



# THE KIPLING SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1927

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## NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2025

### NEXT MEETING

**Wednesday 23 April. 6.00pm.** Susan McMahon, Executive Director of the Landmark Trust USA, will speak on 'The Landmark Trust's planned renovations at Naulakha'. Susan has a background in community development and historic preservation, and lives in Putney, Vermont, not far from Brattleboro. *Zoom-only: Meeting ID: 819 6760 4940 Passcode: 601393*



<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81967604940?pwd=IbdeIjEjXSnlHIoarfL3gwaafw7bD.1>

### OTHER FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- **Friday 16 - Sunday 18 May.** Alliance of Literary Societies AGM and Conference. Hosted by the Kipling Society. *See below for details.*
- **Wednesday 11 June** – Reading evening, curated by Jan Montefiore. 8.00pm by Zoom. *Further details in the next newsletter.*
- **Wednesday 2 July** – AGM and talk TBA. *Army & Navy Club, 4.30pm for 5.00pm, and by Zoom.*
- **Wednesday 24 September.** TBA. *Zoom-only*
- **Wednesday 26 November** TBA. *Army & Navy Club, 5.30pm for 6.00pm, and by Zoom.*

### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES AGM AND CONFERENCE



More than 40 people have already registered for this event, including many members of the Kipling Society. It is being held in Brighton on Saturday 17 May, with optional events on the adjacent Friday and Sunday. *All members of the Kipling Society are welcome to attend for all or part of the weekend.* The programme with a registration form can be found at

<https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Programme-KS-version.pdf>  
**Application forms must be submitted by 11 April.**

### JOHN MCGIVERING WRITING COMPETITION 2025

Members have until 1 May 2025 to submit entries for this year's competition, poems of up to 30 lines about any aspect of the sea and/or sailing: which should be also connected, whether directly or obliquely, with the writings and/or life of Kipling. Full details on the website at [Writing Prize 2025 – The Kipling Society](#)



## REPORT OF FEBRUARY MEETING – Alex Bubb

Andy Williamson spoke to us about Kipling's relationship with Brown's Hotel, the hotel where



he invariably stayed on his visits to London. Andy is a leading expert on historic hotels and the golden age of travel, has appeared on the TV documentaries *Inside the World's Greatest Hotels* and *Jay Blades: The West End Through Time*, and is the author of *Brown's Hotel: a Family Affair*. Andy persuasively argued that Kipling's preference for the hotel was due to its smallness, its low-key, unostentatious atmosphere and because it afforded him the privacy that he so valued. Much was learned, including the fact that Kipling met Joseph Conrad at Brown's, and that hotel staff have the habit of entertaining guests with somewhat improbable stories about Kipling—one such guest was the novelist Stephen King, who began writing *Misery* during his

stay at Brown's and was told not only that Kipling had died in the hotel, but that he had collapsed at the very desk on which King was writing his novel! Members with very deep pockets may wish to stay in the Kipling Suite, available at a mere £12,000 per night, which has been recently redecorated but otherwise features largely the same layout as when Kipling himself regularly slept in it. *A recording of this talk can be viewed on the Society's YouTube channel at [Kipling and Browns Hotel](#)*

## BATEMAN'S EXHIBITION ROOM REOPENS

The redesigned exhibition room at Bateman's was formally opened on 14 February before an invited audience. Short addresses were given by John Walker, the Society's librarian, and Peter Sutherland, who had lived in the house as a child.



The room which for the last decade or so has been presented as 'John's room' is now restored to its previous status at the Kiplings' bedroom. The 'orange tree' wall hanging (left) has been relocated here from the parlour.



### **THE NEW READERS' GUIDE**

If you want to get more out of your reading of Kipling's tales and verse, check out the New Readers' Guide (NRG) on the Website <https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide.htm> Kipling was a prolific writer of verse, stories, speeches, articles; you can find the full texts of these works on the Kipling Society's website – specific works are easily found using the search box. Click on 'Reader's Guide' at the top of the page to find collected and uncollected works, and you can easily browse across Kipling's complete published output (with dates and details of first publication), find stories on shared themes, make connections and explore his work more fully.

The online New Reader's Guide is an invaluable research resource and free to all users. It offers not only full texts of Kipling's published works but, if you click on the red 'Background' link, notes explaining the sources of quotations, technical terms, archaisms, historical references, together with an introduction to each story or poem and links to published scholarship, enhancing the pleasure of reading and understanding of the text. These annotations have been written by many Kipling experts in many countries, masterminded by the General Editor John Radcliffe, who was for many years the Society's Online and Publicity Officer. Linked to the annotations are articles from nearly a century of the *Kipling Journal* on specific works, and a list of general articles on Kipling (with links), specifically written by experts for the NRG, whose topics include music, health and illness, the Great War, science fiction, and many more. There are also links to themes in Kipling's work, to bibliographies, and to parodies of Kipling, together with regularly updated suggestions for further reading.

Whether you are a long-time reader of Kipling or are new to his work, the New Readers' Guide helps you to a deeper understanding of his writing, delivering texts, analysis and ideas and links to further reading, all in one place.

## REQUEST FOR NRG VOLUNTEERS



At a recent meeting of the Society's Council, it was noted that it was largely only the poems collected by Kipling which had so far been included in the NRG. There were many others in volume 3 of Thomas Pinney's Cambridge edition which were not. Council supported the establishment of working groups to pursue new NRG projects, in particular a listing of the poems by theme, and an updating commentary to reflect new scholarship (noting that a website search ought to be able to find any published in the KJ). If any member would like to be involved in one of these NRG working groups, please could they contact the Secretary, Mike Kipling (contact details at the head of this newsletter).

### **RUDYARD KIPLING AND ANGELA THIRKELL; OR "I THINK KIPLING'S MARVELLOUS, ROBIN, DON'T YOU?" Part 3 – Hilary Temple**

Other less known but very Angela Thirkell relusions<sup>1</sup> include 'The dead they cannot rise, and you'd better dry your eyes' from *Barrack Room Ballads* which Charles rightly admits he may slightly have misquoted [*County Chronicle*] and repeats in *The Duke's Daughter*. The story behind this is the soldier who comes back from the war and finds the grieving widow of a friend. Mrs McFadyen also uses this relusion for her reflections - first in *Close Quarters* ('You'd best take me for your true love') then echoed at the end of the same chapter.

In an entirely different voice 'A Nation spoke to a Nation, / A Throne sent word to a Throne: / Daughter am I in my mother's house, / But mistress in my own'<sup>2</sup>. Appropriately Thirkell applies this mainly to feminine contexts. Miss Bunting and Miss Merriman (I'm not sure of the order of precedence here), those eminences grises, meet for the first time and instantly acknowledge each other as equals. 'In the look that passed between [them] a Throne spoke to a Throne and a silent language sped between them which none else in the room could understand, which none else might share' [*Miss Bunting*]. The prospect of Anne Dale's twins causes another relusion at the meeting between Sister Chiffinch and Matron: 'Exactly what happened when a Nation spoke to a Throne Robin never knew and told Anne he was glad he didn't because he would have been frightened out of his wits.' [*County Chronicle*]. In *The Duke's Daughter* Heather 'greeted her father as a kind of equal... Daughter am I in my father's house, but Mistress in my own were the words that would have explained it.' And in *Enter Sir Robert* we have 'Of

<sup>1</sup>Relusions - allusions, particularly those of a literary nature. For explanation, see previous newsletter.

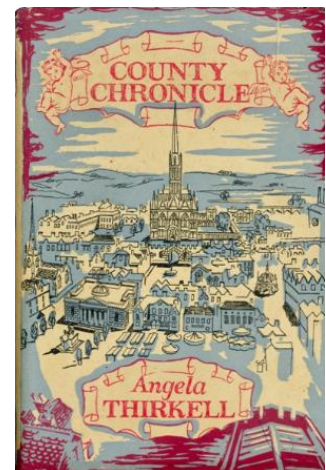
<sup>2</sup> The opening verse of Kipling's 'Our Lady of the Snows'

all the single combats in the world, perhaps one of the most impressive is when - in the great words of a great poet - a Throne speaks to a Throne.' This is Mrs Halliday and Laxton - not even about the coffin but much lower-key in mock-heroic style: the hanging-rails for the linen tablecloths.

The Skraelings come in a couple of times to demonstrate Mr Tebben's knowledge. As we all know they were inhabitants, probably of Eskimo origin, of the north-east coast of North America described by Norse explorers. Richard is 'certainly no Skraeling', he says, the unexplained implication being that he was unfazed by the bull. 'Mr Palmer did make an inquiry as to what his host was talking about, but his niece (Betty, of course) silenced him by saying "Kipling", at which Mr. Tebben winced.' [*August Folly*]. In *Miss Bunting* we have it spelt Skroeling and Anne Fielding says, "I wish a bull would bellow ... [t]hen those Skroelings would stop talking and run away." "What do you know about Skroelings?" said Mr Tebben, amused at this girl's interest in Icelandic matters. "Out of Kipling," said Anne. "It's called 'The Finest Story in the World'. It's marvellous, Mr. Tebben. You would love it. It's all about reincarnation." Mr. Tebben was disappointed by this second-hand approach to Icelandic literature...'

Brugglesmith is a Kipling Relusion that personally I find slightly silly in its original state. It is the title of a short story in which a drunken man can only say the word as being his address in response to a police officer's enquiries about why he is vainly trying to get into a house; and the policeman is able to deduce that he means Brook Green, Hammersmith. But you will remember its crucial importance in Thirkell. We are at the *Old Bank House*: "Adams, that's my name, Sam Adams," said that gentleman. "And I may say I'm sorry I pulled your bell so hard. That wire wants a bit of tightening. The bell pull nearly came out in my hand." "Like Brugglesmith," said Miss Sowerby, holding out her capable but dirty hand. "How do you do. Come in." "I admit I don't quite take the relusion," said Mr. Adams, stepping into the hall and looking admiringly at its proportions and the square staircase beyond, "but my little Heth would, that's my daughter, Miss Sowerby. She's a great reader and anything literary she's down on like a pack of wolves". "Kipling," said Miss Sowerby.' [*The Old Bank House*]

Kipling also provides an excellent put-down for Miss Dale to use with Oliver Marling. [*County Chronicle*] He is pontificating about his wretched Bohun and says: ' "I am only wondering ... whether my chapter on his Rosicrucian studies may not be a little stiff for the ordinary reader." ...Now was the moment when his dear sister Lucy was badly needed, to say "Rot" in no uncertain tones, but Lucy was at that moment in her garden at Edgewood..."Perhaps," said Miss Dale, "some of your readers will be glad to hear about Bombast Paracelsus and Read what Fludd the Seeker tells us, Of the Dominion that runs Through the cycle of the Suns" and that, she said to herself, will show you. "Good lord! Do you read the mystics?" said Oliver. "Oh no. Only Kipling," said Miss Dale. "You will find the poem in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. Is there anything in the evening paper?" ' As they say in triumph nowadays - Yes-s-s-s-s!



There is an embarrassing scene [*Happy Returns*] during the dance at the Nabob when Charles brings in three ices and offers them on one knee to Edith, Justinia and then Clarissa. "Last, loneliest, loveliest, exquisite, apart - and God send no one will come down on me for royalties as it's Kipling - will you accept an ice, as cold as your heart, as pink as ..."at which Clarissa [who is already wrought-up] got up with brimming eyes, looked round for help, saw none, and went quickly out of the room.' Dr Perry gives Charles a dose of reviving brandy and lectures him about getting on with it. The point of this is that Charles and Clarissa have been engaged for some time with no movement on either side. The odd thing is that Kipling wrote this to describe Auckland, New Zealand: as we so often see, Thirkell is brilliant in her ability to adapt a reference to a context quite remote from its origins. The verse is the last in the poem 'The Song of the Cities' and in full reads 'Last, loneliest, exquisite, apart - / On us, on us the unswerving season smiles / Who wonder, 'mid our fern, why men depart / To seek the Happy Isles!'



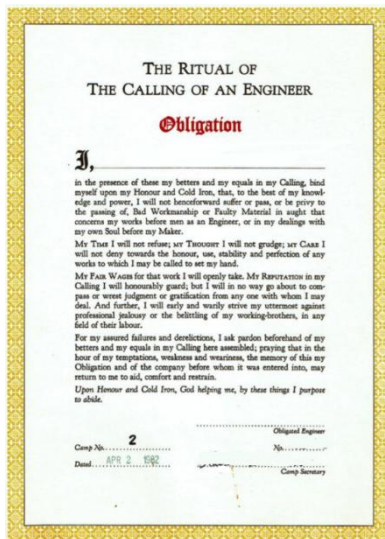
The death of George VI provokes a reference by Mary Leslie [*Jutland Cottage*] to 'the Kipling poem about all the great men who welcome Jane Austen [into heaven].' Canon Fewling picks up the point and says, "He [Kipling] knew. He knew almost too much. I have sometimes thought that after a hundred years or so he will be recognised as a prophet. If I were literary I should like to write something about his prophetic works. Now, there's one called The City of Brass and it says word for word everything that has happened and is happening in England. But no one ever mentions it." A very despairing poem, it attacks early liberal reforms when the Labour Party first came into existence, bewailing the notion of paying people to be idle (though to our way of thinking this means not letting them starve through unemployment). We could well claim that this remains an issue today. Additionally [*Close Quarters*] Mrs MacFadyen recalls Frank Churchill taking a second, slightly but correctly and Canon Fewling replies, "Mess that woman's heart. Do you know Kipling's poem about her? You know I am a Kipling fan - dreadful expression, but come to stay. I know so much of him by heart."

## **THE CEREMONY OF THE CALLING OF AN ENGINEER**

*Many readers will be aware that, in 1925, the Canadian Engineering profession introduced a ceremony for newly qualified engineers. In the run-up to the centenary, it has now been revised, as reported below by Leonard Shara, Chief Warden of the Corporation of the Seven Wardens, the organisation which administers the ceremony.*

The revised Ceremony is now in hand. We performed two years of collecting input from a variety of stakeholders, including recent candidates, Engineering Deans, Wardens from many Camps, Engineers Canada, and the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students. We believe that we have struck an excellent balance between retaining the core traditions of the Ceremony (artifacts, ancient landmarks, history), while adding sections on the impact of engineering on Indigenous communities (particularly the Mohawk of Kahnawake, so badly affected by the collapse of the Quebec Bridge in 1907). All gender and religious references have been

removed, and Kipling is mentioned as the author of the original ceremony and designer of the iron ring, but more as a hired gun of the original heads of the Engineering Institute of Canada, who felt that they could not possibly write as well as an accomplished author could, and they were proven right, of course. Also, we added words of encouragement from a former Canadian astronaut, Chris Hadfield, a section detailing the values and ethics we strive for, and two new poems, one in each official language, winners of a nationwide competition.



Very few changes have been made to the Obligation itself, other than the clarification of a few terms to make them more understandable to modern day candidates. A new History of the Corporation has been written, and it is soon to be published on our website.

*The May edition of the Kipling Journal will have an engineering theme in honour of the centenary and will include an article providing much greater detail about the ceremony and the changes.*

### WHAT KIPLING DIDN'T WRITE #7

Across the internet can be found many references to Milford Sound, in South Island, New Zealand, as being described by Kipling as the eighth wonder of the world. Even Wikipedia states this, referencing a 2004 National Geographic on-line item which itself gives no further reference. John Walker, our Librarian, was asked about this alleged quotation over a decade ago by a BBC researcher working on a series of programmes titled *Seven Wonders of the Commonwealth*. He consulted others, and Vice-President Alastair Wilson wrote “none of the biographies (Carrington, Birkenhead, Lycett) go into much detail about his time in NZ - largely because there’s little, if any, hard evidence of what he did there. He arrived in Wellington on 18 October 1891 and left a couple of days later by horse and buggy for Auckland. He had hoped to find a ship at Auckland to take him up to Samoa, to visit R L Stevenson, one of his heroes, but the only vessel going that way had a skipper who was hopelessly drunk, and a schedule which was elastic to non-existent, so he gave up the idea, and on 30 October, took a coasting steamer down to Wellington, then down the south-east coast of South Island, calling at Lyttleton (to visit Christchurch), then down to Dunedin, Invercargill, and Bluff, whence he travelled in early November back to Melbourne, thence to Colombo, overland to Lahore, where his parents were still living, and then rushed back to London in fourteen days to ‘rescue’ Caroline Balestier and to marry her.



Kipling’s autobiographical memoir *Something of Myself*, written in 1935 and published posthumously, is very light on this two-three weeks in NZ. Charles Carrington, Kipling’s authorised biographer, remarks, *a propos* this visit, ‘. . . *Something of Myself*, Kipling’s fragment of autobiography which, on the events of this voyage, is quite unreliable’. In the

correspondence edited by Professor Tom Pinney, there is only one letter surviving from this whole period, August 1891-January 1892, which was written from Cape Town, before he'd got to NZ, to a local correspondent about one of his books. So I regret to say, that as far as my reading goes, the nearest he ever got to NZ's fjord country was a look back over the starboard quarter of the steamer taking him from Bluff to Melbourne, as it cleared Cape Providence, the SW corner of NZ."

John concluded "It would seem that the closest Kipling came to Milford Sound may have been the port at Bluff, on his voyage to Melbourne from Wellington. You can follow the course of his travels around North Island and then on down the eastern shores of South Island in an article by New Zealander Rev. J. B. Primrose, here:

[www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/KJ145.pdf](http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/KJ145.pdf)

Now, of course, this does not mean we can reject the possibility that Kipling earlier saw the Sound from afar. I'm afraid that all I can say is that we have tried to find a source to support the claim for this endorsement, without success. Kipling did admire New Zealand (particularly Auckland) enormously, but unless he did a very swift and unrecorded overland trip from Bluff (!), we cannot pin down a visit to Milford Sound. The comment does not seem to appear in any of his work, journalism or fiction, nor in his published letters."

### KIPLING IN PUNCH - #3

<p style="text-align: center;">STUDIES IN THE NEW POETRY.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No. IV.</p> <p>In offering this fourth example of the New Poetry to his readers, <i>Mr. Punch</i> wishes it to be distinctly understood, that he is in no way responsible, personally, for the curious mixture of divinities and semi-divinities who figure in it. It is one of the distinguishing marks of this particular sort of New Poetry to pile up a confusion of more or less mythological names in a series of swinging and resonant lines. In one line the reader may imagine himself to be embarked on the River Coeytus. In the next, he will be surprised to find himself in Eden. Blood, battle, bumptiousness, and an aggressive violence, are special characteristics of this style of writing. Some of the lines apparently mean nothing at all, others are calculated to make timid people tremble; and the effect of the whole is generally picturesque, lurid, and uncomfortable.</p> <p>One of the great advantages of a poem like this, is that it may be used for all kinds of purposes. For example, if it was originally written as an invective against an opponent, it may afterwards, with the utmost ease, be made to serve as a threnody. Here then without further preface is:—</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE SUNDERED FLEA.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">By MR. R*DY*RD K*PL*NG.</p> <p>Out on the path of the blazing ball that has hurtled a million years, Where the uttermost light glows red by night in the clash of the angry spheres, [young, Where never a tear-drop dims the eye, and sorrows are stifled And the Anglo-Indians snigger and sneer with the jest of a bitter tongue.</p> <p>Where the tribesmen mock at the Bengalee and shiver their spears in vain, And officers steep their souls chin-deep in brandy and dry champagne; [Kipling seas, Where the Rudyard river runs, flecked with foam, far forth to the And the maker of man takes walks abroad with Pagan deities.</p> <p>Where AZRAEL talks to the Graces Three, and the Muses Nine stand by, And ask Greek riddles of BUDDHA, who never makes reply, (Gentlemen all and ladies too as smart as a brand-new pin), And nobody wonders how on earth so mixed a lot got in—</p> <p>Here in the track of a thunderbolt from the nethermost smithy hurled, [shattered world, With the groan of an ancient passion rent from the wreck of a</p>	<p>In the white-hot pincers of BAAL borne through cycles of agony, Lit by the Pit's red wrath there came the Soul of a Sundered Flea.</p> <p>And all that company started back; first AZRAEL grimly smiled, The smile that an East-End Coster smiles, by a stout policeman riled; And BUDDHA made no remark at all, but nodded his heavy head, Like a boy who has eaten too much dessert, and wants to be put to bed.</p> <p>And the Muses Nine, as they stood in line, they shuddered and turned to go.</p> <p>"A joke's a joke, but I can't bear fleas," said CLIO to ERATO. And the Graces, the good Conservative Three, shrank back to a spot remote, And observed that they knew that this would come from letting the Masses vote.</p> <p>Then AZRAEL spake—"On the Stygian lake I floated a half-sinned sin On the crest of a cross-grained stickleback, that is caught with a crooked pin; For a year and a day I watched it whirl, but never that sin could be One-half so base as your gruesome face, O Soul of a Sundered Flea!</p> <p>"What ill have ye done? Speak up, speak up!—for this is no place, I trow, For the puling people on virtue fed. So speak, or prepare to go." But the Flea flew free from the pincers' grip, and uttered a single phrase— "I have lived on blood, as a gentleman should, and that is my claim to praise."</p> <p>Then a shout of joy from the throng went forth; they built him a crystal throne, And there in his pride, with none beside, he rules and he reigns alone. And this is the tale which I here set down, as the story was told to me— In excellent Rudyard-Kipling verse—the tale of the Sundered Flea.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">=====</p> <p>ANTICIPATORY NEWS (<i>from Our Own Court Tripping Newsmen</i>). —Sir ALGERNON BORTHWICK, Bart, M.P., will be raised to the Peer- age with the title of Lord MORNINGPOST, of Penniwise, Seefar- shire, N.B.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">=====</p> <p>AN Anti-lawn-tennis Lady considers that the argument against Croquet, as a game involving a bent back, and a narrowing of the chest, is merely "A very stoopit objection."</p>
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