

John Buchan Society Newsletter



Hon. President: Lord Tweedsmuir

Registered Scottish Charity No.: SC006071

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Since the last Newsletter, we have held another successful Conference in Durham. The theme of “John Buchan and the Great War” was well addressed by the Speakers – Ursula Buchan, Michael Redley, Bill Telford and Kate Macdonald – and the final discussion on the Sunday morning was particularly worthwhile. I am tentatively looking at one more Conference in 2019. Watch this space.

In November, I watched a top-notch programme, as part of ITV Scotland’s series of Border Life, on the life of John Buchan. The presenter Sandy McCracken relied greatly on Deborah Stewartby, Ursula Buchan and Ian Buckingham to ensure it was a tale well told.

I am delighted that another writer, historian and television producer, Taylor Downing, is giving the pre-Dinner talk at our Annual Dinner in Banbury. Taylor has written several best-selling books and has produced more than 200 television documentaries, many of which have won Awards. He will be basing his talk on his research for his book, ‘*Secret Warriors: Key Scientists, Code Breakers and Propagandists of the Great War*’, published by Little, Brown in May 2014. We owe thanks to Ursula Buchan for the contact. The weekend will be spelt out in detail elsewhere in this Newsletter, but I am especially looking forward to revisiting Elsfield on the Sunday, where we will attend a church service and afterwards, thanks to the kindness of David Buchan and his wife Lisa, enjoy drinks at Elsfield Manor, once the Buchan family home.

The Society Council will be meeting before the AGM. If any member has an issue or topic they would like discussed at the Council or General meetings, please let the Secretary, Ian Berchem, know in good time.

You will all have received the 50th issue of the Society Journal. Michael Redley and his team of writers are to be thoroughly congratulated on its fascinating contents. A Society is, surely, in good health, when it can produce such an excellent magazine. Tom Acton is also to be praised for the very high standard of production. The Index for Issues 1 to 50 will prove most helpful. The twice-yearly Newsletters, edited and produced by Bill and Andrena Telford, exactly complement the quality of the Journal. We now eagerly await the publication of Ursula Buchan’s biography of her grandfather!

Kenneth Hillier

THE RUNAGATES CLUB

Ian Buckingham reports:

This year’s **Runagates Club** draw took place on the 27 August – the day after Buchan’s birthday! – in the museum just before the Pentland Writers presented their delightful “**John Buchan Experience**”.

The photo shows John Buchan’s great-great-granddaughter, Dorothy, holding the winning number, 49. The draw was supervised by our Museum Chairman, Peter Worthington, to ensure there was no foul play from the Black Stone guys!



Our Vagabond supporters have enabled us to purchase items such as a new iPad for the Museum and to commission a company to work on the techy bit, to start showing some of the vast amount of material held on line and in our archive. We plan to extend this work so that our visitors can spend even longer in the Museum playing with a new device!

The iPad has proved very popular, so THANK YOU for supporting us via your Vagabond payment. Sorry if you were not a winner this year, but two people will be very satisfied anyway.... we have suggested they use some of their winnings to purchase a copy of the Runagates Club book, if they have not read it yet!

MUSEUM OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

The Peebles Museum has enjoyed having a variety of groups visiting this past year. As part of its improved educational commitment, the John Buchan Story hosted a group of pupils from Peebles High School, who had a good look around the Museum and learnt more about John Buchan. They are now reading ‘The 39 Steps’ in their English class and museum staff look forward to hearing about how they found it! Their last book was Macbeth, so this will be quite a contrast (although both have suspense and intrigue?) To help the school, the Museum was delighted to present them with a set of the books for the class to use this year and for future years. Richard Hannay lives on!



JOHN BUCHAN AND TWEEDDALE

Dr Jim Lyon has sent us the following information:

John Buchan and Tweeddale is the title of a talk on the 13th February 2018 at 7.30 pm in the Eastgate Theatre, Peebles, Scottish Borders.

The speaker is the grand-daughter of this great author, politician and statesman, Ursula Buchan, who is an accomplished author in her own right and an authority on John Buchan's life and times. This talk will outline how Buchan was influenced throughout his life by the time he spent amidst the rolling hills and fertile valleys of the upper Tweed, and where, appropriately, the John Buchan Museum is housed in the centre of Peebles.



The talk is presented by the Tweeddale Society as one of an annual six-part series of stimulating subjects relevant to the Scottish Borders. Visitors are made very welcome, with a modest charge of £6 for a single talk or £10 membership for the series. Contact the Box Office, Eastgate Theatre on 01721 725777 or www.tweeddale-society.org.uk.

PUBLICITY AND PUBLICATIONS

Ian Buckingham has drawn our attention to a discussion of 'Sick Heart River' which aired as Episode 10 on *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Scottish Literature* (soundcloud.com/user-265718587/episode-10-john-buchan-sick-heart-river). Vikki Reilly and Kristian Kerr also talked in the programme to Robert J. Harris, author of the new Richard Hannay novel, *The Thirty One Kings*, recently published by Polygon.

Harris's book is available on Amazon. The Sunday Post reviewer writes: 'Fans of John Buchan will be wooed by this new adventure', while the Daily Mail's critic opines: 'This is very good fun. The plot whips along, embellished by dogfights, perilous car journeys, personal vendettas and plenty of derring-do - plus a whiff of enjoyable parody to lend an edge. I was beguiled'.

Peter Thackeray has notified us that he is increasing his sales on eBay under the name of Crask Books. Peter assures us that he will still be the sole proprietor and hopes to continue to offer to all customers an essentially personal service. Find his eBay 'shop' at <http://stores.ebay.co.uk/Crask-Books>.

Kate MacDonald's Handheld Books has recently re-published Buchan's *The Runagates Club*, Buchan's 1928 collection of short stories, with a critical introduction by Kate herself. The book can be purchased from the publisher (www.handheldpress.co.uk) or from Amazon.

To access the ITV Borders interview (mentioned in the Chairman's Report) featuring Deborah (Lady Stewartby), Ursula Buchan and Ian Buckingham, go to Border Life for Sandy McCracken on John Buchan at www.itv.com/news/border/topic/border-life/. It's a 'cracking' programme (pun intended).

JOHN BUCHAN SOCIETY JOURNAL

Michael Redley, Editor of the Journal, writes:

The fiftieth issue of the journal is now out, with the first comprehensive index since it was launched in 1980. The editor would be grateful to be notified of any errors members spot so that the on-line version of the index can be corrected. A complete set of the first 40 digitised journals is now ready to be incorporated into the Society's website, and we are working on how to do this as soon as possible. For the next journal, articles are projected on JB's contribution to university life, on his daughter, Alice, the play, "The 39 Steps", Leithen as a lawyer, on JB's faith, and on the sense of place in O. Douglas's novels. There is plenty of room for more! Contributions would also be welcomed by the editor from long standing members on the early days of the society for inclusion in the 40th Anniversary issue.

LINKS WITH SUNDERLAND UNIVERSITY

The University of Sunderland's School of Culture has been working closely with the John Buchan Society and Museum on a number of collaborative projects. These have included the digitisation of the Society's Journal and the redevelopment of the Museum's website. During 2017 the University, the John Buchan Story Museum and the John Buchan Society have been working to establish a new award called The John Buchan Prize for the best MA English Dissertation. The first recipient of the award, Andrew McCabe, from Castletown in Sunderland, won for his dissertation, entitled 'The Middle Way: James Hogg, Tayeb Salih and the Two Halves of the Whole.' Andrew said: "It's an absolute honour to receive the John



Buchan Prize, I can't express just how delighted I am to be the first recipient of this prestigious award." Presenting Andrew with his award, Deborah, Lady Stewartby, said: "One of the founding aims of the John Buchan Story museum in Peebles has been to foster a link with an academic institution, and so the recent collaboration between the museum and the University of

Sunderland's School of Culture has occurred at an opportune moment in the museum's development. The first collaborative venture between the two institutions has led to a significant enhancement in the museum's archives. It is hoped that future involvement with the University will lead to a new exhibition featuring John Buchan as the Director of Intelligence in the Ministry of Information in 1918 and how that position influenced his novel *Mr Standfast*, published in 1919."

Steve Watts, Head of the School of Culture at Sunderland University, adds, "I am delighted with the close collaboration that has been developed with the John Buchan Society and the John Buchan Story Museum. The University has been working on several projects with the Society and Museum to support them in their aim of making their Journal and artefacts available on-line and accessible to everybody. We would like to join Lady Stewartby in congratulating Andrew McCabe, first winner of the John Buchan Prize."

In November Steve and his wife Ann visited the John Buchan Story in Peebles, and, as a delightful footnote, Ann surprised Steve with a birthday cake featuring 'The 39 Steps'!



AGM AND ANNUAL DINNER, APRIL 6-8, 2018, Banbury

Accommodation

The Society's Annual General Meeting, 2018, will be held at Whately Hall Hotel, Banbury, Oxfordshire, from Friday, April 6, to Sunday April 8. The Hotel (address: 17 to 19 Horsefair, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 0AN) is ideally situated 5 minutes walk from the Town Centre. Although on a busy thoroughfare, it has a large and tranquil rear garden. Banbury has a mainline railway station (nearby hotel) and is well served by bus services from Oxford and other neighbouring towns. Room costs are £65.00 per night bed & breakfast for single occupancy, £45.00 per person for double occupancy. Bookings at the special group rate should be made through: Mike Edwards, Freemans Cottage, Piccadilly, Guiting Power, Cheltenham, GL54 5UU; Email: rlkguiting@gmail.com; Tel.: 01451 850232. To reserve your accommodation please let Mike know as soon as possible. You will then be sent an invoice and prompt payment would be appreciated.



Programme

- Fri Apr 6 2.00 ff. Arrival at hotel
4.30 Council Meeting
6.45 Finger Buffet
7.45 Slide Show with William Telford
and Ken Hillier (Buchan and World War I)
- Sat Apr 7 9.30 Departure on Coach tour (prompt!)
1.00 Lunch, Burford
3.30 Return from Coach tour
4.30 AGM
7.15 Annual Dinner
- Sun Apr 8 11.30 Checkout from hotel
11.00 Service at St Thomas of Canterbury,
Elsfield, followed by refreshments at Elsfield Manor, courtesy
of Mr & Mrs David Buchan.

The Saturday tour, by executive style coach (with toilet, etc.) will start from the Whately Hall Hotel and will visit a number of Cotswold towns and villages, including Stow on the Wold. We will also visit Minster Lovell, as featured in *The Blanket of the Dark*. Lunch and some free time will be spent in the attractive town of Burford. Cost of the trip will be £10.00 per person and bookings should be made with the Secretary, Ian Berchem, Holly House, Barton Bendish, Norfolk, PE33 9DL; Email: berchems@btinternet.com; Tel.: 01366 347759. A booking form for the tour and for the Friday buffet and Saturday's Annual Dinner is enclosed with this Newsletter.

On Sunday morning, travel to Elsfield will be by members' private cars, and lifts for those without cars, including return to the hotel or train/bus station in Banbury, will be arranged during the weekend itself.

Annual Dinner

Dinners on both Friday and Saturday evening are bookable separately by application to the Secretary, Ian Berchem (see address details under Programme). A booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Friday's dinner will be a buffet meal @ £19.00 per person, and the Saturday dinner will be £30.00 per person.

There will be a Pre-Dinner Talk by Taylor Downing, writer, historian and television producer. His talk, entitled *'Secret Warriors: The Spies, Scientists and Code Breakers of World War I'* promises much of interest in light of Buchan's novels of the period.

BATTLEFIELDS TOUR

The idea has been floated of arranging a John Buchan Society tour to the battlefields of Northern France in October 2018, dates as yet to be decided. The projected tour would be from Monday to Friday, with 4 nights Bed and Breakfast accommodation, departing from home on the Friday and sightseeing all the way to Calais. Transport would be by luxury coach with onboard toilet, video, etc., and pick ups could be arranged in the Midlands, London and Kent (perhaps other places subject to demand). If you are interested in this tour please let Mike Edwards know as soon as possible. We would need about 30 people to make the tour viable. The tour would take in major sites of WWI and in particular places of JB interest. Members would be able to bring friends along on this tour, for it is essential that we have a good number travelling. If you are interested, contact Mike Edwards; tel. 01451 850 232; email rlkguiting@gmail.com.



JOHN BUCHAN SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2017

St John's College, Durham, was once again the venue for the Society's biennial conference, held from September 8th-10th. This year the theme was "John Buchan and the Great War". Bill Telford gave his own photographic presentation on the battlefields of northern France and Flanders, linking it to excerpts from Buchan's History of the war. Ken Hillier delivered an illustrated overview of JB's writings on the war, while Ursula Buchan spoke on JB's activities in France as a war correspondent and observer. Michael Redley gave an account of JB's contributions to wartime propaganda, and Kate MacDonald presented a sweeping tally of JB's contributions to newspapers and magazines, as well as his published speeches. The standard of accommodation and food at the College was as high as ever, and the lovely city of Durham provided the perfect backdrop to a most enjoyable, as well as informative, weekend.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL, Feb. 1, 2018, ff.*From the Chairman:*

To say that I am enjoying my stint as Membership Secretary might be overstating the case, but what I have found helpful is renewing acquaintance with so many of the names which had slipped from my memory since I gave up the General Secretary's role in March 2007.

The subscription rates remain the same:

Full UK Member £20 – however £18 if paid by Standing Order.

Full Overseas Member - £23 (£43 if paid by non-Sterling cheque).

Associate Member (no Journal) - £6.

Junior Member (17 years or under) - £7.

A reminder that the Society does not offer the 10-year discounted rate any more. Members who come to the end of their 10-year period are asked to pay the full yearly rate. Those particular members will receive a renewal form with their newsletter.

If you currently pay an annual subscription by cheque or bank transfer, you will find with this newsletter a renewal invitation form. If you don't already pay by standing order, please consider this, as it saves you the bother of having to write a cheque every year. A standing order form is included for this purpose; each half needs to be completed, the left hand half being sent to your bank, and the right hand half returned to me.

Overseas Members

Overseas members are encouraged to pay by bank electronic transfer (unless you have a UK bank account or know someone with one). The information needed by your bank is as follows:

Bank: Bank of Scotland, 38 St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh

Account name: THE JOHN BUCHAN SOCIETY

IBAN: GB49BOFS80412100192795

BIC: BOFSGB21139

If overseas members pay by cheque in their own currencies, then £20 must be added to the payment to cover the charges imposed by the banks. Alternatively, members can send a £ sterling cheque or cash. If you have a friend or relative who has a UK bank account, you could arrange for them to pay on your behalf.

Gift Aid

If you are a UK tax-payer and have not already signed a Gift Aid form, please request one from the Membership Secretary, as the Society can claim a substantial amount back from the Government.

Please don't forget to send your completed renewal form to the address below, together with either your cheque or the relevant half of the standing order form.

Kenneth Hillier, Greenmantle, 75 Main Street, Kings Newton, Melbourne, Derbyshire DE73 8BX

Tel: 01332 865315 email: nebuly@hotmail.co.uk

PLEASE NOTE: We encourage members to receive this Newsletter electronically, by sending your email address to: aeandwr.telford@btinternet.com.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome the following new members to the Society:

Michael Short, Haslemere, Surrey
Thelma Woodward, Hong Kong
Robert Miller, Shaftesbury, Dorset
Matthew Darroch-Thompson, Bury St Edmunds
Anthony Drake, Howden, East Yorkshire

FAREWELLS

We say a sad farewell to the following members:

Peter Norris
Alan Hughes
Denis Read
Nigel Champion

NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Much to the relief of our hardworking Chairman, who has been handling the post of Membership Secretary, with the help of his wife Christine, committee member Alison Gallico has stepped up to the post and will be assuming the role after the 2018 AGM. Alison can be contacted at: 72 Ravensdowne, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 1DQ; tel.: 01573 229068; email: akgallico@gmail.com.

REMINDER

For those of you determined to be more organised this year, we recommend the John Buchan Year Planner, available from Diana Durden at durdens@tiscali.co.uk. This attractive aide-memoire features splendid covers from early editions of the Buchan novels and is a must-have for true JB fans!

**ANTI-SEMITE ACCUSATION**

Following Simon Schama's implication in the Financial Times that JB was an anti-semite, JBS member Margaret Bell wrote to the FT with this robust response:

“How disappointing of Simon Schama to state that John Buchan was an anti-Semite (Life & Arts 4/11/17) There is no doubt that attitudes of some of his characters now, rightly, offend our sensibilities but the conspiracy in the Thirty-Nine steps turned out to be a German, not a Jewish one. The first assertions of prejudice are dismissed by another character later as one of “odd biases”. As far as personal views go Buchan had close Jewish friends and he was aware of and troubled by the persecution of Jews in Russia and Germany. Buchan's support of Zionism in the House of Commons and his speech to the Jewish National Fund led to his name being added both to the Golden Book and Hitler's invasion hit list. Surely a strange “double whammy” for an anti-Semite?”

This in turn prompted a vigorous four week correspondence (November 4-December 2, 2017) to which JB's granddaughter, Ursula Buchan, also contributed.



For those of you following the fortunes of Mr Standfast, his owner Mike Edwards reports that sadly he has been retired at the grand old age of 4. Having started racing as a 2 year old he developed breathing problems which deteriorated and made racing difficult. He has now retired to a leafy paddock near Malvern, where life will be much easier, hacking about the country lanes with his new adoring owners.