



THE KEATS Foundation

*Ever truly yours
John Keats*

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THE KEATSIAN

Newsletter of the Keats Foundation - September 2017

This issue of *The Keatsian* looks forward to forthcoming Keats Foundation events for the autumn of 2017 and spring next year. Reported here are Jane's Darcy's Keats Foundation lecture at Keats House, Hampstead, on 21 September, and Angus Graham Campbell's play about Keats, 'Rebel Angel'. 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. Invitations to renew memberships/subscriptions will follow thereafter, once the website is live.

Dates for your Diary

The 2017 annual Keats wreath-laying to commemorate John Keats's birthday is confirmed with Westminster Abbey for Monday 30 October at 11.30am. Please contact Judith Palmer for further details at jpalm@poetrysociety.org.uk

The Keats Foundation annual celebration of St. Agnes Eve is likely to be on Friday 19 January 2018 - further details to follow.

Friday 18 May-Sunday 20 May will see the fifth Keats Foundation Bicentenary Conference at Keats House, Hampstead. The conference theme will be 'Shadows, Magnitudes, Tests and Trials: John Keats in 1818'. Our keynote lecturers will be three distinguished scholars: Meiko O'Halloran from Newcastle University, Carol Kyros Walker from Chicago, and Richard Cronin from Glasgow University.

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.

*The Keats Foundation Annual Lecture at Keats House, Hampstead, 21
September 2017*

Dr Jane Darcy: Primrose Island: Keats and the Isle of Wight

John Keats visited the Isle of Wight twice, two hundred years ago in 1817 and again in 1819. They were brief but important visits and in the Keats Foundation Annual Lecture, at Keats House in Hampstead on 21st September 2017, Dr Jane Darcy, Teaching Fellow in Comparative Literature at King's College London, explored their impact. Keats travelled alone to the Isle of Wight in April 1817 and lodged at Carisbrooke, writing his sonnet, 'On the Sea' ('It keeps eternal whisperings around/Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell/Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns...'), and starting his long poem, *Endymion* ('A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:/It's loveliness increases; it will never/Pass into nothingness...'). Dr Darcy detailed Keats's state of mind (a sense of solitude, loneliness) and the impact on the poet of the Island surroundings whilst charting changing historical attitudes towards the sea, the astonishing Island geology (and its primrose beauty), its literary associations and the beginnings of 'spa' development and picturesque travel. Late in June 1819, Keats returned, this time to Shanklin, where he wrote the first part of *Lamia* and engaged with some spirit in co-writing a drama, *Otho the Great*, with Charles Brown. He wrote to his sister of how 'hilly Shanklin' offered a 'distortion of perspective ... with Ships sailing past the chimney tops looking like weather cocks'. As Dr Darcy emphasised, memories of the Island were to stay with Keats. Her lecture was warmly received and was followed by a vigorous question and comment session.

*'Rebel Angel' - Angus Graham-Campbell's play about John Keats's decision
to quit medicine for poetry, at the Old Operating Theatre St Thomas's
Hospital, Southwark 19 September-7 October 2017*

Angus Graham Campbell's play 'Rebel Angel' ran for a highly successful season at the Old Operating Theatre St Thomas's Hospital, Southwark during September-October 2017. The play tells the story of Keats's decision to quit medicine for poetry, and is based mostly in his Guy's Hospital years 1815-1817 with scenes that glanced back to his early life. The story unfolds in the well of the Old Operating Theatre, with the audience sitting or standing on the tiers originally occupied by the watching (and occasionally fainting) medical students. There were spirited performances by Jonny Taylor as Keats and Peter Broad as 'Billy' Lucas the hapless surgeon and as Richard Abbey, Keats's guardian. Especially powerful were the scenes of confrontation between Keats and Abbey over abandoning medicine for poetry. It is hoped that the play will continue with a new season in Rome.



John Keats, back to camera, tells 'Billy Lucas' he should quit surgery because (having just vigorously botched an operation) he's no good at it.