

## ALAN DAVIDSON

The death of Alan Davidson in December 2003 has left us stricken. Readers will know that it was he who, with his wife Jane, founded Prospect Books and *Petits Propos Culinaires*. Every week, since the transfer to its current home in Devon, has seen us conversing on contents, progress and potential. He was, in every sense, our guide. It seems otiose to reprint here the several obituaries that reflected different facets of his brilliant career: they are available in the online versions of newspapers on every continent. It was, though, a matter of special regret that copies of the revised version of his *Seafood of South-East Asia* arrived from the printers just too late for him to approve them. The book is now available here in Britain under the Prospect imprint and in the United States under that of Ten Speed Press.

I am very grateful to the artist Glen Baxter who has allowed me to use one of his illustrations as a cover to this issue of *PPC* and consented to the monotone reproduction of the rest of the series in the body of the journal. Glen Baxter's humour appealed to Alan on every level and I felt that he would appreciate something like this rather than a portrait to remind us of him. We have, too, his funeral cookbook which was distributed to those who attended his memorial service in Chelsea in February. This contains not only some of his favourite recipes but the text of an exquisitely judged short essay on funeral cookbooks themselves. While setting the type for this, I was always minded of how beautifully Alan could write. Sentences, paragraphs, sections or chapters, and whole books, were so often perfectly balanced and larded with exactly the correct amounts of wit, whimsy, flights of fancy and information. Reading him was ever instructive, and ever entertaining.

He conversed as he wrote: allusively, and with a smile playing across his features more often than a frown. Visits to Lamont Road to take tea with Alan and Jane were eagerly anticipated, both to hear news of their ventures and to feed off a worldwide intelligence network that reflected their central importance to the endeavour of food history or food studies, or whatever you may call that body of knowledge.

He will be terribly missed.

## HONEY FROM A WEED ON THE RADIO

The turn of the year saw a dramatization of Patience Gray's book on BBC radio. It is always unsettling to hear voices that are not as you expect or remember, but aficionados were certainly able to trade impressions, revel in the direct quotation and muse on how this matchless book is approaching cult status.

## LEEDS SYMPOSIUM ON FOOD HISTORY

The nineteenth syposium has been announced for Saturday, 24 April 2004. The subject this year is open-hearth cookery and the speakers/demonstrators are

Sally Grainger, Ivan Day, David Eveleigh and John Hudson. The symposium is once more at York, at the Friends Meeting House and at Fairfax House (weather permitting). If you would like to attend, the fee is £15 and you should write to C. Anne Wilson, c/o Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

## THE OXFORD SYMPOSIUM 2004

The next Symposium is announced for the 4–5 September 2004. The subject is ‘Wild Food: Hunters and Gatherers’. Its locale is changing: no longer at St Antony’s College, but in Headington at the Oxford Brookes University a few miles south-east of the city centre. More information can be obtained from [www.oxfordSymposium.org.uk](http://www.oxfordSymposium.org.uk). The price this year remains £135 and there is some possibility of travel assistance for the impecunious (email the Chairman of the Trustees, Geraldene Holt at [wgh@geraldeneholt.com](mailto:wgh@geraldeneholt.com)).

## PROSPECT BOOKS

The beginning of the year has seen the arrival from the printers of *Seafood of South-East Asia*, a paperback version of *Sugar-Plums and Sherbet*, reprints of *Mediterranean Seafood* and *Honey from a Weed*, and a newly-covered *Traditional Foods of Britain*. Work continues apace on *Recipes from Corsica*, *Cooking Weeds*, the next volume from Leeds – on English cookery books, *Elder*, *Chestnut*, *Mourjou* and *Dining with Dickens*.

## THIS ISSUE

I have accelerated production of this issue in order to catch up a little. Events have so turned out that there is no space for book reviews or for notes and queries. These will be held over until *PPC* 76, which is also the index issue.

## NEW SUBSCRIPTION RATES

With the New Year new subscription rates are as follows: for 3 issues, £18.00, \$34.00 or 27.00 euro, for 6 issues, £34.00, \$65.00 or 50.00 euro. Back numbers remain £5.00. We are now able to take Visa or Mastercard and overseas subscribers may find it easier to deal with us. Anyone whose subscription is on the brink of expiry will be sent a reminder.