



THE KEATS Foundation

Registered Charity: 1147589

THE KEATSIAN

The Newsletter of the Keats Foundation September 2019

Annual Wreath Laying

It's John Keats's birthday on 31st October. Every year we hold a small service to celebrate his life, in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. Representatives of the Keats Foundation, The Poetry Society and Keats House, and their guests meet in Poets' Corner, read a selection of Keats's poems and lay flowers at his memorial.

Numbers are strictly limited. Admission to the Abbey is free to those taking part.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/westminster-abbey-keats-birthday-wreath-event-registration-72968301153>

Nine Letters and Poems

Thursday 31 October 6.30 – 8.30pm at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate, EC2M 3TL. Celebrate Keats's birthday with an evening of readings and music in the setting of St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate, where Keats was baptised on Friday 18 December 1795. £7.50, booking essential at Eventbrite. Go to

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nine-letters-and-poems-tickets-69170459707>

The Eve of St. Agnes: Celebration on 20 January 2020

The Keats Foundation, with Keats House, will be celebrating the poem Keats wrote on the theme of The Eve of St Agnes. The event will take place on 20th January 2020 at Keats House in Hampstead. Keats completed writing the poem at Bedhampton nearly 200 years ago, and at this event celebrating it, the actor, Matthew Coulton (who has adopted the persona of Keats in numerous readings to great acclaim) will read the poem which will be introduced by Professor Nicholas Roe, Chair of The Keats Foundation. The celebratory event will include a wine reception.

More details of the event will be forthcoming but those who wish to attend should note the date and the time now. There will be no charge, although donations may be made if desired.

The Eve of St Agnes
The Keats Foundation
20 January 2020, 5pm - 9pm
Keats House, Keats Grove, Hampstead, London NW3 2RR.

Videos of the Odes of John Keats



During two days over the Spring and Summer a team from the Keats Foundation filmed Matthew Coulton reading Keats's six great Odes. We had enjoyed working with Matthew back In January when he gave a brilliant reading of 'The Eve of St Agnes' at the London Guildhall, and the Trustees decided we should capture his performance of these key poems. Matthew is the actor who portrays the poet at Keats House during the bicentenary of the months when he lived at what was then known as Wentworth Place. The video director and Matthew spent a day going through the six odes in detail, which was followed by two days of filming. We began by trying to film the 'Ode to a Nightingale' in the garden where Keats wrote it in 1819, but the 21st century intruded too much (cars, planes, angle grinders – and parakeets). So, we ended up filming all of the odes inside Keats's and Brown's rooms at the house. The results are now available on YouTube through the 'Poetry Videos' link on the Keats Foundation website: <https://keatsfoundation.com/>

Credits: John Keats - Matthew Coulton; Camera - Steve Bowles; Director - Peter Phillips

Seventh John Keats Bicentenary Conference, 15-17 May 2020 - Preliminary Announcement

John Keats in 1820

A Three-Day Keats Foundation Conference at Keats House, Hampstead, London

Friday 15 - Sunday 17 May 2020

Keynote Speakers

John Barnard

Richard Lansdown

Sarah Wootton

The Keats Foundation is delighted to announce its seventh bicentenary conference, 'John Keats in 1820', which will be held at Keats House, Hampstead 15-17 May 2020.

1820 was the year that saw the publication of Keats's third collection – *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and Other Poems*. A little over two months after the book appeared, Keats boarded the *Maria Crowther* at Tower Wharf, and sailed for Italy where he aimed to pass the winter.

In due course we will be inviting proposals for 20-minute papers for presentation at the 2020 John Keats Conference. Possible themes, which are not exclusive, might include:

Keats's 1820 collection and the poems in it. Unpublished Keats in 1820. New poems. The 1820 letters. The Keats Circle in 1820. Keats and melancholy. Keats and tuberculosis. Friendships. Journeys. Financial entanglements. Keats and copyright.

For obvious reasons, all papers should have a significant Keats dimension.

Lectures and papers will be presented in the spacious Nightingale Room adjacent to Keats House. We will explore the Keatsian locality, Hampstead Heath, and Leigh Hunt's Vale of Health. For conference announcements and further information about the Keats Foundation please go to <https://keatsfoundation.com/>

For Keats House, please visit

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/keats-house/Pages/default.aspx>

Keats at Bedhampton - New Event

A book release, candlelit recitation and afternoon of evensong have been organised in Bedhampton to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Keats's poem, *The Eve of St Agnes*, completed during his fortnight-long stay at The Old Mill House in Bedhampton in January 1819. He returned to Bedhampton in September 1820 after a storm forced his ship to dock in Portsmouth for repairs. It was taking him, desperately ill with consumption, to Rome where he would die on 23rd February 1821.

Drayton historian, Nigel Gossop, is to launch a booklet, *John Keats in Bedhampton*, at The Elms at 2pm on Sunday, 19th January. At 7pm on the same day there will be a full recitation of *The Eve of St Agnes* at St Thomas' Church and a special evensong service at the church from 3.30pm on Sunday, 26th January.

Nicholas Roe, Chair of The Keats Foundation, reflected on Keats and Bedhampton in *John Keats. A New Life* and gave close attention to locations where Keats wrote his poems, to suggest how those circumstances may have influenced the language and shaped the forms of his poetry. An obvious instance is that his poetry always flowed more abundantly if he was writing somewhere near water. He often journeyed through England in quest of such places – at the Isle of Wight, Oxford, Margate, and Teignmouth – before his final epic voyage into Romantic myth as ‘a name writ in water’. The following is an extract from *John Keats. A New Life*:

Keats deliberately commenced *The Eve of St. Agnes* at the Old Mill House in Bedhampton, on the Hampshire coast – because at Bedhampton there was plenty of water. To the front of the house was a neatly channelled millpond of fresh water feeding the mill wheel. Immediately behind the house was tidal water in the Hermitage Stream. Located midway between sweet and saltwater, the Old Mill House was perfectly placed to suggest the contrasted tones Keats meditated for his poem. From his early ‘Imitation of Spenser’ the steady surface of water had presented a threshold between real and ideal worlds, and *The Eve of St. Agnes* would also be concerned with dreaming and waking, folklore and frosty actuality. Likewise, the tidal alternations of Hermitage Stream may have brought to mind a narrative of stealthy entry and furtive flight, the flow and ebb of voluptuous desire, and even a verse form that could best combine passion’s rise, consummation and afterglow with the mediaeval atmosphere he intended for his story – Spenser’s stanza from *The Faerie Queen*. Spenserian verse was associated with Keats’s delighted discovery of poetry at Enfield School; it was used by his early favourites James Beattie and Mary Tighe; and it enjoyed popular success in Byron’s *Childe Harold*. Keats had not attempted this form since his ‘Imitation of Spenser’, but it was exactly suited to his present needs. The rhyme scheme a b a b b c b c c mounts towards a central couplet, then turns in a second sequence towards a closing couplet that takes leave with a long, supple alexandrine measure in its final line. Each stanza contains a pattern of gathering intensity, fulfilment, and retreat that would be reflected in his poem’s larger narrative

structure. That Keats's genius was indeed responding to the tidal fluctuations of Hermitage Stream is suggested by one of his many masterstrokes in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. A new moon appeared two days after Keats's arrival at Bedhampton, and *The Eve of St. Agnes* is illuminated throughout by 'St. Agnes' moon' as it voyages across a chilly winter sky to set six stanzas before the end. By pallid moonshine and turning tides, Keats told the time of his poem.



The Keats Foundation is a Registered Charity in the UK (No. 1147589).