

THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

NEW SERIES NO. 46

April 1984

ANNIVERSARIES

This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of Charles Lamb, next year the 50th birthday of the Charles Lamb Society. Our President and Chairman have kindly organized a day conference at Cambridge, details below, there are plans for a Lamb Exhibition at the Guildhall Library at the end of the year and the July and October *Bulletins* will be combined to make a special bumper Anniversary Number.

CHARLES LAMB, THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT AND CAMBRIDGE

The Society has organised a meeting at *Jesus College, Cambridge* to take place on Saturday September 22nd 1984.

The programme will include talks, discussions and also visits guided by experts to sites of interest to readers of Lamb; these will include Jesus College itself (Coleridge), St John's College (Wordsworth) and Gonville and Caius College (Manning). A more general tour of the Colleges can be arranged if there is sufficient demand.

The participants will include speakers from Departments of English at Universities in England, and though there will be a serious core of material relating to our topic, more light-hearted matter is not excluded, and there will be readings and music of the time if possible.

Cambridge in September should be at its best - not too busy with tourists, and not yet intent upon its own students. Catering at Jesus College will be of a high quality; coffee and biscuits on arrival, luncheon with wine, tea and biscuits in the afternoon will cost those attending £10.00.

Both the President of the Society and its Chairman live in Cambridge and will do their utmost to ensure a happy and memorable day. It will be a great help if those who hope to attend could write now to *Dr D G Wilson, 9 Banhams Close, Cambridge CB4 1HX* to facilitate catering, and so that further details can be sent as soon as available. Dr Wilson will do his best to arrange overnight accommodation (Friday and/or Saturday) if members would indicate their wishes in their letter; please say what price-range for bed and breakfast would suit you.

In my life I never spent so many pleasant hours together as I did at Cambridge.
Mary Lamb, August 20, 1815

It seems appropriate to introduce our activities in this special period with some words of Sir Edmund Gosse at the Fourth Annual Dinner given at Cambridge in honour of Charles Lamb's birthday, in 1912.

I think it is easy to justify these anniversaries. They are not idle meetings; they serve to remind us of the stages in the long evolution of art...

Let us speak often one to another of those things which elevate and

charm us, and so the book of remembrance will be kept open. We are surrounded by influences which take us away from things of the spirit; we yield to the siren voices from the rocks of life, the inevitable tendencies to languor and giving up. I often think that the name and memory of a great man, with some unaffected discussion of his work, make a sovereign talisman against the relinquishment of the fight.

From *Cambridge and Charles Lamb*, Ed. Wherry 1925

I am an inveterate old Londoner, but while I am among your choice collections, I seem to be native to them, and free of the country.

Charles Lamb to John Clare August 31, 1822

JOHN CLARE BOOKS Reviewed by Stella Pigrome

John Clare: *The Journals, Essays and The Journey from Essex*. Edited by Anne Tibble. Carcanet New Press, Manchester 1980. ISBN 85635 3442 £6.95

The main part of this little book, edited by the late Anne Tibble, is taken up by Clare's Journal, running from September to September 1824-25, with a few entries for 1828. This had already been included in *The Prose of John Clare* (edited by J W and Anne Tibble, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), but has been freshly edited from a draft manuscript in the Northampton Central Library, and shows a few minor variations from the earlier printed text, additional notes and Clare's appendices.

At this period Clare was often ill, troubled with financial problems and frustrated by Taylor's dilatoriness over the publication of *The Shepherd's Calendar*, which finally appeared in 1827. In presenting Clare with 'The Student's Journal', with printed dates and appropriate spaces, Taylor perhaps hoped the daily interest would be a beneficial distraction for Clare, who announced his intention on Monday 6th September 1824 of giving his "opinions of things I may read and see and set down and thoughts that may arise either in my reading at home or my musings in the fields".

Over these two years we are given a close-up view of Clare - making his will, worried over his children's illnesses, sending and receiving letters, commenting bitterly on publishers and editors:

I never take up Johnsons lives but I regret his beginning at the wrong end first & leaving out those beautiful minstrels of Elizabeth...but it was the booksellers judgment that employed his pen & we know by experience that most of their judgments lie in their pockets...

Began an Enquirey into the life of Bloomfield with the intention of writing one & a criticism on his genius & writings a fellow of the name of Preston [actually, Weston] pretended to know a great deal about him but I must enquire into its authenticity Capel Loft did not improve on the account given by his brother George by altering it - Editors often commit this fault

But the life of Bloomfield came to nothing, just as his autobiography and Natural History Letters, in progress at this time, were never finished.

He reads extensively - Shakespeare, Chatterton, Milton, Byron, new books of poems, sermons, novels, the *London Magazine*, Hazlitt, Lamb, and other contemporaries, including Wordsworth:

When I first began to read poetry I disliked Wordsworth because I heard he was disliked & I was astonished when I looked into him to find my mistaken pleasure in being delighted & finding him so natural and beautiful...

A rainy morning at the start of his journal keeps him amused by Isaac Walton:

it is the best English pastoral that can be written the descriptions are natural unsullied by fashionable tastes of the time they are simply true & like the Pastoral Ballads of Bloomfield breath of the grass & the sky one might almost hear the water of the river Lea ripple along & the grass & flags grow & rustle in the pages that speak of it I have never read a happier Poem in my time

How well this comment applies to the poems of Clare and to the entries in the Journal devoted to Clare's interest in nature. We find him out hunting for ferns for his garden:

Found the very common Pollopody on an old Willow tree in Lolham Lane & a small fern in hilly wood scarcely larger than some species of moss & a little resembling curld parsley I have named it the Dwarf Maidenhair I believe it is very scarce here

and always on the look out for rare plants:

Found a very scarce and curious orchis of an iron grey color or rather a pale rusty tinge with a root like the pilewort I cannot make out its name - I found last week a fine white piegon orchis which is seldom found [The editor says the first plant is not an orchis, but broomrape.]

He takes an interest in trees, noting the forwardness of whitethorn and walking out to look at an ash tree struck by lightning with curious and devastating effect. He collects "pooties", the shells of large snails probably descended from those brought by the Romans to Roman Bank and neighbouring sites:

there is a great many too of a water species now extinct - the Dyke is 4 foot deep & the soil is full of these shells - have they not lay here ever since the romans made the bank & does the water sorts not imply that the fields were all fen & under water or wet & uncultivated at that time I think it does - I never walk on this bank but the legions of the roman army pass bye my fancys with their mysterys of nearly 2000 years hanging like a mist around them what change hath past since then...

and he buys paints to record them, some unknown at the British Museum. He records the early and late flowering of plants in his garden and in the countryside, and notes the coming and going of the birds and the length of time they take to build their nests, and relates anecdotes of other animals: the curious caterpillars in a neighbour's garden that turn out to be death's head moths; an unexpected encounter with a vixen with her cubs, who almost attacked him but was frightened off when he set up a "haloo" - his imitation of a foxhound only irritated her the more; the frog that had lived in the garden for four years, recognised by a mark made by his spade. He tells us of local events: a gipsy's wedding -

Israel Smith & Lettyce Smith what odd names these people have ... the Fiddle accompanyd them to Church & back the rest part of it was nothing different to village weddings - Dancing and Drinking & Wrote a song for them being old friends

and of a local hiring fair, the "Statute":

& a very wet day for it the lasses do not lift up their gowns to show taper ancles & white stockings but on the contrary drop them to hide dirty ones

To those who ask, "what did swallows do before there were telegraph wires?" Clare gives one answer:

The swallows are flocking together in the sky ready for departing & a crowd has dropt to rest on the wallnut tree were they twitter as if they were telling their young stories of their long journey to cheer & check fears

Not for Clare, it seems, the eighteenth century notion that swallows hibernated under water.

It is no doubt small consolation to ecologists and environmentalists to learn that the problems they battle with today have their precedents:

Saw 3 fellows at the end of Royce Wood who I found were laying out the plan for an 'Iron railway' from Manchester to London - it is to cross over Round Oak Spring by Royce Wood Corner for Woodcroft Castle I little thought that fresh intrusions would interrupt & spoil my solitudes after the Enclosure they will despoil a boggy place that is famous for orchises at Royce Wood end

This is an absorbing and fascinating record of an alert and sensitive mind responding to its surroundings - not at all what one would expect from the "illiterate peasant" image of Clare which for so long held the day.

The rest of the book is made up of Clare's painful narrative of his penniless journey from Dr Allen's mental asylum in Essex home to Northborough, when he slept rough and was reduced to eating grass and chewing and swallowing tobacco, written, under a delusion, for Mary Joyce, his "other wife", already dead; and a few previously unpublished Essays. So they are called, though two of them, on 'Industry' and 'Happiness' are rather moral tales of a folklorish kind, and one, on 'Affectation' is a long anecdote illustrating the subject. The probably unfinished essay on 'Taste' is of interest because in it Clare writes in praise of autumn colouring - surely one of the earliest writers to do so. The essay on 'Honour' can be summed up as "Honour is due to personal merit alone not to birth."

The book contains a helpful introduction and notes by Mrs Tibble, and is pleasantly decorated by several bird drawings which look like Bewick, but no indication is given of artist or source.

The Rural Muse Poems by John Clare. A second edition of Clare's volume of 1835, edited by R K R Thornton from the original manuscript with an essay by Barbara M H Strang. The Mid Northumberland Arts Group with Carcanet New Press 1982 ISBN 0 904790 18 5/ 85635 397 3 £5.95

In 1979 the same publishers gave us the delightful *Midsummer Cushion**, Clare's collection of poems written over a number of years which he had hoped to publish himself by public subscription but which had never appeared as its author intended. Instead, in 1835, after many frustrations and difficulties, there emerged, under the imprint of Whittaker & Coy, a

* Reviewed in the *Bulletin*, New Series No.31, July 1980

much reduced selection from these poems under the title of *The Rural Muse*, further limited in number by the choice of Clare's good friend and patron Eliza Emmerson. His former publisher John Taylor had for various reasons declined to concern himself with this book, but had finally consented to take an interest at proof stage, and the book therefore appeared as edited by Mrs Emmerson and Taylor.

The Midsummer Cushion was edited by the late Anne Tibble, with R K R Thornton as associate editor, and MidNAG and Carcanet Press have now given us (1982) a welcome and indispensable second edition of *The Rural Muse*, edited by Mr Thornton and dedicated to the memory of Anne Tibble, who had done much of the preliminary work on it.

Although the book is described as a second edition in the shape in which it was originally published, it is not a facsimile, since the poems have been re-edited from Clare's original manuscript MS Pfz 198 in the Carl H Pforzheimer Library in New York. The present editor feels confident that the restoration of original readings is fairly complete and suggests that the text can be fruitfully compared with the earlier edition: yes, by those with access to it, but there must be many readers not in a position to make the comparison, and it would have been helpful if more could have been done to indicate at least the major variations from the text as presented to its first readers, adapted to the taste of the time. Mr Thornton gives only a few examples of Taylor's "improvements". He changed the last line of 'Thoughts in a Churchyard'. Clare's last verse had run:

Lifes ignus fatus light is gone
 No more to lead their hopes astray
 Cares poisoned cup is drained & done
 & all its follys far away
 The bills made out the reckoning paid
 The book is crossed the buisness done
 On them the last demand is made
 & deaths long happy sleep is won

Taylor substituted "Heaven's eternal Peace is won" for the last line:

The last is good Atheism - the first is bad Divinity. I think it safer & better to give the incorrect religious sentiment than the downright irreligious one - and I dare say you will agree with me.

On the poem 'Napoleon' he writes:

I had cut off the latter Lines...not thinking them good or clear enough for the close of that Poem, - but then I found that the final line wanted strength. There are some fine thoughts just before, & it finishes lamely after them. Give me if you can a good ending.

Did Clare oblige, and if so was the poem printed in 1835 different from the present version? We are not told. Taylor adds:

My chief corrections have been in the way of making the Verses run along without so often commencing with "and" - or in avoiding the too frequent Repetition of the same word in the compass of a Line or two - sometimes also the Grammar has forced me to make some change in the Tense of a Verb &c

Mr Thornton defends modern editorial practice in dealing with Clare:

When one has the original manuscripts, it would be foolish not to take

advantage of them, in spite of the pleas of some critics and reviewers that to print the poems as Clare wrote them, without punctuation, with a variety of mis-spellings and idiosyncratic spellings, and with dialectal subject-verb concord, is to emphasise misleadingly the peasant poet aspect of Clare. But what Clare wrote has its own defence: without punctuation one is thrust into observing how the poem itself, its line structure and stanza structure, create the necessary pauses; his spellings sometimes throw up important relationships, the most instructive of which is probably the spelling "poesy" which represents a vital link between ideas that conventional spelling would disguise under the versions "poesy" and "posy"; and the grammar is part of that complex decorum where nature, custom, convention and language gather about the location which is both Clare's world and his creation.

This point of view is reinforced by Professor Barbara Strang's essay on 'John Clare's Language' included in Appendix I to this book. She makes the interesting suggestion that Clare's spelling differs from modern custom in five ways: 1. Clare's standard is that of the 18th century, not of the OED; 2. Up to Clare's formative period there existed private spellings different from and more archaic than printed spellings, a custom which covers Clare's use of the ampersand; 3. Some eccentricities look like fairly consistent mistakes, partly due to his having learned to read well before learning to write, and to his early reading having been much in archaic writers, such as Chatterton; 4. Spellings representing alternative pronunciations; 5. Cases where standardisation rules out possible second meanings which extend the sense of certain passages. Professor Strang continues her essay with a close analysis of Clare's diction, with particular reference to *The Midsummer Cushion* and *The Rural Muse*. She finds that in general the nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs Clare uses fall into three main groups - literary words, ideophonic and dialectal, the last two being more prominent in *The Midsummer Cushion* (perhaps not surprising since there are more than twice the number of poems in the latter). Her examination of Clare's grammar shows that many of the features he employs belong to a generalised poetic tradition which had been handed down from the 16th century. Professor Strang's useful study leads her to the conclusion that

Punctuation, spelling sound-patterns (including rhythm and metre), diction and grammar combine to make a single impression of a quality of language artfully composed, like the early Spencer's, from the most diverse elements, literary, archaic, elevated, borrowed, familiar, dialectal and invented. These elements however are fused into something unique and instantly recognizable as Clare's alone.

Doubtless the arguments about editing will continue, but it is relatively unimportant: what matters is to read the poems, and either teasing out the occasional difficulty, or skating over it, to absorb Clare's own "unique and instantly recognizable" contribution to poetry.

The poems in this collection number 130. Eighty-six of them are sonnets and the rest are grouped in the original manuscript under the headings of tales, poems, and ballads and songs, which all come in a variety of forms and rhythms. The principal subjects are what one expects from Clare - weather, the seasons, rural scenes and characters, birds, trees, plants, particular places, love poems, reflections on abstract qualities and addresses to friends, artists and other writers. Some of the best known and

most admired poems are here, including, 'Decay', 'Emmonsales Heath', 'The Eternity of Nature', 'Summer Images', expressing the poet's delight in country sights and sounds:

& wind enarmoured aspin mark the leaves
 Turn up their silver lining to the sun
 & list the brustling noise that oft decieves
 & makes the sheep boy run
 The sound so mimics fast approaching showers
 He thinks the rain begun
 & hastes to sheltering bowers

and 'The Flitting' the lament for the early joys of Helpston, written after moving to Northborough:

I've left my own old home of homes
 Green fields and every pleasant place
 The summer like a stranger comes
 I pause & hardly know her face
 I miss the hazels happy green
 The bluebells quiet hanging blooms
 Where envys sneer was never seen
 Where staring malice never comes

though in the end he reaches some kind of acceptance:

The ivy at the parlour end
 The woodbine at the garden gate
 Are all & each affections friend
 That renders parting desolate
 But times will change & friends must part
 & nature still can make amends
 Their memory lingers round the heart
 Like life whose essence is its friends

Yet with a change of mood he could write in 'Home Happiness'

Like a thing of the desert alone in its glee
 I make a small home seem an empire to me
 Like a bird in the forest whose world is its nest
 my home is my all & the centre of rest

One finds in this book the usual felicitous phrases and out of the ordinary comparisons one looks for in Clare:

Yet here the cowslip shows its face
 Prized for its sweetness more than show
 ('To — on May Morning')

My rod & line doth all neglected lye
 A higher joy mine former sport destroys
 Nature this day doth bait the hook & I
 The glad fish am thats to be caught thereby
 ('Pastoral Fancys')

He dared the world a war to wage
 He scorned the critics mock
 & soared the mightiest of the age
 - the condor of the rock

(of Byron, in *Genius*)

Sweet wild flowers images in dissaray
 Which art & fashion fling as weeds away
 To sport with shadows of inferior kind
 Mere magic lanthorns of the shifting mind
 ('Old Poesy')

These are the picturesque of taste to me
 While painting winds to make complete the scene
 In rich confusion mingles every green
 Waving the sketchy pencil in their hands
 Shading the living scenes to fairy lands
 ('Pleasant Places')

Above the russet clods the corn is seen
 Sporting its spirey points of tender green
 Where squats the hare to terrors wide awake
 Like some brown clod the harrows failed to break
 ('The Skylark')

& the winds all a cold with rude clatter & din
 Shake the windows like robbers who want to come in
 ('Home Happiness')

Joy shouted wherever I went
 & e'en now such a freshness it yields
 I could fancy with books & a tent
 What delight we could find in the fields
 ('The Pasture')

Professor Strang records that in *The Rural Muse* Clare uses the word *joy* 104 times - and it is indeed his joy in so many things that he is able to share with the reader that makes this book a most acceptable addition to the growing collections of Clare's work.

The book is illustrated with engravings from the first edition of Clare's cottages at Helpston and Northborough and of Northborough Church.

John Clare's Birds. Edited by Eric Robinson and Richard Fitter. Illustrated by Robert Gillmor. Oxford University Press 1982 ISBN 0 - 19 - 212977 - 5 £6.95

This charming little book will be of special interest to Clare readers who are also lovers of birds, but one would need to be an ornithologist to assess the accuracy of all Clare's statements.

The editors have assembled a collection of prose pieces and verses not already included in two earlier collections edited by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (*Selected Poems and Prose* (Oxford 1967) and *The Shepherds Calendar* (Oxford 1964)). The note on the arrangement of the entries seems to suggest that none of the material included has been published before, but this is not so: most, if not all of the prose pieces appear in *The Prose of John Clare* edited by J W and Anne Tibble (Routledge and Kegan Paul (1951)) while the list of birds itself appears to be the same as the one there included. Two of the poems, 'The March Nightingale' and "the happy whitethroat" ('The Happy Bird') are included in *The Midsummer Cushion* (edited by Anne Tibble and R K R Thornton, MidNAG and Carcanet Press, 1979), a publication which received the approval of Mr Robinson. The editors do say however that in this book they have attempted to build upon

the base laid by the Tibbles and by James Fisher, to whom they owe the information that Clare had personally observed 145 wild birds, of which 119 are reasonably certainly Northamptonshire county records - 65 "first records". Equally observant as a botanist Clare had described 135 plant species which the Northamptonshire botanist Druce had been able to identify, 40 unrecorded before Clare. As a naturalist, Clare ranks high among the poets, and as a poet, high among naturalists.

The text of this book is basically a list of the birds noticed by Clare with his own observations on them (with some hearsay reports) interspersed with complementary poems or verse extracts on the same subjects. The birds are listed under Clare's names (often local ones) with the modern name where different added, and Latin names identified in the Index.

The juxtaposition of prose and verse often shows how closely Clare related one to the other, for example:

(Partridge) Scrats a hole in the wheat lands and makes no nest
lays from 14 to 18 eggs of an ash color like the p[h]easants
but less the young ones run as soon as they leave the
shells - the partridge has a very pleasant call in the
evening among the wheat calling its mate or young
together

The partridge makes no nest but on the ground
Lays many eggs and I have often found
Sixteen or eighteen in a beaten seat
When tracing oer the fields or weeding wheat

Clare sometimes wrote a number of versions or drafts of a single poem, and it is instructive to compare the poem on the yellowhammer's nest in this book with that on 'The Sedge Birds Nest' in *The Midsummer Cushion*:

Fixed in a white thorn Bush its summer guest
Sow low een grass oer topt its tallest twig
A yellow hammer built its twitchy nest
Close by the brook bank and the wooden brig
[The bird kept]...her little brood from dangers eye
Hidden as secret as a crickets song
Till they on well fledged pinions swept the sky...

In 'The Sedge Birds Nest' (i.e. the sedge warbler) the second and third lines become

A sedge bird built its little benty nest
Close by the meadow pool and wooden brig

while the last line quoted above is changed to

Till they well fledged oer widest pools could flye

The rest of the sonnet is the same, except for some small changes.

To an age concerned with conservation and bird protection it is saddening to see so many references through the book to birdcatchers (presumably professional) and to the wanton killing of birds and to the pilfering of eggs and the destruction of nests (a high proportion of the poems are concerned with maurauding boys) though perhaps we should remember that before the camera naturalists had little option for their scientific studies but to stuff birds and pin butterflies on to a board. Clare had certainly done his share of birdsnesting as a boy but clearly by the time

he was writing his nature notes he did not entirely condone these practices. Speaking of the cuckoo he says:

Artis has one in his collection of stuffed birds but I have not sufficient scientific curiosity about me to go and take the exact description of its head rump and wings the length of the tail and the breadth from the tips of the extended wings these old bookish descriptions you may find in any natural history book if they are of any gratification for my part I love to look on nature with a poetic feeling which magnifys the pleasure I love to see the nightingale in its hazel retreat and the cuckoo hiding in its solitudes of oaken foliage and not to examine their carcasses in glass cases...

He writes of the partridge

...it is not a timid bird but on the shooting season is pursued with such unfeeling anxiety by the sportsman and his dogs that it seems to lose all fear in the confusion and will flye into a house or any were from danger and suffer itself to be taken by the hand - one entered a house next door to mine last year and seemed as tame as a chicken but the tenant being as heartless as the sportsmen it was killed and eaten

Perhaps the same tenant who got at the sparrow's nest on Clare's cottage:

I believe the reason of their choosing such an odd place to build their house [i.e. in trees] was the frequent robberyys that was made on their homes in the cottage below where a nest never escaped their pilfering tho I always denyed their intrusions on my part of the house yet they would watch oppertunitys and take them at night after I was in bed...

Clare had kept a number of birds as pets and writes affectionately about them. There were two kestrels, one larger than the other and more tame:

...when I got into the fields I was astonished and startld to see a hawk settle on my shoulder it was mine who had watched me out of the town and took a short cut to flye after me...it would settle upon the ground before me and if I attempted to catch it it would run and hide in the rabbit burrows and when I left it took wing and flew after me and so it kept on to the end of my journey when it found home as soon as I did... [it] dyd while I was absent from home 4 days it refused food and hunted for me every morning and came to sit in my empty chair as it would do till I got up they thought it fretted itself to death in my absence but I think the meat I gave was too strong for it... I felt heartily sorry for my poor faithful and affectionat hawk

As a boy he had had a pet sparrow, which the cat had come to accept as a substitute kitten and would lay mice before it. The sparrow in its turn treated the cat like one of its own kind, but like many pets it disappeared one day and was not to be found. Then there was a magpie that he kept for years

till it got drowned in a well it used to see its self in the water I fancy it got down thinking to meet itself

The bird used to hide teaspoons in the garden for several days before retuyning them. It also learned to talk:

it imitated many words readily and when it heard a sound or word that it could not imitate readily it would become silent and pensive and sit ruminating on an eldern tree and muttering as it were to itself som

inaudible sounds till at length it got by heart the thing it was aiming at and then it was as lively and as full of chatter as ever

Clare is interested in representing the sounds of birds. His rendering of the nightingale's song in 'The Progress of Rhyme' is given in the Introduction, but the text contains the "novel and pleasing noise" of the Fern Owl or goatsucker:

It is a trembling sort of crooning sound which may be nearly imitated by making a crooning noise and at the same time patting the finger before the mouth to break the sound like stopping a hole in the German flute to quaver a double sound on one note ...

The call of another nocturnal bird called locally the night hawk also exercised him - he did not think it was the same bird as the fern owl, and the editors offer no comment:

a dead thin whistling sort of sound which I fancied was the whistle call of robbers for it was much like the sound of a man whistling in fear of being heard by any but his companions tho it was continued much longer than a man could hold his breath

Most people are content to refer to the "boom" of the bittern, but Clare strove for more accuracy in representing the curious sounds made by this bird, which he calls by its dialectal name of "butterbump":

I have often thought the putting one's mouth to the bung hole of an empty large cask and uttering the word 'butterbump' sharply would imitate the sound exactly after its first call that imitates the word 'butter bump' it repeats the sound bump singly several times in a more determined and louder manner - thus 'butter bu'mp b'u'mp b'u'mp butter bu'mp' it strikes people at first as something like the sound of a cooper's mallet hitting on empty casks... they say it puts its beak in a reed when it makes the noise that gives it that jarring or hollow sound which is heard ...

Although Clare disclaimed "scientific curiosity" his "poetic feeling" brings before us with much vivid detail the sights and sounds of his Northamptonshire birds in their native habitat; one couldn't have a better introduction to this aspect of Clare's work. The editors write perceptively about him both as poet and naturalist, and the book is completed by 24 striking bird portraits by the wild life artist Robert Gillmor, some shown at their nests, others in their natural surroundings. The wood pigeon is depicted just as described by Clare:

In spring they feed on the ivy berrys of which they seem very fond as one may often hear them rustling among the old ivy feathered dotterels and see them feeding in a greedy manner

Two illustrations from John Gould's *Birds of Great Britain* (1873) contribute to a highly decorative jacket. All together, a splendid bargain of a book.

John Clare, a reference guide - H O Dendurent. G H Hall & Co., 70 Lincoln Street, Boston, Mass. ISBN 0 - 8161 - 8071 - 7. £13.60

Annotated list of writings by and about Clare from 1820 to 1977. A necessary tool for Clare scholars.

The *John Clare Society Journal*, No.1, July 1982

The first issue of the Journal of this recently founded Society contains articles on Clare and 'Nature' (Eric Robinson) and 'Religion' (George E Dixon); Trevor Hold contributes 'The Composer's Debt to John Clare' and R K R Thornton 'The Flower and the Book: the Gardens of John Clare'; Rodney Lines writes on 'The Skylark'. Illustrations by Rigby Graham.

Inquiries about membership should be made to the Membership Secretary (George E Dixon), 8 Priory Road, Peterborough.

Picturesque Views of Rural Occupations in Early Nineteenth Century England from Ackermann's edition of the *Microcosm* by W H Pyne. Dover Publications Inc., New York 1977. ISBN 0 - 486 - 23547 - 5

Illustrations contemporary with Clare and the perfect background to the social aspects of his work - the gipsies, the birdcatchers, the sportsmen, rural workers of many trades, just such a milking 'shed' as he describes. The publishers generously permit reprinting of up to ten pages without further permission in any single publication, subject to acknowledgment.

We hope in a further issue to review other recent Clare books including Edward Storey's biography of Clare, *A Right to Song*.

Wallace and Corry Nethery: *Charles Lamb's Town and Country Revisited*. Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1983. *Poetry for Children*. Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1982.

Mr Wallace Nethery, self-styled 'occasional maker of very small books exclusively,' will be remembered by readers of the *Bulletin* as the author of the scholarly *Charles Lamb in America to 1848* (1962), *Eliana Americana: Charles Lamb in the United States 1849-1866* (1971), and *Charles Lamb: Bibliophile* (1965), to name only a few of the several effusions from his study and from his press.

It is particularly in the spirit of the last item that Mr Nethery has continued his activity in this highly specialized area of bookmaking, for, like that diminutive volume, his newest efforts combine the preparation of both text and printing with a format measuring, respectively, three inches square and two by three inches. The numbers of copies printed are correspondingly small, again respectively, one hundred and one hundred fifty copies.

Charles Lamb's Town and Country Revisited is described in the author's Introduction as a 'selective record of two trips, taken in September of 1981 and 1983, to visit those still-existing streets, houses, taverns, and churchyards that are most intimately associated with the memory of [Charles Lamb]'. A capsule summary of information, the text is enlivened by judicious quotations from Lamb's essays and letters. It is beautifully enhanced by miniature photographs, credit for which goes to Corry Nethery. These photographic gems depart from the limitations of drawings, such as were used in Martin's *In the Footsteps of Charles Lamb* and in Hine's *Charles Lamb and his Hertfordshire*, to successfully lend a 'lively air of immediacy (and thus perhaps a heightened sense of past reality) to scenes that even some enthusiasts have viewed, if at all, only through the eyes of the artist.' If a picture is worth a thousand words, this book contains much

more than the fifty-five numbered pages. As if this were not enough, the author-printer has folded in a reduced reproduction of the map of The Lamb Country from Lucas' *Life* as an end paper. 'And still the wonder grew that one small [book] could carry all he knew.'

Poetry for Children is a reduced facsimile reprint of an 'obscure American juvenile based on the work of the same name by Charles and Mary Lamb.' Published in Boston in 1812, the two extant copies of the original are now in the library of the American Antiquarian Society. Mr Nethery has managed to include the nine poems in the thirty pages following his eight-page Introduction.

These little, privately printed books testify to Mr Nethery's continued ability, since his retirement as Librarian of the University of Southern California in 1976, to produce perfection in miniature. The fascination and admiration stimulated in one fortunate enough to be able to handle these diminutive treasures cannot be more than hinted at by a little review - but such a notice is appropriate for little books.

George L Barnett

Collections for a Life and Background of Dr James Manby Gully MD by
Phyllis G Mann

Members of the Charles Lamb Society who can remember Phyllis Mann will recall her ability to ferret out facts and information hitherto unknown. In his book *Companion to Lamb* Mr Prance lists her contributions 'Concerning Lamb and more obscure friends and acquaintances' most of which were published in the *CLS Bulletin*. I was fortunate enough at one time to get inside knowledge of her method, and I was fascinated. She was like a detective and she spared no time or effort in her desire for accuracy.

During the last years of her life she lived in Malvern and was unable to come to London. She spent her time researching on the life and times of Dr James Gully, but died before the book reached a publication date. Her sister, Gwen Mann has now managed to get the book printed. It is available from E L Spencer, Weobley Cross Cottage, Mathon, Malvern, Worcs WR13 5PB - price £5.50.

F S R

It gives us particular pleasure in this anniversary year to be able to print a talk given to the Society on 9 January 1982, by our Membership Secretary, who has been a member since 1938. She tells us that the idea for this paper came from a past member of the Charles Lamb Society, Frederick Whiting, now deceased, who left her some of his notes.

JOHN WORDSWORTH

Florence Reeves

During the past year I have been asking my friends 'What Christian name comes into your mind when I mention the surname "Wordsworth"?' The results have been very interesting. William and Dorothy came almost mechanically, but when I pursued the question for other names, very few gave the name 'John'. This was to be expected, for apart from Wordsworth enthusiasts, the fact that there were three other brothers seems little known. This is not surprising however, for of John, the third brother, his sister, Dorothy wrote 'He is not so bright as either William or Christopher', and his

father nicknamed him the Ibez 'the shyest of all beasts' and according to Carl Ketcham, the editor of John's letters, he was 'a modest likeable man, tactful, sometimes sentimental, with quietly shrewd insight and a dry wit salted with irony'. Hunter Davies states 'He was the quiet introverted one of the family, with Dorothy's sensitivities, though without her effervescence and liveliness'. After a Lakeland tour with John and William, Coleridge wrote 'Your Br. John is one of you; a man who hath solitary usings of his own Intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle Tact, a swift instinct of Truth & Beauty. He interests me much'.

John was born at Cockermonth in 1772 and, like his brothers, was educated at Hawkshead School and boarded with Ann Tyson in 1782. A fellow-schoolmate Philip Braithwaite said he saw very little of John but thought he was the nicest of the Wordsworth boys that he had known. It is not surprising that very little was seen of John at school for, an active boy, he found much to occupy his time out of school, fishing, walking, boating, skating. To quote his sister 'Our poor John was called a dunce, because, poor boy, he loved his own solitary dreamings, wanderings with his fishing rod or social Boyish sports better than his master's tasks', (written in 1807). In 1787 at Christmas he left school. Now fifteen years of age he entered the East India Service and sailed to Barbados, and on his return studied navigation for a short while. Thus he began a life of loneliness, danger and stress of mind and body. He speaks of collisions, exposure in all kinds of weather, a naval engagement with the French and a mutiny among his men - a life quite different from William's. The fortune he hoped to make from his voyages was to be shared with his family,

I will work for you...Could I but see you with a green field of your own and a Cow and two or three other little comforts I should be happy.

Dorothy wrote 'John was active, a sportsman with good commonsense and no fear of loneliness, all in all well calculated for the profession he has chosen'.

He began his naval career with the journey to Barbados in 1788, then a voyage to Jamaica, next probably to America 'It is a most detestable place' he wrote long afterwards to Mary Hutchinson. He joined his cousin's ship the *Earl of Abergavenny* as a midshipman and journeyed to the Far East. His wages for a journey of twenty months were £21.19.10d and he wrote in 1790 that he was 'perfectly contented and happy'. On a later journey he received £41.11.8d in wages. In March 1795 he became fourth mate on *Osterley*, his uniform cost him eight guineas! This ship was taking soldiers to the Cape of Good Hope. He became second mate on the *Duke of Montrose* in 1797 and received £93.4.8d in wages for nineteen months and a trading profit of £400. In 1801 he was made captain of the *Earl of Abergavenny*. He desired to make as much money as possible by investing in his cargoes, hoping to retire early and live at Grasmere. His family subscribed generously. He lost several thousand pounds on his first voyage by investing in a cargo that did not sell but in January 1805 he wrote from Portsmouth

My investment is well laid in and my voyage thought by most persons the first of the season and if we are so fortunate as to get safe and soon to Bengal - I mean before any other ship of the season - I have no doubt that I shall make a very good voyage of it, if not a *very great* one... I have got my investment up on the best of terms, having paid money for the great part of it, which I was enabled to do by one Gentleman's lending me £5,000. It amounts to about £20,000 - in goods and money.

Let us for a short time leave the Sailor and take a brief glimpse of John the Critic of his brother's poems, as can be gleaned from his letters. 'As for the Lyrical Ballads' he writes to his sister in 1801

I never give myself the smallest concern about them. I am certain in time they *must sell*... The Lyrical Ballads are in almost every Booksellers shop in Portsmouth - which has surprised me because they deal as little in new books in Portsmouth as any town in England of its size

To Mary Hutchinson he says, 'I bought one copy here to set them going...if they have real merit they must make their own way in the world'. To his brother he writes in 1805

in the Lyrical Ballads my favourites are the Mad mother, part of the Indian Woman and Joanna - I like Michael and all the poems on the naming of places but Joanna best... The poem of the wye is a poem that I admire but after having read it I do not like to turn to it again - among those unpublish'd that I have seen my favorite is the Leach gatherer, the Sparrow's Nest and Cuckoo - there is a harshness in many of the others which I do not like - I think the Lyrical Ballads taken altogether far superior to the last poems -

In his letters to Mary Hutchinson he often discusses his brother's poems

Joanna is by far, far the most beautiful poem William has ever written of its length - it is complete in all its parts - it is written with great tenderness - (some humour)

or again

the truth is there are few people that like, or read poetry many who buy it - buy it for the name - read about twenty lines the language is very fine & they are content with praising extravagantly the whole poem - Most of William's poetry improves upon 2nd 3rd or 4th reading now people in general are not sufficiently interested in the first reading to induce them to try a 2nd...it is certainly founded upon nature and that is the best foundation

To Mary again he writes in 1801

You ask me what impression these volumes have made - the fact is everyone is so full of his own business that *even* I scarce hear them mentioned except I *lug* them in myself... I think in time they will become popular but it will be by degrees - the fact is there are not a great many that will be pleased with the poems but those that are pleased will be pleased in a high degree and they *will be people of sense* - this will have weight - & people who neither understand or wish to understand will buy & praise them - Longman is a vile abominable and impudent Jew for only giving William £80 for the 2 Editions He will clear at least £400 or perhaps £500.

On 30 January 1801

I have been exceedingly pleased with the poem of the Cumberland Beggar. I was at first reading disappointed with Michael. at the second reading I was not a little pleased - but latterly I have been excessively delighted with it - when I first read it I thought the circumstances too minute & the language too low for a blank verse poem... but now I think it more interesting and particularly to those who are acquainted & have lived in Cumberland.

On 17 December 1802 he writes to his sister

I am much pleased with William's sonnet to Bonaparte I think it is well written - It is like the rest of his sonnets which I have seen not much likely to please *common* people at the first sight but I think they are very good - yet still think it is a pity he should employ himself in that way.

He is anxious to improve his literary taste and writes

tell William I wish he would let me know what books he thinks would suit me best to the amount of 20 or £30 to take to sea with me - Shakespear is the only man I like at present...

A letter to Mary Hutchinson indicates that he had already begun to read Shakespeare

I am beginning to read Shakespear's works & cannot express how much I have been affected by Othello with shocking faults Shakespear carries you beyond the bound of human nature - he is the greatest of all men - Romeo & Juliet was the first I began with Juliet's character is most incomparably drawn but how far how very far is that play inferior to Othello -

His interest in Nature is confirmed in a letter from Dorothy

John would walk with William or me, or both of us, and was continually pointing out...something which perhaps would have escaped our observation, for he had so fine an eye that no distinction was unnoticed by him, and so tender a feeling that he never noticed anything in vain.

Indeed it was his description of a daisy seen on the Isle of Wight that inspired William's poem 'To the Daisy' which begins 'Sweet flower...'

I have been on shore this afternoon...Primroses are beautiful - & the daisy's after sunset are like little *white* stars upon the dark green fields -

Carl Ketcham says 'Towards William's power as a poet he was deferential and self-effacing; William's welfare was his life work. But his deference towards William or anyone else, never erased his common sense or his sharp critical eye.' William says 'He encouraged me to persist in the plan of life which I had adopted; and I will work for you was his language and you shall attempt to do something for the world.' John's visit to Grasmere in 1800 helped to deepen his faith in nature and imagination. So let us go to Grasmere where, during their tour of 1799 William, John and Coleridge discovered a small cottage to let, and it was to this house that the Wordsworths eventually moved in December 1799, and a visit from John was expected. Dorothy had not seen him for several years, but although his visit was expected he became shy and could not find courage enough to lift the latch - he turned away and returned to the inn, and sent word that he had arrived. The visit was a great success, and he stayed for eight months. They were to look back to those days of happiness for comfort when John was no longer with them. 'He loved this fireside' Dorothy wrote 'he paced over this floor in pride before we had been six weeks in the house, exulting within his noble heart that his Father's Children had once again a home together'. He roamed the country with his fishing rod or worked on small contrivances to make the house more comfortable. 'He loved our cottage, he helped us to furnish it, and to make the gardens - trees are

growing now which he planted.' 'Many a time has he called me out in an evening to look at the moon or stars, or a cloudy sky, or this vale in the quiet moonlight.' Within two days of his arrival he had traced out a footway among the trees of the fir plantation which from that time on was known in the Wordsworth circle as 'John's Grove'. He used to visit it daily, wearing a path through the opening in the trees

By that habitual restlessness of foot
Wherewith a sailor measures o'er and o'er
His short domain upon the vessels Deck
While she is travelling through the dreary seas

(*Poems on the Naming of Places* - Wordsworth)

William and Dorothy often visited the spot after his departure, to follow his path up to the rock where it ended. John was furious when some of the firs nearby were cut. He wrote to Mary Hutchinson in March 1801 'I wish I had the *monster* that cut them down in *my* ship & I would give him a tight flogging'. John slept in a 'small bed without curtains in a small unceiled room' upstairs which Dorothy papered with newspapers (they lasted until a few years ago). As Carl Ketcham comments, considering the closeness of their quarters they all got on well except that John showed a 'little hastiness of temper when anything was done in a clumsy or bungling way, or when improperly contradicted upon occasions of not much importance'.

On 29 September 1800 William and Dorothy went with John as far as Grisedale Tarn, one of their favourite fishing spots, on his way to join the *Earl of Abergavenny*. By the fork in the path they stood together

While each into himself descends,
For that last thought of parting friends
That is not to be found

(From 'Elegiac Verses in Memory of my Brother John')

Brother and sister watched as John '*hurried* down the stony mountain'. 'My heart was right sad' wrote Dorothy in her Journal but she 'could not help thinking we should see him again'. John was never to return to Grasmere. In his letters he frequently refers to Grasmere. To Mary he writes

I wish I was once more at Grasmere to see my brother & sister & Sara,
nor shall I ever forget the many pleasant hours I have spent there & I
look forward with hope and pleasure to the time we shall all meet there.

Before we return to John the Sailor a brief mention should be made of the letters he wrote to Mary Hutchinson, who became the wife of William in 1802. Some commentators see them as love letters, but others see in them only a warm friendship. Perhaps a few quotations will give you the opportunity to decide for yourselves, remembering that John was a sailor and not given to purple passages

As my time is precious I think I cannot do better than by writing to *thee* and more particularly so as I was so short in my last letter... write to me often and *long* letters. ...I make this request because my dear Mary there is nothing that thou canst write but what will give me pleasure & to be with *thee* I read thy letters over a *dozen* times in a day - Goodnight and believe me to be thine affectionate friend.

My dearest Mary... Come come my dearest Mary do not tell me again that you do not know how to direct to me do you suppose that J.W. Esq. &c is not to be found in such a place as Portsmouth - if you were to see how great a man I am on board my great ship you would say that I have

just cause to be offended... God love thee and believe me to be thine affectionate Friend John Wordsworth

That news of the marriage came as a shock to him is quite plain in the letter he sent to Mary on 22 October 1802.

My dearest Mary, I have been reading your letter over & over again, my dearest Mary till tears have come into my eyes & I know not how to express myself thou'rt a kind & dear creature. But whatever fate Befal me I shall love thee to the last and bear thy memory with me to the grave

Of this letter the editor of Mary Hutchinson's Letters says 'This letter is unlike the others. Scrawled at the end of one of Dorothy's, it is blurred and careless as if he had indeed been moved to tears. After that the letters cease and he refers to her as his Sister Mary'.

Between voyages John spent some time in London, and his remarks on the London theatres are deprecating

I have been several times to the play since I came to London - the houses are so large that you can hear nothing & I think we shall never see another play well acted on the London stage - the favourite Pizzaro is beautiful in the scenery but the noise rant and flare acting is excessively disgusting (in the extreme). Shakespears plays are not liked by the town the reason I conceive to be is that many of the beautiful passages are not heard & understood, the houses being so large.

He was very fond of children and this is shown in a letter to Mary written while he was staying with his Uncle William

I was exceedingly pleased with the children [there were six of them] I think without partiality I never saw finer children in my life - I could only stay a fortnight but in that time I believe I became a great favourite with them George, the youngest Boy... the morning before I came away got a rope &...would tie me to a tree & said I should not go away again.

Now we come to the last sad episode in the story compiled from notes given me by Mr Whiting. On 24 January 1805 John wrote to William

I have the pleasure to inform you that the Abergany is arrived safe at Portsmouth and if the Wind continues fair which it is at present I shall expect to leave this place tomorrow ...My investment is well laid in & my voyage thought by most persons the first of the season and if we are so fortunate as to get safe and soon to Bengall I mean before any other ship of the season I have no doubt but that I shall make a very good voyage of it.

The ship was in first class condition although the thickness of the bottom was but five inches. The crew numbered 160, and there were fifty to sixty passengers, about thirty Chinese and 160 troops. The cargo it carried of cotton goods and bullion was one of the most valuable ever shipped to the Far East.

Because of prevailing wartime conditions the *Earl of Abergavenny* sailed from Portsmouth on 1 February 1805 under escort of the frigate *Weymouth*. Shortly after leaving port a violent storm arose and as the convoy was in danger of becoming dispersed, a signal was made to put into Portland Roads, Weymouth Bay, the short voyage from Portsmouth having taken four days, such

was the violence of the storm. Despite the presence of a pilot on board, the *Earl of Abergavenny* on the evening of 5 February struck the rocks (appropriately named The Shambles) about two miles from Portland Bill, and in twelve fathoms of water. The light was fair and for the first hour or so it was thought that the ship might be got off without sustaining material damage. This did not take place, darkness fell, and the storm continued unabated, and efforts to refloat the ship failed, guns were fired as distress signals. To add to their difficulties the carpenter announced that a considerable leak had been found near the bottom of the chain-pumps, which it was not possible to stop. As John realised that the wealth stored in the ship's hull would be lost, he knew that the longed for independence for himself and family would never materialise and he cried to the Pilot 'O Pilot, you have ruined me'. The pumps were kept going but all attempts to keep the vessel afloat proved fruitless, especially as the gale had increased and the vessel was being pounded on the rocks. The crew managed to launch one of the ship's boats carrying Joseph Wordsworth and six seamen together with ship's papers and dispatches. One boat came off from the shore and rescued five passengers.

Just before the final plunge the First Mate, Samuel Baggot, said to Captain Wordsworth who was clinging to the rigging 'We have done all we can Sir, she will sink in a moment', to which the Captain calmly replied 'It cannot be helped - God's will be done.' The Fourth Mate, Thomas Gilpin, who acted with great gallantry, was among those who survived. He made a last despairing appeal to the Captain to save himself but he perished, as did over two hundred others. His body was not found until 20 March and was conveyed to the parish church of Wyke Regis, near Weymouth and there interred in an unmarked grave on 21 March.

A full account of the disaster was made by Gilpin to the Directors of the East India Company and a Committee of Inquiry unanimously resolved that 'the Commander, Officers and Ship's Company...be fully acquitted of all Imputation of neglect or misconduct in respect of the Loss of that Ship'. Mr Evans, a passenger on the *Abergavenny* wrote 'in all his conduct, of which I was the witness, I only observed steadiness, judgment and ability, and in the serious hour of danger firmness and resolution, which to the last he manfully maintained. It may be conceived that the mild and reflecting character of your Brother was not so well calculated for the scenes he had to encounter as others who had less feeling, which imposes the appearance of more energy; but as far as I can judge, he tempered his character with qualities that rendered him equal to the arduous struggles of the profession he had adopted'.

News of the disaster quickly reached London, and Richard Wordsworth wrote to his brother

My dear Brother, It is with the most painful concern that I inform you of the Loss of the Ship *Abergavenny* off Weymouth last night. I am acquainted with but few of the particulars of the melancholy Event. I am told that a great number of Persons have perished, and that our Brother John is amongst that number. Mr. Joseph Wordsworth is amongst those who have been saved. The Ship struck against a Rock & went to the Bottom - You will impart this to Dorothy in the best manner you can, & remember me most affectionately to her, & your wife, believe me your's most sincerely, Richard Wordsworth.

Sara Hutchinson, who was on a visit to a friend in Kendal, hurried to

Grasmere and intercepted the letter at the Ambleside Post Office on her way. When William replied to the letter he said

The lamentable news which your Letter brought us has now been known to us seven hours during which time I have done all in my power to alleviate the distress of poor Dorothy and my Wife...They are both very ill.

A letter written by Mary on 7 March 1805 tells of the effects of the tragedy

My dear Mrs. Clarkson, We well know how deeply you would sympathise in our sorrow... we have all hitherto preserved our health through this great trial far, far better than our dearest friends could have hoped.. I need not tell you that it is a blow that will hang heavily to our hearts as long as we shall live. We all have done our best to reconcile ourselves and we have so far succeeded that the perplexity and distractedness of our grief has given place to one feeling of deep sorrow. Our beloved William! My dear friend you would love him more than ever, could you but know how he has exerted himself to comfort us, and after all, as he tells us, his, is the greatest loss - because he says it is only our pleasures and our joys that are broken in upon - but this loss of John is deeply connected with his *business*. This is true - but is not *his* sorrow ours. ...We think that were we anywhere but at Grasmere we should be better, for there is nothing that does not bring his figure before us. Many of the shrubs in the garden were planted by his hand... He loved everything about this dear spot, and John was the first who led me to everything that I love in this neighbourhood... O Mrs. Clarkson he shall live amongst us for ever.

To Sir George Beaumont William wrote

This is the end of his part of the agreement, of his efforts for my welfare! God grant me life and strength to fulfil mine! I shall never forget him, never lose sight of him, there is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living, nay far more sacred, calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost to live in honour and worthiness.

The effect on Wordsworth was shattering, he wrote nothing for two months after John's death. 'I used to think that John and you' he wrote to Richard, 'would be the longest lived of any of us.' In June of that year he went to Grisedale Tarn to fish where five years before Dorothy and William had parted from John for the last time at Grasmere. 'Poor William was overcome...' said Dorothy, 'and with floods of tears wrote those verses.' The poem was 'Elegiac Verses in Memory of my Brother'.

The first Stanza of the poem was unpublished until 1947, and according to Mrs Moorman records what the sight of the flower did for him: the flower was a moss campion.

I only look'd for pain and grief
And trembled as I drew more near.
But God's unbounded love is here
And I have found relief.
The precious spot is all my own
Save only that this Plant unknown,
A little one and lowly sweet,

Not surely now without Heaven's grace
 First seen, and seen too in this place,
 Is flowering at my feet.

In the poem 'To the Daisy' written in 1805, he dwells on the death of John,

A meek man and a brave!
 The birds shall sing and ocean make
 A mournful murmur for *his* sake:
 And thou, sweet flower, shall sleep and wake
 Upon his senseless grave.

This poem becomes even more poignant if one reads a passage from *Poems on the naming of Places* 'When, to the attractions of the busy world' which tells of the happy days at Grasmere when John was with them and made the path through the fir grove. It ends

Alone I tread this path - for aught I know,
 Timing my steps to thine; and with a store
 Of undistinguishable sympathies,
 Mingling most earnest wishes for the day
 When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
 A second time, in Grasmere's happy vale.

In 1806 Wordsworth composed another Elegiac Poem 'Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm' which shows what effect the death had on his poetic writings.

I have submitted to a new control:
 A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
 A deep distress hath humanized my soul.

 Not for a moment could I now behold
 A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
 The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old:
 This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

We cannot leave without a reference to Charles and Mary Lamb. As Professor Alan Hill told us, it was from Lamb that full details of the tragedy were obtained. 'Adopt me as one of your family in this affliction, and use me without ceremony as such' he wrote. The friendship that began slowly between Lamb and Wordsworth was cemented and grew firm and strong to last throughout their lives. Lamb's last tribute to John must have given much consolation to the sorrowing household.

As long as we remember anything we shall remember your brother's noble person, and his sensible manly modest voice, and how safe and comfortable we all were in our apartment where I am now writing... You must cultivate his spirits as a legacy; and believe that such as he cannot be lost. He was a cheerful soul.

THE CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

We celebrated Lamb's birthday, this year on 11 February, again at Frederick's, Campden Passage, where the charming garden setting and the delicious food and drink again delighted us. An encouragingly large gathering of members and friends, presided over by Professor Stevens, heard our guest of honour, Richard Wordsworth, conjure up for us the very spirit of Elia. Both in his elegant and humorous introductory remarks and in the

rendering he gave us of the writing of Lamb himself, he held us spell-bound as he proposed the toast. The toast to Provincial and Overseas Members and Guests was proposed by Mr Charles Branchini and responded to by Mr Eric Norris. We were happy to have with us both girls and boys from Christ's Hospital and the Grecians who said Grace for us this year were Charles Foster and Andrew Barnard. Our Chairman, Dr Wilson, thanked the President for his kindness in superintending these happy proceedings and we take this opportunity too of thanking our Hon. General Secretary, Mrs Huxstep, on whom all our activities depend.

A WARNING TO THE CURIOUS with regard to Henry Crabb Robinson

D E Wickham

Shortly after my article on Thomas Massa Alsager appeared (*Charles Lamb Bulletin* No.35, July 1981) the Librarian of Dr Williams's Library, Mr John Creasey, wrote to me about the quotations from Henry Crabb Robinson.

Robinson's manuscript diary and reminiscences are kept in Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, WC1. Since any serious student of Charles Lamb is bound to quote Robinson at some point and although Edith J Morley's three volumes of extracts entitled 'Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers', Dent, 1938, look much more dependable than any earlier edition, it is worth noting that they are far from reliable.

Mr Creasey referred to the first meeting of Robinson and Alsager, which can now be dated to 8 April 1812:

Then at Serjeant Rough's where I met Mr Burel & a Mr Alsager. Mr B a sensible & most amiable man Mr A also very pleasing in his manner with a gentlemanly frankness about him.

He also gave the correct version of my quotation about another meeting in 1812 (*Bulletin*, page 49) in which I noted a certain ambiguity and which he shows was sadly mangled in the Morley version. Robinson was not being rude about Alsager but about a man whose name he did not record and probably did not know or remember. The passage, dated 6 November 1812, should read:

Accompanied J Collier to Alsinger's for the first time. [Compare Lamb's remark of 9 August 1815 to Wordsworth about 'Alsager (whom you call Alsinger...)' - so was this a shared joke or was the name pronounced, say, All'-sigger?] A party to dinner Barnes, Allingham, & one [blank] a floor cloth manufacturer in the Boro' near Alsinger - not a very agreeable man because a man of pretensions. B. says dealing in canvass [sic] he thinks he has a right to talk of pictures - Il affiche les beaux arts; he has travelled, but his language is coarse, rather familiar than easy - The day passed off tolerably well, tho' not in the very highest pleasure. A. is a sensible man, but apparently without power. B. alone of the party a very interesting man. He knows the tone of good company; never presses but takes the subject from others & throws in a pleasantry as a make light to otherwise a heavy argument. And he makes you think he knows more than he says.

I have to thank Mr Peter Luttmann-Johnson, a Member of the Court of The Clothworkers' Company, for confirming and augmenting my speculation in Note 6 of the original article about the connection between his mother's family, the Hornes, and the Alsagers. He has also described a family tree in which the unusual Massa element of Alsager's name is shown, without

supporting evidence, as the surname of some 17th century ancestors of Alsager's mother. It is found today as an unusual surname in both London and Malta.

For the record, I purposely did not use the Henry Crabb Robinson manuscripts nor the *unpublished* archives of *The Times* when compiling my original article. All my working papers and correspondence concerning Alsager, including Bodleian photocopies of Puttick and Simpson sale catalogues of 1847 and 1853 which refer to his musical library, have been deposited in the Clothworkers' Hall archives.

FOR THE RECORD

The Reverend Sydney Smith is quoted in Hesketh Pearson's *The Smiths of Smiths*, chapter 11 (page 306 in the old Penguin edition), as saying of Charles Lamb 'He draws so much beer that no wonder he buffoons people - he must have a butt to put it in'. This does not seem to have been picked up in E V Lucas' *Life*.

D E W

The Financial Times recently ran a competition in which one had to devise titles, usually more or less comic, for false book-backs. The winners were announced in the issue dated 29 January 1983. Among those discussed but not given a prize was a submission by H W Fairlie - 'Lamb: Essayist and Poet', by Mary Hadder-Little.

D E W

OBITUARY

Mrs Anna Terry died towards the end of 1983 - had we but known it, our November meeting was the last she would attend. A member since January 1973, Mrs Terry was a faithful attender at our meetings, a willing contributor to discussions and readings, and since 1976 a stimulating member of the Council. Her literary interests were wide (not only Lamb and his circle but also Dr Johnson and Tobias Smollett). For years she battled against ill-health; her lively and informed comments and her practical criticisms (most recently on the problems of tackling a whole roast poussin at the 1983 Birthday Luncheon) will be much missed by her many friends in the Charles Lamb Society.

M R H

ELIAN NOTES AND QUERIES

Professor Carl Woodring writes: 'Coleridge is quoted in *Table Talk*, under the date August 4, 1883, as saying "Charles Lamb wrote an essay on a man who lived in past time". Where is the essay to be found?' Answer to the Editor, please, if any member can help.

NOTES

FROM DENMARK

Hans Jørgen Pedersen and Jørgen G Rasmussen of Copenhagen Technical College, KKF, are editing an anthology of international contemporary English-writing authors, for use in Scandinavian schools and extension courses and would like to hear from possible contributors of short stories, poems or articles. For information please write to Hans Jørgen Pedersen, 5 Lupinvej, DK2670 Grøve Strand, Denmark.

CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND RELIGION

Some members may be interested in the Conference 'Romanticism and Religion: in Honour of Coleridge and Schleiermacher' to be held at Hatfield College, Durham from 25 to 29 September 1984. Particulars from the Revd David Jasper at the College.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Charles Lamb Society will take place on Saturday, 12 May 1984 at the Mary Ward Centre, 42/3 Queen Square, London WC1, beginning at 2.45. Nominations are invited for the vacancies on the Council arising from those members retiring in accordance with the Society's rules. Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible, after ensuring that the nominees are prepared to stand.

NEW MEMBERS

We apologize that the list of New Members has been several times squeezed out of recent *Bulletins*, so that this will seem somewhat out-of-date but we hope it is better late than never.

Dr Alec Bond, Literature Department, Southwest State University, Marshall, Minnesota 56258, USA

Mrs E P Burns, 8 Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertford, Herts

Dr Charles De Paolo, 23 Greentree Lane, Staten Island, New York 10314, USA
Serials Dept, Dupre Library, USL, 302 St Mary Blvd, Lafayette, La. 70504, USA

The Rev. T A Gardiner, Mitre House, 6 Shenfield Road, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8AA

Mrs M Gerrish, Flat 1, 35 Portsmouth Road, Surbiton, Surrey

R M Healey, South Wing, Cokenach House, Barkway, Royston, Herts SG8 8DL

Mrs M Howell, 15 Canons Park Close, Donnefield Avenue, Edgware HA8 6RJ

Dr J B Misenheimer Jr, PO Box 1441, Terre Haute, Indiana 4808, USA

M A Parker, 241 Ladysmith Road, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 3AQ

Mrs M E Rydbeck, Nylundagatan 43, S-33100 Varnamo, Sweden

F W Stanley, 3 St John's Close, Cowbridge, S. Glamorgan

Mrs J E Tsushima, 5 Berkeley Gardens, London W8

Serials Section, Tulane University Library, New Orleans, LA70118, USA

Mrs S Wentworth-Sheilds, Flat 11, 45 New Compton Street, London WC2H 8DF

EDITORIAL ECCENTRICITY

Members will notice that this *Bulletin* is to some extent 'back to front'. This was really done for logistical reasons, to ensure that the Clare reviews did not *again* get squeezed off the end. But perhaps kindly readers will put it down to a spirit of Elian nonconformity!