

Editor's Introduction

Ian Firla

It is a great pleasure to deliver this double issue of *Gravesiana*, the Journal of the Robert Graves Society. My apologies for the long break between the prior issue and this one; the problems have been many but sole responsibility for the delay rests with me.

I do hope you will find this edition of the journal both interesting and enjoyable. The critical articles are of particular interest, led by John Leonard's essay on truth and authenticity in the *Claudius* novels and John Presley's essay on *Focus*. There remain gaps in Graves studies but once again Presley's meticulous research and careful thought is there to identify and fill those gaps. His article on the first *Focus* magazines is essential reading for anyone researching that period of Graves' life and career. John Leonard is one of the few Gravesians who regularly writes and researches on the historical novels; as ever, his insights are precise and exact. Two new contributors from outside of the UK/Commonwealth/US nexus are also welcomed here for the first time. German scholar Walburga Gerhardi writes on one of Graves' most interesting short stories, 'The Lost Chinese' and Italian Francesca Ditifeci has contributed an essay about her research on the connections between *Good-Bye To All That* and *The White Goddess*.

The biographical studies section is particularly strong. It includes the eagerly anticipated second part of Michel Pharand's essay on T.S. Eliot and Robert Graves as well as memoirs by Guy Cooper, Colin Wilson and Robert's son Sam Graves. Paul Hogarth, the artist and illustrator, has contributed a fascinating piece about his collaboration with Robert and given permission to reproduce some of his sketches here.

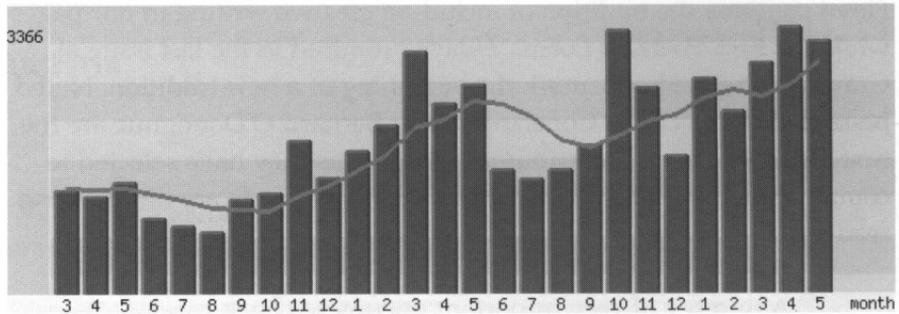
Poems by Norman Buller, William Oxley and Christopher Floyd continue the tradition of including creative writing in our pages while the first 'Poets on Poems' essays promised in the last issue of *Gravesiana* will, I hope, mark the beginning of a new tradition. Noted poets and critics David Constantine and Bernard O'Donoghue are the first 'Poets on Poems' contributors. The poems they have selected to comment upon and the observations they have made are illuminating reading.

A number of very important documents have recently been deposited at the St John's College Robert Graves Trust. I include a short description and, in two cases, illustrations of the donations to close out this issue. The SJCRGT is growing and as the online database is launched (more on that below), it is my hope that this material will be accessed by researchers either in person or through electronic editions made available over the internet

Finally, this is the last issue of *Gravesiana* which I will edit. The second volume is now complete and the editorship now passes to the Society, who will choose a new editor shortly. When Patrick Quinn and I founded *Gravesiana* most of the editing, proofing and layout was shared between us. Patrick has since turned his attention to other matters and I'd taken on much of the work. With a new constitution and organisational structure the Society is now well placed to delegate and share the labour which should help make production of the journal less of a burden, and less dependent, on any one individual in future.

I will be concentrating my attention on the work that needs to be done for the St John's College Robert Graves Trust -- principally, developing the online location register and database for archival holdings and continuing to develop the Robert Graves website. To date, there have been over 76,300 visitors to <http://www.robertgraves.org> and the chart of the month-by-month growth in visitors to the site (pictured below) gives a clear indication of the popularity of this online resource which now, allowing for seasonal blips, sees over 3000

visitors per-month!



Those of you who subscribe to the on-line discussion list, <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/robert-graves.html> will have read the news about the server, nicknamed 'Deya', which will soon be hosting the database that has been in experimental development at St John's for the last 7 months. This database will, in the near future, give access to a location register for Gravesian letters, diaries and manuscripts. The server will also be providing a search facility that will allow users to type in a line of a poem and have the database return all occurrences of that line, the title of the poems in which it occurs and even page references to the Complete Poems. Other and more ambitious plans for the database as well as a site redesign will be announced soon.

Ian Firla
Oxford, May 2001