



Alliance of Literary Societies  
President: Claire Harman  
[www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk)

Newsletter: Autumn/Winter 2020

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### **Honresfield Library appeal**

The Friends of the National Libraries is spearheading a campaign to purchase the Honresfield Library, a private collection of paramount literary importance, for the nation. Sotheby's and the current owners have agreed to delay the auction in hopes that the purchase price of £15 million can be raised. Some of the outstanding items in this collection are: Scott's working manuscript of *Rob Roy*, Burns' poems and letters, seven of Charlotte Brontë's 'little books', Emily Brontë's holograph notebook of 31 poems and letters from Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra.

For the full FNL press release, please go to <https://www.fnl.org.uk/>

*The preservation of this collection should be of first importance to any lover of literature.*

*Please consider making a donation via the [Big Give Save Honresfield page](#) and pass the word on.*

*Marty Ross - Chair*

## **Julie Shorland Memorial Grant**

Our colleague and friend, Julie Shorland, who had served as treasurer of the ALS for over 20 years, sadly passed away in January 2021. It was decided by the committee to establish an annual grant in her memory. The award of £100 will be announced each year at the ALS AGM, and will be given to a member society for a project or as a contribution towards a project. Applications will consist of a brief description of the project and will be submitted to the secretary, Mark Green ([markr\\_green@msn.com](mailto:markr_green@msn.com)), by 31 January 2022. The committee will make its decision at its February meeting. Societies that have a representative on the committee will not be barred from applying for a grant, but the committee member concerned will abstain from voting.

The ALS has a tradition of providing small grants to societies on an ad hoc basis and, while we appreciate that the amount is small, we feel that making this an annual recognition of all that our societies do is a fitting way to pay tribute to Julie.

Marty Smith

Chair

## **Highgate Conference goes online**

Recognising that many people will still feel wary of attending a conference in person, and particularly one based in London, the organisers of the Highgate Conference have reluctantly concluded that this should go ahead as an online event only. It will take place on 2 October and will include speakers on both Betjeman and Hopkins. Further details, including how to book, are given at the end of this Newsletter.

## **The new Edward Thomas Study Centre at Petersfield Museum**

Well, it has finally happened and it is 'hello' from the new Edward Thomas Study Centre at Petersfield Museum in Hampshire which opened to the public, and other users, on Wednesday 9 June.

As well as telling you a bit about the Study Centre I thought I would also tell you about the almost 10-year journey to turn it from dream to reality – which would not have been possible without the support from the team at the independent Petersfield Museum. The crucial element of that support was its ability to raise the requisite funding as part of an overall £4m redevelopment project (the Edward Thomas Fellowship is currently not a registered charity, so many of the eventual funding sources would not have been available).



Photograph courtesy of Patrick Chivers

First though, a few brief words about Edward Thomas (1878-1917), husband, father, writer, literary critic and, finally, poet. In his early days he was a renowned literary critic at a time, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when newspapers ran several columns daily of literary criticism. He firstly wrote prose alongside his literary reviews (his first book, *The Woodland Life*, having been published in 1897 when he was 19 years old) and then poetry from December 1914 (his first book of poetry was published posthumously in 1917 after he was killed on the opening day of the Battle of Arras).

Among his literary works are biographies of George Borrow and Richard Jefferies; critical studies such as that on Swinburne; prose such as *The South Country* and *In Pursuit of Spring*; and poetry including *Adlestrop* and *As the Team's Head Brass*.

Between 1906 and late 1916 Thomas and his family lived in three homes in Steep, a village on the edge of Petersfield, from where he wrote much of his significant prose and his poetry – hence the natural link with Petersfield Museum.

Although he was not required to enlist, he did so in 1915 (perhaps once having made up his mind to do so in 1914 he became 'released' to write poetry), first joining the Artists Rifles and then taking a commission with the Royal Garrison Artillery in late 1916.

So, all his poetry was written during the war years, but he was not a 'War Poet' per se, more a 'Poet of the Great War' as all his 'war' poems reflected upon the impact of the War on life on what we would now call the 'Home Front', and particularly on the countryside.

In all he wrote 144 poems within a two-year period and much of his work is only now reaching the audiences it deserves – and hopefully the Study Centre can help this process.

The idea of the Study Centre came about following an evening talk in Petersfield, given by Richard Emeny and Colin Thornton of the Edward Thomas Fellowship, to coincide with a small exhibition being held by Petersfield Museum. In chatting afterwards, when Museum Trustees were outlining their expansion plans, Richard and Colin mentioned a private collection of books by and about Edward Thomas that were about to be gifted to the Fellowship by the widow of one of their members, Tim Wilton Steer.

The collection must have been amongst if not the richest and largest in private hands, consisting of copies in first edition of all titles by Thomas, many signed by him, books and articles about his work, cassettes, CDs, original letters, photographs and sundry other items, all collected by Tim Wilton Steer.

Hilary, Tim's widow, was keen for the collection to be publicly accessible and held as close to the Thomases' last home in Steep as possible. The significance of this private collection of books by and about Edward Thomas (some 2,000 in total), made it all the more important it was kept intact.

From that discussion grew the agreement whereby the collection would be loaned by the Fellowship to the Museum and the Edward Thomas Study Centre was thus created – initially in spirit and then in body as it formed an integral part of successful grant funding applications to Charitable Trusts, Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund for support towards what became a £4m overall project.

Project work started in 2016 and finally finished this year – after several packing, unpacking, repacking and unpacking sessions involving what is now a collection slightly in excess of 2,500 books, journals, magazines and manuscript letters. (Tim's collection having been added to by other donations and acquisitions, including a gift of over 100 books from the personal collection of Lesley Lee Francis (granddaughter of the American poet Robert Frost) relating to Frost's stay in England between 1912 and 1915 and the formation of his relationship with Edward Thomas).

There are of course, other Thomas collections in the UK, notably the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, Cardiff University and the Bodleian Library. It would be natural to ask why Petersfield should start yet another archive. In fact, Petersfield has many advantages: it is within easy access of London and the South, and it is much visited by students of Thomas's work, many of whom have previously commented that there should be 'something about him' in the town. More important is the difficulty in accessing other collections: the Bodleian is closed to all but Readers and Aberystwyth is not easy to travel to for most visitors and arrangements have to be made to study anything there.

The Study Centre will now open to the general public on Wednesdays (10 am – 4 pm) and, currently, the first Sunday monthly (11 am – 3 pm). It will be open to other users – readers, researchers, students, special interest groups etc – on a Tuesday by prior arrangement using the booking form on the Edward Thomas Fellowship's website - <https://edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk/the-edward-thomas-study-centre/>.

An alphabetical list of all books held is also available on that page of the website – for downloading or searching.

Should anyone wish to arrange a visit at any other time they may do so by first contacting Jeremy Mitchell (Fellowship Chair and Study Centre manager) on [mitchjd.etf@outlook.com](mailto:mitchjd.etf@outlook.com).

The Study Centre is manned by volunteers so its opening hours are determined by its volunteer availability – if anyone reading this article lives near Petersfield and is interested in volunteering please contact Jeremy as above – he will be thrilled to hear from you!

In addition to the 'library', there is a small office for private study\*, a small meeting room\* that will seat up to eight and a flexible space\* that will accommodate any number between ten and forty depending upon the requirement – workshop, presentation, lecture etc.

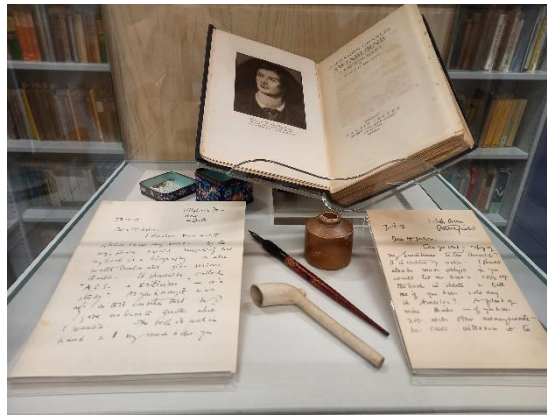
\* Indicates pre-booking essential.

The Study Centre is laid out as a library – with cupboards, bookshelves, picture gallery, a table and two chairs – a small office and a meeting room.





Edward Thomas Study Centre 'library'



Display case showing original letters and artefacts

I hope this whets your appetite and if you are in the area, for whatever reason, and would like to arrange a visit – either individually, as a family or as a group, please do not hesitate to get in touch (oh, and I was also principal fundraiser and application-writer for the capital project).

Jeremy Mitchell – [mitchjd.etf@outlook.com](mailto:mitchjd.etf@outlook.com)

### **Edward Thomas Literary Festival 2021**

Last year, towards the end of the first lockdown, the engagement team from Petersfield Museum approached the Edward Thomas Fellowship about the possibility of hosting a small Literary Festival in the autumn based around the life, work and influence of Edward Thomas.

Although time was short – it was July and the event was to be held at the beginning of October – a draft programme was put together, participants approached and a wide and varied schedule was produced covering National Poetry Day on Thursday 1 October, running through to Saturday 3 October.

Although neither organisation had been involved in producing a 'digital event' before, with a second lockdown at the time all but a certainty, it was felt this was the only sensible option. With the support of all our participants, and some funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, an event covering 27 events and 43 participants was delivered and engaged at the time with over 2,000 'remote' attendees (since then, with the numbers who have watched recordings, the total has almost doubled).

Attendance was global – helped by a joint Saturday evening session with the Robert Frost Society in the U.S.

The 2020 programme is still available to view through the Edward Thomas Fellowship's website here - <https://edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk/the-edward-thomas-literary-festival/>.

On the back of this initial success and feedback, both organisations (Petersfield Museum and the Edward Thomas Fellowship) have been planning the 2021 Festival – and to set a blueprint for what is hoped will become an annual event.

Planning, and contacting potential participants including the Robert Frost Society and Friends of the Dymock Poets, started earlier this year and, after a ‘rest’ whilst everyone was concentrating on preparing the Museum and the Edward Thomas Study Centre for opening on 9 June, the reins have been picked up again and there is now a draft programme in mind – although with detail still to be added in many cases.

- The 2021 Festival will be a mix of live and digital events, as many as possible of which will be streamed in order to reach as wide an audience as possible.
- The Petersfield Museum ‘engagement’ team of Ryan Watts and Lauren Wayland will take the lead on programming and delivery.
- There will be a poetry competition, based around a selection of four Edward Thomas poems (selected from a public poll) from which four poets will be commissioned to each write a poem. The competition will be led by the poet Stephanie Norgate.
- The draft programme currently looks like:
  - Monday 27 September, ‘An Evening with Edward Thomas’. Starting at 7 pm this evening will be an introduction to both Edward Thomas and the Dymock Poets and to the Festival itself.
  - Tuesday 28 September, A talk on ‘War Poets and their Pathways to War’ is proposed as a session.
  - Wednesday 29 September, a session led by Séan Street (writer, poet, broadcaster and actor - to be confirmed).
  - Thursday 30 September, Stephanie Norgate (playwright and poet) book launch.
  - Friday 1 October, a Poetry Evening. Stephanie Norgate will introduce the four poets who will read their commissioned poems. There are plans for a wider engagement and participation from other poets.
  - Saturday 2 October, the main day.
    - Introduction
    - Saeko Yoshikawa (author and professor of English - joining from Japan) – an Edward Thomas Fellowship member who has translated 70 of his poems into Japanese.
    - Dr Sam Perry (Research Fellow, University of Hull)

- Dr Elizabeth Black (Writer, researcher and lecturer)
- Dr Guy Cuthbertson (Editor, author and lecturer)
- Matthew Oates (English naturalist, writer and poet)
- Nicola Chester (writer, columnist and tenant farmer – this event will tie in with the launch of her book *‘On Gallows Down’*)
- Evening session with Robert Frost Society (live link to the US)
- Sunday 3 October, headline events to close the Festival starting and finishing at Bedales School in Steep (to be confirmed). It is hoped the afternoon sessions will take place in a lecture theatre or meeting room at Bedales – if not they will either be in the Village Hall or the Church (subject to availability of live-streaming facilities).
  - Morning walk from Bedales to the Poet’s Stone (similar format to annual Edward Thomas Fellowship walks, with readings en route);
  - Picnic lunch (or in a local pub subject to personal choice etc)
  - Charlotte Peacock (author)
  - Andrew Motion and Daljit Nagra ‘in conversation’.

Other participants will include the poet Michael Longley, his wife Edna – pre-eminent Edward Thomas specialist – poets Yvonne Reddick and Zaffar Kunial and Welsh poet and playwright Gillian Clarke.

As you can see, the programme is still being finalised however we would love as many of you as possible to join us over the week – I am sure there will be something of interest for everyone – for what is an ambitious and wide-ranging programme.

You will be able to find out more in due course through either the Edward Thomas Fellowship website ([www.edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk](http://www.edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk)) or that of Petersfield Museum ([www.petersfieldmuseum.co.uk](http://www.petersfieldmuseum.co.uk)).

Jeremy Mitchell

### **Ford Madox Ford complete edition - help requested**

The Editorial Board governing a new Ford OUP edition now in preparation is seeking the help of members of literary societies.



In the attempt to ensure the first phase of the edition (Collected Letters in 6 volumes) is as complete as possible, they are hunting out Ford letters, both outgoing and incoming, that anyone may be aware of as readers in more far-flung libraries, or as collectors.

They're gathering the majority of the data for the volumes from the major collections, at Cornell, for example, but know they need to look further and wider also.

Put simply, they are seeking any information members may have about Ford letters and/or their whereabouts.

If you have an item to alert them to, they can be contacted at the addresses below. Due credit will of course be given in the edition!

Prof Sara Haslam [sara.haslam@open.ac.uk](mailto:sara.haslam@open.ac.uk)

Prof Max Saunders [m.saunders@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.saunders@bham.ac.uk)

### **Lewis Carroll's Diaries – 1855 to 1897**

To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Through the Looking-Glass*, the Lewis Carroll Society has greatly reduced the prices of the diaries kept by the book's author, the Oxford don Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1898). These cover the years 1855 to 1897, and were published by the Society in ten hardback volumes between 1993 and 2007, with extensive biographical and contextual notes by the renowned Carroll expert, Edward Wakeling.

Much of the content concerns Charles Dodgson's Oxford University contemporaries and the activities of his many relations (notably in London, Yorkshire and Surrey), but there are revealing encounters too with a wide range of celebrities of the day. Among them are the writers George MacDonald, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin, William Makepeace Thackeray and Anthony Trollope.

Interestingly, it was usually Dodgson's great skill as an early portrait photographer which enabled him to engineer introductions to these and other famous individuals (including, of note, Pre-Raphaelite artists) rather than as the author of *Alice*, something he always refrained from making widely known. Many of Dodgson's hundreds of photographs are the only ones known of some of these individuals.

Summaries of the contents of each volume of the Diaries – No 10 is a thoroughly comprehensive Index – can be found here: <https://lewis Carroll Society.org.uk/charles-dodgsons-diaries/>, along with many other related publications, some now quite scarce, priced from £2 upwards.

Mark Davies

## Calling all quotes

Following my appeal in the last newsletter, several societies have sent quotes to represent their writers on the ALS website. Recent contributions have come from Johnson, Crockett, John Cowper Powys and Charlotte M. Yonge. What about the rest of you? We'd love to have representative quotes from all our societies. They need to be very brief. A perfect example and one of my favourites came from the Powys Society: 'In books dwell all the demons and angels of the human mind...'

If you have a quote that you would like to see included, please send it to me at [martyross73@gmail.com](mailto:martyross73@gmail.com).

## MPs are poets at heart according to Westminster Writing Quiz

This quiz, developed by ALCS, aimed to underline to MPs the significant role that writers play in society; a role further highlighted by the way in which readers and viewers have embraced books, films and TV series during lockdown.

[https://www.alcs.co.uk/news/mps-are-poets-at-heart-according-to-westminster-writing-quiz/?utm\\_source=Authors%27%20Licensing%20and%20Collecting%20Society&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=12501993\\_July%202021%20ALCS%20News&dm\\_i=76,7FYLL,TCA,N5W,U8URW,1](https://www.alcs.co.uk/news/mps-are-poets-at-heart-according-to-westminster-writing-quiz/?utm_source=Authors%27%20Licensing%20and%20Collecting%20Society&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=12501993_July%202021%20ALCS%20News&dm_i=76,7FYLL,TCA,N5W,U8URW,1)

## ALS Contacts

**We welcome your feedback and information. Please contact as follows:**

**Website content and events:** Linda Curry: [ljc1049@gmail.com](mailto:ljc1049@gmail.com)

**Newsletter:** Mark Green [markr\\_green@msn.com](mailto:markr_green@msn.com)

**Facebook/Social media:** Jodie Roberts: [geraniumcat@gmail.com](mailto:geraniumcat@gmail.com)

For other matters contact:

**Chair:** Marty Ross Smith: [martyross73@gmail.com](mailto:martyross73@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** [mitchjd.etf@outlook.com](mailto:mitchjd.etf@outlook.com)



*The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Alliance. Please send copy for the next issue by 1<sup>st</sup> February to Mark Green: [markr\\_green@msn.com](mailto:markr_green@msn.com). We reserve the right to edit copy for space. The spring newsletter will be published in early March 2021.*

## **The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS)**

### **The Highgate Highflyers**

*An on-line programme hosted jointly by the Hopkins and the Betjeman Societies*

**Saturday 2nd October 2021**

This conference was initially planned to take place in person over the ALS AGM then transferred to the first weekend of October. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has intervened, and we are holding a single day online event.

The juxtaposition of Hopkins & Betjeman, two very different poets, may at first seem odd. There are, however, many points of intersection between the two in their lives, poetry and interests. We have retained a top-flight team of speakers and which we think you'll find too good to miss.

Book on-line for Saturday 2nd October and learn more about these two much loved poets. To accompany this joint day with ALS members, both societies have produced special issues of their journals highlighting the two poets and their influences on and from other writers. Copies of these journals can be ordered on the Registration Form and sent by post to applicants.

10.30	Welcome and introduction by the President of the ALS, Claire Harman
10.45 to 11.30	'Hopkins and Betjeman: Poetry's Odd Couple' Lance Pierson - Betjeman Society Chairman; Hopkins Society Vice- President
11.45 to 12.30	'Making Sense of Hopkins' Poetry' Dr Jane Wright - Senior Lecturer in English, University of Bristol. ( <i>Contributed to Melvyn Bragg's 'In Our Time' on Hopkins on Radio 4</i> ).
	Lunch Break
14.00 to 14.45	'A Shared Enthusiasm': Hopkins, Betjeman, and Victorian Church Architecture. Dr Jill Robson - Hopkins Society
14.55 to 15.15	Highgate School Archives of the Two Poets Julia Hudson - Archivist
15.15 to 15.45	ALS news with Marty Ross (Chair) and Mark Green (Secretary). Invitation to ALS AGM Weekend 2022 hosted by The Philip Larkin Society

**The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS)  
The Highgate Highflyers**

**Saturday 2nd October 2021**

**REGISTRATION FORM**

Please Note :

London prices meant that the AGM day in person would have cost £35. We are therefore very pleased that we can offer this virtual event for only £12 - but we do need your support.

*This form can be downloaded for the information to be entered. It should then be saved and emailed back.*

<https://allianceofliterarysocieties.files.wordpress.com/2021/08/alsweekend21form.docx>

*Alternatively, it can be printed, entered by hand and posted. Please note: personal information provided below is solely for the purpose of the Highgate online day.*

Title	First Name	Surname
Address & Postcode ( <i>required if ordering printed materials - see below</i> )		
Email address		
Tel. No. ( <i>optional</i> )		
Representing Society		

Qty	Item	Total
	On-line attendance - £ 12 per person	
	<b>Hopkins Society Journal No. 41, Special Issue, Hopkins and other Writers.</b> £ 5.00 incl. postage	
	Journal of the Betjeman Society - The <i>Betjemanian</i> Vol. 32 £ 5.00 incl. postage	
	If you wish to add a donation to help defray our costs, this would be much appreciated.	
	Total	

## Payment

Before submitting your form, please arrange payment using one of the following methods. (*please indicate which*).

	<b>Bank Transfer</b> Sort Code : 20-17-92 Account No. 80174416 <i>Please include as reference 'your surname/ALS'</i>
	<b>By cheque</b> Please send this with your Registration Form made out to 'The Betjeman Society'
	<b>By Paypal</b> Transfer payment to 'The Betjeman Society'. <i>Please include as reference 'your surname/ALS'</i>

Please send your Registration Form no later than Friday 17th September 2021.

by email to: [treasurer@betjemansociety.com](mailto:treasurer@betjemansociety.com)

or by post to: John Diffey, Hon. Treasurer The Betjeman Society, Fairview Cottage, East North Street, PETERHEAD, AB42 1LJ.

Your application will be acknowledged and Zoom link details will be sent by email during the week before Saturday 2nd October to all who have registered for the day.

If you have any questions about the event, you can contact John on the above address/email or by phone 01779 472553 or 07885 748581.