

Editorial

Looking back over copies of *The Powys Society Newsletter* since it began regular publication almost six years ago, I am amazed at the developments which have taken place in the Society. The *Newsletter* itself has progressed, both in terms of production and breadth of content and the response of members to these developments has been very positive. That, perhaps, was an advance which could have been foreseen (or at least hoped for) from its beginnings in December 1987, but I do not believe that any of us could then have imagined many of the other advances made by the Society.

August 1993 saw the publication of the third volume of *The Powys Journal* which, at 240 pages, is a superb publication, offering a wealth of original material by members of the Powys family, as well as critical and scholarly essays by a wide range of acknowledged authorities in the field of Powys studies. Surely, there can be few societies able to boast such a publication or, an important consideration, offer such excellent value for money.

Nor have the *Newsletter* and the *Journal* been the Society's only publishing ventures. Under the auspices of our Publications Committee, the Society has issued six books since 1991, the two most recent of which, *The Joy of It* by Littleton Powys and *Soliloquies of a Hermit* by T. F. Powys, are reviewed in this issue of the *Newsletter*. It is an indication of the growth of the Society that the Committee has now decided that its publications should be issued under two different imprints: *The Powys Society* for those publications aimed primarily at the membership, and *The Powys Press* for those designed also to appeal to a wider readership. Further publications are currently being planned and we would be pleased to receive suggestions from members as to works which the Society ought to publish.

This year's magnificent Powys exhibition, *Writers in a Landscape*, held at the Dorset County Museum, was not our first venture into this field, but was certainly our most elaborate and has proved immensely popular, both with members of the Society and with the general public and has reinforced our association with the Museum at a critical point in the Society's development.

What else have we achieved? Charitable status has had immense benefits to the Society and without it we would not now be able to undertake many of our activities. Society walks now feature regularly in our programme of events and the Annual Montacute Lecture continues to prove very popular, both with members of the Society and with local people.

However, the crowning achievement of the last six years must surely have been the establishment of the Powys Centre at the Dorset County Museum, which it is hoped will be opened in 1995 (appropriately, the Year of Literature).

The Centre will house a vast collection of books, manuscript material, pictures, and personal memorabilia and artefacts relating to the entire family, and consists largely of the collections of Francis and Kathleen Feather and Mr E. E. Bissell. It is hard to imagine the magnitude of these gifts, which could not have been made had we not had charitable status. Members will have read Francis Feather's account of his collecting life in *The Powys Journal*, and Morine Krissdóttir gives a vivid account of her journey to Zimbabwe to arrange transportation of the collection in her Chairman's report.

My own connection has been with Mr Bissell, a man whose profound knowledge of all things Powysian and passionate devotion to literature are only partly disguised by his modesty and his endless patience with, and kindness to, excited visitors. I have had the privilege of visiting Mr Bissell on a number of occasions now, and have been fascinated by his conversation and not a little overwhelmed by the diversity of his collection, which extends far beyond the world of the Powyses. On each occasion I have felt after leaving a desire to return, to ask that question I had forgotten in the excitement of seeing yet another rare first edition, to look again at some of the manuscripts I had only glimpsed, more than anything simply to talk to a man who has so much to tell.

However, the visit I made in July of this year will long remain in my memory as one of the outstanding events of my life. As I headed north on the M6 that evening, not only did I have a head full of ideas and impressions, but a car full of precious manuscripts. It hardly bears thinking about now. The responsibility! I tried to concentrate on the road and to forget that, among other things, I was carrying the manuscripts of *Confessions of Two Brothers*, *The Brazen Head*, *Glory of Life*, and *Apples be Ripe* (as well as several dozen essays and short stories of John, Llewelyn and Theodore), the corrected typescripts of *Porius*, *Maiden Castle* and *Earth Memories*, the corrected proofs of *Autobiography*, seven hundred letters from John to Littleton, two hundred to Elizabeth Myers, and five hundred to Huw Menai, and a vast collection of newspaper cuttings. And this represented, perhaps, less than a third of Mr Bissell's collection!

The debt which the Society owes to Mr Bissell and to Francis and Kathleen Feather is incalculable, as is the importance of their combined collections (although these will retain their separate identities in the Powys Centre). To take simply one book, *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, as an example, the Centre will enable scholars to examine the manuscript through from the earliest notes to its final form, the complete (and important) correspondence between Powys and his publishers, every edition of the book so far published and a wealth of critical and scholarly literature related to it.

Although the practicalities of establishing such a Centre mean that it will be some time before it is open for study, its scope is breathtaking. Certainly this is something which we could only have dreamt of in 1987 and which would, perhaps, have seemed quite impossible twenty years earlier, when the Society

was formed.

Yes, the Society has grown and developed, but we cannot afford to be complacent and the officers are constantly seeking ways in which we can further our aims. In order to assist in this process, the April 1994 issue of the *Newsletter* will contain a questionnaire designed to seek your advice on ways in which we can continue to promote public awareness of the lives and works of the Powys family.

Paul Roberts

Powys reaches Finland

Sven Erik Täckmark reports:

The sixth John Cowper Powys exhibition in Sweden opened on September 28th at the University Library in Linköping. The exhibition was beautifully mounted, and Professor Ingemar Algulin held as usual a splendid lecture before an audience of about sixty people on the life and work of J. C. P.

As a result of my friend Birgetta Olofsson's energetic efforts the exhibition will be transferred to the University Library in Helsinki, Finland, to open on November 16th, when both Professor Algulin and I are to be interviewed at length by the Finnish broadcasting company.

Our common project is to spread the news of J. C. P. in due time to Oslo and Copenhagen.

Helsinki is, therefore, the first step along that road.

Sven Erik Täckmark

Vision On

Following Anthony Head's playing of his remarkable video tape of John Cowper Powys speaking about marriage in order to promote his debate with Bertrand Russell (see page 5), Patricia Dawson wrote the following poem, which we are delighted to publish. We hope to include further poems by Patricia in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Vision On

Among the flickering
and the grating sounds
he nods and sways.
Barristerial, he puts his case,
but as a child
and camera shy.
As bard, philosopher and heneog
he made me read.
This man can make me cry.

Patricia Dawson

Urgent: Subscription increase in 1994 ***Standing orders, covenants and concessions***

All subscriptions are due on January 1st 1994.

The enclosed large coloured sheet is addressed to all members, whether you pay by standing order or not, whether or not you have made out a deed of covenant.

Last year, after much discussion by your committee, it was decided that the subscription should be increased. It was fixed at its present rate of £10 for UK members (£12 abroad) in 1987, having been £7.50 since 1980. The approved subscriptions from 1st January 1994 are £13.50 for UK members and £16 for members abroad. A new concessionary rate for students has also been introduced; this is £6 a year, to be supported each year by the submission of a photocopy of a student's card.

Existing standing orders

Members who have been paying by standing order will find a ticked box on the sheet and are asked to complete a replacement standing order and to return it as soon as possible so that we can get it to the bank well before Christmas.

Existing covenants

Payment by covenant considerably increases the value of your subscription; those who have previously signed deeds of covenant will find a ticked box on the sheet and are asked to complete it and send it back as soon as possible.

Other members

Please help us by sending us a standing order for your subscription. This saves us a lot of time spent in boring clerical work each year noting unpaid subscriptions and chasing them up. The Society also benefits greatly if you sign a deed of covenant. For example, if you pay the subscription of £13.50 and the basic rate of tax is 25%, we can reclaim another third of the subscription, which is £4.50 (this depends, of course, on the actual rate of tax in force). The forms for new standing order and deed of covenant on the sheet are for you to use; please complete them and return them to us as soon as possible.

Concessions

The Society is naturally concerned that some members may be unable to afford the increased rates. As we would not like to lose them as members, those who find that they are unable to afford the increase are invited to write to the Secretary to ask to be allowed to pay at the existing rate for 1994; the same concession will be offered, if required, for 1995, but not beyond. In approved cases, standing order payments will be allowed to continue at their present rates.

Finally: please make sure we have your subscriptions, replacement or new standing orders, and new covenants as soon as possible.

Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer

Conference report

The programme of this year's Powys Society Conference, held at Kingston Maurward from August 21st to 24th, contained the names of over eighty members who were attending, making this one of our most popular conferences to date. Encouragingly, for a significant number this was their first conference and we look forward to enjoying their company again in future years.

It would be hard to imagine a more varied programme of events, and, looking back on it now, it is difficult to believe that we managed to fit it all in. Members have come to expect a high standard from our speakers, and they will not have been disappointed by Janina Nordius, who addressed the notion of solitude in John Cowper's work, Lawrence Mitchell, who spoke of Theodore's transformation of the actual landscape of Dorset into the world of his novels, Judith Stinton, whose lecture complemented this by exploring the social history of Chaldon Herring, or by Glen Cavaliero, who placed John Cowper Powys in the perspective of cultural history he so often seems to evade in *John Cowper Powys and the Aether*.

However, Powys Society conferences are far from passive affairs. The weekend began with a reception and private viewing of the magnificent exhibition, *Writers in a Landscape*, designed by Bev Craven and Sarah Linden at the Dorset County Museum, and this was followed by an illustrated lecture by Richard de Peyer, the Museum's Curator, on "Literary Centres and Museums", a subject given added significance this year with the announcement that the Museum is to house the Powys Centre.

Sunday afternoon was devoted to an energetic and invigorating tour of Dorchester and its environs, *In the Footsteps of J. C. P.*, led by Roger Peers, and this was followed in the evening by our annual Book Sale. There were those who found it hard to decide which was the most exhausting!

The Conference closed on Monday evening with a reading by Neil Curry from the poems of Gerard and Mary Casey.

However, for many of our members the event which will linger longest in their minds was "A Powys Appears", a late addition to the programme and one which its presenter, Anthony Head, wisely kept shrouded in mystery until (quite literally) the very last moment. It was, in fact, a piece of film lasting about seven minutes and made by the Fox film studios to promote John Cowper Powys's debate with Bertrand Russell on the subject of "Modern Marriage". Not only was it a momentous event to see J. C. P., but this was also a piece of sound film and is, therefore, the only known recording of John Cowper's voice. Perhaps it is most fitting for Anthony to explain in his own words.

... what prompted me into a search for the film of J. C. P. was your very own speculation in *Singular Figures*, which I happened to be reading at the beginning of the year, that it perhaps had still survived somewhere. I wrote off to a close Japanese friend of mine, Ayako Saito, who is doing a

PhD in Film Studies at UCLA, to ask if she had any contacts with Fox Studios or knew of someone who did who could perhaps make the relevant inquiries. At first she drew a blank from several quarters, except to be told that Fox were notoriously uncooperative. But she was later casually mentioning it to someone else and was told that the Fox Archives were now at the University of South Carolina, and that that was the place to write to. She wrote, and received a reply to the effect that, yes, indeed, they did have the footage of J. C. P. and Russell. She sent this on to me and I took up the correspondence with South Carolina, inquiring as nonchalantly as I could whether it would be possible to purchase a video adaptation of the original 35mm footage – which proved to be no problem.

I knew about the film in March and obtained a video in April. As you can imagine, I was rather eager to let people know, but decided the Conference would be the best place to reveal it for the first time. I'm now just trying to clarify the copyright situation with the university ...

That so packed a programme should have run so smoothly and that so many members should have been able to enjoy it in comfort is due to the hard work and meticulous attention to detail of Eve and John Batten. The success of the Society is the result of the hard work of many people, but Eve and John undoubtedly deserve out most sincere thanks.

Paul Roberts

The Last Georgian

The President writes:

On Sunday October 17th I attended the first performance of *The Last Georgian*, the life of Kenneth Hopkins told through his prose and poetry. This tribute has been compiled by C. V. Roberts, Literary Editor of the *Eastern Daily Press*, for which Kenneth Hopkins was a regular reviewer and it was recorded in the Assembly House in Norwich; it is hoped to broadcast it on BBC Radio Network during the Christmas season. Friends and admirers of Kenneth Hopkins who are able to listen to Radios Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge, Peterborough, Bedford and Northampton should consult the *Radio Times* in due course. It is a well-composed portrait which brings its subject vividly to life.

Glen Cavaliero

[Charles Roberts also wrote a piece called *Memories of a truly lyrical friend in the Eastern Daily Press of October 12th 1993. Unfortunately, notice of this recording was sent out by the BBC too close to the event for many of Kenneth's admirers to be able to attend. I am currently exploring the possibility of obtaining a recording which could be made available to members and will report in the Newsletter when I have received a reply from BBC Radio Norfolk. P.R.]*

Report of the Annual General Meeting

August 23rd 1993 at Kingston Maurward College of Agriculture

1 Minutes of the last A. G. M. These were read and approved.

2 Matters arising. There was no business arising.

3 The Secretary's Report

John Batten reported that the Executive Committee had met twice since the last A. G. M. It had received reports on the financial state of the Society and that information had been published in the *Newsletter*.

Committee meeting of 23rd January 1993:

a The Committee accepted a recommendation from the Publications Committee that the Society consider publishing *Soliloquies of a Hermit*.

b It discussed the duration of conferences and agreed to continue with the three-day format.

c It discussed how best the Feather Collection might be transferred from Zimbabwe to Dorchester. The Chairman was given authority to act on behalf of the Society on this.

d Members took note of the new law on the administration of charities.

e Following the death of Peter Powys Grey, Derek Langridge was appointed to the Committee on Gifts and Bequests.

Committee meeting of 23rd August 1993:

a The Committee received a report on agreed increases in membership subscriptions and resolved that there should be a concession for members suffering financial hardship.

b The successful transfer of the Feather Collection was applauded.

c It was agreed that the Chairman and officers should negotiate the housing of the Bissell Collection at the Dorset County Museum.

d Bev Craven and Frank Kibblewhite reported on the development of the Powys Exhibition, from first ideas to opening.

e Methods of paying conference speakers were discussed and greater flexibility agreed.

4 The Treasurer's report

Stephen Powys Marks amplified the printed accounts for 1992 with the following details of this year's expenditure: *Publications in 1993: The Powys Journal*, £1,900; *Newsletters*, £400; *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, £1,400; *The Joy of It*, £400. He announced that income from the Annual Book Sale was £412. The cost of transferring the Feather Collection was reported as £1,825, largely offset by a donation of £1,000 from a generous member, with tax to be reclaimed. The Society's contribution to the cost of the *Writers in a Landscape* exhibition had been about £1,000, towards which a donation of £200 had been received from another generous member. The report was received.

5 Chairman's report

Dr Morine Krissdóttir began by paying tribute to three members who had died during the year: Peter Powys Grey, Sally Powys, and Professor Gloria Fromm. She continued in more optimistic vein, describing first how obdurate bureaucracy had been overcome and the Feather Collection delivered safely to the Dorset County Museum, and then elaborating on the earlier announcement that Mr E. E. Bissell had decided to give his famous collection of Powys works and memorabilia to the Society. Morine emphasised the complementary nature of the two collections the Society is establishing at Dorchester. Mary Warden asked whether sufficient room had been allocated for both collections; Morine replied that they would certainly be housed, but future developments at the Museum depended upon the outcome of negotiations between the Museum and other bodies.

6 Election of officers

The President, Glen Cavaliero, proposed the following:

Chairman Morine Krissdóttir

Vice-Chairman Paul Roberts

Secretary John Batten

Treasurer Stephen Powys Marks

The motion was seconded by James Dawson and carried unanimously.

7 Election of Committee

The President announced that Michael Everest was standing down from the Committee and expressed the thanks of the Society for his contribution. He then proposed the following who were willing to stand for re-election:

Griffin Beale Louise de Bruin Bev Craven Peter Foss

Timothy Hyman Frank Kibblewhite John Williams

Overseas Members

Marius Buning Francis Feather Charles Lock

Jacqueline Peltier Sven Erik Täckmark

The proposal was seconded by Mary Warden and carried unanimously.

8 Appointment of Auditor

Stephen Allen was re-appointed with expressions of gratitude for his services.

9 The Powys Society of North America

Chairman Professor Michael Ballin conveyed the greetings of the Powys Society of North America and spoke of its membership and activities. He also expressed the hope that links between the two societies would be strengthened. He was confident that, after many delays, *Porius* would appear this autumn.

10 Announcement of editors of *The Powys Journal* and of the *Newsletter*

Peter Foss and Louise de Bruin were appointed joint editors of *The Powys Journal*. Paul Roberts was re-appointed editor of the *Newsletter*. These appointments are to run for the next three years. Warm tributes were paid to the editors, and also to Stephen Powys Marks and Bev Craven.

11 Announcement of Honorary Life Membership

The Vice-Chairman, Paul Roberts, rose to inform the meeting that the Committee had unanimously agreed to invite Sven Erik Täckmark to become an Honorary Life Member of the Society. He recounted Sven's early association with John Cowper, his work in translating Powys into Swedish, and his Powys exhibition, which had visited each of Sweden's universities. In replying, Sven thanked the Society and said he hoped to translate *Glastonbury* before his hundredth birthday.

12 Future Powys Events

The Secretary referred to the Weymouth walk [subsequently postponed] and the third Montacute Lecture.

13 Time and Place of the 1995 Conference

There was some discussion, during which a plea was made for the Conference to move north. Eve Batten (Conference Liaison) commented upon the fact that Kingston Maurward and Cirencester were popular with members and, in value for money, compared well. A proposal from Paul Roberts that we return to Kingston Maurward in 1995 was seconded and agreed. Eve Batten then announced the dates of that Conference would be August 19th, 20th and 21st.

14 Any other business

No matters were raised

John Batten

Chairman's report

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting 1993

Last year's Conference was a high point in the history of The Powys Society. I think it was an unforgettable experience for all who were there. Unhappily, I must begin this report with a brief reference to three swift blows that followed it: the deaths of Sally Powys, Gloria Fromm, and Peter Powys Grey.

Sally did not involve herself actively in the Society, but the work she and Francis have done in preserving Powys material has been inestimable. Sally helped me unstintingly in my work on the *Diaries* but there was always time for coffee and laughter. She was – gutsy – was Sally: always her own person in the midst of the Powys clan.

Gloria Fromm gave only one lecture to the Society: she was too ill to give the one on Elizabeth Myers she had planned for last year's Conference. I inherited some of her things – amongst them a copy of *A Philosophy of Solitude*. She had marked certain passages. We all have our solitudes. Gloria died in silence.

Peter Powys Grey died having finally found his voice. The last six months of his life were very happy. He began writing again and spent last summer on his beloved Criehaven – where his ashes are now buried. Last year's Conference was an epiphany for him. His carefully deliberated talk was not a speech at all but, in Geoffrey Hill's phrase, "the long lost words of choice and valediction."

I turn now to two very good and happy things that have occurred this past year.

The gifts to The Powys Society of the Feather Collection and the Bissell Collection

The Feather Collection is now in the Powys Centre in Dorchester, but getting it there was not without adventures. Perhaps you would like to hear the story. The Feathers' generous gift was announced at the last Conference but, quite rightly, it was up to the Society to get it to England from Zimbabwe.

At the February meeting of the Committee we discussed ways and means. I had already contacted government officials and knowledgeable colleagues, and I knew it would be difficult. This was verified by a member of the Committee who has had experience with African governments: "Oooh no, Morine, you must not go alone. In Africa to get anywhere you must have a man with you, preferably a large man." Nonetheless, the Committee gave me formal authority to act on behalf of the Society to get the Collection to England and I went – alone.

We had already tried several approaches which for one reason or another did not work. We then contacted a recommended shipping firm and for a while it seemed as if the job could be done by long distance without my having to go out. However, Francis Feather insisted that my presence was necessary. As it turned out, either he was prescient or else he just knows Africa very well.

To get anything out of Zimbabwe requires an export licence, a valuation, and exchange control authority. Ultimately all authority for export lies in the hands of

the Reserve Bank. Requests cannot be made directly but must go through several intermediate channels. I had been assured by the shipping firm before I left England that this procedure was virtually complete.

An extremely generous donation from a member of The Powys Society paid for my flight and for part of the removal expenses. I arrived June 10 in Bulawayo twenty-four hours after leaving Devon. How the Feathers do this every year in order to attend our conferences is a matter for marvel! They met me and took me "home" – as it indeed became to me for ten days.

The next day Francis and I began putting the 700 or so books that constitute his Powys collection in one room. This was no small task as every room in the large Feather house is filled with books, organised according to Francis's own meticulous system. That afternoon there was a knock at the door. It was Di Swanepoel of Glens Removals and we knew by the look on her face that it was not good news.

We had been refused exchange control authority. No reason was given. As Di explained, the Reserve Bank does not have to give reasons. Eventually, as the horror stories piled up, I realized that this was a common happening in Zimbabwe and once any application was refused, it might be months – or years – before they would reconsider it.

I could only respond that I had ten days, that we had arranged to pack the books next Friday and to crate them the following Monday. The books were going; all we had to do was to figure out how to get the Reserve Bank to change its mind.

Di Swanepoel was marvellous. Later she told me that she didn't ever think it could be done, but certainly once she realised I was determined to get the books out, she went to work: phone calls to her head office in Harare, long discussions with the manager of the Bulawayo bank through which we had to work. She asked Francis if by any chance he had evidence that he had brought the books to Zimbabwe from elsewhere. Within three minutes Francis came back with a Pickford's removal document from 10 years earlier! I showed Di the letter from the Canadian ambassador in which he stated that he had checked into the matter for me and that there would be no difficulty. Fortunately he had written the names and phone numbers of the authorities he had spoken with. Di's eyes lit up and off she went to xerox these and a number of other supporting documents. If these didn't work there were other methods but all of them very risky and moreover illegal.

I passed the next few days eating Kay's lovely meals and seeing something of the country, including the extensive ruins of the curving drystone enclosures of Great Zimbabwe and the rare cave paintings of the Matopos. But most often I was with Francis talking about his life of collecting, and immersing myself in the exquisite collection of private press books, rare first editions, priceless art books: an Aladdin's cave for book-lovers.

On Wednesday Di Swanepoel phoned to say that she was cautiously optimistic: "Everyone is working in it." Word had got round about the crazy lady who didn't know how slowly things worked in Africa. Also since we were a charity and since there was no legal reason why the books should not be released, the affair became a mini *cause célèbre*.

On Friday morning, Derius, the expert packer, came and the two of us worked most of the day carefully wrapping each precious book in paper and then packing it into the boxes. That evening Di phoned to say that APPROVAL HAD COME THROUGH. I did so want to dance.

On Monday Derius and Mr Thomas came and built wooden crates around the book boxes on the Feathers' big back verandah. At that point we intended to send them by ship via South Africa, so we taped double layer plastic around everything. It took four men to carry each wooden crate. A last-minute decision was made to send them by air on the advice of the Canadian ambassador who said that Natal province in South Africa (from which the ship would leave) might explode any day. The border guards were stopping transport trucks and strewing the contents over the road in search of illegal guns and ammunition. I thought of Mr Weston's good wine spilled over a dusty road and decided that since the cost came within the original estimate, by air the books would go.

Twelve days after arrival I departed, with a small fortune in manuscripts packed in a club bag – prepared if necessary to state to the guards that it was a long journey and I was a fast reader. But the trip went without incident and the crates themselves arrived in England, cleared customs, and were shipped to Dorchester in a matter of days. The Feather Collection is now safely unpacked and in the Powys Room at the Dorset County Museum.

All this would not have been possible without Kay and Francis's loving support, Di Swanepoel's enthusiasm and experience, and the help of many people whose names I do not even know. I won't forget Zimbabwe.

Let me refer now to another exciting development. In *The Powys Journal* volume III, the contributing editor predicted that the Feather Collection would act as a "lodestone". Whatever the source of the magnetic energy, I was able to announce at the opening of the Powys Exhibition, on August 21st 1993, a second piece of news of greatest importance: Mr E. E. Bissell had decided to leave his magnificent collection to the Society. He informed the officers that we were to be given everything that constitutes his Powys Collection – manuscripts, typescripts, books, letters, photographs, drawings, family history, articles by and about the Powys brothers, press-cuttings, books by and about the Circle as well as the family.

I received a letter from Mr Bissell just before I came to the Conference. It reads in part: "It is good to know that the Collection, in its entirety, will be in safe hands and in this country. ... I hope the Conference and the Exhibition will be a success and bring the Powys family to the notice of a wider public."

I am now formally announcing this to the A. G. M. and ask their approval to accept this great gift of Mr Bissell with the Society's deepest thanks.

Morine Krissdóttir

A Bibliography of the Powys family

Professor J. Lawrence Mitchell, Alan Howe, Dr Peter Foss and I have been commissioned to produce the first complete bibliography of the entire Powys family. Naturally, we will wish to build upon the earlier bibliographies, where these exist. However, it is likely that there is much to be discovered and we would be grateful if members who feel that they may have, or know of, material which may be of interest would contact us via the *Newsletter*.

For each member of the family, the bibliography will be divided into a number of sections. These are:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| A Books and pamphlets | B Contributions to books |
| C Contributions to newspapers and periodicals | D Translations |
| E Manuscript, typescript and proof materials | F Reviews and criticism |
| G Miscellanea (adaptations, plays, recordings, radio and television broadcasts, films, etc) | |

Items in Category A should be described as fully as possible, using the following headings:

1 title-page; 2 collation; 3 measurements; 4 dust-jacket; 5 binding; 6 date of issue; 7 number of copies; 8 price; 9 contents; 10 illustrations; 11 notes.

In addition, Anthony Head is considering the possibility of compiling a list of Powys manuscript holdings and would be extremely grateful for any information concerning both private and institutional collections. This too may be sent via the *Newsletter*.

Paul Roberts

The Old Man of the Hills

Powysians have with justification complained that the mass media has paid little attention to the work of the Powys family, but now comes good news in the shape of a forthcoming television drama-documentary on John Cowper Powys by Herbert Williams.

Williams, a full-time writer who recently joined The Powys Society and came to this year's Conference, has been commissioned to write the sixty-minute programme by HTV, the ITV company serving Wales and the West of England.

It will be called *The Old Man of the Hills* and is scheduled for transmission by HTV Wales next year. "I hope it will go out in the West Country as well and Society members can help by writing to HTV West in Bristol, saying they would like to see it", said Herbert Williams, who lives in Cardiff.

Writers in a Landscape

The Powys Exhibition at the Dorset County Museum, August 22nd–October 31st 1993

Regular readers of the *Newsletter* will recall Morine Krissdóttir's entry in No 19 on what was then the forthcoming Powys exhibition. She quoted part of John Cowper's account of Gertrude Powys's 1937 exhibition at the Cooling Galleries, and went on to explain that the aim of the 1993 exhibition was to capture "the sense of that interpenetration of landscape and art which played so large a part in the Powys psyche". It is well worth turning back to that John Cowper passage. What for John Cowper was "a completely new Picture" of Lodmore brought alive for him a prospect "known best to me in the whole world"; and just as those phrases juxtapose in one event the completely "new" and the profoundly familiar, so his celebration of that Lodmore prospect develops a suggestion of visionary perception by further interweaving what is "indescribable" with what is known and "real", the "tang and blow of the spray from the sea".

The Powys exhibition pointed to essentially the same paradox, a paradox which can always be relied upon to fuel controversy, and around which debate will always properly thrive. The display cases set the achievements of John, Theodore and Llewelyn in a startlingly tangible, precise historical context. A sense of the creative time and place of these men was skilfully and powerfully evoked. Yet at the same time the extracts, so expertly chosen and so effectively presented, combined with the landscape (represented in photography and painting) to suggest a quality of timelessness.

To anyone stumbling upon the Powyses for the first time, this exhibition will have been an invaluable introduction. There needs to be no apology for re-stating the extent to which the remarkable achievements of this family are an integral part of Dorset cultural history. Here it was dramatically illustrated, and will have come as a revelation to many of the Museum's visitors. The full extent of the wider circle of writers and artists involved with the Powyses in Dorset will likewise have surprised many while offering a bridge from the broad cultural context of the East Chaldon period across to specific Powys material.

For Society members already well aware of most if not all the texts, images and information displayed, the experience of seeing it brought together in this way was every bit as worthwhile. It was possible to appreciate how here (just as in the Conference talks and lectures) we were in receipt of another thought-provoking interpretation of what our Powys work is about, and what it might all be for.

I want to conclude these brief reflections with my own choice of extract from John Cowper Powys, because I want to return to the creative tension I found so much a part of the ambience of the exhibition. Morine turned to the letters; I have chosen a passage from Chapter III of *In Defense of Sensuality*:

The surface of our awareness is continually being provoked and teased by

practical necessity. This necessity must be endured; for we all have to bear the burden of being human. We all have to pay back the debt we owe, for being born at all, to our long, elaborate, human inheritance. But when, beyond these primal necessities of earning our living, and being responsible for our dependants, human tradition seeks to lay upon us a complicated catalogue of moral obligations and service-duties, it is best to sink down into the lap of our primal life-sensation, from the depths of which we can afford to take such matters extremely lightly.

It seems to me that this passage might be applied to the way in which "context", location in time and place, must be recognised as part of the baggage the writer and reader necessarily bring to a text, "for we all have to bear the burden of being human". The exhibition helped in this respect, but it then offered to move us on along the path John Cowper writes of here; his is ultimately the lonely quest dramatised by the novels (not least *Maiden Castle*), taking us away from time and place towards "our primal life-sensation". In consequence we are left with the impression not that we have all the information we need (it would have been a less than satisfactory exhibition had that been the case), instead we find ourselves grasping at the paradox with which I began: laid out in the glass cases we recognise history of a particular kind; the creative spirit, meanwhile, is in perpetual movement away from this kind of history, it leaves behind it the printed word, the tobacco tin, the shingle, the walking stick; or that at least is how it may seem.

John Williams

The Powys Centre at the Dorset County Museum

Many Society members who visited Dorchester in August will have heard me outline something of the Museum's future plans. For those of you who could not be there I hope this note will be a reassurance and an encouragement.

The Society's Chairman has achieved a remarkable hat-trick in the past twelve months. Firstly, she has reviewed the many possible recipients of The Powys Society's growing manuscript and library collections. Happily, she has recommended the Dorset County Museum as the most suitable for the Society's aim. Secondly, she had completed discussions with Mr and Mrs Feather and ably shepherded their spectacular collection of library editions from Zimbabwe to the Museum's premises in Dorchester. Finally, she has deepened and broadened that achievement through an agreement with Mr Bissell also to deposit his unparalleled collection of manuscripts, correspondence, editions and personalia. Much of this collection too has arrived safely at the County Museum.

What are we to do with all of this? Few museums have the established track

record of the Dorset County Museum as a centre for literary research. Several important collections, including the considerable library and manuscript collection relating to Thomas Hardy, the major archive of William Barnes, and the complete papers of Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland, already reside in the Museum and form a coherent Dorset Collection spanning one hundred and seventy years of literary achievement.

The Museum collection is the focus for most scholarly research into Thomas Hardy and forthcoming editions of William Barnes' poetry and Sylvia Townsend Warner's diaries and correspondence have relied entirely on the County Museum's archives.

Despite the Museum's broad achievement as a literary archive centre, its reputation with the public rests almost completely on the slightly inconsequential display of Thomas Hardy's study here – a matter for trivialising comment in recent national press articles and correspondence.

Current plans to reinvigorate display and study facilities pre-date this new notoriety and it is for the sake of these wider plans and not our simple archive function that the Society's collections are at the Museum today.

The Dorset County Museum is owned and operated by the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, founded by William Barnes and others in 1846 and generously supported by Thomas Hardy in its new premises after 1883. The Museum and DNH&AS are closely entwined and the Museum building boasts an attractive research library prominently on its main site. The symbiosis of research, study, display and education essential to the Museum's operation and a review of our plans for the next few years has thrown heavy emphasis on the need to improve public access to the collections through carefully researched re-display and an educational programme. In many ways there could hardly be a better time for the Museum to realise its aspirations. U. K. readers will know of the Government's commitment to celebrate the year 2000 A.D. as the Year of the Arts, and may well recall that, while 1993 was the Year of Music, 1995 will be the Year of Literature. The Museum has already submitted an application to the Department of National Heritage for funds to become available in 1995 and for a major gallery of Dorset literature, where we hope to present up-to-date research on the Powys family, Thomas Hardy and our other collections. If we are successful, the gallery should open at the end of 1996 as a major new attraction for the Museum, which will analyse and interpret literature in a way that the present "shrine" display cannot.

The DNH&AS has a need for much-enhanced study facilities overall and it is intended to extend the present library to provide environmentally managed manuscript storage, study carrells, and improved facilities such as photocopy and refreshment arrangements. The fully evolved plan will provide better performance spaces and, with the Museum's temporary exhibition venue and other complementary photograph, sound, archaeology and local history collec-

tions, the prospect for an integrated literary centre in the new millenium is bright indeed.

Just for now the collections deposited with the Museum are in the course of cataloguing and facilities for study must remain closed. The Powys Society's involvement in this process of cataloguing is of essential importance to us and we have been lucky in the offer from the Chairman herself in seeing this project through to fruition during 1993.

I look forward to seeing all of you (though not all at once) at the Museum in years to come.

Richard de Peyer

The Powys Centre

As announced at the 1993 Conference, Mr E. E. Bissell, with the greatest generosity, has willed his Powys Collection to the Society. In June he lent the Exhibition organizers much material and shortly thereafter decided to give the Society part of his Collection immediately for deposit in the Dorset County Museum. After a meeting with the Curator of the Museum and the Chairman of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, a letter of agreement has been signed, and many boxes of priceless material constituting the Bissell Collection are now safely in the Powys Room.

Distinct and separate, the Bissell Collection and the Feather Collection complement each other wonderfully; together they constitute one of the finest collections of Powysiana anywhere.

However, there are many, many months of hard work ahead cataloguing and classifying these two collections of such quality, quantity and complexity. I know that members will understand and accept that, as is the usual practice, until the cataloguing, appropriate storage and conservation are complete, the invaluable (and often fragile) material cannot be made accessible. Please be patient; as soon as possible the collections that form the Collection will be available to facilitate the work of those who desire to further an understanding and recognition of the works of the Powys family.

Morine Krissdóttir

A new face for the Newsletter

Observant readers will find that the *Newsletter* looks different. Instead of the rather narrow and boring *Times* (computer version), I have used *Plantin*, a very clear face, much more readable at small sizes. The line-spacing hasn't actually changed, though it seems so, but the letters are slightly wider (and bolder) so that the amount of text which fits the line is slightly less. I hope you approve of the change.

Stephen Powys Marks

Praise from the Living

[The following article is based on a sermon given by Pastor Leslie Harrison to the Montacute Ramblers and Natural History Group at their annual Ramblers' Service on Sunday July 28th 1991. The sermon was written with the needs of its particular audience in mind and some of the introductory material will, therefore, be familiar to seasoned Powysians. However, what is unlikely to be familiar is the importance of the story of King Hezekiah to Llewelyn Powys, and we are grateful to Leslie Harrison for his permission to publish what will for many be an enlightening piece. P. R.]

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee."

[inscription on the memorial stone of Llewelyn Powys]

"For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day ..." [Isaiah 38, verses 18-19]

Anyone who lives or walks in the West Country will sooner or later come across the *Somerset and Dorset Essays* of Llewelyn Powys. The original volumes are now being re-issued in both hardback and paperback. A charming collection, *Scenes from a Somerset Childhood*, can be obtained at our local Post Office.

As most of you will know, Llewelyn was a member of the famous Powys family, which lived in Montacute vicarage in the early part of this century. Some of our older people can still remember members of the family, even the Revd Charles Francis Powys himself, and one or two the young Llewelyn, or *Lulu*, as he was called by his brothers and sisters.

It is fascinating to read his essays and compare the scenes he described with their appearance today. In spite of some considerable changes; it is amazing how many places have scarcely changed over the years. Certainly, if he came back to Montacute today he would have no difficulty in recognising the scenes he enjoyed in his childhood and youth.

I first came upon these essays about thirty years ago, long before I came to Montacute, and was immediately entranced with them. This was the more surprising, as I was then living in Oxfordshire, far from Dorset and Somerset. Not until I broke a journey back from Devon one day did I see this village at last, even then never suspecting that I would one day live here. It was an even greater thrill when eventually, many years later, I was called to be the Baptist Pastor of Montacute and so was able to explore the "Powys Country" in earnest.

With this background, it wasn't surprising that when, a few weeks ago, John and Eve Batten invited me to walk with them to the cottage at Chydyok where Llewelyn lived in his later years I jumped at the chance. A lovely walk from the village of Chaldon Herring, where his brother Theodore lived, took us over the

chalk downs to a group of farm cottages I immediately recognised from the photo in the *Dorset Essays*. Once again, almost nothing had changed, from the flocks of sheep on the downs to the skylarks singing overhead.

It was not the cottage, however, but another memento that I particularly wanted to see, and this I achieved on another walk with John and Eve a few weeks later. This is Llewelyn's memorial stone, which we found beside the path on the edge of Chaldon Down overlooking the sea far below. It was much smaller and simpler than I had expected. On it was inscribed:

LLEWELYN POWYS

13 AUGUST 1884

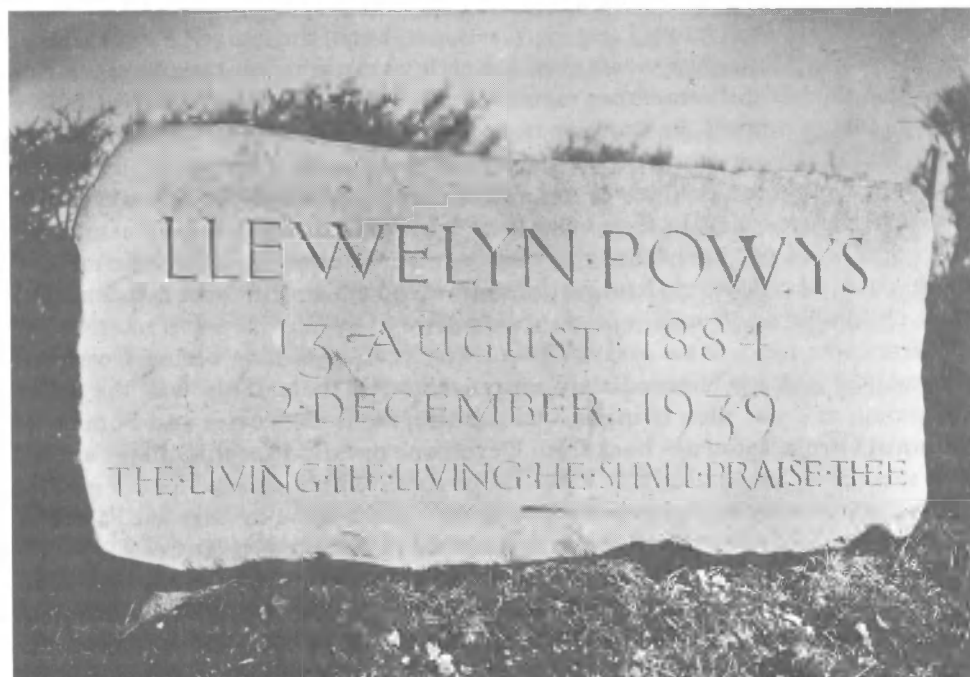
2 DECEMBER 1939

At the bottom was what appeared to be a text:

THE LIVING THE LIVING HE SHALL PRAISE THEE

I thought at first that the words must come from one of the psalms, but John and Eve corrected me and told me they came from the Book of Isaiah. When I got home, I looked up my Bible and found that they were quite right. Here is the full passage from which Llewelyn drew his text:

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall



praise thee, as I do this day ... [Isaiah 38, verses 18-19]

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee." I can well understand why Llewelyn Powys should choose those words for his memorial stone, for most of his life was a battle with death. When he was still quite young he contracted tuberculosis in the lungs and was not expected to live. In one of his books, he speaks of a local villager telling him that he had "a graveyard cough", which can't have been much comfort.

Eventually he was sent to a sanatorium in Switzerland, where he made a partial recovery. But there was no real cure for T. B. in those days and the disease continued to trouble him to the end of his life. It wasn't helped by his determination to lead a normal life and the many foolish things he did in trying to prove himself. But it did give him a zest for life which he might never have possessed but for his illness. With the prospect of an early death ever before him, every day of his life was regarded as a priceless gift to be enjoyed to the full. It also gave him an appreciation of the beauty and wonder of this glorious world in which we live, which is reflected again and again in his writings.

I also think that his choice of text may have been influenced by the remarkable account in Isaiah 38 of the illness and recovery of Hezekiah, king of Judah. In Isaiah 37 we read of the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from an Assyrian invasion. But no sooner was it over than the king fell sick and the prophet Isaiah tells him that he is going to die.

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover." [Isaiah 38, verse 1]

This is a pretty bleak message for a king in the prime of life, probably still under forty. His reaction is described in verses 2 and 3:

Then Hezekiah turned his face towards the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight." And Hezekiah wept sore.

Hezekiah's prayer was answered by a wonderful promise from the Lord:

Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father. I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

The promise is confirmed by a sign and Hezekiah recovers from his sickness.

After his recovery, the king composes a wonderful hymn of thanksgiving, one of the finest in the Old Testament. It begins with a meditation on death. Strange though it may seem in relation to the resurrection confidence of the New Testament, the men of the Old Testament had no great expectation of a future

life. After death, you live a shadowy existence in a place called Sheol, where you were separated both from mankind and from God.

This is why Hezekiah cries out:

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit [Sheol] cannot hope for thy truth.

But in His wonderful mercy God has delivered him from death and restored him to life again.

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day ..."

Anyone who has recovered from a serious illness will understand how King Hezekiah felt. No wonder Llewelyn Powys was so moved by this story that he chose Hezekiah's words for his memorial stone. After Beethoven had recovered from a serious illness, he composed one of his most sublime quartets and inscribed at the top of the score: "Thanksgiving to God after recovery from illness."

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee." There is only one problem about the words chosen by Llewelyn Powys for his memorial stone. The words are really a confession of faith: "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, *as I do this day.*"

You cannot really offer praise unless you believe there is someone to praise. Hezekiah was convinced that he owed his recovery to the God of Israel, whom he served, and so he praised Him from the depths of a thankful heart. But in spite of being brought up in a Christian family, with an Anglican vicar for his father, Llewelyn proclaimed himself an atheist for most of his adult life. More than that – he was a militant atheist. When reading his essays, one is often brought up by some bitter diatribe against the Christian faith and the God it worships. He wrote a book about Christianity called *The Pathetic Fallacy*. He visited the Holy Land and afterwards wrote a book called *The Cradle of God*, in which he treats almost every sacred place with scepticism and unbelief.

And yet I am convinced that he chose this text because, deep within him, there was a desire to praise God for the wonders of His creation. Sometimes when he is writing a passionate description of some natural beauty, the word *God* creeps in almost without his noticing it. In the essay on "The Blind Cow" in *Earth Memories*, he first writes of the Blind Cow Rock, near Lulworth Cove, as a symbol of the "obdurate reality of matter, against which the sensitive spray of life throughout the milleniums has dashed itself in vain." But he goes on:

Yet out of the obedience of the dutiful ewe, out of the poetry in the fragile, crested head of the lark, out of the expert precision of the fish's flashing body it is conceivable that there does rise a certain whisper of hope challenging to the sottish absolute domination of the Blind Cow. I have often entertained this fancy, especially towards evening when, as the sun draws down over the island of Portland, the whole coat-line is held under a vesper benediction, as if the peace of God that passes all understanding was in very truth present and offering some ineffable assurance to the

samphire patches, to the sea-kale, and indeed to all the spindrift litter of the foreshore, with its shells and congregated paradise pebbles.

There is another passage in his essay on "The Partridge" in the same book, "so sustained was the tranquillity of the evening that one might fancy it an interval set apart by God for His own praying time, and that one might accidentally surprise Him 'in his piety' in any of the valleys."

I have a suspicion that all his life the atheism of Llewelyn's intelligence was doing battle with the instinctive faith of his father and mother, which he had learned in childhood in the vicarage at Montacute.

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee ..."

I believe that each one of us has a deep need to offer praise. People sometimes say to me, "I'm not religious", but I seldom believe them. All they really mean is that for one reason or another they no longer go to church. But we are all religious by nature. Who can look at the stars at night without a feeling of awe at the sheer wonder and magnitude of the universe? Who can gaze upon a beautiful sunset without a sense of some mighty Presence behind the beauty and tranquillity? Who that is musical can listen to the mighty *Sanctus* in Bach's *Mass in B minor* and not be uplifted above the cares and worries of daily life?

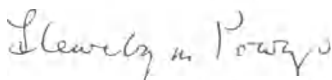
And finally, who can enjoy a walk through beautiful countryside and not want to give thanks for this glorious world in which we live? That is why I believe that societies like the Montacute Ramblers and Natural History Group are, in their modest way, helping us all to draw closer to God through the beauties of His creation.

We might even go a step further and, like King Hezekiah and Llewelyn Powys, gain such a sense of deliverance and the wonder of being alive that we shall want to continue our praise for the rest of our lives.

The Lord will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the Lord.

Leslie Harrison

[*Note: Since giving the above address, I have been able to see the children's picture book of Bible stories once owned by the young Llewelyn and now in the possession of Mr John Cornelius. Thanks to his courtesy, we are able to reproduce the picture of Hezekiah that appears in this book (see the back cover). Undoubtedly, the story must have influenced Llewelyn from childhood. L. H.*]



Llewelyn Powys's signature in *Bible Pictures and Stories*

Letters to the Editor

from Janet Prior

Dear Mr Roberts

Having read the "forgotten works" bibliographical check-list for J. C. P. in the *Newsletter*, I was led to wonder whether anyone could give me information on the background of a book I found recently, *The Pleasure Ground*, published by Macdonald in 1947, edited by Malcolm Elwin and containing pieces by, among others, Llewelyn Powys, T. F. Powys, Valentine Ackland, Alyse Gregory, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Gamel Woolsey.

I could hardly believe my eyes when I first glanced at the contents to this "Miscellany of English Writing". But, being a relatively new member of the Society, perhaps I have missed a mention of it in some earlier of your publications.

With regard to your concern that the Society meets the needs of its members, I feel sure that John Batten is entirely correct in his belief that no other literary society offers anything to rival *The Powys Journal*. However, in his letter to you in the *Newsletter*, John Batten talks of the "individual response to Powys". Maybe because I'm a woman, but it is this aspect of the Society's membership that most interests and intrigues me. The "flying visitor" from the Midlands: what does reading Powys mean to him? To know that, I think, might prove a Powysian revelation in itself.

Ultimately, though, if you really want to know what the membership thinks, then you're going to have to ask them; and not just a polite invitation of views, but something as crude as a questionnaire included in one of the mailings. Here am I writing; but strong though my interest and definite though my views, I should never have written this save for a direct and personal request.

Still, for the rest, the Society is getting it right a good 99% of the time, and I can only express my admiration and gratitude for the hard work you and all the rest of the editorial team must put in for us lay devotees.

Members able to help with further information regarding The Pleasure Ground should contact Janet Prior at "Lanega", Ava, Mevagissey, Cornwall PL26 6RY.

from Reverend Neil D. Lee

Dear Mr Roberts

I write in the full flush of enthusiasm nourished by the recent acceptance of my membership of The Powys Society, and in response to John Batten's letter, which I thought deserved a bouquet of grateful acknowledgment, not least for the insight displayed by the writer, which goes some way towards shedding light on the enigmatic and non-stereotyped characteristics of the membership. Surely the composite make-up of the Society is a reflection of the comprehensive and

multitudinously diverse talents of the Powys family, and I feel certain that most of us will have found a great interest in John Batten's letter and an affinity with Barbara Spencer. The "individual nature of response to Powys" is a subject of fascination, and John Batten's statement that "one doesn't join the Society unless their works or their lives have touched one's own" and that "in some instances their influence reaches the very centre of being and becomes another dimension of existence" is most certainly true in my experience. John Batten is correct, it is a "renewable resource" and, I would add, vitally and admirably maintained by The Powys Society. Our primary task must be to maintain that renewable resource – and we can only succeed in that task by communication.

My own experience of the Powysian influence being the catalyst responsible for a complete transformation of my life may serve as an illustration.

As with our Secretary and many others, my introduction to things Powysian began with Llewelyn, and I confess to having Lluised ever since. At once enchanted by his autobiographical essay style, enriched (and emboldened) by his rationalist philosophical approach to his life experience, encouraged and inspired by his intrinsic empathy with the pagan spiritual worship of the natural, I was captivated, held in a spell, almost bewitched – and all by pure chance!

I was a relatively uneducated and not particularly literate ex-juvenile delinquent coal-miner when, in 1981, whilst still suffering the distasteful aftermath of my youthful misdemeanours, I chanced upon an old copy of *The Countryman* dated Summer 1957, and an essay on Llewelyn Powys by Gabriel Seal, which was number 8 in a series on "Country Authors". I had never heard of Llewelyn before, but that essay marked the beginning of my education.

Five years later my re-routed course found me at theological training college, where I picked up a copy of *The Pathetic Fallacy* in a college library book sale for 50p. I was immediately struck by the remarkable similarity of perception displayed in this "Study of Christianity" with the book which I was studying at the same time by the late-nineteenth-century German theologian Otto Pfleiderer.

Later, at university, I submitted a paper on "Pagan Worship and Natural Spirituality", quoting from both *The Pathetic Fallacy* and *The Cradle of God*, whilst researching Unitarian links with the Powyses. By this time my appetite was well and truly whetted and it remained a constant and growing source of frustration that, whilst a very small minority had heard of John Cowper, I could find no-one to assuage my thirst for discovering more about Llewelyn. I spent far more time in the John Rylands library reading borrowed Powys books than I did swotting for my theology exams. I began collecting Llewelyn's books, and the more I read the greater his influence became. Yet, despite this diversion, I managed to graduate into ministry in 1990 and accepted a pulpit in the North of England. This gave me the opportunity to continue my hedonistic indulgence and I took great delight in reading passages from Llewelyn's philosophical books to my congregation. I

began to feel a special earth-kinship, intensely personal, and was carried forward on the crest of a wave of the will to live which swallowed whole the liturgical dogma of the establishment and created a tension which divided my conscience. During the time of my decision to make a quiet withdrawal from the theological establishment I remember feeling that when it was time to stand up and be counted, the kindred spirit of Llewelyn Powys stood tall beside me in support, urging "nothing but the truth can avail us now".

During my final days in ministry I had the good fortune to have my counsel sought by a greatly troubled lady, instantly recognising that she possessed rare human qualities and a strong spiritual potential for self-analysis and self-healing. Following our first meeting in my vestry I lent her *Love and Death*. It transpired that she had T. B. and the scar tissue in her lungs had become infected. The disease caused a secondary infection which was treatable but incurable. This, of course, had been a major factor in her despair. Upon returning the book she was alight, and surrounded by a new aura of hope, which was fuelled by our joint enthusiasm for Llewelyn. Ann identified with Llewelyn's illness and adopted his earth-philosophy as her knowledge and awareness grew.

Sheer chance, glorious chance, had brought us together. In our romantic imagery she became my Dittany Stone and I her Llewelyn. Her illness was pronounced terminal last year and, following my resignation from the Church, I became her full-time carer and we removed ourselves to the peaceful and picturesque countryside of the Derbyshire Dales. When Ann is well enough we walk in the countryside, but generally, and especially during the months between October and May, she remains housebound. She has often expressed a desire to correspond with other admirers of Llewelyn Powys and indeed, prior to her knowledge of the existence of The Powys Society, Ann had actually planned to formulate a register of Llewelyn Powys's devotees and form a sort of appreciation society by correspondence.

In response to your request for your readership to respond to John Batten's letter, may I humbly submit Ann's idea of a list of the names, correspondence addresses and interests of Powys devotees. Although this would primarily be aimed at those who are isolated or housebound, and who are unable to attend Powys Society functions, it would, of course, be open to all members.

In addition, I would add that Ann and I would welcome any letters from fellow admirers of Llewelyn Powys in particular, and would love to hear from anyone who has information, books or artefacts to share or exchange. Also, for those unable to visit the areas mentioned in John Batten's letter, a video film which was made available to members might be a worthwhile consideration.

Members wishing to write to Neil Lee, who has recently published a collection of poems and prose sketches entitled Ramblings in the Dust, may contact him at: 12 Holme Close, Holloway, near Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 5BE.

Reviews

Soliloquies of a Hermit, by T. F. Powys. The Powys Press, 1993.

ISBN 1 874559 07 4. £7.50 (£6.00 to members). 105 pp.

The Joy of It, by Littleton Powys. The Powys Society, 1993.

ISBN 1 874559 08 2. £7.50. 317 pp re-set on 80 pp A4.

The appearance of these two books marks a significant stage in the development of The Powys Society's publications programme; they are the first full-length works by members of the Powys family to be reprinted by the Society. Both books are handsomely produced, the *Soliloquies of a Hermit* in particular benefiting from being re-set in an A5 format, using what even my untutored eye can recognise as a beautiful but unfussy typeface. This edition also reproduces the original frontispiece from the 1916 edition, along with a second portrait of Theodore, and follows the 1926 text, which featured the alteration of two words and the division of the book into chapters. But the most significant feature of this new edition is that it contains an essay by John Williams which is not only of great value to the seasoned Powys reader, but which is indispensable to the reader new to the Powys world. The *Soliloquies* is a work which has few, if any, parallels in the literature of its era, so some kind of an introduction to explain the background to the book is essential if this work is to attract new readers whose interest will be sufficiently aroused to seek out more of Theodore's writing. John Williams' essay provides exactly what is required to enable a reader coming new to the book to find their way around this unique and compelling work. This is not a conventional religious meditation; the whole book is some way beyond simple dissent and is part of an altogether more radical tradition, which has something of the flavour of Blake's *The marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In its seeking to explore the notion of a God who presides over creation in which evil is present, Theodore establishes some of the unorthodox themes which resurface again and again in his fiction. It would be unfair to both the book and its potential readers to portray it as some kind of "key" to Theodore's fiction; this is a far more complex and self-contained work than that. What it does offer to the admirer is a different, more direct, discussion of some of the ideas that form the background to the fiction, although the author never attempts anything as trite as an explanation.

Perhaps my only, rather trivial, quibble with the production of this volume is that John Williams' essay is tucked away as an *Afterword*, when it might have put at the start of the text as a *Foreword*. However, this is the first time *Soliloquies* has appeared with any sort of introduction, so that, along with the admirable points of the book's production, is a cause for celebration.

Littleton Powys's first volume of autobiography, *The Joy of It*, is a book which is more widely known through its being cited in critical and biographical works about the Powyses, than through being actually read, the reason for this neglect

being the difficulty of finding copies. This edition is the first time this book has been printed since its first appearance in 1937. The format for the book is that of a "reference reprint", and Stephen Powys Marks, who prepared this edition for the press, deserves much congratulation, for both his efforts and the end result. By combining his knowledge of typography and mastery of desk-top publishing, he has produced what is in effect a very attractive paperback, a long way from the pallid photocopies which reference reprints often consist of. The original text was scanned by computer and then electronically reset in a late-eighteenth-century typeface chosen for its legibility in the slightly reduced size. In order to allow for existing references to match new ones made from this edition, the original page numbers appear in the text. In the advance publicity this book is described as "a handy working copy", which seems an altogether too modest description of what we have here. I have the reprint and the original open side by side before me, and it is hard to say which is the clearer; the reprint, with its smaller but bolder type and whiter paper, stands up well to such a comparison. What is not in doubt is that, as a piece of book production, it is a more attractively printed and legible piece of work than many of the paperbacks which appear from the presses of major publishers.

The Joy of It is a book which has attracted both praise and criticism from past readers, and it is easy to see the reasons for both opinions. Even someone who, like myself, has enjoyed and values this book has to admit that it cannot be given unrestrained praise. The author's love of life and the unpretentious honesty with which he writes have a great deal of charm and his sincerity does much to defuse criticism of the book's faults. For example, among the chapters relating to Littleton's career as a teacher an uncomfortably large number of its pages read like a Prize Day speech; and yet even when one doesn't enjoy the writing, one cannot help admiring the man, because the power the author's love of life brings some light to even the dullest pages. The first chapter, "Nature", is in many ways the key to the whole book, and it demonstrates that Littleton had a spiritual affinity with the natural world which was deeply felt, although more conventionally expressed, as that of the more famous members of his family. The first chapter also introduces the second main theme, the idea that happiness is a necessary and attainable part of life. It is in this that one finds his most obvious point of similarity with his brother John and his "art of happiness", although Littleton's "art of happiness" is rooted in a philosophy of "because of" in contrast with John Cowper's "in spite of".

For the reader of the *Powys Newsletter*, the biggest attraction of *The Joy of It* is that it provides a considerable amount of information which has the added interest of being presented by a member of the family. His comments about Richard Heron Ward's *The Powys Brothers* are of particular interest, offering some valuable comments on an under-discussed book. Littleton's views on Louis Marlow's *Welsh Ambassadors*, which are the most often quoted part of the book,

benefit from being read in their entirety and seem no more unreasonable than Llewelyn's letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* (8/2/36), similarly defending his father from Marlow's charge of "repressed ferocity". Outside the chapter "My Brothers" (how one wishes he had added "and Sisters" – it would have been good to read more about Katie and other members of the family), there is a great deal of information and insight which ought to be read by anyone wishing to gain a more complete picture of the Powys family.

Alan Howe

Powys on Keats – Volume One of John Keats: or Popular Paganism,
by John Cowper Powys, edited by Cedric Hentschel.
London: Cecil Woolf, 1993. ISBN 0 900821 98 1. £17.95. 160 pp.

Like several other titles published by Cecil Woolf, *Powys on Keats* will sharply divide its potential audience. First, there will be those who welcome the book, and those who believe it ought not to have been published. Second, those who believe it is of importance in understanding Powys's life and work, and those for whom it will appear merely peripheral. Finally, there will be those who believe it is a book with something important to say about Keats and those for whom it is of interest only to the most avid Powysians. Simply to be at the centre of so much controversy would ensure the sales of many less deserving books.

The argument as to whether the book should have been published at all will centre upon the practicalities of this edition. Powys's original text consisted of an "Epistle Dedicatory" and twenty-six chapters, of which two seem irretrievably lost. Of the remaining twenty-four chapters we are here given six, in addition to the "Epistle Dedicatory"; those that focus on Powys's notion of Paganism. The remaining eighteen extant chapters, largely devoted to the study of individual poems, are promised in a second volume to be published at a later date. This seems, to say the least, an odd arrangement. Of the one hundred and sixty pages in the present volume, only slightly more than half are actually written by Powys, the remainder being taken up with an introduction, notes and index and two appendices. At this rate it seems possible that the second volume will be disproportionately large and will require a second index. Such an arrangement seems not only inconvenient and expensive for the reader, but also to require unnecessary editorial work.

Why, then, do I believe that *Powys on Keats* is a book which everyone interested in the life and work of John Cowper Powys ought to buy and read?

Every Powysian tends, by selection and preference, to create his own version of the author: the awkward and poetic youth of Montacute and Cambridge, the barn-storming lecturer of the American years, ensorcerizing vast Labor Hall audiences and gatherings of genteel ladies alike, the great artist of Phudd Bottom, Dorchester and Corwen, the kindly sage of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Yet all of

these are partial views and even taken together they do not tell the entire story. Perhaps it is impossible to achieve a full and objective view of so huge and protean a figure because no single, unified, solid existence is there to be viewed and any attempt to create such a view must inevitably lead to distortion. However that might be, there is an entire epoch in Powys's life and work which has, until now, remained almost entirely hidden, the period between the *Poems* of 1899 and *The War and Culture* of 1914 (the exception, of course, being *Lucifer*, written in 1905). Penny Smith has provided a partial survey of this period in her essay "Works without Names" (*The Powys Review*, 22, 23, 1988-89), yet this valuable work tells only part of the story and, because it deals with only one body of manuscript material, may mislead us into believing that during those years Powys's energies were entirely devoted to the creation of a vast erotic phantasy enacted by himself and his circle of friends. In fact, there remains a large body of work, of which *Powys on Keats* and the essay on Chesterton which appeared in *The Powys Journal* III are the only published examples, which reveal a Powys quite different to any we have previously known: a body of work (much of it held in the too little explored archives of the George Arents library at the University of Syracuse) which includes two plays (one complete, one virtually so), at least one short story, six chapters from an abandoned novel, and his "ethical essay" *The New Paganism*, most of which was written in the critical period between 1905 and 1910.

In what way, then, do Powys's writings of this period differ from those with which we are more familiar? The most obvious difference lies in the style, which has an astringently satirical edge such as he later came to disparage. It was a style which was to linger for some years, however, and appear fleetingly in *Confessions of Two Brothers* (1916), a book in which Powys could make statements such as the following, which appear startlingly at odds with his more familiar attitude:

In poetry and philosophy I can see the world transfigured, and even learn the secret of that exquisite lie which would make me believe that the commonplace itself is wonderful and charming – if only one looks at it from a certain angle. I confess I have never been able to find this angle. But it is a relief to be told that it is there. (pp 79-80)

Confessions of Two Brothers has often seemed to sit oddly with Powys's other works, an aberration brought about by depression. Yet, in the light of *Powys on Keats* and other works of this period we can see that, in both thought and expression, it is an important transitional work.

During this period Powys also allies himself in his efforts, as Cedric Hentschel puts it, "to write a tract for the times, to strike a blow for Edwardian modernism against stuffy Victorian values", with authors such as Wells and Shaw, unlikely alliances viewed from the perspective of his later works. His concerns lie with the problems of social class, democracy and the attitude of society towards sexual relationships. From the evidence of the other unpublished materials, these

concerns and the radical change in his style from the “poesy” of his earlier work, arise after his first visit to America, but conversely wane as he increasingly established America as his permanent home. It is interesting to speculate as to how Powys’s work might have developed had he remained in England and continued under the influence of such authors.

The same pattern may be seen in the long history of the writing of *Keats*. In unpublished letters to his brother Littleton in the Bissell collection, written between 1902 and 1904 (i.e. before his first visit to America), he speaks of quite a different book, one which he hoped might earn him a doctorate from Cambridge and allow him to settle into some comfortable academic post where he might continue to write undisturbed and where, perhaps, he might have welcomed Aunt Betsy (the dedicatee of this book and the antithesis of all that it stands for) to tea. By 1910, when the current text appears to have been complete, everything had changed.

As an interesting footnote, I have just discovered (thanks to Robin Patterson, a Society member living in Canada, who has sent me a wealth of interesting material) that Ernest de Selincourt, whom Powys establishes as his chief rival in this study of Keats, had, in 1909, been the official examiner to whom Powys’s University Extension students in Rochdale submitted their end of course papers. To some extent, then, by 1910 de Selincourt was not only the author whose work on Keats had, so Powys believed, been published in preference to his own, but was also the arbiter of his professional success as a lecturer.

Powys on Keats is, therefore, a book of profound importance because it begins the process of opening a hitherto unknown era in Powys’s life and work; a beginning which I can only hope will be continued with the publication of those other lost works currently held at Syracuse.

In his invaluable introduction and notes Cedric Hentschel maintains the high standard of judicious and wide-ranging scholarship which we have come to expect of his work in Powys studies. He writes with an elegance and economy which integrate an enormous amount of information into an easily assimilable form and we can only be grateful for the painstaking work which he has devoted to this edition.

There may be proper reservations to be made about the form in which this invaluable book has been published, but in making them we must constantly bear in mind the question: who else was prepared to take the risk of publishing the book at all?

Paul Roberts

John Cowper Powys at the Pioneer Hall

In his bibliography, *John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement*, Derek Langridge informs us that during the autumn 1907 lecture season John Cowper Powys delivered a series of twelve Oxford University Extension lectures in Rochdale, Lancashire, on the subject of *English Novelists*. The average attendance at these lectures was six hundred and it would seem that both in this and in other years, Powys's Rochdale audiences were among the largest of his English tours.

Robin Patterson has recently sent me photocopies of a number of remarkable items from his collection and among these is the *Annual Handbook and Calendar* of the Rochdale Education Guild for 1908-9. The Guild was a branch of the Workers' Education Association, of which the Reverend William Hudson Shaw, father of John Cowper's friend G. Arnold Shaw and himself one of the most popular Extension Lecturers of his day, had been a founding member in 1903. Its *Handbook* contains (on page 19) *Examination Results and Reports: English Novelists, January 11th 1908*, followed by a list of ten successful candidates (only a small proportion of the audience would have elected for examination after the course), signed by the Examiner, E. De Selincourt. This is followed by the *Lecturer's Report*, which reads:

The Lecturer has been more than pleased by the deep interest in the Writers under discussion displayed by the audiences in Rochdale. It was evident to him that the greater number of those present had already a considerable acquaintance with Scott, Dickens and Thackeray, and the discussions after the lecture drew forth from certain students present some original and striking opinions. The lecturer must also thank the writers of essays for the very interesting conscientious work done by them throughout the course.

Signed – John Cowper Powys, M. A.

Among the list of successful candidates was one Grace E. S. Blakelock, and it happened that whilst sorting the papers from the Bissell collection earlier this year I came across the following letter, written forty years after these Rochdale lectures. It is in many ways a poignant testimony to the impact of Powys's lectures and, as such, deserves publication in the *Newsletter*.

65 William Way
Letchworth
Hertfordshire
May 25th /48

J. C. Powys Esqre M. A.

Dear Sir,

I used to write Essays for you when I was a girl of 16. How well I remember the

journey of 3½ miles from our country Vicarage to Rochdale – then the long flight of stairs to the Pioneer Hall. A great audience gathered & then you came on the platform looking my naughty sister said like a farmer's boy. You began and your face lit up & changed completely and we were all held. I was Thrilled by it and writing the Essays was the joy of my life. They went to the Vicarage Montacute.

One evening a youth came with you. He was fair as you were dark and very good looking. His hair was of the true English gold. He sat in the front row & I think he was your brother.

One week I wrote a poem a moorland walk in poesy & sent it for an Essay. The next lecture my Mother another sister & a friend were drawn by my enthusiasm to go with me. You read a great deal of the poem aloud. My sister nudged my Mother & said "It's Grace – I'm sure it is". Then to my horror you said "I should like to see the poet" & put the Essay apart from the others. On reaching home my Mother took the Essay & next day sent for me to her bedroom & gave me a good scolding! Then I heard you were to lecture at the Oxford Summer School & begged my Mother to let me go. I could not of course go alone but after interviewing several elderly friends one was found (head of a Mothers' Meeting) who would take me. Just before the happy event they saw yr illness in the paper & scarcely dared tell me. I went up to my room & cried bitterly. Still I had to go. I missed the train selected by my elderly chaperone and travelled alone to Oxford to her great chagrin. Then a wonderful thing happened. In the sitting room of the G. F. S. Lodge where we stayed was a girl with flashing dark eyes a good deal older than I was called Joan French. She lived in Novington Lane Plumpton. She knew you well & lent me a book of your poems to read. I remember one particularly

There's not a life in all this human round
But hath on other lives an influence profound
An influence sacred as the silent rain
That falls from heaven to consecrate the ground *

I hope I have got it right but it was 40 years ago! We had lovely talks about your lectures & our essays. We promised to continue writing to each other & did so for about 7 years till her death. I sent her some small poems & she thought I was a true poet. Her letters were most interesting & I think she had genius. We tried once to meet. I was staying in Wakefield with my brother. On the way to Lewes the horse bolted & J & her aunt were thrown out but not badly hurt. I waited for her in rain at Lewes.

Hearing from her sister-in-law that Joan was very ill I packed a box of grapes for her. I heard later she had them by her bed when she died & they were the last food she tasted on earth – a sacrament of our friendship. I went to see her home later & saw the room in which she died.

Years went on & one Sunday when I was in Folkestone for a weekend I went to the Parish Church. They prayed for Littleton Alfred Powys. I found out after that it was your son who was being ordained a priest the next Sunday. I was very

deeply interested. I bought a motor bike when I was in the twenties & was one of the first girls to ride one.

Whilst touring from Salisbury to Torquay I saw a small sign "To Montacute". I could not go then but fixed the spot in my mind & a year or two later returned & saw the beautiful village which was your home. I went to P. Office which had received my numerous essays & went to look at the vicarage & talked to an old Villager about your family. I remember the beautiful crusader figure in the Church and a lovely wooded hill above the village. It was a place to dream of.

This Christmas my son aged 16 gave me his book token given by an uncle and I wondered what to buy. Then on the counter at Smith's I saw "Letters of Llewelyn Powys" & decided at once to buy it, but had not the coupon with me. When I returned they had lost it & had no other copy. In the end they found it and I was able to read his letters to you & construct a little biography. I wonder if he was the boy at the Lecture at Rochdale. I greatly admire his courage in his illness.

This is I expect the last Essay I shall ever write. What title should I give it. Perhaps The Poetry of Life would do.

I have always been so grateful for your Lectures – they opened up a new world to me. My sisters still tease me about one remark you put on an essay. "I hate this phrase intellectual treat – please please avoid." I was greatly distressed by that but as a rule you were very encouraging to me.

I should love to know if you are ever going to lecture in England again – if at all possible I should be there!

Please forgive the length and I do hope I shall not have bored you too much in reading it.

Believe me,
yours sincerely,
(Mrs) Grace E. S. Townsend
(née Blakelock)

I feel sure that John Cowper Powys's reaction to this letter can be judged from the fact that it remained among his papers when so many other letters were dispersed or have disappeared.

P. R.

* The poem to which Mrs Townsend refers is "To L. C. P." from *Poems* (1899, page 87). The actual quotation is:

Ah! not one life in Nature's vast domain
But on all others hath a power profound,
An influence sacred as the silent rain
That falls from Heaven to consecrate the ground.