY" by Billy Collins in which "the poets are at their windows" and I thought – well, I'm in the best of company then!

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Quote; the late Freddie Truman, England fast bowler;- " we didn't have metaphors in my day. We didn't beat about the bush".

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Books you should read.

The Poem and the Journey
By Ruth Padel.

The fifty page introduction deals with all the issues faced by the contemporary poet. She debates the obscurity of some modern poetry, the problem of identifying the life of the poem with his/her private life, the categorization of poets into "mainstream" and poetry published by commercial presses.
She has a firm grasp of the origins of some present day difficulties.
"Modernists" she explains goes back to Elliot and Pound who provoked an important battle between what was popular and what was authentically original. She quotes James Fenton, ex-professor of Poetry at Oxford, saying "modernism slammed the door on the past, took the glass of art out of our hands and smashed it"
Her following chapter is entitled , "*different ways of being difficult*"

In defense of poems that do not surrender their meaning without a struggle she quotes the Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti;
"Simplifying takes the accessible and the easy from the human condition and so blurs that condition instead of defining it"
Padel then adds; "We and our lives are much more difficult than most poems".

Geoffrey Hill asks the question at this point; " Why shouldn't poetry be a bit chewy?"
The book then goes on to analyse sixty poems in some detail. This is an excellent tutor for those poets who have reached the stage of regular publication and now want to raise the fences.
(Chatto and Windus price £12.99)
Simon Armitage blurb says " She misses little of the nudging and winking that goes on in a poem and seems able to tune into the silent music of the text on the page ... always alert to the acoustic play of consonants and vowels. ... a generous reader prepared to enter the spirit of the poem.

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"A Sense of Suffolk"

Poetry of John Watts.

His latest publication was launched on Sunday March 11th at Hungate Church in Beccles. The Beccles Chamber Orchestra was led by Stephen Blake and with Sue Ives, the former principal clarinetist with the Welsh National Opera they provided musical interludes to John's poems. The readers were Caroline Birt and Douglas Hackett.

The geography of the poems selected was limited to the countryside around Beccles and North Suffolk. It was, therefore, perhaps appropriate that the opening music was a clarinet piece called 'Prelude' by Paul Reade which was used to introduce a gardening programme on T.V. entitled "A Walled Victorian Garden."

An insert in the programme stated;

" Just as the artist with paint and easel, pictures the moment, John, with clarity and focus crystallizes in his poetry a broad perspective of the son, the father, the humanitarian.

He offers a personal view of life with directness and affection, but without dictate or constrictions of dull formality. Seemingly simple Suffolk detail, like a dimly lit church porch, or an old sack, or log cutting serve to illuminate Suffolk's mediaeval lineage with us all."

For a number of years John was the administrator of The George Crabbe Memorial Competition and in this way gave the opportunity for aspiring poets to value and develop their abilities..

As a regular member of the *Folio Group* he has made a more personal contribution to the encouragement of many poetic endeavours. Most *Folio* writers look forward to his comments on their work because his advice is always succinct and a ready indicator of the way forward in the process of improvement.

There is also a Dickensian touch in the way his criticism is written with a quill pen dipped in black ink that he has obvious made himself in a shed near the coppice where he saws his logs! A poet who loves the quiet countryside, the conversations of young people, the joy of good conversation in convivial surroundings and the owner of a throaty chuckle reserved for the idiosyncrasies of human behaviour.

There are a hundred printed copies of Johns wonderful book of poems. I'm reliable informed that should the first edition sell out there is a print facility for the publication of a second edition. Order your copy now from;

John Watts,
Kingfisher Barn
Kings Lane,
Weston
Beccles
Suffolk, NR 34 8TQ

Please send a stamped addressed envelope. Copies are £6 each.

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Poetry Competitions.

Mslexia a magazine for women who write.

Mslexia Women's Poetry Competition

Judges U.A Fanthorpe and R.V Bailey
Closing date 27th April.
Poems of any style or length
Entry fee £5 allows you to enter up to five poems. Poems should not be translations of another author's work. 1st prize £1000 2nd £500 3rd £250.
e-mal address for further details
www.mslexia.co.uk

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Ware Open Poets Competition.

Closing Date 30th April.
£3 per poem. No entry form required.
Competition Secretary, Ware Poets Competition 2007, 48 Highbury Rd, Hitchin, SG4 9SA.

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Quote; **"I've given up reading books. I find it takes my mind off myself." H.L Mencken.**

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We asked for poems about sport in our last issue. We received this poem in our post;

Lost Weekends.

How many times did I stand there?
on the touch line in the freezing cold
while my husband joined another
twenty idiots running after an
odd shaped ball, catching it,
rolling in the mud – triumphant.

Until he was forty two he played,
I watched until the sight of rippling thighs
no longer impressed,
clubhouse jokes and singing,
became repetitive and boring
taking car keys away from
happy drunks a regularity.

Retiring from playing, he took
up the whistle and I watched as
he ran around after thirty younger
men and brought discipline
to the chaos of the game that could
not start without him.

Don't misunderstand,
I grew up with the game,
enjoyed watching rugby with dad
in the stand with the grownups
cheering the local team, just not expecting to do it for another
fifty odd years..

Maureen Butler

Crabbe Memorial Poetry Competition

Don't forget to get your entries in before the 31st May 2007. First prize £250.

Members should be encouraged by last years adjudication which awarded prizes and commendations to a significant number of members of the Society. Four poets were also members of the *folio group* which would seem to suggest that there is a virtue in submitting your work to the gentle perusal of fellow poets.

The adjudicator in May is George Szertes

George Szirtes was born in Budapest in 1948 and came to England as a refugee in 1956. He was brought up in London and studied Fine Art in London and Leeds. His poems began appearing in national magazines in 1973 and his first book, The Slant Door, was published in 1979. It won the Faber Memorial prize the following year.

By this time he was married with two children. After the publication of his second book, November and May, 1982, he was invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Since then he has published several books and won various other prizes including the T S Eliot Prize for his collection *'Reel'* in 2005.

Having returned to his birthplace, Budapest, for the first time in 1984, he has also worked extensively as a translator of poems, novels, plays and essays and has won various prizes and awards in this sphere. His own work has been translated into numerous languages.

(from Szertes web site.)

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N.B. Please keep the newsletter informed of poetry events in your part of the county. There are still readings and events which don't get reported Editor

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Frank Wood recalls a item from an old newsletter.

I recently came across a letter written by Peter Hardiman Scott, our late president dated 15th November 1991. In it he mentioned that Edward Thomas's most celebrated visit to Suffolk was for nine weeks in 1908 when he was writing his biography of Richard Jeffries.

During those weeks he became completely infatuated with a 17yr old girl, Hope Webb. In a previous job, his wife Helen, had actually looked after the girl, and said she was her 'favourite child'. The whole affair seems to have been quite unsexual and although it must have been painful for Helen at the time, the ultimate effect was to bind Edward and Helen closer together.

Thomas would have been 40 at the time. Around four years later he would meet Eleanor Farjeon, and a serious liaison would ensue.

This item appeared in the Spring edition of 1992 Newsletter, but I doubt if any of our members remember it. I certainly didn't and I was the editor.

Frank Wood.

A fresh pressing! Disco News!

Being frustrated at not having his poems published, Frank has, instead, made a CD on which he sings popular songs by Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Jerome Kern and many others. Any profits go to the **St Elizabeth Hospice, Ipswich.** Frank is accompanied by a friend , Bill Stoddart. Two tracks have been played in a jazz programme on B.B.C. Kent , Southern Counties and Oxford but not alas on Radio Suffolk. Well as someone said, A prophet is not without honour save in his own County . *Editor*

Notes From The Chair.

In March 1994 I moved from London to Woodbridge with my mother , Renee Harris then in her 80's, Mum wrote poetry and before long learned of the SPS. We both joined. After all, I do enjoy poetry but – and here I stress this – it was Mum who was the poet.

April 2002, when Ionne Hammond took over the Chair from Mike Bannister, I became Vice Chairman, a less daunting position than Speaker Secretary as far as I was concerned. Then lo and behold , that September Ionne suddenly resigned and I found myself in the chair.

For five years I have happily chaired committee meetings and for the rest have been guided by more knowledgeable committee members and by our President. However, I now feel the time has come to say enough is enough and hope that someone with better credentials will take over from me.

Those five years have seen considerable changes in SPS, nearly all good. Five years ago we were so close to broke that we had to replace speakers we had booked for a summer programme with others, mainly members who were willing to speak for free. Now we are solvent. Five years ago most of the committee were so new and inexperienced that we co-opted Marguerite Wood, with her long experience as SPS Chair on the committee for guidance. We were also helped inestimably by the support of Bertie Lomas, who regularly attended committee meetings in those early days which was certainly not in his remit as President. To them both, the committee and SPS as a whole are truly grateful.

That shaky start seems long behind us now. I have sung the praises of your committee often enough in the past but must reiterate that without their commitment and sheer hard work we could not be in the position we are now.

The committee now consider themselves old hands – 'old' being the operative word. Having worked so hard for the last five years, some much longer than that, many would like to hand over responsibility to younger more active members. We are fortunate that Fred Ellis has recently joined us as Programme Secretary and his energy and enthusiasm have already ensured a lively summer programme for 2007. Moreover, he is attempting to bring,(drag) us into the computer age, believing that the internet has many benefits for the society. He is right, of course,. We are a long established society with a fine tradition but if we aren't prepared to move forward we will become like fossils, interesting only because we are old.

Which brings me back to my main point. **WE NEED YOU –YOU and YOU** - to serve on the committee for a while. These are exciting times for SPS. Come and join the fun!

Beryl Sabel.

Contributions to the next Newsletter should be sent to Editor @ 56 b Aldham Rd, Hadleigh, Suffolk, IP7 6BS. Floppy disc or e-mail would be convenient for publishing. .e-mail.: gerard.melia @ btinternet .com

Closing Date; Oct 2nd 07