

# Simplified Spelling Society

*Founded 1908*

Working for planned change in English spelling for the benefit of learners and users everywhere

## Newsletter April 1994 [N7]

Edited and published by the Secretary, Bob Brown.

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## 1. In brief

### Subscription reminder

If you have not yet paid your subscription for 1994, you will find a reminder with this *Newsletter*. Please pay soon (£10, net of exchange fees if from abroad) to the Secretary.

### Help still wanted!

Your Secretary must admit to sinking under yet more of a workload, hence the paucity of Newsletters of late. Now his employers have asked him to work abroad for six months or so, returning home every three or four weeks. He will do his best to keep the Society's admin ticking over, but please bear with him.

### Booked

From the next issue of the Central London telephone directory the Society will be listed under both "Spelling" and "Simplified", to make it easier for people to find us. This follows a number of complaints from enquirers.

### We're not being gloomy but ...

An article elsewhere in this issue invites you to think of the Society when making your Will. You will notice from the Accounts that we need to increase our endowment fund (and thus income) if we are to continue even present levels of activity.

## **2. AGM Lecture: Phonicsphobia:**

### **Emotional reactions to the teaching of English through phonic methods**

A talk by our distinguished member

**Dr Joyce Morris, OBE**

Joyce Morris is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and has been a teacher and researcher for over 39 years. She was co-founder of the UK Reading Association and has been author or editor of numerous publications. She received her OBE — and other awards — for services to literacy.

**Saturday April 23, 1994 at 10:45**

prefacing the AGM.

#### **Lecture:**

Following [Joyce Morris' talk](#), Chris Jolly will present recent experience with *The Phonics Handbook* and associated teaching materials.

#### **AGM:**

The annual General Meeting of the Simplified Spelling Society will be held on Saturday April 23, 1994.

As usual, the AGM will be a combined general meeting — which elects the coming year's Committee — and first meeting of the new Committee, which elects Officers. All members are welcome to both, as always. Start time is 10:45 with two preceding lectures, detailed overleaf. There will be a lunch break at some appropriate point.

#### **AGM agenda**

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Minutes of last AGM      | 8. Research Director's report |
| 2. Matters arising, if any  | 9. PRO's report               |
| 3. Secretary's report       | 10. Chairman's round-up       |
| 4. Treasurer's report       | 11. Re-election of President  |
| 5. Appointment of auditor   | 12. Election of Committee     |
| 6. Subscription for 1995    | 13. Any other business        |
| 7. Editor-in-Chief's report |                               |

#### **Committee Agenda**

- |                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Minutes of last meeting | 5 Meeting dates for next 12 months |
| 2 Matters arising, if any | 6 Speaker for July meeting         |
| 3 Co-options to Committee | 7 Any other business               |
| 4 Election of Officers    |                                    |

#### **Income & Expenditure Account**

for the year ending 31 December 1993 (£)

#### **Balance Sheet**

as at 31 December 1993 (£) [not included]

### 3. William Archer: A biography. Excerpts

by Peter Whitebrook, Published by Methuen 1993, 435pp, £25



William Archer (1856–1924) was present at [the inaugural meeting](#) of the Simplified Spelling Society and became its first Secretary.

This massive biography comprehensively charts his busy journalistic life, mostly as a theatre critic. Archer was also an inveterate traveller and social campaigner, so there is much to report.

Whitebrook's book has received reviews far and wide. Rather than adding to them, I felt it would be more useful to excerpt the main passages that concern the Society. The Society was but a small part of his life so receives relatively brief treatment.

[This account of Archer's life], the first for over sixty years, is an illuminating and original portrait of a principled and enigmatic man, whose inexpressive demeanour concealed a progressive and passionate mind.

A drama critic for more than forty years, William Archer transformed the Victorian theatre ... into the playwright's theatre we know today. He introduced Henrik Ibsen to the British stage, guided the early career of Bernard Shaw, encouraged Pinero, Wilde, Galsworthy and Granville Barker, and had a grand affair with Elizabeth Robins, one of the greatest actresses of her generation, who played Hedda Gabler in Archer's own translation of Ibsen's play. He was a radical opponent of censorship and a lifelong campaigner for a British National Theatre. [Cover]

(1907:] It was yet another of his enthusiasms which took Archer abroad that spring. In his early love letters to Frances he had proposed a modest spelling reform, mostly consisting of dropping the u from words such a *favour*. [ ... ]

The previous year, the Simplified Spelling Board was founded in New York ... This was just the sort of thing Archer enjoyed ... Simplified spelling was modern ... and smacked of American good sense and practicality. [...] In the *Morning Leader*, he called for an international commission of eminent scholars to refine English spelling ... [for] the Simplified Spelling Board, whose job it would then be to encourage newspapers and magazines 'by bribery and corruption' if necessary, to translate at least some of their articles into new spelling. [...] This was the message he took with him to New York when invited to address the Board on 3 April 1907 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. [264-51]

[ 1908 after the award of a Norwegian knighthood for services in translating Ibsen:] Being a knight in Norway did not guarantee an income in England, and financially, he was only bumping along. But as so often with Archer, something came along to save the day. He became a co-founder of the Simplified Spelling Society, an English counterpart to the Simplified Spelling Board. At the inaugural meeting on 10 September, Walter Skeat, a Chaucerian scholar from Cambridge, was elected president and Archer secretary on a salary of £200 a year. A week later [...] he was appointed treasurer as well. Renting a tiny office at 44 Great Russell Street, he equipped it with desk, typewriter and typist [and began to spend the funds from Andrew Carnegie that had initiated the Society].

He had hardly begun his secretarial duties when, after nine months without a drama column, he became theatre critic for *The Nation*, a Liberal weekly paper ... [281]

By the Spring of 1909, Archer had written three [SSS] [pamphlets](#), or 'pamflets', urging the use of a 'fonetic alfabet' and had become the ambassador to its sister organization in the USA, speaking at its annual meeting in April. [281]

[1910:] He fell back on his work as secretary [of the SSS], but as he now only worked part-time, he halved his salary to £100 a year. With Walter Ripman, who took over as treasurer, he wrote the Society's handbook, *Proposals for a Simplified Spelling of the English Language* [subsequently [New Spelling](#)], outlining their phonetic principles and which, in a substantially revised form, is one of the publications still issued by the Society today. [2861]

[1912:] For the second time in four years, there seemed nothing to keep Archer at home. Resigning as secretary of the [SSS], he planned his second trip around the world. [290]

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[Sir George Hunter: see [1930 Essays](#)]

## 4. The Society's Finances: Thank you, Sir George!

Sir George Hunter, of the Tyneside shipbuilders Swan Hunter, backed the Simplified Spelling Society financially for many years until his death in 1937.

He then left us with substantial funds which — despite heavy inroads over the years — still form the core of our present endowment of over £70,000. You will see from the Accounts elsewhere in this Newsletter that this still generates an annual investment income approaching £3,000.

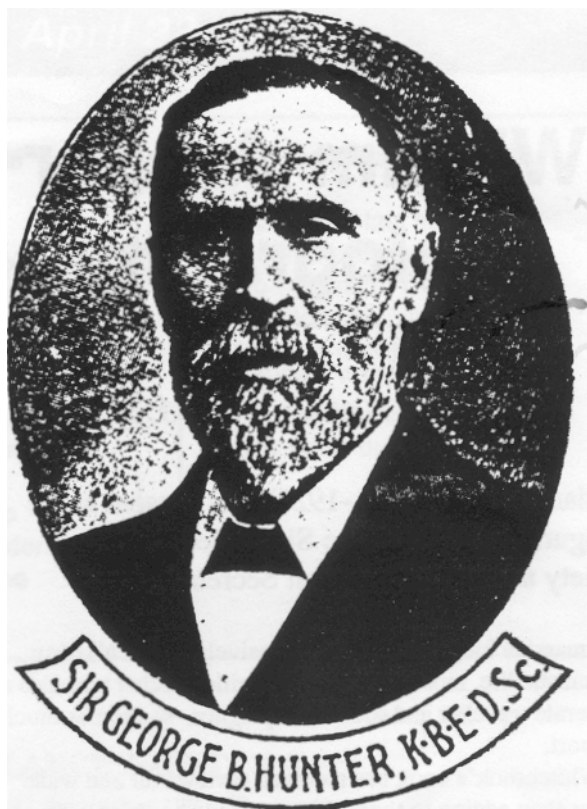
But it plainly isn't enough. You will also notice that we spent more than our income last year, eating into reserves a little.

### Then and now

In Sir George's day, the Society maintained a small permanent office with a full-time staff. This was in Great Russell Street opposite the British Museum from 1908 until Sir George relocated it to Wallsend-on-Tyne during the 1930s to reduce costs. Although not operated as a membership society in those days, the Organisation claimed several thousand "members" or supporters.

All this contrasts with our present membership of 130 or so, and a relatively low level of activity, dependent on a few individuals donating their leisure time. And still we have difficulty to cover our costs.

Members can help — no matter in how small a way — by emulating Sir George Hunter's generosity and leaving the Society money in a will.



Picture courtesy of (and ©) Swan Hunter

## Changing your will is simple

Minor changes to your will can be made by adding a *codicil* — a simple amendment or addition to your existing will. But if you want to make more substantial change we recommend that a new will be prepared. Simply contact your solicitor who will advise on what is most appropriate.

### **But if you haven't made a will.**

Surprisingly, two out of three people die without leaving a will. This can cause problems such as lengthy, and maybe costly, legal delays. Worst of all, if you are unmarried and have no close family, the government can claim all your assets.

Simplifying the archaic spelling of English is a cause to which you are dedicated to some degree, or you wouldn't be a member of this Society. Change could be brought about much sooner if we had more resources — and mostly that means more income, in turn meaning more capital.

If you haven't already remembered the Simplified Spelling Society in your will, call your solicitor now for an appointment.

Sir George Hunter is being effective more than half a century after his death. Will you still be reforming our wayward orthography in the middle of the next century?

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