

## Lewis Carroll Study Weekend at Guildford.



Some of the course members on the riverside at Guildford

Four of our members attended this weekend at the University of Surrey in Guildford; Carole Tallon Bailey, Irene Rutter and Keith & Liz Wright.

First, let's get the bad points out of the way! The accommodation was not very good; student accommodation is not really suitable for elderly folk who are used to hotel accommodation. The university staff were not used to dealing with people who required services so, although nobody could be faulted, people were left to struggle under their own devices to get into accommodation not suited to their needs. This was not helped in any way by the layout of the University of Surrey which had obviously been designed by someone wishing to create an intricate maze but one which was also on quite a steep slope! Another snag was that the day we arrived was 'Graduation Day' so the car parks were full, this made bag carrying or bringing cars around the site to offload luggage extremely difficult not to mention having to dodge lots of ecstatic graduates and their families cavorting outside the main block for pictures for the family album!

The Carrollian aspect of the weekend was however quite good and was attended by 38 Carrollians from all over the world. The weekend took in the usual sites, The Chestnuts where the Dodgson family made their home after 1868, Albury where Charles Dodgson visited friends during his walks across the Surrey downs and, more interesting perhaps to researchers, the Woking Record office where many Dodgson items are stored. The end of the weekend was spoiled somewhat by a truculent coach driver who refused to take the party up to the cemetery on The Mount saying that he had not been booked to do that and had to be away for another collection. The matter was not resolved so anyone wanting an early get-away had to miss out on this important aspect of the weekend or go up to the cemetery by car later on and have a much later departure time. The Daresbury contingent voted to miss out on this visit as it was already approaching five o'clock after an already long day.

## Some of the Images from the Guildford trip - all are pertinent to Lewis Carroll and his time in Surrey.



This is called 'Silent Pool' and has a known history going back to King John's time. Lewis Carroll used to walk over to this pool on the way to Albury Hall. It is crystal clear being fed by a spring from the nearby hills. The depth is much greater than it appears because of the clearness of the water. It is located on the A25 close to Albury.

This is the Saxon church in the grounds of Albury Hall where Lewis Carroll visited. This church was the village church but the landowner moved the village in the 19th century and built a new church in what is now Albury village about a mile away. The church fell into disrepair but has now been restored.



This is one of Lewis Carroll's surplices which was on show in the museum at Guildford along with the family tea pot. Bearing in mind the size of the family this was obviously a ceremonial tea pot used for visitors only! We are grateful for the museum allowing us to show these images - as long as it is not for financial gain, which of course this magazine is not!



The interior of St. Mary's church in Guildford. This church is only a short distance from Lewis Carroll's home in Guildford. He attended this church on his visits there and occasionally preached there. It was also the church which held his funeral service prior to interment at The Mount cemetery on the opposite hillside.

A bronze of Alice and her sister sitting by the riverbank which is sited appropriately by the river in Guildford. The book she is reading is 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland!' There is also a white rabbit part to this sculpture a few yards from this bronze.



The Old Rectory at Albury which Lewis Carroll visited when he went to see the rector, George Portal. Portal was rector at Albury from 1858 - 71. In April 1869 Lewis Carroll made his first visit to Albury Hall by invitation to see Lord Percy.

**LCS Guildford Conference, 15-18 July 2010**  
**by Michael O'Connor**

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For those people who regard LCS members as a bunch of effete bookworms with scarcely the strength or stamina to pick up and use an electric pen – this is not an opinion I've ever heard voiced, admittedly, but who can ever tell what those odd people who aren't in the Society think – then the Guildford Conference proved them wrong. This was a conference which showed us at our physical best. The campus of the University of Surrey appears to have been designed by M. C. Escher (I am grateful to Catherine Richards for this artistic insight) in that it is comprised entirely of hills that go up and none that go down, and is dotted with sign posts that show you the way to every building except the one you want. Carroll would have loved it. I suspect that, even now, there are members of the Society still wandering through the labyrinthine walkways and passages seeking the car park so that they can go home.

The standard of talks to which we were treated made it worth all the walking, and sore feet and fears of not being able to find the campus dining hall faded away whenever we were in the Management School lecture room listening to the speakers who had so generously agreed to share their knowledge with us. The conference began early on Thursday afternoon with our Chairman's introduction then a superb overview of Carroll's connections with Guildford given by Roger Allen which set the scene very well for all that was to follow.



After a brief buffet lunch, we then boarded a coach that took us into Guildford town centre, where we visited a number of the sites there with Carrollian connections. The coach returned us to campus in good time to check in to our better-than-expected accommodation – I don't remember having the luxury of en suite toilets and showers when I was a student! – and have dinner. We were then treated to a characteristically interesting and well-researched talk by August Imholtz (left) on *The Identity of Lewis Carroll from an American Perspective*, for which he had taken to trouble to provide hand-outs, copies of articles in contemporary American newspapers.

Friday began with an 'ease into the day session', a sort of temporal 'cordon sanitaire' allowing members to arrive at the Management School any time between 8.45am and 9.20am to enjoy tea/coffee/chat whilst looking at the book and merchandise stalls and various displays. This seemed to me to be a brilliant idea from somebody (modesty forbids ...) catering for both early and late risers and allowing a relaxed and sociable commencement to the day's proceedings: I hope such sessions will become a regular feature of Carrollian outings hereafter.



Our first lecture was by Charlie Lovett, (left) titled *Thy Will Be Done: Charles Dodgson, Death and the Afterlife*. This was a masterly presentation, leavening a huge amount of research with gentle humour and intelligent insight. Not content with preparing the outstanding lecture itself, Charlie had also gone to the trouble of providing for us a document that reconstructed Carroll's funeral based on contemporary sources, and including with it a CD of the music played at that funeral. It is to be hoped that he subsequently publishes this lecture in some form, as it deserves the widest possible audience.

The intellectual largesse continued to be showered upon us after the morning coffee break, when the incomparable Selwyn Goodacre (right) told us about *The Incomplete Works of Charles Dodgson* and the equally incomparable Mark Richards about some of Carroll's friends in the local area.



In the afternoon, we were whisked away to the beautiful village of Albury to explore Carroll's many connections there, including the Silent Pool and the Old Rectory, and the day ended back on campus with Edward Wakeling talking about the dispersal of Dodgson's effects after his death, and the establishment of the Dodgson Family Collection.

We spent most of Saturday at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, in the morning viewing many of their documents from the Dodgson Family Collection which Edward had told us about the night before, and being treated to a behind the scenes tour of the Centre giving us an insight into the fascinating work of the conservators there. The afternoon session comprised a series of short and stimulating talks by Clare and August Imholtz, Jenny Woolf, and Edward Wakeling, who gripped the audience as he revealed some new and very compelling thoughts he has had on the fate of the missing diaries. As this session was open to the general public (although only about 8 of them attended it), Selwyn Goodacre generously reprised his Carroll in Three Minutes talk, covering our author's life and works at breakneck speed. In fact, he had got it down to two minutes, and I have challenged him to try for a one minute version on a future occasion!

In the evening, we were taken to nearby Gomshall Mill for the traditional LCS fine dining (and wining) experience, as ever, a bibulous highlight of the whole event!

And then too soon it was Sunday, our last day, and we had to begin it with the melancholy chores of packing up our luggage and returning our room keys. But our spirits were quickly raised again as we were taken into Guildford



once more, initially to view the charming statue of Alice and her sister at Millbrook, and then to attend St. Mary's Church (at which Dodgson had preached) where a warmly given and even more warmly received talk by Mary Alexander was followed by Sung Matins.

A toothsome lunch at the Olivo Restaurant in Quarry Street preceded a visit to the Chestnuts (left -where the owners kindly allowed us to go inside and look around the basement of the property to see the remaining original features that Carroll would have known) and then to the Castle grounds to view the TTLG statue (below) of Alice there. The next part of our itinerary was to have seen us being taken by the coach to the Mount Cemetery, but a rather unco-operative coach driver declared that it was not

possible to get a coach up there, and declined to try, so instead we asked to be taken back to campus. A number of our members disembarked at the railway station en route to make their ways home, while others of us, once back at campus, piled into cars and found our own way to the Cemetery where we enjoyed the poignant experience of visiting Carroll's grave and those of some of his family.

To end the Conference, we drove in convoy to the Guildford Holiday Inn, where two of our members were staying, and gathered inside for a final cuppa. Generously, Katsuko Kasai secretly ordered a range of glorious desserts to accompany our teas and coffees, and the event ended in a mini-feast of ice cream and cheesecake and trifle. A treat for everyone – which is a very good way to sum up the Guildford Conference as a whole!

I am grateful to the organisers for all the work they put into making this event so special and so worthwhile for everyone, especially Margaret and Matthew Heaton and of course Mark Richards, and to the speakers who gave us an array of scholarly talks of the highest quality. Finally I would like to express my thanks to one unsung heroine of the event, Catherine Richards, who unflaggingly and silently worked throughout to make sure things happened when and where they were supposed to: I have on occasions seen a joke postcard that says 'No-one knows what I do until I stop doing it' – it always makes me think of Catherine, and of all the other 'backroom' LCS members who give their time and energy to making events such as this run so smoothly and be so enjoyable for the attendees.



## Connie Gilchrist and Lewis Carroll by Keith Wright

It is often said that Charles Dodgson cultivated the friendship of young ladies and then dropped them suddenly when they reached puberty. It is for the reader to discern whether Connie Gilchrist falls into that category.

On 13th January 1877 CLD writes in his diary after seeing a play called Goodie Two Shoes at the Adelphi in London that *'The Harlequin was a little girl named Gilchrist, one of the most beautiful children, in face and figure, that I have ever seen. I must get an opportunity of photographing her.'* Constance (Connie) Macdonald Gilchrist was born on the 23rd January 1865 in Pancras London to parents Matilda and David Glichrist, her father was born in Scotland and her mother was born in Milford Haven.



Constance was the youngest of five girls and she was approaching her twelfth birthday when CLD first saw her on stage. We can appreciate what CLD meant because in 1877 Leighton used Connie as a model for three of his paintings. The one on the left was entitled 'The Music Lesson.' It is not known if Leighton used Connie's mother in this painting but it is thought that Connie came into posing as an artist's model because her mother had been already posing for Leighton. From this image of her and from the other two 'Winding the Skein', (an extract of which is shown opposite) and 'At the Reading Table' Connie's obvious prettiness shines through.

In late February or early March CLD had written to Connie's mother offering to send a copy of 'Alice in Wonderland' for Connie as he writes on Mar. 3rd. *'Heard from Mrs. Gilchrist, mother of the 'Harlequin' accepting my offer of Alice and sending the name 'Constance Macdonald Gilchrist,' born Jan. 23rd 1865. I sent one with acrostic verses on 'Constance.'*

On April 10th 1877 CLD writes, *'Then called on Mrs. Gilchrist and spent about half an hour with her and 'Connie' (the elder sister being away, sitting to some artist.) I was decidedly pleased with Connie, who has a refined and modest manner, with just a touch of shyness, and who is about the most gloriously beautiful child (both face and figure) that I ever saw. One would like to do 100 photographs of her.'*

On April 16th CLD writes in his diary *'Devised a plan which seems more feasible than any I have yet thought of, for getting Connie Gilchrist: to be staying in London: to bring her over to Oxford by the early train, and take her back in the evening: this would give nine hours in Oxford, and cost little more than paying for her and an escort, who would be an encumbrance.'* Whether this photography session ever took place we do not know. There is supposedly a photo of Connie, said to have been taken by CLD, in the Chicago Institute but he recorded no photography session with her. On the 15th June 1877 he writes *;- 'Had the studio etc. Dusted and mixed some chemicals as I hope to do a few photographs here this month. All seems to be in good working order.'* On July 2nd after a stay at Guildford he writes *'returned to Ch. Ch. Via London in order to visit the Westminster Aquarium (and see 'Connie' do the 'skipping-rope dance') and the Royal Academy. The dance was preceded by a rather pretty Morris-dance by a dozen children: and was itself a marvel of grace and dexterity. I took Connie with me to the R.A. Which she seemed to enjoy (particularly seeing Mr. Leighton's pictures of herself!) and after about 1½ hours there I took her home, and went on to Paddington.'*



The skipping rope dance was immortalised by Whistler in his 1878 painting of Connie and this is shown here on the left.

On October the 2nd 1877 CLD records after a visit to the Adelphi . . . . *In the children's Pantomime of Red Riding Hood, we had Carrie and Bertie Coote, as good as ever, and that most delicious of Harlequins 'Connie' . . . ' The following day, October 3rd, he records going to the same Pantomime ' . . . When it was over we went round to the stage-door, where we met Connie Gilchrist and her mother . . . ' On October the 8th he called on the Gilchrists at home but Connie was out. On December 31st of 1877 he went to London and saw Connie at the Adelphi once again but records no visit to the stage-door.*

On October 2nd 1878 he records his last encounter with Connie on the stage *' . . . . Went to London and put up at the 'United': saw Little Doctor Faust at the Ghaity: Connie Gilchrist was 'Siebel'; she is losing her beauty and can't act - but she did the old skipping-rope dance superbly. . . . '*

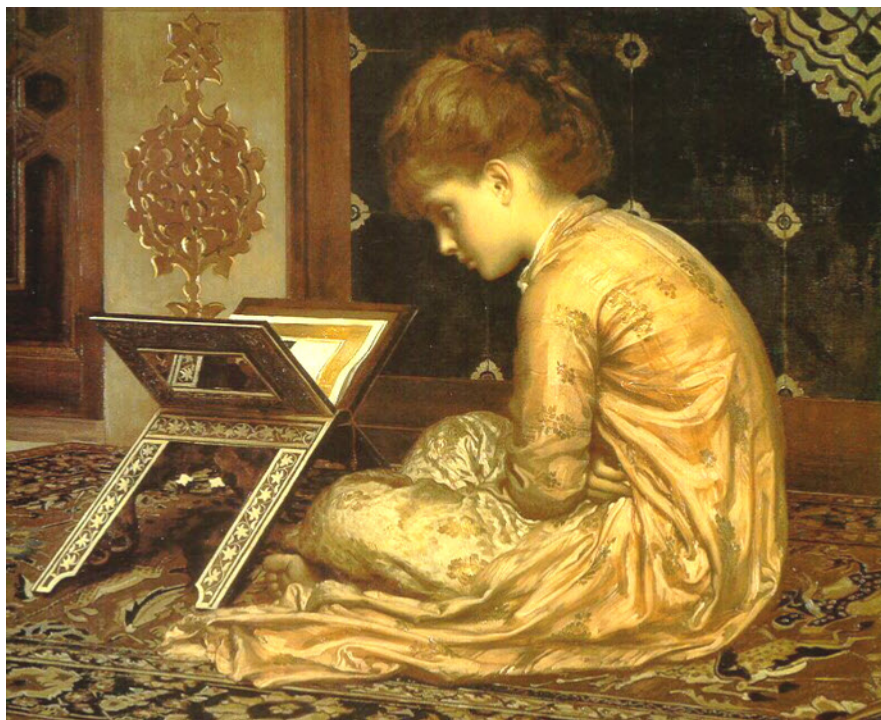


Connie Gilchrist does not feature in the diaries again except for one reference four years later on May 25th 1882. ‘*Oxford to London, to be Mrs. Bayne’s guest for two days. Dined with her, and then went (as arranged some while ago) to spend the evening with Mr. Coleman. I was with him from 8 till about 11, and had a very enjoyable evening, looking through his drawings, I selected 22, to be sent to Mr. Robinson to be photographed for me. Two of them (one dancing, and one with tambourine) were drawn from Connie Gilchrist. . . .*’

The photograph left is not by CLD but is entitled ‘Connie Gilchrist as a young Actress. Despite CLD’s scathing remarks about Connie’s acting she did in fact make a name for herself on the stage in the 1870’s and 1880’s.

Her costume for the skipping-rope dance is similar to the one shown in the photograph (right) which she wore at the Gaiety theatre. Connie Gilchrist confounds the apologists (those who apologise for CLD’s chasing of young ladies) and the denialists (those who say it never happened) as she does not fall into any of their myth making categories. What Charles Dodgson appears to have seen in Connie Gilchrist was beauty and it was this which he admired, much as an artist would wish to draw beauty he wished to photograph beauty. Whether he succeeded in Connie’s case is debatable as the diaries only show a planned photograph session not an actual one and the provenance of the ‘Dodgson’ photograph of Connie in the USA cannot be proved.





Connie Gilchrist (1865 - 1946) was depicted a third time by Leighton in the above picture entitled 'Reading at Desk' also painted in 1877. She went on to leave the theatre in 1892 when she married Edmond Walter Fitzmaurice, (1867 - 1951) Earl of Orkney. From then on she devoted herself to county living, she died in Buckinghamshire in May 1946. She had a daughter in 1903, Mary Constance Hamilton Fitzmaurice (1903 - 1950) who married Edward Lambert Gosling.

## References.

The diaries of Lewis Carroll published by the Lewis Carroll society volume 7. 'The Music Lesson' by Leighton, painted in 1877, can be seen at the Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

'Winding the Skein' by Leighton, painted in 1877, is in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

'Harmony in Yellow and Gold' (the Skipping Rope dance), painted by Whistler in 1877/8, is in the Queensland Art Gallery, Australia.

'Reading at Desk' by Leighton (above), also painted in 1877, is at Sudely House in Liverpool.

**NB** for our local readers. Sudley House is part of the Liverpool Museums and has several Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the collection. It is open every day.