



**ALSo ...**

**The Journal of the Alliance  
of Literary Societies**

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**Volume 9, 2015**

**Literary Places**



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**LITERARY PLACES**

**Editor: Linda J Curry**

If you wish to contribute an article to the 2016 edition of this journal, please contact Linda Curry by email to [ljc1049@gmail.com](mailto:ljc1049@gmail.com) ) or by post to 59 Bryony Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4BY, by 1 January 2016.

The theme for 2016 will be 'Literary Scandal'. Some examples might be:

- The comic portrayal of scandalous events in writings
- The scandal surrounding a piece of work (e.g. Wilde's *Salome*, Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*)
- Scandal surrounding a writer (which might affect the reception of their work)
- The use of 'shocking behaviour' to promote a work
- Media/publishing attitudes (in terms of what is, and is not, acceptable)

As always, the theme is broad – open to many forms of interpretation and the above are just some ideas.

Would someone from your society be willing to contribute a piece for the journal – of around 1,000 to 1,500 words? If so, I would be delighted to hear from you. Remember – it's good advertising for your society!

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## Editorial

Welcome to ALSo... – the journal for the Alliance of Literary Societies. Each member society receives this electronic journal by email to the contact we have listed on our database. It is therefore essential that we are kept up to date on any changes to contact details.

This edition focuses on literary places. We begin our journey by looking at how we might envisage place or setting. There are three articles on H. G. Wells, but all looking at different influences on his novels: an analysis of his ‘country houses’; his time in Windsor as a draper’s apprentice; and the significance of the title of *802701*. We also look at three ‘writers of landscape’: John Clare, Richard Jefferies, and Samuel Crockett. Other pieces focus on Vita Sackville West (a short poem); Parson Woodforde and his incredible diary; P G Wodehouse and a thinly disguised Hunstanton Hall; and Dr Johnson and Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese.

My thanks go to the contributors, and, as always, to the ALS for supporting the production of this journal.

Linda J Curry



## The Importance of Place/Setting

Elizabeth Negus

How is place envisaged? This is a fundamental question that is asked by authors worldwide and, perhaps to a lesser degree, by readers. In any event, place is very important, because it has a literary aim. For instance, a Caribbean setting with swaying palm trees, white sandy beaches, and turquoise sea water can be a backdrop for a holiday romance. The Australian outback can be a source of danger and add suspense, thereby affecting the reader's expectation.

The American Literary theorist Stanley Fish (1938 - ) argues that meaning inheres not in the text but in the reader, or rather the reading community. In other words, how the reader interprets place/setting is the centre of attention where meaning is made. Therefore, when we consider 'place' in any text, its meaning is not somewhere out in space but rather it is within the reader.

Place is also very important in making sense of, and understanding, one's identity and culture. The French philosopher, Roland Barthes (1915-1980) in his renowned essay *The Death of the Author* (1967), argues that the reader holds more responsibility in making meaning of the text than does the author. Barthes makes the point that the origin of a work may lie with the author, but its destination is with the reader. "... [T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."

"To give a text an Author" and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it "is to impose a limit on that text."

Therefore, is place a fixed location or a constantly changing construction? Does the author impose meaning on his/her definition of place? How does place affect the reader? The question of place in geographical knowledge is ultimately not just about 'where', 'how', 'when', or even 'why', something happens. It is also about *how* it matters. Given that places are about the 'where' of things, their relative invocation has usually signalled different understandings of what 'where' means. Thus, it is best to examine them together rather than separately. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives approximately three and a half pages to a definition of place. Place also occupies a 'rank' in a list (as 'in the first place'), a temporal ordering (as in something 'took place'), and a 'position' in a social order (as in 'knowing your place'). Notwithstanding this variety, over the greatest span of time it has been the geographic meanings of the term 'place' that have been most important, at least in philosophical circles.

As we go through the variety of novels written over the centuries, it becomes evident that place is not a fixed location or a firm physical concept, but a process that is dynamic and constantly changing. It can help set the mood, influence the way characters behave, affect the dialogue, foreshadow events, invoke an emotional response, reflect the society in which the characters live, and sometimes even play a part in the story. It can also be a critical element in non-fiction as the setting provides the framework for what is being discussed, making the setting come alive through the inclusion of significant details. This does not mean describing everything that the characters see, or giving a complete history of where the scene occurs. What is necessary is that sufficient information must be provided to help readers visualize the setting. On the contrary, too many minor details about place may slow down the story rather than move it forward.



The novelist has to engage with the physical world, and with the culturally specific meanings of one place or another. Some writers are happy to deal with nothing but psychologies and verbal exchanges. Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), one of my favourite novelists, was keen to describe the physical world in all his novels. Many of the locations in *Clayhanger*(1910), and other Bennett novels based in 'the five towns', correspond to actual locations in and around the Potteries district of North Staffordshire, especially Burslem.

Dickens creates an extraordinary opening in *Bleak House* (1853). Most of the action of *Bleak House* takes place in or near London, around 1850. The London street scenes are in the Holborn district (on the north bank of the Thames and very close to the river). The depictions of neighbourhoods, streets, buildings, working conditions, lighting, weather, dress and deportment of persons, etc., are completely authentic. The fog remains the most famous fog in all literature. Dense, long-lasting blankets of it, yellowish or yellow-brown with pollutants, were common in the coal-burning London of Dickens' time — and later.

As far as literature is concerned, for it to be effective, it must engage with the physical world and with the culturally specific meanings of one place or another. Some writers, like Ivy Compton-Burnett, are content to focus on the psychologies and verbal exchanges of characters, as in *Manservant and Maidservant* (1947). From a psychological point of view, writers and readers are rooted in place and setting. This could be a small room, an avenue, the moon, house or mansion, stable, nation, country, town or city. From the place, a psychology emerges which sets the narrative in motion. Flaubert said that the first breath of *Madame Bovary* (1856) came when he imagined a woman in a silk dress the colour of a woodlouse; but he surely omitted the rider, that it was a woman wearing this dress in the remote corners of Normandy that created the effect. Again, place has a prominent role.

Often, when I think of a novel I love, it is not the characters or plot that immediately comes to mind; I find myself thinking about the place. They can be real places like the blackened London that Maggie and Little Dorrit wander through on one long night – or the visionary skied blankness at the beginning of *Great Expectations*. When the novelist's eye falls on a particular stretch of earth, it can transform it forever. In Amanda Prowse's novel "*Poppy Day*" (2011), it is very hard to read it without making tactile contact with places in East London and Afghanistan. As Roland Barthes argues, the death of the author heralds the birth of the reader.

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## H. G. Wells' Country Houses

Tom Miller

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS (1866-1946) became, as Brian Aldiss put it, the 'Shakespeare of science fiction', after a scientific education under T. H. Huxley. He was an important novelist and popular educator, and an advocate of radical social reorganisation. His fiction carried quite a lot of his political thought, but his disorderly private life contrasted with his austere social recommendations.

In their biography of Wells, *Time Traveller* (1973), Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie stress the importance of the English country house in Wells' thought.

The novelist was the son of the housekeeper at Uppark, and the MacKenzies believed that, at that country house, Wells learnt about an intellectual and social tradition foreign to grubby late Victorian industrialism, and that, although he had no patience with upper-class pretensions of a right to rule, he had a sneaking sympathy with the country gentry.

As Wells put it in his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934):

"Now it is one of my firmest convictions that modern civilization was begotten and nursed in the households of the prosperous, relatively independent people, the minor nobility, the gentry, and the larger bourgeoisie ... spreading as country houses and chateaux and villas ... Deer park and park wall and sheltered service ... They ... could go on after thirteen thinking and doing as they pleased ... "

I seek here to analyse Wells' country houses, in fact and in fantasy.

How do we distinguish a *country house* from a *stately home*? The stately home, examples being Chatsworth and the fictitious *Downton Abbey*, dominates socially, and perhaps politically, the county, or at least a large part of it; whereas a country house, such as Uppark, is physically smaller, and exerts an influence over a lesser area; thus, Uppark is prominent in the life of the neighbouring villages, such as Harting, but the residents of the house do not rule socially much of West Sussex. Residents of country houses will farm quite a large area; and will take part in field sports; and a country house will contain good pictures (perhaps brought back from Italy when an ancestor went on the Grand Tour), and emphatically a *library*. Wells was introduced in the Uppark library to eighteenth-century thought that was of great importance to his political conclusions.

The underground passages at Uppark, the MacKenzies think, influenced Wells in the construction of 'The Time Machine' (1895).

There are no country houses in such early Wellsian fiction as *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1900), *Kipps* (1905) and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910) but we get them in *The War in the Air* (1908), as Wells seeks to describe the social changes that lead to his awful war, the recollections of an aged coachman who could remember

" ... the vanished estate of Sir Peter Bone, long since cut up for building, and how that magnate ruled the country-side when it was country-side, of shooting and hunting and of coaches along the high road ... "

(Bone is a typical West Sussex name.)

In another, optimistic 'fantasia of possibility', *The World Set Free* (1914), Wells sets his last scene in a Himalayan sanatorium, that is much like a country house, where the heroic Marcus Karenin comes to die:

"It was made of granite, already a little roughened on the outside by frost, but polished within and of a tremendous solidity. And in a honeycomb of subtly lit apartments, were the spotless research benches, the operating tables, the instruments of brass, and fine glass and platinum and gold ... "

Wells' most celebrated fictional country house is Bladesover, in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), a setting plainly borrowed from Uppark, though Bladesover is larger than its original. Bladesover is in a superb situation on the Kentish Downs:

"And its old pavilion, a little wooden parody of the temple of Vesta at Tibur, upon the hill-crest behind the house, commands in theory at least a view of either sea, of the Channel southward and the Thames to the north-east ... The house was built in the eighteenth century, it is of pale red brick in the style of a French chateau ... "

There is a magnificent park, two dependent villages, an air of self-confidence, that the narrator, George Ponderevo, comes to distrust; and a collection of eighteenth-century books. (Bladesover plainly symbolises the situation of late Victorian England, apparently powerful and secure, but actually under threat.)

Before *Tono-Bungay*, there appeared *The Wonderful Visit* (1895), that does not contain scenes set in a country house, but does include implicit condemnation of the English rural system of the 1890s; the book is not important, save as a gymnasium in which Wells could propound ideas, that were later developed in *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *The Invisible Man* (1897).

In the, obscure, *Meanwhile* (1927), an all-talk, no-action, novel set primarily in a Mediterranean estate, we are introduced to a prophetic Mr Sempack, who, we are told, lives in,

"A house built specially for its occupant ... small, but lined with books ... a tremendous view. Stretches of heath and then the tidal flats of Poole Harbour ... a window with a view that goes away into distance beyond distance ... "

In *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), Wells forecasts:

" ... A pleasant individualised country house within the purchasing power of an increasing proportion of the population ... A man or a woman may hit upon an unoccupied site, spend a few pleasant weeks planning and revising projects and designs, and give his order. In a month. his home is ready ... It is hardly more trouble than ordering an aeroplane or an automobile."

In *The Holy Terror* (1939), Rud Whitlow, who has been elevated to world mastery, builds for himself a splendid residence:

"The house he occupied had been built not so much to his designs as to his suggestions. For after the nature of his type, he had strong architectural impulses. It was built into a cliff that jutted out upon a wide bend of the River Durance ... a great cluster of residences and halls,

laboratories, work-rooms and offices ... this towering assemblage of structural loveliness challenged every palace and splendour of the past ... “

(This all sounds a bit like the Nazi leaders' group of houses at Berchtesgaden, as Wells possibly intended, because Whitlow is based, up to a point, on Hitler.)

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WELLS in the real world built two biggish houses and lived in a third, but I think that only one can properly be called a *country house*.

Spade House was built in 1900 at Sandgate to Wells' specifications, but I judge from photographs that it is really a seaside villa, though no doubt a large and convenient one - not a country house.

Between 1912 and 1930, Wells rented from Lady Warwick Easton Glebe in Essex. This house was of a fair size, but only a building on the Easton Lodge estate, and thus disqualified from ranking as a country house.

On the other hand, Wells built Lou Pidou in the south of France in 1926-1927, and he lived there with Odette Keun until their relationship collapsed in 1933. Lou Pidou, which I have seen externally, is a country house, though it is constructed, understandably, in a French style.

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WELLS' film, *Things to Come* (1936), merits special attention because it is often broadcast, and most owners of computers can readily call it up on their screens. The film may also be interpreted as a summary of the author's social thought.

Early in the picture, there are scenes in a suburb of Everytown, based on London. We then survey the apparent collapse of civilisation, as Everytown falls apart after a very long war and a plague, and comes under the control of the boss, played by Ralph Richardson. The boss' rule comes to an end when Everytown is taken over forcibly by beneficent, but ruthless, aviators operating from Basra.

Everytown under the boss lacks country houses, or any other comfort, but the scene in which his force of primitive biplanes is decimated by gunfire when it attacks the huge aircraft from Basra resembles a country-house shooting party. (The aviators' leader, John Cabal, played by Raymond Massey, has unfortunately been taken prisoner by the boss, but he is released unharmed. On his return to Basra, he addresses his senior assistants in a curious chamber that may be based on the Renaissance anatomical theatre at the University of Padua.)

We then flash forward six decades.

Cabal's great-grandson, played also by Massey, directs a technological society that has apparently reverted to a system of hereditary monarchy, and plans to send a manned projectile round the moon. Cabal repels an attempt, led by a sculptor played by Cedric Hardwicke, to prevent the launch.

In the final sequences, the younger Cabal, wearing impractical clothes and equipped with

new gadgets, rules from a vast country house that is surrounded by a formal garden, within Everytown. For the country house library there are substituted 'history pictures', demonstrated to a priggish little girl who, in practice, sees films of 20<sup>th</sup> century New York, as her complacent great-grandfather denounces *windows*, because the new cities are internally illuminated!

The little girl is played by the Hon. Anne McLaren (1927-2007), who became a distinguished biologist in later life, an expert on in vitro fertilisation, a Fellow of the Royal Society (a distinction that Wells could only dream of, because he was not a good scientist), and a Dame (despite her Communism) who died in a car crash on 7 July, 2007, together with her ex-husband, Donald Michie. Needless to say, she was brought up in a country house, Bodnant, in Conwy.

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--- (1914) **The World Set Free**, Macmillan.

--- (1909) **Tono-Bungay**, Macmillan.

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## Richard Jefferies and Coate

Eric Jones

Richard Jefferies (1848-1887) was the premier naturalist-writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a country mile. In person, he was slightly aloof and solitary – poor Dick Jefferies poking about the hedgerows – and his most formative years were spent in near isolation on his father's little farm in the hamlet of Coate, near Swindon, Wiltshire. Although he married the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, he had at an earlier stage spent much time near London with his mother's kin, a printing family; hence, while the most knowledgeable of countrymen, he was no unalloyed rustic. Before becoming a freelance writer he worked as chief reporter for the *Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Standard*, based in Cirencester, Gloucestershire. Later, he moved away from these roots to the greater London area, seemingly to be closer to the market.

Because he chose to make a living by his pen, Jefferies supplied magazines with innumerable articles on nature, agriculture and rural life, derived partly from an acquaintance, increasingly a remembered acquaintance, with the minutiae of the countryside around Coate, and partly from keeping up with the unfolding agricultural economy. His book about boyhood adventuring, *Bevis*, is based on the immediate surrounds of his home and the nearby early 19<sup>th</sup> century reservoir, Coate Water. It is accompanied by a map, and aficionados love to trace the detail on the ground. He wrote several novels, the early ones rather mawkish. He wrote disguised autobiography with a mystical element. He wrote local histories, for example one about Malmesbury. He produced a book about Exmoor, *Red Deer*, and a much cited pioneering work of futurology, *After London*. Jefferies' range was extraordinary.

For my money, the five books he published in a great burst of creativity about 1880, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *The Amateur Poacher*, *Round about a Great Estate*, *Wildlife in a Southern County*, and *Hodge and his Masters*, are the heart of his oeuvre. They describe topography, nature, society, and rural occupations near his home, chiefly on the Burderop estate where he had become a familiar of the gamekeeper. Of these five core works, only *Hodge* moves a little further afield, being – according to a colleague of his on the local newspaper – a faithful portrait of Cirencester, which he named Fleeceborough.

I say 'portrait'. The rich flow of his writing lifts what may seem at first glance to be mere reportage well above plain accounts. Yet, it is not always clear whether Jefferies was giving us a photograph or a painting or, perhaps more to the point, whether he was extrapolating from single examples of people, places and institutions, making them stand for full representations of rural society, or alternatively averaging the scene as a whole. His observations flow on, meet a check, then start up somewhere else without seeming in the least disjointed. Simple, yet rich, describes them. He was clearly a lonely soul who took when very young to scrutinising every aspect of his home, the farmyard, Coate Water, the neighbouring estate, and the countryside around. Nothing was too tiny for him to notice. However, his books never read like pedestrian description and he was entirely capable of flights of fancy, not only in his works of fiction but in musings about the cosmos and the meaning of life. To enter the spiritual or, more accurately, the mystical world he would lie on

his back on the turf of Liddington, the great convex hill close behind Coate, and commune with whatever Being or spirits he could call to mind. Even these flights, then, were topographical. He felt Liddington and the chalk downs to be positively numinous.

Because Jefferies rarely tells us outright, or admits, precisely which places he is dealing with, it is a happy game for his admirers to try to decode his writings, put a name to the villages, and so forth. Truth be told, a great deal of his work does seem to smack of generalising and sometimes over-generalising about the small locality which as a youth he could readily walk from his home. This area and the places he visited while a newspaper reporter constituted *Jefferies Land*; an early posthumous collection which appeared under that title. It was also celebrated in a video of the same name, made for the Richard Jefferies Society by our late librarian, John Webb. This was an effort to establish a visual record of the places which Jefferies mentioned before they were swallowed for ever by the unchecked growth of suburban Swindon.

Jefferies died young. It is not that he had failed to produce a long list of books and articles, but that a single message is not immediately obvious in them. His scope was immensely broad, something that is apparent from the bewildering miscellany of sources that mention his work. They touch base with a great exponent of rural beauty but few except biographers investigate his themes in depth. The others genuflect, but seldom debate. Jefferies is a constant source for mid-Victorian rural history, for observations on the natural world and as a patron saint of the English countryside. His is no 'roses around the cottage door' pap, he knew too much about the workings of the farm economy and the fate of the poor for that. Nevertheless, the use typically made of his writing remains fragmented. This stems from the fact that he could not afford to turn away transient commissions, nor did he live long enough to pen the single commanding work which he surely had in him and which might make it easier for the casual reader to place him. All the elements are there, broadcast through his writings, they just take more digging than do the contributions of more focused and conventional authors.

Jefferies' work rested on a deep familiarity and understanding of the world around him, fanning out with decreasing intensity from the farmhouse at Coate. Virtually everything he writes is rooted in topography. When he is speaking of Coate and dissecting every minor item of the scene, he can nevertheless be sensed as striving to see the world in a grain of sand. He elevates the parochial into the general, and transmutes local experience into broad conclusions. This is so, even when he is discussing distant places like Brighton, Exmoor or London. People who are primarily interested in story-telling may unfortunately pass over what he says as too fixed in the soil. With such varied works, much depends on which of them one comes across first.

Of all the localities which he draws into his work, Coate is the first and foremost. Only by walking beside Coate Water, visiting the fields round about and climbing Liddington Hill on foot (preferably by oneself), can his writings be fully appreciated – the ever-fresh turns of phrase he used to convert the scene into prose that virtually becomes poetry. Precise and minute the subjects may be but the language can often soar.

Unhappily the Coate landscape he knew has been battered close to oblivion. Between the wars, ribbon development advanced on it, while Coate Water was concreted into an urban

pond. The farmhouse belongs to the borough of Swindon, a town that has almost always spurned its most famous son.

From inception in 1960, the house was run as a museum by volunteers from the Richard Jefferies Society but has suddenly been wrenched from the Society's care and now opens less often than before. It is already bordered on one side by the motel extension of a pub and on another by a miniature railway, while on the busy road in front traffic screams to a halt at a roundabout.

Now, plans have been passed for a huge housing development that will press close to the museum garden. Appeals to keep a couple of thousand extra houses back from the premises fell on more than deaf ears. The inspector at one planning inquiry had never heard of Richard Jefferies, yet wielded what was to all intents and purposes unaccountable power over Coate's fate.

At the final inquiry, the developers produced a hired gun who argued tendentiously that Jefferies is not a significant author. Literary landscapes have no standing in law. Against this rage, how shall beauty hold a plea?

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## H. G. Wells and Windsor

Eric L. Fitch

H. G. Wells (1866-1946) is mostly remembered today for his seminal science fiction such as *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Invisible Man* and *The First Men in the Moon*, but he also wrote mainstream novels, perhaps the most famous being *The History of Mr Polly* and *Kipps*. Latterly, he became an internationally renowned figure deeply concerned about the future of humanity, so much so that he was able to conduct interviews on the world and its problems with the likes of Lenin, Stalin and Roosevelt. However, he had humble origins and the royal town of Windsor was to play a part in his early days and to influence his later writings.

We start in 1880 when, at the age of 14, Wells arrived in Windsor in order to take up his post as an apprentice at Rodgers & Denyer's drapery in the High Street, sent there by his mother, Sarah. She considered that drapery was the highest and most respectable occupation that one from their station of life could attain. She also did not wish her youngest son to venture alone, so he was packed off to Windsor because nearby at Surly Hall, an inn on the Thames two miles along the Maidenhead Road, lived Uncle Tom Pennicott, in reality Sarah's second cousin. The inn was well established in Eton College tradition, and it was frequented in the summer by wetbobs (the Eton rowers). Its name derived, apparently, from the surliness of successive landlords: in particular, one from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century named Hall.

So, the young Bertie, as Wells was then called, arrived at Rodgers & Denyer's in Uncle Tom's dog cart and was taken up to the dormitory via a narrow staircase. The other domestic rooms consisted of a small, dismal sitting room where one could rest in the evening, and a dining room situated downstairs, lit by gas and containing two long dining tables. Wells described this room as a 'sort of vault underground'.

Bertie's job was to sit behind the counter, take the money, enter the amount on a cash sheet, and stamp the receipts. Additional duties included dusting and window cleaning, which were carried out in the morning after the bell rang to get up at 7.30 am. After breakfast he was to prepare his cash sheet at 8.30 am, ready for the commencement of his counter duties. Dinner was at 1.00 pm, supper at 8.30 pm and, after a short free period, lights out were at 10.30 pm. This routine took place every day except Sundays, which were free. However, Bertie was not to stay long in this employment.

He did not take to this life and showed no interest in his work. At every opportunity, he walked to Surly Hall and was entertained by Uncle Tom's daughters Kate and Clara who were in their early twenties, and whom he already knew, having spent summer holidays at the inn. Kate was the more serious of the two and encouraged him to read and to draw. The inn also possessed a complete set of Dickens, which Bertie read in great measure, and a collection, albeit decaying, of stuffed birds, ostrich eggs and the like.

Such memories had a profound effect on Wells. In his *Experiment in Autobiography*, written at the age of 68 in 1934, he stated that he could still vividly remember the walk along the Maidenhead Road to his uncle's and could recall each point where the road widened and narrowed. He tells us that the last stretch in the dark held unknown terrors, and once, when there was a rumour of an escaped panther, the sound of a horse on the other side of a hedge almost frightened him out of his wits!

After only a couple of months, Bertie was dismissed. His heart was not in his job and he performed his tasks mechanically, if he could avoid them altogether, and spent as much time as possible in the warehouse reading and learning, smuggling in books and practising

algebra. In the meantime, his work was becoming slapdash and inaccurate and finally, after constant shortages in the till almost led to an accusation of pilfering, and after a brawl with a porter resulted in a black eye, he was asked to leave.

Despite his unhappy sojourn, the Windsor area retained its appeal and Wells had an affection for Monkey Island, which was upstream from Surly Hall. He later used the island's hotel as a rendezvous with Rebecca West during their notorious affair, which lasted some ten years and which resulted in the birth of their son Anthony West.

Turning to Wells' fiction, he often used in his novels autobiographical details and topography familiar to him. The below-stairs dining room at Rodgers & Denyer, along with the servants' quarters and tunnels he frequented at the stately home of Uppark in Sussex, where his mother was once housekeeper, provided Wells with underground locations in his writings, the best-known being the Morlocks' subterranean caverns in *The Time Machine* (1895).

Passing on to perhaps his most famous mainstream novel *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910), the riverside Potwell Inn at which Polly finally settles is modelled on Surly Hall, where he spent so many happy hours, a "perfect heaven", compared with his drapers' digs. The book has an escapist theme and it is significant that when Wells thought of escape, he recalled this favourite haunt of his childhood.

His work *The Passionate Friends* (1913), a novel concerned with the problems of marriage, describes both Windsor and Eton under the pseudonyms of Wetmore and Harbury respectively. *Joan and Peter* (1918), a long novel on the subject of education, has one of its principal characters attend a second-rate boarding school in Windsor, from which he runs away at the age of ten. His travels bring him straight away along the Maidenhead Road so familiar to Wells, past Surly Hall to Maidenhead, Boulters Lock and Cliveden. Thus once again we can see Windsor dwelling and resurfacing in the mind of Wells long after his early encounters with the town.

Who would have thought in 1880, when the 14 year-old Bertie arrived in Windsor, that he was destined to become a world figure? He went on to write over 100 books and basically he was a polymath writing on all manner of topics through his copious fiction, articles, essays and booklets, as well as letters to prominent figures of his time. Subject matter ranged from science fiction, novels and short stories to non-fiction including history, science, philosophy, economics and politics. His later books became increasingly concerned with the future of humankind, an example being *The Rights of Man* (1940), which resulted directly in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights of 1948. He was without doubt the most influential author in the first half of the twentieth century.

For those interested, there are two plaques commemorating Wells' apprenticeship in Windsor: one outside The Token House and the other inside the adjoining bank, both of whose premises were once those of the Rodgers & Denyer drapery establishment in those far off Victorian days.

-oOo-

## John Clare('s) Cottage: Home or Museum

Valerie Pedlar

Thou lowly cot where first my breath I drew  
Past joys endear thee childhoods past  
delight  
Where each young summer pictures on my  
view  
And dearer still the happy winter night  
When the storm pelted down wi all his  
might  
And roard and bellowed in the chimney top



And pattered vehement against the window light  
And oer the threshold from the eaves did drop  
How blest I've listnd on my corner stool  
Heard the storm rage and hugd my happy spot  
While the fond parent would her wirring spool  
And spard a sign for the poor wanderers lot  
In thee sweet hut I all these joys did prove  
And these endear thee wi eternal love

(John Clare, 'To My Cottage')

If it had not been for the outbreak of war in 1939, the cottage where John Clare was born might well have been pulled down. As it was, having been not exactly saved from demolition – but demolition having been forgotten in the turmoil of a second world war – the cottage was lived in (though maybe not continuously) until 2005, when it was put on the market.

The John Clare Society was unable to purchase it, but Paul Chirico, then Chairman of the Society, collaborated with Barry Sheerman MP, then Chairman of the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, to form the John Clare Education and Environment Trust for the purpose of obtaining the property and transforming it into a site of historical and cultural importance, open to the public.

Having bought the property, an application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and, that having been successful, and with the help of other donations, work started in the summer of 2007. The original Trust was taken off the register of charities in 2008, and all assets passed over to The John Clare Trust, which now owns and runs the cottage.

Much has been written in recent years about the 'heritage industry' (a term coined by Robert Hewison in his book of 1987). Hewison was an outspoken critic of what he perceived as an industry more concerned with entertainment than education, where 'heritage centres'

seemed to be characterised by a backward looking nostalgia that sought escape from the realities of current economic decline, and looked for reassurance and comfort in the achievements of the past. More recently, however, a defence of 'heritage' has been mounted, arguing that, without the conscious preservation of old buildings of interest, whether they are stately homes or workers' cottages, factories or farms, there is a danger that a valuable part and evidence of our past will be altogether lost.

Having escaped demolition in 1939, John Clare's cottage was not in danger of being altogether lost when it was put up for sale in 2005. But an opportunity would have been lost to use the cottage for the furtherance of Clare studies, had not the Trust been set up. However, the question then was: having bought the cottage, what do you do with it? How do you attract visitors to a fairly unremarkable (however attractive) cottage that is in a small village without any other obvious tourist attractions, save perhaps the annual John Clare Society festival?

### **Cottage as Home**

One alternative for preserving a literary house is simply to keep it as much as possible like a home: the home as the writer would (or might) have known it, as, for instance, has been done with Hardy's cottage in Brockhampton.

We know that the cottage in Helpston, Northamptonshire, where Clare was born, was important to him. The poem I quote at the start of the article speaks of Clare's warm feelings towards his birthplace, and other poems were written out of his distress when he was forced to leave it for an alternative cottage in nearby Northborough. However, it is difficult to know what exactly – in terms of the actual building – could be called Clare's cottage. What is now denominated as the cottage was originally separate tenements, and the number and configuration of those tenements changed from time to time.

When Clare was born in 1793 there were three different dwellings, and the Clares lived in one that gave them two rooms up and two down, and a sizeable garden. Later, however, the cottage was divided into five tenements, so that from 1814 to 1820 the Clare family, which by now included two children and grandmother Alice, had one room up, one room down and only a slip of garden. There were further changes in family membership as Clare married and had a child, his sister Sophy married, and the grandmother died, but it was not until 1821 that a family consisting of Clare, his wife, six children and his parents became the occupants of a dwelling which eventually combined two tenements. This was the family that moved to Northborough in 1832 to make a new home in a cottage, which interestingly enough came on the market this year, but one where Clare never felt at home and in which he lived only briefly.

Apart from the difficulty of deciding which rooms of the cottage as it now stands to use as 'Clare's cottage', any attempt to reconstitute his home is bound to be rather sterile, lacking the noise, the crowdedness, the smells of a family living in rather cramped quarters and, of course, there remain none of the furnishings or equipment the Clares used. Furthermore, visitors need facilities: toilets, refreshments, a sales outlet. It is not obvious how these could be situated in the cottage. There are also, more positively, good reasons for not even trying to present the cottage as a 'home', somewhere that people simply look round, somewhere

that encourages voyeurism, a looking back at the past as a visitor without any active involvement, which tends to create a separation between then and now, them and us.

### **Cottage as Museum**

Another alternative is to make a literary house into a museum. One definition of a museum is given by Michael Stratton, in *Preserving the Past* (ed. Michael Hunter, 1996). He says: "one distinguishing feature of any museum is that it holds objects for research and display to the public". There are many examples of literary houses where features of the house as the writer would have known it have been preserved, but which also hold a considerable body of papers and easily satisfy Stratton's definition. However, major collections of Clare's manuscripts are held in Northampton and Peterborough, and it is difficult to imagine what other objects might be held in the cottage that could reasonably qualify it as a museum. Nevertheless, the association of 'heritage' with tourism, has led to a 'softer' definition of museum, which includes touch screens and interactive displays. In addition, the concept of research can be widened to include children finding out things for themselves as well as the conventional idea of scholarly research.

An early publication about the John Clare Education and Environment Trust and its work makes its position quite clear:

"The cottage will be a dynamic educational centre rather than a museum, engaging not only with a single exceptional life but with a long history of changing attitudes and activities in rural communities."

So, what has been done? The cottage, which was open for eager visitors when the John Clare Society held its annual festival in Helpston on Saturday 11 July 2009, has been restored using traditional building methods, and a new extension has been added to provide the necessary visitor facilities: a café serving food made on the premises, a sales outlet and toilets.

Some of the rooms (those Clare never lived in) are furnished only with display cases, or objects on display. Others are furnished to look as they might have done in Clare's time: the main living room, the kitchen, an upstairs room made to look like a study, and a bedroom. As well as the furniture and objects either on display or part of a room's furnishings, there are information panels about the way that cottages were built in that time, and about rural life in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the sizeable garden has been developed to give some idea of the sort of plants that would have been grown.

As you progress through the rooms, you get a more or less chronological account of Clare's life and constant reminders that Clare was a writer. Poems are written on walls, and wall panels, there are objects associated with the writing life and testimonies to his legacy as a writer. In addition, an almost inevitable attribute of a 'heritage' attraction today: there is an audio guide to accompany you around the cottage.

However, the cottage is intended as a 'Cultural, Educational and Environmental hub for every age group', and education has been at the heart of its work. As well as organising visits from schools and other organisations, there are education packs to help teachers

introduce Clare into their school work, and loan boxes with costumes and artefacts to help bring history lessons to life (as the website says). There has also been an annual poetry competition; there are open mic evenings, performances by a travelling theatre group; and, in 2014, to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Clare's death, the Trust organised a special art project involving five artists whose work was shown at the cottage as well as in galleries elsewhere in the country.

For Clare, 'home' never meant simply the cottage he lived in and, apart from the fire and his corner chair, he writes little about the things in the house, but soon moves out into the garden and the countryside around. So, it seems entirely fitting that the current building, with elements of both home and museum, is not presented as John Clare's Cottage, but as John Clare Cottage, a centre for discovery and activity, a place for interaction between the present and the past.

Unfortunately, lack of funds in the past year means that, for the moment at least, the Trust's aims are curtailed; the opening hours are limited; and the organised events are mainly those that will draw in an audience and may have little to do with John Clare. The café keeps going when the cottage is open and is itself a draw, attracting, for example, weekend cyclists and others who are not interested in visiting the cottage itself. This seems to be an inevitable consequence of the way that 'heritage centres' have developed. Many a museum or National Trust property is visited for its café or restaurant alone.

It is the activities with schools that seem to be the main casualty of the lack of funds and this is regrettable, but, for the moment at least, John Clare Cottage remains accessible to the public. Its display takes visitors into Clare's world and gives some idea of the rich legacy that Clare has left us.

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# **The J B Priestley Society**

Formed 1997

*“I have always been delighted at  
the prospect of a new day,  
a fresh try, one more start, with  
perhaps a bit of magic  
waiting somewhere behind the  
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## VITA'S TOWER

*(written after visiting Sissinghurst, home of Vita Sackville-West)*

Beryl Fleming

Stone stairs, a cluttered room,  
sunlight piercing blue glass on the sill,  
refracting shafts of light on dusty air.

Silence. A waiting stillness.

I sense I am not alone.

Is she still here, somewhere?

A shadow on the wall...

light step on the stair...

rustling skirt...

scratching pen...

a sigh...

Did she watch the sunrise here,

awaiting her Muse -

or in fading light see sunset's end?

Did these walls inspire – or imprison -  
her spirit?

In her ivory tower

above the garden she adored

she penned the hours.

*Bird in a cage without bars.*

Thousands have passed her door -

paused, moved on.

She watches, a ghost dancing in words.

Unseen.

Unforgotten.

-oOo-



## S. R. Crockett: Hefted to Galloway <sup>1</sup>

Cally Phillips

*'Galloway is a wide, wild place where the raw edges of creation have not been rubbed down.'*

It is often said that Galloway is Scotland's best kept secret and, if that is so, I think S. R. Crockett is probably Galloway's best kept secret. My goal is to let the secret out of the bag on both counts.

For those of you who need an introduction, Samuel Rutherford Crockett was born Samuel Crocket on 24 September 1859 (the 'R' came later, as did the additional 't') at Little Duchrae in rural Galloway. He was the illegitimate son of dairymaid Anne Crocket. Brought up by his maternal grandparents, the family moved to Castle Douglas in 1867 and, in 1876, the young Sam won the Galloway Bursary, allowing him to study at Edinburgh University. He supplemented the Bursary through a combination of tutoring and journalism. He died in France on 16 April 1914. And, in between?

From 1894 until his death, he was one of the best known and widest read of the 'new' breed of writers who took advantage of the revolution in mass-market publishing. As well as hundreds of articles in magazines and periodicals, he had sixty seven works published, was represented by leading agent A. P. Watt, and was one of the celebrities of his day. What a difference a century makes.

As recently as fifty years ago, parts of Galloway were still referred to as 'Crockett country', and, a century ago, the network of railways and emergence of tourism saw people flock there in search of the places made famous by her native son. Yet, today few people even in Castle Douglas are aware that it is the setting for Crockett's fictional 'Cairn Edward' which features in more than a handful of his works. The railways are gone. The tourists are tempted back by Red Kites and Dark Skies, but Crockett barely gets a look in.

Yet Crockett, more than any other writer, puts Galloway on the map. As late as 1923, *'The Scotsman'* notes:

*"In his pages we seem to smell the scents of the seaside and the woods and the hills, the fresh airs of heaven blow upon us. We are aware of the magic of the moonlight and the heat and the glare of the sun at noon. We feel the sharp stinging cold of the early morning flow of the tide of the Solway; we know the black shadows under the cliffs and the silver of the reflected moon on the calm surface of Balcary Bay."*

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<sup>1</sup> Hefted. I am using 'hefted' in its farming context. For those unfamiliar with it, hefting is a traditional method of managing flocks of sheep on large areas of common land and communal grazing. It is a process which takes some time. Initially, sheep have to be kept in an unfenced area of land by constant shepherding. Over time, it becomes learned behaviour, passed from ewe to lamb over succeeding generations. Lambs graze with their mothers on the 'heaf' belonging to their farm instilling a life-long knowledge of where optimal grazing and shelter can be found throughout the year. Hopefully, this explanation will make the analogy clear to those previously unfamiliar with the concept.

Crockett writes of the hills, the coast and islands as well as the villages and hamlets which scatter the rural landscape of Galloway. His landscape is populated by Covenanters, Gypsies and Smugglers as well as a fair panoply of 'ordinary' rural characters: herds, tenant farmers and dairymaids. The ministers, dominies and landowners are all lampooned where necessary, and the bigger characters of history are placed firmly in the background, in favour of the ordinary 'bonnet laird' heroes and feisty heroines of his fiction.

Crockett made Stevenson homesick for Scotland. He was credited with doing for Galloway what Scott did for Tweed-dale and beyond. And yet, like the very landscape he describes, he has long been cast out into the wilderness.

I first came across Crockett's writing some twenty years ago, over which time I have become hefted to him as surely as he is to Galloway. The word 'heft' perhaps requires an explanation in this context. Some may see it as an archaic term. It is certainly a distinctly rural term and I am using it deliberately to suggest that there is as vital a relationship between Crockett's places and people as there was between Crockett himself and Galloway.

Crockett's ability to describe the natural world comes not just from a keen observation but from something deeper, a sense of being part of the place he describes. Through a wide range of characters from smugglers to dairymaids, he offers us an insight into this world. As a contemporary reviewer noted:

'There is a sense of intimacy established between the reader and the author. The result is entirely pleasing.'

I believe that the full depth of Crockett's skill cannot be appreciated until one understands the 'hefted' nature of the way his characters and his places work together. Dismissed by urban modernists as escapist or worse, given the pointless and abusively constructed soubriquet 'kailyard,' in actual fact Crockett is a writer of sometimes radical rural realism. He writes about ordinary rural folk because he is one of them. He writes about the landscape from the position not just as one who inhabits it but as one who is 'of' it. He is in no way aspirational and he serves no master – even while writing for 'the market' he manages to retain his unique voice and hefted nature.

Under Crockett's pen, Galloway becomes a living, vibrant and extraordinary place. But, not in a romanticised or escapist way. Crockett was a romancer (in the Scots tradition) but he was a romancer of the ordinary people and their places. Landscape is always a key factor in Crockett and to read his work (fiction and non-fiction) is to experience all the seasons of Galloway, from the beauty of a May morning to the harshness of a November snow storm.

His best known novel, *The Raiders*, opens by taking us on a whistle-stop tour of the seasons:

'It was upon Rathan Head that I first heard their bridle-reins jingling clear. It was ever my custom to walk in the full of the moon at all times of the year. Now the moons of the months are wondrously different: the moon of January, serene among the stars—that of February, wading among chill cloud-banks of snow—of March, dun with the mist of muirburn among the

heather—of early April, clean washed by the rains. This was now May, and the moon of May is the loveliest in all the year, for with its brightness comes the scent of flower-buds, and of young green leaves breaking from the quick and breathing earth.

So it was in the height of the moon of May, as I said, that I heard their bridle-reins jingling clear and saw the harness glisten on their backs.'

He is just as eloquent at describing the local flora and fauna. This is a land of whaups and bog myrtle. It is frequently called 'Grey Galloway', although those who know it better understand that there is no contradiction in also referring to it as 'Bonnie Galloway'.

However, we most fully appreciate Crockett's skill when we experience it in the company of his characters. Crockett writes in an episodic style (much of his work was serialised before novelisation) and his use of narrative voice is sophisticated and sometimes playful. He writes as easily from a female as a male perspective and he breathes as much life into his characters as he does into the natural world around them. Like Crockett, his characters are hefted to their landscape.

For Crockett, a sense of place involves people at least as much as it does landscape. The two cannot really be separated. It is impossible to give short examples of this but here is a brief attempt from his 1909 novel *Rose of the Wilderness*.

"They tell you that nobody is really alive to the beauty of their birthplace. Well, perhaps not for some time after. But in the long run it depends on the person. For me, Rose Gordon of the Dungeon in the uplands of Galloway, from my earliest years I was glad of the large freshness of every breath I drew.

Solitary? Why should I be? I had my father. I had books. Men did not often come there, it is true, save our great Lob-Lie-by-the-Fire, Muckle Tamson, but on winter evenings a stray shepherd or two would look in, each with five or six miles of trackless moorland to cover when he left our warm ingle-nook."

To read Crockett today is to go on an adventure into the past. In the process, you can find characters who become friends, and places that will stay with you forever. Anyone who has enjoyed Dickens or Stevenson or Scott can appreciate Crockett. And, for Hardy-lovers (the other writer who springs to my mind as being 'hefted' to his world), Crockett should offer a familiar pleasure. I cannot give you advice on where to start your adventure – a unique relationship develops between writer and reader after all. And I am running out of space. My favourite place in all Crockett's fiction is a fictional one (but set firmly in a real landscape) and so I shall leave you with a brief description of the place I am hefted to, even though I have never been there outside of my armchair.

"At the Shiel of the Dungeon of Buchan—a strange place half natural cavern, the rest a rickle of rude masonry plastered like a swallow's nest on the face of the cliff among the wildest of southern hills—this story begins."

I can heartily recommend Crockett's Galloway for anyone who enjoys finding a sense of place in their fiction. The secret is out – if you're looking for history, adventure and romance, look no further than Crockett's Galloway.

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## A Trip to the German Ocean

Katharine Solomon

In May 1779, James Woodforde, the Rector of Weston Longville in Norfolk, set out on a short riding tour of the north coast of Norfolk. His party consisted of himself, aged 38, his friend the Revd Roger Hall of Whinburgh, aged 31, and Woodforde's manservant Will Coleman, aged 24. Every evening, Woodforde wrote up his diary as usual ...

*May 4th, 1779* "We breakfasted at Weston, and at 12 o'clock after eating some cold meat we mounted our Horses to put into Execution a Scheme upon the Northern Coast of Norfolk which had been some time talked of. My Servant Will carried some Shirts etc for us. We got to Aylsham at ½ past 2, refreshed ourselves & Horses for about an hour and then proceeded on to Cromer ... At the Inn at Cromer we were not much more than 20 yards from the German Ocean – which highly delighted us - Cromer is famous for catching of Crabbs & Lobsters – and could see Men catching them at Sea by a Glass. We had some hot Crabbs & Lobsters for Supper that were just brought from Sea and exceeding fine eating they were."

*May 5th, 1779* "After breakfast we went & saw Cromer Church, after that we took a walk on the Beach till noon. We saw at sea about 2 Leagues from us a Fleet of 28 Sail going to London from the North. ... After that we mounted our Steeds and went to Cley, the Sea being near to us all the way on the right to which place we arrived about 2 o'clock and there we dined at the White Horse, a shabby House but the best in that Town. The Sea comes up almost to Cley – there were some trading vessels in the river. ... We left Cley at 5 o'clock and after riding in the rain for near 2 hours we arrived (almost wet thro') at Wells, where we supped and slept at the Royal Standard ... There is a very good Key at Wells and many Ships lying in the River upon the Key – it is about 3 Miles from the main Ocean."

*May 6th, 1779* "We breakfasted at Wells and after breakfast we got a small Boat and went to Sea in it. We carried some cold Meat & some Beer with us in the Boat. My Man Will went with us also. We had two Men to manage the Sails etc for us. When we got to Sea we fastened our Boat to a Sea Mark & regaled ourselves – but I could eat very little being very near sick as was Will, it being the first time of my being upon the Sea, and the Waves so large that frightened me, as I thought it dangerous. Mr Hall having been often at Sea did not mind it. We returned from Sea about 12 o'clock and I was glad to set my foot on land again ..."

This three-day extract allows us to picture the north coast of Norfolk. We may imagine the three men riding along the coast road – James Woodforde and Roger Hall in front, and the manservant Will Coleman a little distance behind. Will's horse was carrying packages of clean shirts, as important to civilised gentlemen as are a daily bath or shower to us. The sea, the quays and the rivers were busy with working vessels, both fishing vessels and a fleet, probably a merchant fleet carrying coal to London.

James Woodforde (1740-1803) kept his diary for over forty years, making an entry every day. He did not use it to describe the pastoral beauties of the countryside, like the Victorian diarist Francis Kilvert, nor to ruminate introspectively, like George Gissing. Indeed, it is not clear who he expected to read his diary, but diary-keeping was a tradition in his family.

Woodforde wrote in a simple, straightforward style without any elaborate 18<sup>th</sup> century literary devices, but putting down where he went, who he met, and what he spent. He was not a frequent traveller and, despite being better off than most of his countrymen, his geographical experience was limited. The short trip to the north coast quoted above was unusual, and the furthest north he ever travelled. There were three places which were familiar to him: firstly, his native village, Ansford, on the outskirts of Castle Cary in Somerset, where all his closest family lived; secondly Oxford, where he was an undergraduate of New College, and some years later, a Senior Fellow; thirdly and finally, the small village of Weston Longville, some nine miles from Norwich.

These three places each have their own character in the diary. However, it is not because of their geographic location or the scenery, but because of Woodforde's activities and the people we meet in the pages of the diary. Ansford was 'home' in a way that Norfolk was never to be. Almost every afternoon and evening was spent in a family-party with some of his five siblings and their children. After his move to Norfolk, he returned to Somerset every second or third year for a long summer holiday, and took up again the constant round of family visits.

Oxford was the scene of his most active and outgoing years. As an undergraduate, he played cricket in Port Meadow, ice-skated down to Abingdon, and regularly played cards and got drunk. Ten years later, he was back at Oxford as a Senior Fellow, waiting for a New College living to become vacant, and playing his part in the administrative affairs of the College. As a Pro-Proctor, he patrolled the streets of Oxford taking undergraduates to task and putting them into his 'black book' if they were rude to him. He joined the Freemasons, and went to concerts, and, after a year of waiting, was rewarded with the Norfolk living of Weston Longville.

The last twenty-five years of Woodforde's life were spent in Norfolk. He had a companion, his nephew Bill, for the first three years, and then Bill's sister Nancy, who was to stay with him until his death. Together, the pair socialised with the clergymen of the district, and with the Squire and his Lady. The diary records weekly gatherings, less frequent than the daily parties there had been in Somerset. In Norfolk, Woodforde had more servants to manage and more dealings with tradesmen, and was apparently more actively absorbed in running his house and his glebe-land. The sense of being part of a community where everyone was in and out of each other's houses, so notable in Somerset, is absent in Norfolk. Woodforde and Nancy always seem to have been 'incomers' who were not quite accepted as locals.

The complete diary has now been published in full by the Parson Woodforde Society in seventeen absorbing volumes, a mammoth undertaking completed in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Prior to that, in the 1920s and 1930s, a civil servant named John Beresford had published a five-volume extract, "The Diary of a Country Parson", which introduced the public to Woodforde for the first time. The reputation of the five-volume selection led Beresford to produce a one-volume

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<sup>2</sup> Winstanley, R.L., Jameson, P., and Edwards, H. (eds), **The Diary of James Woodforde**, The Parson Woodforde Society, Volumes 1-17, 1988-2013. See [www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk](http://www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk), under "Publications". Volumes may be second-hand or new, and cost between £15 and £29 per volume.

version in 1935, which is still in print today.<sup>3</sup> The Parson Woodforde Society was formed in 1968, and in the 1980s the Society embarked on the project of publishing the entire unabridged diary, finally completed with the seventeenth and final volume in 2007.

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<sup>3</sup> Blythe, R., (introduction), and Beresford, J. (ed), **James Woodforde: The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758-1802**, The Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1999, £13.51

## **P. G. Wodehouse and Hunstanton Hall**

**N. T. P. Murphy**

P. G. Wodehouse died forty years ago but is still widely read across the world. His continued popularity is probably best explained by Evelyn Waugh's panegyric: "Mr Wodehouse's idyllic world can never stale. He can continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in."

His stories of Blandings, the Drones Club, the adventures and misadventures of Bertie Wooster and his omniscient manservant Jeeves are indeed a world to delight in and have led many enthusiasts to explore its origins. In a letter to a friend, Wodehouse wrote that he always liked using a real location whenever he could; it saved time and effort. It was that letter that set me off looking for the settings of Wodehouse's stories.

In London, it was straightforward. By reading his letters whenever they came up for auction, I discovered that just about every London address in his 98 books was based on houses where he had lived, or the addresses of relatives or friends. Visiting places he knew outside London, Emsworth in Hampshire and Upton-on-Severn in Worcestershire produced more obvious candidates, especially when I discovered his habit of retaining the initial letters of real names. Thus, Bingley-on-Sea and Bramley-on-Sea are his versions of Bexhill-on-Sea, where his parents moved to in 1922.

Whilst Blandings Castle ("a mixture of places I remembered") is almost certainly based on Weston Park in Shropshire for the gardens and estate, and on Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire for the building itself, one of Wodehouse's country houses is unmistakable: Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk.

Because his father was a magistrate in Hong Kong, Wodehouse saw little of his parents during his childhood, and was looked after by uncles and aunts in Worcestershire and Wiltshire. He remembered accompanying them to tea in the local Big House, but it was not until he stayed at Hunstanton Hall that he came to know such an establishment well.

Hunstanton Hall, the home of the Le Strange family from the 12<sup>th</sup> century until 1948, is a large rambling building. It has a gatehouse dating back to 1490, while the main hall itself was built in 1578. Though much of the main section was rebuilt after fires in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is still very impressive and is surrounded by a moat which has been enlarged on one side to form a picturesque lake. The house has been divided into separate dwellings now, but the family still own the estate.

Wodehouse and his wife Ethel first stayed here for Christmas 1924, and were invited back frequently over the next nine years. Their host, Charles le Strange, was clearly an hospitable man: the Hall Visitors' Book shows that Wodehouse stays were often a fortnight or longer, and their total time there came to about twelve months. In 1933, they rented the Hall, and the local newspaper noted that it was the first time the place had been let in eight hundred years.



Although Wodehouse had already written about country houses, his stays at Hunstanton gave him an invaluable insight into the life of a landowner. Before his first visit in 1924, he had written two Blandings novels: *Something Fresh* and *Leave It to Psmith*. Both are good, but we hear comparatively little of Lord Emsworth's role in the community or the way an estate is managed. Hunstanton enabled Wodehouse to see at first hand the responsibilities of a landowner and his role in local affairs. It also refreshed his boyhood memories of such events as village concerts (*The Mating Season*) and point-to-point meetings. (The local newspaper of the time reported on him attending a concert by the Hunstanton Boy Scout Troop.)

It was at Hunstanton that Wodehouse head of timber that needs clearing ('The Crime Wave at Blandings'), and since Charles le Strange was a keen breeder of Jersey cows, I think we can attribute to him Lord Emsworth's anxiety over a Jersey cow in 'Lord Emsworth Acts for the Best', as well as the technical details about Alpha separators and Thomas tap-cinders in *Doctor Sally*.

Charles le Strange was a Justice of the Peace (JP) and, as patron, he nominated the vicars of three parishes. I suggest that Wodehouse used the JP factor when we read of Chuffy Chuffnell and Esmond Haddock and their relationship with the local bobby (*Thank You, Jeeves* and *The Mating Season*). Although Wodehouse had four clerical uncles, we do not read of patrons choosing a new vicar until he had learned what factors a patron like Charles le Strange took into account.

In a letter to a friend, Wodehouse described the Hall:

"It's one of those enormous houses, two third of which are derelict ... [I]t's happening all over the country now ... thousands of acres, park, gardens, moat, etc., and precious heirlooms but not a penny of ready money."

I believe that the heirlooms gave Wodehouse the idea for *Money For Nothing* and *Company for Henry*, while 'The Fiery Wooing of Mordred' and 'Big Business' reflected the fires that occurred at Hunstanton, one of which coincided with a Wodehouse visit.

*Money For Nothing* (1928) is set in Hunstanton Hall and, because Wodehouse described the house and grounds so accurately, he spent the first page of the book moving 'Rudge Hall' and estate over to Worcestershire on the other side of England. Having visited Hunstanton, I can see why. I recognised at once the small bridge where the lake flows into the small stream, the path through the grounds to the village, and the oaks in the parkland.

'Mr Potter Takes a Rest Cure' is clearly set in Hunstanton, as is 'Jeeves and the Impending Doom'. In that story, Bertie and Jeeves row off to rescue the marooned Rt. Hon. A. B. Filmer from the Octagon, an unusual edifice built exactly as Wodehouse described, which stands on a small island upstream from the house. This was the centre of attention when Wodehouseans from all over the world came here in 2012 and half a dozen of them emulated Bertie Wooster's scramble up to the roof when he was pursued by an angry swan.

Perhaps the most important feature of Hunstanton for Wodehouseans is the now-disused pigsty at the entrance to the kitchen gardens. It was here that Wodehouse used to begin his regular afternoon walks, and it was here that, in 1928, a black pig was installed. Wodehouse had been trying for two years to work out a new Blandings Castle plot. Towards the end of his visit that summer, he wrote to a friend that he had the answer at last. The following year, *Summer Lightning* appeared, the first novel to feature Lord Emsworth's pride and joy, the immortal Black Berkshire pig, the Empress of Blandings.

In 'Jeeves and the Old School Chum', Bingo Little, having inherited 'a fine old place in the country about thirty miles from Norwich', leads the party to 'Lakenham Races'. Hunstanton is thirty three miles from Norwich, and Fakenham Races, a feature of Norfolk social life, are held some fifteen miles from Hunstanton. I would bet money that Wodehouse attended them with a Hunstanton house party, since his accurate description of the point-to-point races and the Norfolk countryside in winter could only stem from personal experience.

Whilst Blandings may be, for many, the epicentre of the happy Wodehouse world, its origins are still subject to heated argument. With Hunstanton, there is no such doubt. Wodehouse remembered it fondly all his life, referred to it often in letters and was sad to hear that the family had had to give it up. It had become a haven for him: his own personal Blandings Castle.

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## From Vauxhall Gardens to Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese: placing Doctor Johnson

Ross Davies

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) came to notice with *London*, the poem that contains that much-quoted line 176 'Slow rises worth by poverty depress'd.' Johnson published *London* in 1738, the year after fetching up in the capital from his home town of Lichfield. For Johnson societies around the world, the sage has haunted London ever since. This is nowhere more so than in and around Fleet Street for here, if anywhere, was 'Grub Street'; if not the thoroughfare of that name, then the figurative one, the rocky, insecure road to be trodden by Johnson and all freelance writers and journalists.

Johnson defined 'Grub Street' in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) as "originally the name of a street near Moorfields in London", sardonically adding "much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems". It was at No.17 Gough Square, off Fleet Street, that Johnson produced the *Dictionary*. This is the great work that lifted him out of Grub Street and onto Easy Street, no longer Samuel but Doctor Johnson, possessor of an honorary doctorate (from Dublin) as well as of a royal pension, no more a 'harmless drudge'<sup>4</sup>, but a celebrity pursued not by creditors but by tuffhunters such as James Boswell.

Not that the *Dictionary* was to everybody's taste. As she left Miss Pinkerton's Academy in Chiswick Mall, Becky Sharp slung her presentation copy out of the carriage window and into the garden.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after I graduated, another pushy girl barged in front of me in a secondhand bookshop to snatch the copy I was reaching for: the only affordable near-contemporary example of the *Dictionary* I have ever seen. Already a Johnsonian when I made it to Fleet Street as a journalist, I naturally and as often as possible was unavoidably detained at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese. This pub ('tavern' to the tourist trade) is in Wine Office Court off the north side of Fleet Street.<sup>6</sup> 'The Cheese', the nearby Johnson Museum house in Gough Square and, on Fleet Street itself, St Clement Danes are perhaps the three London locations still with us that Johnsonians most closely identify with the sage.

"I have heard him [Johnson] assert that a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity," wrote his lifelong friend (and biographer) Sir John Hawkins. Boswell avers that Johnson "scarcely ever ... refused going with me to a tavern".

In my Fleet Street days, snug in the society of my fellow scribes at 'the Cheese', I found that the Marston's Pedigree bitter slid down all the more agreeably as I basked in the

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<sup>4</sup> The *Dictionary* definition of a lexicographer.

<sup>5</sup> Miss Pinkerton owed her 'reputation and fortune' to a visit paid by Dr Johnson. He met a real James Pinkerton at dinner (1784).

<sup>6</sup> An Excise Office once stood there.

presumption that this particular ‘tavern’ had been Johnson’s local.<sup>7</sup> Why, the Cheese could even display ‘Dr Johnson’s Chair’.<sup>8</sup>

Home for me was, and is, across the Thames from Fleet Street in Vauxhall where, becoming active in The Vauxhall Society, I started to give talks and write articles about the literature and history of Vauxhall Gardens, particularly that of Johnson’s time.<sup>9</sup> Dr Johnson and Vauxhall Gardens are inseparable from discussion of the literature of, or about, Augustan England and, by the centenary of Johnson’s death (1884), the two seem to have so fused together in the popular imagination that ‘everybody knew’ that Johnson was a regular at Vauxhall.

The spread of literacy and advances in printing created and met a demand for books. The market flooded with cheap reprints of works in which Vauxhall Gardens figures - many of them by friends or contemporaries of Johnson’s, among them Fanny Burney, Oliver Goldsmith and Tobias Smollett. Victorian chroniclers took to pronouncing Johnson a frequent visitor to Vauxhall Gardens, without saying how they knew.<sup>10</sup> They did the same with Dr Johnson and Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese.

The only textual evidence that, in all his 47 years in London, Johnson so much as set foot in Vauxhall Gardens seems to be a picture caption. It is the one, now validated by the Victoria & Albert Museum, to a print struck under Rowlandson’s supervision from his water-colour *Vaux-Hall* (1784). Reproductions of this print were to become, for a century or more, the principal pictorial representation of the celebrated pleasure gardens. Among the celebrities portrayed in the crowd are a supper-box party whose members are (from left to right) Boswell, Mrs Thrale, Johnson, Mrs Thrale again (in 1784 now Mrs Piozzi), and Goldsmith.<sup>11</sup>

As to the Cheese, neither Boswell nor Sir John Hawkins so much as mention the place. Moreover, Thomas Tyers doesn’t either.<sup>12</sup> That set me thinking, because in 1755 or so, *Dictionary* year, Johnson and Tyers met and started a lifelong friendship. Tyers, ‘Tom Restless’ of Johnson’s *Idler*, inherited Vauxhall Gardens from his father Jonathan in 1766<sup>i</sup>. Thomas then co-managed ‘Vauxhall’ with his younger brother, also Jonathan. Tyers was first into print with a memoir of Johnson (1784). Johnson’s friendship with him, as with Sir John Hawkins and others with strong links to the Gardens, suggest to me that Johnson did at least visit Vauxhall.<sup>13</sup> There is circumstantial evidence in the case of Johnson and the Cheese, but it strikes me as crumbly.

Still, ‘everybody’ came to know that this was Johnson’s local. One Johnson biography after another trundled out from 1784 onwards, and they still do. To the delight of 19<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>7</sup> The bitter is now Fuller’s *London Pride*.

<sup>8</sup> E V Lucas contends that Johnson’s seat, ‘so dear to Americans’ is ‘probably an imposture’. See Lucas’s *London Revisited*, London, Methuen & Co., 1926. There is both a Johnson seat and a Johnson chair.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.vauxhallcivicsociety.org.uk/history/>. Vauxhall Gardens closed in 1859.

<sup>10</sup> See Walford, Edward (c. 1878), **Old and New London**, Vol. vi, London, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> See Coke, D. and Borg, A. (2011), **Vauxhall Gardens: a History**, New Haven & London, p. 238. Coke and Borg suggest that a figure in the crowd is that of Thomas Tyers.

<sup>12</sup> **The Idler** (1758), no. 15, 22 July.

<sup>13</sup> I deal with this question in some detail in the 2014 *Transactions* of the Johnson Society (Lichfield): [www.thejohnsonsociety.org.uk](http://www.thejohnsonsociety.org.uk).

'Fleet Street' (where more and more newspapers now congregated), Fleet Street taverns and their more assiduous patrons discovered and cherished a Johnsonian association, real or otherwise.

According to one Victorian regular, Cyrus Redding (1858), in 1806 or so you could still meet men in the Cheese who "well remembered Johnson and Goldsmith".<sup>14</sup> Another Cyrus, Cyrus Jay, who became a regular about 1813, recalled (1868) "several very old gentlemen who remembered Dr. Johnson, nightly at the Cheshire Cheese". A landlord of the Cheese in the 1880s recalled, as a boy, serving a Cheese regular of advanced years who spoke of customers who "boasted that they had often spent an evening there with Dr Samuel Johnson". This same landlord remembered being deputed to see a befuddled Jay safely home to the Temple after "an unbroken succession of glasses of gin and water".<sup>15</sup>

The landlord told this story to George Birkbeck Hill, a member of The Johnson Club which was formed in centenary year (1884). The inaugural meeting of The Johnson Club were held not in the 'Cheese', but in another Fleet Street tavern, The Cock. When The Cock was pulled down, Johnsonissimi foregathered usually - but not exclusively - at the Cheese.

By 1887, according to the *St. James's Gazette*, of seventeen taverns claiming Dr Johnson for their own, only five remained, Yet, the *Gazette* declared, the only Fleet Street tavern "to which the true believer should allow himself to be attracted" was the Cheese. Goldsmith had lived opposite at No 6 Wine Office Court, so "there can be no doubt that he [Goldsmith] and the Doctor spent many an evening in the same old [Cheese] rooms". Yet Goldsmith only lived in Wine Office Court for two years (c.1763).

It was Birkbeck Hill who gave academic respectability to the, by now, 'traditional' Johnson-Cheese link. With *Johnsonian Miscellanies* (1897), Birkbeck Hill whipped up such a fever for Johnson studies on either side of the Atlantic that it continues to this day.<sup>16</sup> Birkbeck Hill says nothing about Johnson and Vauxhall Gardens in *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, but in the case of 'the Cheese', tables what he regards as "direct evidence of what could scarcely be doubtful", that 'Johnson often dined in the [Cheshire Cheese] tavern".

"In no contemporary writer", Birkbeck Hill notes, "is mention made of Johnson's frequenting this tavern [the Cheese]".<sup>17</sup> The only evidence Birkbeck Hill adduces is that of Jay. Jay

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<sup>14</sup> Redding describes the Cheese as a 'place of entertainment', which can be a loaded term. In 1962, the Cheese gave the Museum of London some pornographic fireplace tiles from an upper room, which the Museum suggests may indicate that, in Johnson's day, there was a brothel there. This does not sound quite Johnson's cup of tea. All remarks from Jay, Redding and the Cheese landlord, as well as newspaper extracts, are as reported in Adams, R. R. (ed.) (1901), **The Book of the Cheese**, London, pp. 19 – 26.

<sup>15</sup> In 1867, Jay could have read in *Once a Week* of the Cheese's 'being connected by tradition with Goldsmith and Johnson'. Indeed, the fact that Jay's remarks appear in the introduction to rather than in the text of his memoir should suggest that the Johnsonian association was tacked on after appearing in *Once a Week*.

<sup>16</sup> Birkbeck Hill, like other Club writer-members, was extensively published in a USA still looking towards European literary models.

<sup>17</sup> A Johnson Club member, the poet and belles lettriste Austin Dobson, was unconvinced of the claims of the Cock or the Cheese. Dobson speaks of Johnson and Goldsmith's seats at the Cheese as being pointed out 'to the trustful inquirer'. See 'Dr Johnson's Haunts and Habitations', in Dobson, A. (1901), **Sidewalk Studies**, London, pp. 182 – 3.

published, after the Crimean War and in old age, memories allegedly going back to two years before the Battle of Waterloo, of even older men's memories that harked back to the end of the American War of Independence (1784, the year Johnson died) or even to before the war started (1774, when Goldsmith died).<sup>18</sup>

Jay, writes Birkbeck Hill, affirms that, once Johnson came to live on the north side of Fleet Street, first in Gough Square and then in Bolt Court, he became a 'constant visitor' to the Cheese. This was because "nothing but a hurricane would have induced him to cross Fleet Street".

Birkbeck Hill judges Jay's testimony to contain "much loose talk", for it is "unlikely that many, if indeed any of the old gentlemen remembered Johnson in Gough Square, for he left in 1759". Birkbeck Hill does not mention that Johnson left to move south of Fleet Street, and stayed there for seventeen years before heading northwards (1776), to spend his last eight years in Bolt Court. While silent about these years and Johnson's last address, Birkbeck Hill does point out that Boswell "records many dinners at the Mitre [on the south side of Fleet Street] after he [Johnson] had removed to the north side".

'Loose talk' or not, Birkbeck Hill is able to conclude "Nevertheless we may take the [Jay] account as direct evidence of what could scarcely be doubtful that Johnson often dined in the [Cheshire Cheese] tavern." Well, perhaps.

By 1897, with this the only possibly-Johnsonian tavern left, could it be possible that The Johnson Club revellers were coalescing around, perhaps clinging to, the Cheese? How strong is the link between the two? Strong enough, apparently, to be a crowd-puller profitable enough to prevent three centuries of wreckers from calling 'time' on Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese.

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<sup>18</sup> Birkbeck Hill is quoted in *The Book of the Cheese* on what the landlord of the Cheese told him about Jay.

## H G Wells and the World of 802701

Brian Burden

H G Wells' novella *The Time Machine* was published in 1894. It was the first of a series of novels which Wells dubbed 'Scientific Romances', and it was an instant success. It is an impressive first effort, compact and densely written, and crammed with classical, mythological and folkloric references.

Wells' Time Traveller travels forward to the year 802701. When he arrives, he is confronted by the statue of a White Sphinx (a statue with its gun metal counterparts on the Thames Embankment in Wells' day). Its predatory predecessor, in classical mythology, waited outside the gates of Thebes and posed travellers a riddle: "What goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?" When Oedipus supplied the correct answer ("Man"), the Sphinx, deprived of its malign power, self-destructed. A number of riddles are associated with Wells' Sphinx. The first, a variation on the original legend, goes through the Time Traveller's mind as he confronts the statue: "What had *not* happened to Man?" (my italics). The Time Traveller has three shots at answering this.

The first time, he deduces that the Golden Age, an earthly paradise, has been achieved. He is quite wrong, and his Time Machine is locked in the pedestal of the Sphinx, thus forcing him to remain in this time period until he comes up with the right answer: that mankind has evolved into two species. One branch of humanity has regressed into childishness; the other has regressed to become apelike carnivores which sustain and predate upon the first species. Thereupon, the Time Traveller's machine is released and he is enabled to return to his own time.

Another, unspoken, riddle is posed by Wells: why did he choose the year 802701 for the Time Traveller's adventure? The answer sheds significant light on one's interpretation of the novel.

In 802701, "the whole world had become a garden", a garden which bears a striking resemblance to the splendid public parks of the Victorian era in which Wells was writing. The first inhabitants the Time Traveller encounters are beautiful, childlike beings called the Eloi. Unsympathetic critics insist on pronouncing this as 'Ee-loy' (as in "Old Macdonald had a farm, Ee-loy Ee-loy Oh!"), but the correct pronunciation is 'El-oh-ee'. The word is related to 'Elohim', the god-like beings of Genesis and of Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877).

When the Time Traveller first encounters one of the Eloi, "a slight creature ... very beautiful and graceful ... but indescribably frail", he notes that "sandals or buskins – I could not clearly distinguish which – were on his feet". The reference is to the ancient Greek theatre. Sandals were worn by comic actors; buskins denoted tragedy.

The Time Traveller cannot decide at this stage whether the Eloi are comic or tragic figures. He first concludes that the Eloi's predecessors have bequeathed their offspring a self-regulating environment and, in this paradisaical situation, humanity has regressed to a state of happy dependency. He is wrong.

In the course of the novel, he becomes aware that the Eloi, descendants of the leisured classes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are sustained by an underground race called the Morlocks, who maintain the upper-worlders' Edenic lifestyle so that they can, when required, devour them like cattle. The Morlocks are descendants of an exploited proletariat. Like the Eloi, they have regressed, roughly according to Darwinian theory, to resemble, in their case, nimble carnivorous apes, whose manual skills enable them to maintain the machines which supply the needs of both races.

Having reached the erroneous conclusion that the world of 802701 is paradise unalloyed, the Time Traveller relates that "a noiseless owl flitted by, and I shivered with the chill of night". Immediately afterwards, he realises that his Time Machine has been stolen (by the Morlocks, it transpires, who have locked it inside the pediment of the Sphinx). That owl is no ordinary owl: it is Hegel's owl – "Minerva's owl, (which) flies at nightfall". (Philosophy of History, 1837) Hegel's aphorism is usually taken to mean that one only learns wisdom when it is almost too late.

In the Oedipus legend, Oedipus solves the riddle and becomes King of Thebes. Thereupon, plague devastates the city. The reason, we are told, is that the gods are angry at Oedipus' unrevealed crimes against his parents. When the Time Traveller confronts the White Sphinx, its face appears to be ravaged by disease. The plague has already visited this society in the form of the Morlocks' cannibal depredations, a punishment for one class's crimes against another, for man's crimes against his brother man.

The similarity of the Time Traveller's experience to that of Oedipus is not accidental. When the Time Traveller returns from his travels, his friend, the narrator of the story, notices that one of his feet is swollen. The Time Traveller explains that a nail in the sole of his shoe has pierced his foot. Symbolically, Wells is telling us that, in solving the Sphinx's riddle, the Time Traveller has taken on the mantle of Oedipus, who was so-called (the name meaning 'swellfoot') because, as a baby, his parents, warned by the Delphic oracle that he would be the cause of their death and disgrace, pierced his ankles and exposed him on a mountainside.

A great deal of classical mythology and folklore has gone into Wells' novel. The pretty cupolas protecting the wells by which the Morlocks come and go to and from their industrialised underworld appear to be based on the 'puteals' which ancient Romans would set up to protect points where lightning had struck – signs of a god's anger, but sacred and in need of preservation. The Morlocks themselves are likened to 'lemurs' – a species of primate, but also, in Roman mythology, ghosts of the unplaced dead ('lemures'). When the Time Traveller first sees a group of Morlocks one night, he takes them for ghosts. Bailey, in his English Dictionary of 1782, defines 'lemures' as 'Hobgoblins, Ghosts, or Night Spirits'. Wells' 'ghosts' are cannibals. Wells may have imported this notion from a reading of the chapter in R L Stevenson's *In the South Seas* (1893), where Stevenson relates how the Marquesans rarely venture abroad at night for fear of the cannibal ghosts of their ancestors which infest their island paradise after dark.

The other riddle Wells poses, the riddle for readers, is: Why 802701? The date contains the numbers 87 and 21, which were significant for Wells. In the autumn of 1887, Wells



celebrated his coming of age (his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday) and, not long after, he received a virtual sentence of death.

He 'celebrated' his birthday in bed, whither he had been confined as a result of an incident on the football field at the crammer's in Wales where he was teaching. He had been kicked in the back by one of his charges. Later, he found himself confronting a chamber pot full of blood, and a doctor diagnosed a ruptured kidney.

After apparently recovering, Wells went back to teaching in unheated classrooms. After a little while, he began to cough up blood. Tuberculosis was diagnosed (wrongly, as it turned out).

For several years, Wells believed he was a doomed man. A massive haemorrhage in 1893 brought him very close to death: "This was no skirmish; this was the grand attack". As he lay in bed recovering, he told himself, "I might write or I might die", and shortly thereafter he began work on *The Time Machine*.

It is tempting to think that this experience is relived, in fictional form, in Wells' short story *Under the Knife* (1896). A patient undergoing major surgery has been chloroformed but remains conscious and leaves his body. He watches the surgeons at work, until one of them accidentally severs a vein. Blood gushes forth, and the patient, certain that he has died, finds himself receding from earth at a massive rate, ending up among the distant stars, whence earth is perceived as a tiny dot. The imagery of blood features in all four of the Scientific Romances Wells wrote before the turn of the century.

It could be argued that the world of 802701 is a sort of Avalon, the paradise where King Arthur, in Tennyson's poem, goes to "heal me of the grievous wound". In other ways, it is a world of the dead. As he prepares to set off on his journey to the future, the Time Traveller feels like a suicide holding a pistol to his head. If one follows this line of interpretation, one can see the world of 802701 as a staging post en route inevitably to a consumptive's bloody death. On one final foray into the distant future, the Time Traveller finds himself "more than thirty million years ahead", on a terminal beach facing an ocean "all bloody under the eternal sunset" – a scene of "abominable desolation". An eclipse of the sun is in progress. The sun is blacked out and the Time Traveller, gasping in the thin atmosphere, feels on the point of passing out and falling from his machine, when the sun reappears, "like a red-hot bow in the sky" – a token of reprieve, though an ambiguous one – and he summons up enough strength to pull the lever which will take him back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bearing in mind the fact that Wells' health problems originated with an incident on the football field, it is interesting to note that the only living object which the Time Traveller sees on his furthest foray into the distant future is "a round thing, the size of a football perhaps ... It seemed black against the weltering, blood-red water ...".

During his time in 802701, the Time Traveller enjoys a few days of true paradise in a loving friendship with the childlike Weena, whom he has saved from drowning. The Time Traveller plans to bring her back to his own time, but she dies of terror when they are beset by Morlocks. Wells had a "bright, precocious and fragile" sister called Fanny, who died in infancy before he was born. His mother was devastated by the death, which destroyed her religious faith, and would impress upon her son that he had been sent to replace her.

Arguably, Weena represents Wells' wish to bring his sister back from the dead. Weena showers the Time Traveller with flowers, and two of these flowers are the only items which he brings back with him from his foray into the future: "And that reminds me! In changing my jacket I found ...". The Time Traveller paused, put his hand into his pocket, and silently placed two withered flowers, not unlike very large white mallows, upon the little table. The incident echoes a proposition from Coleridge's *Anima Poetae* (1816):

"If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he found that flower in his hand when he awoke – Aye, and what then?"

Few critics have given Wells full credit for the literary tour de force which is *The Time Machine*. I hope this article does something to remedy the situation.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Brian Burden** graduated from Oxford University in 1963, where he was awarded an MA. In 1989, as an external student, he received an MPhil from the University of Essex for his thesis on 'Source and Symbol in the Scientific Romances of H. G. Wells'. Up until his retirement, he taught English and Communications at Braintree College of Further Education.

**Ross Davies** is a life member of The Johnson Society (Lichfield), and Chairman of a London civic group, The Vauxhall Society. His books include: *A Student in Arms*, Donald Hankey and *Edwardian Society at War*, Drummond Allison; *Come, Let Us Pity Death*; and *F. W. Harvey: Poet of Remembrance; Vauxhall: a Little History*.

**Eric L Fitch** was brought up in Windsor and is now retired from Local Government, since when he became Secretary of the H.G. Wells Society. He is the author of *Unknown Taplow* (1988), and *In Search of Herne the Hunter* (1994), a study of the antlered spectre reputed to haunt Windsor Great Park. In addition, he has contributed articles to various journals on such topics as ghosts, folklore, the Arthurian legends, archaeology, local history and, of course, H. G. Wells.

**Eric Jones** is an Emeritus Professor of Economic History and author of *Revealed Biodiversity: an economic history of the human impact* (2014).

**Beryl Fleming** is a lifelong writer of poetry, short stories and articles, and has been a U3A Creative Writing tutor for over 25 years. She has two poems in the archives of Westminster Abbey as being representative of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. She is a member of the Society of Women Writers & Journalists, The Downland Poets, and Secretary of the Chichester Literary Society.

**Tom Miller** is an Oxford Law graduate who qualified as a solicitor but drifted into journalism. He has been a member of the H. G. Wells Society for over 20 years.

**Norman Murphy** was founding chairman of The P. G. Wodehouse Society (UK). He is the author of *A Wodehouse Handbook*, *The Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood*, and *One Man's London: Twenty Years On*. The History Press published his latest book, *The P.G. Wodehouse Miscellany*, earlier this year.

**Elizabeth Negas** is Head of English at Barking and Dagenham College and also a member of the Arnold Bennett Society.

**Val Pedlar** became interested in the biography and writings of John Clare while she was working on her PhD these about madness in Victorian fiction. She has edited the John Clare Society newsletter since 2007 and is currently Vice Chair of the Society.

**Cally Philips** graduated from St Andrews University and is founder of The Galloway Raiders as well as series editor for 'The Galloway Collection'. She is also author of the 'Discovering Crockett' series, in addition to other fiction and non-fiction works. Following a 20 year professional career as a screenwriter/playwright, and latterly as author/publisher, she now indulges her lifelong interest in Scottish writing, particularly rurally focussed work, by writing,

editing and blogging. *Discovering Crockett's Galloway: Crockett Country* is available at [www.gallowayraiders.co.uk](http://www.gallowayraiders.co.uk) and also on Amazon.

**Katharine Solomon** discovered Parson Woodforde's Diary in the 1990s, in the one-volume selection, and became increasingly absorbed by it. By 2001, she needed to know what had happened on the days in between, and started to read the unabridged diaries. She edits the Newsletter of the Parson Woodforde Society and contributes to its Journal.

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