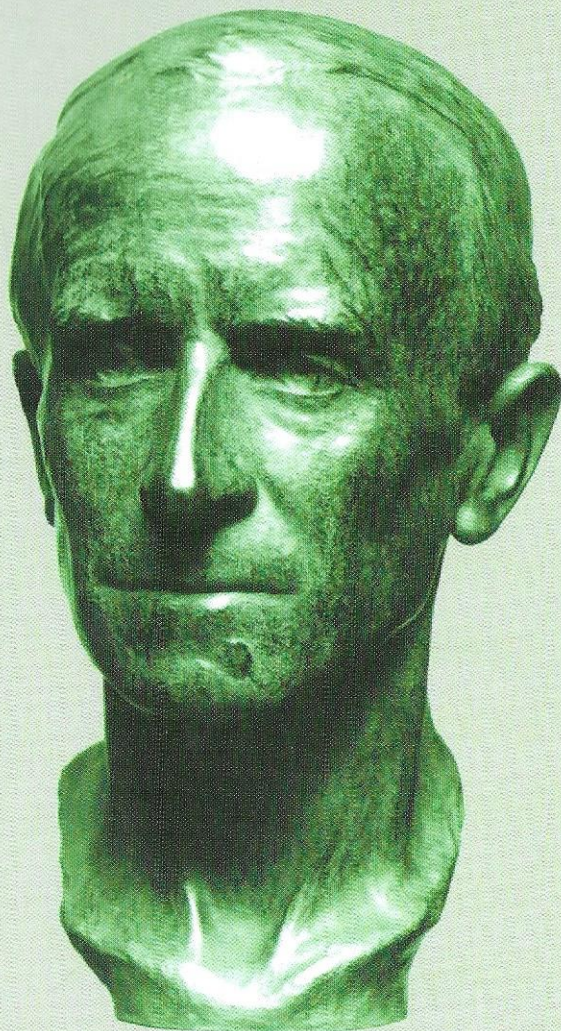


# The John Buchan Journal

RETROSPECTIVE ISSUE

1979 – 2004

The John Buchan Society



Spring  
2004  
Issue  
30

The Douglas Library  
The Horace Club  
*The Three Hostages*

# The John Buchan Journal

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**Note to contributors:** the Editor welcomes articles on and personal memories of John Buchan, his work and background. Where possible articles should be emailed to the editor at kate.macdonald@skynet.be. Typed or hand-written articles are also welcome, but it will save time and money if they could be sent already in digital form. Where references are required please use this issue of the *Journal* as a style guide. Illustrations are particularly welcome but should be clear enough for reproduction.

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# Editorial

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**Kate  
Macdonald**

**T**wenty-five years ago The John Buchan Society was founded in Edinburgh. I didn't know anything about it until a few years later when I began to work on Buchan as a student, and used the *Journal* to find my way into the subject, there not being much else published on Buchan at the time. This is a bumper issue of the *Journal* to remind ourselves of what Buchan studies were like then, and where we are now. I have reprinted two articles from the first issue of the *Journal*, with a retrospective from Eileen Stewart, one of the Society's founders, and a survey of Buchan publishing.

We also have a nice selection of present-day Buchan scholarship. A scoop from the Hasletts, on Buchan's membership of the Horace Club as an undergraduate, and a discussion of the Buchan holdings in the Douglas Library. I've also reprinted an excellent review from the TLS on a recent radio adaptation of *The Three Hostages*.

One thing that has changed for the better since the Society's early days is the editorial support network. I edit this *Journal*, but I rely on Tom Acton, Brighton, for the design, picture research and layout, all of which is his, on Kate Love, Edinburgh, for proof-reading and on Diana Durden, quite near Brighton, who puts the *Journal* into envelopes; calculates, buys and licks the stamps, and drives surreptitious carloads of *Journals* in their envelopes to all of Sussex's post boxes. It's a joint publication: I'm just the boss.

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## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
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| <b>Eileen Stewart</b>  | is one of the founders of the John Buchan Society.                                  |

# 'The Immortal Memory'

An extract from the proceedings of the annual birthday celebration of the London Burns Club (now the Burns Club of London) on 25 January 1918

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**L**IEUT.-COL. JOHN BUCHAN, rising to propose 'The Immortal Memory of Robert Burns,' was received with loud applause. Col. Buchan delivered one of the most masterly orations that has ever been contributed in an appreciation of the Poet. He said:- 'Mr. Chairman, my Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am not going to waste your time in professing my unfitness for the task which you have done me the honour of entrusting me with to-night. Let us take that for granted. (Laughter.) We are all unworthy to speak about Robert Burns; yes, even the youngest of us. As the 25th of January comes round we Scotsmen regard it as a pious duty to honour the memory of the greatest of our poets. Tonight there will be few of the ordinary Burns celebrations. The blasts of Januar' win' will not this year be fragrant with haggis and cock-a-leekie and the national beverage. Most of those who used to foregather with us are now doing more for their country than toasting the immortal memory of a poet; and some of the best have drunk the darker cup and learned the secret which no poet, however gifted, has discovered.

But, ladies and gentlemen, a time of national crisis is the very time to turn to poetry. A poet writes, not for the common round only, but for the great moments of life. The greatest poets, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Dante, have written not in times of peace but amid war and unsettlement. There is something in such epochs of crisis which quickens the imagination and the mind, and brings the spiritual world of the poet closer to our common life. In the few words I have to say to you to-night I would speak of Burns as pre-eminently a poet for a time of war.

Now, in time of war what are the matters that are most in our thoughts? I think there are three. In the first place our affection for our own birthplace and countryside is quickened. That comes first, I think, with most people. (Hear, hear.) A Scottish soldier in the field does not think of the British Empire with all its glories, not at first at any rate; he thinks of his moorland home, of the 'lone shieling on the misty island'; or, as the case may be, of a tenement in Coatbrig. The

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second is the affection for our own country, the duty to our Fatherland. At ordinary times we do not think very much about our country. We have generally a grievance against the government of the day and regard the State as a collection of cold-blooded bureaucrats, who make us pay taxes and lick stamps. (Hear, hear and laughter.) But with war this apathy goes. We realise that there is a mysterious alchemy, some strange compelling force, which links all the citizens of a nation in defence of that liberty which we had not valued till it was threatened. Our country ceases to be an abstraction; it becomes something towards which we feel, in Wordsworth's famous words, 'as a lover and a child.' And thirdly, we realise not only our common citizenship but our common humanity. King Harry told his men at Agincourt:

He this day who sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile  
This day shall gentle his condition.

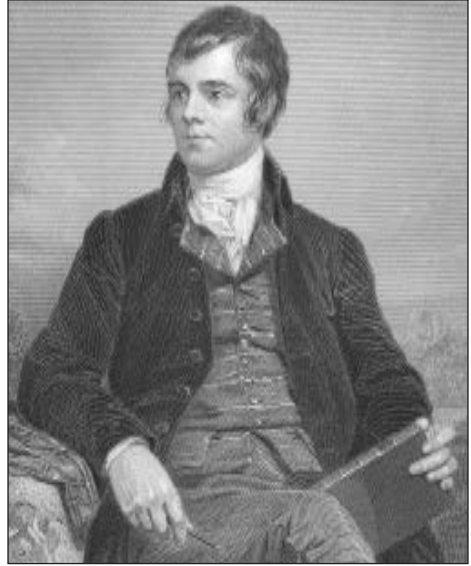
War gentles all our conditions, and like some wholesome hill wind blows away the fog from men's eyes. It brings sorrow and pain; but it brings also an enduring sympathy and a marvellous common sense.

We think of Burns first as the poet of Scotland. He has the hold which he has upon us all to-day largely because he sums up every feeling and interest which we Scotsmen hold dear. He has described for us every nook and cranny of Scottish life, both those which have gone and those with which we are still familiar. Again, he had the great tale of Scottish history in his bones - its poverty, its struggle for independence, its desperate devotion to impossible loyalties. Our small and down-trodden nation never forgets that it is long-descended. We in the North have history very close to us. We have always thought far more about Bannockburn and Flodden and Prestonpans than our neighbours in the South have thought about Crecy and Agincourt. Burns has enabled us to see the rock whence we were hewn and the pit whence we were digged. That is why he is a sort of bible for wandering Scotsmen. To read Burns in a far country is like smelling peat reek, or hearing again the soft sing-song of Lowland speech. (Applause.)

Above all, he understood the Scottish character, - that strange mixture of apparent inconsistencies which, except for the Jews, is the most clearly marked race-stock in the world. I am afraid there is a conventional idea of the Scottish

*Burns has enabled us to see the rock whence we were hewn and the pit whence we were digged*

character firmly fixed in certain alien minds, an idea that we are all taciturn, prosaic, thrifty, astute and desperately cautious. I have often thought of the shock any stranger nourished on this idea must get when he discovers our admiration for Burns. 'I could understand,' he might say, 'the deification of John Knox; I could understand the yearly celebration of the birthday of Adam Smith; I could even accept, though I should deplore, the adulation of Mr Andrew Carnegie. But Burns!' And then I think the stranger, if he were a wise man, would begin to revise his notion of our national character. The fact is we are a bundle of paradoxes. We are sober and astute in most of the relations of life; but there is a large amount of pure daftness in all of us,



ROBERT BURNS

even the dingiest. We are saving; but we are also absurdly generous. We are prudent; but we are capable of the craziest, most quixotic loyalties—things like the Covenant and the Jacobite cause, which defy every consideration of worldly interest. We are unemotional on the surface; but every one of us knows in his heart that he is wildly sentimental. We are law-abiding; yet no race has so little real respect for authority. (Hear, hear.) Have you ever considered that prayer which is used in our Scottish Churches 'Bless the two Houses of Parliament now assembled and over-rule their deliberations for the people's good'? Mark you, not 'guide' or 'direct,' but 'over-rule'; the assumption being that they are perfectly certain to be wrong. (Loud laughter.) The truth is that the Scotsman is not a narrow person, and Burns understood this. His lot may be cast in narrow surroundings, but he is always reaching up and beyond them. It was not for nothing that the Admirable Crichton was a Scotsman. We admire people who warm both hands before the fire of life. We like to see the mixture of homeliness and adventure. Like Admiral Duncan who was very particular about his woollen underclothing, but who at the battle of Camperdown told his crews that they need not be afraid, for he had taken soundings, and if every vessel was sunk the British flag would still be flying above

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water. Or like Bailie Nicol Jarvie, who was half a Glasgow 'body' and half a Crusader. The Scotsman is like King Saul, who goes out looking for his father's asses but has always half a hope of finding a kingdom. (Loud laughter and applause.) But if we think of Burns to-night first as a poet of Scotland we think of him next as a poet of our common patriotism. He has written one or two of the classic war songs of the world. No man has ever preached more nobly the duty of the citizen, who, whatever his quarrels with his country, is bound to help to close up the ranks when his country is threatened. If you wish for a statement of the Allies' War Aims you will find it throughout the poetry of Burns. Freedom, tolerance, sympathy in the State; devotion, courage, sacrifice in the citizen it is all there. To-day history greater than any we have known in the past is being made before our eyes. We can ask no better gift from the gods than that some second Burns should arise to embody in immortal verse the spirit of the British soldier to-day as a legacy to the unborn generations. (Loud applause.)

But Burns was a great poet, and so he must be something more than the poet of a people. He belongs to the whole world, and at his best he strikes a note which everybody feels, whatever his class or country. Take that song, 'Auld Lang Syne.' I once spent a New Year's Eve in a Boer farm on the Swaziland Border, and we sang it in Dutch. All over the world, in every variety of accent and some of them make an awful mess of the beautiful Scots (laughter) all over the world you will hear these words sung wherever friends meet and part. Could you find a better proof of Burns's immortality? He understood the emotions of the human heart and could share every one of them. He could sympathise with both sinner and saint. He could admire equally the Jacobin and the Jacobite. He could strike the heroic note, and he could set his fiddle jiggling to the dance of beggars in a tavern. He could spare even a touch of kindness for Satan himself. You remember his own confession:

'I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear,  
I hae been merry drinkin',  
I hae been joyfu' gathering gear,  
I hae been happy thinkin'.'

It is this extraordinary width of sympathy which makes Burns in the highest degree the poet of Democracy. And in that better world to which I hope we are advancing he may well



be our leader, for he is the poet of the true Democracy, which is based not upon an abstract creed, but upon a complete understanding and love of human nature. Not patronage, remember. Burns could not patronise a louse, much less a human soul. (Loud applause.)

If you seek for the great democratic note in him you will find it at its best, not so much in those passages where he talks loudly and grandly about the rights of man. They are not bad, but other people have done the thing as well. And you will not find it in those passages where he paints the follies of the fashionable and the vices of the rich. They are good enough in their way; but many much inferior writers could have written them. You will find it best expressed in those poems where human sympathy breaks down all artificial divisions, where he can write kindly even of folly, because it is our mortal heritage. You remember in the 'Twa Dogs' how Luath, the ploughman's collie, breaks in upon Cæsar's lurid picture with the kind of human protest which the honest man always makes against something coloured too high for nature:

'Oh, would they stay aback frae courts,  
An please themsels wi' country sports,  
It wad for every ane be better,  
The Laird, the Tenant, and the Cotter;  
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,  
Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows;  
Except for breakin' o' their timmer,  
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer,  
Or shootin' o' a hare or moor-cock,  
The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk.'

There is another and deeper sense in which Burns is the poet of Democracy, if by Democracy we mean essential human nature. You know what his life was with its heights and its tragedies. His work is a result of his being Robert Burns, and without the vicissitudes of that strange career can we say that he would have come as close to the springs of life? He is the poet of a certain kind of experience like Shakespeare and Scott who can understand the dark places of the human spirit without having actually experienced them, who observe life as it were from a hill-top, and see the marshes and the fever-haunted wastes below, and can describe them without painfully travelling them on foot. Now, I do not say that to understand sin and suffering one must be oneself a sinner and a sufferer. That would be a shallow and a foolish creed. But

*There is  
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is the poet of  
Democracy,*

I cannot help feeling that the report of one who has himself been in the depths will be more poignant and helpful than that of the god-like observer on the mountain-top. Burns went down into the dark places of life, the shadow-land of the spirit, and found in sorrow and degradation and bitter regret material for that poetry which elevates man from the deeps because it tells him that another has been there before and has not lost his courage. His loss is our gain, and from the bitterness of his own experience the world has drawn power and consolation. (Applause.)

*He made  
mistakes, but  
he atoned for  
them gallantly;  
and he paid his  
lawing for all  
that he took  
from the inn  
of life.*

A time of war, as we know too well, is a time of suffering and searching of heart. We have, most of us, lost near kinsmen; we have all of us lost many friends. At such a time our minds turn to a poet who does not deal merely with the sunny springtide of life, but who can lay a sure and healing hand upon the wounds of human nature. The great and eternal lessons of Burns are sympathy and fortitude, and we need these now as never before. I will conclude on that word fortitude. I have known respectable people spend much time in apologising for Burns's life. Believe me, it does not need it. (Hear, hear.) He made mistakes, but he atoned for them gallantly; and he paid his lawing for all that he took from the inn of life. I do not envy the man who can read Burns's story without a sincere respect respect for his indomitable Scottish pride, for the milk of human kindness that did not sour, respect for one who never bowed his head to fate. I do not envy the man who cannot see in that tragic figure, in the last days at Dumfries, writing his great songs without hire as a gift to his country, struggling desperately against the consequences of his character and environment who cannot see a genuine nobility of soul. (Applause.) When the floods come, the lower ground is covered and little hills do not show; only the peaks stand clear above the waters. In a time of flood such as this it is the high summits among mankind that we look to, and of these Burns is one. In giving the Toast of the Immortal Memory, I would ask you to think of him as a great and famous Scotsman; as one who has done much to inspire in his countrymen that spirit of freedom and courage which will yet win all our battles; above all as one who to the weakest of mankind is a brother and a comforter, and to the strongest among us is an example.'

The Toast was drunk in solemn silence, and the Pipers played 'The Flowers of the Forest.'

# The Horace Club

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**T**he Horace Club was founded on 15 March 1898 and met for the first time on 11 May. The founder was Arnold Ward of Balliol College. This statement will surprise readers of Buchan's biographies, with Janet Adam Smith attributing its foundation to Buchan and three friends Raymond Asquith, Cuthbert Medd and Harold Baker (Adam Smith 1985, 31), and Andrew Lownie giving the honour to Buchan alone (Lownie 1995, 48). There is an explanation. After the club had ceased to exist in 1901 and 'The Book of the Horace Club' had been published by Basil Henry Blackwell, the 'Keeper of the Records' of the club, the records disappeared into the archives of Blackwell's, the booksellers. They briefly surfaced in 1983 when Sir Arthur Norrington published his 'Blackwell's 1879-1979: The History of a Family Firm' to celebrate its centenary. This book was written in a great hurry. Sir Basil Blackwell, the son of Basil Henry Blackwell, had intended to write it himself but found he was too old. He, therefore, commissioned Sir Arthur Norrington who did little more than note the existence of the club and the high quality of its members and their poetry.

In 2002 Rita Ricketts published 'Adventurers All', a much more detailed account of Blackwell's based on a much wider range of Sir Basil Blackwell's papers collected together after his death. She was the first to name Arnold Ward as founder, basing her account on the original records of the Horace Club (Ricketts 2002, 90). These consist of two white-volume Kelmscott folios in which have been pasted ninety-five poems by members of the Club. Each poem is handwritten, dated and signed by the author. In addition there is a memorandum by Dorothy M Ward, surviving sister of Arnold Ward, in which are details of the Horace Club's foundation, history, organisation, rules and membership. This is accompanied by an explanatory letter to Sir Basil Blackwell dated 17 June 1952. Finally there is an attendance record of the first six meetings, a list of reviews of 'The Books of the Horace Club' and a number of invitation cards to its meetings.

Basil Henry Blackwell had had a longstanding connection with Balliol College. In 1879, the year he established his bookshop, Blackwell had published a brochure, 'Mensae Secundae', of poems written by undergraduates at Balliol. It was he who started the Blackwell's tradition of publishing

by **Michael  
and Isobel  
Haslett**



**ARNOLD WARD  
OF BALLIOL  
COLLEGE**

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the works of young poets, often at a loss.

It was, therefore, natural that Arnold Ward should choose Basil Henry Blackwell as Keeper of the Records. Five years after the death of Jowett, Balliol remained the intellectual powerhouse of the university and hosted three or four literary societies in 1893 (Barker 1948, 78-79). Buchan in contrast found none at Brasenose in 1895 (Adam Smith 1985, 52). As a founder of a literary society Arnold Ward had the advantage of being the great-nephew of Matthew Arnold and a son of Mrs Humphrey Ward, the novelist. He was able to attract an impressive membership among senior academics and postgraduates including Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen College, who became President of the Horace Club. His own college, Balliol, supplied almost half the undergraduate members. Moreover he himself was a good classical scholar who had already won the Chancellor's prize for Latin Verse and was shortly to win a Craven Scholarship. He invited to the inaugural meeting at his rooms seven other university poets, of whom Buchan was one, the only one of his circle to be so honoured. Asquith, Baker and Medd became members before the next meeting.

The rules of the Club were decided at this meeting on 15 March 1898 and were as follows:

- 1 An Arbiter will be elected by lot from the whole Club to hold sole office in the Club from the end of the meeting to the end of the next meeting following; he will be responsible for the meetings of the Club and for any expenses which may be incurred during his term of office and will issue at least a fortnight before the meeting a set of rules to hold good on that occasion, specifying those of his predecessors' rules which he accepts and those which he rejects.
- 2 The properties of the Horace Club are an urn and a book.
- 3 The Arbiter will invite all members to read poems determining the order by lot.
- 4 Members are asked to observe the following conditions with regard to their poems:
  - i. They should be written in a well-known language.
  - ii. They should not exceed in length nor fall below in brevity any poem of Horace (excluding the 'De Arte Poetica').
  - iii. For comic poems Hor Sat I (ix) should serve as a limit to the comic vein.
  - iv. They should be written on separate pieces of paper in order that the several MSS may be pasted into the Book of the Horace Club (ie the Kelmscott Folio MWH).

- v. Any verses that a reader may not wish to read he may circulate without reading.
- vi. No translations shall be read or circulated or pasted into the Book of the Horace Club.
- 5 Members are invited to bring nuts or other fruits etc after Horatian precedent, while the Arbiter will supply wine, water and cigarettes. 'Nardo vina merebere.'\* (Ward memorandum).
- \* Loosely translated: you will earn your wine by dressing up.

*Members are invited to bring nuts or other fruits etc after Horatian precedent, while the Arbiter will supply wine, water and cigarettes.*

Arnold Ward was elected Arbiter for the next meeting held on 11 May. He issued the following additional rule: 'Members may bring guests who will be invited to read poems to the club, but in inviting guests members are asked to remember that it is not the object of the club to provide opportunity for the exercise of ordinary hospitality to friends. Distinguished guests and guests who are candidates for membership will be most appropriately welcomed at meetings of the Club. Guests will be formally the guests of the Arbiter who must receive notice and may exercise a veto in this matter.'

In fact at the first meeting there were no guests but almost all the members were present or sent apologies. Arnold Ward launched the Horace Club with a poem describing the mixed feelings of schoolboys towards Horace, which became in adult life feelings of enjoyment, respect and desire to imitate.

At the end of the meeting the MSS of all the poems were pasted into the Kelmscott Folio, the property of the Club, and lots were placed in the urn that had been recently excavated at Chuisi and had been bought and presented to the Club by Arnold Ward's father, T Humphrey Ward, later an honorary member. Buchan's lot emerged so that he became the second Arbiter. His rules for the next meeting are shown in Figure 1.

The Arbiter of the final meeting on 7 May 1901 was Raymond Asquith who took his chance to mock the pedantry of classical scholars with the sardonic wit seen in his letters, and circulated the following rules. To understand the references given in brackets, remember that 'C' stands for 'Carmina' (ie Odes), the first large Roman numeral denotes the number of the book, the second smaller Roman numeral denotes the number of the ode, and the Arabic numeral denotes the line.

- 1. There being no authority discoverable in our Patron's Odes for the contribution of fruit and nuts sanctioned by

former Arbiters, members are forbidden to bring one or the other.

2. It being known that our Patron produced his poems under the influence of endive and mallows  
(*me pascunt olivae me* (olives, chicory and smooth  
*chicorea levesque malvae*) mallows nourish me)  
(C I xxxi 15)

members may bring both these vegetables; or they may be provided by the Arbiter. But this is unlikely.

3. Should members wish to bring unguents, they are advised that the following have the sanction of our Patron: the ordinary or Assyrian nard (C II xi 16), Malobathrum a product of Syria (C II vii 8) and Balanus (C III xxix 4). It may be stated for the convenience of members that the cheapest variety is to be obtained in the country of the Troglodytes.
4. Wine will be provided by the Arbiter; who nevertheless ventures to hope that the self-respect of members, reinforced by the Lapithae to which our Patron has called attention (C I xviii 7), will prevent their exceeding a reasonable limit in the consumption of it.
5. Members are earnestly requested to divest themselves of their Median Scimitars before entering the Arbiter's room; our Patron having his opinion (C I xxvii 6) that such weapons are inappropriate at social gatherings.
6. Members are invited to bring pet quails, if they feel that this would add to their comfort. Ladies may also be brought but in the latter case permission must be first obtained from the Arbiter.
7. Members are further permitted to bring turtles or small horses, but it is hoped that the right will not be exercised. (Buchan 1987, 68)



**HILAIRE BELLOC**

The membership was distinguished. From Balliol came Arnold Ward, Raymond Asquith (the brilliant son of a future Prime Minister), Hilaire Belloc (already a professional author and poet), A C Mead (a fine scholar and poet and a member of Buchan's inner circle of friends) and E Wright who could write good poetry in both English and French. From Brasenose came the Vice-Principal, Dr F W Bussell as well as Buchan. Harold Baker, a close friend of Raymond Asquith from their time at Winchester, came from New College with H E Butler, who won the Newdigate Prize for poetry after Buchan, then became a don at New College and later Professor of Latin in London. Nowell Smith also came from New College, and after a succession of fellowships and a long period as housemaster

at Winchester, edited Wordsworth's poetical works and the letters of Sydney Smith, who was an ancestor. From Magdalen came the President and also the Tutor, A D Godley, author of humorous verse in Latin, Greek and English, or a mixture of them. The Rev A G Butler, a former headmaster of Haileybury and a recently retired Dean of Oriel, wrote drama and verse and in 1900 greatly helped Buchan by introducing him to St Loe Strachey, editor of *The Spectator* (Lownie 1995, 67). St John Lucas of University College later became a non-practising barrister and was a close friend of Aubrey Herbert. Professor J S Phillimore of Christ Church, having won all the classical prizes at Oxford, had just departed to Glasgow as Professor of Greek in succession to Buchan's friend and teacher Gilbert Murray. York Powell of Christ Church was Professor of Modern History at Oxford, but had in addition taught Law, Old English and Old German. James Williams, DCL, was bursar and fellow of Lincoln College, where he taught Roman Law. His legal books were less distinguished than his published collections of comic verse ('Briefless Ballads and Legal Lyrics') according to Professor Lawson (1968, 81). A E Zimmern was a New College man who got his First in Greats in 1902 and became a teaching fellow. Later he changed course and ended a Professor of International Relations at Oxford University. Unusually, L R F Ollerenshaw of Christ Church later became a proprietor of a coaching establishment and a local politician at Maidenhead.

Ward enrolled a remarkable number of very able undergraduates, postgraduates and university professors, the great majority of whom were active members contributing poems. The honorary members in contrast were in most cases just that. They all lived a long way from Oxford and can have attended few if any meetings. Only two contributed poems - the Rev H C Beeching and Professor W R Hardie who after ten years as a teaching fellow at Balliol had become Professor of Humanity (Latin) at Edinburgh in 1895. He was a brilliant and enthusiastic teacher. When Ernest Barker won the top scholarship at Balliol in 1893, Hardie noticed that his Latin was weaker than his Greek. He offered to mark work that he sent him regularly during the ten months before Barker's admission to Balliol, charging him nothing because of the penury of his family (Barker 1948, 62-63).

Other honorary members were the Hon. Maurice Baring (diplomat and man of letters), Laurence Binyon (art historian and poet), Professor Courthope (Professor of Poetry at Oxford



AUBREY  
HERBERT

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OWEN SEAMAN

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1895-1900, Civil Service Commissioner, author of 'History of English Poetry'), J Meade Faulkner (industrialist, poet, author of 'Moonfleet' and other romances, local historian), Sir Rennell Rodd, KCMG, (diplomat, poet and author of books on classical subjects), Owen Seaman (poet, satirist, professor of literature and finally editor of 'Punch') and T Humphry Ward (father of Arnold Ward, former fellow and tutor at Brasenose and after 1980 on the staff of *The Times*, author, art critic and connoisseur). All these men were distinguished in different ways and it was a tribute to Arnold Ward's and probably Raymond Asquith's literary, social and political contacts that they agreed to become honorary members. However seldom they attended, it can have done Buchan no harm to have met them.

The very high quality of the Horace Club's poetry causes surprise that the club lasted only three years. There are several explanations. Due to the Boer War meetings were discontinued from January to October 1900. By 1901 all but two of the undergraduates who contributed poems had left Oxford. It was sheer coincidence that Belloc, Buchan, Baker, Medd, Asquith, Herbert and Ward were at Oxford at the same time and that all except Buchan and Baker were at Balliol, where from the first Buchan had so many friends. More importantly the vast majority of its members were classical scholars interested in English literature and poetry. Already in 1898 the first cohort of students of English were taking their final examination (Barker 1948, 78). Schools of French and German were soon to follow. It was inevitable that from then onwards literary societies would form within each language school. Nevertheless in those three years the Horace Club produced some amazingly good poetry, even if it may not be of the very highest class, which thanks to Basil Henry Blackwell can still be enjoyed today. It has rhythm and rhyme and is easily understood – qualities that are underestimated by modern poets and critics and were possessed by Buchan in full measure. However, Janet Adam Smith dismissed his poetry at this period as 'the accomplished verses of a young man with a good ear, romantic feelings and a head full of the poetry of other men – Keats, Arnold, Morris, Bridges, the Greek Anthology, the Ballads, not the work of a young man wrestling to say a new thing, to say something that could not be said in any other way.' (Adam Smith 1985, 88). She concedes however that Buchan's longest contribution to the collection of poems, 'From the Pentlands looking North and South', throws an interesting light on his personality.



He wanted both adventure and security (Adam Smith 1985, 109). In the concluding lines he asks for:

‘The fighter’s strength, the echoing strife,  
The high tumultuous lists of life’

but then adds:

‘But when the even brings surcease  
Grant me the happy moorland peace’.

(Lownie and Milne 1996, 50)

He needed in fact not only South Africa, the Great War and Canada, but also Broughton and Elsfield. A similar theme is found in ‘The Soldier of Fortune’ who concludes unhappily:

‘I am broken and houseless, lost my clan and my name.  
A stranger treads on my homeland, no heart remembereth  
me’.

(Lownie and Milne 1996, 62)

‘The Last Song of Oisín’ is interesting in that it is based on Irish legend. Buchan was totally unsympathetic to the Irish who seemed to him to be always harping on ancient wrongs (Adam Smith 1985, 185). However he admired the beauty of their culture and legend. The poem was written for this collection and was never published elsewhere (Lownie and Milne 1996, 57).

Buchan’s remaining contributions, ‘Ballad for Grey Weather’ and ‘The Gipsy’s Song to the Lady Cassilis’, had both been previously published, the former as an introduction to *Grey Weather*. ‘The Gipsy’s Song to the Lady Cassilis’ had been published in the *Glasgow University Magazine*. It is based on an episode in ‘the Chap-book of the Raid of Cassilis’ when my lady ‘forgot husband and kin, and followed the tinkler’s piping’. The original version consisted of three verses, and the following additional verse was inserted into the Horace Club version between the second and third verses of the original (Lownie and Milne 1996, 57):

‘When morning cleaves the eastern grey  
And the lone hills are red;  
When sunsets light the evening way  
And birds are quieted;  
In autumn noon and spring-tide dawn,  
By hill and dale and sea,  
The world shall sing its ancient song  
Of hope and joy for thee, my love,  
Of hope and joy for thee.’

**Raymond Asquith, Harold Baker and Cuthbert Medd formed the inner circle of Buchan's friends.**

Raymond Asquith, Harold Baker and Cuthbert Medd formed the inner circle of Buchan's friends. During his first two years at Oxford he had neither the time nor money to spare for social life. The Horace Club was one of many activities that he could enjoy with them during his final two years. Of the three Raymond Asquith was the most remarkable. He could write good poetry in both English, Latin and Greek. His close relationship with Baker had already been established at Winchester (Jolliffe 1980, 23) and Medd and Buchan were added. Raymond had an aloof personality and did not tolerate fools easily, though he was close to friends who were his intellectual equals. This part of his personality was used by Buchan in creating the character of Vernon Milburne, the hero of *The Dancing Floor*. His total lack of ambition was used in the creation of Lewis Haystoun, the hero of *The Half-Hearted* published in 1900 and dedicated to Buchan's three friends. Love, marriage in 1907 and parenthood were to modify these traits, and by 1914 he was Treasury Junior Counsel and had been selected as Liberal candidate at Derby. Death at 37 at the Somme in 1916 cut short his career. His contributions to the Horace Club were an ode to his old school in Latin Alcaeics, a very difficult metre to master, three Greek epigrams (Dreyfus, de Rougement and Gladstone) and a poem addressed to a beautiful woman.

The Kelmscott folios and the other documents at present are housed in cramped conditions in a small room at Blackwell's. They are due to be removed to a larger 'Blackwell Room' at Merton by October 2004. A collection of Blackwell's first editions and a collection of rare books, presented by Sir Basil Blackwell to his old college, will also be placed on exhibition there.

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It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help received from the college archivists of Balliol, Brasenose, Christ Church, Lincoln, New College and University College. We owe thanks to the Poulton-le-Fylde library for obtaining some of the books above. We are grateful to Rita Ricketts and Blackwell's for allowing us access to the records of the Horace Club and for preserving them. We both owe thanks to the manager, staff and customers for tolerating us, and in particular to those who coaxed the photocopier to do what was wanted. Isobel is owed thanks for the birthday gift of *The Book of the Horace Club*, without which this article would never have been written. Finally we would like to thank Julian Blackwell for his interest and insistent hospitality.

A meeting of the John Buchan Society at Blackwell's is planned for October 2004, associated with the inauguration of the Blackwell Room at Merton College, and a viewing of the folios and documents of the Horace Club, as well as other collections.

ACKNOWLEDGE-  
MENTS

**1. THE CLUB will meet at 8 p.m., on Wednesday, June 15, in the President's Garden, at Magdalen College.**

**2. The rules for the First Meeting will hold good. The Arbiter will invite all members to read poems, determining the order by lot. Members are invited to bring contributions of fruit, etc., after Horatian precedent.**

**3. Rule 6, which refers to the bringing of guests, may, on this occasion, be interpreted so as to admit ladies. Members are reminded that the Arbiter must receive notice of each guest at least three days before the Meeting.**

**JOHN BUCHAN,**

**B.N.C.,**

**ARBITER.**

**June 7, 1898.**

Figure 1

One of Buchan's invitation cards to the second meeting. It has been pasted on to a page of the earlier Kelmscott folio held at present at Blackwell's but due to be transferred to Merton College in October 2004.

# Evil's soft touch: *The Three Hostages*, BBC Radio 4

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by Paul Bailey

**T**he *Three Hostages* is the least credible of the five adventure stories involving John Buchan's stalwart Englishman hero Richard Hannay, though *Greenmantle* runs it close in terms of unintentional hilarity. Bert Coules's adaptation simplified a famous plot, but in the process robbed the 'shocker' (Buchan's word) of its appeal. This two-part Classic Serial came over as only intermittently exciting on the radio, whereas the book is compelling even at its most absurd. The villain in *The Three Hostages* is the unforgettable Dominick Medina: physically beautiful, mentally alert. He is a politician with the charm and brilliance of Disraeli, and a celebrated poet. (Coules deprives him of his poetic talent, which in the novel is likened to that of the Housman of *A Shropshire Lad*.) Medina is also a man of action, and arguably the best shot in Britain. Early on, however, Buchan hints that Medina falls short of perfection: he has no sexual interest in women, and he is a teetotaller, refusing the excellent Madeira on offer at the Thursday Club.

*Medina falls short of perfection: he has no sexual interest in women, and he is a teetotaller, refusing the excellent Madeira on offer...*

Water is his damnable potion. For all his social skills, Medina is not a gentleman. He dresses discreetly; he mixes well with the genial buffers of London's clubs – but there's something foreign about him, something not quite proper. It is the philosophizing master of disguise Sandy Arbuthnot who ascertains that Medina is One of Them, not One of Us.

Michael Maloney tried to convey Medina's Byronic allure, but the script never allowed him to break loose. There is a homoerotic not to say sadomasochistic element to the brief relationship Hannay enjoys with Medina, which is here confined to the scene in which Medina commands him to behave like a faithful dog.

Buchan's horror at the idea of homosexuality is expressed in the sixth chapter of *Greenmantle*, when Hannay is shown into the brutal Colonel Stumm's private quarters: 'It was the room of a man who had a passion for frippery, who had a perverted taste for soft delicate things. It was the complement to his bluff brutality. I began to see the queer other side to my host, the evil side which gossip had spoken of as not unknown in the German army'. There is no tell-tale frippery on display in Medina's capacious house in Hill Street and the absence of knick-knacks means that Hannay can sit comfortably in the armchair in the library.

The nature of Medina's 'evil' is not as obvious as Stumm's – it's mystical, quasi-religious, and to do with seizing power.

Buchan's shockers possess shades of feeling of which the God-fearing side of his character may have been unaware. They survive because they are written in the kind of prose that doesn't go out of fashion – clear, lithe, attentive to detail. No one equals him, not even Stevenson, when it comes to making the reader feel at home in a landscape, whether it be a Norwegian fjord, a glen in the Highlands of Scotland, or the frozen wastes of Greenland. Radio can merely nod in the aural direction of these scenic splendours. Some of the best passages in *The Three Hostages* describe the natural world, and Buchan judges people by their interest in it. The good identify trees and plants; the bad do not.

Coules cannot be blamed for toning down the book's racism. The 'Jew with the dyed beard' was left intact, but 'A nigger band, looking like monkeys in uniform' was shorn of its offending 'nigger'. The character of Julius Victor, father of Adela (one of the hostages), and described as 'the whitest Jew since the Apostle Paul', was omitted. Victor is a familiar figure in the popular novels of the 1920s and 30s because he's a philanthropist and therefore exceptional among his race. He isn't 'fat' and 'dirty', and might almost merit the grudging respect of Sir Archibald (Archie) Roylance, the daftest of Hannay's cronies. It was Mordecai Richler who first pointed to the anti-Semitism in Buchan's thrillers. The views are particularly repellent, he argued, because they issue from the mouths of upright officers and educated gentlemen. The racists in the Bulldog Drummond novels by 'Sapper' are mere thugs by comparison.

This truncated dramatization made sense, just about, but the spirit of the novel was missing. It was an error to lose the Scotland Yard inspector, Macgillivray, because his function is to highlight the superior sleuthing of the talented amateurs Hannay and Arbuthnot. The exotic Madama Breda and Medina's blind mother, with her spinning wheel and peat fires in Gospel Oak, were both acted by Souad Faress: Breda's accent seemed a long way from her native Sweden, but Mrs Medina had the right steely authority. David Robb sounded too young for Hannay, and Haydn Gwynne, in the enlarged role of his wife, Mary, caught the tone of the well-bred shires. But Buchan's essential silliness – always at odds with the fine writing – was never really present, despite the 'period' noises and the ticking of the grandfather clock.

This review was  
first published in  
the *Times Literary  
Supplement*,  
24 October 2003

# John Buchan at the Douglas Library

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by Heather  
Home



MACKENZIE  
KING

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In anticipation of the John Buchan Society's 'Canada Tour' in the fall of 2004, attempting to both inform and entice the potential traveller or researcher, I am delighted to provide a brief description of the Buchan papers and library that are held at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

The John Buchan collection was purchased for Queen's University in 1955 through the good offices of Dr Brockington, Rector of Queen's University from 1947 to 1966. Brockington, like Buchan, had a strong interest in both the arts and politics, serving in such diverse positions as special advisor during the Second World War to Mackenzie King's war cabinet and the British Ministry of Information, and in the role of President of Odeon Theatres, a national chain of Canadian motion picture houses. One can presume that it was an affinity with John Buchan and his diverse and significant interests that motivated Brockington to pursue the purchase of this material for Queen's University. It was also likely linked to his friendship with the family; Brockington was never afraid of using his influence with his more distinguished friends to further the reputation and academic standing of the University.

Brockington persuaded Colonel RS McLaughlin of Oshawa, another close personal friend of some distinction, to purchase the Buchan collection for Queen's University. This arrangement was beneficial both for the University and the Tweedsmuir family, successfully fulfilling their wish to ensure a safe and appropriate environment for this important collection of material. At the time of the donation, Lord Tweedsmuir's son was attributed with stating:

'I say with absolute sincerity that ... my father would have been delighted to know, as he undoubtedly does, that his papers and his books are to find a perpetual home in his beloved Canada.'

The papers of John Buchan span the years 1894 to 1950. The posthumous material was accrued by Lady Tweedsmuir and was included in the transfer of over 15 linear feet of archival material. Although the library and papers of John Buchan were purchased by the McLaughlins in 1955, the archival component was not physically relocated to the University until 1966. The papers had been retained as they were being organized and used by both Lady Tweedsmuir and Janet Adam Smith in the writing of the latter's *John Buchan: a biography*.

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The material is arranged in six series: Correspondence (1895-1940); Speeches (1903-1940); Writings (1898-1940); Press Clippings (1912-1940); Miscellaneous Material (1932-1940); and Posthumous Material (1940-1950). The correspondence series of the papers is the most voluminous as well as the most detailed. All of the letters have been indexed according to author and the material is fairly evenly distributed between correspondence Buchan sent and that which he received. Buchan's correspondents are a varied and sometimes unlikely group. In keeping with Buchan's own interests, most of these individuals come from the fields of literature or politics. What is particularly enjoyable are the many examples within the papers of the literary set espousing their political views and the politicians discussing their opinions on literature.



THE DOUGLAS  
LIBRARY,  
QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY,  
KINGSTON,  
ONTARIO.

The library component of the John Buchan collection is equally as interesting as the papers, offering further insight into Buchan and his interests. There are over 4000 volumes in the library, most notable of which are the 28 bound holograph manuscripts of Buchan's own work. There are definite gaps in the library collection; there are few books on science or fine art, but this provides the interested parties with insight into Buchan's character. What is particularly compelling about this library is that almost all the volumes have been noticeably well read, evidenced by marginalia and other annotations. And although the collection contains no incunabula, there are a few rarities to be found. There are a half dozen books from the seventeenth century as well as a collection of works from small private presses from which TE Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, privately printed by Manning Pike and HJ Hodgson, is the most valuable book in the entire library.

Queen's University Archives and Libraries have also attempted to supplement the collection with purchases of Buchan material as it has come on the market: eight letters

were purchased in 1982, and in 1988 the manuscript of *Sick Heart River* was purchased at auction from Sotheby's with financial assistance from the Chancellor Richardson Memorial Fund and the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board. There is also an artefact collection housed in the John Buchan Room, located within Douglas Library on campus, containing the desk and chair from Buchan's home in Elsfeld, three portraits, a bronze bust of Buchan by Thomas Clapperton and three portraits of Buchan donated by Yosuf Karsh.

**We hope to see you here in 2004**

The combination of the artefacts, archives and library makes Queen's University one of the foremost research environments and destinations for investigation into the life of John Buchan. We hope to see you here in 2004, during which time we are looking forward to highlighting and promoting our Buchan collection.

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## Current Research

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**National Archives of Scotland**

The catalogue for this library is now online ([www.nas.gov.uk](http://www.nas.gov.uk)). I did a quick search on John Buchan, and immediately came across a quotation from a letter from JB to Hugh Walpole from 1915, criticizing the British withdrawal from Gallipoli. More treasures inside if you only look. But the Buchan name is a common one.

**Recent criticism**

This link takes you to a very long and carefully plotted essay on Buchan, largely examining his life by working through *Memory Hold-the-Door*, by Roger Kimball. It was originally printed in *The New Criterion*, Sept 2003. The periodical is a monthly review of the arts and intellectual life, based in New York. Roger Kimball is its managing editor and an art critic for *The Spectator*. <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/22/sep03/buchan.htm>



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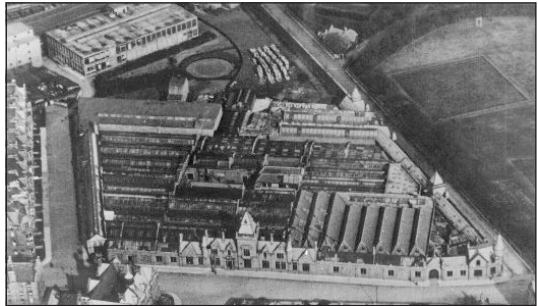
# The corridors of Parkside: Nelsons in the 1950s

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I was fortunate enough to be the last trainee publisher employed by Thomas Nelson and Son, and looking at the small photograph of the large works off the Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh, which was printed on page 36 of the Spring 2003 *Journal* brings back many memories.

by  
John Kinross

The trainee was supposed to spend a month in each department and, when I joined in the summer of 1958 after two years of National Service, I was conscious of walking down the dark wood-panelled corridors of the firm that were haunted by the spirit of Buchan and his friend Tommy Nelson. In *These for Remembrance*, Buchan wrote about Tommy, who was killed in the Tank Corps in 1917, as a man of quick intelligence, unshakeable good humour, faithfulness and great courage. In 1906 Tommy asked JB to become a partner in Nelsons and according to Anna Buchan it was JB who started the sevenpenny reprints of popular authors. These crown 8vo pocket volumes were printed on a special 4-up machine, still going in 1958, which churned out four Buchans at a time. I recall we also printed Oscar Wilde in this series. The bindings were red cloth or a deluxe white and purple or green buckram and all the paper was made at the mill in Penicuik. I had a month there as well, and have disliked the smell of esparto pulp and ammonia acid ever since.



*Thomas Nelson's printing works at Parkside in  
Edinburgh*

The build-up of an educational list for Nelsons in the 1920s was clearly stated by Michael Redley in his article on the Buchan-Newbolt collaboration in the Spring 2003 *Journal*. The firm very much depended on its educational orders from schools. There were some winners like the Nelson's Atlas, newly produced using a photo-litho 4-colour Roland machine, the pride of the busy machine room. The operator would look down on the sheets coming off at great speed and every now and again the coloured ink trays had to be refilled, the sheets

*I tripped up  
their centre  
forward in the  
circle, and was  
never asked to  
play again.*

checked and there was always a lot of washing-up to do on a Friday night. Trainees did not have to work on Saturdays and a Wednesday afternoon the Nelson's football team played on their pitch, visible in the aerial photograph at the back of the works. One day I was approached by the Works Manager, who was also the Team Coach, to play at left back. I had played hockey in the RAF and also football at school and assumed it would be a 'friendly' game so changed into my ex-RAF kit (still a bit muddy) and went into the pitch. A horrified coach sent me back to the changing room to put on the firm's red and white shirts, red socks and white shorts. It was a match best forgotten as, although we won, the opposition scored a goal from a penalty as I tripped up their centre forward in the circle, and was never asked to play again.

The following year there was a printing strike. The directors Walter Cairns and Ronnie Nelson (a steam enthusiast who loved to travel on the footplate between Waverley and Kings Cross) had anticipated this and there was a large stock of most titles in the warehouse, including the best-selling atlas and the RSV bible. For the first time in my life, and the last I hope, I had to cross a picket line of unfriendly but familiar faces. Luckily they knew I was not one of the bosses and only a very junior worker. The entire staff was put onto hunting out and packing orders, typing out invoices and sending out statements. It was hard and enjoyable work. Once a week a large container left the works for Leith where it went by ship to Tilbury for the London and south coast orders. Parcels were cut to a minimum and wooden crates of books were sent all over the world by ship. This was a pre-air travel, pre-computer age and Nelsons had to keep their many branches happy overseas.

One day in late 1959 I was sent for by Mr Cairns and told that my traineeship was over but he was going to give me a one-way ticket to the New York office, and after I had spent a month there I was to go to the Toronto office. Nothing was said about a future job at Parkside and there seemed to be a sort of implied suggestion that I might find work overseas rather than a future in Nelsons of Edinburgh.

The RMS 'Britannic' took me safely to New York through a storm force 9 and I ended up in the YMCA, New York. The Nelson office in 5th Avenue was close to the public library and very small. I spent most of the time proof-reading Harry Feldman's 'In a Forest Dark' in which the author tells minutely of his nervous breakdown. The book was not a success. After some days in the bible bindery in New Jersey, I took the

Greyhound bus to Toronto. On the border the customs men discovered my football boots (wrapped in brown paper) and opened them as if expecting a bomb. It seems a shame they don't play football in Canada, but they even asked me what they were for.

Fortunately in Toronto I was wanted as one of the educational representatives had gone sick and an important conference was to be held at Saux St. Marie in Northern Ontario. This meant a plane and a train ride carrying a heavy bag of books. The Canadian schools had a list system for each subject. Every year the teachers decided which text-books they wanted, so new ones had to be displayed. The orders came in fast and I was very busy – even doing a talk on the local radio station. The snow at last began to melt, but I was keen to get home and had no intention of remaining in Canada. The 'Britannic' took me safely home and I contacted Nelsons to tell them I was back. Alas the contract was over and there was no place for me so I had to work in London, strangely for Buchan's other publishers, Hodder and Stoughton near St Pauls.

Some time later the Parkside Works were sold off, pulled down and turned into the office for Scottish Widows' insurance. The firm's name was reborn in a small way in Walton, Surrey but quickly became lost in the Thomson Corporation. The shades of Buchan and Tommy Nelson no longer walk the corridors, but every time I see that beautiful black-shawled Scottish Widows girl in her unsuitable footwear tripping through the puddles of the adverts I think of Parkside in the rain and the two years I spent there helping to produce and sell the pocket editions of Wilde and Buchan.

Buchan, J 1987 *These for Remembrance*, Buchan & Enright

Buchan, A 1945 *Unforgettable Unforgotten*, London.

Kinross, J 2000 *Thomas Nelson's Nelsons*, *Scottish Book Collector*

Lownie, A 1995 *The Presbyterian Cavalier*, London 1995

## REFERENCES

## RETROSPECTIVE: Letter from Lord Tweedsmuir, 1979

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Dear Members,

To most of the reading public of today my father was a novelist who was best known for *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. In dedicating that book, to his friend Tommy Nelson, he speaks of it as 'a romance where the incidents defy the probabilities and march just inside the borders of the possible'. Perhaps it was because he was a Borderer that his concern was so much with borders and a frontier where the known confronts the unknown. He was a natural frontiersman.

A far lesser number of people remember him as a historian and biographer, for which Sir George Trevelyan believed that he would be for longer remembered. He was a natural writer of romance whose plots came almost unbidden to him. But his biographies were intensely personal creations. An historical character would suddenly fill him with an interest of such burning intensity that he was forced into writing his biography. Like the mountaineer, that he had once been, he had to climb a tall peak simply because it was there. With his rich experience of people and places he might have used the words that Trevelyan puts into the mouth of Ulysses: 'I am part of all that I have met.' Perhaps his firmest conclusion was that the barrier separating peace and security in human affairs, on the one hand, and utter barbarism, on the other, was paper thin. He put into his chancellor's speech, at Edinburgh University in 1932, his concept of the 'horizons of the mind'. I listened to that address, not in the hall at Edinburgh but on the frontier of Canada's Eastern Arctic. I was in the wireless cabin of the Hudson's Bay Company's gallant old ice-breaker ship, the *Nascopic*. The cold tides of Hudson's Strait closed over her more than 30 years ago. But then she went round the Company's far northern fur-trading posts to collect the fur catch, and put down supplies for another year to sustain the small and hardy population of frontiersmen who manned them. His voice came across three thousand miles to me, with extraordinary clarity against a background of winches turning, scraps of conversation in English and Eskimo, shuffling feet in seal-skin boots, and an occasional explosion of snarls from sledgedogs roaming the rocks beside the inlet in which we were anchored: '...there are the spiritual frontiers, the horizons of the mind. We are



The second  
Lord Tweedsmuir

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still frontiersmen in a true sense, for we are domiciled on the edge of mystery, and have to face novelties more startling than any which confronted the old pioneers.'

And into those thoughts went the lessons of his lifetime,

Yours sincerely,

TWEEDSMUIR

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## Letter from Lord Tweedsmuir, 2004

Dear Members

Writing in the first issue of the *John Buchan Journal* twenty-five years ago my brother John gave a brief conspectus of our father's literary work and I do not think I can better that. Whatever anxieties our earliest members and their Committee may have felt about the JB Society's chances of survival, these did not last for long. The child was healthy from the very first. A quarter of a century has passed, and we see our Society firmly established and becoming ever better known in places far afield. Although great work has been done in enlightening people about John Buchan's work the man himself has perhaps become a little shadowy. I suppose that I am the only person now alive who remembers him really well and can still see him under many different lights. In the past I have written about him as I knew him, and others, including my mother, have done the same. Where the mechanics of writing were concerned his experience was the same as mine, a matter of galley-proofs, page-proofs and meticulous corrections by hand. Now we have electronic type-setting and other improvements, although to a book-lover the unindented gloss of the pages feels wrong. Other innovations were scarcely dreamed of in JB's day. We now have the Internet extremely busy over our heads and e-mails whizzing in every direction. There is some good here, of course, in research terms, and much, also, that is bad. Poor scholars, cranks pursuing ideas fixes, biographers who are no more than gossip-mongers are all busy. I am sometimes plagued by people whose wish is to shed further light (or darkness) on my father's writing. Sadly, I cannot stop them and so I turn with pleasure to the fine work done by members of the Society on JB's behalf, and send my thanks to David Daniell and Andrew Lownie for their work on the short stories, and to Kate Macdonald for her most capable editing of the Journal. And so I send my warmest wishes to the Society's members whose good influence will continue to grow, I am sure, over the next twenty-five years.

TWEEDSMUIR

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The current  
Lord Tweedsmuir  
(left)

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# RETROSPECTIVE:

## The Memory of John Buchan (1979)

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By Eileen  
Stewart

*Mrs Stewart has just completed a PhD thesis at Edinburgh University dealing with the themes of Borders, Frontiers and Limits in the works of John Buchan. A book by her called John Buchan - Borderer is due to be published in 1980.*

The aim of our meeting on 3rd March 1979 was not self-indulgent hagiography but an enthusiastic desire to acknowledge a social debt to John Buchan and to continue some of the activities which he showed to be so valuable in Western society.

Memory, for Buchan, could not be equated with nostalgia. In his view the past acts both as an integrator and as a challenge in our times. It identifies the adventurer and spurs him into his quest. It contains the ground for his hope and his belief in a positive future. In *The Long Traverse* Donald's father uses a fishing image to illustrate the importance of a correct view of the past to a proper orientation in the future. 'You know,' he says, 'that if your back cast is not good your forward cast will be a mess.' Like Bergson, Buchan saw a continuity and an organic unity in time. Like Kant he believed its progression to be teleological [sic]. In such a view man is inescapably part of a tradition, whilst his past is an integral part of himself and both man and history have intrinsic value and purpose. His belief in man is undoubtedly that stated in the first proposition of *The Shorter Catechism* which he quotes so often.

John Buchan is certainly part of our Western heritage. In some measure he helped to shape the imagination and spirit of a whole generation of young men. It is tempting to wonder if we should have given such a high value to adventure in our educational system (as, for example, by the Duke of Edinburgh Awards) if there had been no Buchan heroes.

Buchan has always been a popular writer and his popularity has been at its height when society has been in crisis because he affirms man's right to self-respect and significance and also because he asserts the existence of those 'romantic accidents' that unexpectedly shatter the iron grip of inevitability and destructive monotony. Young people still enjoy his novels because they are active, outward looking and call the reader into the 'caller upland air.' Academic interest

in Buchan has increased recently because of the general reassessment of the transitional period in which Buchan worked and also because of the increased impetus and extent of Scottish studies.

Buchan is worth studying and remembering for four very good reasons. His life is fascinating and his personality refreshingly likeable. He is a historical figure who, whilst not in the limelight of power politics, nevertheless participated in many different areas of our social and political history. He is a key transitional figure in Scottish literature and an interpreter of his age. Finally, he was deeply concerned for people, their culture and environment. In Buchan's view people have an inalienable right of access to their history and their cultural traditions, just as they have a right of access to their countryside. He disliked all tyrannies whatever their social or political complexion, since these inevitably level society according to dehumanized norms. His appeal is wide because he demonstrates that people, their ideas and decisions are what really matter in society. Systems, property and prestige are valuable only in so far as they make it possible for human beings to function morally. For Buchan man is essentially a frontiersman, physically, mentally and spiritually, and most keenly himself when on the 'razor-edge of life.'

Therefore on 3rd March 1979 we did not seek to ossify him as another national cult-figure, but to form a truly cultural society in his memory whose inspiration is that adventurous pioneering spirit which is as relevant today as it was at any other moment in human history.

## SMS Books

- A small internet-based book seller specialising in works by and associated with John Buchan.
- Catalogues produced twice a year; available by post or e-mail.
- Wants lists maintained.
- Collections/individual items bought.
- **5% of gross profits donated to the John Buchan Centre.**

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# RETROSPECTIVE: Twenty-five years of the John Buchan Society (2004)

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By Eileen  
Stewart

The first thing that strikes me in looking back over my first article in the first *Journal* for the Society that I edited is how much better the proof-reading and lay-out is these days! Neither Ann nor Kate would ever have let 'teleological' slip by and the paragraph spacing looks haphazard to say the least. I also chuckle at some of my own preoccupations and concerns for society as a whole that could have done with a short break in the Interpreter's House before publication, I think. Nevertheless, I stand by the main thrust of what I was trying to say, particularly in the last paragraph, and look with great satisfaction and appreciation at the way the John Buchan Society has gone forward to fulfill those aspirations so well over the last 25 years.

The hopes were not just mine, of course. During the time I had given a series of extra-mural lectures at Edinburgh University I had met people who were long-standing Buchan readers and some who had actually known him in their youth. I felt that I was able to tap into, as well as to rekindle, their enthusiasm for a proper appreciation of the man and his work, though not to set him up as some kind of cult figure. The response to the day conference which I organized, with the backing of the now Professor Ian Campbell and through Bridget Stevens of the extra-mural department, was astonishing and encouraging. The seed of the Society was sown but it has taken a lot of careful nurturing to bring it to flower, let alone to fruition. That nurturing has been done by the selfless efforts of many people to whom I can only express my gratitude and genuine admiration.

The cult of personality and of popular culture (or should I say anti-culture) has reached dizzy heights during this last quarter century. We now make and break idols at the press of a button it seems, but somehow the JB Soc has maintained its strength by taking a much longer view of historical worth and human value. The *Journal* also eschewed the temptation to become a kind of vehicle for hard-pressed academics to increase their necessary publications lists. Instead it has good scholarly content and analysis of issues that were of concern to JB himself and which continue to be of concern to us but it has still kept a youthful sense of exploration and fun that are essential ingredients of any



Buchan venture. It has even gone from penny plain to twopence coloured without doubling its price. That shows great skill in the best use of new technologies.

Successive chairmen (both male and female) and their committees have steered the Society to solvency and stability. Perhaps one of the secrets of this has been the long periods of service to the Society of committee members and the integrity of those involved. Few societies can boast committees which have retained their composition without infighting for position throughout their history. Certainly I know of no occasion, personally, when such tensions were felt and have not been aware of any splits since I handed over the steering wheel to other hands. That good family feel is also communicated to members more widely, largely through the unstinting efforts of Russell Paterson.

The Society has worked closely with the Buchan family and the John Buchan Centre in Broughton over the years and this, too, gives me much real joy. Sheila Scott put so much of herself and her own money into setting up the Centre with the help of Brian Lambie that it is good that the Society has been able, increasingly, to complement rather than compete with her efforts. The Buchan family themselves had to endure cheap jibes about John Buchan's ambitions and his private life for so many years that it is good that they too can feel the support of members of a Society concerned to establish a more just evaluation of the man and his work. Justice is important as the damp-proof course of civilisation and JB the lawyer, with a classical degree behind him, would have approved of our attempts to achieve a proper balance in our judgments of him.

The Complete Buchan Project, so dear to my heart as the basis for that sound evaluation of JB's work, never got off the ground in the way I had hoped, but it is, nevertheless, continuing to come together with the help of many members in what may prove to be a much more accessible format on the Internet. The innovation of an Internet site is, of course, something we could not have dreamed of at the beginning, but is very much at one with the adventurous aims we formulated. The Society has also remained outward-looking and encouraging, in so far as it has been able, of talent amongst the young and proud of its international links. There is always more to be done for there are endless creative possibilities.

Twenty five years on, the John Buchan Society still seeks to preserve the memory of John Buchan and his inspiration by taking the past courageously into the future. May the first 25 silvery years reach their golden maturity in another 25.

# RETROSPECTIVE:

## Letters on John Buchan

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*In 2003, John Buchan's grand-daughter Deborah Stewartby and her husband Lord Stewartby wrote to friends from politics and private life, to ask for their memories of John Buchan. Here we print a selection.*

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**From  
Bill Deedes**

I don't have many regrets in my life; but one of them is that I never did meet him!

My uncle, Sir Wyndham Deedes, with whom I resided in London knew him and we were always going to arrange a meeting but it never came off.

I have most of his books on my shelves - including the recently published volumes of short stories - and I have lost count of how many times I have read Hannay's four main adventures! When required by my newspaper to write serious prose, I consult *The King's Grace*.

Years ago, one evening when the Commons rose early, I took the then Attorney General, Manningham-Butler, to see a version of *The Thirty Nine Steps*, for which I had tickets. We were outraged by the liberties taken with Buchan's original version - I forget whose film this one was - as you will know there were two or three. We retired to Pratts, and composed a letter, which I signed and the *Telegraph* published, drawing attention to this.

The Tweedsmuir family lawyers pursued the matter and, I believe, reached some settlement on films about Hannay. All I remember is that Buchan's eldest son Tweedsmuir, whom I barely knew at the time, invited me to be his guest at the Fly Fishers Annual Dinner in return. A very good dinner!

Yes, I do wish I had met him!

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**From  
Dame Jean  
Maxwell-Scott**

John Buchan came to unveil the statue of my great great grandfather, Sir Walter Scott, in Galashiels in 1932. I was about eight years old but I remember two things about his visit - firstly, his kindness to us children and secondly, across all the years, what an excellent speech he made on that occasion.

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From  
Sir Douglas  
Dodds-Parker

John Buchan (JB) has been, for my generation, a writer who captured the 'approach to Life' which we sought to follow. I can claim little personal association, but what there was, has always remained a very happy memory.

I first met him, I recall, at the BNC Senior Common Room for dinner. Both JB and my Pa had served in the South African War. My Pa, a just-qualified doctor, had gone there to recover from TB; caused by malnutrition, due to poverty at Medical School. Both JB and my Pa returned from South Africa, and were elected to the BNC Senior Common Room at the same time.

So, from about 1925 when, as a schoolboy, I would dine with my Pa at BNC, JB was often there. He would talk, quietly and most interestingly, to us juniors (only much later did I know that he had links with an embryonic SIS). All were entranced by his description of Africa in those pregnant years. This was of great benefit to all of us who went later to serve there.

This ended in 1931, when I left to serve in the Sudan, and on my return, JB had gone to Canada. Occasionally, on those years, I would meet him at Paddington, where he caught the 4.45 train on Fridays to Oxford. He would invite me to tea on the train and was always most friendly.

# RETROSPECTIVE:

## Publishing on John Buchan: *The John Buchan Journal* since 1980

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By Kate  
Macdonald

The invited speaker to the 1997 annual dinner of the John Buchan Society was Professor John Haldane of the University of St Andrews. In his talk, 'John Buchan: a Scottish philosopher reflects', he said of *The John Buchan Journal* that it had 'begun well and has progressed ever since to the point where it is now essential reading for anyone seriously interested in Buchan's life and writings.'<sup>1</sup>

*The John Buchan Journal (JBj)* began as the members' newsletter of the newly-born Society, and, twenty-two years later, is a proper periodical, published twice a year and carries chunky articles addressing serious aspects of history and literature, as seen through the prism of Buchan's life and work. The incoming slow tide of his reassessment indicates that Buchan is becoming necessary reading, in history and literature. How do the *JBj*'s contents reflect the changing fortunes of John Buchan studies?

THE SOCIETY  
AND THE  
JOURNAL

In the late 1970s there was an atmosphere of interest in Buchan, given impetus by a 1975 critical study.<sup>2</sup> On 3 March 1979 the John Buchan Society was established at a John Buchan Day, hosted by the University of Edinburgh's Department of Extra-Mural Studies. Short papers were read. An exhibition of Buchan material was on display, and, after tea, 'The Right Honourable Lord Tweedsmuir, son of John Buchan, kindly presided over the proceedings, in the course of which the constitution was circulated and a committee elected. Lord Tweedsmuir then presented the Society with the "Thirty-Ninth Step", which has since been placed in safe deposit in the National Library Of Scotland'.<sup>3</sup>

This formal report set the tone for the next fifteen years of the *JBj*. It rarely exceeded 32 pages, and was never more frequent than annual, occasionally less. The first editor was Eileen Stewart, an enthusiastic lecturer who enjoyed a cordial relationship with the Buchan family.

The Society's members who funded the *JBj*'s printing to a large extent supplied its articles in the early days, writing on what they were interested and what they wanted to read.

The *JB* tended to contain a selection from the following generic heads:

- a little-known, or, even better, unknown piece of writing by Buchan (e.g. Prefaces, speeches, once or twice a short story)
- the speech from the most recent Annual Dinner, usually by a specialist or a Buchan family member
- 'My favourite Buchan novel and why'
- something about landscape and Buchan's descriptive powers
- something on a knotty problem in interpreting a phrase or reference in a Buchan work
- reviews of recent reprints of Buchan's work
- personal reminiscences.

The Society had set itself as a primary objective the publication of a complete annotated edition of Buchan's works, starting with the collation of a Buchan bibliography. However, after the 1981 publication of the classic bibliography by Robert Blanchard<sup>4</sup>, the Society agreed that their task had been superseded and that they would have to rethink what to do with their energies, other than have an Annual Dinner. Angling competitions flourished for a few years. A Buchan Ball was advertised, a competition for 'Budding Buchans' was announced. A 'John Buchan database', comprising anything written by and about John Buchan, became a substitute literary activity. Contributions were collected from writers famous and obscure, and were supplied to the *JB*. In principle, an integrated database of these snippets and lists of reviews is to be set up: the *JB* carries on publishing whatever of these comes its way as juicy fillers for the 'Notes and Queries' section.

The *John Buchan Journal* is a single-subject special interest periodical in literature and history. Its first readers were the Society's members, and browsers in the national and university libraries which received free copies. It could be argued that the Society's primary function now, in financial terms, is to fund the *JB*, and that a large proportion of the *JB*'s readers have little active involvement in Society activities. The *JB* is certainly the main benefit for overseas Society members, and for UK members who are unable to attend the social events. The *JB* has achieved independence of being, if not of finance.

Literary criticism did not feature in the early years,

EARLY DAYS

apart from a single defence of Buchan's portrayal of female characters.<sup>5</sup> Historical research focusing on and through Buchan was represented by how he nearly became Governor of Burma in 1932,<sup>6</sup> the history of the Nelson Popular Libraries<sup>7</sup> and the British Empire in 1935.<sup>8</sup> Early examples of a continuing passion for teasing out the last scrap of Buchan information using specialist knowledge include an discussion of early motorcars in his fiction, with parallels from his known personal use,<sup>9</sup> and the mountaineering experiences of his characters.<sup>10</sup>

Amateur writing in the style of Buchan was not encouraged in the *JB*, but retracing the supposed journeys of his characters was popular. South Africa<sup>11</sup> and Canada<sup>12</sup> were common subjects for weighty papers from the mid 1980s. Contributors included Trevor Royle, Christopher Harvie, David Daniell, James Buchan and Andrew Lownie.

**COMMERCIAL  
BUCHAN  
EDITIONS**

The advertisements in the *Journal* can help us to track the state of trade publishing of Buchan at the time. In 1980 the 20-page Issue 1 carried full-page ads for The Mercat Press' edition of *Montrose*, Macdonald Publishers' *John Macnab* and *Sick Heart River*, Thames & Hudson's *John Buchan and his World* by Janet Adam Smith and Hodder & Stoughton's edition of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Issue 2 (1981) featured full-page ads for Canongate's *John Burnet of Barns*, Michael Joseph's *The Best Short Stories of John Buchan* edited by David Daniell and another version of the previous year's Macdonald Publishers' advert. In the next issue in 1983 Three Rivers Books advertised their hardback editions of *The Courts of the Morning* and *The Dancing Floor*, Buchan and Enright trumpeted their publication of William Buchan's memoir of his father, and the antiquarian dealer Standfast Books advertised its services to Society members. Greenmantle Ale from the Broughton Brewery took a full-page ad. By Issue 4 in 1984 the advertising frenzy had calmed down, and although the brewery held firm to the cause, only Bannantyne Books (specialist book dealers) and a series of Dent paperbacks of Buchan works took advertising. Bannantyne appeared again in 1985 in Issue 5, joined by two hotels, in Biggar and Broughton, indicating that the commercial publishing houses were no longer interested and that the editor had looked to Society members and local establishments for support. Buchan's grandson's firm, Buchan and Enright, paid to advertise their edition of *The Massacre of Glencoe*. Although all these titles were to be found fairly

easily in, for example, London second-hand book shops in the second half of the 1980s, almost none are now stocked by high street book shops.

John Buchan did not come out of copyright until 1990, but in the early 1980s there was an eruption of new editions of Buchan novels, indicating that serious commercial possibilities were anticipated by publishers. There followed the publication of an edition of selected Buchan short stories<sup>13</sup>, the Blanchard bibliography<sup>4</sup> and the first modern memoir of Buchan since the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> These, with the 1965 official biography of Buchan by Janet Adam Smith,<sup>15</sup> gave scholars material from which to work. While working on her thesis, the first on Buchan since 1961,<sup>16</sup> Eileen Stewart collated a list of bibliographical material<sup>17</sup> showing how much material on Buchan had accrued since his death in 1940. Academic attention in the late 1970s and early 1980s could well have generated a new commercial interest in Buchan's work.<sup>18</sup> What is surprising is the spread of investment on the task. If at least nine different publishers risked a reprint of one or more Buchan or Buchan-related titles this indicates that something more than a gamble was at work: it seemed to be a fashion.

What were the bibliophiles buying? Second-hand and antiquarian book dealers had been advertising with the *JB* since 1983, and since the early 1980s prices for all Buchan material had risen 'astronomically, in what appears to be an unending trend ... the noticeable increase in serious collectors of JB's works in the last ten years or so ... must reflect the greater awareness that is out there.'<sup>19</sup> The John Buchan Society might have increased this awareness in a small way, but popular recognition of the name and books of Buchan in the 1980s is also likely to have been stimulated by, among other examples, re-runs of the three film versions of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and, on television, BBC Scotland's *Huntingtower* and the ITV *Hannay* series. As for prices, first editions of Buchan's works are extremely rare, and valuable. In 2000 a first edition of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* with the original dust-wrapper sold for £8000.

Before the advertising dried up, or became less desirable, new expressions of public interest had begun to appear. The *JB* shows that, alongside the growing interest in Buchan's work from academics and specialist writers, his ordinary enthusiasts were active in preserving his memory. In 1980

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novels*

WHAT THE  
PUBLIC WANTS

Ballantyne's Whisky donated a trophy for the John Buchan Society's angling competition.<sup>20</sup> In 1985 Lord Tweedsmuir unveiled a plaque at the Buchan family house in Glasgow.<sup>21</sup> In 1987 the Buchan Monument at Haenertsburg, South Africa, was unveiled by the Chairman of the South African Tourist Board.<sup>22</sup>

One of the earliest aims of the Society was to establish a John Buchan Centre and museum in the Borders, but this was achieved independently in 1983, at Broughton.<sup>23</sup> *Huntingtower* was filmed by BBC Scotland in 1978.<sup>24</sup> A documentary on Buchan's life was reported to be in preparation in 1981.<sup>25</sup> The Edinburgh Book Festival featured performances inspired by Buchan's work in August 1984.<sup>26</sup> As a culmination to this decade of interest, the Scottish Borders Festival in 1991 featured '32 performances of five Buchan-related events in 25 venues.'<sup>27</sup>

EVOLUTIONARY  
CHANGE

A new editor took over in 1992. The *JB* remained a house magazine, dependent on the time of its volunteer editor for its publication. However, there was a significant change in the quality of the articles submitted. Issue 12 contained an important article on Buchan and T E Lawrence by the novelist James Buchan, John Buchan's grandson.<sup>28</sup> Issue 13 published the *JB*'s first lengthy analysis of Buchan's work which used footnotes.<sup>29</sup> Issue 14 contained the first discussion of the literary output of Susan Buchan, given by her granddaughter, the writer Ursula Buchan.<sup>30</sup> Issue 15 showed further signs of the *JB* gathering speed before take-off, with an article by Buchan's most recent biographer, Andrew Lownie.<sup>31</sup> Contributors appeared to be submitting material under the assumption that more would be expected of them than had been the case in the past. Longer articles made the *JB* a more satisfying read.

In 1997 the present writer took over as editor of the *JB*. Over several issues it was redesigned and a questionnaire to readers asking for their opinions was distributed. Postal competitions were introduced, regular features were standardised to contain the continual flood of snippets. Articles began to be commissioned and contributors were asked to supply a short biographical note. Articles were sent out for refereeing and references had to comply with full academic rigour.

I was aware that the trend for more detailed articles must not alienate General Reader. I hoped to encourage the ordinary members of the Society to continue feeling interested



and enthused after they had read their *JBJ*: I did not want to make them feel that their Society's journal had been taken over by a bunch of pretentious intellectuals. When I receive an enthusiast's 'My favourite Buchan novel and why' article, I am reminded that the *JBJ* must not abandon the root of the matter, the stories which Buchan wrote and which the readers read and reread.

At the same time, I wanted to get disinterested researchers to contribute, for free, the fruits of their work in the cause of furthering John Buchan studies. In this tension lay the key to how the *JBJ* has flourished.

Haldane's suggestion that he was part of a much wider group than I had hitherto considered was a galvanising moment for me as an editor, redirecting my attention to researchers outside Scotland, outside the UK, in any field that looked a likely mine of untapped Buchanalia. By hunting around the Internet I was offered new articles by new contributors. Some were delightfully accessible for General Reader (e.g. Buchan as ornithologist,<sup>32</sup> a walking guide to Buchan's London<sup>33</sup>) and some were unexpectedly out of the blue.<sup>34</sup> As the *JBJ*'s direction changed towards historical enquiry and literary criticism, more and more articles began to be submitted, of a very good standard. Whereas in my first year as editor I had relied on filling a single issue with leftover material from my inherited 'pending' file, five years and ten issues later I was working one issue ahead of myself, with the hard disk comfortably full of reviewed and edited material.

Confirmation of the *JBJ*'s academic respectability came in 2000 when the Modern Languages Association of America accepted the *JBJ* for indexing. Christopher Harvie offered me his new paper on *The Northern Muse*, Buchan's anthology of poetry, a version of which was also published in 2001 by the *Scottish Studies Review*.<sup>35</sup> In 2001 I persuaded a University of Cape Town historian to write me a provocative article on how South African history regards Buchan.<sup>36</sup> Historians from Australia and Canada have also chipped in. Remarkable special interests continue to be applied to Buchan in excellent scholarly articles.<sup>37</sup> But if there has been a constant theme among the range of subjects presently flourishing in the *JBJ*, apart from Buchan himself, it is how a man's life can be used as a medium for seeing his world, and ours.

The switch in the *JBJ* from literature to history came gradually. Reminiscences of Buchan in the *JBJ* were frequent, by

BEYOND  
SCOT LIT

*Prismatic  
vision*

individuals contextualising their personal history as part of the life of a famous and much-admired man. The first instances of an article on Buchan as prism in the *JB* came in 1985<sup>9</sup> and 1989.<sup>10</sup> The prism approach is not unique to Buchan studies in the *JB*, but Buchan as a historical figure is particularly well-suited to it, because of the sheer variety of things that he did. The range of subjects mentioned already in this paper should indicate that if there was an issue or a subject on which one might want an opinion of how he as a contemporary regarded it, or an insight into how people of his time went about that business, something will be found about it in his fiction, his historical writing, his biographies or his personal life, and so on.

This Everyman quality can be expressed in many different kinds of articles in a scholarly periodical, and this is where the *JB* remains strong. Even in the simplest and least assuming of pieces by, for example, a retired Gas Board employee on why he likes *Huntingtower* so much and what he has found out about the Glasgow shop on which he believes Buchan may have based McCunn's grocery empire, will make your *JB* a good read. We may learn about 1920s retail practices, about how one went about arranging with the bank manager for funds to be available on a long journey by foot without any particular destination. We might see photos of the clothes worn at the time, read about the food which sold best in the grocer's and hear about what happened to street children who pinched apples from the outside stall. An academic paper by a post-modernist historian on the same subject would give the same information, with more long words and a lot more references. The strength of the *JB* is that any reader can feel involved and able to participate in research at the local library, and any academic can feel comfortable with the *JB*'s name on their list of publications. It may be small, it may be semi-rather than fully peer-reviewed, and it is certainly specialist, but the *JB* delivers good historical and literary analysis.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps Buchan's ubiquity, Zelig-like, might explain why he keeps cropping up, even in today's media. Other novelists of his period, 1895-1940, and of the same kind of fiction, say Erskine Childers, Edgar Wallace, E C Bentley and Ian Hay for starters, do not get mentioned in the Sunday papers' features section as often. Who now among the browsers of Waterstones remembers what Bentley wrote, and why it was so ground-breaking?<sup>38</sup> Take a different genre: Neil Munro,

Sir Walter Scott and Stevenson expressed different paths for the Scottish historical novel. Buchan made his mark too, with his early fiction and his masterpiece *Witch Wood* (1927). I cannot speak for historical biography with authority, but was assured that Buchan's *Julius Caesar* (1932) is still recommended reading for classics undergraduates, and I do know that his *The Marquis of Montrose* (1913) was reprinted in 1996. The resurrection of such an obscure historical biography (outside Scottish publishing too) after eighty-three years out of print must have been backed, I am persuaded, by good commercial reasons.

Buchan's presence in high street bookshops is solidly represented by the Oxford University Press World's Classics editions, and the un-annotated cheap editions rushed out as soon as he was out of copyright. Now that Buchan is, bizarrely, back in copyright through a revision of the law, can one ask whether he has been gradually coming back to life since 1980, and that the publishers weren't wrong? The *JB* shows the evidence of his revival, and shows that it has kept faith with the General Readers who wanted to publish what they wanted to read on Buchan. That the *JB* has diversified so successfully into academe without losing its original aims can only be down to the unaltered quality of the man's work.

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## Book News

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### **The English criminal**

John Buchan Society Member Neil Davie has just published his latest academic work. *Les Visages de la criminalité: à la recherche d'une théorie scientifique du criminel-type en Angleterre, 1860-1914* (Paris, Editions Kimé, 2003).

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### **Useful spy supplement**

Bill Galbraith reports on a fairly recent special issue of *Intelligence and National Security*, 5 (4) 1990 (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London), on 'Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence'. There are 12 articles, of which six have mentions of JB.

'Introduction: Fictions of History',

by Wesley Wark (University of Toronto)

'The Politics of Adventure in the Early British Spy Novel',

by David Trotter (University College London)

'Decoding German Spies: British Spy Fiction, 1908-1918',

by Nicholas Hiley (King's College London)

'English Spy Thrillers in the Age of Appeasement',

by Eric Homburger (University of East Anglia)

'Ireland in Spy Fiction',

by Keith Jeffery (University of Ulster at Jordanstown) and

Eunan O'Halpin (Dublin City University)

'The Development of the Espionage Film',

by Alan R. Booth (Ohio University)

'Spy Fiction and Terrorism',

by Philip Jenkins (Pennsylvania State University).

A more recent issue of *Intelligence and National Security* has some interesting references to JB, in Volume 15, Number 2, Summer 2000, in an article by Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones (University of Edinburgh) entitled 'The Role of British Intelligence in the Mythologies Underpinning the OSS and Early CIA'. Jeffreys-Jones refers to one myth of 'London's use of Scots in cultivating America' and writes 'To take another influential case, the spy novelist John Buchan was Governor-General of Canada. He died in Montreal on 11 February, 1940, but not before he, in turn, had sent wise words of advice to Lord Lothian, another Scot, who served as British ambassador in Washington.' Jeffreys-Jones goes on to note that Lothian, Buchan, Brogan and Stephenson ('Intrepid', or 'the silent Canadian') 'were like-minded in heeding US provincial sensitivities'. He then goes on to question the merit of this 'myth' about Scots, questioning 'whether Buchan retained a Scottish mindset, though, of course, it might have been assumed that he had one'.

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Niall Ferguson cites Buchan as a writer of Empire. 'Just like the British Empire before it, the American Empire unfailingly acts in the name of liberty, even when its own self-interest is manifestly uppermost. That was the point made by John Buchan, looking back on the heyday of Milner's imperialist kindergarten from the dark vantage point of 1940.

**Niall Ferguson  
and Empire**

I dreamed of a world-wide brotherhood with the background of a common race and creed, consecrated to the service of peace: Britain enriching the rest out of her culture and traditions, and the spirit of the Dominions like a strong wind freshening the stuffiness of the old lands ... We believed that we were laying the basis of a federation of the world ... The 'white man's burden' is now almost a meaningless phrase; then it involved a new philosophy of politics, and an ethical standard, serious and surely not ignoble.

But Buchan, like Churchill, detected an heir to this legacy, on the other side of the Atlantic.

... There are on the globe only two proven large-scale organizations of social units, the United States and the British Empire. The latter is [no longer] for export ... But the United States ... is the supreme example of a federation in being ... If the world is ever to have prosperity and peace, there must be some kind of federation I will not say of democracy, but of States which accept the rule of Law. In such a task she seems to me to be the predestined leader.

Allowing for wartime rhetoric, there is more than a little truth in that.' (Ferguson N, 2003 *Empire*, Basic Books, New York, 392)

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(BY MR PUNCH'S STAFF OF LEARNED CLERKS)

MR JOHN BUCHAN, who rushed us all at such a breathless pace up his *Thirty-Nine Steps*, now carries us in *Greenmantle* (HODDER AND STOUGHTON) on a fairy carpet out to Germany and down the Danube and so to Erzerum, in company with our old friend (now Major) *Richard Hannay*, *Sandy Arbuthnot*, a prince of travellers and secret service heroes, *Peter Pienaar*, an old Boer hunter and fighting man, and *John Scantlebury Blenkiron*, a dyspeptic nootral of Boston, Mass. - this last a creation of such gaiety and tactful perception on the author's part that it ought to produce an Anglo-American alliance right now. The four are on a great quest, to find out the meaning of some

**Wartime  
review of  
*Greenmantle***

mysterious and fateful enemy move among the Mahomedan races. I daren't spoil your pleasure by babbling of the hustling details. It is a gallant book. MR BUCHAN makes his soldiers and adventurers so confoundedly plausible that you swallow them without any sense of the enormity of the unlikeliness of it all. If the picture would have turned out something widely different, had the eagle been the artist instead of the lion, yet MR BUCHAN has a soldier's tolerance for a tough enemy and real admiration when he happens to be a sportsman. I will just say this, that it was *Peter* who got through the lines to the Grand Duke's army before Erzerum; and the noble horseman who rode triumphantly into the city, to the confusion of the Turks, was the honourable *Sandy*, while the gallant *Blenkiron* found eupepsia through the most gloriously improbable treatment. (*Punch*, November 15 1916, 355)

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## Notes and Queries

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### ERRATUM

Last issue we printed an intriguing story about Buchan and the Stone of Scone. This has turned out to be not at all true, and the lesson we have learned is never to trust a journalist who does not check his sources!

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### TOLKIEN AND BUCHAN? AGAIN?

The editor wishes to point out that she does not support the theory described below, and would enjoy a good argument about it. Neil Davie of the University of Paris found this recording of an interview with Professor Robert Giddings.

'I think [*The Lord of the Rings*] is a very devout book on one level; it's a book about Tolkien's fundamental beliefs about religion, about human society, about human identity. At another level, it was a book written to please the Inklings. CS Lewis said to Tolkien once: You know, Tollers, there aren't enough books of the kind we enjoy - we'll have to write some!

I think that Tolkien was trying to satisfy particular kinds of literary appetites. For a start, the fondness for George MacDonald, which a lot of the Inklings had; their love of *The Wind in the Willows*; their obsession with the kind of fiction that all middle-class and upper-class schoolboys of their generation enjoyed, like Rider Haggard, like John Buchan, like Lorna Doone. And I believe that all these elements are demonstrably present in *The Lord of the Rings*. It's sometimes Tolkien's treatment of the source material ... which makes it funny because he's taking the mickey out of *King Solomon's*



*Mines and The Thirty-Nine Steps.*

If you take, for example, the world conspiracy story when Gandalf explains to Frodo the conspiracy to take over Middle Earth, I am sure that that is an echo – probably not an echo, probably a deliberate and rather witty imitation – of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. After all, where do the Ring-bearers flee to? They go to Buckland. Now, isn't that a joke on Buchan? Strider, isn't that a variant of Scudder ...? If you remember, the wicked gang that chase Frodo and company in *The Lord of the Rings* are called The Black Riders; the wicked gang in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* are The Black Stone ... *The Lord of the Rings*, I think, once you learn how to read it, is full of these clues.'

*JRR Tolkien: An Audio Portrait*, presented by Brian Sibley (BBC Worldwide Ltd., 2001: ISBN 0563 536918)

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Academy Award-winning writer Robert Towne (*Chinatown*, *Mission: Impossible 3*) and Carlton International Media have agreed that Towne will develop a contemporary re-make of the classic feature film *The Thirty-Nine Steps* – originally directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

THE FOURTH  
FILM VERSION  
OF THE THIRTY-  
NINE STEPS

The agreement will involve Towne writing and directing the thriller, based on the classic John Buchan novel. Hitchcock's original version of the film, produced in 1935 and starring Robert Donat, Madeleine Carroll and Lucie Mannheim, is considered to be one of his finest films ever. In the film, our hero inadvertently comes to the aid of a frightened woman who is then found murdered, and he is forced to search for a master spy to find the woman's real killers and clear his name.

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* is part of Carlton International's Film Collection – one of the world's largest catalogues of classic movies. Carlton International owns the rights to the 1935 Hitchcock version, Ralph Thomas's 1959 version starring Kenneth More, and the 1978 version by Don Sharp.

'*The Thirty-Nine Steps* is a seminal film that embodies a wonderfully crafted story that we believe can be re-told in a contemporary manner. There is only a small handful of individuals in our business with the talent, experience and insight to whom we would entrust a project of this magnitude and Robert Towne is one of them,' said Stephen Davis, President and CEO of Carlton America.

Towne stated, 'It's not much of an exaggeration to say that all contemporary escapist entertainment begins with *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. I look forward to having it in my future.'

So now we know.

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### COMPETITION RESULTS

The sad news is that there aren't any. We did have some entries, but the judging panel felt unable to choose between them, and have decided not to use any of them.

## John Buchan Journal : back issues

Back issues: numbers 6, 8 to 11 and 13 to 29, at £4.00 (UK) or £4.50 (overseas) each, are available from:

JBj Distribution, 2 Greenbank, Guiting Power, Cheltenham, GL54 5UT, UK.

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# The John Buchan Society

*Founded in 1979 to promote a wider understanding and appreciation of the life and works of John Buchan*

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The John Buchan Society's main aims are to hold regular meetings and social gatherings, to produce a journal, to compile a bibliography covering everything written by or about John Buchan, to endow John Buchan Prizes at schools and universities and to support the John Buchan Centre at Broughton.

Membership is open to all who share in the aims of the Society.

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A 'discounted' ten-year membership is available for a single payment of £100.

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