

JOHN MASEFIELD RESEARCH PROJECT

IN THE JOHN MASEFIELD SOCIETY ARCHIVE

As well as being a prolific writer, Masefield was in near constant correspondence with many different people. He inscribed many copies of his books with these friends' names, many examples of which now reside in the John Masefield Society Archive. As part of Masefield Matters, a group of people interested in local history researched people mentioned in the collection of the John Masefield Society to better understand their connection with John Masefield. Below are some of the stories we found.

FAMILY



'Pip' to his children, John Masefield inscribed books to his wife Constance, daughter Judith, and son Lewis.

CONSTANCE MASEFIELD (DE LA CHEROIS CROMMELIN)

1867 (Co Antrim, Ireland) - 1960 (Oxfordshire)

Constance Masefield was a Cambridge-educated teacher from a French-Irish family, and met Masefield while they were both working in London. She was very supportive and involved in John's work throughout their 57 year marriage.

JUDITH MASEFIELD

1904 (London) - 1988 (Midhurst, Sussex)

Judith was the eldest child of John and Constance Masefield. She frequently acted in productions of her father's plays, also designing costumes and directing music. She is best known as the illustrator of many of her father's books.

LEWIS MASEFIELD

1910 (London) - 1942 (Libya)

The younger Masefield child, Lewis aspired to be an author. He was killed in North Africa while serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps during the Second World War. One of his novels, *The Passion Left Behind* was published after his death.

ERNEST RAYMOND

1888 (Switzerland) - 1974 (London)

Raymond was an author writing at the same time as Masefield. They knew each other through the 1961 reburial of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Raymond had championed the reburial, and Masefield spoke at the ceremony (notably, while wearing his carpet slippers!)

QUEEN MARY (SYBIL HERIZ-SMITH)

1895 (Suffolk) - 1986 (Suffolk)

After performing the part of Mary, Queen of Scots in Masefield's play 'End and Beginning', Masefield addressed Heriz Smith as 'Queen Mary' in letters and a book inscription now within the Archive.

MISS F NEWBERY BIRCH

F Newbery Birch was the secretary of Frederick Glasscock, a businessman who had made a fortune selling custard powder. Glasscock was fascinated by Arthurian legend, likely leading to Masefield sending his secretary his book of Arthurian tales in verse.

WRITING AND PLAYS



'Pip' to his children, John Masefield inscribed books to his wife Constance, daughter Judith, and son Lewis.

CAUSES



John Masefield was part of a range of initiatives, including ones promoting poetry and local charitable causes.

WARTIME CONTACTS

During the First World War, John Masefield worked as an orderly in hospitals in France. He also recorded what he saw on the Front in a number of works. As always, Masefield wrote many letters during this time, including writing to many people to raise funds for hospitals.

PAUNTLEY COURT

Masefield helped raise funds for the Wayfarer's Home in Pauntley Court, Gloucestershire, near his childhood home of Ledbury. Masefield said 'the home takes lads from the roads, trains them and gives them a chance to recover and start again.'

THE OXFORD RECITATIONS

There are a number of inscriptions to people who won prizes in the Oxford Recitations, an annual poetry-reading competition run by John and Constance during the 1920s. These competitions would attract hundreds of entrants.