

# Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter

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## Orts 31, 1994

The George MacDonald Society

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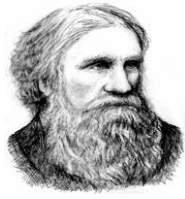
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# Orts

## The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 31, February 1994

### FUTURE EVENTS

LITITH CENTENARY SYMPOSIUM. A joint symposium with the Inklings Gesellschaft at Cologne from April 28th to May 1st 1995. Further details will be available soon. The Inklings Gesellschaft have recently hosted very successful J.R.R. Tolkien and Dorothy L. Sayers centenary symposie.

WORKSHOP ON THE FAIRY TALES OF GEORGE MACDONALD AND LEWIS CARROLL, April 22nd-24th 1994. Full details available from the Secretary or from Hawkwood College, Painswick Old Lane, STROUD, GL6 7QW

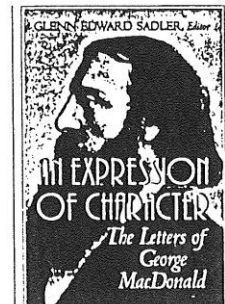
### NEW PUBLICATIONS

As a minister in 19th century Scotland, George MacDonald became an internationally acclaimed author, lecturer, and storyteller whose work has inspired many other prominent writers, including G.K.Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R Tolkien, and Maurice Sendak. This extensive collection of MacDonald's personal correspondence offers intriguing insights into the inner thoughts and visionary ideas behind MacDonald's life and career.

*An Expression of Character* draws from more than 3,000 letters to friends and family members, many not previously published. Editor Glenn Edward Sadler has arranged the most significant of MacDonald's letters chronologically – ranging from his boyhood in Huntly and student days at Aberdeen University, to his marriage and fatherhood, to his career as a novelist, to his lecture tour in America in 1872, to his later days in Bordighera, Italy. Sadler also introduces each section, summarizing the significant milestones in MacDonald's life.

Fascinating and often full of humor, these letters provide a window into MacDonald's personal and spiritual reflections. From his own introspective spirit MacDonald writes openly, revealing his personal fears, doubts, and hopes, and – most of all – rehearsing his dynamic belief in what C.S. Lewis defined as “good Death” – that glorious life hereafter.

Readers of MacDonald will find in these letters penetrating glimpses



of a deeply religious and sensitive man. To the specialist and general reader alike the letters speak with heartfelt sincerity and warmth. Those familiar with MacDonald's fiction and poetry will find the best portrait yet of the man himself.

**An Expression of Character is published by Eerdman's at \$29.99 and will be available in the U.K. through Gracewing.**

### **The 1993 AGM**

The AGM is often a boring affair, dutifully but reluctantly attended. Not so the AGM of the MacDonald Society at St Martin's in the Field's. The necessary business was slotted in between various pleasures and was quickly and efficiently transacted.

First there was half an hour set aside for conversation with friends, old and new, including the Johannesens from California, who are steadily republishing MacDonald's works. These and other publications were on sale and could be looked at over biscuits and a glass of wine.

But the most moving display was a celebration of the life and work of Anthony and Margaret Barker. This brought a sharp sense of loss, but also a vivid reminder of all that they had achieved and stood for. The display included some of Maggie's paintings. There was a good portrait of Anthony, but her main gift was for landscapes. Anthony, as benefits a surgeon, was skillful with his hands. There was a fine carved boy, celebrating their fortieth wedding anniversary, a small rotating table, and photographs of other pieces of furniture. Also on display were examples of his beautiful calligraphy – the latest being the record of the Macdonald Memorial at Drumblade. But perhaps the most moving item of all was a hamper piled with the produce of their allotment – a symbol of generosity, hard work and their view of life.

While we looked and talked, Dr Leslie Cowan and his wife were improvising a stand for his projector. He then gave us an illustrated survey of Arthur Hughes's career as an artist. In 1846, at the age of 14, Hughes had left Archbishop Tennyson's Grammar School to attend the school of Design in Somerset house. He soon went on to the Poval Academy Schools, where he won the silver medal for his drawing from the antique. Two years later, in 1849, he exhibited his Musidora Birmingham. It was then that he came into contact with the newly formed Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In 1851/2 he painted his Ophelia, a totally different concept to Millais' but equally memorable. This was followed by his best-known works: April Love (1855/6 Tate) and The Long Engagement (1854/ ?) Birmingham). In 1857 he contributed The Passing of Athur to the Pre-Raphaelite frescoes in the Oxford Union, and two years later he painted a similar chivalric subject: the Knight of the Sun, recently the subject of an article and letters in North Wind.

In the 1850's, Hughes shared a studio with Alexander Munro and the sculptor introduced him to MacDonald, who became a close friend. Hughes was to be the most sensitive illustrator of

MacDonald's work and in particular of his fairy stories. He could enter into MacDonald's imaginative world and he had a special empathy with childhood, from Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song to Ransald Bannerman's Boyhood. The bond of sympathy and friendship was strengthened by the tragic engagement of his nephew Ted Hughes (himself a talented artist) to Mary MacDonald.

Although never given the recognition he deserved, Hughes continued to paint in the true Pre-Raphaelite tradition until his death in 1915. The audience was glad to hear they can look forward, in the near future, to the publication of Dr Cowan's book on Arthur Hughes.

After a vote of thanks to the speaker, the meeting dealt with the business agenda of the AGM. Then John Fridmore generously invited the members up to his flat, where they enjoyed coffee and food, a bookcase full of MacDonald's works, and a magnificent view of St. Martin's.

Katharine Macdonald

Volume 10 of Seven is a special Dorothy L. Sayers number. It can be ordered through the Secretary who will supply full details of the contents on request. Your support will help insure the future of this excellent journal which carries many articles on MacDonald.

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Our member Vivian Forrest had contributed an article on MacDonald to the Scottish Field and this should be published in the not too distant future.

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Prof. Giorgio Spina has taken a short break from translating MacDonald and has just published an Italian translation of Boswell's Life of Johnson. We understand that further MacDonald translations will follow shortly.

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We strongly recommend the autobiography recently published by our member John Heath-Stubbs. We asked the publishers for leaflets about this book to enclose in North Wind, but none were forthcoming!

### **Memorial Meeting for Anthony and Margaret Barker**

Three members of the Committee of the MacDonald Society were able to attend this memorial service. The cathedral is by no means a small building, but it was packed for this occasion. The service began formally enough, and there was a distinct stirring of unease throughout the building at the words "May they rest in peace" at the end of the Bidding. Nothing could be further from Tony and Margaret's outlook. However, this was soon rectified by a fine poem composed and read by Dr Leo Avlen emphasizing the opposite outlook: that like Blake,

the Barkers did not expect death to interrupt their strivings. From here onwards convention was swamped in joyous celebration. Splendid singing by the Zulu group Shikisha mixed with the Barker's favorite hymns and Simon and Garfunkle (on tape). In two passionate yet perfectly controlled addresses by the Pt. Revd. Lawrence Zulu, Bishop of Swaziland and Professor Harold Lambert of St George's Hospital. Tooting, we learnt what the Barkers meant to their African friends and to their medical colleagues in England. The range of their work exhibited such diversity in unity that few of the congregation were apparently aware of more than a small range of their activities. But all were united in thankfulness at having known them.

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Members visiting Huntly may like to know that the Huntly Hotel in the Square has opened again under new management and warmly welcomes George MacDonald Society Members. Proprietor Mrs McRobb: tell 0466.792703.

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**For Sale:** The Princess and the Goblin, At the Back of the North Wind, The Princess and Curdie, Blackie, c 1914, 6 pounds each including p & p, overseas 7 pounds. From Prof. R. Fletcher, 2 Chestnut Cl. AMERSHAM HP6 6EO. In future, Orts will not carry advertisements for twentieth century editions of MacDonald's books which are currently in print. Offers of nineteenth century editions of MacDonald are always welcome.

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**Change of Editor** Due to an increasing load of church work, Nicholas Bolton has been obliged to give up the editorship of Orts. Future issues will be edited by William Webb, 37, Joseph's Rd. GUILDFORD, Surrey GU1 1CN, to whom all copy should be sent. Copy deadline for the next issue is March 31<sup>st</sup>. We apologise for the late appearance and poor format of the present interim issue.

All general enquiries about the MacDonald Society should be made to The Hon. Secretary, 9 Medway Drive, FOREST ROW, East Sussex, RH18, 5NU.