



The John Clare Society of North America

NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 2, February 1999

The editor invites brief submissions of items relevant to Clare studies, including calls for papers, announcements of new books or articles, details of up-coming events, and scholarly notes. Send submissions to Sarah M. Zimmerman, Dept. of English, Fordham University, Lincoln Center Campus, 113 W. 60th St., New York, NY 10023; or to: smzimmer@facstaff.wisc.edu

John Clare Society of North America (JCSNA) Incorporated as Non-Profit Organization

We are pleased to report that the JCSNA has been incorporated in the State of Maryland as a non-profit organization for the following purposes: (1) To promote the study of the works and life of John Clare; (2) To promote the collection, preservation, and exchange of items of literary and biographical interest; (3) To promote a wider appreciation of Clare and the continuing publication of his works; and (4) To advocate the protection of Clare's countryside and to encourage rural education and sensitivity to rural landscapes. The U.S. Internal Revenue Service has formally recognized this non-profit status, so all contributions from our members are now tax-deductible. There will be no substantive change in the scholarly and educational activities of the JCSNA; it will continue to be a non-profit literary society with membership open to all who share its purposes. We expect that our new status as a non-profit corporation will enhance our ability to raise and administer funds for our worthwhile activities. We are grateful to all of our members for their generous support of the JCSNA.

James McKusick

Clare On the Net

Clare's presence on the world wide web has grown since the last issue of the *Newsletter*. Entries for Clare have multiplied at two sites. The Voice of the Shuttle page for Romanticism (<http://humanitas.ucsb.edu/shuttle/eng-rom.html>) provides links to Clare's poems, to critical articles, and to conferences on his works. It also provides a link to the John Clare Society (JCS), the *John Clare Society Journal*, and the John Clare Page, which has a new location: <http://human.ntu.ac.uk/clare/clare.html> Maintained by Simon Kövesi, updates to this page include a list of available editions of Clare's works (with ISBN numbers provided for paperback editions), and a critical bibliography (from 1970) kept by John Goodridge.



Fr. L to R: John Goodridge, Bridget Keegan, and Cathy Taylor, participants at the Day Conference on John Clare, New Approaches and New Voices, at the Nottingham Trent University, 18 July 1998. Reproduced by kind permission of Peter Moyses A.R.P.S.

Up-Coming Events

Eric Robinson's Lecture Tour: Clare and His World

Eric Robinson, international Clare scholar and an editor of the Clarendon Press edition of Clare's poems, continues his lecture tour in England this summer. Robinson's tour aims to introduce new readers to Clare. He is scheduled to speak at Manchester Central Library at 2:00 p.m. on 24 June 1999. He will also give a series of lectures on Clare at Peterborough Cathedral in May and June, 1999. For information about these events or about organizing a reading or

lecture, contact Pamela Blevins, Public Relations Director, 5333 N. 26th St., Arlington, VA 22207; (703) 532-2055; kshaffer@erols.com

Recent Events

1998 Modern Language Association Panel on Clare

On December 28, 1998, a special session entitled "Reading John Clare" was held at the Modern Language Association annual convention in San Francisco. The panel—the sixth MLA session on Clare in as many years—featured papers by Bridget Keegan of Creighton University and Simon

Kövesi of the Nottingham Trent University. Professor Keegan's paper, "Boys, Marvelous Boys: John Clare, Youth, and Genius," focussed on the paradigm of the young, "unspoiled," male poet in the Romantic period. With reference to several aspects of eighteenth-century genius theory, Keegan reconstructed a line of criticism which had connected Clare to Chatterton and Keats, and she demonstrated how an ideal of the male genius shaped much of the early critical response to Clare. Kövesi's paper, which placed Clare's poem "Don Juan" alongside Byron's more famous work of the same name, offered a compelling argument for Clare's often overlooked abilities as a poetic craftsman. In explicating Clare's intricate punning, Kövesi both illuminated the poem's difficult sexual politics and discussed the nature of the psychic alienation that pervades it. An audience of 25 expressed their great interest in both papers, describing the panel as one of the highlights of the conference; the panelists and session organizer were gratified by this favorable response. The JCSNA looks forward to the likelihood of another Clare session at the 1999 MLA, to be held in Chicago.

Scott McEathron

Theresa Kelley on Charlotte Smith and Clare

Theresa M. Kelley gave a paper on Charlotte Smith and John Clare titled "Romantic Particularities: Botany, Dissent" at the 1998 Modern Language Association

meeting in San Francisco. Kelley appeared on a panel on "Visual and Verbal Crossings" sponsored by the Keats-Shelley Association.

Clare included in Pinsky's "Favorite Poem Project"

Eric Robinson read Clare's poem, "Songs Eternity," as a participant in a reading of poems sponsored by Robert Pinsky, U.S. Poet Laureate, and the New England Foundation for the Arts. The Project promotes poetry as a vocal art and, under Pinsky's direction, is creating an audio and video archive of Americans reading their favorite poems. The reading took place at Borders Bookshop, Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia on 11 Nov 1999.

Forthcoming Publications

Articles

John Coletta's article, "Literary Biosemiotics and the Postmodern Ecology of John Clare" is forthcoming in a special issue of *Semiotica* on "Biosemiotics," edited by Claus Emmehé, Niels Bohr, and Jesper Hoffmeyer.

Anthology

Literature and Nature: Four Centuries of Nature Writing in Britain and America, an anthology edited by Bridget Keegan and James McKusick, is forthcoming from Prentice-Hall publishers, Fall 2000. This anthology will present the variety of modes of writing about nature and the physical environment produced in Britain

and America from the early modern age to the present. The anthology will include a range of literary genres: lyric and epic poetry, short and longer fictional prose, non-fictional prose essays and reflections, and drama. Moreover, it will represent the wealth of literary perspectives on nature, which underscore the multiple and

historically-shifting understandings of humanity's relationship to the natural world. The poetry of Clare will be prominently represented, since he is among the most significant nature writers to emerge from the English literary tradition.

Bridget Keegan
and James McKusick

Scholarly Notes

Yesterday I bought a second-hand book; Alan Porter, *The Signature of Pain and Other Poems* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1930). It is the same Alan Porter who, with Edmund Blunden, brought Clare again to public notice and who then emigrated to the U.S.A. The last poem in the book (dated October 1920) does not mention Clare's name but it is surely about Clare's grave in Helpston Churchyard:

Country Churchyard

This grave moss-grown, marks him who once walked free;
Now pent—no, portionless; from sharp life lost;
Mere mouldered bone-work. His unheeded name

Who, curious, pausing, may decipher? See;
Thin gulled by running rains, by chipping frost
Frustrated, muffled under a yellow, same,

Fat scurf of lichen, the dim characters
Withstand conjecture, aimless and awry.
Yet here lies one who, living, peopled earth

With indestructible fancy. Now he hears
No nature's music, who for hours would lie
To hear the blue-caps click their quick small mirth.

Eric Robinson, Cambridge, England, 30 June 1998