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The
Charles
Williams
Society



Newsletter

No. 91 Summer 1999

The Charles Williams Society

The Society was founded in 1975, thirty years after Charles Williams's sudden death at the end of the Second World War. It exists to celebrate Charles Williams and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive a quarterly newsletter and may attend the Society's meetings which are held three times a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at King's College London.

Officers of the Society

- | | |
|--|--|
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<i>Until the appointment of a new editor, please send all newsletter material and editorial correspondence to Eileen Mable.</i> |
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Reading groups

For information about the **Oxford** reading group please contact Brenda Boughton, tel: 01865 515589.



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From the (temporary) Editor

First, I want to emphasise again the urgent need for a new Editor for this Newsletter. He/she will be responsible for compiling and editing the Newsletter, and later the Web site, before passing the material to Andrew Williams for setting up on the computer.

Of equal urgency is the need for a Production Assistant for Andrew to arrange for the printing and despatch of the Newsletter to members.

We are not without members who are capable of undertaking these tasks for the Society. If you would like to know more, please contact Mark Brend, Andrew Williams or me.

We are extremely fortunate in those who come to speak at our London and Oxford meetings and we owe them much gratitude. The talks are

stimulating, discussion is lively and afterwards there is the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones over a cup of tea.

It is disappointing that so comparatively few of us attend the meetings. Many of you cannot come, I know, because of other commitments or because distance makes it impossible. We are not unmindful of our overseas members, many of whom would like to be with us. It is always a pleasure when a visit to this country coincides with a Society meeting and we are able to enjoy their company.

I want to invite members who could attend meetings, if only occasionally, to come when they can.

I look forward to meeting you.

With all good wishes,

Eileen Mable

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London, W3 8AZ
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andrew.williams22@virgin.net

Mark Brend's address:

197 Underhill Road, East Dulwich
London, SE22 0PD
Tel: 0181 693 7022
Mbrend@compuserve.com

Charles Williams Society meetings

- ◆ **Saturday 16th October 1999**
Bishop John V. Taylor will speak on The Doctrine of Exchange. The meeting will take place in Pusey House, St. Giles, Oxford, at 2.30 pm.
- ◆ **Saturday 5th February 2000**
Dr. Georgette Versinger will speak on a subject to be announced later. The meeting will take place in the Church Room of St. Matthew's Church, St. Petersburg Place, Bayswater, London, W2. at 2.30 pm.
- ◆ **Saturday 6th May 2000**
Annual General Meeting in Pusey House, St. Giles, Oxford at 1 pm. At 2.30 pm the Revd. Graham Leonard will speak on a subject to be announced later.
- ◆ **Saturday 14th October 2000**
In the Church Room of St. Matthew's Church at 2.30 pm. Speaker to be arranged.

Council meeting report

The Council of the Charles Williams Society met on Saturday 27th February 1999 at St. Matthew's Church, Bayswater.

- ◆ The Council accepted with regret Mark Brend's resignation as editor of the Newsletter.
- ◆ Andrew Williams requested help with the production and despatch of the Newsletter because of additional work commitments. Eileen Mable and Brian Horne offered temporary assistance.
- ◆ The setting up of the Society's Internet site has been postponed until Andrew Williams has more time available.
- ◆ A proposal that the grave of Charles and Michael Williams in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford, should be turfed and maintained by the Society has been welcomed and accepted by Mr. Michael Williams.
- ◆ A booking has been arranged for 16/17 June 2000 for a Society Conference at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine.
- ◆ Dates were agreed for the regular meetings of the Society in 2000 (see page 5).

Richard Sturch

Bertie Shuttleworth

Bertie, widow of Thelma Shuttleworth, died recently. Thelma's nieces write that Bertie had much appreciated hearing from those friends of Thelma's who had kept in touch with him since her death.

Photocopy service for North American members

To reduce the cost of obtaining back issues of the Society's newsletters for North American members Dale Nelson has offered a photocopy service. Dale has issues 1-16, 18-34 and 55-present and is able to copy them for around \$1.25 per issue including postage. American and Canadian members wishing to take advantage of this offer should contact Dale to check on the final costs. Dale can be contacted at:

English Department
Mayville State University
330 Third St NE
Mayville
ND 58257, USA

Email: dale_nelson@mail.asu.nodak.edu

The Taliessin poems of Charles Williams

This book consists of notes on Charles Williams's Arthurian poems written by people who knew him well – Alice Mary Hadfield, Anne Ridler, Anne Scott, Thelma Shuttleworth and Joan and Richard Wallis.

The notes originally appeared in Newsletters issued between 1977 and 1986. They were later edited by Anne Ridler and published by the Society in book form in 1991. They are a valuable resource for readers of the Arthurian poems.

Copies are still available from:

Mrs Brenda Boughton
44 Plantation Road
Oxford, OX2 6JE

Price includes postage and packing. Please make all payments in sterling.
UK £7.00, Europe £7.25, Other overseas countries £7.50.

New members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members of the Charles Williams Society:

- ◆ **Mr Barry Lorimer**
146 Three Bridges Road
Crawley
West Sussex, RH10 1JP
- ◆ **Universitätsbibliothek**
Catholic University of Eichstätt
Universitätsallee 1
85072 Eichstätt
Germany
- ◆ **Canon Martin Coombs**
54 Divinity Road
Oxford
OX4 1LJ
- ◆ **Mr AJK Green**
15 Rowland Close
Hampton Dene
Hereford
HR1 1XF

The Man Born to be King

Members of the Charles Williams Society may be interested to know about forthcoming performance readings of *The Man Born to be King* by Dorothy L. Sayers. The Dorothy L. Sayers Society and Radius will present performance readings of Plays 5, 7 and 8 at **3.30pm on Sunday 26th September 1999** at The City Temple, Holborn Viaduct, London (nearest tube stations, Farringdon and Blackfriars).

Tickets are available by post from: TMBTBK, Rose Cottage, Malt-house Lane, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex, BN6 9JY, telephone: 01273 835988. Tickets can also be obtained by personal application at The City Temple, or on the door one hour before performance. All tickets are for unreserved seats and cost **£5**. One free ticket is available with every five purchased.

Video of the Masques

A video of *The Masque of the Manuscript* and *The Masque of Perusal* by Charles Williams is now in the Society's library and may be borrowed by members. Application should be made to the Librarian, Dr. Brian Home. Borrowers are requested to refund the cost of postage when they return the video.

The Masque of the Manuscript

Charles Williams

The Masque of the Manuscript was written by Charles Williams and set to music by Hubert J. Foss. It was presented in the Library of Amen House, London (the then headquarters of the Oxford University Press) on 28th April 1927. The Masque was written for performance by staff of the O.U.P.

One hundred copies of the Masques were printed for private circulation only.

The Masque has been published in two parts, the first part appearing in the last issue of the Newsletter. There is no break in the original text between the two parts.

Part Two

Persons of the Presentation

THE INTRODUCER OF THE MASQUE

THE SINGER

THE MASTER OF THE MUSIC

PHILLIDA

THE MANUSCRIPT

DORINDA

ALEXIS

COLIN

The Masque presents the Library at Amen House, the front wall of which forms the back of the stage.

PHILLIDA [*moving hesitatingly forward and kneeling to ALEXIS*]

Consider, Alexis, let pity have place!
 Shall the word of Dorinda determine disgrace?
 Ah look on the stranger and lift up her face;
 'Tis I that entreat, who sought nothing before.

ALEXIS [*raising her, with a glance at DORINDA*]

I will look once again, and perchance will be kind;
 One should not judge worth with a prejudiced mind;
 We can mend her and clothe her and straighten and bind –
 hear you, my Phillida, ask me no more.

PHILLIDA [*moving across to DORINDA and kneeling*]

Consider, Dorinda, shall justice deny
 Any chance to poor strangers reluctant to die?
 'Tis for mercy to-day and for kindness I cry,
 And you dare not (as usual) to bid me be mute!

DORINDA [*raising her*]

I will look once again; but if any can aid
 Call Colin; he knows that a spade is a spade,
 But he has—at long intervals—mercy displayed.
 If he shall allow it I will not dispute.

[*They all move round the Library to the telephones, and sing as one voice:*]

ALL THREE Colin, Colin, Colin, are you there?

Deign to hasten down the stair;
 Deign upon a shape to look
 That was meant to be a book;
 Deign to see if you can trace
 Any beauty in its face;
 Deign to be a final judge,

May she stay or must she trudge?

May she stay or must she trudge?

COLIN [*entering to a new motif*]

You disturb and distract me from Samuel and Jane;

O quickly release me! I hanker again

For clues in the watermark, clues in the grain,

For stubs that are loosened and leaves that are fly.

[*He dances angrily round and then inspects the MS*]

The rules of all style are both simple and few,

So Shakespeare has taught; to your own self be true,

And see that your style is undoubtedly you;

I doubt me, I doubt me, if this will get by.

PHILLIDA Ah Colin, consider; she's young and too fair

To be left on the threshold in utter despair:

Come, tidy her raiment and comb out her hair;

Ah Colin, Dorinda, Alexis, do try!

[*To the sound of a solemn minuet they move round THE MANUSCRIPT, tidying her up generally, and chanting in monotone the following incantation:*]

COLIN Be these long words ripped away;

Short will serve for what you say.

Do not flap a winged conceit;

You can walk on your own feet.

ALL Round her, round her, with the sun,

Pluck and pull till all is done.

ALEXIS Of appendices what need?

Bravely, bravely; though you bleed,

Look you fair, for health prevails

When you trip not on your tails.

ALL Round her, round her, with the sun,
Pluck and pull till all is done.

DORINDA If corrections there must be
Have them neat and mannerly;
Wear the introduction straight;
• Manuscripts should be sedate.

ALL Round her, round her, with the sun,
Pluck and pull till all is done.

THE MANUSCRIPT

Thanks to you who condescend
To prepare me for my end
Long desired, that I may be
Gathered in security.

COLIN [*moving to the right of THE MANUSCRIPT*]
Now she trips it, blithe and true,

ALEXIS [*moving to her left*]
All is done that we can do.

DORINDA [*moving to COLIN'S right*]
If you pray, now breathe a prayer.

PILLIDA [*moving to ALEXIS'S left*]
Forth, and up to Caesar's chair.

[The array moves forward down the stage and halts in front of Caesar. To the

sound of a great chorus they all sing:]

Ah Caesar, remember this Syriac tome,
So far from her father, her folk, and her home!
Ah Caesar, have mercy! we do what we may,
Regard her with favour and publish, we pray.

[They kneel. CAESAR having signified assent, the music begins to suggest a dead march, and with a slow outward movement the characters retire.]

COLIN Knowst thou what, with thy fortune, thou hast won?

DORINDA The hour attends; be the great rites begun.

ALEXIS Be darkness and the executioners nigh.

PHILLIDA Nothing at all can live except it die.

[ALEXIS and COLIN bring in, first the bier and then two lighted candles. The music ceases for THE MANUSCRIPT to speak.]

THE MANUSCRIPT

O you my father's house, whom if I see
At all again, it will not then seem me,
Nor I shall know myself nor you, being then
Long haled by the swift wrath of childless men
To bitter separations from myself;
And though another I upon your shelf
Glimmer in a dark azure or deep bronze
Or colours else, and new dimensions
Constrain that other me, I shall not know
The patient desk where I so long lay low,
Nor feel my father's tracing hand fulfil

The measure of his knowledgeable will,
 Or sprinkle on my folios the lore
 Distilled by lesser sages gone before;
 This shall not be again: and you, farewell,
 My cancelled pages, who perchance may dwell
 Within some drawer, and he with doubting eye
 Muse if he did well when he put you by;
 And also farewell you, long-loyal friend,
 The instrument wherewith the whole was penned!
 Farewell, the end is sure though it delay;
 Joyous, I pass upon no joyous way.

[She turns to ALEXIS and COLIN, who place her on the bier and cover her with a pall.]

ALEXIS Now on the postulant, invoked with power,
 Descends the destined sacrificial hour.
[All the lights, except the candles, are extinguished.]

COLIN Now parted from her are her maps and charts:
 See, from her wounds the deathly life-blood starts.

PHILLIDA Ah to what end, by mere goodwill of thought,
 Have I this woman and my sister brought?

DORINDA Have cheer: on the thrice-darkened path of man
 This is the best that any friendship can.

ALEXIS *[he moves to the front of the stage and sounds a trumpet. Behind him*
 COLIN *watches the bier.]*

Depart, ye profane ones, for ever; but hearken, ye lords of the myth,

While the damsel goes on to the printing and destruction that marches
 therewith,
 Can ye sing of her part in perfection, of her kinship in deed can ye tell
 With Odysseus the wise, the far-travelled, who arose and went down
 into hell?

O answer, ye searchers of legend, this is not another but one.
 The symbol is heavy upon her, and darkened the light of the sun,
 As when on the hosting of Connaught the light of the underworld fell,
 When Cuchullain the high king, the mighty, arose and went down
 into hell.

For the houses of traffic and commerce, the houses of learning and
 art,
 The houses of strong adoration, are one in the innermost heart,
 For always and allwhere the trumpet is crying that all things are well,
 Since the Lady Persephone issued from the broad jurisdiction of hell.
 And where is the Lodge and the Master, O there is the place of the
 East;

And where is the altar and offering, O there are the hands of the priest;
 And the Table is everyway perfect, and the crown of the kingship
 goes well,
 Since the feet of Dom Galahad entered, and he sat in the Perilous
 Sell.

[ALEXIS *returns to his place, music sounds suddenly, and THE MANUSCRIPT
 makes a movement to rise.*]

COLIN No, not yet the change is ended,
 Nor the working sin expended;
 Here's a fault and there one more;
 Here is a mixed metaphor;
 Here a reference speaks untruly;
 There a headline spreads unduly;
 Back to suffer; back to bear
 Penance and correction there.

ALL No, not yet the change is ended
 Nor the working sin expended;
 Back to suffer; back to bear
 Penance and correction there.

[ALEXIS *again moves forward* and PHILLIDA *appears before him. There is a little light on her.*]

PHILLIDA A place is chosen for you, O new-comer,
 Among the pleasantness of older books;
 In winter cosy, cool in heats of summer,
 Where are no envious and no hateful looks.
 From wall to wall, circumference to centre,
 Behold your fellows courteously inclined;
 The dictionaries glance to see you enter
 As if great kings were generously kind;
 While in yon nook a small audacious drummer
 Beats crime and marvels into sovereign mirth;

ALL A place is chosen for you, O new-comer,
 Among the happiest places upon earth.
 [The light vanishes]

COLIN All now is ended! Look, she comes again.

ALL Light, light! that we may see her beauty plain.
 [In the full light THE MANUSCRIPT is seen as a Syrian book gloriously dressed.]

THE BOOK Hail, O you most fair world! I come to you
 As perfect as man's work can be, as new
 As Spring in gardens or young love in minds

Where love's best self no rough presumption finds.
 O glorious earth! O happiness of art!
 O full Imagination, make my part
 Not quite unworthy you. And now install
 Me humbly as the youngest of you all.

COLIN Take her, you powers of strong publicity,
 And of the world of letters make her free.

ALEXIS Wherefore, to all the towps and provinces —
 Though think not the too-populous streets to please —
 Be, for the duty's sake, the news proclaimed,
 And be you now among your equals named.

[*He sounds a trumpet to the four corners.*]

Hear, you four corners of the compass! hear,
 You readers that are busy everywhere!
 To-day *A Treatise upon Syrian Nouns*
As Used in Northern and Sub-Northern Towns
Five Centuries B.C.: with maps and charts,
By W. Lackpenny, Master of Arts,
 Is published. [*He gives the book to DORINDA*]

Hear it, you that study most
 In books, you *Daily News* and *Morning Post*,
 You *Antiquaries' Journal*, and *Church Times*,
 And all you prints of many trades and climes;
 You *Scullions' Weekly* and *Home Readers' Pet*,
 You *Priest's Adviser*, *Atheists' Gazette*,
Ethno- and Geo-Historical Review,
 You *Travellers' Train-Companion*, *Actors' Cue*,
Esquimaux' Mail, *Tierra del Fuego Star!*
 And as you treat her, show us what you are.

DORINDA [*giving the Book to PHILLIDA*]

But you, receive her, Phillida, and store,
Lest in some crisis, whether foreign war,
Lock-out, or day of judgement, she should be
Needed and lacking from the Library,
And you, to judgement hurried up the stair,
Find no hand stretched to aid you anywhere.

PHILLIDA Welcome! come in, and take your joyous place.

[She puts her on a shelf of the Library.]

But is there, my stern sistèr, if disgrace
Catch me, and she be lost – that I may live,
No other copy for your hand to give?

DORINDA No more, child: none. How many would you have?

We print few copies of a book so grave—
A score or so; some fifteen for reviews
Which the instructed Magians shall peruse;
For Caesar one; one for your Library,
Six for the others; one for the Author (free);
And one in case—such things have been before—
A customer should want one. What needs more?

PHILLIDA Is there no traffic then and no desire

For any commerce, so the Olympian Sire
Of gods be glad at this thing brought to pass,
And a new light shine where the darkness was?

COLIN None; 'tis the glory of the Absolute

Not to deny, encourage, or dispute;
But to himself to be himself displayed;
Of whom herein we are a little shade.
By her through whom all mortal things must be,

The Muses' mother and ours, Mnemosyne.

[All the company gather in the front of the stage and sing the Ode to Mnemosyne.]

ALL Praise to the Mother, the Watcher,
 The knower of space and of time,
 The light that wakes in the darkness,
 The maker of music and rhyme;
 Praise to Mnemosyne ever,
 * In all things be rendered praise.
 The mother of men and of Muses,
 Who walks amid human ways;

 Veiled except to her children,
 From all but her lovers hid,
 From all but the pure of purpose
 Who are clean from the thing forbid.
 Hers is the star that arises
 O'er temple and market and house,
 And all the desire of mortals
 Is to look on her blessed brows.

THE MASTER OF THE MUSIC

Hers are the lustral cities,
 Hers are the Sacred Nine,
 Hers are the silver bridges
 O'er the pits where the foolish pine:

Patron of all the scholars,
 And the poets' mystery,
 What sun can there be of science
 That is not learned of thee?

ALL Holy and happy who seek thee,
 Thou art our inmost mind,
 Knowing the things before us
 And the centuries left behind.
 Goddess and mother, remember
 Thy children here and befriend,
 And bring us by holy learning
 To peace and the perfect end.

[The curtains are drawn, the music passes again into a suggestion of a dead march, and the INTRODUCER of the Masque speaks the Epilogue.]

Because there is no end but death
 To anything of mortal breath;
 Because, beyond the times and seas,
 Shakespeare shall no more have increase,
 But lie forgotten, as the bards
 Who sang between the shining guards
 Of Cnossus or of Mexico,
 We with goodwill dissolve our show
 To nothingness and memory;
 To-morrow all shall vanished be,
 Forgot this gay solemnity;
 You shapes, farewell; and you who deigned
 An hour of courtesy, and feigned
 Such love and laughter, O farewell—
 Now, and hereafter when you dwell
 No longer amid human things,
 And the round earth no longer sings
 Of joy or pain, and silence ends
 Even the most precious talk of friends,
 And time hath nothing more to tell—
 Take now the taste of that farewell;
 And think on this as nothing more
 Than the rich triumph passed before

Your princely chariots: all is done,
Song and the changing April sun,
Music, delight—the hour is run—
All but the slave's monotonous cry:
[He kneels, and over solemn music speaks the final words.]
Caesar, remember thou shalt die.

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An autocriticism by Charles Williams

We are pleased to reprint here Charles Williams's own review of *Reason and Beauty in the English Poetic Mind* which appeared in *The Week-End Review* of 18 November 1933. This was one a series of "Autocriticisms" in which authors reviewed their own books.

All of us have authors whom we cannot read properly, and I am sorry that Mr. Charles Williams is one of mine. If his work has any value I shall never know it, for on the rare occasions - and how rare they seem, alas! - when I have discussed it with a friend, we generally appear to be talking about different books. A something in each book, obvious to others, eludes me; but how obvious to me are things my friend never discovers! I dare not, therefore, dwell on the lucidities and just conclusions of which the present volume at moments seems to be so full, and I am reluctant to formulate the imbecilities which, at other moments, suggest themselves. I fear Mr. Williams is not as intelligent, I passionately hope he is not as silly, as those alternating moods declare. This notice need not hesitate over the correct summarising adjective; there will not be any.



Caricature by Coia.

There is a footnote on one page which might have been enlarged to a paragraph and even to a chapter. When one considers how many chapters in how many books might have been happily compressed to footnotes, it is perhaps a sign of fearful grace in this author that he left it as it is, but of a perilous grace

also, because there is always a danger that he will imagine himself to have said something clearly when, in fact, he has not. The profound agreement in which I find myself with his main discourse does not blind me to that. This particular footnote relates to owls: that which in the *Faerie Queene* shrieked from the height above the cave of Despair, that which the partner of Keat's *Melancholy* was bidden to exclude from his "sorrow's mysteries", and that "fatal bellman" which Lady Macbeth heard on the night of Duncan's murder. These three owls in their separate places ornithologically present a progress in the poetic genius. The first represents a romantic enjoyment of the imagination; the rejection of the second is a sign of the imagination driving forward to the intense realisation of "forms and substances"; the third lives in the place of great identities, substances mightily, and (in Wordsworth's phrase) gloriously, recognised in poetry.

The separate chapters which study this development begin with Wordsworth's definition of Reason in the *Prelude* and with Marlowe's metaphysical inquiry into Beauty in *Tamburlaine*. They then proceed to the *Essay on Man*, considered as a conflict between Pope's arguments and the insight of his genius; to the *Faerie Queene*, as a defeat of the philosophical imagination by poetry, offering as an example Spenser's unintentional transformation of Despair into Hope; to Keats, the manner in which he at one time explicitly abandoned the intellect being shown by an analysis of the *Nightingale* and the *Grecian Urn*; and the Shakespearean crisis of the disintegration of the intellect. Mr. Williams then puts forward the suggestion - but let us, for once, quote him:

In the past it [poetry] has done chiefly two things, and those by the two imaginations of Milton and Shakespeare. It has, in the one, imagined that "madness of discourse" as subordinated to Reason; it has imagined a sublime Reason in control of the universe, a Reason which is at the same time absolute Power; and this controlling "truth and beauty" it has imagined in relation to the contending and contradicting states of divided souls. But in the other it has followed the "madness of discourse" itself, abandoning, at least explicitly, the divine Reason, and tracing the conflict deeper and deeper until in some sense it has imagined earth, under the influence of the operation of falsehood, ravening upon itself. It has traced the path of destruction.

To this double process of imagination the rest of the book is devoted. Mr. Williams has here confined himself, in Milton, to *Paradise Lost* which (as against those critics who have called it "inhuman") seems to him one of the great psychological examinations of the nature of man; man rebellious against, man evasive of, man exquisitely surrendering to, a state of perfect freedom, joy, and peace. The Shakespearean progress is other - to the entire cannibalism of *'Macbeth'*.

In his preface Mr. Williams half apologises for seeming to impose a pattern on poetry; he excuses himself on the ground that at least Milton in *'Paradise Lost'* did pretend to deal with Reason and Shakespeare in the tragedies with Unreason. It is perhaps sufficiently true to justify this exposition of a relation in our mightiest poetry. But patterns are baleful things, and more so because the irony of the universe has ensured that any pattern invented by man shall find an infinite number of facts to support it. The many-titled beast of Apocalypse, the almost-as-many titled Elizabethan who really wrote Shakespeare, are examples. When, being very young, I sometimes thought I knew Mr. Williams, I should have warned him to beware of his pattern; if ever, "some evening when the moon is blood", I meet him again in Holborn or on Ludgate Hill, I shall offer him the same warning. But meanwhile, for anyone who can outdo me by reading him correctly and with a more exquisite judgement, his evoked pattern is here.

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Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Society's Newsletter and Web site have two functions. Firstly, to publish material about the life and work of Charles Williams. Secondly, to publish details of the activities of the Society.

Contributions to the Newsletter and the Web site are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- ◆ Submissions should be sent to the Editor.
- ◆ Submissions over 300 words should be made on floppy disc, typewritten paper, or by e-mail.
- ◆ Submissions under 300 words can be hand-written.
- ◆ Submissions on paper should be one-sided and double spaced.
- ◆ All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- ◆ The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission.

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