



(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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(Thirtieth Year)

SEPTEMBER, 1965

VISIT TO BUTTON SNAP

27th June

About fifty members and friends journeyed to Button Snap on 27th June ostensibly to inspect the Charles Lamb Medallion recently presented to the Society by the Westminster Bank Ltd. following the demolition of their Birkbeck Bank Branch in Southampton Buildings off Chancery Lane. It was a beautiful afternoon to gladden the hearts of the party who travelled by coach from London through the Hertfordshire countryside once familiar to Charles Lamb—Ware, Puckeridge, Westmill, with Blakesware (now no more) and Widford on the outskirts.

Mr. Crowsley had been making some research into the history of Southampton Buildings and its occupants among whom were several of the Lamb circle, and the following will be of interest.

Southampton Buildings were connected with the Earls of Southampton who had their town house on the site of the present buildings. The fourth Earl received permission in 1638 from the Privy Council to pull down Southampton House and build tenements on the site, and thus Southampton House was succeeded by Southampton Buildings. These gave the name to a

street which runs into High Holborn with a fork to Staple Inn and another to Chancery Lane. The street included domestic dwellings, shops, a coffee house, various law offices and the London Mechanics Institution. The latter provided "education to students in the Principles of the Arts they practice and in the various branches of Science and useful knowledge". The students were craftsmen and small employers, and the lectures were usually given in the evenings. Such Institutions were, during the early years of the 19th century, springing up throughout the country, and one of the prime movers, if not the originator of the movement, was Dr. George Birkbeck, the son of a banker, born at Settle in Yorkshire in January 1776. He graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in 1799 and was appointed to the Chair of Natural Philosophy at the Anderson Institute, Glasgow. In the following years he delivered for the benefit of the working classes free courses of scientific lectures which became very popular. He came to London in 1804 where he continued his philanthropic schemes. In the early 1820's he and other enthusiasts founded the London Mechanics Institution at a meeting held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. Its first home was in Dr. Lindsay's Chapel in

Monkwell Street, Cripplegate, which opened in February 1824, but later that year accommodation was leased at 29 Southampton Buildings, to which was built a lecture theatre, and opened in July 1825. Dr. Birkbeck was appointed Director at the Institution and held that position until his death in December 1841. The title of the Institution was changed to Birkbeck Institute, and finally to Birkbeck College in his honour. The sphere and usefulness of the College was gradually enlarged. In 1885 the College left Southampton Buildings and moved to nearby Brems Buildings off Fetter Lane. Now it forms part of London University with accommodation in Malet Street.

Another activity in the "street" was the Birkbeck Bank, which evolved from the Birkbeck Building Society, established in 1851, and consisted of three classes of members—investors, borrowers, and depositors. The depositors' accounts became the banking business, and in 1858 cheque books were issued. Though banking was its main business it still remained a Building Society. In November 1910 there was a severe run on the funds and again in June 1911, which resulted in the Bank suspending payment. Agreement was reached between the Birkbeck Bank and the London County & Westminster Bank (as the Westminster Bank was then known) and the latter absorbed the Birkbeck. At first it was known as the Birkbeck Branch, later renamed the Chancery Lane Branch and was in existence up to a few weeks ago, when demolition was authorised.

Designed by T. E. Knightly, erection commenced in 1899 and was completed in 1902. The main banking hall has been described as one of the most magnificent examples of Edwardian rococo work in London, in style Italian Renaissance. The Banking Hall, a magnificent circular domed room was 72 feet in diameter and larger than the main room in the Bank of England. It had glazed tiling in a colour scheme of cream, buff and brown, with a sparing use of sage green, and gold mosaic in the dome. Arabesques, Diaper patterns and fantastic dragons looked down from great heights.

The exterior had set high up in its columns a series of sixteen oval plaques or medallions, in terra cotta, faience and glazed stoneware, each measuring approximately three feet by two feet. These plaques were designed by John Broad of Doulton & Co. who supplied them, and they represented Birkbeck, Michelangelo, Pugin, Tennyson, Hazlitt, Charles Lamb and others. An approach was made to the Westminster Bank for the Lamb plaque to be preserved, and the Society was generously presented with it. And so it has come to rest at Button Snap.

Something can now be said about persons, particularly those belonging to the Lamb circle, who resided from time to time in Southampton Buildings. William Hazlitt was probably the longest resident. In 1807 he was living in rooms at No. 34, prior to which he had been living with his brother in Great Russell Street. On 8th December Godwin recalls that Hazlitt entertained to dinner Stoddart, Joseph Hume, Godwin and the Lambs, whilst on the 18th March 1808 Stoddart, Northcote, Charles Lamb, Hume, George Dyer, Crabb Robinson, Godwin and the Holcrofts were his guests for tea. Early in 1810 Hazlitt was again in his old rooms, and for the last time professionally engaged on the painting of portraits. In June 1812 he was in Southampton Buildings and again in 1816 although living in Westminster about this time. Hazlitt's infatuation for Sarah Walker began in August 1820 when he returned from Winterslow to Southampton Buildings. He took lodgings with her father a tailor at No. 9. In *Liber Amoris* he poured out his feelings. In May 1822 he left for Edinburgh to seek a divorce from Sarah Stoddart. Again on 24th August 1822 he was back at No. 9, but in October he had moved to No. 4 Chapel Street West, Curzon Street, never to return to Southampton Buildings. Mr. Walker was tailor to Crabb Robinson and Barry Cornwall.

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Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1811 came to No. 32 next door to Hazlitt's rooms in Southampton Buildings in order, he said, to be near his work at "The Courier".

* * *
Charles Lamb writing to Manning and Coleridge in 1800 mentions an offer of accommodation at No. 27 by J. M. Gutch, an old school-fellow, where he had a business as law stationer. The accommodation consisted of three rooms including servant for under £34 a year which Lamb thought "very generous and very friendly". In 1809 the Lambs decided to leave Enfield and took lodgings at No. 34 Southampton Buildings though it is not definitely known for how long, but possibly until early November. Whilst there Hazlitt died on 18th September and Charles Lamb was with him in his last hours.

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Mr. Crowsley expressed his thanks to the Westminster Bank Ltd., Messrs. Doulton & Co., the Guildhall Library and the Librarian of Birkbeck College for the great assistance he had received.

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The members inspected the Medallion which had been sited near the entrance to Button Snap after it was unveiled by Dr. C. Frank, one of our American members on leave in England.

A bronze tablet fixed adjacent to the Medallion bears the following words:

This Medallion of Charles Lamb was presented to the Charles Lamb Society by the WESTMINSTER BANK LTD. on its removal from their premises at Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.
4th February 1965.

The wooden stand for the Tablet was made and provided by Mr. Charles Tickle.

Then followed the pleasure of accepting Mr. and Mrs. Tickle's invitation to look round the cottage and its recent internal improvements. Tea was very welcome in Westmill Village. A most enjoyable afternoon.

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BOOKS NOTED

MR. GILLRAY THE CARICATURIST, by Draper Hill; pp. 266, 147 illustrations. The Phaidon Press, London, 40s. 1965.

In the last number of the *Anti-Jacobin* July 9th 1798 there appeared a poem entitled "The New Morality" by George Canning, satirising Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd, Lamb & Co. The *Anti-Jacobin* was succeeded by the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* the first number being published 1st August and was enriched by a coloured cartoon by Gillray, shewing a group of prominent English revolutionists worshipping Justice, Philanthropy and Sensibility. Coleridge appeared in the form of a donkey and Southey as another donkey. Behind them side by side were seated, poring over a manuscript entitled "Blank Verse by Toad and Frog" the Toad and Frog to represent Lloyd and Lamb respectively. Southey's comment on the caricature was "I know not what poor Lamb has done to be croaking there". Charles Lloyd also defended Lamb vigorously, and although Lamb did not make any protest at the time he gave Canning some hard-hitting epigrams in the *Champion* many years later.

And what of the author of the cartoon referred to, James Gillray. Born 1756 in a cottage by the Robin Hood Tavern, Chelsea, his father was a Lanarkshire blacksmith who in 1743 enlisted in the Royal Cavalry and went to Flanders two years later during the War of the Austrian Succession, where he lost his right arm at the battle of Fontenoy. He became an invalid pensioner at Chelsea Hospital and continued as such until May 1754. Later he joined the Moravian Brotherhood.

James, the second son of the elder Gillray and his wife, was born on 13th August 1756. His education was of the Moravian foundation. His bent was for art and he was apprenticed to a writing engraver in Holborn. In 1778 he was

admitted to the Royal Academy Schools as an engraver and here he came in contact with the leading artists of the day. And now began his real work as a caricaturist as he turned out plate after plate, and came to be looked upon as the best draughtsman among the political satirists, with development as a portrait caricaturist, and as a satirical political and parliamentary cartoonist. "John Bull" and Napoleon also came within the range of his satire, and about forty plates were produced against "Boney". Gillray's chief claim upon posterity is that his work at times cut through the images of the conventional history books to the realities. He is in fact the founding father of British cartoonists. His end was sad; the pace was too hot, and overwork combined with intemperance brought him down. He died of insanity in the month of Waterloo.

Mr. Draper Hill's biography completed after years of research gives a full picture of the life and work of Gillray, and many of the drawings and sketches are reproduced for the first time.

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Mr. Draper Hill on the 12th March 1962 delivered an address to the members of the Society on Gillray's life and work, illustrated with lantern slides of meticulous examples of his craftsmanship.

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WINTER PROGRAMME 1965-66

Saturday 9th October 1965—"George IV; Patron of the Arts"—Miss Joanna Richardson, F.R.S.L.

Chairman: Arthur F. Bishop.

During the morning—Visit to Garrick Club.

Monday 8th November 1965—"Wordsworth's Immortality Ode"—Professor Geoffrey Tilotson, M.A., B.Litt.

Chairman: F. E. Sandry, F.L.A.

Saturday 4th December 1965—"Ostentatious Trumpery"—Mrs. Anne Renier.

Chairman: Miss Margaret Brown.

Monday 10th January 1966—To be announced later.

Saturday 12th February 1966—The Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration. Guest of Honour—Edmund Blunden, C.B.E., M.A., C.Litt.,

Chairman: Arthur F. Bishop.

Monday 14th March 1966—"William Friend; Lamb & Dyer's Friend"—Miss Frida Knight.

Chairman: A. J. White.

Saturday 23rd April 1966—"Edward Young"—Professor Henry Pettit.

Saturday 21st May 1966—Annual General Meeting.

Monday Meetings are held at Dr. Williams's Hall, 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. and commence at 6-30 p.m. Saturday meetings (excluding the February Meeting) are held at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, London, W.C.1 and commence at 2-45 p.m.

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Visit to the Garrick Club—Members' attention is especially directed to the visit, by kind permission of Commander E. S. Satterthwaite, to the Garrick Club, Garrick Street, W.C.2 on Saturday, 9th October at 10-30 a.m. **As the party is strictly limited those members wishing to join this visit should notify Mr. E. G. Crowsley, 37 Highbury Grove, N. 5 immediately.** Successful applicants will be notified and given further details. Members will be expected to make their own arrangements for lunch. In the afternoon there will be Miss Joanna Richardson's lecture which will be given at the Mary Ward Centre.

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DRAMATIC GROUP:—Future Activities

Friday, 22nd October, 1965. Dramatic Group's 20th Birthday Celebration and Buffet Supper. Our Guest of Honour on this occasion will be the Society's Chairman—**Mr. Arthur F. Bishop** and long interested in the Dramatic Group. We ask members to note that the celebration will be held at The Royal Scottish Corporation (in the "Hewit-Murray" Room), Fleur-de-Lis Court, Fetter Lane, E.C.4. 6-30 for 7-0 p.m. Tickets 10/- each—including Buffet Supper (catering arrangements entirely new) can be obtained from Miss Edna Philpot—address front page.

Friday, 26th November, 1965: Mrs. Violet Anderson and Miss Anne Jones (Non-Members of the Society) will present a poetical evening with the Romantics—"Gigantic Shadows"—in the "Clans" Room, The Royal Scottish Corporation—7-0 p.m.

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SALE OF A CHARLES LAMB AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPT

In Sotheby & Co.'s Sale Catalogue for June 28/29 the following item appeared:
170. LAMB (CHARLES) AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPT consisting of quota-

tions from Spenser, Bishop Hall, Marston, Michael Drayton, Samuel Daniel, Burton's *Anatomy*, George Chapman, Sir William D'Avenant, Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Brooks and Richard Hooker, 4 pp., 4to. written on paper with watermark dated 1807.

The firm state that the Manuscript was bought for £85 by Seven Gables Bookshop, 3 West 46th Street, New York 36, N.Y.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

In an article "Iowa to Cumnor" by Oliver Edwards which appeared in the *Times* 24th June there are some very appreciative comments about our Vice President Mr. Edmund Blunden. The article is mainly centred on Mr. Paul Engle the Director of studies of the School of Creative Writing at the University of Iowa. Mr. Engle was a Rhodes Scholar at Merton, Oxford, thirty years ago—Mr. Blunden was Fellow at Merton at about the same time, and the two became firm friends. In his latest book *A Woman unashamed and Other Poems* Mr. Engle has a section "Edmund Blunden on his Sixty-fifth Birthday" and in several poems sings his "devoted recollections of Oxford 1933-1936". His first lesson at Merton turned unexpectedly from literature to cricket (which Edmund Blunden loves passionately and endows others with his enthusiasm).

Oliver Edwards continues: Blunden is one of the most retiring men. His poetry is among the finest we have had in this country. The most engaging volume of his prose is *Votive Tablets*, essays which range through English literature with a pleasant savour and a feeling conveyed to the reader that the essayist is thoroughly at home. Blunden's "studies, chiefly appreciative" must have led many newcomers to the originals. He is too gentle a man to convey gusto; one is lured rather than hurried to share his discoveries.

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Two of our Vice-Presidents have recently been honoured. Mr. Edmund Blunden has had an Hon. Doctor of Letters conferred upon him by Leicester University, and Mr. John Betjeman an Hon. LL.D. by Aberdeen University. The Society offers its congratulations.