



THE KEATS Foundation

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John Keats*

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THE KEATSIAN

Newsletter of the Keats Foundation - June 2017

This issue of *The Keatsian* looks forward to forthcoming Keats Foundation events for the autumn of 2017. Reported here too are our 'Negative Capability' evening at Keats House, Hampstead, on 17 May and the fourth John Keats Bicentenary Conference, 19-21 May, also at Keats House. The new Keats Foundation website is scheduled to go 'live' at any moment, and all supporters of the Keats Foundation will be alerted by e-mail.

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 21 September 2017 7-8.30 pm: the Keats Foundation annual Keats House Lecture. Dr. Jane Darcy of UCL will speak on 'Primrose Island: Keats and the Isle of Wight'.



Friday 18 May-Sunday 20 May: the fifth Keats Foundation Bicentenary Conference at Keats House, Hampstead. The conference theme will be 'Shadows, Magnitudes, Tests and Trials: John Keats in 1818'. Further information will follow. **PLEASE NOTE** that the conference on 'Keats Reading / Reading Keats', 20-22 July next year is organised by Notre Dame University and is NOT a Keats Foundation event.

News of the annual October wreath-laying at Westminster Abbey will be included in September's issue of *The Keatsian*.

Negative Capability at Keats House, Hampstead, 17 May 2017

Dr. Toni Griffiths writes: The Keats Foundation evening of reflection on Keats's idea of 'Negative Capability' was attended on 17th May by a capacity audience of 80 at Keats House in Hampstead. Dr. Toni Griffiths, Keats Foundation Trustee, explored where the idea of Negative Capability sprang from and lived in Keats and Dr Margot Waddell, psychoanalyst, talked about some of the ways in which Keats's idea had been thought about in the field of psychoanalysis. From different but linked perspectives they examined Keats's insight that to possess Negative Capability was to understand what it means emotionally – and poetically - to remain in doubt, not to know, to sense contradiction – and not to move to close down unsettling uncertainty by reaching for certainties and knowledge one does not possess. Its relevance to 'learning from experience' and to the distinction between the desire to know and understand, on the one hand, and intrusive curiosity, on the other, was explored. Strong association with the thinking of the psychoanalyst, Wilfrid Bion, emerged, particularly in how the capacities described by Keats are those on which Bion's model of the mind is based. Lively questions and comment followed the two papers, with connections made to Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot', motifs of other writers and the nature and possibilities of work in the field of 'literature and psychoanalysis' - and much more.

Fourth Bicentennial John Keats Conference John Keats, 1817: Moments, Meetings, and the Making of a Poet 19-21 May 2017

Conference Reports

Sarah Wootton writes: The fourth bicentennial John Keats conference (19-21 May), and our third in the glorious surroundings of Keats House in Hampstead, was another success. The balance between familiar and new faces proved conducive to intellectually-stimulating and convivial debates. The conference is firmly established as an annual Romanticism event and is a truly international occasion – over half of our 26 speakers came from outside the UK. What emerged over the course of the conference was the value of revisiting Keats's poems of 1817, not simply as a foreshadowing of later writings, but as a literary and cultural moment in and of themselves. The various and illuminating readings of his life, works, and influences during this pivotal year – from Professor Theresa M. Kelley's inspired exploration of scale and Professor Kelvin Everest's keenly observed and thoughtful engagements with locations and dislocations to Professor Greg Kucich's masterly and entertaining 'Cockney' reading of *Endymion* – provided ample evidence of a poet already producing works of enduring significance. As the conference came to a close, our thoughts turned to the exciting prospect of the 1818/2018 bicentenary events.



Rico Brown demonstrates Powerpoint.

Richard Marggraf Turley writes: A conference focused on ‘meetings and moments’ in Keats’s life in 1817 provided plenty of both for the delegates of this, our fourth bicentenary gathering. As for meetings: like Endymion himself, an international cast of Keatsians ‘long travers’d to and fro’, from all corners of the globe, to convene in glorious weather on the lawns of Keats House, Hampstead. Moments, too. Perhaps one that will live long in the collective conference memory arrived with a dull thud in the central aisle of the Nightingale Room, followed by a cry of ‘Oh, my God! Is he dead?’, as sleep, that ‘soft closer of our eyes’ (aided, perhaps, by Bacchus), claimed one of the delegates during a warm afternoon panel session. As in previous years, the papers were of the highest



Some conference participants at the sunny Vale of Health.

standard, and offered an engaging mix of themes and approaches. The conference rubric drew papers from the ‘hoary majesty’ of eminent Keats scholars as well as from a gratifying number of PhD students, whose exciting new work and innovative methodologies amply demonstrated that Keats and his circle remain a focus for some of the most demanding and rigorous research in Romantic Studies. The Keats Foundation’s bicentennial conference is unusual in that it is welcoming to, and pleased to attract, not just academic delegates, but many independent scholars, Keats lovers and members of the public. This precious mingling gives the annual event its distinctive character, and over the past few years has contributed significantly to the conference’s status as a firm, much-loved fixture in the Keats calendar.



Prof Richard Marggraf Turley and keynote speaker, Professor Theresa Kelley, at the Freemasons Arms.

Forthcoming events at Keats House, Hampstead

Friday 30 June

Keats and the Poems of 1817

7-8.30pm

University College London's Professor Gregory Dart, leading expert on the Romantics, will be transporting us back to Keats's 1817 works, marking 200 years since the publication of *Poems, On Seeing the Elgin Marbles* and the inception of *Endymion*. Discover more about this year of growth, travel and literary highs and woes.

£5, book at www.keatshouse.eventbrite.co.uk

Saturday 29 July

A Joy Forever: 'I Almost Wish We Were Butterflies'

2-3.30pm

'I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days - three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain' wrote John Keats to Fanny Brawne. Join poets Julia Bird and Mike Sims for afternoon tea – with readings, games, gifts, tea and cake – as they explore Keats' summer days.

£12 (includes light refreshments), booking essential: www.keatshouse.eventbrite.co.uk

Friday 4 August

Summer Jazz and Poetry

7-8.30pm

Celebrate the lazy, hazy days of the season with the Keats House Poetry Ambassadors and musician Catherine Lima, who will be coming together to bring you a fusion of poetry and jazz. Enjoy a drink from our pop-up bar and take in some sumptuous verse and music - heady summer evenings were meant for this.

£8, booking essential: www.keatshouse.eventbrite.co.uk

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