Editorial

In previous editorials I have written of many significant events in the history of The Powys Society, but there can hardly have been a period of greater activity and of greater importance than the last six months. Not only has the Society issued the second annual volume of its *Journal* which is, if anything, even better than the first (and at 230 pages, remarkably good value) but it has also issued three other important publications, which are dealt with elsewhere in the *Newsletter*. There has been a second Montacute Lecture, at which Stephen Powys Marks spoke to a large and appreciative audience on the life and work of A. R. Powys, an invigorating and fascinating walk around Sherborne organised by Tony Hallett, and a conference, our twenty-first, which was generally agreed to have been among the most exciting and enjoyable to have been held.

Indeed, so stimulating was the Conference that it prompted A. N. Wilson, who had joined us at Cirencester, to devote a large part of his article in the London *Evening Standard* of September 4th to the importance of John Cowper's work. "He is every bit as good as D. H. Lawrence and much more interesting ... He understood almost *everything*, and no one has wiser things to say about the relations (or lack of them) which individuals have with one another and with the natural world ... Start by reading *Wolf Solent* ... and then bombard the paperback publishers with letters, demanding more Powys" he wrote. Let us hope that many readers (and members of the Society) will be moved by his advice.

As if that were not enough, the final contracts have now been signed for the setting up of a Powys Centre at the Dorset County Museum, the foundation of which will be the magnificent Powys collection of Francis and Kathleen Feather, which they have generously donated to the Society. This is a major achievement and one which, even a year or two ago, would have seemed the wildest fantasy. Yet it has been achieved through the unstinting efforts of the Society's officers, to whom we owe an enormous debt. Further news of the Centre will appear in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.

Yet there has been great sadness too, for we have learned of the deaths of a number of friends, including Giles Wordsworth and, most recently, Peter Powys Grey, whom many of us came to regard so highly when he joined us at this year's Conference and spoke so memorably and movingly.

With so much achieved, it is hard to imagine what will come next. Yet more there will, undoubtedly, be, with the continued support of our ever-growing membership.

Paul Roberts

The Society's publications, including several new this year, are listed inside the back cover. Please help the Society in its publishing programme by buying them. Please use the handy inserted order form provided.

The Conference Comes Of Age

When we assembled for dinner at the Royal Agricultural College on the first evening of the 1992 Conference our President reminded us that the Society's conference had attained its majority, the first conference having been held at Churchill College Cambridge, in 1972. In an opening address to that conference Dr George Steiner had asked "Why is John Cowper Powys not more widely known and in print?" That question applied to the three brothers has become almost hackneyed, but it still motivates the Society twenty years later.

Although the Annual General Meeting is not usually the most eagerly awaited, or best attended, session and is invariably placed toward the end of the programme, it is there that I will begin these impressions of the 21st Annual Conference. The resignations of Tim Hyman (Vice-Chairman) and Griffin Beale (Secretary) prompted warm tributes from the President and Chairman. Tim is one of the longest serving members of the Society and has contributed much over many years. Griffin has played a leading role during a period of reorganisation and expansion. Both will continue to serve on the Committee, so their experience will not be lost.

It is a pity that item nine on the agenda, prosaically put as "Discussion of a Proposed Powys Centre" was completed without acknowledgement of the fact that it was only through the vision and hard work of Morine Krissdóttir that we were even contemplating such a significant development. Questions about the contractual arrangements with the Dorset County Museum were persistently interrupted by a member who, quite understandably, wanted to know whether there was any Powys material available to make such a centre a reality. Finally, the Centre approved, the Chairman invited Francis Feather to address the meeting. Francis owns one of the two great private Powys collections, comprising over seventy manuscripts, other primary material and all the published works. This entire collection, he said, he would make over to the Society in order that it might be housed in the Powys Centre, where it would be available to scholars and serious enthusiasts. Applause seemed inadequate in the face of such generosity.

The theme of the conference was "The Powys Woman: 'The Realm of the Imaginary' ". In a letter written at the planning stage the Chairman said she hoped the programme had the ingredients of a good soufflé. We all know the capacity of a soufflé to rise to a mouth-watering consistency, or to sink to become tough and unpalatable. The opening paper, by Harold Fawkner, entitled "Woman and the Mineral: A Mineralogical Reading of Maiden Castle", was as dense as granite and, for me at least, only occasionally as clear as crystal. It was a stimulating and challenging beginning, after which Morine must have known that the soufflé would rise.

On the second day Angela Pitt, in "Unprecedented Waves and Storms", offered further insights into the elemental personality of Katie as revealed in her journals and

poems. This was followed by Morine Krissdóttir's "The Twig in the Crystal: Phyllis through the Diary", an extraordinarily powerful and disturbing interpretation of aspects of the relationship between Phyllis and John. Charles Lock's paper on John Cowper Powys and Dorothy Richardson, "A Lost Atlantis of the Feminine", offered a perspective on that original and neglected writer that made me resolve to read her. After dinner on Sunday, in "Frances and Jack", we enjoyed an evening of unforgettable theatre from Micheline Patton, Isobel Powys Marks, Oliver and Christopher Wilkinson, who dramatised the correspondence between John Cowper Powys and Frances Gregg. Skilfully edited and scripted by Oliver and read with absolute authenticity, the letters provided a subtle documentation of a complex and enduring relationship. Sometimes humorous, sometimes deeply moving, they had a profound, almost mesmeric effect upon the audience, who only reluctantly left the theatre, but did so knowing that they had been present at a very special contribution to a Powys conference. At that point, the soufflé had not merely risen, it had taken off.

On Monday morning Frank Kibblewhite first disarmed us by extolling the virtues of not speaking on the theme and then delivered a paper without a title, in which he explored the expression of Theodore's personality through the themes of his novels with a coherence and illumination astonishing in work completed at the expense of the previous night's sleep. It was a privilege to have with us Dame Iris Murdoch, Professor John Bayley, A. N. Wilson and P. J. Kavanagh, all enthusiastic Powysians. The penultimate session took the form of an unscripted and wide ranging conversation between Iris Murdoch and John Bayley. The originality of their observations and the spontaneity of their disagreements proved contagious, stimulating whole-hearted audience participation and many interesting contributions from the floor.

Our last speaker, Peter Powys Grey, Marian's son, had earlier been made an Honorary Life Member of the Society. It was in every way fitting that so memorable a conference should close with a contribution from a member of the family. Peter is a natural raconteur and spoke with deep sensitivity and affection of his cousins, Katie and Father Hamilton. Through the immediacy of his personal recollections he created almost tangible images of two people, so different, yet with so much in common. He concluded his paper by quoting Father Hamilton's last words to him, which were: "Those Powyses, why did they have so many convictions?" As he said, "That is not a bad question."

No account of a Powys conference is complete without some reference to the Book Sale. This ingenious lottery, devised many years ago by Francis Feather, is arranged by Louise de Bruin and Frank Kibblewhite. Powysians descend upon it with an ill-concealed competitive fervour which ordinary mortals reserve for the January sales. This proved to be a vintage year in which, in an exciting auction, a copy of *The Blackthorn Winter* was sold for £80 and the total proceeds amounted to £715.

Llewelyn's admirers may remember it as the conference at which he was hardly mentioned, but his time will come again. I will certainly look back on 1992 as the conference dominated by Katie Powys and Francis Feather. Two papers were devoted to

Katie, the Society's new edition of her poems made its appearance, and a revised version of Angela's '91 Conference paper was in the *Journal*. As to Francis and Kathleen Feather, members could only feel humble and grateful that the labour and love of more than sixty years' collecting should be entrusted to the Society.

So, on Tuesday morning we left Cirencester, promising each other to meet again next year at the Dorchester College of Agriculture — this Society will make farmers of us yet!

Observer

Frances and Jack

The readings at the Conference from the correspondence between Frances Gregg and John Cowper Powys were recorded on a tape of about an hour's duration. Despite extraneous noise, the amateur recording conveys the atmosphere of that memorable evening. Through the generosity of Oliver Wilkinson, the other readers and Laurence Pollinger Ltd, copies are available to members from the Secretary, John Batten, at £5 including postage and packing, all profit going to the Society.

Report of the Annual General Meeting *

August 31st 1992 at The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester

1 Minutes of the last A. G. M. (for 1991) These were read by Griffin Beale and approved. Proposed by Peter Powys Grey, seconded by Tim Hyman.

2 Business Arising There was no business arising.

3 Secretary's Report Griffin Beale reported that at December 31st 1991 the membership stood at 276, after the removal of 18 names of those who had not paid the 1990 subscriptions. 30 new members had joined during the year. 111 members paid by standing order, and 20 covenants had been signed. 28 new members had joined the Society so far during 1992, making a total of 306 of whom 234 had paid their 1992 subscriptions. 17 members have still not paid for 1991. There should therefore be a small overall increase by the end of the year. Details were given of decisions reached during the three Committee meetings which had been held during the year.

* This report will be submitted as the minutes for approval at next year's Annual General Meeting.

The acceptance of the Secretary's report was proposed by Stephen Powys Marks and seconded by Louise de Bruin.

4 Treasurer's Report Stephen Powys Marks reported that details of the 1991 Accounts had been given in the July *Newsletter*. It showed a very healthy position, giving a good start for 1992. He pointed out that publication expenditure was recorded basically as value of stock of books, except for *The Powys Journal* for which the actual cost of providing copies to members was noted as expenditure. In 1991 there had been a gross income of £11,772 and gross expenditure of £10,630, which gave an idea of the scale of our activities.

Several items had been published during 1992. The printing cost of the *Journal* was £1,900, the *Powys Review Index* under £200, *The English House* £430, *Driftwood and other poems* £560 and the Powys Family pamphlet for Montacute gazebo £360. £900 had been raised on the books given to us in 1991, and £250 on the sale of our own 1991 *Journal*. So far this year 234 subscriptions had been received, compared with 226 at this time last year.

The approval of the Treasurer's report was proposed by Tim Hyman and seconded by Charles Lock. It was agreed unanimously.

5 Chairman's Remarks Morine said that about half of her time had been devoted to Society business. She thanked Committee members for their support during and over the years she had been in office. The Society today was a lively and enthusiastic one. She especially praised the retiring Secretary, Griffin Beale, who had been invaluable during sometimes difficult times. The meeting applauded Griffin for his efforts.

6 Election of Officers The President, Glen Cavaliero, thanked Tim Hyman, the retiring Vice-Chairman, who had held the position since 1972. His contribution had been immense over the years. It was a pleasure that Paul Roberts had agreed to stand as Vice-Chairman. He mentioned the Society's debt to Griffin, and the pleasure of his contacts with him.

The officers were proposed by Glen Cavaliero as follows:

Chairman Morine Krissdóttir
Vice-Chairman Paul Roberts
Secretary John Batten
Treasurer Stephen Powys Marks

The motion was seconded by Gerald Pollinger and agreed unanimously.

7 Election of Committee

The members proposed by the President were:

Griffin Beale	Peter Foss
Louise de Bruin	Timothy Hyman
Bev Craven	Frank Kibblewhite
Michael Everest	John Williams

Overseas members were Charles Lock, Francis Feather, Jacqueline Peltier and Marius Buning.

The list was seconded was Patricia Dawson and agreed unanimously.

8 Appointment of Auditor The name of Stephen Allen was proposed by Glen Cavaliero, seconded by Stephen Powys Marks and agreed unanimously. A formal letter of thanks was proposed by Morine Krissdóttir.

9 Discussion of the Proposed Powys Centre Morine Krissdóttir gave the background to this item, especially on the necessary requirements. A 1991 Committee meeting had agreed the idea, and a sub-committee was formed to decide the broad approach. In May 1992 a draft report was drawn up of a contract with a possible donor. The Committee had approved the report and set up a structure. The Committee have now drawn up a report covering all the possible considerations they can think of. Anyone interested could see it on request. Morine had spent time with the directors of possible repositories. Early on, the Dorset County Museum at Dorchester had seemed a likely candidate. They themselves were very enthusiastic. It already houses collections of Thomas Hardy and Sylvia Townsend Warner. After much work with other repositories the Committee decided that Dorset was the best choice. Morine wanted the A. G. M. to vote on two motions, which had been agreed by the Committee at their meeting earlier that day:

[1] that the Dorset County Museum should be the chief repository for collections given to The Powys Society;

[2] that the Chairman of The Powys Society be authorised to negotiate with the Curator of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society a formal contract on the basis of the agreement already reached.

A discussion ensued. Mary Warden asked about the costs of the Centre. Morine said that there would be no costs to the Society. Angela Pitt asked about cataloguing. Morine replied that this would be a joint responsibility, and was covered by the contract. A knowledgeable volunteer might come forward to assist. Derek Langridge then said that he would be very happy to assist in this, as he had recently completed a similar exercise for Dickens House. Morine thanked him for his kind offer, which would be taken up. Tim Hyman asked about earlier arguments concerning the claims of Cambridge University as a centre. Morine replied that her experience after working in Cambridge for five months showed that there were enormous difficulties, even for a scholar. The new Curator of the Dorset County Museum, Richard de Peyer, was very enthusiastic. Peter Foss endorsed this view. Difficulties of staffing at Dorset had been resolved to Morine's satisfaction. Gerald Pollinger asked about copyright protection. Morine said this was covered in the contract. There was a question on security, to which Morine replied that Dorset would have the responsibility, and would safeguard it as it does other material in its possession. Jacqueline Peltier asked about admission policy, bearing in mind there would be many rare and valuable items. Morine replied that prior arrangement would need to be made by researchers with the Society and the Museum.

At this point, David Goodway suggested that the terms of the contract be read out, which Morine did. It was agreed that the word "mechanical" should go in before the word "copying". Gerald Pollinger said that mechanical copying was agreed, but not publication. Charles Lock suggested that publication could be ignored as far as this

contract was concerned. As regards any future changes regarding copyright, Charles Lock said they could be discussed at the proposed annual joint meeting. Gerald Pollinger said that he would have no objection to a researcher needing to ask only the Museum and the Society; there would be no need to ask him.

Motion 1 was then proposed by Tim Hyman and seconded by Frank Kibblewhite, and agreed with one abstention. Motion 2 was proposed by James Turner and seconded by Frank Kibblewhite, and agreed with one abstention.

Morine then announced that the Society had received a letter from Francis Feather indicating that he was willing to bequeath his collection to the Society. A contract with him would be drawn up. She then invited Francis to address the A. G. M.

Francis said that he had started collecting in 1928, and that his collection was very well catalogued. He described his collection, which he said consisted, as far as published material went, of "every single imprint that has come onto the market". Manuscripts included *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, *Unclay*, *Mockery Gap* and *Innocent Birds*. There was also a great deal of ordinary correspondence. He added that it was the conversion of the Society to charitable status that really converted him to the idea that the Society was the right place, and congratulated Griffin Beale on creating the circumstances that enabled him to carry out his wishes.

Francis was thanked with appreciation and applause from the whole meeting.

10 Report of Gerald Pollinger Gerald commented on the current lack of editors. He said that the film rights of *Wolf Solent* had been taken up. Books to come shortly were Morine's book of selections from the J. C. P. *Diaries*, Oliver Wilkinson's *Frances and Jack* and a book on Theodore by Larry Mitchell. Llewelyn's *Skin For Skin* was also being reprinted.

11 Date of the Next Conference This would be held at Kingston Maurward, Dorchester, on August 21st–24th 1993.

12 Treasurer's Announcement Stephen Powys Marks stated that it was not necesary to increase the subscription until 1994. The new rates would be £13.50 for U. K. members, £16 for overseas members, with a student rate of £6.

Griffin Beale

The Powys Society Chairman's Report

Calendar Year 1991

The executive committee met three times in 1991: April 5th, August 5th and October 19th, to carry forward the business of the Society. In November 1990 a *Report on Publications* was approved which outlined in detail policies concerning the Society's publishing projects. One of the most important was the establishment of an annual *Powys Journal*, the first volume of which was distributed in August 1991. Also published in 1991 was a *Checklist* to the writings of the Powys family — a much needed

guide for readers. In addition, three *Newsletters* a year keep members informed of Society events.

Pursuing the policy of the Society to promote public education and recognition of the Powyses, four other major initiatives were undertaken during the year. Under the auspices of the University of Bristol extension department, Frank Kibblewhite, a member of the Committee, has given a series of courses in small communities in Somerset and Dorset. These have proved very popular and gained the Society a significant number of new members. In August 1991, in conjunction with the annual conference held at Kingston Maurward, a Powys Exhibition was mounted by Frank Kibblewhite and Louise de Bruin at the Dorset County Museum, which the Director informed us attracted much public attention. A lecture by Charles Lock opened the exhibition and was also well attended by the public as well as by Society members. Subsequently the talk was published in pamphlet form and is available through the Museum. Another public lecture by Glen Cavaliero, President of the Society, was given in Montacute on October 12th.

A project that has attracted interest is a well mounted display about the Powys family in one of the gazebos of the National Trust's Montacute House. A new pamphlet was written and produced by the Society specifically to accompany this and is available in the gazebo. The design and mounting was done by Bev Craven, Sarah Linden and John Batten. The National Trust was sufficiently impressed to allow the display to remain in place during their 1992 season.

Addendum

At the Committee meeting in October 1991, it was agreed that the Society would proceed with the establishment of a "Powys Centre". This would provide in England a much-needed source of research information for scholars as well as providing a focus for Powysian studies. The impetus for this Centre was Francis and Kay Feather's generous decision to leave The Powys Society their outstanding collection of Powys material, if mutually agreeable arrangements could be made. Much of the Committee's effort in 1992 has been devoted to setting up policies and a structure that will be useful and acceptable not only to the Feathers but to future donors, and to choosing the best possible repository. At the 1992 Conference contracts were exchanged between the Society and the Feathers, and the A. G. M. approved the Dorset County Museum as the Powys Centre and approved the contract drawn up between the Society and the Museum.

Full details of this momentous venture will appear in the next *Newsletter.*

Morine Krissdóttir

Sherborne School Days and Wolf Solent

A walk around Sherborne led by Tony Hallett on September 20th 1992

On this fine Sunday afternoon fourteen Powys Society members and friends met outside Sherborne station, looking forward to a walk around Sherborne with readings and explanations from Tony Hallett. Tony came well prepared with Powys books and two very interesting guide books: *Sherborne Camera* (£8.95) by Katherine Barker, and *The Book of Sherborne* by J. H. P. Gibb (£15.95).

Chapters one and two of *Wolf Solent* describe Wolf's arrival at Ramsgard station (Sherborne station). Wolf catches sight of the familiar Lovelace Hotel (Digby Hotel) across the public gardens. Tony pointed out to us the Digby Hotel built in 1869 as a rather upmarket railway hotel with money provided by George Digby. It is now part of Sherborne School. The public gardens are still there opposite the station. Here Tony read us the opening paragraph of chapter 2. This was chosen because it placed us very firmly in Wolf's landscape. We turned to the east, as Wolf had done, and looked over the very same bridge Wolf remembered looking over with his father; and we deplored the number of cans still cast into the stream today. Tony was sadly unable to identify Selena Gault's house for us.

We then went on to Westbury House — John Cowper Powys's first Prep. School where he and his brother Littleton were taken by their father in 1883. It is now called Wessex House and stands in Westbury Road but its rear premises (Wessex Court) face on to the Digby Road. Here the reading was from *Autobiography* pages 80–81.

In 1885 John and Littleton moved on from the Prep. to the "Big School" and Wildman's House. This was our next stop and here we had our fourth reading (*Autobiography*, page 98). Wildman's House became a convent and behind this convent we saw the school cricket field where Littleton and John Cowper would bowl at each other on long summer evenings. Tony explained about the route that Wolf and Selena would have taken to the cemetery to visit William Solent's (Wolf's father's) grave. Isobel Powys Marks told us that her uncle Littleton and his first wife Mabel were buried in this same cemetery.

Then on, until we came to a short lane that had been called Powys Lane, but alas the sign was stolen in early 1989, so although the present headmaster of the Prep. says the lane is always called Powys Lane, it cannot now be readily identified by visitors. Powys Lane goes to Acreman House, the Prep. where Littleton had been Headmaster from 1905 until his retirement in 1923. Isobel explained how Littleton had extended the school and she could remember staying there when she was young.

Sherborne School at last, founded about 705, unaffected by the dissolution of the monastery and re-founded by Edward VI in 1550. The school buildings are exceedingly picturesque, being made up of rambling halls and houses of all ages. The old Guesten

Hall of the monastery is now the library, the school chapel was the Abbot's Hall. Tony had only intended us to walk around the outside of the school but, fortunately, Furse Swann (an old boy) was with us and, aided and abetted by him, we were shown the school library, where John Cowper must have spent many hours in his youth. Susan Rands pointed out a small, timid-looking boy, hiding away from his fellows. This seemed history repeating itself. Furse Swann said he remembered there being a bust of John Cowper in the window of the library a few years ago, but we couldn't discover it. Our Secretary is now making some inquiries to try and discover something about the head and its whereabouts. We checked the library for Powys material and were pleased to discover an extensive collection.

We continued on our way across the school courtyard and on to Cheap Street. We noticed the Conduit, a Lavatorium built for the monks and moved to its present position from the monks' cloisters in 1553.

As we entered the Abbey, John Batten remembered how in Llewelyn's essay on "Ham Hill" in *Somerset and Dorset Essays* Llewelyn had written "I have wondered out of which particular quarry of Ham Hill the stones that form the fan tracery of the roof of Sherborne Abbey were lifted — perhaps from the same bed that was destined to provide flagstones for the notorious Ilchester gaol, stones of devotion and stones of despair deriving from a single matrix of unimplicated nature!" The immediate impression that will befall any who enter the Abbey for the first time is an outcome of the magic tint of the Ham Hill stone. The fan tracery in the roof is said to be unrivalled in England. However, we were after Powysian memorabilia and quickly went to look for the "bones", searched for by Wolf and Selena Gault. We found "the bones" covered by glass and nearby a brass plaque sunk in the tiles. The inscription reads: "Near this spot were interred the mortal remains of Ethelbald and of Ethelbert his brother. Each of whom in his turn succeeded to the throne of Ethelwulf, King of the West Saxons and were succeeded in the Kingdom by their youngest brother Alfred the Great". We were surprised when Tony told us that the Lady Chapel in Victorian times had been the Sherborne headmaster's house. The headmaster and his wife could hear the organ clearly during services as the dividing partition was so thin. We left the Abbey and walked back towards the station, going through the Pageant Gardens on the way.

In 1905 an enormous pageant was held in the old castle grounds. Isobel remembered that her uncle Will, dressed all in green, had taken part in this pageant. The pageant was designed to celebrate the 1,200th anniversary of the founding of the town and bishopric in 705. Various episodes in the history of the town were performed by local people and the money raised went towards the laying-out of the Pageant Gardens in the old Half Moon Field. Here Tony read John Cowper's letters to Littleton dated March 19th and April 4th 1932 (published in *Essays on John Cowper Powys*). These letters seem to confirm that John Cowper used the Sherborne pageant to help him write his very descriptive chapter "The Pageant" in *A Glastonbury Romance*.

Finally we approached the castle. John Cowper writes in his *Autobiography* "Since the manor was snatched from Sir Walter Raleigh by King James, this unrivalled house

and park, with the ruins of the older castle, has remained in the hands of the Digbys, another famous Elizabethan family. Not a park in England, No! not even that charming one at Montacute, do I know so well, or admire so much, as this one at Sherborne!" This was one of the two paragraphs read to us by Tony. It is in these paragraphs that John Cowper remembers his first day at the Prep. and the walk with his father and Littleton through Sherborne Park. The castle has a fascinating history. There are two buildings bearing the name Sherborne Castle. They are divided by a lake. The old castle became a ruin in the Civil Wars, meeting its doom in 1645 when General Fairfax stormed the royalist garrison. Raleigh's former home, Sherborne Lodge, was then slowly extended and became the "new" Sherborne Castle, taken over by the Digby family in the seventeenth century. The Digbys, although no longer occupants, are owners to this day. We went to look at the field below the castle ruins and Tony explained how this field had been the scene of the Horse Fair in *Wolf Solent*. We were also shown photographs of the Sherborne Pageant and could see the ruins of the castle in the background.

This seemed an ideal setting for a reading of John Cowper's first poem, "At Corfe Castle".

Our final reading was an extract from Llewelyn's essay "Albert Reginald Powys" (from *Somerset and Dorset Essays*). In this essay Llewelyn describes Bertie saving up his pocket money to build Maberlulu — the Powyses' own castle in Montacute gardens.

At about 5 pm, as sadly our afternoon drew to a close, we all thanked Tony Hallett for what had been a very memorable Powysian experience.

As Isobel and I approached home, exhilarated by such a stimulating afternoon, we saw huge, brightly coloured hot-air balloons rising over Bath. Isobel said, "I'd love a ride in a balloon — I think I'll do it on my 90th birthday." Would another Powys Society member please volunteer to go with her?

Mary Warden

The Powys Society's Newsletter

Your editor has decided to number the newsletters, beginning with the new direction of the Society of Morine Krissdóttir and Griffin Beale in 1987. Counted thus, the present newsletter is number 17. The full list is as follows; number of pages includes covers.

1	December 1987	8 pp.	9	April 1990	28 pp.
2	March 1988	8 pp.	10	July 1990	16 pp.
3	May 1988	8 pp.	11	November 1990	24 pp.
4	July 1988	12 pp.	12	April 1991	24 pp.
5	December 1988	16 pp.	13	July 1991	16 pp.
6	March 1989	20 pp.	14	November 1991	24 pp.
7	July 1989	24 pp.	15	April 1992	16 pp.
8	December 1989	68 pp.	16	July 1992	24 pp.
(incl. August 1929 J. C. P. *Diary*)			17	November 1992	40 pp.

Peter Powys Grey, July 14th 1922 – October 5th 1992
Photograph taken at Chydyok by Charles Lock, September 3rd 1992

Peter Powys Grey

1922–1992

Many members of the Society will be grieved to learn of the death at his New York apartment in October of Peter Powys Grey. The only son of Marian Powys Grey, the third of the five Powys sisters, he was a man of enormous warmth, generosity and charm. His exuberant and responsive personality was shared with us at more than one annual conference, and his recollections of his mother and of John Cowper Powys will be gratefully remembered, as will those he delivered this year at Cirencester, concerning Katie Powys and Hamilton Cowper Johnson. His reading of Katie's poems can never be forgotten by those who heard it: perhaps John Cowper had sounded a little like this. The deep affection with which Peter spoke of these two was in fact the unconscious self-revelation of a man whose keen response to life and alert interest in other people showed him to be a characteristic member of his mother's family. All those of us who were fortunate enough to have enjoyed his company, his candour and openness of spirit, will share also in that family's sense of loss. Our sympathy goes out to them.

Glen Cavaliero

Peter Powys Grey died on October 4th 1992. A Memorial Service was held at St Clement's Church, New York, on October 18th. Dr Morine Krissdóttir and Dr Charles Lock attended and spoke at the service.

Dr Charles Lock

Peter Powys Grey was brought up in the belief that his mother Marian Powys had married a Mr Grey who had at once departed for distant lands and died of malaria. A drawing by Marian of the putative Mr Grey was all the evidence for this story. Only after he was grown up did Peter learn the identity of his father, and the origin of his name (while he continued to honour the picture of "Mr Grey"). His actual father was Ernest Angell, who was to become well-known as the national chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union. The name Ernest Angell seems to belong to one of the fictional characters of Theodore Francis Powys: to be both Ernest and an angel would have seemed, if not important, at least appropriate to the humour with which Marian chose to leave her supposed marriage and genuine pregnancy otherwise unexplained. As for the name given to Peter in place of Angell, that was devised by John Cowper Powys. On hearing of his nephew's arrival, in rather unconventional circumstances, John Cowper had announced portentously: "This is not black; this is not white; we shall name him Grey." Less portentously, we ourselves in the past two weeks, thinking of the manner of Peter's death, may have arrived in our indecision and bewilderment at the word grey. Between the beginning and the end, however, Peter was all extremes and colours, anything but grey, entirely, one might say, Powys.

We are today giving thanks for Peter's life. Less than two months ago I had the task — so similar yet so unthinkably different — of thanking Peter for the talk which he had just delivered to The Powys Society in England. He had spoken about the two members of his extraordinary family to whom he felt particularly devoted, his aunt Katie, and his cousin, the Cowley Father, John Hamilton Cowper Johnson. It was after these two relatives that he had named his own children. I was unable then, in Peter's presence, to mention the anecdote in his lecture which had most struck me and moved me by its implication. When he was at boarding school, Peter had become very close to Father Hamilton. Peter visited Father Hamilton in 1961, just before his death, when Father Hamilton's mind was wandering. He did not identify his visitor, but asked the visitor to pass on a message to Peter: "Tell Peter," Fr Hamilton said unwittingly to Peter, "Tell Peter he must use all the words he's got." What struck me in this anecdote was the indirection of the instruction: had Father Hamilton known that he was speaking to Peter, would he have said these very words? Thanking Peter in August, I was unable to mention this; today, in his irrevocable absence, I am haunted both by the question, and by my inability to pose it now. (His lecture in August was by no means the first occasion on which I had heard the anecdote.) Now, in his absence, I have a great deal that I want to tell Peter, a great many questions to discuss. Yet always with Peter indirection seemed the best way of communicating, and of soliciting information: information that I sought not only in the course of friendship but as it were professionally, for my research on the biography of John Cowper Powys, which had first led me to write to Peter in 1978. I did not often ask direct questions, for Peter's mind worked by leaps of association, yielding all sorts of facts unsolicited and often unsought. I was content to listen, content to let Peter use his words — and that voice of astonishing range and power. He was an exceptional *raconteur*, not just in public, nor when a small group or an audience of just one was transmuted into an *audience*, but even in a private, almost conspiratorial way. I shall hoard the memory of many days passed and excursions undertaken in Peter's company, more accurately with Peter as my guide, to Patchin Place, Phudd Bottom and other Powysian sites, or, following his own enthusiasms, to the Noguchi Museum in Brooklyn, or simply to a favourite ailanthus tree, or to a tiny area of green in the midst of Manhattan whose planting had been Peter's doing, when he worked for the New York Chamber of Commerce. But I particularly recall now a day in the early summer of 1990, when we visited Snedens Landing and I was shown the places of his childhood. With much preparation and anticipation we carried a picnic lunch on a steep path through an ancient beech wood to the banks of the Hudson, and we stopped as Peter had planned in the magical space of a mock-classical ruin on the Katharine Cornell estate: "This is where I danced with Vivian Leigh." And in the casually understated tone, itself by no means unrehearsed, I heard also the tremulous voice of the adolescent, the excitement, the wonder, the sheer youthfulness that leaked out, if I may so put it, from even his most polished performances. "And that's where Larry moored his flying-boat. I used to row him out in my dinghy." Peter's voice could always entrance; in that grove it all but redeemed the years.

Peter had indeed many words, and it was of course a perpetual anguish that he failed to be a writer or an actor. His gifts of language were put at the service of the American Express Company, and then of the New York Chamber of Commerce. In the successful years of his professional career, as speech-writer and public relations officer, I fear that Peter must have been haunted by Father Hamilton admonishing: "That is not what I meant at all." Certainly Peter was driven by the quest to find the appropriate form for his words. And there was an absoluteness, a purity in his failure which I choose to celebrate. Peter's standards were inordinately high: in trying to write the great American novel (as, he often told me, was expected of him at Harvard) he was unable to write anything at all. When one thinks of his privileged upbringing and education, Cyril Connolly's phrase "enemies of promise" comes inevitably to mind. And yet, Peter never behaved as a disappointed man; he remained without cynicism, without bitterness, above all, without excuses. Writing never became a regret; it remained always a task, a challenge, a purchase on the future.

Peter had a great many mentors and teachers, of extraordinary eminence and quality, from John Cowper Powys and Theodore Dreiser and Horace Gregory, to his art teacher at school, the great Armenian painter Arshile Gorky (Josef Albers was another), to his Harvard professors, F. O. Matthiessen and Harry Levin. What impossible steps to achievement such masters must have indicated. And now, after Peter's death, I cannot but dwell on the fact that the two teachers of whom he spoke most warmly and without reserve were "Mattie" and Arshile Gorky — both of whom committed suicide. And Peter spoke of Mattie's suicide as pedagogical, an admonition to his students. I always wanted to ask Peter what he meant by this. I suppose the need to ask should have gone with the possibility. But these men, though of great eminence, had judged their lives to be failures. One, Gorky, was neglected shamefully; but Matthiessen was regarded, long before his death, as one of the greatest literary critics and scholars America ever produced. What left Matthiessen dissatisfied may have been the price of success, the loss of privacy, perhaps the compromise of integrity, even the curse of complacency and self-satisfaction.

I have long regarded Peter as one of my teachers. He had abundant gifts, of encouragement and enthusiasm and appreciation, of curiosity and compassion, gifts for others, for us; and his great gift of words was more than sufficiently used in his friendships and, especially, in his devoted work for the Samaritans. One might regret that Peter could not be content with all that he did in his remarkable life, nor with all the good he did for others. Yet his discontent with himself was the very genius of personality. Mixed with his generosity and his enormous sense of gratitude, his sense of every moment as a gift, that discontent has been for me exemplary. Peter attained to the age of seventy without any of the condescension and complacency usually allowed to age. However harsh and depressing his circumstances, and in the last few years we know they were far from easy, Peter was not tempted to blame others or to find excuses. He might not have forgiven me for the comparison, but his courage and fortitude reminded me sometimes of what I have read of the "uprightness" and

"steadfastness" of the grandfather he never met, the Reverend Charles Francis Powys, Vicar of Montacute.

Some eighteen months ago, when I was working on the medieval mystics, Peter gave me an icon of Julian of Norwich, an icon painted in England and given to Peter by his cousin Gerard Casey. Thereafter we would always close our telephone calls with Julian's most famous words: one of us would say "All shall be well", and the other would respond "and all shall be well". Such words of faith and reassurance hardly came amiss in these past months and years. I last spoke to Peter, and said goodbye, in the most appropriate setting, at Chydyok, just inland from the Dorset cliffs, on a translucent September day. We parted without using Julian's words, as if neither to ignore what seemed virtually inevitable, nor to mock the faith that would resist it. I hope it is not presumptuous to believe that those words, used so often in the past year and more, would have a merely sentimental or therapeutic value if we could not still use them today. Now, when Peter has no words left to use, I say: "All shall be well" — and even in his absence the response resounds: "And all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Dr Morine Krissdóttir

As everyone in this church knows, a relationship with Peter was multi-levelled, and so I come not only as Chairman of The Powys Society, of which he was a valued member, but I come as his friend, his sometime-helper, and his mythologized "stone-bearer".

As it happened — and nothing happened accidentally with Peter — I had asked him to give a talk at the 1992 Powys Conference held this past August. Since the theme of the Conference was "The Powys Woman" I wanted him to talk about his aunt, Katie Philippa Powys. But Peter decided that he wanted to speak about *two* important people in his life: his aunt Katie and his cousin, Father Hamilton Johnson.

We were in close communication so I knew that Peter was finding this a very difficult speech to write. This surprised me because Peter — when he was not *imprisoned* by language — was a master word-smith. I gradually realized that this talk was only in part about Katie Powys and Hamilton Johnson: that what he was doing was trying — finally — to come to terms with his relationship with the maternal side of his family and, in so doing, to define two aspects of his complicated self.

He wrote much of the speech at Criehaven — his beloved island — so it was natural, inevitable, that he used as a controlling metaphor the image of two buoys. He said that Katie and Hamilton were like harbour buoys, starboard and port, moored out beyond the breakwater: that these two people set the boundaries of the deep channel through which the family could venture forth into dangerous waters and return safely. They were the outsiders who gave both freedom and containment to the insiders.

He revered Father Hamilton, who was both a religious mentor and a father figure to the young man. Hamilton encouraged Peter's love of literature. He told Peter to "Use words, use all the words you have."

The words he had and could not use tormented Peter all his life.

But Peter loved also his aunt Katie Powys — wild, intensely-loving-and-hating,

turmoiled Katie. She was a poet (the last entry in Peter's Journal was a poem of Katie's). *Her* tragedy was a kind of mental stammer — the words imploded inside her and rarely found their natural and right way out. But he loved, he said, her intransigence and her stubborn refusal to adapt.

As Peter talked, it became obvious that these two beloved figures, superficially so unlike, were connected: in their mysticism, their love of literature, and above all, their sense of always being outlanders. They were the two buoys that defined Peter.

Society members were deeply moved by Peter's speech, both by its text and — as some must have heard — its sub-text: the silence between the words.

After the conference I arranged to take Peter for a few days to Chydyok in Dorset, that remote place between windswept chalk downs and the sheer cliffs of the sea, where as a boy he had visited his aunts and uncles. It was another test he had set up for himself — to see if after so long an absence he could re-visit the place where he had once been a beautiful boy full of promise and surrounded by love.

While we were there he came with me to the Dorset County Museum and witnessed the signing of a contract which brought into being the Powys Centre — an event of great importance to him.

But of greater importance to him was the day we were walking on the cliffs and he found a particular flint which he thought was "the most beautiful stone I have ever seen".

Peter and I shared a love of and reverence for stones and I understood — and accepted — what he was saying when he told me during our last telephone conversation that the flint, like some magnetic lodestone, had helped him to find his way finally to freedom.

I remember how he put it: "It all coheres, Morine, in some miraculous way, it all coheres."

Another speaker at the Memorial service told of Peter's frequent recommendation of Chapter twenty-three of *Moby Dick* — "Melville made it easy to remember like the twenty-third psalm." It was then that I realized why he had chosen the image of the two buoys. Hamilton-Peter, Katie-Peter: "in landlessness alone".

23

THE LEE SHORE

Some chapters back, one Bulkington was spoken of, a tall, new-landed mariner, encountered in New Bedford at the inn.

When on that shivering winter's night, the Pequod thrust her vindictive bows into the cold malicious waves, who should I see standing at her helm but Bulkington! I looked with sympathetic awe and fearfulness upon the man, who in mid-winter just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage, could so unrestingly push off again for still another tempestuous term. The land seemed scorching to his feet. Wonderfullest things are ever the unmentionable; deep memories yield no epitaphs; this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington. Let me only say that it fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land.

The port would fain give succor; the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds all sail off shore; in so doing, fights 'gainst the very winds that fain would blow her homeward; seeks all the lashed sea's landlessness again; for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her bitterest foe!

Know ye, now, Bulkington? Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God — so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh who would craven crawl to land! Terrors of the terrible! is all this agony so vain? Take heart, take heart, O Bulkington! Bear thee grimly, demigod! Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing — straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!

A Mystery Solved and Unresolved

Llewelyn Powys's Fourth Publication

Since my note to the re-publication of Llewelyn Powys's early short story "The Necrophilias" in *The Powys Review* 14 (1984), it seemed certain that the earliest pieces by Llewelyn had been located. Llewelyn himself was fond of recalling that his first published essay was "Death", taken by A. R. Orage for the remarkable "democratic review of politics, religion and literature", *The New Age*. It was the enterprising and cultured Orage who had given Llewelyn his much-needed "break", and he was to publish further pieces by Llewelyn Powys from 1915 onwards — "From Montacute to Gilgil" in n. s. Vol. XVI, No. 12 (21 January 1915), "Rubbish" in n. s. Vol. XVI, No. 23 (8 April 1915), "Africa" in n. s. Vol. XVII, No. 10 (8 July 1915), and "How It Happens" in n. s. Vol. XXVI, No. 23 (8 April 1920).

The publication of Llewelyn Powys's second and third pieces in the canon were rare items indeed — "The Stunner" and "The Necrophilias" both appearing in *The Cerebralist* No. 1 (December 1913) — see my note in *Powys Review* 14. But a gap in the list still remained between "The Necrophilias" of 1913 and "From Montacute to Gilgil" of 1915, for the simple reason that Llewelyn, in his first published book — the joint-authorship *Confessions of Two Brothers* (Manas Press, 1916) — had acknowledged *The New Statesman* as well as *The New Age* as a magazine which had previously published

some of his diary extracts used in *Confessions*. *The New Age* piece was obviously "From Montacute to Gilgil" — but which and where was the *New Statesman* piece?

Malcolm Elwin intimated its existence on page 108 of his *Life* , when he had written that J. C. Squire, the literary editor of *The New Statesman* and an old Cambridge friend, had "accepted an extract from his diaries", but since Elwin's meticulous method would undoubtedly have referenced the piece had he known it, my guess is that the piece was never identified. Further inquiry of *The New Statesman* itself revealed nothing: their list began with "Black Gods" of 10 July 1920 (Vol. XV, No. 378); and the indexes which appeared in the magazine quarterly, when checked for the period prior to 1916, were also silent.

There was nothing for it but to check through early issues of *The New Statesman* . Knowing that the magazine did not index initialled items, one had to be aware that the piece may have been under "L. P." or even anonymous, and of course the eye had to be trained to recognise style and format in case the title proved unfamiliar. In the event it turned up — "A Consumptive's Diary" was included under the Miscellany section of the issue of 7 March 1914 (Vol. II, No. 48, pp. 689–90) — Llewelyn Powys's fourth published piece. The reason for its not being located is because it was published under the initials "M. L." (presumably those of Marion Linton), which casts the mystery onto another plane altogether. Did Llewelyn give the piece to Marion Linton to send to Squire, resulting in a confusion of names, or did Llewelyn intend to disguise his authorship by submitting it anonymously?

I am currently working on a full descriptive bibliography of Llewelyn Powys, continuing the good work begun by Mrs Margaret Eaton, but it will prove a major and long-term task. I would be grateful for any help from members concerning unfamiliar pieces by Llewelyn Powys that appeared in obscure journals or newspapers. I would particularly value photocopies of cuttings which people may have. I am concerned to make exact references, e.g. the volume, number and pages references of any periodical, not just the date, and the page and column(s) references of any relevant newspaper. It is important also to distinguish between supplements and magazines in newspaper references. For example, some of Llewelyn's pieces in *The New York Evening Post* appeared in "The Saturday Magazine", which was an almost identical paper brought out at the same time as the Saturday issue of the newspaper; and many American newspapers of the time went in for up to twenty supplements or "sections" in the week-end issues. Llewelyn's pieces sometimes appeared in one of these.

I am providing here a list of some obscure references which I have on file but which I have not been able to confirm in research at the libraries I have so far used:

"Banks and Bank Clerks", *The Liberator* V, No. 7 (July 1922), pp. 24–5.

"Brothers of the Lion", *The Independent* CXIV, (21 February 1925), pp. 20–6

"Accidental Reflections", *The Fig Tree* No. 1 (June 1936/1939?), pp. 76–78

"Lodmore", *The Fig Tree* No. 3 (December 1936), pp. 239–42 [*sic*]

Dr P. J. Foss

The Heron

An Epitaph for Giles Wordsworth

Solitary, grey and thin,
at the rim of a lake,
sartorially trim,
witty and grim,
he wore the poet's narrow skull
with style.

As small birds
skimmed the lake for flies,
he stood,
waiting for grander prey.
This is the way
I shall remember him.

Patricia Dawson

Giles Wordsworth

One of the founding members of The Powys Society, Giles Wordsworth cherished early memories of being looked after by Gertrude and Katie Powys at Chydyok, and the Dorset landscape remained a touchstone all his life. Through his father, Andrew (a correspondent of Llewelyn) Giles read the Dorset and Somerset essays in boyhood. His attitude to John Cowper was more ambivalent; he detested long, heavy novels, yet was fascinated by the man himself. He remained dear to Phyllis Playter (who once told me she considered Giles, after J. C. P., "the most interesting man she'd ever met").

In what did this "interest" consist? Giles projected — despite his constant, compulsive self-disparagement — immense charm and distinction; and while his circumstances often bordered on catastrophe, he somehow radiated a profoundly humorous view of life. His smile was irresistible; his wit, delivered in an exhausted drawl, was exceptionally penetrating. He was so obviously gifted, and so evidently displaced in a series of hack jobs, at *Readers' Digest* or, later, in Fleet Street, that his predicament attracted a stream of would-be saviours. There were various writing projects (including collaboration with Belinda Humfrey on a life of J. C. P.) yet somehow nothing ever got done. His family life was difficult, but his worst disasters involved property. In the 1970s he fulfilled a fantasy when buying a house looking onto Weymouth harbour (and where he once memorably entertained members of the Powys Society) ; yet he came to see his purchase as a terrible error — as he explained, "like taking a lease on the vale of Tempe"; and it ended — as did several other dream-castles, ranging from Carnaby Street to Mount Abu — in the long drawn-out agony of Giles' eviction.

In recent years he combined an exhausting job as night sub-editor on the *Sunday People*, with half the week quietly in his idyllic cottage at East Chaldon. He is buried there, and a church crowded almost to overflowing witnessed the real devotion Giles inspired in so many friends. His death, while still in his fifties, transformed what had always seemed a comic persona, into an essentially tragic one.

Timothy Hyman

Henry Miller and Colin Wilson

I would like to make a comment, via the *Newsletter*, on the article by Glen Cavaliero, "Powys Retrospect: An Informal Commentary" in the splendid first volume of *The Powys Journal.*

I would suggest that, in addition to those mentioned by Dr Cavaliero, there are two more writers who helped to bring Powys's novels to the notice of a wider audience. The first was Henry Miller in his own retrospective, *The Books In My Life* (U. K. paperback first published in 1963). Miller's now famous account of the moment that he first set eyes on "Prester John" is wonderful: "He illumined whatever he touched ... he was an interpreter or poet in the highest sense of the word." I'm sure that this superb advertisement for John Cowper Powys, which ran to six pages, persuaded more than a few readers to seek out certain books by J. C. P., especially those that Miller asserted he "devoured hungrily".

The second writer, Colin Wilson, was very encouraging towards J. C. P.'s work generally in *Eagle and Earwig* (1965). In *The Craft of the Novel* (1975), Wilson praised J. C. P.'s "breadth of vision". However, it was *The Occult* (published in paperback in 1973) that had the greatest influence. Printed on page sixty-five was the opening paragraph of *A Glastonbury Romance* and a description of the "peculiar genius" who was its author, as well as many more references to J. C. P. throughout its 790 pages length. Since *The Occult* became an international best-seller, I am sure that the author's glowing recommendation was responsible for many people throughout the world subsequently buying or borrowing copies of *A Glastonbury Romance.*

Thus, it is probable that Henry Miller and Colin Wilson both contributed to the rise in popularity of at least one member of the Powys family and, hopefully, the ranks of The Powys Society as well.

Jeff T. Meddle

Gertrude Mary Powys, the Painter

Ever since I have seen photographs of Gertrude Powys's paintings and reproductions of her drawings and prints, I have been regretting that she was not able to develop her talent more freely. To me, it seems to have been more than an average one. Nobody knows what would have become of her work if she had had the chance to dedicate all her powers to it.

Her fate was a typical one. Time out of mind, gifted women had to suppress, or at least to neglect, their artistic abilities due to the duties of family and marriage. There are exceptions, of course, but they are few.

In order to do some justice to Gertrude's talent, it could be arranged for her to be

included in one of the most renowned German encyclopaedias of art. This encyclopaedia is just being revised and newly edited. Since the new edition has only arrived at the letter B, some time will pass until Gertrude's début. During this time, though, I would like to collect information about her education and work as an artist.

If anyone, therefore, knows anything I would be most grateful to get that particular piece of information.

Please write to **Henning Ahrens, Heintzestr. 16, 2300 Kiel 14, Germany.**

Sketch of the Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, by G. M. Powys

The drawing on the back cover is reproduced at its original size from a pen drawing by Gertrude Mary Powys. It shows the dome of the Panthéon from the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, where she studied for a short period in the 1920s. I also have an oil painting of the same subject, at the same size.

SPM

The Second Montacute Lecture

On Saturday, October 10th, The Powys Society held its second Montacute Lecture in the Baptist Schoolroom. As last year, the evening was well attended, both by Society members and by others.

The meeting opened with a welcome from Leslie Harrison, the Church Pastor. There followed the announcement of the death in New York of Peter Powys Grey, son of Marian. This was a shock to local members who had recently entertained Peter in Montacute prior to his visit to the Conference at Cirencester. It was particularly poignant that his comment in the visitors book at St Catherine's Church during his stay was "Returned Home".

The subject of this Montacute lecture was "A. R. Powys — His Life and Work", given in the presence of A. R. P.'s daughter Isobel, by his grandson, Stephen Powys Marks. It was fitting that A. R. Powys should be thus remembered in a building just a few yards from the drinking fountain designed by him in 1902, and in close proximity to Montacute House, the Elizabethan mansion which, but for the enthusiasm and foresight of A. R. P., would have been lost to the nation.

Led by his grandson, we were guided through the years of A. R. P.'s work from Mabelulu to the post of Secretary to the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, culminating in the award of the C. B. E. in 1934, and including the restoration of Winterborne Tomson church which was to be his final resting place at the tragically early age of fifty-four. During the lecture we were shown a variety of memorabilia, including the chess table made at Sherborne School with signs of the damage it

sustained in transit home as described by Llewelyn in "Memory Stirred".

Thus far we recognised the "Received Wisdom" of the practical, hard-working, down-to-earth brother of the three great literary figures usually thought of when the name Powys is mentioned. But we find that John, Theodore and Llewelyn were not alone in their search for truth in the family. It was his constant pursuit of honesty in all aspects of architecture and conservation and his use of the correct materials from whatever source which guided A. R. P. in his work with the S. P. A. B.; his directness of approach and unpretentiousness earned him the respect of his profession and the name of "Brother Positive" within the family.

His letters and articles reveal a person who thought very deeply of the philosophy underlying his approach in his chosen profession. In a letter to his brother Littleton, published in *The Joy Of It*, A. R. P. writes "The secret of Life is to live in accordance with Nature and not with theory, whether the theory of convention or the theory of traditional religion or any other thing." This is the creed of a practical man, a thinking practical man, who viewed life within a reasoned perspective and whose works are evidence of his integrity.

At the end of the talk, questions were invited and Stephen thanked by John Batten, secretary to the Society.

This most interesting evening revealed yet another facet of the intellect and uniqueness of this outstandingly gifted family. Those of us who live in the timelessness of the Somerset countryside are privileged to think of them still as neighbours.

Phyllis Warr

A. R. Powys at the Palace

After he had been to Buckingham Palace to receive his C. B. E., A. R. Powys wrote to Llewelyn an observant and amusing letter about the experience; I quoted the last paragraph during my lecture at Montacute. I do not know where the original letter is; this transcript is from a copy made by his sister Gertrude, and there are one or two uncertainties in the text. I have not, intentionally, made any alterations.

Stephen Powys Marks

May 1934

My dearest Lulu

You are very often in my mind & this stirs in me my happiest memories & my love to you. I do hope you are well. Dont walk far but walk on your terrace having seats at hand on which to rest.

You would like to know whether I saw a mouse under the royal chair yesterday. I found my fear of doing the wrong thing so distracting that I could not note all that you would have done. The King, whom I passed all too quickly, gave to my mind an

impression of a small hairy pet dog carefully pampered & protected — a ladies drawing room dog. But it was all so quick that the impression may well have been wrong. I looked for an instant into his eyes which seemed to look into mine with some interest and inquiry as though they were wondering what sort of man this is. The performance was odd. Not a soul to be seen in ordinary clothes. A Palace full of fairy tale generals, soldiers, guards & footmen. Tis a building of no great distinction but there are a good many things in it, & the room in which we were marshalled in pens, was a picture gallery, a large room about ½ the length of the Gallery at Montacute, lighted from the ceiling & not from the walls. There was in it a fine set of pictures from floor to ceiling, much too crowded. I was penned near some exellent Rembrants. Alone amongst the crowd to be honoured the Generals seemed at ease. They all knew each other and seemed to [vie ?] to collect honours & medals & call each other by their Christian names in grand surroundings. My immediate neighbour came from Cardiff & told me with jealous sureness that only one had been bestowed on his city, though this neglect of the city worthies was for him clearly compensated by his having been chosen for the C. B. E. I got a sense that about ½ the folk were seekers after letters so that they could stand higher in the eyes of their fellow citizens, where social distinction is all on a par, & the addition of one extra half feather is of enormous importance. There were guards about with golden helmets topped with drooping white feathers. There were others with golden staved pikes, twisted about with red silk ribbons which partly covered the carved staves. But although these things were doubtless expensive they had about them a good deal of the look of the gold-tinned ornaments of the Pack Monday fair roundabouts. If I were king I would have less of that sort of thing and more of reality. I guess Edward III had well carved stairs and a guilding such as remains on the Gothic screens. The show must vanish because it is so much false buttressing of Royalty. The precedier was as follows:– I went and was dressed at the shop that hires out Court levee dress. Drove with Faith into the palace courtyard in a taxi left my enormous cocked hat [*sketch*] at the cloak room on the stand in the hall & received ticket no 125, went up the stairs where stood an Alice in Wonderland footman all dressed in queer clothes, much braided & gold, thence into the picture gallery where a man in uniform carrying a paper where all our names were listed asked me "What I had got" for the life of me I could not remember & rather than make a mistake fumbled with the official letter until I could point to the letters C. B. E. He sent me to the middle of the room where another uniformed man put me into the roped space of the floor where stood a number of others of the like kind. All strangers each to the other. An elderly man next to me was much concerned because he had lost a button from his waistcoat & expected to be sent out to get it. He kept his hand over his belly to hide it. I dont know what he did when he made his bow. Eventually we were formed up in a line & gradually proceeded to the door of the throne room where we were launched into a space & made to stand before the King & bow to him, to walk 6 paces up to him & shake hands, when I nearly lost my head, I was so much trying to see him to tell you what I saw, that I almost forgot to put out my hand & flurried by the neglect did not with dignity return backward two steps nor make the bow I had prepared

as well as it should have been made. There I turned to the right passed the watching & helmeted guardsmen, to the great room where someone stripped me of the ornament & put it in a box & sent me out. I found I had to walk out into the street all dressed up & get a taxi, passing the curious crowd. I drove home and Faith took a photograph of me which later I will send you. That is my discription of the show. I noticed while we waited that the knowall Queen had been making architectural alterations to good Queen Victoria's decorations. These were more suggestive of the time of Melbourne & to my mind were more interesting than the antique dealerish embellishments added by your old Tarts mother. You remember how you carried for many years Princess Mary's photo to add to your nightly dreamings.

L. C. P. would have liked the show very well & would have taken on the characteristic manner with his fellows in the Pens. I cannot imagine brother John in the show at all. You would have been all curious & would have brought back a story worth reading, Theodore would have seen small things or insects which would have peeped winkingly out for his special benefit. Had Willie been with us he would have undoubtedly have had the giggles.

A. R. Powys

Reviews

The Interior Castle: A Life of Gerald Brenan, by Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy. Sinclair-Stevenson, London. ISBN 1 85619 137 0. £25.

A number of parallels may be drawn between the lives of Gerald Brenan and John Cowper Powys. Each was born to an upper-middle class family, of parents who found communication difficult; each was sent to boarding school and hated it; each lived a long life filled with travel and incident and each drew heavily upon his own life in his writings, both in direct autobiography and in fiction, as well as obsessively analysing his smallest sensations in letters and journals. Why is it then that Powys appears, at last, so great and sympathetic a man and Brenan so small and mean-spirited? Was it simply the difference between the genius of one and the mere cleverness of the other, or the fact that Powys was part of a large and clannish family, whereas the Brenan household consisted only of a number of isolated individuals? Perhaps this is at the root of the matter, for Gerald Brenan, as he is portrayed in Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's huge biography, was a particularly self-absorbed man, who explained the failure of his novels by saying that he could "only create solitary figures and cannot imagine anyone having real relations with anyone else" (p. 484). There are those who believe that the world is divided into two sorts of people: themselves and those who serve them. Gerald Brenan appears to have been just such a man.

Consider, for example, his relationships with women. Women seem to have existed, so far as Brenan was concerned, for three purposes: to deal with domestic necessities, to

allow him to prove to himself and his male friends that he was not impotent and, best of all, to reject him entirely, so that he could spend a day comforting himself by shrieking into a pillow or groaning in despair on his bed.

Brenan also liked to play at being poor (although he was never so poor that he had actually to find himself a job or do without domestic help) and particularly selected the most rat- and flea-infested hovels in which to stay on his travels, so that he might be amongst the peasants and share their experiences. Presumably the pleasure of such privation was all the greater since, unlike the peasants, Gerald could leave when the flea-bites became too much. Indeed, during his long life in Spain, although he had of necessity to deal with the local people, it was with the European and American ex-patriot community that he preferred to spend his time, never failing to ask when someone new arrived, "What class are they?"

Yet a man may be vain and unfeeling, he may exploit and manipulate those over whom he has power and live a life completely devoted to the satisfaction of his own needs and yet still, if his work is of sufficient importance, command our attention and deserve serious study. What then of Brenan's writing?

He published three novels which, as Gathorne-Hardy says "... must all be considered failures", two volumes of autobiography which the current volume shows to have been at least highly misleading, a volume of poetry ("... he never wrote even passable poetry.") and two miscellaneous volumes, as well as the five books devoted to his life in Spain, Spanish history and literature. Although Raymond Carr believes that "... his historical reputation is not permanent ...", it is upon these, particularly *South From Granada* (1957) and Brenan's unpublished letters, that Gathorne-Hardy believes his reputation will survive. Yet one has to ask whether this is enough to justify a biography of over six hundred pages. Clearly, in the sense that every life has its own fascination, it is; yet whereas the life of a man such as John Cowper Powys is inexhaustibly fascinating, the life of Gerald Brenan with its often repeated patterns and petty vanities, is merely exhausting.

As a piece of work *The Interior Castle* is an heroic achievement and nothing demonstrates more clearly the subjective nature of reviewing than to contrast the author's not uncritical affection for Gerald Brenan with my own reaction. The great revelation of the book, to my mind, is the portrait of Gamel Woolsey, and it is during the period of her long and horrible death from cancer that Gerald Brenan becomes, briefly, almost noble in his devotion. Within ten days of her death he had burnt many of Gamel's papers and had invited Lynda Price to come and stay.

Paul Roberts

Seven Friends, by Louis Marlow. The Mandrake Press, Thame.
A limited edition of 750 copies. ISBN 1 872736 07 6. £25.

Those lucky enough to have found a copy of the Richards Press, 1953, edition of *Seven Friends* by Louis Marlow (Wilkinson) will be familiar with the major contents of this book, a series of masterly and perceptive essays on John Cowper, Theodore and

Llewelyn Powys, Oscar Wilde (with whom Wilkinson had corresponded as a schoolboy), Aleister Crowley, Frank Harris and Somerset Maugham. In a sense that very list of names indicates something of the importance of Louis Wilkinson to the Powys story, for although few men were as close to the Powyses or understood them as well, Wilkinson was also part of a quite different, more cosmopolitan and sophisticated literary world and, as such, was able to bring to their lives and works a more objective criticism than was sometimes the case among contemporaries.

The Mandrake Press edition of *Seven Friends*, however, is far from being merely a reprint of the earlier issue and the first impression which it will make upon any reader is of the obvious elegance of its design and the care of its production. This is apparent from the haunting and dramatic photograph of the author which appears on the dust-wrapper (I believe this is the previously unpublished photograph by Man Ray which has been mentioned in publicity material, although this is not acknowledged in the text) as well as from the clear and attractive typeface. My only criticism of the production of the book is that the photographs which are integrated into the text appear rather grainy.

In addition to the essays themselves, this edition is furnished with a wealth of fascinating additional material. Oliver Wilkinson's long introduction not only provides an essential portrait of his father but will also remind us, if we need reminding, what a fine writer Oliver is. His writing is clear and direct, elegant in style, honest and abounding in a quiet and controlled wit. We can only hope that he will be encouraged to write more.

In 1964 and 1965 Louis Wilkinson broadcast two autobiographical talks for the BBC and here we have not only the texts of those talks published for the first time, but also reviews by Arthur Calder-Marshall and J. M. Bunting. Readers will be curious to note the differences between Wilkinson's reaction to Radley and that of Gerald Brenan. Whereas in Brenan's day the school was excessively regimented, dominated by sport and tolerant of brutality, Louis Wilkinson, thirteen years his senior, had found that "You could do more or less as you liked at Radley."

This is followed by Oswell Blakeston's enthusiastic review of the first edition of *Seven Friends*. Blakeston had been the editor, in 1949, of that excellent anthology *Holidays and Happy Days*, to which Louis Marlow had contributed "Holiday Love-making" and he clearly delighted in "That crisply graceful and deliciously witty writer ..."

The book also contains a review of *Seven Friends* by Paul-Charles Duclos which was broadcast by the BBC French Section in 1953, a series of family portraits, obituary of Wilkinson in *The Times*, and an extremely useful bibliography.

Despite its cost, *Seven Friends* is a book which admirers of Louis Wilkinson and the Powys brothers will want to own, for it triumphantly supersedes the first edition.

Paul Roberts

The Powys Family of Montacute, reviewed overleaf, costs 20p; postage is 25p (foreign 40p), but no charge is made for p&p if sent with other items. It should be ordered with other publications of the Society; please use the enclosed order form.

Powys Society Publications

The Powys Family of Montacute, by John Batten, Frank Kibblewhite and Bev Craven
Powys Checklist, by Alan Howe (1991), ISBN 1 874559 01 5, £2.70 (£2 to members)
Powys Review Index, by Stephen Powys Marks (1992), ISBN 1 874559 03 1, £2.70 (£2)
The English House, by A. R. Powys (1992), ISBN 1 874559 04 X, £3 (£2)
Driftwood and other poems, by Philippa Powys (1992), ISBN 1 874559 05 8, £4.50 (£3)

When it was decided that the Society would embark on its own publishing programme one or two of us may have had misgivings as to how professional an undertaking it would turn out to be. To judge from the booklets so far produced, such doubts can be dispelled: the handsome covers, elegant typeface and well planned lay-out reflect the hard work and sound judgement of those who have made these texts available. Our warm thanks are owing to all those concerned.

To begin with *The Powys Family of Montacute* (see footnote on page 27): this booklet, written and designed by John Batten, Frank Kibblewhite and Bev Craven is designed for visitors to the Powys exhibition in the south-east gazebo at Montacute House. It gives just enough information to whet a reader's appetite to know more about the owners of those magnificent, extraordinary faces, so skilfully presented here. Two other of these publications also come under the heading "useful". Alan Howe's *Powys Checklist* provides publishing dates and details of the works of no less than seven members of the family; a listing of biographical and critical studies; and (particularly helpful to beginners) some personal advice as to where to start and as to how most readily to obtain copies of the books required. This section is agreeably controversial. Personally, I would myself have selected John Cowper's *Letters To His Brother Llewelyn* rather than those to Louis Wilkinson — and yet, to start with? No, Alan Howe's choice is almost certainly the right one. (But I should point out, subject to correction, that *Atlantis* was reprinted by Cedric Chivers in 1974, along with *Owen Glendower*, whose republication Alan Howe does note.) All in all this is a booklet that will benefit Powys aficionados and newcomers alike. I hope it does not seem too perverse of me to hope that it may soon be in need of expansion.

Another valuable publication has been the *Powys Review Index*. Compiled by Stephen Powys Marks and covering volumes 1 to 26, this is an essential item for Powys scholars, for the *Review* is a well-nigh inexhaustible supply of articles of real importance for studies in this field. Now one can find what one is looking for, almost at a glance. The three famous brothers have an index each, and there are others under the headings of General Index, Contributors and Other Books Reviewed. This project is both a fitting tribute to the *Review*'s editor, Belinda Humfrey, and a blessing to all those who have had to spend hours (however agreeably) in trying to track down one elusive source.

The English House was A. R. Powys's first book, a pamphlet first published in 1929 in Benn's Sixpenny Library. It is a masterly piece of compression, in less than fifty pages, both providing an informative account of the development of the English house

up to the early twentieth century, and in the process relating that development to the course of social history. A. R. Powys lays more stress on plan and form than on style: his is essentially a practical approach, which keeps in touch with the economic conditions that dictated the various building methods employed. The chapter on nineteenth century architecture is particularly spirited: the author has a short way with the sentimental Gothic revivalists. "The people needed space, clean dwellings, and clean air. They were given new churches in an ancient form." He writes a bracing and trenchant prose, flexible enough, however, to allow touches of characteristically Powysian poetry:

> The houses of Inigo Jones, equally with the Cistercian abbeys, reflect minds familiar with tall elms, the sun on wet green grass, and streams where wide stretches of dry shingle never disappoint slow-moving, thirsty cattle.

The blend of sensible, practical information with a clearly argued presentation of the social and moral implications of domestic architecture make this the most forceful book that "Brother Positive" produced. It seems as much to the point now as at the time when it was written.

The publication of *Driftwood and other poems* supplies a long-felt need. The original pamphlet of Philippa Powys's poetry is hard to come by and, like the original edition of *The English House*, is fragile when found. This reprint adds to the original collection the contents of three smaller ones published in the author's lifetime, together with eight additional poems supplied by the editors, Gerard Casey and Louise de Bruin. At last it is possible to get an overall view of Philippa Powys's achievement as a poet.

Those who have read *The Blackthorn Winter* or who have listened to readings from her diaries will not be surprised to find the poems passionate, deeply personal, and quite without posturing or cant. The title (not taken from any particular poem) is appropriate — the poems read like fragments torn away from some larger vessel of feeling. They do not have the intellectual character that informs those of the author's niece, Mary Casey; rather, they are cries — sometimes piercing, as if against the wind that Katie so much loved; sometimes they are low-toned and brooding, as if in lament for a dead young hare. An immense pity for afflicted creatures fills the poems; but this is offset by an acceptance of the cruelty inherent in nature itself. "The Martyr's Litany" is an extraordinarily impressive witness to the stoicism of its author's attitude to life. There is nothing sentimental here, no touch of the pathetic fallacy; but nor is there any mysticism. These are genuinely pagan poems, utterances of one whose perceptions and responses are part of her life on earth, both in its ecstasy and in its pain.

The imagery is taken from the world of Chydyok — the high cliffs, the pounding seas, the ploughing of the soil, the sea-gulls, fishermen, the mysterious silences of night. The versification can be rough and awkward, but Philippa Powys writes effectively in three stress lines and, in some poems, for example, the one in memory of Walter Franzen, she uses what amounts to an Anglo-Saxon metric that is perfectly adapted to her particular tone of voice. But her supreme master was Walt Whitman, and it is not surprising that her most impressive pieces should be those couched in the long, irregular lines of free verse he likewise favoured. It is not an easy measure to command, but

Philippa Powys does so: the opening "Song of The Wind" is surely her masterpiece, the authentic utterance of a woman whose writings were never a mere imitation of, or appendage to, those of her famous brothers. Rather it is of Christopher Smart or of Emily Brontë that one thinks as one reads her, and responds to the Biblical cadences, the elementalism, and the upwelling pity for all forms of suffering that characterises her work. But she also possesses a winning understated humour. A short elegy for her bay mare Josephine calls her "A good mare and strong/ But somewhat wayward/ In spirit/ Such as her mistress/ was known to be."

Driftwood will sustain many readings; and both it and *The English House* are enhanced by reproductions of the work of Gertrude Powys, two portraits and, for the poems, the sketch of a carline thistle that seems especially appropriate.

Glen Cavaliero

Rabelais, by John Cowper Powys, translated by Catherine Lieutenant

La Thalamège, Verviers, Belgium. Published in an edition of 1000 copies.
ISBN 2 87363 000 0. 1055 Belgian Francs (including 6% VAT). *

On the 18th of January 1943, John Cowper Powys was announcing to his old friend Louis Wilkinson, "Old-Honeysuckle-Bee", "My Dear":

> "You wait — you'll like this work [*Rabelais*] of brother John's best of all he's done — you'll say "Well! *that* was a hole in English Culture that wanted filling, & though, as we know, what Jack's got to fill it with is none of the erectest or sturdiest — still, I warrant I'll hit the mark!"[1]

It took him two years to write *Rabelais*, alternating with *Porius*, whilst in the middle of many troubles, not only because it was war-time but also because he was suffering with his eyes and worried by lack of money, having at that time "about 50 pounds in all the world".[2] It is a magnificent work of love and erudition and Kenneth Hopkins was right in seeing it as "an ideal introduction" to Rabelais "whose greatness has never received in England the general recognition it merits ..."[3] I do not know if, since 1967, this "recognition of Rabelais's greatness" has been achieved in England, nor even in France. *I* personally have to recognize that J. C. P. has made me understand my countryman's genius as nobody before him and I have spent two weeks of immense delight re-reading his *Rabelais* with the help of Catherine Lieutenant's own excellent translation which, at last, has come out and is now available.

I hope one day she will be willing to tell us herself about the fight she had to sustain against forces of darkness, and since her sense of humour is great, it might well read as a sort of "supplement" to the Picrocholine Wars, but grimmer. To this humble reviewer, reviewing her work has been a feast of intelligence and pleasure, so that my task will be made agreeable but a little difficult, for I find nothing to criticize and can only praise her rendering of John Cowper's sometimes peculiar and "long-winded" style (as he said himself) into French. But, more important perhaps to English Powysians, I would like to stress the fact that her book is an indispensable complement, if one wants to enter more completely into Rabelais's world, and so into Powys's mind.

Apart from being a handsome, carefully produced book of three hundred pages, with a striking portrait of Rabelais on the front cover, it is, as I said, a faithful and lively translation of Powys's study and includes some additional items which will certainly prove very helpful to the careful reader: a nine-page introduction by Catherine Lieutenant opens the book, in which J. C. P. is vividly delineated in these troubled years, during which he turned to Rabelais once more for solace, as Catherine Lieutenant is right, I think, to suppose. True, J. C. P. had been commissioned by the Bodley Head to write this "Introduction" to Rabelais, but never once does he call it a "pot-boiler". We know that Rabelais was really always part of the Powyses' lives, for Theodore and Llewelyn as much as for John Cowper. One of Catherine Lieutenant's main preoccupations is to protect Powys against well-informed readers who, in the light of recent studies, could criticize him on some of the opinions he formulated on Rabelais, relying on the books he mentions himself in his preface: apart from the famous Urquhart version, he worked on two translations, one by W. F. Smith and one by the American S. Putnam. He was also fortunate to have, thanks to that wonderful "Book Discoverer & Book Seller",[4] George L. Lewin, (the main protagonist of *Edeyrnion 1*, the unfinished Welsh novel Powys had abandoned in 1941) probably the latest important work in French on Rabelais, by Jean Plattard and Jacques Boulenger, published in 1929 and which proved to be a great help. The one important source of reference he did not have was the work of Professeur Abel Lefranc, the founder of the Société des Etudes Rabelaisian, which he heard of only through Plattard. Understandably too, Rabelaisian studies have evolved since 1943. Catherine Lieutenant whose own knowledge is impressive, has detected errors of interpretation on some aspects of Rabelais (mainly about the "absence" of women in his work, about his "childishness", his political views, and about Plato). But in fact, all this is really of no importance because even if Powys's Rabelais is sometimes subjective, on *all* important issues they are very close. Powys's main incentive was to make us *read him*.

Two other important features must be stressed in this "French" *Rabelais*, which might provide new lights on J. C. P.'s *Rabelais*. First, thirty pages of notes which deal with people mentioned in the Four Books or who had some importance in Rabelais's life, including a long one on Etienne Dolet, a fascinating contemporary of Rabelais who was printer and publisher in Lyons and finished his life at the stake, burnt ("brûle vif") by the Inquisition, in 1546.

But I would also like to mention the numerous very interesting illustrations contained in this book. One is a reproduction of the first page of Rabelais's own copy of a work by Galen, the Greek physician, with, in his own writing, the phrase: "Nunc vero Franciscus Rabellus, me habet" (Now, verily François Rabelais owns me), which struck Powys, book lover that he was.[5] Even more interesting and moving is the portrait of J. C. P. by Gertrude, made when Powys was writing the last pages of his *Rabelais*, which is placed at the very beginning, next to the dedication to Bernard Price O'Neill. We know how pleased Powys was with this picture because he looked, he thought, like his dear Erasmus. It is not fortuitous that Erasmus was *also* Rabelais's "father-mother" as

he says, the only man he really admired. Holbein's portrait of the Dutch philosopher is also present, together with the engraved enlargement of this portrait as badly disfigured by the Spanish Inquisition.

Catherine Lieutenant has brought back many treasures from her lengthy search, which lasted several years, in the form of maps, documents and portraits. She has also given us the source of all John Cowper's quotations.[6] They add value to her impressive translation for the perplexed non-English reader! Shakespeare comes first (quoted eighteen times), but also Dante and Walt Whitman ...

"And now for a drink", that is to say, let us go back to Rabelais which means also back to Powys who, in an important chapter, gives us his definition of "Pantagruelism":

> There is an element of both farcical humour and sardonic humour in its composition. There is an element too of considerate humanity and pity. There is of course a tremendous element of shameless realism and gross bawdiness. [...] There is also a rich, deep, dim, glowing, magical and *almost occult* hero-worship in it. And I will conclude by saying that while three chief qualities dominate the Pantagruelism way of living: namely endurance, enjoyment and unlimited toleration, its permanent attitude to God, to Morality, to Sex, to the Church and the State, is a humorous one.[7]

Jacqueline Peltier

Notes

[1] *Letters to Louis Wilkinson*. p. 121.
[2] *ibid*. p. 136.
[3] *The Powys Brothers* by Kenneth Hopkins. p. 229.
[4] *Letters To Louis Wilkinson*. p. 132. See also *The Powys Journal* Vol.I.
[5] *ibid*. p. 135.
[6] All ... except one, from "our grave poet" quoted in *Rabelais*, p. 407!
[7] *Rabelais*. Village Press. p. 368.

Memories of a Friendship

Your editor has commanded me to find a few reminiscences of my life-long friend Kenneth Hopkins, author of *The Powys Brothers*, with special reference, perhaps, to our early encounters with "The Brothers" in Dorset and Wales.

Where to begin? Two diminutive choirboys at St Peter's, Bournemouth, squeaking away? St Peter's had a good musical reputation, which it retains to this day, for we have been fortunate in our succession of organists, and there was a choir-school that half-century ago.

Well: we graduated into the Boy Scouts and, we might say, this is where life begins, or shall we say Kenneth began writing? Not quite a true statement this, because Kenneth

had been writing all his choir and school days, upon any and every subject, "always first in the class in English, scribe for the scouts, Rainbow Rhymes on the members, diaries and whatever else came along." It was a particularly well-run troop, one of the early ones, founded in 1909, and now under the paternal dominion of "Dad" Atkins (no relative, "Dad" was an affectionate nickname). He was indeed a paternal and influential figure, as may perhaps be judged by the fact that seven of us met recently after an interval of sixty years and sat down together as if no time at all had passed. The occasion merited a newspaper article.

We did much walking, cycling and camping in those days. The four of us who formed the closest "gang", Shindie, Bob, Paul and Kenneth (in turn, The Connoisseur, The Enthusiast, The Seeker and The Poet: Enthusiast and Poet now deceased), introduced first by Shindie to the Hills, spent a great deal of time exploring the Purbecks west of here and the Dorset cliffs, and they became our regular playground. There could not have been a better — the finest scenery in the World — christened by Kenneth, "The Lands". We had a number of walking holidays — on Dartmoor, amongst the Cotswolds and in Berkshire. Our accommodation limit was five shillings and at Ampney Crucis we were given supper, bed and breakfast for half-a-crown, with free cider pressed upon us at departure.

At Verwood, the Rev. C. J. Hanson had, attached to his house, "St Gabriel's", a field which we were privileged to use at will and a substantial wooden annexe to which we could retire in inauspicious weather. There was a good selection of books in the bookcase. Powerful educative influences were in operation: Shindie was a librarian, fortunately with literary leanings, abetted by John Dent, also a librarian. While I discoursed on Bertrand Russell and contemporary scientific theories, they talked of authors old and new. Shindie had a large influence upon us both. There was a good Central Library in Bournemouth and we were always there: with friends on the staff we were exempt from fines! Kenneth was already book collecting, perhaps already the nucleus of his later massive library of poetry. He was also writing his early sonnets on Love and Death: youthful, emotional, imaginative, idealistic, with a special freshness — and *poetry*.

Is this the time to introduce Scabbo? I don't know where Scabbo came from, but he appeared suddenly. He seemed to be a small oriental figure of a minor god. But Scabbo illustrated a slightly mischievous streak in Kenneth's philosophy and was set up, as if with an altar and flowers, at the entrance to our tent. We, at that time, were seniors, and lesser scouts, on passing, were compelled to bow to Scabbo — until Dad Atkins, somewhat religiously-minded, put a stop to this idolatry. Scabbo eventually went to Boyne Grainger in the days of the poetry meetings called "The Saturdays".

Later, Kenneth would take the opportunity of deliveries, or other excuses for absence from the ironmongers for whom he worked, to call at my office in the town centre, very likely to show me his latest poems *and* the letters forming the early part of his correspondence with Llewelyn, to be published as *Letters To A Young Poet* in 1949, and in the enlarged American edition of 1969. We would withdraw to Lyons teashop in the

Square to peruse and discuss these at length, meanwhile supping their exceptional cups of tea and eating their wonderful currant buns: I wish it was still there.

The ultimate expedition of The Four met its Waterloo in 1946 at the Old Commonwealth barton of Llewelyn's "Dorset Cliff Foxes" (*Dorset Essays*) and "High Chaldon" (*Somerset Essays*), where Farmer Cobb lost his 40 chickens. We had battled with the storm thus far and sheltered shivering and wet-through in the barn, declining, all, to venture the few extra hundred yards to the cliff edge. Discouraged, it was the last united sally of The Four. I remember an occasion in earlier, sturdier years when we arrived at Arish Mell so wet that we simply walked in the sea dressed as we were: but those were the days of our youth. Sea Barn is but a stone's throw from the block of seven "White Nose" coastguard cottages, scene of much Powys activity, for they were all there from time to time.

The cottages were plain and functional, gaunt in and out, and very solid as befits their exposed position. Surrounded by a high protective outer wall, with an additional walled courtyard at the back containing outbuildings, a "loo" at the bottom of the garden and a well for water. One entered through the kitchen, the only door, on the sheltered side. The living rooms at the front were reasonably large, with high ceilings and tall sash windows. Because of the high outer wall, one could only see the sea from the first floor. The Powyses always had good furniture and carpets, fine china and silver.

At first Llewelyn occupied No. 7 at the western end and then, later and longer, No. 5. In more recent years we have frequently taken tea with Miss Peacock in No. 5. It is a coincidence that my own interest in the cottages goes back a long way. Before the war a board proclaimed that they were for sale and I made tentative enquiries of the owners in Reading, to discover that the price was £3,500. Later, again coincidence, I got to know the owners as friends through quite another connection. Another friend also had one of the cottages in the 1950s. Llewelyn portrays a nostalgic return in the last essay of *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, "A Headland Refuge".

The cliffs from here to Lulworth are redolent with recollections of the Powyses, every gully and promontory and crevice we explored was previously investigated and described by Llewelyn: in *Dorset Essays* ("The White Nose", "Bats Head", "Dorset Cliff Foxes", "West Bottom"), in *Somerset Essays* ("High Chaldon" and "Durdle Door") and in *Earth Memories* ("The Blind Cow"). Llewelyn uses the title "Herring Gulls" twice — once in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, where the venue is New York, and again in *A Baker's Dozen*, where the setting is White Nose. In the essay "East Chaldon" (*Skin for Skin*) Llewelyn describes his stay with Theodore in the small village house, Beth Carr, whose architect was Thomas Hardy. *Dorset Essays* was almost a bible to us, with its intimate descriptions of The Lands we knew so well, and in May 1936 I lent my copy to Mrs Thomas Hardy, whom I knew well.

Theodore first stayed in the cottage at the eastern end of the row of terraced cottages facing the village green, and John once wrote from No. 3 East Chaldon. John himself occupied farm buildings on the downs which he sometimes called "Down Barn" or "Old Down Barn", both of which exist, but his *pied-à-terre* was really "Chaldon Down

Buildings", about a mile from the village. Llewelyn moved from White Nose to the house which is part of "Chydyok", a farm complex: here he lived with his wife Alyse Gregory and, just above here towards the cliff, with "The Pound" on the left, the earthwork where Llewelyn occasionally slept out (see "Gay Leopards"), Kenneth and I met her for a discussion, at a spot called Warren House. "Llewelyn's Stone" is not far from here — "The Living, the Living, He shall praise thee" — but sad to say it has been vandalistically removed to the corner of the field from its original position, so that it shows no longer the exact spot where his ashes are buried. Even worse, the main Right of Way, the 3000 year old ancient British track which Llewelyn features in "Gypsies", has been ploughed. The views are much poorer from the diversion. We are trying to grow cowslips around the stone, but the south-west gales make life difficult.

Llewelyn describes in *Skin for Skin* a very steep descent, now fallen away, down the cliff in Middle Bottom, which he calls "A Smugglers' Path". We had a minor drama here. It was much more precarious in our time, through erosion, even than it was for Llewelyn. Nevertheless, tempted by his essay, we ventured upon a trial. The very iron stanchion which Llewelyn used was still in place and to this we attached a rope and so, with some scrambling, reached the shore known to us and Llewelyn as the "Forbidden Beach", for there was no other way down. At that time we were exceptionally fleet of foot over the boulders at the sea edge, the rocks and rocky clefts, not least of us Shindie. But this time, for some reason, he made an error, failed to clear a deep cleft in the rock, fell forward, hit his head on the far side, and dropped unconscious into the water which was surging up and down with the waves and tide. Kenneth and I had great difficulty getting him up and out, and then Kenneth sped off back up the cliff to telephone from T. F.'s cottage to Mr Brooke Williams, the Lulworth coastguard, who eventually rescued us by sea. I spent an unpleasant two hours with the unfortunate, not knowing whether Kenneth had succeeded in climbing the cliff, though after a while Shindie did begin to come round. This escapade found its way into the Sunday press and *The News Of The World*, feeling the six feet we quoted insufficiently exciting, corrected it to a hundred feet.

Our favourite pub in The Lands was the Weld Arms at East Lulworth, designated by us "The Holy of Holies". Gamel Woolsey and Gerald Brenan stayed there whilst on a visit. Memorable was the draught cider at the Weld Arms; exquisite, nectar, never to be forgotten. What a contrast to that we had at the Greyhound in Corfe a few years later, so vile that Bob never touched cider again for the rest of his life.

Not far away from the Holy of Holies is the face in the wall, the Edy Head, of Llewelyn's "The Castle Park of East Lulworth". In 1934 The Four made a compact that they would meet again in the bar of the Weld Arms on the first Sunday of November 1939. Alas, I was the only one there: Kenneth was in the army in Derby, Shindie in India, Bob in Mombasa, and my own call-up imminent.

Our other focal point, regarded to this day with the greatest affection, was The Sailor's Return at Chaldon itself. There Kenneth and I used to stay during the reign of Mrs Legg, whilst he was visiting Llewelyn. Their shove-halfpenny board was a gift

from Kenneth. One thing that remains with me about The Sailor's Return of sixty years ago is that, sitting in the little public bar with the locals, so strong was their deep Dorset dialect, with its strange vocabulary and intonation, that we, living twenty odd miles away, genuinely *could not understand them.*

I must mention our first visit to John Cowper at Corwen. Llewelyn had given Kenneth an introduction and we set off on our bicycles one evening at 5 pm after work to do the first fifty-five mile stretch to Devizes. We were a little proud of that. Perhaps we got to Corwen next day, I do not remember. But, as can well be imagined, there are other things I shall never forget. J. C. is a Giant, and these are events beyond my powers of description; a turning point of Kenneth's life, and an influence upon mine. Enthralled we both were to hear John declaim some of Kenneth's poems, a profound experience for Kenneth. I wish I could say more, describe more of our impressions, it was a thaumaturgic moment.

Then, too, another "life experience". Kenneth and I went to hear J. C. lecture at Dorchester on July 26th 1937, at a Labour meeting where he was introduced by Sylvia Townsend Warner (a poor speaker). His subject was the Spanish War and his message a plea for peace. Not only a great speaker, but a great actor, his peroration was mightily stirring — he stumped up and down the stage thumping upon the boards with his powerful stave. After the meeting he shook hands with me and introduced Phyllis Playter and Katie. The greatest man I have, in a lifetime, met.

A few years ago Kenneth, too, lectured at Dorchester, to the Dorset Natural History Society in the Dorset County Museum, on "The Powys Brothers in Dorset". We accompanied him on what was to be one of his last public appearances.

Bournemouth is now abandoned and Kenneth moves to London, via Corwen. J. C. recommends that he call upon Charles Lahr, the bookseller in Red Lion Street, and it is a fateful decision. Lahr offers Kenneth the use of his tiny first floor room and thus, at the same time, access to the literati frequenting the shop. At that time I was often in London myself, and somehow we managed to share this small cube for the odd night. Kenneth was at Red Lion Street about two years, during which time he met, wooed and married Elizabeth, the inspiration for many of his poems.

The newly-weds needed slightly more space than about 40 square feet and moved to a tenancy in St Christopher's Buildings, a charming upper level looking over the roofs of the West End and, as a few more shekels became available, in turn to Blandford Square and Ladbroke Grove and then to Brighton — where we met E. H. Visiak. Later still they moved to Nettlestone on the Isle of Wight, where they had the houseboat Texan, in which we used to stay to the sound of lapping water all night. After this to Liss, to be nearer their son Edmund at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, and finally to Norfolk, North Walsham, a large house with a fine garden.

Kenneth died in Norfolk on the 1st of April 1988, and there is a memorial to him in North Walsham churchyard. Some say he should be remembered at St Peter's, Bournemouth, but it is a long time since then.

F. Paul French