

Westminster Abbey  
Poets' Corner



A Wreath-laying to mark  
the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of George Gordon Byron,  
The Lord Byron's, death  
*by*  
The Byron Society



Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024  
6 pm

*The Very Reverend Jane Hedges, Canon in Residence, gives the Welcome*

Good evening, and on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, I offer a very warm welcome to the members and friends of The Byron Society. We are here to remember and honour The Lord Byron upon the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in 1824 and to lay a wreath upon his memorial.

*The Collect*

Let us pray.

Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Robin, 13<sup>th</sup> Lord Byron, reads*

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,  
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo;

...

There was a sound of revelry by night,  
And Belgium's capital had gather'd then  
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright  
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;  
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when  
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,  
And all went merry as a marriage-bell;

But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

Did ye not hear it? -- No; 'twas but the wind,  
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;  
On with the dance! let joy be unconfi'd;  
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet  
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet --  
But, hark! -- that heavy sound breaks in once more,  
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;  
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!

Arm! Arm! and out -- it is -- the cannon's opening roar!

...

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,  
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,  
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,  
The morn the marshalling in arms, – the day  
Battle's magnificently-stern array!  
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent  
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,  
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,  
Rider and horse, – friend, foe, – in one red burial blent!

*from Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, 1816, Canto 3, stanzas 18–28*

*Dr Christine Kenyon Jones reads*

'The isles of Greece! the isles of Greece!  
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,  
Where grew the arts of war and peace, –  
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!  
Eternal summer gilds them yet,  
But all, except their sun, is set.  
...  
Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,  
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;  
If not like Orpheus quite when Greece was young,  
Yet in these times he might have done much worse:  
His Strain display'd some feeling – right or wrong;  
And feeling, in a poet, is the source  
Of others' feeling; but they are such liars,  
And take all colours – like the hands of dyers.  
  
But words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;  
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses  
Instead of Speech, may form a lasting link  
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces  
Frail Man, when paper – even a rag like this,  
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his.

*from Don Juan 1819, Canto 3, lines 689–800*

*Dr Emily Paterson-Morgan reads*

So, we'll go no more a roving  
So late into the night,  
Though the heart be still as loving,  
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,  
And the soul wears out the breast,  
And the heart must pause to breathe,  
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,  
And the day returns too soon,  
Yet we'll go no more a roving  
By the light of the moon.

*A lyric sent by Byron to Thomas More, 1817*

*The Earl of Lytton DL reads*

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved  
Since others it hath ceased to move –  
Yet though I cannot be beloved  
Still let me love.

My days are in the yellow leaf  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone –  
The worm, the canker and the grief  
Are mine alone.

The fire that on my bosom preys  
Is lone as some Volcanic Isle,  
No torch is kindled at its blaze  
A funeral pile!

The hope, the fear, the jealous care  
The exalted portion of the pain  
And power of Love I cannot share,  
But wear the chain.

But 'tis not thus – and 'tis not here  
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor now  
Where glory decks the hero's bier  
Or binds his brow.

The Sword – the Banner – and the Field  
Glory and Greece around us see!  
The Spartan born upon his shield,  
Was not more free!

Awake! (not Greece – She is awake!)  
Awake my spirit – think through whom  
Thy Life blood tracks its parent lake,  
And then Strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down  
Unworthy Manhood; – unto thee  
Indifferent should the smile or frown  
Of Beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy Youth, why live?  
The Land of honourable Death  
Is here – up to the Field! and give  
Away thy Breath.

Seek out – less often sought than found,  
A Soldier's Grave – for thee the best,  
Then look around and choose thy ground  
And take thy Rest!

On this day I complete my thirty sixth year, 1824

*Bernard Beatty gives the Address*

*A wreath is laid on behalf of The Byron Society by The Earl of Lytton DL*

*The Canon in Residence leads the Prayers*

O God our Father, who through the ages has caused poets and writers to perceive the world afresh, to enthral and provoke us to thought, reflection, and wonder; to explore the richness and diversity of our common human nature; and to challenge us in our perceptions: we thank you for your servant Lord Byron, remembering him with joy, gratitude, and affection, giving thanks for the perception, the insight, and the keen observation of his work; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O God, who by your Spirit in our hearts, leads men and women to desire your perfection, to seek for truth, and to rejoice in beauty; illuminate and inspire, we beseech you, all writers and poets, artists and craftsmen, that in whatsoever is true and lovely and good, your name may be glorified; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*All say the Lord's Prayer*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

*The Canon in Residence gives the Blessing*

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all people, peace and concord; and to us sinners, life everlasting. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**