

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

Winter 2021

New Series No. 174

'Let us cultivate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour'

**Who's Who? Charles Lamb in Conversation
with William Wordsworth**
JOHN WILLIAMS

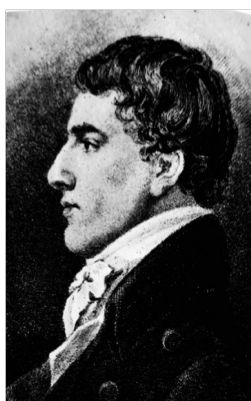
Wordsworth's Friendship with Burns
JAKE PHIPPS

The West End of London in the Age of Charles Lamb
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Book Reviews

CHARLOTTE MAY; JOHN WILLIAMS; SOPHIE PHELPS; NORA
CROOK; SIR JONATHAN BATE



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THE CHARLES
LAMB
SOCIETY

An Elian Bicentenary

Charles Lamb first published 'My First Play' in the *London Magazine*, in December 1821.

From 'My First Play'

AT the north end of Cross-court there yet stands a portal, of some architectural pretensions, though reduced to humble use, serving at present for an entrance to a printing-office. This old doorway, if you are young, reader, you may not know was the identical pit entrance to Old Drury -- Garrick's Drury -- all of it that is left. I never pass it without shaking some forty years from off my shoulders, recurring to the evening when I passed through it to see my first play. The afternoon had been wet, and the condition of our going (the elder folks and myself) was, that the rain should cease. With what a beating heart did I watch from the window the puddles, from the stillness of which I was taught to prognosticate the desired cessation! I seem to remember the last spurt, and the glee with which I ran to announce it.

We went with orders, which my godfather F. had sent us. He kept the oil shop (now Davies's) at the corner of Featherstone- building, in Holborn. F. was a tall grave person, lofty in speech, and had pretensions above his rank. He associated in those days with John Palmer, the comedian, whose gait and bearing he seemed to copy; if John (which is quite as likely) did not rather borrow somewhat of his manner from my godfather. He was also known to, and visited by, Sheridan. It was to his house in Holborn that young Brinsley brought his first wife on her elopement with him from a boarding-school at Bath -- the beautiful Maria Linley. My parents were present (over a quadrille table) when he arrived in the evening with his harmonious charge. -- From either of these connexions it may be inferred that my godfather could command an order for the then Drury-lane theatre at pleasure -- and, indeed, a pretty liberal issue of those cheap billets, in Brinsley's easy autograph, I have heard him say was the sole remuneration which he had received for many years' nightly illumination of the orchestra and various avenues of that theatre -- and he was content it should be so. The honour of Sheridan's familiarity -- or supposed familiarity -- was better to my godfather than money.

Front cover images of Mary and Charles Lamb are taken from the William MacDonald edition of the *Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London: Dent, 1903-1908)

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

www.charleslambociety.com/bulletin.html

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The Charles Lamb Society *Bulletin* has been published since 1935. Its first editor was the Elian scholar and poet S. M. Rich. The new series began in January 1973 as *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* under the editorship of Basil Savage.

The *Bulletin* is a peer-reviewed journal devoted to the study of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle. It aims to promote Lamb scholarship and welcomes submissions in the form of essays, reviews, and notes and queries from established academics, new entrants to the field, and those who simply admire the Lambs' writings.

Essays submitted to the journal should be in 11-point Book Antiqua typescript and between 4000 and 8000 words in length. Preferably, submissions should be sent to the Editor as an email attachment in MS Word. Submissions should be double-spaced throughout, including quotations, and should follow MHRA style, with a couple of minor alterations. A full style-sheet is available online at the Society's website. For further information contact the Editor, John Gardner, School of Humanities, Anglia Ruskin University, East Road, Cambridge, CB1 1PT (john.gardner@aru.ac.uk).

The Charles Lamb Society

www.charleslambociety.com

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The Charles Lamb Society was founded on 1 February 1935 at a meeting at Essex Hall in The Strand. Its first President was Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Today, the Society aims to advance the study of the life, works, and times of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle; to preserve for the public a collection of Eliana (currently held at Guildhall Library, London); and to stimulate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour.

The Society holds a series of events each year in London, including lectures, study days, and a Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon. The Society also publishes the biannual peer-review journal, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*.

For further information please contact either the Membership Secretary, Helen Goodman, h.goodman@bathspa.ac.uk, or the Chairs, Felicity James, fj21@le.ac.uk and John Strachan, j.strachan@bathspa.ac.uk

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