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The George MacDonald Society

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NEWS FROM ‘THE FARM’, HUNTLY

The new owners of 'The Farm', Huntly—MacDonald's childhood home—are the Johannesens from California as announced in the last issue of 'Orts'. Andy and Debbie are settling happily into life in a small town in northern Scotland, according to reports and their own correspondence. They welcome visitors and overnight guests as far as the fairly limited accommodation allows, and can supply a leaflet giving their charges. Running the place as a guest-house is not of course their main aim! From a letter written in June we learn: "Every transaction has gone smoothly. Our great and glorious Lord has seen that we enjoy the 'changing of the guard' with a sense of delight and gladness—and every person involved has been notably pleasant and encouraging. A very grand sense of welcome as their new neighbours—truly a sincere and genuine act of Christian hospitality! Tremendous example for us to follow. Americans learning from the Scots—I like that! We’re having great fun getting goods at the local 'roups' or sales which surface artefacts occasionally befitting for the Farm."

The large garden had been neglected for some months so that needed as much work as the house itself.

We can see that the delight previously expressed by the new residents at their acquisition has not worn off in the least, and they seem to have missed meeting those dour Calvinistic Scots that one has heard about—who also occur in the works of MacDonald himself.

To contact the Johannesens: U.S.A. address for enquiries in America: PO Box 24, Whitethorn CA 95589. Phone 707-986-7465.

Fax: 707-986-1656

Address in Scotland: The Farm, Huntly AB54 4QY. Phone or Fax from U.S.A. 011-44-1466-792816. Within U.K. 01466-792816

'LILITH' CENTENARY: MANUSCRIPTS ON EXHIBITION

The British Library devoted the June display in their 'MS of the Month' series to MacDonald's Lilith, to link up with the centenary of the publication of the book.

One of our members reports: 'Passing through the crowded courtyard and entrance into the cool
and quiet of the library, I met Sally Brown who was responsible for the presentation. She led me to the small display case containing the first of the eight MSS of Lilith that the Library holds. A small bound volume beautifully handwritten by MacDonald himself—presumably a present for someone, probably his wife. He very much changed and corrected his MSS, perhaps not always for the better. The other version on display was typed (purple ink!) with corrections and re-corrections, as was common with him. The third item in the case was a very new reprint of Lilith published by the Johannesens of California, now occupying the writer's old home in Huntly. A fine photograph of MacDonald writing at a table, taken by his famous friend Lewis Carroll, was also shown.

As we walked to the display, Sally pointed out the manuscript of Alice shown nearby, handwritten and illustrated by Carroll and given to Alice Liddell. This had been bought by American friends who generously gave it to the Library.

F.L.

A SYMPOSIUM ON 'LILITH' AT COLOGNE

The centenary of the publication of MacDonald's last outstanding work Lilith was celebrated most impressively not in these islands but in Cologne, Germany. There was a symposium or conference (Friday 28 April to the following Monday) organised jointly by the German 'Inklings' Society and the MacDonald Society of this country. Many scholarly experts took part including our secretary John Docherty. Not only talks and discussions were held, a dramatic performance called 'The Wanderer' was also given—and a showing of the film based on The Princess and the Goblin.

This very important occasion will be described in detail in the next issue of 'North Wind'.

OUR SECRETARY VISITS THE U.S.A.

John Docherty has recently visited the United States, staying in Boston and also Wheaton, Illinois. He took part in a workshop in Boston on MacDonald's novel Adela Cathcart, emphasising its theme of story-telling as therapy. A number of stories are inset in the main narrative; these are supposedly told with the aim of healing the heroine Adela of her mysterious depressive disease. The group led by Nancy Mellon discussed how story-telling, that ancient art, could still have a healing effect in our day. New light was thrown especially on one inset story 'The Cruel Painter' and it was shown to be more relevant to Adela's cure than many readers would suspect. This fresh approach to the study of literature was extremely successful and will certainly lead to more events on similar lines. The group's discoveries will be published in permanent form later on.

John then went on to Wheaton. The Marion Wade Center there publishes 'Seven' magazine, whose latest issue was described in the last 'Orts'. The Center concentrates on the English
'Inklings' group, plus one earlier Scot, MacDonald. John found their collection of books etc. generally excellent, and saw interesting association items such as the late C. S. Lewis's dining-table.

'WINGFOLD': A MACDONALD MAGAZINE FROM U.S.A.

Barbara Amsell of 5925 S.E. 40th Portland, OR 97202, U.S.A. has shown an enthusiasm for MacDonald similar to that of a few other publishers in the same country, but with a magazine named 'Wingfold' rather than reprints of full-length books. Ten issues of this have appeared up to now and are very good value at $20 for a year's subscription. 'Wingfold' is economically produced—but this will not deter fellow-enthusiasts who want the rare items advertised and appreciate the care which has gone into research and discovery of rare material. In addition to the magazine certain books are occasionally published at about $5, including MacDonald's Stephen Archer and Far above Rubies. Examples of his less familiar illustrators are given, such as Edmund Dulac and Aubrey Beardsley. Full details can be obtained from the address given above.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

The collection at Kings College, London, now has a complete run of the magazine 'Seven' and also of the Italian periodical 'Letterature' (the latter complete as far as MacDonald studies are concerned).

Among books newly added are Creation in Christ, Rolland Rein's edition of the Unspoken Sermons of MacDonald. The editor makes these somewhat difficult theological works much more approachable. Rolland's anthology The Heart of George MacDonald should be in the library soon, though it is apparently not yet available through booksellers in this country.

Johannesens, the publishers of the main series of MacDonald reprints, have kindly donated their new Lilith: first and final version.

German interest in MacDonald should be further stimulated by Hinter dem Nordwind, the first version in German of At the Back of the North Wind, translated by our member Brigitte Elbe. This is now available at Kings College.

AN APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

It is well known that MacDonald's Lilith is full of allusions to and brief quotations from the Bible. Critics such as Rolland Hein have drawn attention to some of these but there seem to be hundreds and probably none are superfluous to a proper understanding of this very important book. We urgently request members who have real familiarity with the Bible to identify as many of these allusions and quotations as possible. The results will be published as a check-list in 'North Wind'.
PROFESSOR SPINA AT THE CENTENARY OF 'LILITH'

Professor Giorgio Spina of Genoa is one of the limited number of people outside Great Britain, America and Germany who seem to have a true appreciation of MacDonald. In a letter to one of our members he remarks that up to now he is the only Italian scholar devoted to MacDonald studies—which have occupied him since 1972. Apart from some work on the conditions of life in Victorian London, and on Charles Williams, he has given most of his time recently to MacDonald and the centenary of Lilith. He contributed an article to the Italian 'Letterature' magazine, and gave a paper on the construction of Lilith at the symposium in Cologne which is mentioned in this issue.

He has made efforts, incidentally, to have a street in Bordighera named after MacDonald but the plan has come to nothing so far. —He confesses to a nostalgia for London which is probably similar to the feeling many English people have for his own homeland!

A GRANT FOR THE SOCIETY

We are delighted to announce that financial aid of £250 annually for a period has been granted to the Society by the Ashfield Trust. This is due to the help and co-operation of Professor P. H. Butter, an enthusiastic member. The professor has not published anything on MacDonald himself, but is an expert on Shelley and William Blake, also on a more recent poet, the Scot Edwin Muir. Our requirements have been emphasised in recent issues of 'Orts' and we need not stress this is very good news indeed.

A MACDONALD MEMORIAL IN U.S.A

In the last issue was a report of the re-discovery of a memorial in North Carolina, U.S.A. to Ronald MacDonald's wife. Her first name was incorrectly given there; it was in fact Virenda. The Society now proposes to place a brass plate on the stone with the name and other details on it. The cost will be about $1,500 and we are appealing for contributions towards this sum which will be gratefully received.

A CANADIAN COLLECTION OF JUVENILIA

We have received a notice about the remarkable collection of children's books held at the Public Library, Toronto, Canada. This is moving to a new address, 239 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M51R5 and should re-open in late September.

Known as the Osborne Collection, it encompasses the development of English children's
literature from the fourteenth century to 1910. Holdings include the Lilian H. Smith collection—children's books of outstanding literary and artistic merit published in English from 1911 to the present day—and the Canadian collection of current and retrospective creative works for children by Canadians or about Canada. All collections include manuscripts, artwork and other related materials. Visitors are welcome whatever their particular interests may be.

A TALK GIVEN TO THE HUNTLY SOCIETY

Rachel Johnson, Treasurer of the Society, gave a talk on MacDonald to the G. A. Huntly Society in early June at Kelsall, Hertfordshire. The two authors are very different, but some books of MacDonald which were regarded as 'juveniles' were brought out by Henty's main publisher, Blackie. The audience enjoyed hearing about the life and works of another widely-read Victorian story-teller, and Rachel's 'MacDonald for new readers' was greatly appreciated.

THE HUNTLY GUIDE

Very few town guides offer more information attractively presented than the Guide to Huntly, Aberdeenshire, which includes MacDonald's life story and a most useful 'Town Trail'. A map and illustrations are provided, and the authoritative text is by the late Bill Raeper. The Treasurer Rachel Johnson can supply copies of the guide at present at the low price of 60p which includes postage.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO 'NORTH WIND'

The Editor would appreciate article for 'North Wind'. At present his need is for the lighter type of essay or study.

CONTACTS:

The Secretary: John Docherty, 9 Medway Drive, Forest Row, Sussex RH18 5NU

Treasurer: Rachel Johnson, 61 Longdales Road, Lincoln LN2 2JS. Please note: all MacDonald titles reprinted by Johannesens are now available from this address only.

All the text of 'Orts' is written by the Editor where not stated otherwise or signed by other initials.

'Orts' Editor: William Webb, 116 Pierrefondes Avenue,
Farnborough, Hants GU14 8NZ

We apologise for the long interval since the last issue of 'Orts', due to various causes including a breakdown of the computer used for recent numbers.

Frontispiece of the 1924 edition of 'Lilith' (F.D.Bedford)