

# Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter

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The George MacDonald Society

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## **The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 19, April 1990**

### **Report on last year's AGM.**

This was held on Nov 24th 1989 at Westbourne Park Villas. 12 people were present, with apologies from 4 more. Chairman's, Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were given and approved. The Society's account stood (after the production of North Wind) at £212.58. The Committee were ratified in their positions for the coming year, and John Docherty welcomed as a new member of same. The Committee now comprises John Docherty, Rachel Johnson, Freda Levson, Chris MacDonald, Bill Raeper, Raphael Shaberman, Philip Streeter & Kathy Triggs.

Freda Levson mentioned that planning permission had been sought to build a cottage opposite the gates of Drumblade Cemetery (the MacDonald family burial ground). The Society had sent a letter of protest which had joined other protests, and permission had been refused. The Society agreed to organise a George MacDonald event to be held in Huntly in September 1990. Freda Levson & Bill Raeper had visited Huntly already, had made initial contacts and devised a draft programme.

There being no further business, members settled down to listen to John Docherty's talk comparing MacDonald's and Lewis Carroll's fantasies, entitled The Golden Key.

2. **The Library.** The Committee feel that our collection of MacDonald texts (housed at King's College) is not being sufficiently used, and have appointed John Docherty to be Honorary Librarian. He reports that the Society is now being readily quoted in books, article, etc., and would welcome offers of material for the library – anything at all relating to George MacDonald, either books or manuscripts. He is also trying to establish what MacDonald books are available at other libraries. Any information, offers or queries to John, please, at 9 Medway Drive, Forest Row, East Sussex, RH18 5NU, UK. Phone 034282 3859.

3. **Subscriptions.** Rachel Johnson would like to remind members to send their subscriptions to her at 97 Hykeham Road, Lincoln, LN6 8AD, UK. If there is a red spot in the margin at this point it means your subscription is overdue. This method replaces the expensive reminder notes we have formerly sent out, and is, in effect, the final request. No subscription means no more mailings this year! If you find no red spot, you can of course ignore this and pass on to the next item.

4. **A Visit to George MacDonald Country.** You should all have had your brochure inviting you to this event (September 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> at Huntly Hotel). There are still places available, so send your £25 deposit as soon as possible, please, to 58a Westbourne Park Villas, London, W2 5EB, UK.

5. **Retreat.** Hike and Judy Phillips are organising a weekend Retreat on George MacDonald topics at the Christian Renewal Centre, Silverston, Oregon, on May 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>. They say it will

be not a literary seminar, book fair or intellectual convocation, but a weekend of lectures, fun, discussion and personal interaction and growth. “This retreat is intended to offer an environment where truth in spirit exists, not necessarily accuracy of analysis nor insight of intellect. Come prepared to listen to hearts, not discuss abstract ideas.” Plenty of Scottish food, music and dancing will be available, so kilts and bagpipes will be very much in evidence! For information, contact Mike & Judy Phillips at 1905 Williams St, Eureka, CA 95501, USA.

6. **Wheaton College.** Lyle Dorsett is leaving his post as Director of the Marion E Wade Center, to head the College’s Urban Studies programme. We wish him every success, and look forward to liaising with the new Director, when appointed.

7. **Book Section.**

i) MacDonalds in Print. The catalogue of British Books in Print has 15 titles, mainly the fantasies, whereas the US Books in Print has 2 1/2 columns devoted to MacDonald. This is, of course, due to the sterling work of US editors in bringing MacDonald before a new public. Oddly enough, of the novels only The Fisherman’s Lady [= Malcolm] is available in the UK (pub. Pickering & Inglis). However, Michael Phillips’ Sunrise Centenary Edition, which aims to reprint MacDonald’s original texts, is available by post. Contact Mike at the address given in para. 5.

The growing number of writers called George MacDonald leads to such anomalies as Thumbscrew and Rack, pub. American Atheists, being attributed to our GMD! UK readers might like to know that Oxford University Press is reprinting The Princess and the Goblin and The Princess and Curdie as a single volume in their World’s Classics series. It’s edited by Roderick McGillis, Asst. Professor of English at the University of Calgary, and editor of The Children’s Literature Association Quarterly.

ii) J Joseph Flynn has responded to the query in Orts 17, “What should be the future direction and purpose of the George MacDonald Society?” with the following:

“I believe that, in addition to being a literary society celebrating the life and work of George MacDonald, the George MacDonald Society should spearhead the effort to get MacDonald’s books back into print.

For years, I have read the angry protests from so-called MacDonald “purists” on both sides of the Atlantic, indignant over the editing and/or abridgement of MacDonald’s novels. But what are we as a Society doing about it? It is wonderful to discuss and critique the work of a great author, but what good does it do if the majority of members cannot obtain his books in unedited form?

Ironically, the only person I know that is making a sincere effort to republish MacDonald in “unedited” form is Michael Phillips (Sunrise Books). It is ironic because he is also one of the people responsible for the publication of a vast array of “edited” MacDonald books. As of this letter, Sunrise Books have published ten titles in unedited facsimile form, in fine hard-bound editions (Many of these titles are near impossible to find in their original form). Sunrise has invested tens of thousands of dollars in an effort to make these books available. But the sales continue to be poor, thus halting their efforts to republish the entire MacDonald catalogue. Again, “What is the Society going to do to keep the name and works of George MacDonald alive?” If we cannot support the efforts of a fellow member to save the “Words” of the Society’s namesake, then what is the purpose of the Society?!

I encourage – no, I exhort the members of the George MacDonald Society to take action. It is up to us. For starters, I would suggest that Society members buy copies of the Sunrise editions (even if you have a complete collection of the originals). If Sunrise could only break even on their investment, they would continue to publish the entire list of out-of-print MacDonald titles.”

- iii) Tony & Kathy Triggs still have 2 MacDonald books for sale (surface post free):  
David Elginbrod ? 1st 1-vol edn. ?1871 printed Bradbury, Agnew: £45.  
The Marquis of Lossie 6th edn. 1884, some damage to hinges etc: £20.

8. **Two Notions of Hell.** This will be the subject for a combined meeting with the Charles Williams Society, to be held on Sat November 24th at 2.30pm at Liddon House, 24 South Audley St, London WC1. Mrs. Watkins is to be the speaker. Put the date in your diary now!

9. **Top Meadow.** Admirers of G K Chesterton have been hoping to purchase his house Top Meadow and to set up a centre for a study of his life and work. The suggestion has now been made that there will be a greater chance of success if the scheme is extended to cover several other Christian writers of this century, and the names of George MacDonald, C S Lewis, Charles Williams, Hilaire Belloc, Christopher Dawson and Dorothy L Sayers immediately come to mind. There has already been some cross-fertilisation, and all will benefit from such a centre for study, information, activities and discussion, and a library of books, tapes, archives, etc.

Beaconsfield, a pleasant small town, is 25 miles west of London, near Windsor and within easy reach of Oxford. This makes it an admirable venue for meetings and social events, particularly in the great studio. The idea is at this stage no more than a new suggestion. It is hoped simply to arouse enough interest to ensure a prompt and vigorous response if and when the time comes to form a representative committee of action. Enquiries and expressions of interest may be sent to Mrs. Christina Scott, Top Meadow, Grove Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks, HP9 1UR. We hope to have your prayers and interest.

10. **Deadlines.** Members have been very good in passing copy to us for inclusion in ORTS. To help you, we would like to make it clear that ORTS comes out at the end of April, August & December. Our copy deadline is the 15th of each of those months. Anything received after August 15th, for example, will be held over for inclusion in December's ORTS.

11. **Telephone Numbers.** British Telecom have been active in Lincoln & Essex, causing an alteration in phone numbers, Rachel Johnson's is now 0522 524085, while Phil Streeter's is 0708 741945. The London code is being altered from May 6th this year, Freda Levson's number will be 071 221 0842.



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