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The  
**Charles  
Williams**  
Quarterly



No. 122

Spring 2007

[www.geocities.com/charles\\_wms\\_soc](http://www.geocities.com/charles_wms_soc)

## 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 magazine and may attend the Society's meetings which are held twice a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at The Centre for Medieval Studies in Oxford.

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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 Editor**

This issue features Charles Williams's verse play *A Myth of Bacon*. We published this previously spread across three issues of the Newsletter and since decided that this was not an altogether satisfactory way of preserving it. So it appears here in its entirety. Or almost.... There are two small gaps in the text marked thus: { } arising from a corner of a page of the typescript being torn. Also there are two short parts of the dialogue that CW (or someone) had crossed out, and these have been enclosed in square brackets: [ ]. I have arranged the pagination in such a way that those who wish to do so may extract the play and keep it as a separate booklet with their other Williams books. To accommodate this the Council Meeting Report and the review of a CD audio course on Williams's novels are being held over until the next issue.

On another matter, if I may be allowed to advertise myself, I would like to draw your attention to my forthcoming talk at Treadwell's, Covent Garden, on "The Strange Secret Life of Charles Williams: Littérateur and Magician of Inter-War London". Further details are in the News and Notes section.

Richard Jeffery, who does all the real work of getting this Quarterly to you, pointed out that we are not all damned. He writes "Gregory in *War in Heaven* had aims just like the magicians in your quotation, and finally repented and was presumably condemned but not damned. Clerk Simon wasn't human enough to care for luxury or revenge and surely was damned." I stand corrected.

Edward Gauntlett.

## Society News & Notes

### New Member

We extend a warm welcome to the following new member of the society:

Mr Daniel Bailey  
7608 Rohrer Drive  
Downers Grove  
IL 60516-4416  
U.S.A.

### John Heath– Stubbs

John Heath-Stubbs's funeral took place at St Matthew's Church, Bayswater, on January 10th, attended by a congregation of about a hundred; the Society was represented by its Secretary. Tributes to him incorporated three of his shorter poems, but concentrated mainly on his personality and sense of humour, though reference was also made to his critical work, including his booklet on Charles Williams. A fuller memorial service, intended to do justice to his standing as a poet, is planned to take place later in the year. (See our obituary on page 43.)

### Subscriptions

Members should all have now received a note about the changes we have introduced in the collection of subscriptions to the Society.

We would be grateful if all UK members would return their Standing Order and Gift-Aid forms as soon as possible; and that all non-UK members make the necessary arrangements with their banks and advise the Treasurer.

### Treadwell's Talk

*The Strange Secret Life of Charles Williams: Littérateur and Magician of Inter-War London.* Edward Gauntlett

15th May 7.15 for 7.30pm start £5

[www.treadwells-london.com/events.pdf](http://www.treadwells-london.com/events.pdf)

Treadwell's Bookshop, 34 Tavistock St., Covent Garden WC2E 7PB

BOOKING: Please book in advance via [info@treadwells-london.com](mailto:info@treadwells-london.com) or Tel. +44 (0)20 7240 8906. Note: all events start promptly and latecomers are not admitted. Wine is, however, served from 7pm on nights when the events commence at 7.30pm. All Treadwell's evening talks are followed by a drinks party.

## **Charles Williams Society Meetings**

### ◆ **Saturday 24 March 2007 (Oxford)**

**The Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies St. Michael's Hall, Shoe Lane, OXFORD OX1 2DP** 10.45 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

10.45 a.m. – 11.15 a.m. Coffee

11.15 a.m. - 12.45 a.m. Brian Horne: *Extracts from the Archives*.

There is a great deal of fascinating material in our reference library of which the majority of our members is probably unaware: unpublished letters, reviews, diary entries, photographs, jottings of various kinds. Most of these are by Charles Williams himself but there are many items by others who knew him and corresponded with him. These are housed in the Charles Williams Room at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Oxford. It was a thought a good idea that we should have a session at the centre in which some of these treasures could be introduced to members by the chairman, in his capacity as librarian of the society.

12.45 a.m. – 2.15 p.m. Lunch.

2.15 p.m. The afternoon session will consist of our reading of the last play of Charles Williams: **The House of the Octopus**. Please bring your own copy of the play if you have one. A few copies will be available for members who do not possess their own.

### ◆ **Saturday 13 October 2007 (London)**

Provisionally the programme is for a talk by Angelika Schneider in the morning, followed by readings from, and discussions of, some of the early poems from *Divorce* and *Windows of Night* in the afternoon. Full details will be announced as soon as they have been finalized

A MYTH OF FRANCIS BACON

by

CHARLES WILLIAMS

This *Myth of Bacon* has two themes. The first is the life of Bacon, presented in its four chief episodes; the second is the purification of his interior being which proceeds simultaneously. That very great mind proposed to itself, it seems, two objects: (1) the service of the State; (2) the organisation of all knowledge and its expansion to the widest possible limits. He shaped an image of this second concern in the description of Salomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Work of God, which closes the *New Atlantis*. The motives of his actions were no doubt often mixed; his self-interest and his duty sometimes pointed in the same direction. Lesser minds have therefore found it easy to blame him.

The *Myth* opens with the supposed appearance to Bacon of one of his own imagined pontiffs of Salomon's House, who defines for him his work and darkly threatens him with the pain which the making pure of his devotion to wisdom will bring on him. The First Episode then presents his rejection by his uncle Burleigh and his friendship with the Earl of Essex, the beginning of his political career. The Interlude which follows is the noise of the rebellion of Essex, and contains a momentary echo of the presentation of *Richard II* by the Chamberlain's men at that time. Augustine Phillipps, the manager of their company, was examined by the Privy Council upon this performance, and it is not too extreme a fancy that Shakespeare, the writer of the play, was ordered to be in attendance also. The quite possible meeting of Shakespeare and Bacon in 1601 (Bacon had published the first edition of the essays in 1597; Shakespeare in 1601 was at the *Hamlet – Troilus* period) surrounds the encounter of Bacon and the fallen Essex with the renewed sense of Bacon's prime duties, as Cecil touches his immediate profit in the matter. Shakespeare's prophecy precedes the Second Interlude – Bacon's procession as Chancellor (1618) The Third Episode presents his own fall, and the triumph of his passion for reality.

Beyond this there is shown in the Epilogue his last experiment, the appearance of the Father of Salomon's House, and his approaching death, struck into him at once by the cold of winter and by that of immortal purity. The song of the young generations to whom he commended himself accompanies him as he is carried out.

A MYTH OF FRANCIS BACON

by

CHARLES WILLIAMS

Characters

Introducer

The Father of Salomon's House

Francis Bacon

Lord Burleigh, the Lord Treasurer

Sir Robert Cecil, Burleigh's son

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex

Bacon's Steward

Thomas Hobbes

Rawley, Bacon's Chaplin

A Gentleman

Earl of Arundel

Earl of Shrewsbury

A Woman

The Guilds

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(Characters in order of speaking)

First Episode — The Beginning. A Court in the Palace.

The Father of Salomon's House	Carol Stewart
Francis Bacon	Susan Lamert
William Cecil, Lord Burleigh	Elizabeth Pym
Sir Robert Cecil, Burleigh's Son	Nancy Joy
Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex	Biddy Grant

INTERLUDE — The Rebellion of Essex.

Second Episode — The Fall of Essex. A Courtyard near the Palace.

Augustine Phillips	Diana Keane
William Shakespeare	Joan Clark
Francis Bacon	Susan Lamert
A Secretary	Patsy Schofield.
Sir Robert Cecil	Nancy Joy
The Earl of Essex	Biddy Grant
Two Guards	P. Godman & P. Patterson

INTERLUDE — The Procession of the Lord Chancellor.

Third Episode — The Accusation. A Room in York House.

Francis Bacon	Susan Lamert
A Steward	Barbara Roffey
Thomas Hobbes, Bacon's Secretary	Rosemary Hughes
Audley	Wendy Rathbone
A Gentleman	Jay Home
A Servant	Hilary Stebbing
The Earl of Arundel	Marjorie Boyd
The Earl of Shrewsbury	A. Monier Williams

Epilogue — The Last Experiment. Highgate Hill.

Francis Bacon	Susan Lamert
Thomas Hobbes	Rosemary Hughes
A Woman	Dauphine Bosanquet
The Father of Salomon's House	Carol Stewart

Introducer:

Master of the house of knowledge  
whom men's seeking minds adore,  
keep thine own immortal college  
evermore as heretofore.

Through our deep imaginations  
send the vision now as then;  
lift in us the invocations,  
let us now praise famous men.

Each, our master and our neighbour,  
at the sacred temple builds;  
follow, follow them to labour  
in the charter of the guilds.

Weigh the stars and plot the ocean,  
make new engines of new might,  
Still desiring in each motion  
God's first creature, which is light.

The Father of Salomon's House:

Gentles, greetings I am one  
to reveal the lasting laws  
and the name of secret cause  
which is God's creative style.  
Therefore once in a great while  
cast they horoscopes to see  
by divine astrology  
what new child among you hath  
power to take that sea-borne path  
to the hostels of our land  
where the helmed pontiffs stand.  
Him we subtly purge and clear,  
feed, indoctrinate, and rear  
through his childhood and his youth  
for the lucid joy of truth.  
Wherefore thus it is that now  
we are well content to show  
how a certain man was made

pure and fragrant for our trade,  
 doing you to wit that ye  
 praise his good integrity,  
 watching how we shaped his mind.  
 in the mode that we designed,  
 so that he through good and ill  
 toiled for our Atlantis, till  
 came conclusion to his skill  
 in the snow on Highgate Hill.

*(He draws back. Bacon enters.)*

Bacon: I will beseech my uncle yet again  
 Cannot the Earl of Burleigh do me good?  
 Can he? nay, will he? Virtue in great place  
 is calm; his calm is virtue's, and to aid  
 a destitute nephew - that is virtue too.  
 I will accost him when he - soft, who's here?  
 Some foreign monster sent to please the Queen  
 by Raleigh's bidding. Fellow there, give way.

*(As the Father turns.)*

Why, pardon: but... I know you..? I have seen  
 your face in... Cambridge? no; abroad? or, where?

The Father: Francis, thou know'st me not, but thou shalt know.

Bacon: Do not let go mine eyes. I will know.

The Father: Aye.  
 I will sear thine eyes in gazing: keep them fixed.  
 What think'st thou of my face?

Bacon: As of a map  
 strangely marked out with cities long since drowned.  
 Drowned, but not dead: most wholly, wholly, wise:  
 living as if all ocean were up piled  
 to show a rarer world beneath its waves.

The Father: I have marked a path beneath the waves for thee,  
 into a new Atlantis beyond hope.

---

Bacon: Do not go from me. I will follow it.  
Where goes it?

The Father: Into knowledge.

Bacon: Knowledge! speak.

The Father: Of nature, man, and all things else that are.

Bacon: Aye... aye...

The Father: ... all things below and over earth,  
and how man's empire judges them and rules.  
See'st thou?

Bacon: I see. (*He kneels*) bless me, O father of truth.

The Father: Thou art a doorkeeper in Salomon's house,  
and shalt be pontiff when thy day is come.  
Feel'st thou? (*laying his hand on Bacon's forehead*)

Bacon: Cold: cold.

The Father: Aye; go, and be alone.  
Thou shalt behold me when thou art alone.

Bacon: Spirit, who art thou?

The Father: I am thy desire,  
thy sole friend; thou shalt have no friend but me.

Bacon: I rise not level yet with my desire,  
so fast it flies into horizons of cloud.  
Tell me, thou vision, tell me my desire.

The Father: Look on me once more: sees't thou?

Bacon: Ah thy face  
is lucent with the hiddenness of thought,  
and through its purity flash to and fro  
the secret causes of all mortal things.  
It is the epiphany of the universe

vastly conveyed to thought, and thought to flesh.  
Ah, ah! the intolerable tormenting joy.

The Father: Thou feel'st the torment of the greatest joy  
that man may know; be thou man knowing it,  
be the new instauration of man's mind.  
This is that hope which is unique despair  
so great its scope is, and its depth so strong.  
For how but by despair of plenitude  
can plenitude discover all itself?  
In me thou seest thy power to comprehend  
the whole of nature and the whole of man.  
Thou art my child as I am Wisdom's child.

Bacon: Name her again, vision, and. name thyself.

The Father: Our mother Wisdom, looking on the sea  
and tawny uproar of Infinitude,  
beheld there the unshaped floating limbs  
of pure Imagination; then she sighed  
as deep as when divinities create,  
and in that sigh she summoned it to be.  
At once for all those waters it arose  
with its own world Atlantis, with its house  
the College of the Six Days' Work of God,  
beyond the waters of infinitude.  
And I am of its Keepers; I am come  
to bid thy heart imagine mightily  
all knowledge of the everlasting laws.

Bacon: O there! O there! O pulse of my desire.  
I love thee, spirit.

The Father: Also thou shalt love.  
Thou shalt love purely, and for that love's sake  
I warn thee I will have thee wholly pure.  
Be of good cheer, Francis, for thou art mine.

*(He retires backward and disappears. Burleigh and Robert Cecil enter from one side, as Bacon turns away from the vision.)*

Bacon: Debts! Debts! To free myself and. then to gaze!

I must be free ere I can free the world  
 with instruments and organs of new power,  
 to make a myriad truths into one truth.  
 Cecil! O Cecil, be the key wherewith  
 I will enlarge myself then the world!  
 My lord! Sir Robert!

*(Burleigh moves a hand. Robert Cecil nods.)*

If I dare intrude  
 upon your lordship's pleasure....

Burleigh: The old. tale?

Bacon: Some small - the smallest station; but to serve  
 you and the Queen's Grace.

Burleigh: Many are apt to that.  
 In more need; of more mark.

Bacon: Your lordship knows  
 My father's death encumbered me with debts,  
 I am unknown - I pray for chance and time  
 And I will show you how I shall be known,  
 I think not boastfully.

Burleigh: Be safe; boast now  
 truth yet unproved which, proved, may thwart the boast.  
 There is no office open. To the Courts;  
 there labour; labour shall bring gold; gold fame.

Bacon: I thank your lordship's counsel: yet I dare  
 once more petition: we are kin, my lord,  
 and the Queen needs sure service.

Burleigh: I have spent  
 these forty years to learn what the Queen needs.

Bacon: Forty years! forty years of study! O,  
 give me, my uncle, give me forty years  
 of learning and of vision: give me ten -  
 I have taken all knowledge for my province - ten,  
 and afterwards.... I shall be dead or saved.  
 Some post, some little post, to bid me thrive!

Burleigh: The Queen has little need of such as take  
all knowledge for their province, but of small  
diligent clerks deciphering, by the light  
of candles, themselves candles, no broad suns  
blasting the dazzle of morning through dark skies,  
deciphering, scribbling, calculating clerks.

Bacon: But I am patient as all knowledge is -  
Might I not be a better clerk to the Queen  
for being a clerk to knowledge? The great forms  
that are the principles of our cherished life  
of taste, smell, touch, sight, hearing, they are found  
but by such figuring and decipherment,  
experiment, discovery, then the truth.

Burleigh: Well, Robert... no more, nephew. Void the square.  
I am in privacy with Sir Robert here.  
To the Courts, to the Courts, go.

Bacon: At your lordship's will.

*(He withdraws, disheartened, and goes out.)*

Robert Cecil: How the beggar whined!

Burleigh: I would have you, Robert, note  
I have chiefly put him by because of you.  
I will run no risk of wiseheads by the Queen  
till you are firm with her. This learning - she  
has dallied longer with learning than the Dukes  
she toyed with - hand in snuggling hand. This talk....  
I will not have him near her. Now for Spain,  
mark this -

*(Essex bursts in, dragging Bacon with him)*

Essex: Ha, ha! ha, ha! What, my Lord Treasurer  
despoils his family and his queen at once -  
for fear, belike, of seeming touched with bribes.  
This is a virtue overnice to keep  
unspotted from the world. Now, by my life,  
I wonder my Lord Treasurer dares to talk  
with his own son in open day.

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- 
- Burleigh: My lord,  
give you good morrow.
- Essex: Why, Francis here was sent  
so hard by your good morrow that I fear  
there's thunder heavy in it. What! no place?  
Why, hang some rogue for treason and make room.  
Nay, I must have him suited.
- Burleigh: Very like,  
Treason itself must serve Lord Essex' will.
- Essex: Here's Robert younger than Francis; let him wait  
a throw or two of the State dice, and learn  
a neater touch with the dice-box. Come, my lord,  
I must be served; a reversion, at the least,  
with a retainer for a cushion to fit  
the waiting-bench. The Registrarship now, ha?
- Burleigh: 'Tis promised.
- Essex: Why, unpromise then.
- Bacon: My lords,  
I am unworthy of so much heat.
- Essex: No heat.  
Only the Queen shall hear - the Queen shall know  
how Robert Devereux is served.
- Burleigh: The Queen  
has heard a many Robert Devereux brag.  
Pah! I ungrace myself to talk of it.
- Essex: But whom this Robert Devereux makes his friend -  
no shyness, Francis; we are friends, I hope -  
might have a Cecil for a squire, and then  
be served less than his merit.
- Robert Cecil: How, my lord!  
You are wondrous warm.
- Essex: I could name a wondrous cold
-

shivering, frost-bitten shepherd pushed in court  
 by the old steward his father. Ha, sweet friend,  
 never despair; I'll to the Queen myself.  
 Am I not Gloriana's Robert?

Burleigh: Aye.

Was never Gloriana's minion yet  
 but Gloriana kept her royal head  
 and he... well, think of it one day. Farewell.  
 I claim the earlier audience with the Queen,  
 Come Robert. (*They go out*)

Essex: What, despair, nay, cheer thee, friend.

Nay, we are friends, I hope. I would be loth  
 to find that Essex cannot serve his friend.  
 Depend on me - and in me on the Queen,  
 This hand she toys with shall, the while she toys,  
 pluck any jewel forth from her stomacher  
 and grace the hat of any man my friend.  
 And she shall smile.

Bacon: My honourable lord,  
 princes are lightly stirred to wrath; be wise;  
 I would not have your lordship spoil the Queen  
 for my sake, yours, or any.

Essex: Come, I have  
 a manor out at Twickenham shall be thine  
 while we wait greater things.

Bacon: All of my heart  
 that is not common land of England lies  
 enclosed to your sole service: yet, my lord -

Essex: Chut, wilt thou delay with my favour, man?  
 Why, if I would not thrust thee into place  
 part for thine own wise brain - as it shall serve  
 me also: there shall be great need: the Queen  
 ages - and then, thou knowest, Francis, then -  
 hist! the succession. I must cozen James,  
 we must be subtle...

Bacon: O my dearest lord,  
 what greatness of a man's own station can

be worthy of his ordained being? look,  
 how frail our persons, our fortunes how unsure,  
 and for all that what worth within our souls!  
 Love duty, apprehend it, look abroad  
 into the universal sway of things.  
 Tis the corrupter sort of politics  
 that thrust into the centre, as if all  
 yea, the whole realm and world of lives should meet  
 in them and in their fortunes. Glorious men  
 are but the slaves of their own vaunts; whom fools  
 admire and parasites idolatrise,  
 whom princes never love but with an eye  
 wary upon the little inch of ground  
 that separates their footstool from the throne.

Essex: How, Francis, lectures?

Bacon: God be good to me  
 as I desire your honourable fame  
 in the Queen's mouth and all men's.

Essex: I am the City's favourite. Come, we'll in.  
 I love them marvellously; wait awhile  
 and I will spite this Cecil with thee yet.

Aye, well said.

.....

## II

*(Augustine Phillipps and Shakespeare enter.)*

Phillipps: This is the blesseddest day of all my life!  
 I hardly thought to see the sun again.

Shakespeare: Richard's own dungeon won't be half as deep  
 as the pit I'll hide that play in: all because  
 my lord of Essex must be picturesque,

but I'm not made for such benevolence  
to the poor thrifty boat-in-floodtime world.

Phillipps: All's safe: we've slipped the danger.

Shakespeare: Have we so?  
It makes me mad to think we ran so near;  
to think you let yourselves be gulled and bribed  
by his jerrymaking Gerry Merricks.

Phillippes: Will,  
he offered us twice our pay, and -

Shakespeare: Easy fools,  
to let his Merricks thumb-and-finger you.  
Whenever I'm out of the theatre things go wrong.

Phillippes: You'd have stood out; you'd have refused.

Shakespeare: I am  
as good a gentleman as Gollykins,  
and Gellykins should jelly in Little Ease  
before he took my coat of arms to wag  
over his lusty bombast. Bombast's place  
is on the stage, my friend; let's keep it there.

Phillippes: At least our stage is ours; our verse is yours;  
we are the Chamberlain's men; but there be men,  
whom the Earl made, who now not merely slip  
as we do from his fall, but push him down.

Shakespeare: Close tongue: ware slitting!

Phillippes: Nay, but all men know  
that Bacon will denounce him at the Trial.  
Why, the Earl set him on his stage.

Shakespeare: Aye, aye!  
I am something weary of being helped by the world  
with so much picturesque generosity.

Phillippes: You? but I talk of Bacon.

Shakespeare: So you do.  
I dream myself am Bacon at this pinch  
Did you feel his *Essays*?

Phillipps: Feel his - ?

Shakespeare: Read them then?  
But “feel”’s the word. I couldn’t think like that,  
twining and thrusting, measuring in and out  
with the very footrule of man’s mind that God  
once plotted all earth’s base with. The slow words -  
it’s only that that stops me envying him.

Phillipps: What stops you? Envying him? what do you mean?

Shakespeare: It’s .. it’s all but .. only it isn’t quite ...  
That’s what I mean. He’s all but the perfect whole -  
nay, he’s a whole that I shall never be.  
To have his power, his learning, his grand style -  
I’d give up everything except my own.  
Not that we are such perfect opposites  
we must be somewhere a strange unity.  
Well - I suppose I’d rather be my half.  
And - hist! it’s Bacon.

*(Bacon enters, with a Secretary)*

Bacon: These to the copying clerks.  
This to the Secretary: this I’ll keep.  
The examinations press him hard.

The Secretary: He’s dead,  
If he can make no better at his trial. *(He goes out.)*

Bacon: Ha, sirs! at Court still? Well, you’re going free.  
Take heed to what you play another time –  
or what you write, you poet. *(Phillipps bows and goes.)*

Shakespeare: Truth, but verse  
teaches its maker more of its will than prose;  
that’s why the greater minds choose prose. They know  
before they write it more of what they mean  
than we poor poetasters.

Bacon: Oracles  
dancing the inspiration!

Shakespeare: Neither so.  
But - don't your Essays teach you how to act -

Bacon: How now!

Shakespeare: May not a paltry poet have read  
and contemplated study's horizon?

Bacon: You -  
What, sir! you flatter!

Shakespeare: Can I flatter you  
or what your mind discerns or what it - serves?

Bacon: What then?

Shakespeare: Less than perfected knowledge?

Bacon: Known!  
All known - all knowledgeable wonder brought  
into the edifice of the mortal mind.  
The vault of worms, the skiey spire of stars,  
and all the involuting laws of each -  
the operation of the secret forms -  
man, man shall hold it soon.

Shakespeare: Sooner for you.

Bacon: You are the playwright Shakespeare, are you not?

Shakespeare: For business' sake; somewhat for pleasure too.

Bacon: Because the actions and events of man  
are less by much than his desires, less great,  
heroical and potent, you draw up  
tales to delight his fiction of himself.  
You must reduce the shows of things to be  
subordinate to man's longing: reason bows  
man's mind to things in their own nature, what,  
my master-mummer, can knowledge mean to you?

Shakespeare: Upon the shore, say - look, you there, I here!  
 you judge the waves, you measure currents, plot  
 the palpitating air in calm or storm:  
 your exquisite pattern! your strong government. I  
 build up a cameleopard from the sand  
 wet from the ebb, blowing soft wind through it  
 till the small image stretches, rises, talks,  
 looms terribly leviathan, and therewith  
 goes crunching from the pebbles such a sound  
 as is your very pattern come to song.  
 Shall you mock me or I mock you? Brave hearts,  
 at least we both whistled the wind; it came,  
 and the same salt is clustered on our beards.  
 We are strangely separate and as strangely one.

Bacon: What, fictitious and witty prattle with that deep  
 excellency of learning, whereby man  
 all pleasures else surpasses, and ascends  
 into the heavens, making their motions bare  
 as his hand's palm to study: the supreme,  
 immortal, incorruptible reason! Out!

Shakespeare: I could say that! I could say that! but you -  
 O Master Bacon, could you take my word?  
 You cannot; I am you; you are not I.  
 You are the intellect that cannot love.

*(Enter Cecil. Essex between his guards.)*

Cecil: My lord, I dare not sound the Queen.

Essex: One word;  
 Cecil, be wise: if I ride out this storm -  
 you know the Queen - men that have slipped have stood  
 as firm again. But give me speech with her.

Cecil: My lord, I dare not name you to the Queen  
 except her Highness open.

Essex: Why, by chance -  
 have me by chance somewhere when she goes by -  
 She loved me.



your life, your very mind -

Bacon: No, by God's life.  
I that was born for the service of mankind -  
I that have sought to serve the commonwealth  
as a man serves his mother, on his knees,  
with what poor art he can; and serving so  
might hope to win his mother's listening thoughts  
to let him on a voyage of great skill  
to - where? some lost Atlantis.

Essex: Lost! you lie.  
The Queen shall hear, shall see, shall relish me.

Cecil: (*signing to the Guards*): Farewell, my lord. God send your lordship good.

(*He is carried off*)

Cecil: (*To Bacon*) Cousin, the Queen's Grace bid me send for you.  
Sir Edward Coke will lead against the Earl;  
she chooses you to second.

Bacon: Second the Earl!

Cecil: You are merry, coz: second Sir Edward Coke  
in the prosecution. Come to me to-night.  
I shall show you certain secret things. Meanwhile,  
your answer?

Bacon: I am her Highness' creature; ever hers.

Cecil: You do well; you were somewhat thought to be -  
what shall I say? - intimate with his thought -  
this readiness will purge you: you may look  
for recognition. Give you joy, good coz. (*He goes out*)

Bacon: I warned - a score of times I warned him. God  
knows I am free of all blood-guiltiness.  
I bade him keep from Ireland; I besought,  
nay, wrestled with him. I was never his  
but while - no longer - while he was the Queen's.

Shakespeare: You cannot move except against the Earl.

And can you cease to move?

Bacon: I cease? withdraw,  
leave the State service? leave the greater thing  
whereto the State may serve?

Shakespeare: It cannot be.  
The incorruption and the corruption drive  
your feet at once; impurity - purity.

Bacon: He rose not in his service, and he took  
order to make his service fall with him.

Shakespeare: It is a dreadful thing - this purity  
that works within us; this most pregnant cold  
wherein the sense of all our senses lives  
yet is repugnant to all outer sense,  
and overthrows it; happy if we still  
find that, losing the outer. But the men  
who love us, living in our outward sense,  
find us grown treacherous to them where they live.  
Witness the poor wretch babbling in the Tower.

Bacon: The State is more than any score of Earls.

Shakespeare: Reason - good reason; the true reason lacks.  
There's something in you never cared for him.

Bacon: I loved him.

Shakespeare: Aye, the incorruption loves.  
'Tis the incorruption hath you: wait awhile -  
The incorruption shall have you nearer yet;  
it shall divide you - sharp; flesh from bone,  
giving you but yourself to be your food.  
The skeleton shall feed on living flesh  
when the day comes,

*(He moves off)*

-the day that does not end.

*(He goes out. Bacon also departs)*

.....

III

*(A room in York House. Bacon enters with his steward.)*

Bacon:           The tapestry of Psyche seeking love  
                          goes it to Gorhambury?

The Steward:   Even today.

Bacon:           The two gilt salt-cellars and the silver cup  
                          Mr. Attorney sent last New Year's day -  
                          these shall go too. I am here richly-devised  
                          and would be there.

The Steward:   You are more magnificent  
                          than any lord. in England.

Bacon:   For itself

---

I care not, but magnificence shall make  
 study applauded by the world: her sons  
 too long are outdone in the eyes of men  
 by folly's brood of babblers. [Cloth of gold  
 may be worn nobly: if the markets gape  
 first at the wear they may beyond the cloth  
 marvel at mind that wears it] Get you gone.

The Steward: So please your lordship, I must pay the hire...

Bacon: Why, take it from yon drawer: I keep that full  
 of gold and silver for such casual chance.

The Steward: Pardon, my lord, 'tis empty.

Bacon: Empty, how!

The Steward: O my good lord, pardon! Your gentlemen,  
 Knowing your habit, being in need of gold,  
 furnish themselves therefrom. I see it done  
 and have not dared to speak of it.

Bacon: Why, so.  
 I cannot help it, friend. I cannot count  
 each coin against them. Folly! here at home  
 I should be careful as I am abroad,  
 of my own revenue as of the King's:  
 I have promised it - and always broke me word.  
 I will procure the gold ... begin the work  
 and you shall have it. Are my letters gone?

The Steward: Aye, my good lord.

Bacon: To France? I would not have  
 my learned friends wait for me. There is now  
 a movement in the very air of thought,  
 and we must move upon it; as on wings  
 excelling and ascending through our minds  
 to view invention and discovery  
 from the full zenith.

The Steward: They are gone, my lord.  
 (*He goes out, meeting Hobbes.*)

---

Bacon: Ha, Thomas! What news from the House?

Hobbes: Strange news.  
Know you Sir Thomas Egerton?

Bacon: Egerton -  
a last year's applicant, was he? sued. a case  
in chancery - and lost it.

Hobbes: Nothing more?  
Had you no present?

Bacon: Present? Very like.  
It never swayed my judgement. What of him?

Hobbes: Once more - a Chancery suit one Aubrey brought  
and brought (he says) a hundred pounds to lure  
your lordship's favour: rests it in your mind?

Bacon: What is this talk of favour, Thomas Hobbes?  
What are these Aubreys and Egertons to me?  
The law have dealt with them.

Hobbes: The House is loud  
with their complaints of how you dealt with them.

Bacon: I dealt? their suits were answered.

Hobbes: Aye, and lost.  
They brought their presents and they lost their suits.  
There are petitions now before the House  
against the Lord Chancellor -

Bacon: Against me?

Hobbes: for sore  
bribery and corruption.

Bacon: Against me!  
I never outweighed justice by a hair.  
None dares accuse me -

Hobbes: all the House accuse!  
Devising and petitioning the Lords  
There were two cases uttered when I left -  
by now there may be twenty.

Bacon: No truth - none.  
Their presents never gained them ought from me.

Hobbes: May you deny the gifts?

Bacon: Why there indeed? -  
but this is enemies' practice. Egerton -  
a matter of a mere four hundred pounds  
He sent it; I received it; sure, the Lords  
cannot...

*(Enter Rawley)*

Rawley: My lord -

Bacon: What news?  
Rawley: - Doubtless a thing for mirth,  
but - Master Hobbes! you brought the tale?

Hobbes: What tale,  
if aught beyond the Commons' malice?

Rawley: Aye:  
but how far went their malice?

Bacon: Tell me all.  
[I am become the plaything of the void  
unless]  
This cannot hold. Tell me.

Rawley: One from the House  
brings news - 'tis mere delirium -

Hobbes: Tell him, for pity's sake.

Rawley: .. impeach ..

Bacon: Impeach!

Hobbes: Of what?

Rawley: High misdemeanours,  
Corruption, bribery, justice bought and sold,

Bacon: Can men suppose my life so base a thing?  
I ever lived in public: why the gifts  
were taken publicly.

Hobbes: They swear, not so.

Bacon: Not mine the darkness then. They know me, Hobbes.  
I built broad windows all about my mind  
to let the light stream in.

Hobbes: They, looking through,  
see a broad hall piled high with gifts.

Bacon: They lie,  
and fifty times they lie. What, freely sent,  
was freely taken - No; I see, I see.  
O Thomas Hobbes, mayhap I would not see.

Hobbes: I will not see but as your lordship will -

Bacon: Was I the only man that had no depth  
or dared I never look into myself?  
or did I hope that others were content  
and credulous to believe me credulous?

Rawley: Either your lordship must deny the charge  
or make submission, pleading guiltiness.

Bacon: No, by my life! folly - accuse me there -  
the squinting foolishness of negligence,  
greed for my greatness - not my greatness: no,  
I have a thought within me is not mine  
that I would house in splendour: I have erred -  
but yet the Commons will not - if they do,  
the Lords, the King's self...

Rawley: O my lord, the King!



Hobbes: Take counsel; mayhap things are not so lost  
but something may be saved -

Bacon: What can be saved?  
All things fall after me because I fall,  
and how should I that am grown bottomless  
find standing for them? O forget, forget  
that ever there was such a man as I.

Rawley: If it please God to show -

Bacon: If it please God  
to let a man with gifts of rare perfumes  
stink out the house of truth - God knows the stink:  
let the man know it. O love-making to truth  
O longing for it - yet not here, not here,  
not in this breast.

Hobbes: I have heard your lordship say  
the enjoying of truth is, over all things else,  
the sovereign good. of human nature. Light -  
light always -

Bacon: Is it light? -

Hobbes: The enjoying of truth.  
Enjoy it then.

Bacon: Enjoy... no, not enjoy.

Hobbes: Purpose enjoyment then, if this be truth.

Bacon: I feed upon my own flesh: can I judge  
the taste and dressing?

Rawley: Maybe, till a man  
hath for some while lived on his proper flesh  
he cannot taste God's plenty.

*(Enter a servant.)*

Servant: My lord, the Peers in session send to you;  
The Earls of Arundel and Shrewsbury wait,

*(The Earls enter)*

Arundel: My lord, we hold commission from the Lords  
to bring to Francis, Viscount Verulam,  
Lord Chancellor of England, their demands  
on certain charges of malpractice, brought  
by the Commons against the said Lord Chancellor  
and pray him for an answer.

Bacon: Even at once?

Shrewsbury: All decent time - all reasonable grace -

Bacon: My lords, my lords, press not a falling man.  
Show me the paper; what is true thereof  
I will confess; what false - all's false to me!

*(he takes the paper)*

It was a present - Egerton - he sent  
four hundred pounds for kindness done him, naught  
said, naught supposed of favour. Cabinet -  
I have begged to have it taken from my house,  
this cabinet they talk of. Could I help  
if some fool sent... a New Year's gift; I swear  
I thought it was a New Year's gift come late...  
I gave, even as I took: was I to search  
and see if that or this man had a cause  
adjourned from court to court or hour to hour?  
could I? O there... there I confess I took...  
and there again, the cause in action still...

*(he drops the paper)*

My eyes are seared with blood; I cannot read.

Arundel: The Lords will move but in the rule of law.  
The charges shall be answered or confessed.

Shrewsbury: All reasonable privilege allowed  
of time and evidence.

Bacon: It shall not need.  
How subtle Envy is to utter truth -  
and yet for truth's sake I will answer her.

Arundel: No envy -

Bacon: None: pure honour.

Shrewsbury: No despite -

Bacon: None: virtue stinging me with godly fangs.

Hobbes: (*apart to Bacon*) Be gentle with yourself; be wise with them.  
Be honourable -

Bacon: Thomas...

Hobbes: in yourself  
as you have kept the honour of the law.

Bacon: I would fain see - I would fain see one case,  
one judgement that the worst of them can change.  
There is no word, no comma, nay, no stroke  
that shall be altered or repeated.

Hobbes: They stand:  
and you -

Bacon: I fall away from under them,  
outcast by my own work.

Hobbes: Approach the lords.

Bacon: My lords, I pray your pardons. I will write  
as the honourable peers require. My lands  
my house, my fame, my life, are at their feet.  
The Great Seal... is the King's. I will return  
these charges, answered or confessed.

Arundel: Your hand,  
your very hand, set to them.

Bacon: It shall be  
my hand, my seal, my heart. Pray you, farewell.  
O Thomas if they keep this day as white  
as their feigned honour shows it to the world -  
what's that to me?

Hobbes: Let's see what can be said.

Bacon: There has not been a truer judge than I  
these fifty years, yet these two hundred years  
shall be no truer sentence. Get we in.  
Give me the paper. Answer me again -  
What is the sovereign good of humankind?

Hobbes: I dare not.

Bacon: But I dare. O I am blind  
I am weak, and paltry and wretched, and shall be,  
because of folly and of loss, but this  
stands as a child laughing to see the sun,  
immortal, incorruptible, sovereign truth:  
Blessed he God who hath made our souls for truth.

*(They go in)*

.....

Epilogue: Highgate Hill

*(The sound of voices singing in the far distance)*  
Master of the house of knowledge  
whom our seeking minds adore,  
keep thine own immortal college  
evermore as heretofore.

*(The sound of a carriage is heard. It stops and Bacon and Hobbes enter)*

Bacon: Cold, cold.

Hobbes: But let me serve -

Bacon: Nay, Thomas Hobbes,  
I ever was the best apothecary  
for my own medicines: experiment  
begins with preparation, ends with truth.

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He slips the last who cares not for the first.  
Ho there, good woman! (*A woman runs in, flustered*)

The Woman: Please your lordship' s grace -

Bacon: Those are your fowls - out yonder?

The Woman: Please you, yes.

Bacon: I have a mind to one.

The Woman: O sir, at once.  
Or broiled or roasted as your lordship choose.  
They are the best in Highgate. A poor house,  
but if your lordship will but wait awhile -

Bacon: No cooking, gammer: catch and kill, the fowl.  
Here's a payment.

The Woman: So much for one fowl? My lord,  
you shall have the fattest chicken in the roost.

(*She runs out*)

Bacon: It stands with reason: stuff it full with cold,  
the putrefaction might be hindered. Snow  
and a chicken and I together - try the trick.  
It will be Easter soon and snow be gone.  
God send she be not long.

Hobbes: Will you return  
into your coach?

Bacon: I have ever wondered much  
on conservation of bodies: think'st thou not  
winter is feared too much, too little used?  
Refrigeration, 'tis but scanty known  
how healthful and preservative... Cold, cold.  
It strikes within me. I remember once  
being young I dreamed of such a stiffening cold.

(*The singing, nearer and louder*)

Through our deep imaginations  
send the vision, now as then:

Lift in us the invocations,  
let us now praise famous men.

*(The Father of Salomon's house enters)*

Bacon: The flesh itself clean...

The Father: Francis!

Bacon: Vision, thou!  
I have longed these forty years to look on thee;  
why hast thou hidden from me forty years?

The Father: We have chilled thee, Francis, and, preserved thy soul  
by operations of benevolence  
to make thee pure to us. The work is done -  
nigh done.

Bacon: Not yet! not yet! there is so much  
unplotted, unprepared; organs of thought,  
the instauration of science but begun,  
the interpretation of all nature. Time!  
a little longer time!

*(The father lays his hand on Bacon's head.)*

O cold, cold, cold!

*(The Woman runs back with a fowl)*

The Woman: Please your kind lordship. Is his lordship ill?

Hobbes: Ask not.

The Woman: Is he talking to himself?

Hobbes: Away.

The Woman: But -

Hobbes: Give me the fowl. Begone.

The Woman: But if he's ill -

Hobbes: Think, Francis Bacon speaking to himself

is a thing that loftier eyes than yours or mine  
might shade themselves from. You are paid: begone.

*(She goes out)*

The Father: This little, little last of things, my son -  
You cannot reach Atlantis till you die,  
{            } this thing. Think, a fowl stuffed with snow -

Bacon: Aye, bodies stuffed. with snow: preservativ {            }  
quick, Thomas, hold it, press it full... more... more.

*(As they work, the singing breaks out all around)*

Each, our master and our neighbour  
at the sacred temple builds;  
follow, follow them to labour  
in the charter of the guilds.

Bacon: My scarf to bear it - ah! the chill at heart.  
Quick, Thomas, hold it; press it full - so - so.  
My scarf to bear it safely to the coach.  
Aid me: the cold hath ta'en me. Thine arm -  
no, I will bear it: quick, thine arm - or thine -  
I lean on immortality: yes, yes,  
I sinned, my Father, but I kept the faith,  
I have desired the very soul of truth,  
the purity of knowledge. O the world,  
the throughfares of the world are full of light  
God's first, God's best of creatures, blessed light!

*(He is supported by Hobbes and the Father. The guilds begin to throng the stage)*

Weigh the stars and plot the ocean  
make new engines of new might;  
still desiring in each motion  
God's first creature, which is light.

Bacon: My name, my hope, my will - to foreign lands,  
to future ages I bequeath myself.







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## JOHN HEATH-STUBBS (1918 – 2006)

### PRESIDENT OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY 1999 – 2006

In 1999 John Heath-Stubbs was elected president of the Charles Williams society becoming, thus, the first person to hold the office. While the constitution of the society had allowed for such a post, no-one before John had ever held it. He had joined the society in the year of its inception, 1976, but was rarely seen at meetings until the mid-eighties. From 1993, however, when he was elected to the council he seldom missed a meeting and, when we found we could no longer use the room behind the Grosvenor Chapel, it was John who suggested the parish rooms at St. Matthew's Church in Bayswater. By this time he was living in a small flat in Artesian Road and St. Matthew's was his own parish church. His attendance at the meetings of both the council and the society were, of course, memorable. In hindsight he seems an improbable member of the council for it is doubtful whether he had much interest in the day-to day running of the society, a fact which makes his willingness to serve as an ordinary council member for over five years the more remarkable and tells us much about the depth of his admiration for the work of Charles Williams. That he, one of the country's most distinguished poets, should assiduously attend these council meetings, and sit through discussions of the mundane business affairs of the society, demonstrated not only a deep devotion to the memory of Charles Williams but a touching faith in the efforts of our society to keep that memory alive. He rarely intervened in the discussions of the council but it was obvious that he wanted to give his support to all that we were trying to do and, when, by a curious set of circumstances arising at the Annual General Meeting in 1999 we found that we had too many persons proposed for the council, a way out of the dilemma - which was also a way that could relieve John of the burden of council business and honour him at the same time - was to elect him President of the society. It was, in a sense, unplanned, but it could not have been a happier solution and could be said, perhaps, to be an example of the adage of Boethius's that Charles Williams himself was so fond of quoting: 'All fortune is good fortune'. We had the good fortune to have as our president for over seven years a man who had not only been a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the recipient of the Queen's Medal for Poetry,

bestowed as long ago as 1973, but the OBE in 1989 and the Cross of St. Augustine awarded by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the same year as he became our president.

Ten years after Charles Williams's death John was asked by the British Council to contribute a booklet on him for their celebrated series *Writers and Their Work* published by Longmans, Green & Co. It was No 63 and, though long out of print, is still, along with Anne Ridler's introduction to *The Image of the City*, one of the best introductions to Williams that there is. He had particular admiration for Williams's poetry but one quickly realises, as one reads it, that he was possessed of a mind and sensibility which not only understood and appreciated the literary gifts of his subject but had grasped the depth and character of his religious interpretation of reality. 'As a poet, he stood, in some sense, apart from the age in which he lived, in much the same way as William Blake did from his. This was due (as also in Blake's case) to his over-riding spiritual preoccupations . . . .' (p. 8) As an undergraduate in Oxford during the Second World War he had met Williams and heard him lecture, but, as he tells us in his autobiography, *Hindsight*, his acquaintance with Williams dated from an earlier time: his years at the Worcester College for the Blind in the Isle of Wight. He was eighteen and frequenting the lending library at the rear of a chemist's shop came upon a section labelled 'Books for the sophisticated' There was a copy of *Descent Into Hell*. (*Hindsight*, p. 53) The obituarist in the *Church Times* of 19 January 2007 speaks of the 'lifelong influence' of Charles Williams on John Heath-Stubbs, but the precise nature of that influence is elusive. Years later, in an interview in 1986, he spoke of his encounter with Williams: 'I had already read Williams's novel *Descent Into Hell*, but didn't really understand it at the time. . . . Later on . . . I actually met Charles Williams and his personality had a very strong affect on me. I didn't know him well . . . . My most important meeting with him was after I had left Oxford . . . and this put me on another track, away from the influence of Leopardi, back to rediscovering Christianity' (*Aquarius* 23/24 pp. 87-88 'John Heath-Stubbs. 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Issue' 1998) Rather like W.H. Auden, John seems to have been profoundly impressed by the man as well as the work. Such influence as there was always expressed itself through John's own particular genius. That genius is not always easy to grasp. The poetry is rich and allusive – and the allusions are extraordinarily wide-ranging for John was extraordinarily erudite. It

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seemed that he was well-acquainted not only with the whole tradition of English poetry but also with the traditions of other European literatures, ancient and modern. His own poetry is steeped in all this knowledge; and the introduction to his *Collected Poems* of 1988 contained this plea: 'I can only ask my readers to be patient if they should come across in reading my poems references to matters which may be unfamiliar to them'. Richard Tyrrell, chairman of the Poetry Society in 1993/1994, claimed, on John's eightieth birthday, that he was 'the most learned living poet' and described his poems as 'the product of the professorial intellect, heavily imbued with the seriousness of literature and both its tragic and comic effects on its adherents'. (*Aquarius* 23/24. p.96) Members will remember both his learning and his seriousness; they might also remember that these qualities could be alarming as well as illuminating and amusing: an inaccurate reference was swiftly corrected, a foolish observation could be brushed aside briskly. His friend, John Fryer remarked that John was 'a disconcerting man to encounter', and that he could be 'terrifyingly didactic. On at least one occasion, this prompted Stephen Spender to run away.' (*Guardian*. Obituary, 29 December 2006) Disconcerting he certainly was, but I cannot recall any member of our society being hurt or humiliated by him; members are far more likely to remember, in addition to his towering physical presence, his generosity of spirit and a kind of humility born, partly, I believe, out of his unswerving Christian faith.

Many of those who have written about him have drawn attention to his extensive knowledge and deep love of music. I have often wondered what he made of the conclusion to our day of celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Charles Williams's death at Pusey House, Oxford in 1995. Those who were there on that day will remember that the celebration was to end in the chapel with a performance of the *Carol of Amen House*. At midday we heard that neither of the professional musicians we had engaged to play and sing the carol would be able to appear. In an act that might be deemed either foolish or brave Gillian Lunn and I agreed to attempt the piece. It is not easy music and our performance left much to be desired but perhaps we were able to convey something of its loveliness. I do not think our rendering of the carol was shameful but it was a struggle. John, the passionate lover of music and merciless critic, did not comment. I like to think that he was grateful for our attempt to present something in public that had not been heard for

decades. Like his beloved Charles, Williams Burke's 'unbought grace of life' was in him and, even his outer ears were occasionally offended by wrong notes and false intonations, perhaps his inner ears were attuned to the divine harmonies towards which we were striving.

The poetry began in 1941 and continued for forty years. As well as the poetry there were his translations, his editorial work and the literary criticism; an output which is made the more remarkable by his increasing blindness. By 1978 he had lost his sight completely so there is a particular poignancy in the title of his second last volume of poems: *The Sound of Light* (1999) It seems to have been suggested by his contemplation of the composer Scriabin who enjoyed (if that is the word) the power of synaesthesia: the ability to 'hear' sounds in terms of colour. The second poem, 'The Colour of Sound. The Sound of Light' begins with an evocation of Scriabin but it ends with Dante.

But far remote from this,  
In the cold dryness of the sphere of Saturn,  
The great contemplatives were dancing,  
Just for sheer joy, gyrating  
Among the planet's circling rings, about  
That Florentine space-traveller, Alighieri.

The volume also contains a little poem which has nothing to do either with Scriabin or with hearing colours. It is John at his most direct and touching.

November evening – fingers of the rain  
Tap at the window glass, or is it  
My lost companions calling me out  
Into the darkness? Patience friends.  
It won't be long now, and I'll not delay.

November  
(*Derived from Giosue Carducci*)

Brian Horne  
February 2007

## Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Quarterly and the Society's Website 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 Quarterly are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- ◆ Submissions should be sent to the Editor, preferably on floppy disc; otherwise by email attachment to: Edward.Gauntlett@down21.freeuk.com.
- ◆ Submissions on paper should be typed double spaced and single-sided.
- ◆ All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- ◆ Submissions of just a few hundred words may be hand written.
- ◆ The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission. Usually the main article in any issue will be a paper previously read before the Society; in most cases such papers will be published as received, with little or no editorial input. Other submissions may be edited.

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