

# Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter

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Volume 67

Article 1

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2005

## Orts 67, 2005

The George MacDonald Society

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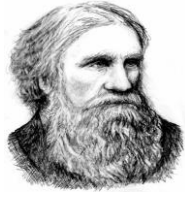
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# Orts

## The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 67, Spring 2005

### Princess Comes Home



(*The Princess and the Goblin* at the Gordon Schools, Huntly, December 15 through 17, 2004)

The Gordon Schools' production of *The Princess and the Goblin* was a treat. In Stuart Paterson's adaptation for the stage, George MacDonald's fable retains its particular charm; but, being a tale of good versus evil, it also provides the elements of pantomime.

Paterson makes the most of the Evil in the story. His goblins are the 'hissable' villains. Lest they be too absurd for us to hate, he adds a Banshee, more powerful than they. The printed version of his play has a goblin royal family of three (King Cob, Queen Mam, Prince Krankl – Prince Harelip as was); this production also had a goblin

princess (Rubella). The four goblins were a grand comic force, and thoroughly revolting.

As for the Good, they shone. Irene was beautiful, Curdie forthright and heroic. He instantly won the audience by speaking broad Scots, and this exchange got a laugh:

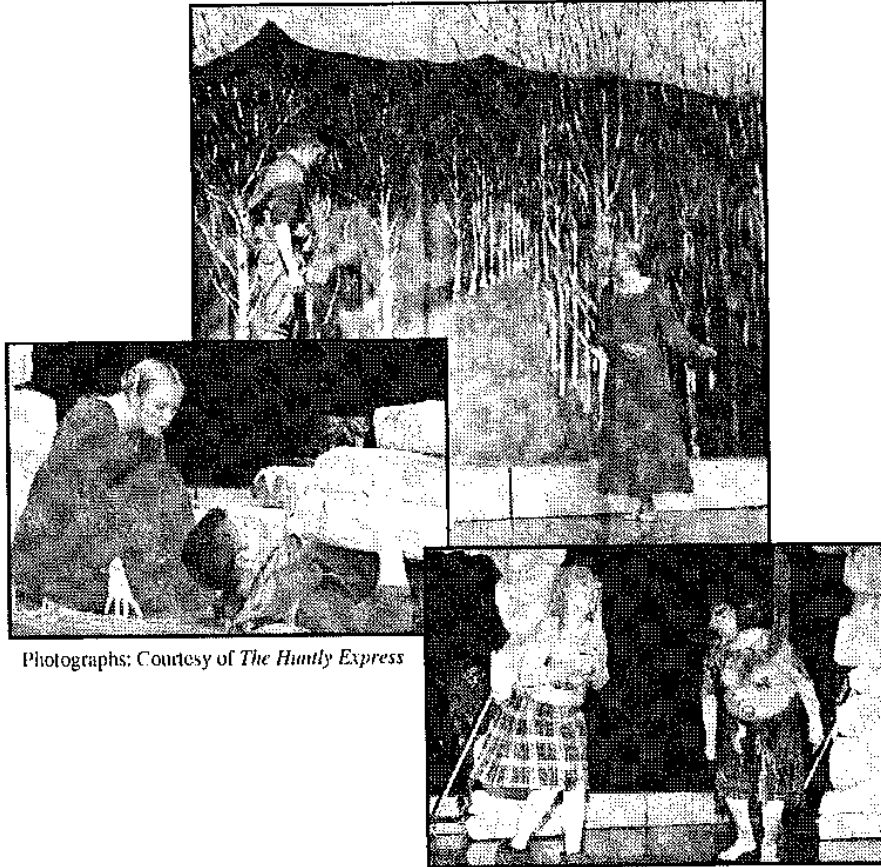
Curdie: I'm Peter's son.  
Irene: Who's Peter?  
Curdie: Peter the miner.  
Lootie: I don't know him.  
Curdie: I'm his son though.

The plot largely follows MacDonald. Some details differ: for example, Irene sheds tears in the book, but won't cry in the play. If she did, the goblins could trap her forever. The Banshee shows them how to do this; but they also have the help of Sly, a venomous being who is opposed by a friendly young dragon named Fannon. These new characters hardly seem needed for the plot. On the other hand they were a joy to watch, especially Sly. MacDonald's original 'goblin creatures' also appeared, hinting (as they do in the book) at a complex natural world within the tale.

This was a handsome production, accompanied by a suite of especially composed music. The sets were attractive and of a high standard; the costumes, make-up, and masks were wonderful. But the actors will perhaps be the longest remembered. Their energy and wit brought MacDonald's tale to life, reminding us of his power as a storyteller and of the timeless appeal of

the struggles of the innocent and good.

*Review by Annie Lamb*  
(Proprietor of the *Orbs Bookshop* in Huntly)



Photographs: Courtesy of *The Huntly Express*

### **Vote for Lilith**

#### **100 Best Scottish Books**

What is your favourite Scottish book? In the guide, *100 Best Scottish Books of all Time*, sponsored by Orange and in association with Scottish Book Trust, they have listed their top 100 books and now you have the opportunity to vote for yours.

For the full list of the top 100 visit: [www.list.eo.uk/bestbooks/bestbooksmain.html](http://www.list.eo.uk/bestbooks/bestbooksmain.html)

**Vote for Lilith** *cont'd ...*

**Please note**, you can also vote for a book that does not appear on this list.

**Every person** who votes will be entered into a prize draw and be eligible to win: Orange Pay As You Go phones plus talk time.

- Over £400 worth of books from Waterstone's One of 100
- Canongate Classic book set
- A trip for two to Vancouver courtesy of Canadian Affair, the UK's leading tour operator. The trip includes seven nights in the beautiful Rosedale on Robson hotel, renowned for its comfort and location, as well as VIP passes to the Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival.

**All votes** will be tallied up and the winning book will be announced at this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival on 27 August. Make your vote count.

Lilith (1895) George MacDonald

**Lilith**      *Click on 'Lilith' for the following description and 'vote' to register yours.*

George MacDonald has good claim to be the originator of fantasy as a genre with C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling among many others who owe a debt to the Aberdeenshire minister turned fantasist. *Lilith* is the first text to employ the idea of going through a mirror into another world though this other reality is not a neatly allegorical alternative. Moreover, these otherworlds may operate by different rules, as the narrator observes: 'I was lost in a space larger than imagination, for if here two things or any part of them could occupy the same space, why not 20 or 10,000?'

The narrator moves through a succession of surreal landscapes encountering the talking raven, evil wood, white leopardess, house of death and more. Each is vividly clear but imbued with ambiguity. What is the reality status, and the moral or spiritual quality of these events? For MacDonald these questions are always intertwined and in *Lilith* he pushes at the boundaries of literature because he has little interest in conventions or canons. For him, imagination is a doorway to the inner life. C.S. Lewis struggles to define *Lilith* as 'fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic', but the effect of reading MacDonald is dreamlike; he is, in the true sense of the word, 'uncanny'.

*Lilith* is a figure of myth—Adam's first wife and a fulcrum of the narrator's ambiguous journey. Tensions of human/animal, good/evil, body/spirit, and angel/vampire play through the text, finally emerging in a violent conflict. From this, *Lilith* moves onto an openly spiritual plane. As the narrator reflects: 'The darkness knows neither the light nor itself; only the light knows itself and the darkness also.' MacDonald begins the tale with a terse epigram from the Kabala: 'Off *Lilith*!', and ends it with Novalis: 'Our life is no dream, but it should and perhaps will become one.' (Donald Smith)

**From *100 Best Scottish Books of all Time***

**Please note:** you can also purchase the book *100 Best Scottish Books of all Time*- £2.50 via the website or via bookshops.

**Centenary Events in 2005**

Deveron Arts in Huntly are planning to commission a sculpture by the international artist Kenny Hunter as 'Homage to MacDonald'. We have put in a funding application to the Scottish Arts Council, but are also looking for support from individuals to support this.

Let us know if you would like more information.

The Editor

**George MacDonald : International Symposium.**

Organised by Inklings-Gesellschaft.

**Friday to Sunday 13-15<sup>th</sup> May** in Oberwesel (Rhein) in Germany.

A report will appear in the next issue of *Orts*.

**George MacDonald at Hastings**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May**

Edward Preston organised another visit to Hastings, the south coast town where MacDonald's writing career began to take shape—the home of *Phantastes*, MacDonald's meeting with Lewis Carroll, and so much more. The venue for the day was at Holy Trinity Church in the very heart of Hastings. The day started with tea and coffee served on arrival, followed by a lecture on 'George MacDonald in Hastings' and an illustrated presentation. After lunch there was a conducted coach tour of the locality, identifying the MacDonald associations. This follows the successful visit to Hastings with a coach tour in 2001. A report will appear in the next issue of *Orts*.

**Friday and Saturday June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>**

Regent College in Vancouver, B.C. is putting on a MacDonald Conference.

**Summer**

**Two Centenary Events in London**

English Heritage (with the consent of the present owner) has agreed to the placing of a blue plaque on MacDonald's former home, 'Tudor Lodge' in Albert Street, London NW1. The Society will be invited to be present at the opening ceremony. A date has yet to be fixed for this, but it is hoped that this will be in late May. Members will be informed of the date.

The Royal Parks Agency has agreed to the placing of an inscribed plaque commemorating Alexander Munro's statue 'The Boy and the Dolphin' in Hyde Park. Greville MacDonald was the boy and Lewis Carroll drew a picture of Greville admiring his head in Munro's studio and wrote an amusing account of the incident. The drawing and Carroll's text are reproduced on the plaque, which has been paid for jointly by the George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll Societies. The wording has been agreed by Munro's granddaughter, George MacDonald Society member Katharine Macdonald. The Royal Parks Agency has agreed to host an unveiling ceremony. A date this summer for the ceremony has yet to be fixed. Members will be informed of the date. Press releases will be prepared for both events.

### Centenary Events in 2005 *Cont'd...*

#### **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July**

George MacDonald Centenary Conference at University College, Worcester (If not already booked—see pg. 11 & 12 for details).

#### **Friday and Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> July**

A two day conference on 'George MacDonald and Today's World' at Temple Lodge, Hammersmith, chaired by Society President, Professor Stephen Prickett. For further details apply to John Docherty.

#### **Saturday and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September**

MacDonald Conference at Baylor University, Baylor, Texas, organised by Professor Stephen Prickett.

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October: 'George MacDonald Dinner'** and presentation of 'Images of His World' in Huntly, Aberdeenshire. This event is a three-course dinner, and tickets will have limited availability. Over the weekend there will also be a similar guided tour to the one we organized for 'Huntly 2002'.

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>:** Lecture by Dr. David Robb 'The Scottish Sources of MacDonald's Fantasy' at Marischal College, Aberdeen.

**Mon 24<sup>th</sup> - Fri 28<sup>th</sup>:** Exhibition of manuscripts, books, letters and original photographs at the Marischal Museum, Aberdeen.

A.G.M. of the George MacDonald Society will take place at this time day and time to be confirmed.

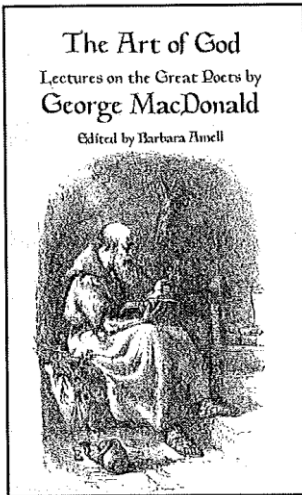
A separate mailing will be sent out by Ian Blakemore during the summer. This will give all information, booking form, map and suggestions for accommodation in Aberdeen and Huntly. Also relevant email and website addresses will be given. Also there will be a brochure, which will be available from September.

The Editor

"The way in which my father first wrote *Lilith* in 1890 is important. He was possessed by a feeling—he would hardly let me call it a conviction, I think—that it was a mandate direct from God, for which he himself was to find form and clothing; and he set about its transcription in tranquillity. Its first writing is unlike anything else he ever did."

*George MacDonald and His Wife* by Greville MacDonald. 1924. (*The Times Literary Supplement*) in 1924 describe Greville's biography as 'A crowded story of thought and suffering and friendship and, above all of joy')

*Book News & Reviews...*



Book Review

**The Art of God: Lectures on the Great Poets by George MacDonald**

Barbara Amell [Edited by]

(Wingfold Books, 2004. 136 pages)

Available from Wingfold Books (address on pg. 12)

U.K. Distribution: Rosley Books

As readers of "Wingfold" know Barbara Amell provides us with much material about George MacDonald from contemporary sources. This book is a rich source of such material and is made possible by Barbara's skillful sleuthing among original sources. In this book she quotes from more than sixty nineteenth century journals and diaries.

It is a wealth of newly made available information about his lectures and insights into MacDonald himself. The rest of this review will be a small sampling of the material in the book.

Not surprisingly, after delivering a lecture on *Macbeth* MacDonald said to a friend, "I do so like to get in a bit of a sermon unawares." (p. 7). "[H]is lectures are not only services to literature, but psychological and spiritual studies of great importance." (p. 8). According to one account in 1905, "His lectures were sermons—eloquent and inspiring." (p. 13). At one of his lectures the introducer said of MacDonald that he was "a man of vision, poet, and an evangelist." (p. 105).

Evaluations of his skill as a lecturer vary widely from too loud to too soft to "Mr. MacDonald read in a powerful and well modulated voice." (p. 11). His speaking style probably grew as a lecturer with time and experience. By 1868, he was drawing crowds in the thousands in Scotland and tickets had to be issued for his lectures because of the demand. His U. S. tour in 1872 was a huge success.

Here are a couple of the many gems to be found in the book. In a lecture on Robert Browning, "Surely if a man would help his fellow-men, he can do so far more effectually by exhibiting truth than exposing error, by unveiling beauty than by a critical dissection of deformity." (p. 19). In a lecture on *Macbeth*, "His [Macbeth's] idea of murder was such as is many people's idea of wickedness. They keep from it for fear of going to hell, not that they hate it, but because they fear the consequences. That is no religion." (p. 36).

In a lecture on John Milton, "It was good for people to look up to those who were greater than themselves: for next to the worship of God Himself, nothing did human beings more good than to look up to those other human beings who were nearer to God than they." (p. 79). The good that MacDonald got out of looking up to Milton and others, many of us get from our love of MacDonald and his writings. This small book by Barbara adds to our knowledge, edification, and enjoyment through these reports of MacDonald lectures.

By David Neuhouser

### **Book Offer: Octavia Hill's Letters**

George MacDonald Society members are offered the opportunity to purchase Octavia Hill's Letters to Fellow-Workers 1872-1911, edited by Robert Whelan and published in 2005 by Kyrle Books for the concessionary price of £25.00 (plus £5.00 postage and packing). The normal published price of the book is £40.00.

Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a close friend of George MacDonald and his family. She was a mentor to Greville as a boy and even took part on one occasion in one of the memorable MacDonald family performances of The Pilgrim's Progress. This was in Harrogate in 1880 when Grace MacDonald was taken seriously ill before the performance and Octavia was drafted in to play the part of Piety. Octavia Hill is best remembered today as one of the founders of the National Trust, but in her day she was a notable housing reformer, dedicating her life to the provision of social housing for the poor in London. She was a friend and pupil of John Ruskin and a friend and devotee of FD Maurice (through whom she came to join the Church of England). It was through these two that she came to know MacDonald.

Octavia Hill's life as a social reformer is a remarkable example of Maurice's 'Christian Socialism' in action. The character of Mary St. John in MacDonald's novel Robert Falconer seems to be an idealised portrait of Octavia.

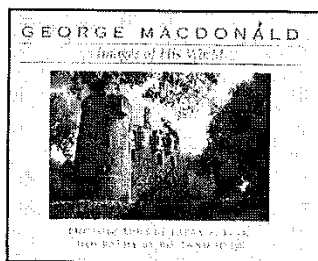
The book is 784 pages long and contains the full text of all 39 letters to Octavia's fellow-workers, together with an index, appendices and over 400 footnotes explaining the people, places and organisations mentioned in the letters. There are over 30 illustrations, some of them in colour. Footnotes on MacDonald and his family have been contributed by Richard Lines.

Robert Whelan is a social historian and commentator who has written a number of books on contemporary social issues. He addressed the 1998 Annual General Meeting of the George MacDonald Society on Octavia Hill and her work in social housing.

Members may purchase the book from its distributor:

**Civitas**, 77 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2 EZ, tel. 020 7799 6677, fax 020 7799 6688, e-mail: books@civitas.org.uk. Please state that you are a member of the George MacDonald Society when ordering.

***Don't forget to treat yourself to this magnificent book in this Centenary year!***



#### **George MacDonald: Images of His World**

Photographs by Larry E. Fink

Biography by Rolland Hein

Pasture Springs Press, 2004. 110pp.

UK Distribution: Rosley Books

Rosley Books Members Offer - Post Free:

Hardback, cloth-bound. Dust-jacket



Write a review send to the Editor

**Book News & Reviews Cont'd...**

**George MacDonald Exposes False Conflicts:**

Jesus/God Justice/Mercy Science/Religion.

Mary Ellis Taylor.

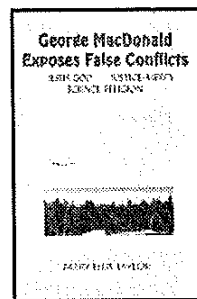
Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2004. xxii,125pp.

UK Distribution: Rosley Books

Paperback and hardback.

Review: for a 'review' please see one by Rachel Johnson with

Nathaniel Johnson in *Orts* 66



**Ever Yours.** 47 books by George MacDonald on CD (in Word format)

Robert Trexler [Compiler]

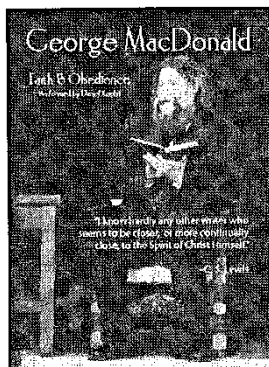
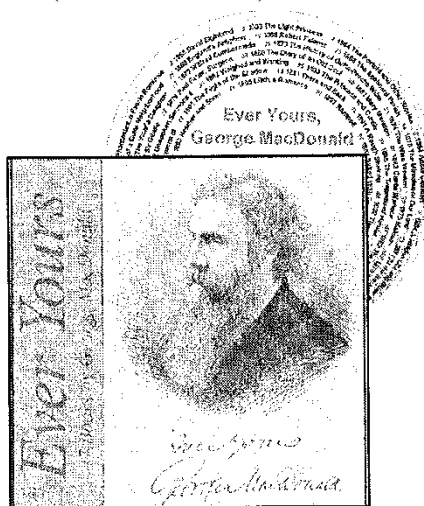
Available from the compiler at 366, S.

Brooksvale Rd, Cheshire CT 06410,

U.S.A.

Email: [gmd@yours.com](mailto:gmd@yours.com)

Distribution: Rosley Books



**George MacDonald: Faith & Obedience (DVD)**

Daniel Koehn

Available in the U.S.A. via [www.evangelartists.com](http://www.evangelartists.com)

U .K. Distribution: Rosley Books

The Scottish writer and lecturer who was so influential on C.S. Lewis comes to life in *George MacDonald: Faith & Obedience*. See and hear MacDonald as he is portrayed by Daniel Koehn in this unique 70-minute DVD. MacDonald shares from his sermons, his poetry, one of his novels, and one of his fairy tales.

**At the Back of the North Wind (CD)**

George MacDonald

Originally broadcast on BBC Radio 7 on New Year's Eve 2004.

Juliet Stevenson, Joss Ackland and Tom Fleming star in a new dramatisation of the classic fantasy for children.

'With cinematic sound and dazzling effects'.

Directed by Norman Stone

Running time: 123 minutes

2-CD Set

U.S.A. Publishing & Distribution:

Focus on the Family Radio Theatre

U.K. Distribution: Rosley Books



Book Advert

**Rosley Books: Ask for current list of titles and prices of the following books:**

[Will also include DVD and CD's]

**The Art of God: Lectures on the Great Poets by George MacDonald**

Amell, Barbara [Edited by].

**George MacDonald: Images of His World**

Fink, Larry E [Photographs by]

Hein, Rolland [Biography by]

**George MacDonald: Selections from his Greatest Works.**

Neuhouser, David L. [Compiler]

**The Gold Thread: Essays on George MacDonald.**

Raeper, William. [Edited by]

**George MacDonald Exposes False Conflicts: Jesus/God Justice/Mercy Science/Religion.**

Taylor, Mary Ellis

**3,000 Quotations from the Writings of George MacDonald.**

Verploegh, VERPLOEGH, Harry [Compiler]

**Rosley Books:**

**Contact:** Ian Blakemore, Rosley Books, Rosley Farmhouse, Wigton, Cumbria UK CA7 8BZ

Tel: 016973-499-24 (also you can leave a message 24hrs)

Or by email: [sales@rosleybooks.co.uk](mailto:sales@rosleybooks.co.uk)



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE WORCESTER



**International Centre for Research in Primary  
English and Children's Literature**



***GEORGE MACDONALD  
CENTENARY  
CONFERENCE  
JULY 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2005***

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**

***PROF ROD MCGILLIS, CALGARY  
PROF MARIA NIKOLAJEVA, STOCKHOLM  
PROF DAVID NEUHOUSER, INDIANA***

*A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE: £50 INCL. LUNCH*

If you wish to book accommodation off campus, Information can be found via the College website [www.worc.ac.uk](http://www.worc.ac.uk) then click on 'research and consultancy' box and pick 'International Centre for Research in Primary English and Children's Literature' from the drop down menu. From there, the information about the GMD Conference is clearly marked.

Dr. Jean Webb, Graduate School, University College Worcester,  
Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ, UK.

Tel: 01905 855459

or e-mail: [j.webb@worc.ac.uk](mailto:j.webb@worc.ac.uk)



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE WORCESTER



**International Centre for Research in Primary English and  
Children's Literature**

*George MacDonald Centenary Conference July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005*

**Booking Form**

*A ONE DAY CONFERENCE: £50 INCL. LUNCH*

•Please complete all sections below

First Name and title	
Last Name	
Institutional affiliation	
Department e.g. English	
e-mail	
Mailing address:	
City:	
Postal/Zip Code	
Province/State	
Country	
Telephone no:	Fax: no
Paper being presented	YES/NO (delete as applicable)
AVA requirements	O/head projector      data projector      laptop Other
Lunch required	YES/NO (delete as applicable)
Any special dietary requirements:	
Any special access requirements e.g. ground floor	
<b>Accommodation on campus:</b> student single room accommodation available with shared bathroom facilities. £13 per night, room only, otherwise see below	Yes/no No of nights: Dates required: Total:

**Conference fee: £50**

**Payment by cheque, British Pounds only £50 per delegate for conference plus any accommodation on campus. Cheques to be made out to:**

**University College Worcester**

**And sent with your booking form to:**

**Prof. Jean Webb  
Graduate School  
University College Worcester  
Henwick Grove  
Worcester, WR2 6AJ  
UK.**

**To be received by June 1<sup>st</sup> 2005.**

*New from Wingfold Books*

*Calvary Revisited*

By Barbara Amell

**“But Jesus ‘held His peace, and answered nothing.’ The interrogation was unlawful.”**

**Alex. Taylor Innes, "The Trial of Jesus Christ."**

**In 1877 the Scottish professor of law and theology Alex. Taylor Innes published an article titled "The Trial of Jesus Christ." The legal information in this piece provides astonishing insights into the Gospel accounts of Jesus' Hebrew and Roman trials, the full purpose of the crucifixion and resurrection, and the first persecution of the disciples described in Acts. *Calvary Revisited* reprints the majority of Innes' article, and explores the connections between religious corruption among the Jewish priests in Judea and corruption among Christian church hierarchies today. The Gospel accounts of Jesus' trials are literally incomprehensible to contemporary readers without the information Innes provided; all Christians should have access to these facts. Additional material in *Calvary Revisited* includes a chapter with reprints from articles on George MacDonald's 1868 spoken sermons revealing what he believed were the true motivations of Judas for the betrayal of Jesus. A chapter on substantiating belief in the resurrection of Christ features the first reprinting of excerpts on this topic from eight of George MacDonald's public sermons and lectures.**

**Available from:**

**Barbara Amell  
Wingfold Books  
5925 SE 40<sup>th</sup>  
Portland, OR 97202  
U.S.A.  
[b\\_amell@prodigy.net](mailto:b_amell@prodigy.net)**

**Or in the U.K. Rosley Books  
Address in 'Books' section**

*Please send news, reviews and articles for the next Orts*

**Newsletter Editor:** Ian Blakemore, *Orts*, Rosley Farmhouse, Wigton, Cumbria UK CA7 8BZ

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Chairman: **Richard Lines**, 38 South Vale, Upper Norwood, London, SE19 3BA

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