Happy New Year to our members.

2010 was a very successful year for the Fellowship, with extra events which helped many people unfamiliar with George Eliot to learn more about her. We brought George Eliot to a younger audience as well through the superb production of Viv Wood’s adaptation of *The Mill on the Floss* by sixth form students from King Edward College, Nuneaton. We have also published the text and made a DVD - see details of how to order elsewhere in the Newsletter.

We are now planning the events for the Silas Marner Festival in October and November. Meanwhile all the usual events of the Fellowship calendar are in place, with a new lecture as part of the AGM day in March, to be delivered by the incomparable Professor Barbara Hardy, who will set the scene for the year in which we celebrate *Silas Marner* at 150.

John Letts 1930-2010

John Letts, the sculptor responsible for the much-admired statue of George Eliot in Newdegate Square, Nuneaton, died last October at the age of 80.

John was born in Birmingham and went to that city’s School of Art. It was not until 1978 that he established a studio in the old school building at Astley, in a partnership with Keith Lee.

John’s traditionalist style won many friends. The Queen sat for him and his sculpture of her is in the foyer at the George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton.

The Fellowship commissioned him in 1986 to produce a George Eliot statue, an image which has travelled the world.

We were represented by May Green at the funeral.
Introducing Our First Spring Lecture

Silas Marner: The Radical Novel
by Professor Barbara Hardy
at Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre, Avenue Road, Nuneaton
Saturday 5th March at 2.30pm

The Fellowship Council has felt for some time that there is a long gap between the annual birthday luncheon in November and the George Eliot Day in May, with only the AGM in between. We have decided to make more of the AGM day and introduce an opportunity for a new presentation which will set the scene for the year, especially if it has a theme, as 2011 does, with the 150th anniversary of Silas Marner. Who better to provide a stimulating and challenging start to our year than Professor Barbara Hardy, one of our most respected Eliot scholars.

TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY

11.00am Refreshments and welcome
11.30am Annual General Meeting
App. 1.00pm - 2.20pm Lunch

Next door but one to the Heritage Centre is The Cedar Tree pub which offers an excellent carvery for £3.69 plus a drink. Across the car park from the Centre is All Saints Cafe which can provide meals or snacks. Or you can bring your own lunch and eat it at the Centre. Chilvers Coton Church (Shepperton) is opposite the Centre, for those wanting to see the Evans graves and Milly Barton’s vault. See order form for costs.

2.30pm Professor Barbara Hardy. Silas Marner: The Radical Novel

During this week there is also World Book Day on Thursday 3rd March (UK only; elsewhere 23rd April). And on Saturday 5th it is the first World Book Night when 1 million books will be given away. We hope to work with Astley Book Farm to give away copies of George Eliot novels.

DURADE COMES TO GRIFF

At the end of the Mill on the Floss Festival the Fellowship presented this copy of the Durade portrait (by permission of The Herbert) to the manager of Griff House, Mike Wastell. The picture now hangs in the Snug, the oldest part of Griff and the room behind the old front door, the ground floor of the original house. Isaac used part of it as his office, and died there.

Members will be pleased to learn that there is at present a Listed Building Planning Application before Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, seeking permission to restore parts of the old, original Griff House. Good news indeed, and what we have been waiting for.

DATES FOR 2011

Study Group
As You Like It
Leader Eric Leese
Friday 4th March 2011, 7pm
Aldersgate Lounge, Nuneaton
Contact: Brenda Evans 024 7639 2828

AGM and SPRING LECTURE
Saturday 5th March, from 11.00am
Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre

GEORGE ELIOT WEEKEND
Saturday 21st & Sunday 22nd May
Saturday - Four papers, buffet lunch at Bedworth Civic Hall
Sunday - George Eliot Country Tour in vintage 1929 charabanc

WREAKH-LAYING
Sunday 5th June at 3pm
George Eliot Memorial Garden, Nuneaton - with refreshments

MILL ON THE FLOSS WALKS
Two hours duration, start at Griff House at 2pm. Includes readings
Sunday 26th June
Sunday 25th September

GEORGE ELIOT'S NUNEATON WALKS
Two hours, start at Nuneaton Library at 2pm. Includes readings
Sunday 31st July
Sunday 25th September

GEORGE ELIOT TOUR
Sunday 11th September
Start Bedworth Civic Hall
1.00pm-7.00pm £17.50

SILAS MARNER FESTIVAL
Annual Lecture
Saturday 1st October
Gabriel Woolf and Rosalind Shanks
Saturday 15th October
Details in next Newsletter

SILAS MARNER PLAY
by The King Edward Players
Friday 11th, Saturday 12th and Monday 14th November

BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON
at Weston Hall, Bulkington
Sunday 20th November
Why not indulge yourself in our 21st/22nd May George Eliot Weekend

Saturday 21st May at Bedworth Civic Hall  10.00am - 4.30pm  £25 inc. lunch  Theme - Recent findings in George Eliot Country

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.00am</td>
<td>Registration and coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30am - 11.30am</td>
<td><strong>Professor Kathryn Hughes</strong> (University of East Anglia): ‘Who were the Dodsons? Uncovering traces of family history in <em>The Mill on the Floss</em>’</td>
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<td>11.30am</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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<td>11.45am - 12.45pm</td>
<td><strong>Alan F Cook:</strong> ‘Silas Marner and Teddy Kem of Attleborough’</td>
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<td>Alan is a geologist and noted local historian.</td>
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<td>12.45pm - 2.00pm</td>
<td><strong>David Paterson:</strong> ‘George Eliot as Historian: Mr Crewe and Hugh Hughes’</td>
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<td>David is a teacher and historian.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.00pm - 3.00pm</td>
<td><strong>Vivienne Wood:</strong> ‘Adapting George Eliot for the Stage’</td>
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<td>Viv has adapted three George Eliot novels for the stage and for young actors.</td>
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<td>3.00pm - 4.00pm</td>
<td>Concluding discussion</td>
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We are hoping that members will make a weekend visit so that they can take part in the charabanc tour on Sunday. Why not stay at Griff House, George Eliot’s home for 21 years? Make your own booking most economically by booking online. Tel (024) 7632 7156. For drivers the postcode is CV10 7PJ. Website: www.premiertravelinn.com. If there is enough interest we hope to put on an extra event at Griff on Saturday night.

George Eliot Country Tour in 1929 Midland Red open charabanc

Sunday 22nd May starting and finishing at Griff House 10.30am - 6.30pm  £35 including buffet lunch at Astley Book Farm

This really is the de-luxe George Eliot Country Tour. We run it absolutely at cost price so need to sell all 25 places to break even. Last year was a delightful spring day with a superb buffet lunch - a memorable experience for all.

We start at Griff House and visit Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton, Astley Book Farm for lunch, Arbury Hall, where we have a full tour, Astley Church and village and finish at Griff.
The George Eliot Fellowship Undergraduate Essay Prize: The Mill on the Floss

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of ‘The Mill on the Floss’, the Fellowship is running a competition for an undergraduate essay on the novel.

The prize is £100. Entries will be judged by Professor Barbara Hardy.

Essays must be between 2,000 and 3,000 words, can cover any theme in ‘The Mill on the Floss’ or be a personal response to reading the novel.

Please send 2 typed hardcopy entries, with full name, contact details, and institutional affiliation, to the address below. The only entry qualification is that students must be currently registered for an undergraduate degree in the UK or abroad.

Closing date for entry is February 1, 2011.

Please send competition essays to:
The George Eliot Fellowship Undergraduate Essay Prize,
c/o Dr Louise Lee,
English Department,
King’s College,
Strand,
London WC2R 2LS

Nuneaton wreath-laying
Sunday 5th June at 3.00pm
George Eliot Memorial Gardens

Guest of honour is Lily Woods, who played Maggie in the King Edward Players production of The Mill on the Floss in November.

After the ceremony, which includes readings and prayers and is usually attended by the Mayor there will be tea and cakes nearby. About a dozen wreaths are laid by local groups. Do come!

FREE George Eliot Walks

Last year’s Mill on the Floss walks were very successful. They start and finish at Griff House, last about two hours, and include relevant readings from the novel. The gentle walk uses road, canal towpath and woodland track - Red Deeps in fact. About 25 came on each walk in 2010. There will be two this year:

Sunday 26th June at 2.00pm
Sunday 28th August at 2.00pm

Also successful in recent years have been the George Eliot’s Nuneaton walks. They last about two hours, start from Nuneaton Library, visit the sites relevant to ‘Scenes of Clerical Life’ and places known to the young Mary Ann Evans, including Chilvers Coton, and include a cup of tea at Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre. They will take place on

Sunday 25th July at 2.00pm
Sunday 25th September at 2.00pm

Robert Evans was agent to the Nicholas Chamberlaine Trust and collected rent for them in Bedworth. The present Almshouses were completed as Robert and Mary Ann moved to Coventry. Mary Ann’s nephew was Rector of Bedworth from 1876-1927. He knew the Almshouses well. I run tours of Bedworth Almshouses. They last two hours and include refreshments. They will be on

Saturday 25th June at 1.30pm and 3.30pm
Saturday 27th August at 1.30pm and 3.30pm

Book all these walks on (024) 7661 9126 or email jkburton@tiscali.co.uk

George Eliot and The New Yorker

Rebecca Mead was one of our speakers at last year’s George Eliot Weekend and she stayed to do the charabanc tour. She can be seen standing beside the charabanc at Arbury in the picture. Rebecca is a writer for The New Yorker and made copious notes during her stay. These will form the basis for an article in the February 2011 edition. We are looking forward to reading what is likely to be a lively and interesting feature. Order your copy now!
One objective of all literary societies must surely be to introduce new, young audiences and readers to the writers they revere. In Nuneaton this is happening through the extraordinary skills and dedication of teachers Viv Wood and Simon Winterman working with a responsive and enthusiastic Fellowship Council. Viv has worked on adaptations of Scenes, Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss for students, the last two directed by Simon. We believe the educational value of this work is immense and will provide an experience the students will never forget. Their enthusiasm was terrific and the entire production was done in eight weeks, which also included an Ofsted inspection for the College. Buy a DVD of the production and the script to show support for this partnership!

Launch of script and DVD
Members of the cast at the DVD and book launch held in December for the press and students. Cast members signed copies of both.

Order your copies of both for £3.50 each - see order form.
Louis Marks (1928-2010)

Louis Marks died last autumn. He was a man of exceptional abilities who had a varied career as a writer (Robin Hood, Dr Who, Danger Man) and producer.

He was known to the Fellowship because of his association with the BBC adaptation in 1994 of Middlemarch, working productively with Andrew Davies. He had also worked in 1986 with Ben Kingsley and director Giles Foster in the BBC adaptation of Silas Marner. Most recently he had been the producer for the BBC version in 2002 of Daniel Deronda.

Many members will recall his visit as a speaker to the Fellowship after the great success of Middlemarch.

Penguin have recently launched in their ‘Great Ideas’ series a copy of Silly Novels by Lady Novelists and four other essays. Penguin are also publishing a special limited edition of Silas Marner. See websites for details.

Gainsborough trip

We had a very successful trip to Gainsborough (St Ogg’s) on 9th October. The superb Old Hall (left) features in the scene of the bazaar where Maggie helps to look after a stall. The members seen sitting below are where Maggie had her stall. We went to West Stockwith for coffee at the White Hart, adjacent to the Idle, tributary of the Trent, or the Ripple, tributary of the Floss! We had huge help from Margaret Crompton, who researched the local myths surrounding George Eliot, TMOTF and Gainsborough ten years ago and sent her work.

As we prepare for the year of events celebrating the 150th anniversary of Silas Marner we have designed a poster which will be used for the adverts and leaflets. We hope members approve. It uses two pictures from the 1905 J.M.Dent ‘Series of English Idylls’ edition with 24 illustrations by C.E.Brock. Please ask for copies - print or electronic - if you can display them.

Some members purchased a DVD on Warwickshire last year. Simon Cox won an award for it. His new Shakespeare DVD is yours for £13 post free - profits to the GEF!
Order Form

If you wish to combine an order for places on events with items for sale and membership renewal on one cheque I will make suitable arrangements with the membership secretary. In such a case please send total remittance and necessary paperwork to:-

John Burton, The George Eliot Fellowship, 39 Lower Road, Barnacle, Coventry CV7 9LD

Please send me ..........ticket(s) for Barbara Hardy’s lecture on Saturday 5th March at 2.30pm at Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre. Price: members £4 non-members £6  £..................

Please send me ..........ticket(s) for the George Eliot Day on Saturday 21st May 10.00 - 4.30 at Bedworth Civic Hall. Price: with buffet lunch - members £25, non-members £30. Without buffet lunch -members £18, non-members £23 £..................

Please send me ........ticket(s) for the George Eliot charabanc tour on Sunday 22nd May 10.30 - 7.00. Members - £35; non-members £40 £..............

Please send me ........copy(ies) of the Mill on the Floss DVD by the King Edward Players at £3.50 £..............

Please send me ........copy(ies) of the Mill on the Floss playscript (ISBN 978-0-9550756-4-3) by Vivienne Wood at £3.50 £..............

Please send me ........copy(ies) of the Wordsworth Silas Marner at £2 £..............

Please send me ........copy(ies) of the Discover Shakespeare’s Stratford-on-Avon DVD at £13 (post free) £........................

Please send me ........copy(ies) of the Discover Warwickshire DVD (includes scenes and interview at Griff) at £13 (post free) £........................

Please send me ........copy(ies) of Edward Neville by Marianne Evans (1834) at £6 £........................

All tickets and both the Discover Stratford and Discover Warwickshire DVDs will be sent post free. If you order any other items please add a contribution towards postage of £1.50. Books and DVDs are sent in bubble wrap envelopes

contribution to postage £..............

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