

STARLIGHT ORDER

11 March, 2017

Speaker Biographies

William Blissett first met David Jones in the mid sixties when the poet-painter kindly responded to a young writer's questions about his work. William and Jones shared a love of all things Arthurian and William made many visits to England to see Jones over the next few years – including the year Jones died. William's memories of Jones are collected in *The Long Conversation*, which gives an insight into Jones and his mindset. Thanks to William, many more scholars and thinkers encountered Jones's works, and their lives and works have been enriched by knowing Jones's, so that they too become passionate vectors of David Jones's legacy.

Hilary Davies is an award winning poet, Royal Literary Fund Fellow and former Chairman of the Poetry Society. Her fourth collection, *Exile and the Kingdom*, is due to be launched on 15 November 2016, at 10 Bury Place, WC1A 2JL, published by Enitharmon. She has written on and taught David Jones's poetry and painting at various institutions. Her talk concerns the close parallels between David Jones's *In Parenthesis* and Stanley Spencer's great sequence of paintings at Sandham Memorial Chapel in Burghclere.

Ewan Clayton is a calligrapher and teacher, who grew up near Ditchling, Sussex. His family worked as weavers in the Guild of craftsmen on Ditchling Common founded by Eric Gill and the printer Hilary Pepler in 1921. Ewan was also a member of the Guild before it closed in 1988. He was invited by the Folio Society to create calligraphic illustrations for a special commemorative edition of *In Parenthesis*, which was published in 2014, as a tribute to Jones and the Great War. Ewan now lives and works in Brighton and is Professor in Design at The University of Sunderland. His book on the history of writing *The Golden Thread* was published by Atlantic in 2013 and has since been translated into four other languages.

The **Conran Poetry Chorus** presents a selection from the newly published *Three Symphonies* (Agenda Editions, 2016), the final substantial works of their founder and inspiration, **Tony Conran**, poet, translator and cultural interpreter. Here Tony explores life, love, theology, creation, creativity and even historical themes using a wide range of poetic and imaginative techniques which are brought vividly to life in recitation, music and song. Tony was a founder member of the first David Jones Society and Jones's poetry and art work were a continuing inspiration. He has been described as '...by far the finest poet in the Modernist tradition that Wales has produced since David Jones.' (Professor Tony Brown, Bangor University).

Tom Durham was 11 years old when his family spent the summer of 1955 at an eccentric boarding-house on Harrow Hill - Northwick Lodge. Tom became aware of one of the residents in particular, a 60 year old artist named David Jones. It would not have occurred to either of them that 60 years later the boy would be performing, from memory, ever more mind-blowing passages from the artist's poetic work. What does such a meditative practice, familiar to virtuoso musicians, reveal to performers and auditors

of the spoken word? Tom will share his insights with us in his rendition of a three part sequence for Part 7 of *In Parenthesis* - The Battle of Mametz Wood.

Richard Kindersley trained by his father David, who was in turn apprenticed to Eric Gill. Richard followed in his father's footsteps specialising in architectural lettering and carving. His early training as a sculptor made him familiar and confident with handling materials that are part of the fabric of buildings including brick and concrete. David Jones has always been an inspiration to Richard because of Jones's seriousness in expressing his beliefs and fusing them uncompromisingly into his art and life.

John Matthews remembers: 'I first met David Jones in the mid-sixties when he kindly responded to a young writer's questions about his work. We shared a love of all things Arthurian and I made several visits over the next few years - to within a few days of his death. His passion for the legends of Arthur and the Grail, his shy but profound spirituality and his personal struggles with health were a background to our conversations. We talked for long hours about the mysteries - and difficulties - of writing, drank copious amounts of tea, and poured over the pictures he has stored in his "dugout". In my talk I will remember those meetings and the things we discussed and try to understand this remarkable man I was lucky enough to know.'

In acknowledgement of the poet David Jones's admiration for, and gratitude to, *Agenda Poetry*, we also have two *Agenda* poets: **Josephine Balmer** and **Patricia McCarthy** (the current editor of the magazine), who will be reading selections from their poetry.