2015 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH OF APRIL
2-4 pm Saturday 18 April 2015
St Mary’s Church, Magdalene Street, Glastonbury BA6 9EJ

**Blake and Albion**

Geoffrey Ashe is considered by many to be the premier Arthurian scholar in the world today. He is a writer and lecturer specialising in early British history and mythology and in particular the legends of Glastonbury. His numerous works on British and European history and legend include The Mythology of the British Isles and The Discovery of King Arthur. He was co-founder and Secretary of the Camelot Research Committee, the group responsible for the excavation of Cadbury Castle (a strong candidate for the site of King Arthur’s Camelot) and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

The talk will focus on his exploration of Blake and Albion, the key figure in the poet’s later prophetic work, and what his ‘awakening’ might involve. The event will also celebrate the launch of the republication of Ashe’s classic work on the subject, Camelot and the Vision of Albion (Karnac Books).

MONTH OF MAY
7.30 pm Tuesday 5 May 2015
Waterstones Bookshop, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HD

**The Gate of Los**

In this illuminated talk, Dieter Löchle will explore how Blake accompanies the daily life and work of an artist.

Born in 1952 in Constance, Southern Germany, Dieter studied literature and art at the Universities of Tübingen, Oxford and Cambridge. Blake has been an ongoing source of inspiration in the spheres of both academic research and in his practice as an artist – a Ph.D. project turned into an exhibition.
Dieter will be passing through London on his way to Yorkshire where he is one of two artists – one German & one British – who are collaborating on a project to mark the beginning of The Great War when battleships shelled the seaside towns of Hartlepool and Scarborough.

His earlier Blake inspired exhibitions include ‘Roof’d in from Eternity’ in 1995; the performance projects ‘The Scatter’d Body’ and ‘One Day with WB’ which was realized with dancers and musicians from several European countries; and two calendars ‘Love Sweet Love’ and ‘Glad Day’ published in 2013 and 2014.

MONTH OF JUNE
Saturday 20 June 2015 from 10 am to 4 pm
The Abbey, Sutton Courtenay, Abingdon, OX14 4AF

A Reading of The Four Zoas

Continuing the exploration of Blake’s great Prophetic Books through shared reading aloud, Barbara Vellacott will lead us in a day-long encounter with Blake’s complex myth of the Eternal Man, The Four Zoas or ‘The Torments of Love & Jealousy in the Death and Judgement of Albion the Ancient Man’. It tells of the fall into disunity and division of the four elemental aspects of the universal – and personal – psyche, their conflicts and eventual resolution in a revolutionary apocalypse.

Blake’s sprawling multilayered epic combines dissident theology, deep psychosexual insight, radical politics and violent drama. It also contains passages of some of Blake’s most powerful poetry, which can perhaps be most fully appreciated through reading aloud.

Barbara has spent many years in helping to make the poetry and drama of Blake’s prophetic books more accessible, and while the poem is too long for a day’s reading, we will focus on selections which most directly reveal its essential vision.

We are again fortunate to hold our summer reading retreat at The Abbey, a unique medieval building in extensive grounds in the village of Sutton Courtenay, 10 miles south of Oxford. It can be reached by bus/taxi from Didcot Parkway station (Paddington 45 minutes on the Oxford main line).

Sutton Courtenay is 30 minutes from the M4 (J13) and M40 (J7). Lunch can be bought at a nearby pub, or you can bring your own.

As there is a limit on numbers, please let us know by Friday 12 June if you are interested in coming. We can then contact you beforehand with all necessary practical details, including the selections we plan to read.

fourzoas@blakesociety.org

MONTH OF JULY
7.30 pm Wednesday 15 July 2015
The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB
An Evening on the Island in the Moon

The Island in the Moon (1784) is an unusual piece of juvenilia, half prose, half drama. It is ‘Blake’s first true symbolic book’ according to W.B. Yeats. With surreal and often scathing humour, Blake satirises the conversations and characters that attended Harriet Mathew’s literary salons at 27 Rathbone Place.

In this participatory event, we will all take a ‘role’ and read the full text of The Island in the Moon, bringing this fascinating early work to life. No acting experience is required. We are meeting two doors down from Harriet Mathew’s address, in The Wheatsheaf on Rathbone Place.

The evening will be introduced by David Worrall, who has written extensively on Blake, including (editor) Blake Trust: The Urizen Books (1995), co-editor (with Steve Clark) of Historicizing Blake (1994), Blake in the Nineties (1999) and Blake, Nation and Empire (2006). He is Emeritus Professor of English at Nottingham Trent University, Visiting Senior Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Roehampton and Vice President of the Blake Society.

MONTH OF AUGUST
12 Noon Sunday 16 August 2015
Bunhill Fields, 38 City Road London EC1Y 1AU

Poetry at the Grave

We gather at Bunhill Fields at noon to mark the life of William Blake who died in August 1827. By tradition people often read or share a favourite text. This year the readings will be led by the actor, Kim Lethbridge. Afterwards you are invited to repair to a local pub for lunch.

MONTH OF SEPTEMBER
Saturday 12 September 2015

And Did Those Feet ~ A Pilgrimage Through Golgonooza

Back by popular demand, Henry Eliot will lead four walks through Blake’s London over the course of a day. The walks may be walked individually or as one single pilgrimage. Please register your interest by emailing : walks@blakesociety.org

1. Tharmas the Body: Vegetable Blake

2. Urizen Your Reason: Radical Blake
Tyburn & Westminster, 2.5 miles. Meet 12pm, The Rising Sun, 46 Tottenham Court Road.

3. Luvah the Lover: Emotional Blake
Lambeth, 2.5 miles. Meet 2.30pm, Tate Britain steps, Millbank.
4. Los the Imagination: Visionary Blake
The City & Clerkenwell, 3.5 miles. Meet 4.30pm, The Albion, 2/3 New Bridge Street.
All walkers are invited to meet from 6.30pm at The Artillery Arms, Bunhill Row, for a celebratory pilgrims’ drink.
Henry Eliot has devised and led guided walks for the National Trust, Google, the City of London, City Lit and the cheese shop in Leadenhall Market. He produces a series of interactive editions of Shakespeare and is co-writing a guide to London for Penguin Books.

MONTH OF OCTOBER
7.30 pm Thursday 29 October 2015
Waterstones Bookshop, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HD

Visions, Blake and Film
An opportunity to see all of the 4 second films that were entered into the 2015 Tithe Grant streamed on screen together with the announcement of the winner, judged by Sir Alan Parker.
Wine, Cake and Conversation.

MONTH OF NOVEMBER
7.30 pm Friday 13 November 2015
Waterstones Bookshop, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HD

Blake and Things
Literary criticism has recently been very interested in ‘the life of things,’ to use Wordsworth’s phrase, not least in the autonomy of things – whether made, manufactured, or natural – from human beings and their priorities. On the face of it, this interest in the autonomy of the thing does not look promising for Blake, so often identified with spirituality and mysticism, and his belief that ‘a tear’ was an ‘intellectual thing.’ Opposed to materialism he may have been, and in more than one sense, but he was fiercely committed to the materiality of his books and always opposed to abstract thinking, including abstractions that would separate human beings from the world of things that they inhabit. This talk thinks about Blake’s thinking about the life of things.
Professor Jon Mee is Professor of Eighteenth-century Studies at the University of York and Director of the Centre of Eighteenth-century Studies there. He has written widely on literature, culture and politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, including Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s (Oxford 1992) and more recently, with Sarah Haggarty, a Palgrave guide to criticism on Songs of Innocence and of Experience. He is just completing a study of radical print culture in London in the 1790s and working on the idea of a
‘transpennine enlightenment,’ but he is very glad to be returning to thinking about Blake in this talk.

‘If a thing loves it is infinite’

MONTH OF DECEMBER
7.30 pm Friday 11 December 2015
Waterstones Bookshop, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HD

Blake Remixed
An evening with Testament, the creator of innovative Hip-Hop theatre show ‘Blake Remixed’. Testament is an acclaimed rapper and Guinness World Record holding beatboxer and his show makes its debut at the Edinburgh Festival. The piece explores the work of William Blake and its resonance within the world of contemporary Hip-Hop. The show is produced by The West Yorkshire Playhouse and production company Little Mighty.

Testament will be telling us of his journey in creating the piece and performing some excerpts from the show. Join Testament to explore Blake’s genius in a fresh and exciting way.

Testament credits include work with Grammy winner Corinne Bailey Rae, Soweto Kinch, Kate Tempest, jazz legend Jean Toussaint, as well as two of the progenitors of Hip-Hop itself DJ KoolHerc and Afrika Bambaataa. Under his ‘Homecut’ pseudonym released the celebrated album ‘No Freedom Without Sacrifice’. Testament is also founder of the ‘Hip Hop Clinic’ using poetry, rap & beatbox as positive tools in education.

MONTH OF JANUARY 2016
7.30 pm Tuesday 12 January 2016
Waterstones Bookshop, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HD

Billy Blake’s Cab
William Blake became a black cab driver in 2007, when John Riordan began his long-running cartoon ‘William Blake, Taxi Driver’ in Time Out. Among Billy’s unexpected passengers were Milton, Newton, Peter Ackroyd and Tracey Emin. John will discuss Blake’s influence on his work, and reveal plans for a new graphic novel inspired by Blake.

John Riordan is an illustrator and comic artist who lives in London. In 2013 he won an Association of Illustrators award for his project Capital City (also inspired by Blake). He co-creates the psychedelic, musical, soap opera, comic book Hitsville UK. He likes cats, mustard and Mayans.

Annual General Meeting
The AGM will immediately precede this Talk.
MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2016
7.30 pm Friday 26 February 2016
Waterstones Bookshop, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HD

Blake and the Gita
In 1785 the Bhagavad Gita was published for the first time in English by the East India Company. We know Blake read this first translation by Charles Wilkins through one of Blake’s lost drawings The Bramins (‘the subject is Mr Wilkin translating the Geeta’), yet the argument of The Gita reappears in Blake’s work in a curious and contrary form. How Blake read this great work of philosophy illuminates how he transformed or translated everything he encountered.

Parul Jani graduated from St Martin’s School of Art and then travelled to India to study the Bhagavad Gita under A. Parthasarathy, the founder of the Vedanta Institute. She has been studying and teaching the philosophy of the Gita to international audiences for twenty years.

MONTH OF MARCH 2016
!!! Annual Lecture !!!
7.30 pm Wednesday 2 March 2016
St James’s Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1J 9LL

The Infinite Brain And The Narrow Circle
Is the brain infinite? If so, how is it that, as Blake puts it, ‘they inclos’d my infinite brain into a narrow circle’? Evidence is gathering that the structure of the brain, in particular its asymmetrical nature, may explain the increasing narrowness of the circle of our experience in the present day, awareness of which may be the first step in reversing the process.

Dr Iain McGilchrist is a former Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and former Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at the Bethlem Royal & Maudsley Hospital, London. He has been a Research Fellow in neuroimaging at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore. He has published original articles and research papers in a wide range of publications on topics in literature, philosophy, medicine and psychiatry. McGilchrist is the author of Against Criticism (Faber 1982), The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World (Yale 2009), The Divided Brain and the Search for Meaning; Why Are We So Unhappy? (e-book short) and is currently working on a project entitled When The Porcupine is a Monkey, to be published by Penguin Press. He lives on the Isle of Skye.

Each member of The Blake Society is allowed one free ticket and additional tickets for members or tickets for non-members can be purchased at a cost of £15 each.

For more information and to reserve your free ticket or to purchase tickets:

TICKETS
Tithe Grant

Each year the Blake Society gives ten per cent of its income to an individual in the form of a grant to encourage a work of creativity.

This year the 2015 Tithe Grant will be awarded to a short film that evokes a vision. The maximum duration of the film is 4 seconds – a tribute to William Blake’s fourfold vision.

The Judge will be Sir Alan Parker, whose films include Bugsy Malone, Fame, Midnight Express, Mississippi Burning and Angela’s Ashes. His films have won ten Oscars and he is currently President of the European Federation of Film Directors.

Full details about the Award including how to submit an entry will be available shortly on our website.

The winner of the 2014 Tithe Grant, which was judged by Stephen Fry and awarded to an aphorism inspired by William Blake’s Proverbs of Hell, was Beryl Kingston:

Incorruptible Plastic Proves the Value of Decay