FUTURE EVENTS

Chesterton/MacDonald Conference This one-day conference will take place at Plater College, Headington, Oxford on Saturday September 25th 1999. The cost, including morning coffee and lunch, will not exceed £15. It is the principal U.K. event for the Society in 1999 and we hope that as many members and friends as possible will attend. Oxford is easily accessible by road and rail from most parts of the country, with very frequent local buses from the rail and coach stations to Headington. Express coach services from London, which serve request stops in Headington, are very cheap and likewise very frequent. A varied and interesting programme is being planned. Full details will appear in the next Orts and will also soon be available directly from the Secretary.

Workshop on The Lost Princess (sometimes titled The Wise Woman)—April 30th May 2nd, Greenville, New Hampshire. Anyone who has not yet booked for this workshop but wishes to attend should contact Nancy Mellon as soon as possible. As previously described, this is a 'hands on' workshop. The Lost Princess, with its theme which is so immediately relevant to all of us, is perfectly adapted to such an approach. We hope that participants will both increase their own understanding of parental responsibilities and uncover depths in the story never previously recognised—as was achieved so successfully with the previous workshop on Adela Cathcart. Nancy's phone/fax number is 603 654 2982.

The Octavia Hill Society Some time back, we discussed with the Octavia Hill Society the possibility of holding joint meetings. On Monday May 10th at 6.30pm a talk will be given by our Chairman, Richard Lines to the Octavia Hill Society on the subject of "George MacDonald and Octavia Hill", at the National Trust Headquarters, 36 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1, close to St James' Pk. Stn. Society members are most welcome to attend.

NORTH WIND No. 17 FOR 1998

In January, Richard Lines, the Chairman of the Society, wrote to Andrew Gutteridge, the editor for the 1998 issue of North Wind, asking for information about the delay in the appearance of this issue. Like his previous letters, it was not answered. On April 1st, however, David Robb
received a fax from Prof Gutteridge stating that Number 17 had been complete for some time but that he had not gone ahead with publication because he had been given to understand that there was uncertainty as to whether he was still the person responsible for bringing out this issue. We are unaware who told him this, but it was not any member of the Committee of the Society nor anyone authorised by them. We trust that *North Wind* 17 will now appear some time in April.

**JIMMY BLACK 1922-1999**

James Todd Black died in the Rothieden wing of Huntly Jubilee Hospital on Friday 19th February after a short illness. He was known to many admirers of George MacDonald as the kindly host at 'Greenkirtle', formerly 'The Farm', which was the writer's boyhood home, and closely associated with the MacDonald-Troup family until he became the first non-family owner in 1959.

Jimmy Black was born in Edinburgh and educated at George Heriot's School. He graduated Master of Arts at Edinburgh University in 1941 and immediately commenced training in the Royal Air Force, gaining his Pilot's wings at Turner Airfield, Georgia, U.S.A. He served as a pilot with Squadrons 454 and 500, and at the end of the war he was with Squadron 249 based in Kenya. Upon demobilisation he returned to Edinburgh University where he graduated L.L.B. before serving his apprenticeship as a writer to *The Signet*. He commenced his legal career in Huntly before moving to Orkney in 1951. With another ex-pilot he bought an old Tiger-Moth aircraft for £25 and thus the Orkney Flying Club was started.

In Orkney, Jimmy met and married Morag Learmonth, a teacher at Kirkwall Grammar School, and they had two sons, Neil born in 1954 and Duncan in 1958. In that year the family moved back to Huntly where Jimmy became a partner in the legal firm of John Dickson and Son. The following year Jimmy bought George MacDonald's boyhood home from the late Robert J. Troup who lived there with his wife Margaret and sister Peggy, who then moved to 'Howglen', their town house in Gladstone Rd.

For the thirty-six years that he owned 'The Farm', Jimmy was a genial host to hundreds of George MacDonald visitors, mostly from North America, but also from many parts of Europe, Australia and even Japan. With his wife Morag he learned a great deal about 'Our Poet' from visiting experts in the fields of literature, philosophy and theology, who were always entertained to afternoon tea and shortbread, or perhaps 'a dram' if they came in the evening. Morag was happy to show people around the house and garden—sometimes they showed more interest in the garden! One memorable Sunday morning Jimmy welcomed a coach-load of Japanese students, and in full highland dress as he always was on the Sabbath, was the subject of dozens of photographs. The Blacks played host to over thirty members of the George MacDonald Society in 1989 at a Huntly reunion organised by the late Bill Raeper, then Society Secretary, and Morag gave a talk on George MacDonald at a televised service from Huntly Parish Church in 1991. That was only one of many talks, usually illustrated by slides, given by the Blacks over many years in an attempt to rekindle interest in a genius much neglected in his home area. Jimmy and Morag kept in touch with several MacDonald visitors, including the Johannesen family from Whitethorn, California, who bought 'Greenkirtle' privately in 1995 and restored the name 'The Farm', where the tradition of welcome to MacDonald visitors continues.

Apart from his family, Jimmy's main interest was his Church, and he served as an elder for over forty years, 33 of these as Session Clerk of Strathbogie Parish Church. He was a past-president of Huntly Rotary Club, a founder of Probus Club, a regular visitor at hospitals and
Scott's Eventide Home, a supporter of Scouting, a member of two Choirs and the Gordon Primary School Board. His services to the Huntly community were recognised last year when he shared jointly with his wife Morag the Citizen of the Year Award. He will be very much missed in the town he loved and served so well.

M.B.

NORTH AMERICAN SUBSCRIPTIONS-IMPORTANT CHANGE

If any North American Members of the Society who pay their subscription in dollars are not up to date with these subscriptions, Debbie Johannesen would like to receive these subscriptions as soon as possible. Pressure of work for Johannesen's Publishing means that she can no longer act as North American Membership Secretary, and she would naturally like to balance her books as much as is possible before handing over to her successors. They are Emily and Randall Tobias, who performed this role in exemplary fashion for the Society up to 1991. Their address is 661l Lipscomb Drive, DURHAM, NC 27712.

TO ALL MEMBERS FROM THE SECRETARY

The Society has been through several changes within the last year and is now settling down and looking forward to interesting and lively times ahead. The one-day conference on George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton promises to be a stimulating event. In the year 2000, we are planning a one-day event in Bedford, celebrating MacDonald's long association with The Pilgrims Progress, hopefully attracting local society members and Bunyan enthusiasts. Also in 2000, the Gordon Forum for Arts is arranging a Huntly Heritage Exhibition, for which the Society is hoping to arrange a MacDonald display.

As the new Secretary, I am very keen to promote the Society and what it stands for, and would welcome any interesting ideas from members here and abroad, including suggestions for future events, approaches to other societies, or possible social events. Perhaps Orts might be the place for sharing ideas, and a letter page could be set up—would this be popular with members? In any case it's your Society, so do write in and let us know how you would like it to move forward—we're hoping for some good suggestions.

Deirdre Hayward
Cruister, SAN DWICK, Shetlands, ZE2 9H N

Do you know this man?

Around 1870 this Scotsman was the person responsible for a London-based magazine for young people which published a story which soon became one of the best-loved children's
books of the century.

Answer:

The shape of the nose should have given the clue! This is James Henderson, of the publishing firm Red Lion House, whose magazine *Young Folks* serialised Robert Louis Stevenson’s story “The Sea Cook” as *Treasure Island*. Between 1865 and 1875 no fewer than 76 new children’s magazines appeared in Britain. MacDonald and the OHEL. The monumental *Oxford History of English Literature* began to appear before World War II and was only completed fairly recently. One wonders if such marathon surveys have a future. Presumably the next will be in some computerised form rather than a series of books.

The last volumes of the OHEL, as it was lightheartedly called at times, were not chronologically placed when the nineteenth century, MacDonald’s period, was reached. A volume on part of the twentieth century was published earlier. Perhaps this was due to the vast subject of *The Victorian Novel*, which is the work of Alan Horsman. There is also a separate volume by Paul Turner, also very substantial, on the nineteenth century apart from fiction. Incidentally, one of the earlier books of the series may have some slight reference to MacDonald, that on *The 16th Century Excluding Drama*, which is by C.S. Lewis. He thought he had never published a book without some mention of the man he called his master, but personally I never found one in the many pages of *The Sixteenth Century*... It would be interesting to know of anything our members may have found.

Paul Turner’s subject covers the poetry and fantasy of MacDonald. There are many interesting comments here. Discussing the verse he finds the poems for children have charm and inventiveness. However, he does not care for "Where Did You Come From, Baby Dear?" Many critics and ordinary readers seem sure in advance that using the word 'baby' guarantees sentimentality, and after about 1920 it became much less frequent in poetry. But there may be profound ideas underlying the USC or the innocent word, and some other critics have pointed this out.

MacDonald’s verse drama *Within and Without* is described as compounded of 'insight and absurdity'. The narrative poem "A Hidden Life" is realistic autobiography plus improbable romance. In "The Disciple" we find that questioning tormented spirit which caused the writer to cease being a Congregational minister.

Turner shows us many vital things in MacDonald in relation to the contemporary background of thought. The idea of 'retrograde evolution' is important, especially in the *Curdle* books; something similar can be found in Charles Kingsley’s *Water Babies*, also in Tennyson’s "Idylls of the King." Readers will remember the strange creature Lina in *The Princess and Curdle* who had formerly been a woman; she has moved down 'beastward,' but can be redeemed and becomes an ally of the hero.
Turner sees influence from Plato's Phaedrus and Shelley's Alastor in At the Back of the North Wind. The book was something new in children's literature, Turner tells us, but to him Diamond is rather too much of a paragon. Personally I find Diamond more human than the boy Clare in A Rough Shaking. The critic might have mentioned the apparent use of Plato's myth of the cave and the shadows in "The Golden Key," but of course the space at his disposal was very limited. Alan Horsman remarks that it is hard for readers of novels to have patience with the majority of MacDonald's adult stories. It was not a genre that suited him or that he really liked—except when firmly on Scottish territory. Perhaps not many Society members have gone far into the long range of the English novels, though his themes of fantasy bring a characteristic quality into some of them.

Horsman naturally concentrates on the best of, the Scottish fiction, and finds that MacDonald has something of Scott's ear for memorable speech and even something of his vivid awareness or individuality in the speaker: 'these vernacular speakers can quicken the most tepid narrative, but MacDonald is looking less at them than beyond them.'

With an enormous number of Victorian novels to cover in his survey, Horsman gives a fair idea of the essential virtues or MacDonald's adult fiction—as docs Turner with the non-fiction in his share of the work.

W. W.

Education for the Modern Age

Activities at the Cabrach school immortalised by MacDonald in chapter V of Castle Warlock appear to have changed dramatically since his day, if a description appearing in the Sun newspaper in February is any guide. You will recall that the hero Cosmo was knocked down by the teacher on his first day at the school and valiantly rescued by one of his fellow-pupils, who carried him away in her arms. Today, according to the Sun, the principal interest of the children is collecting the tokens for the "Free Books for Schools" scheme:

Headteacher Vivienne Collins—the school's only teacher—says: "Every day about a dozen envelopes arrive. The children love to open them and count the tokens. The most we have had in one envelope is 300 tokens . . ."

Dreadful as were Cosmo's experiences at the school, one cannot help feeling that a vital ingredient, present then, may be lacking in today's approach. At one time this ingredient would have been called 'romance,' but even the meaning of this word is almost lost today. Is it too much to hope that Castle Warlock might be one of the 37 books the children have so far ordered with their tokens? On second thoughts, however, we recall that the climax of Castle Warlock is a nineteenth century equivalent of a big lottery win for Cosmo and his family. So perhaps human needs have not changed so very much after all!

W.W. & J.D.

Animal (and Child) Welfare in MacDonald's Fiction
We recently received a request from Professor Andrew Linzey, the IFAW Fellow in Animal Welfare at Mansfield College, Oxford, for information about MacDonald's influence upon public awareness of animal-welfare issues in Victorian Britain. We sent him photocopies of some of the principal passages where the subject is discussed in MacDonald's novels, emphasising that there are many such references scattered through the novels and that most of these novels were bestsellers.

We had come across suggestions that one or two such passages from MacDonald's novels were republished as animal-welfare pamphlets and we searched for these pamphlets in the likely specialist libraries some years ago, but without success. As Prof. Linzey apparently does not know of any such pamphlets they probably do not exist. But if any reader has come across them we would very much appreciate having copies for our archives.

Lewis Carroll wrote several detailed letters to the press on the subject of vivisection and critics suggest that he drew upon his friend MacDonald's views. Carroll's publications on vivisection are well-documented.¹ A beginning is also now being made in exploring C.S. Lewis's views upon animal welfare, which avowedly draw heavily upon MacDonald's writings.² But little has been published on MacDonald's own views and they should richly repay investigation.

Anyone who begins to study MacDonald's views upon animal welfare soon ceases to be surprised that members of his congregation at Arundel took exception to these views and pressed him to resign his pulpit! Even when full allowance is made for the views of the narrators and protagonists in MacDonald's fiction not always being in full accord with MacDonald's own opinions the latter are still very curious. Moreover, it soon becomes evident to a researcher that MacDonald's views upon matters such as human relationships within the family were strongly influenced by his views upon animals. It even begins to seem likely that some of his religious views grew out of his concern for animals rather than vica-versa!

An article upon this subject will be submitted for inclusion in North Wind. Observations from members would be very helpful in compiling the article. Part of the problem arises because MacDonald often uses specific animals in a story both as real animals and as allegorical symbols. For example, a horse belonging to a principal character is usually both the real horse belonging to that character and a symbol for the character's will forces. Other writers, however, use this device on occasions and manage to combine the two roles satisfactorily. Another explanation has therefore to be sought for the apparent violent dichotomy in most cases where MacDonald employs the device.

ORTS ON-LINE ENQUIRY SERVICE

It was mentioned in Orts 50 that we planned to establish a MacDonald Enquiry Service similar to the very popular one run by the Dorothy Sayers Society. As this service is associated with Orts the same name will be retained. Some people may consider such a service to be merely dealing in orts, using 'orts' here in its idiomatic meaning of 'worthless scraps.' But if worth-while questions are asked, the answers will often be 'the results of by no means trifling labour'—the phrase used by MacDonald to describe the pieces in his book A Dish of Orts.

¹ See eg. Morten Cohen's biography Lewis Carroll, Macmillan 1995, p.p. 391-93
If the same questions come up frequently they will be taken as the basis for articles in Orts and additions to the Society's web-pages. Where possible, the service will be listed in the appropriate national and international directories, but it will be accessible via the Wingfold web-pages, and will not duplicate information provided there.

The service would have been up and running by now were it not for the vicious circle whereby what look to be the most appropriate access providers do not respond to letters or phone calls but expect callers to be already provided with the services which they are requesting from these providers!

If the service becomes very popular we shall have to look for outside funding. But initially it is simply an extension of the service which the MacDonald Society, like any other literary society, automatically provides for members and other genuine enquirers. Anyone with a question who is not on-line may continue to write or fax to the Orts address. However, if you think the information you require is likely to be on the web pages or in MacDonald's books you should first attempt to obtain help from your local library services.

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