

# Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter

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The George MacDonald Society

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## **The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 37, November 1995**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1995 A.G.M. was held on 13 October, this time in Freda Levson's ever-hospitable flat in West London.

John Docherty, Secretary for many years, has now resigned. The members are deeply grateful for his tireless hard work over these years, when he played a vital part in the Society's development, not least in keeping people in contact with our work in this country and overseas. On this occasion one visitor from outside England was present, J. J. Flynn from California, one of the American publishers of MacDonald reprints. Our distinguished poet-member, John Heath-Stubbs, attended also.

After the business was concluded, our Members' Secretary Rachel Johnson gave a talk. She has become expert on one particular aspect of MacDonald family life, the dramatic scenes based on Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress which were presented by the family in various places up and down the country. Her talk was detailed and extremely fascinating.

Afterwards those present were asked to say briefly how they were first attracted to MacDonald's books, which was a suitable epilogue to a satisfying meeting.

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NOTE RE 'NORTH WIND': It has proved difficult to keep to the normal November publishing date for 'North Wind' this year, because four papers given in German at the Cologne symposium have had to be translated. However, if the magazine is not enclosed with this issue of 'Orts', it will be dispatched to members a week or two later.

### HOW THE GEORGE MACDONALD SOCIETY CAN HELP YOU—AND VICE VERSA

We give here the draft of a proposed separate leaflet for new members. Any suggestions for improvements or modifications to the text would be gratefully received.

#### 1. WHAT THE SOCIETY IS AND DOES

a) Our journal 'North Wind' carries articles giving fresh understanding of MacDonald's writings, studies of the MacDonalds and their friends and the places where they lived, also reviews of new

books and other publications relevant to MacDonald. The newsletter 'Orts' keeps members up-to-date on MacDonald-related events around the world.

b) Members planning to visit places of MacDonald interest can always be given advice, and often direct practical help. MacDonald's use of myth and legend has often inspired creative writers.

c) Members can obtain copies of many MacDonald books in print through the Society at an appreciable saving on the normal retail price.

d) The Society's collection in the library at Kings College, London, is always available to members wishing to carry out research on the author and his writings.

e) Lectures, conferences and workshops are organised whenever and wherever support justifies this. In the workshops the emphasis is upon applying an understanding of MacDonald's thought to participants' present-day problems. The Society has vital contacts with America and Europe where active interest has developed remarkably in recent years.

## 2. YOUR INVOLVEMENT

a) There is abundant scope for ordinary members to do valuable original research. For example, MacDonald often made major alterations in successive editions of his books. The existence of variant texts is recorded, but few of the variants have been documented. Also many extended reports of the author's lectures and sermons are buried in the files of local newspapers in Britain and America and deserve rescuing from oblivion. Early reviews of his works, and testimonies of MacDonald influence in autobiographies etc. can be most valuable.

b) The larger the membership of the Society the more services it can provide; so please encourage everyone you know with an interest in MacDonald to join us. In some areas the Society can arrange for a speaker to talk to a local church or literary group, and members can always bring guests to Society events.

c) The help of anyone with success in journalism or in fundraising is always invaluable, and many other skills can be useful in particular circumstances.

d) Donations of books, articles and newspaper cuttings relating to MacDonald, and Victorian editions of his books, are usually very welcome to us. But please check with the Hon. Librarian before sending, to avoid possible duplication.

e) Suggestions of topics for journal articles or Society events are always welcome, as are ideas for improvements in our publications.

## A TALK ON MACDONALD'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

Our member Raphael Shaberman has just published a book embodying a new approach to MacDonald's friend Lewis Carroll—who is now being seen as one of the former's friends who most strongly influenced his imaginative writing. Raphael is also a leading expert in Macdonald bibliography, and he is talking on this subject to the Children's Books History Society on 19 November at 6.30, at the Library Association, Ridgemount Street, London W C 1. Members of the MacDonald Society are welcome as guests.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON MACDONALD

Another scholarly bibliographer, this time Professor G. Spina from Italy has recently published George MacDonald, un designo bibliografico. The text is in Italian but with numerous English extracts. After the main book-list there is a 'miscellany' which helps to fill out our picture of the writer's later days in Bordighera. Here many presentation copies from admirers are listed, as well as books MacDonald himself acquired. Some letters written from the house by Octavia Hill while she was a guest are most valuable in catching the atmosphere of this exile's Italian existence.

From America comes an excellent issue of 'Wingfold', published by Barbara Amell in Portland, Oregon. The content is mostly reproduced from other sources, including 'The Victorian Fairy Tale' by M. P. Hearn, and a note on illustrating 'The Light Princess'.

'Letters to Lilia' reminds us of the close relationship between MacDonald and his much-loved daughter Lilia. She made a collection of children's verse which was published after her death with drawings by Arthur Hughes. An original contribution to 'Wingfold' is Rachel Johnson's article on the family performances of scenes from The Pilgrim's Progress.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS (continued)

Michael Phillips of Eureka, California, has added MacDonald's Unspoken Sermons, 2nd Series to his Centenary reprints, twelve sermons in all. This is a leatherbound hardback presumably more substantial than the paperback edition brought out by J. J. Flynn, also in California, some years ago. Price \$26.50. The collection of verses 'for children and the childlike' mentioned on the previous page is called Babies' Classics. It has now been republished by Barbara Amell in paperback, and is available only to subscribers of her magazine. The vital illustrations by Arthur Hughes are included, and there is a preface by Winifred MacDonald Troup. It costs \$10 post paid: an extra \$2 for airmail overseas.

## A LETTER FROM GEORGE MACDONALD TO HIS DAUGHTER LILIA

'May you have as many happy birthdays in this world as will make you ready for a happier series of them afterwards, the first of which birthdays will be the one we call the day of death down here. But there is a better, grander birthday than that, which we may have every day—every hour that we turn away from ourselves to the living love that makes our love, and so are born again. And I think all these last birthdays will be summed up in one transcending birthday, far off it may be, but surely to come—the moment where we know in ourselves that we are one with God, are living by his life, and having neither thought nor wish but his—that is, desire nothing but what is perfectly lovely, and love everything in which there is anything to love.' (An extract from a letter of Dec. 1872, from An Expression of Character, edited by Glenn Sadler, 1994.)

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### CONTACTS

Chairman      Rev Phil Streeter:  
66 Clydesdale Road  
Hornchurch  
Essex RM11 1AQ  
Tel 01708 741945

Membership Secretary  
Rachel Johnson  
61 Longdales Road  
Lincoln LN2 2JS  
Tel 01522 532967

Editor of 'North Wind'  
John Docherty  
9 Medway Drive  
Forest Row  
East Sussex RH18 5NU  
Tel 01342 823859

Editor of 'Orts'  
William Webb  
116 Pierrefondes Avenue  
Farnborough  
Hants G114 8NZ  
Tel 01252 543960