Editorial

This issue of the *Newsletter* marks the passing of a man and an institution whose individual contributions to the continuing success of The Powys Society have been incalculable.

As a comparative newcomer to the Society I cannot claim to have known Francis Powys, although I vividly remember standing outside Beth Car during a Chaldon walk and hearing him reminisce about his childhood home and his father. At that time the *Newsletter* was a four-page duplicated pamphlet limited to Society matters and member's news and views. The *Journal* was still in the offing. That they have together become the life-blood of the Society was due, in no small measure, to the generosity of Francis Powys. As executor of the literary estates of Theodore and John Cowper he allowed editors of our two publications to use copyright material without charge or hindrance. John Powys, on assuming responsibility for the estate immediately confirmed his willingness for that arrangement to continue. We have enjoyed a similar privilege with regard to Llewelyn and A.R.P. and this seems an appropriate time to express gratitude. Without copyright concessions the scope of both our publications would be severely restricted.

As a new member I had never heard of Jeff Kwintner or The Village Bookshop, although I was no stranger to the Village Press. Paul Roberts tells their story elsewhere in this number. Surely there isn't a member who doesn't have

Books for sale — please see page 25.

ON OTHER PAGES

Kwintner's publications on the bookshelves. No doubt, some of us owe our discovery of the Powyses to them. Glen Cavaliero contributed an article to the November 1978 issue of *Antiquarian Book, Monthly Review* (Bissell Collection) entitled 'Powysiana: Collecting a Family', in which he wrote: 'A few Powys books are posthumous publications; but the most remarkable publishing event on their behalf has been the issue of no less than thirty-eight titles by John Cowper Powys in paperback form by Mr. Jeffery Kwintner's Village Press. The aim here was to set the texts before the public, and as a result John Cowper's readership has soared. And the books are well designed. Has any author had such a gift conferred upon him?' Surely, the gift was ours!

This issue also carries a report on the work that has been going on to conserve, catalogue and improve access to The Powys Collections. The *Newsletter* aims to provide a blend of Society news, member's news, letters and literary contributions and suitable interesting items from the Collection. Through the latter I hope to convey some impression of the range and richness of that resource. In that respect *Newsletter* 34 is a belated tribute to Mr. Bissell.

John Batten

Francis Llewelyn Powys

Francis Llewelyn Powys (1909–1998) died on May 2nd, after another stroke followed by pneumonia. He had been in ill-health since the death of his wife Sally in 1993. A cremation service was held in Hastings on May 13th. A memorial service for both Francis and his wife Sally was held at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Mappowder, Dorset, on May 30th 1998. The ashes of Francis and Sally were interred in the grave of his parents, Theodore and Violet Powys.

About forty-five relatives and friends of Sally and Francis attended the memorial service, with The Powys Society well represented.

Following the interment, all were invited to a reception at the home of a close family friend in Sherborne.

The order of service included Francis' and Sally's favourite hymns, a reading from *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* by Chris Gostick, and a tribute to Francis and Sally Powys by Morine Krissdóttir.

Tribute to Francis Llewelyn Powys and Sally Powys

I have been asked to speak at this memorial service for Francis and Sally Powys. I gladly do so, as a representative of The Powys Society, but most of all as a friend.

There are people here who have known Francis and Sally much longer than I

have, for I only began to spend a good deal of time with them both when they asked me to edit the diaries of John Cowper Powys. But because of my other writings on the Powys Brothers, I have also read thousands of family letters over the past few years. Inevitably Sally and Francis are a part of the story of a complicated and talented family, so in some strange way, I feel I know them in a very special and intimate way.

The first time I met them at Restfield, my overwhelming impression was of laughter, warm hospitality, the fragrance and colour of their garden – and cats. There seemed to be cats everywhere, each one well-beloved.

It is difficult to speak of Francis and Sally separately, because they were so much a couple. John Cowper refers in his diary to them as 'the young ones' and it must have been their child-likeness, their sense of fun, their joy in life and each other that so endeared them to John and to his companion, Phyllis, although John reports in his diary he is a little shocked to find: 21 Aug 1936 'took their tea to the young people who have not used the other bed but both sleep in one of the two small beds – Francis apparently never wearing anything at all at night – & Minime (as I always call her) hugging, like a child, her Teddy Bear.'

Despite their closeness, Francis and Sally pursued their own paths too, and were successful in their different ways. Francis became a professional photographer – and very fine his work was, published in many magazines. He started out as a bookseller at Foyles and later had his own bookstore in Hastings for many years. After the deaths of his father Theodore and his uncle John, he became their literary executor and copyright holder. That necessarily entailed many letters to authors, publishers and agents. He was invariably courteous in his responses, even to the most annoying requests. I know this because he kept copies of his letters in exercise books. True to Francis's double-subtle nature, one side of the page had the tactful response he sent, and on the other side of the page, he wrote what he really would have liked to have said – and it was often hilariously rude!

Francis wanted most of all to follow in his father's footsteps and be a writer, and more especially a poet. He was never recognized as perhaps he deserved to be, except by the most discerning.

Recently, I came across a letter from Sylvia Townsend Warner to Francis, dated October 30th 1929. She had just read his book of poems *At The Harlot's Burial* which was dedicated to her: 'I always knew you would be a real poet one day, but I did not guess how soon that day would come. There's no doubt about you now; and I am so happy about it. Love from Sylvie'

To have this tribute from someone who was herself a successful writer and poet, must have been very important to Francis. There is some fine verse in his first book of poetry, but it is a late poem that I would like to read today. In 1987–88 while he was waiting for a cataract operation, he wrote thirty-two poems which, sadly, have never been published. The family favourite, and mine, is 'Old Cat Henry'.

Old Cat Henry

He, called Black Henry, aged
far more than I
By a cat's reckoning, all his
hunting days
Long over, resting on my lap
he stays
Curled up, and catwise says
''tis comforting to be old'.
Meanwhile a wind rushes
across the land
Shaking the willows by old farmer's
pond
Breaking down fences, hurrying on
beyond,
To the next village, on towards the sea.
This is the north wind. Once it told of snow.
And its delights. Then came the winds of spring
Of sunny days when larks and blackbirds sing
And buzzards soar high in the blossomed air.
Now they mean nothing. I,
old blind man,
sit in my chair thinking of other things.
Let the wind roar and howl!
To me it brings
No fear, nor hope, excitement not
nor tears
Of sad regret or loss. The while
the fire
Sings quietly or whispers, and the flame
Smothers my thoughts with warmth
soothing my aching frame
While the old cat sleeps on
my lap and purrs.

The poem speaks dispassionately of a kind of defeat, but a sense also of the contentment of acceptance. His wife Sally was largely responsible for both the acceptance and the contentment.

It is of Sally that I would now like to speak. I don't think anyone, except her closest family, realized how competent, hard-working, and caring she was. She was infinitely versatile – looking after and loving her two children, keeping house, tending her beloved garden, later looking after sick relatives. Her family was particularly important to her; she was very proud and protective of her son and daughter, John and Anne, and 'honorary daughter', Rosamund. She delighted in Anne's children, Katherine and Isobel, in Rosamund's children Francis and Louise, and in William, John and Amanda's son. Sally once told me how pleased she was that Will not only took after the Powys side of the family with his dramatic abilities but after hers – in his musical skills.

Sally's love of life made her game to try anything. One summer holiday in Dorset she turned her hand to milking cows and driving a tractor. The delight with which she describes this feat to John Cowper and Phyllis in a letter makes you realize her intense 'aliveness'.

She loved beautiful clothes and bright red lipstick but beneath that surface was an astute business woman. In a sense, she worked harder to promote recognition of the writings of the Powys Family than anyone else. She typed out dozens of Theodore's manuscripts, for which any scholar trying to read his handwriting must be grateful. But her biggest project – her life project, was the transcribing of the diaries of John Cowper Powys. She worked years at them, and had transcribed 15 years – about 5000 pages – before her death. His diaries from 1945 onwards got more difficult, virtually impossible to read at times, and towards the end of her life she must have felt she was in a losing race with time in the hope of completing them. It was a lonely and largely unrecognized labour of love. All I could do in the way of tribute was to dedicate the published diary selections, *Petrushka and the Dancer*, to her. For she was, in John Cowper's words 'the ghost on the roof' who did so much to make it all happen.

John and Amanda say that after Sally's sudden death in 1993, the shock and sorrow he felt caused Francis in a sense to 'block her out' for a time. But in the last months before Francis's death, his childhood home of Chaldon and his wife Sally were once again omnipresent in his thoughts. So I think that this tribute to Francis and Sally should end by a short reading from *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* - the chapter 'A Drink of Deadly Wine'. There is something ironic and yet fitting about ending with the writing of the father rather than the son.

And it is doubly fitting because it is about Mr Weston, who is really God, about Folly Down, which is really Chaldon, about Mr Grobe (he could have been Francis) who wants to rejoin Alice (who could have been Sally). Francis, the lover of a good wife, the lover of good wine, the accepter of the wine of death.

Morine Krissdóttir

Francis Powys, an appreciation

Francis Powys wrote an account of his father, Theodore, which he called *The Quiet Man of Dorset*. Those words were not inapplicable to himself in later years, when a gentle voice and manner disguised the strength and courage with which he faced a disabling stroke and, later on, the death of his wife Sally. Indeed, in longevity and toughness Francis was typical Powys, with a dry humour that I still recall with pleasure from evenings spent in his and Sally's company at dinner with Isobel Powys Marks (who shared his love for French architecture, food and wine) or with his father's steadfast champions, Harry and Joy Coombes, when Francis came to hear Harry deliver a lecture on T.F.P. at the Cheltenham Festival.

Under the name Laurence Powys he himself published two collections of verse: *At the Harlot's Burial* (1929), whose title poem seems to anticipate Theodore's recently published story 'The Sixpenny Strumpet'; and *A Winding Sheet of Gold* (1985) under the imprint of Kenneth Hopkins' Warren House Press. The latter collection contains a number of poems that voice an intensity of feeling, at times almost a morbidity, echoing John Cowper Powys's early work; but I would choose to remember Francis by a short lyric in the Housman manner that expresses a wry gentleness which, I suspect, was peculiarly its author's own.

The summer moon has risen,
And Heaven's lamps are hung;
And yet you say for loving
You are too young.

December is surrounding
With its white crust of cold.
It is too late for loving,
And I too old.

Soon there will be no moonlight,
No stars to light our tread,
And little chance for loving,
If we are dead.

Be not too young my darling,
The while we yet are free,
And I too old for loving
Will never be.

The poem's title is 'Missed Opportunity', and one feels that in these sixteen lines Francis Powys was speaking for far more readers than he could have hoped to reach.

Glen Cavaliero

The 27th Annual Conference of The Powys Society

Kingston Maurward College of Agriculture, Dorchester
22nd–25th August 1998

Programme

Saturday, 22 August

12.30 Officers' Meeting
2.00 Committee Meeting
4.00 onwards Arrival of participants
6.00 **Reception**
6.30 Dinner
8.00 **Paul Roberts** *John Cowper Powys and His Popular Contemporaries*

Sunday, 23 August

9.15 **Christopher Wilkinson** *These Honeysuckle Rogues: The Friendship of Llewelyn Powys and Louis Wilkinson*
10.30 Coffee
11.00 **Professor W. J. Keith** *John Cowper Powys: The Literary Criticism of a Bookworm*
12.30 Lunch
2.00 **Anthony Glynn** *Scraggy Little Dreamer: The Life and Work of Elizabeth Myers*
3.15 Tea
4.00 **John Batten** *Littleton Powys: 'The Only Radical'*
6.30 Dinner
8.00 **Christopher Kent, Chris Wilkinson** and **Oliver Wilkinson** *In Our Free Way: Readings from the Correspondence of Llewelyn Powys and Louis Wilkinson*

Monday, 24 August

9.15 **Dr David Gervais** *The Religious Comedy of T. F. Powys*
10.30 Coffee
11.00 **Professor J. Lawrence Mitchell** *Theodore Powys: The Artist at Work*
12.30 Lunch
Free Afternoon (Publications Committee Meeting)
4.00 **Annual General Meeting**
5.45 Dinner
7.00 Coach Departs for **Weymouth Walk-About**

Tuesday 25th August

Breakfast and departure

The Annual General Meeting of The Powys Society

will be held at Kingston Maurward College of Agriculture, Dorchester
at 4.00 pm on Monday, 24th August 1998

AGENDA

1 Minutes of the last AGM (25th August 1997)
2 Any matters arising from the minutes
3 The Hon Secretary's report
4 The Hon Treasurer's report
5 Chairman's Remarks
6 To note the appointment of Officers for 1998/99
(no other nominations have been received)

Chairman	Paul Roberts
Vice-Chairman	Griffin Beale
Hon. Secretary	Chris Gostick
Hon. Treasurer	Stephen Powys Marks

7 To note the appointment of Committee Members for 1998/99
(no other nominations have been received)
John Batten
Bev Craven
Bruce Madge
John Powys
Judith Stinton
Christopher Wilkinson
John Williams
8 To note that Morine Krissdóttir has been co-opted to the Committee as *Hon. Curator of the Powys Collection* for a further year.
9 Appointment of Hon. Auditor [Stephen Allen]
10 Development of The Powys Collection
11 Date and Location of the 1999 Conference
12 Any Other Business

Chris Gostick, Hon. Secretary

There will be the usual BOOK SALE at the Conference.
PLEASE bring as many books as you can give us,
preferably with Powys connections or associations.

It is still not too late to book for all or part of the Conference, although accommodation at Kingston Maurward itself is strictly limited. Reservations are on a first-come first-served basis; application forms are available from the Hon. Secretary Chris Gostick.

Jeff Kwintner and the Village Bookshop

During a recent edition of Desert Island Discs, Sir Ernest Hall, the textile magnate and champion of the arts, was discussing the retail menswear business of the late 60s and early 70s. 'The king then', he said, 'was a man called Jeff Kwintner', and he went on to explain that at the height of its success Jeff's chain of sixteen Village Gate clothes shops had sold three thousand suits a week. That, by anyone's standards, is a remarkable achievement and, of course, a man selling three thousand suits a week can indulge his passions. In Jeff's case that passion was for books, but to him a book was never merely a precious object to be opened gingerly with the delicate tips of gloved fingers, never a matter of typeface and binding over content, as it sometimes is for the connoisseur. A book for Jeff was, and no doubt still is, a spanner to unfasten the mind, the outpouring of a spirit too big for one body. And it was these great spirits, these 'living books', that Jeff set out to celebrate on the proceeds of his suits; life-enhancing writers too slippery and electric to be constrained by style-rules, too exuberant to mince safely along the neat pavements of aesthetic perfection, carefully avoiding the pitfalls of absurdity, bad taste and inconsistency, but plunging and striding instead through life with the broad soles of their literary seven-league boots. Such were Rabelais and Cervantes, such was Shakespeare and such were those vast spirits Jeff proclaimed: Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys; men who wrote much because they could not write little; men whose genius had made them incompetent in the world of fastidious artistry.

Those of us who have been readers of Powys for some time will know of the Village Press, the publishing company which Jeff founded exactly twenty-five years ago and which suddenly made available more Powys books (and not just John Cowper, but Llewelyn and Theodore too) than had ever been in print before or since. No doubt many of us will still have the books on our shelves, and very well they have lasted too, for although Jeff was never very much bothered about the book as a physical object, they were printed on paper which hasn't browned and were sturdily bound in stiff wrappers.

With the discovery of the Village Press the dreary trudge from bookshop to bookshop was over and it was no longer necessary to feign polite interest when one sort of bookseller told you that he stocked what books he could find, but that they were sold as soon as they appeared on the shelves, and the other sort asked 'John Cowper who?' as if you were some poor misguided soul that had been let out for the day. Suddenly, every title I had ever heard of (and some I hadn't, for Jeff published first editions too) was there for the taking, and at less than the price of an average paperback.

But before the press there was the bookshop, and that is something fewer will have seen. The Village Bookshop opened in Regent Street in May 1973. On the ground floor, as one came in from the street, it seemed the sort of place, a clear

and uncluttered shop with a floor and shelves of polished pine, specialising in paperbacks, of which there were a number in London at the time. There was always music playing, classical, jazz and what has now come to be known as World Music, but which we then called 'folk'. This came from the record department upstairs ('nearer the stars and the toilet', as the publicity notice put it), which was reached by what I remember as a curved, open staircase, which one climbed until one reached a sort of mezzanine from which the ground floor could be seen through railings.

I only rarely climbed those stairs, but I remember a place well-stocked with records hard to obtain elsewhere, especially the small independent labels, and I remember too a staff that not only knew the music they were selling, but once persuaded me to buy the cheaper version of a classical piece (I forget what it was) because it was the better recording.

All of Jeff's staff were knowledgeable people, but they were also a pretty eccentric crew, especially the bald man with the vast red beard who would disconcert customers by suddenly turning to them with a huge false eye clamped between eyebrow and cheek – Popeye redrawn by Robert Crumb, whose 'comix' were also on sale – or answered their politely whispered questions as Donald Duck. I wish I'd had the nerve to ask his name, but I was too timid and now the chance has gone.

Jeff served in the shop sometimes too, a slim figure with a head of tight black curls splashed with grey and a voice like cinders.

But it was as one approached the rear of the ground floor that it became apparent why this was one of London's most special bookshops and one which has fused itself into my mind as a kind of ideal. With the stairs leading up to the music department to the right, the visitor faced a short flight of two or three steps down into the lower ground floor. These steps were curved into a concave arc and, as one looked ahead, the rear wall of the shop curved in the opposite direction, so as to create an oval floor between steps and wall. The light was more subdued here and the rear wall was clad in stone, so that one had the feeling of having stepped down into a cave, or part of an ancient building. Set into the walls were shelves of thick pine, some several feet long, others no more than niches, and here one found the Village Press books, rows of titles by and about Powys and Miller as well as other works such as *The London Adventure*, or *The Art of Wandering* by Arthur Machen, the books on Zen, exciting books from little presses, thick tomes and flimsy pamphlets. This was treasure indeed.

Music played here too, and in front of the shelves was a pond built of stone in which golden fish moved slowly. With the stone, the trickle of water, the lowered lights and the music, it was a magic place, but not a sombre one. It was a place to go for peace, a sanctuary in Regent Street, even if one knew every book on the shelves. And then, to the right, on a tall plinth, stood the massive bronze bust of John Cowper Powys by Oloff de Wet which, when no-one was there I would

quietly greet by touching my forehead in homage against its cold cheek. I saw that bust again when Jeff opened another shop in Great Queen Street, where it stood in the corner of an elegant parlour. By then the end of its nose had been broken as the result of an accident when it was moved, but it was still a thing of beauty and power.

Just as I had found the Village Bookshop by chance one Saturday afternoon so, by chance, I came upon its closing on another Saturday, in November 1981. My wife and I had decided to go into London on impulse and thought we might as well walk up Regent Street. As we reached the bookshop we saw huge signs filling the windows and hanging from the ceiling, announcing that it would close that very day. The place was full of people, their arms cradling books. As so often in situations such as this, I was stricken with panic. There were books I didn't have, but would I be able to afford them? As ever, Jan told me calmly to collect together the books I wanted and eventually I hauled an armful to the till, where Jeff himself was serving. He ran his finger down the tall column of books and came up with a price that was, in fact, far less than it ought to have been. And so I left the shop for the last time, weighed down with two bulging carrier bags. The next time I passed the building it was full of suitcases and handbags and looked just like any other shop.

Although Jeff later opened another bookshop, a special place had disappeared with the closing of the Village Bookshop. Of course, there were many stories among Jeff's admirers about why it had happened, but Jeff himself has recently told me that the truth was far more mundane than the dark conspiracies which some of us had imagined. The Village Gate chain, with its sixteen shops, was no longer selling three thousand suits a week and had gone into voluntary liquidation: the subsidy which had kept the bookshop afloat and had paid for the publication of all those books was gone.

Though he would probably laugh at the idea, I feel I owe Jeff Kwintner a great deal. He published the books I needed to read when no-one else could provide them; he founded a bookshop unlike any other and he introduced me to Kenneth Hopkins and The Powys Society. Most important of all, once I overcame my timidity enough to speak to him, he prompted me with questions, as every good teacher should. Then, I was foolish enough to think that I could solve the mystery of Powys, that I could encapsulate his essence and describe it in words. But every time I proudly presented my latest solution, Jeff would unravel it with a question and send me away to re-think my grand ideas.

Like Powys and Miller, Jeff Kwintner is a life-enhancer, but that doesn't make him soothing company, as older members of the Society will testify. There are still those who remember his emulation of The Laughing Philosopher when he felt the approach to his favourite 'living book' had become too sombre and academic, too sterile and analytical.

Twenty-five years after founding the Village Press, Jeff Kwintner is now retired

and, it seems, unlikely to venture into publishing again. Nevertheless, his legacy is important in showing what can be achieved when the passion and the means coincide.

Who now would have the courage and the vision to take on his mantle?

Paul Roberts

Reviews

The Diary of John Cowper Powys, June 1934–July1935
Edited and Annotated by Morine Krissdóttir and Roger Peers
Kilmersdon, Somerset: The Powys Press, 1998. A4, xxiv + 301 pp., 191 illus.
paperback, £25 (£29 by post from the Society), ISBN 1 874559 19 8
hardback, 60 copies signed and numbered, fully subscribed

John Cowper Powys began keeping a diary in 1929 and continued to do so for the rest of his life. *The Dorset Year* covers the period from 12 June 1934, when Powys and Phyllis Playter arrived in England from Upstate New York, until 3 July 1935 when they left Dorset to settle in Wales. That twelve months was probably the most significant and eventful chronicled by Powys in thirty years and is now presented in such an elegant, scholarly and revealing manner that it must cast a shadow over the likelihood of other 'one year' diaries being edited for publication. Having said that, it has itself to some extent, but only a limited extent, been pre-empted, even undermined, by Morine Krissdóttir's very successful *Petrushka and the Dancer*, for which selections were made from J.C.P.'s diary entries covering this period. Readers of that work will undoubtedly find themselves already familiar with some of the more memorable passages in *The Dorset Year*. It must however be stressed that there is no comparison and certainly no conflict between *Petrushka and the Dancer* and *The Dorset Year*. One is a panoramic glimpse of ten years, while the other places one exceptional year under the microscope of scholarly research.

Morine Krissdóttir's credentials as a Powys scholar are well known to *Newsletter* readers, and her editorial collaboration with Roger Peers, whose reputation as an authority on Dorset and Dorchester is equally high, was a master stroke. Their elucidations and extensions of otherwise cryptic entries through head notes and side notes make *The Dorset Year* compelling reading, not only for Powys enthusiasts, but also for a generation that grew up in Dorset in the thirties; for them Roger Peers' insights and comments on a bygone way of life will be pure nostalgia.

John and Phyllis spend the first four months at Rat's Barn, one valley away from Gertrude, Katie, Alyse and a sick Llewelyn at Chydyok, and within easy walking distance of Theodore. The primitive isolation of their situation, and perhaps the proximity of the family, proves too much for Phyllis' frail frame and

fragile constitution. Although a move to a flat above a shop in Dorchester seems to be a solution it turns out to be no more than a compromise and is followed within a few months by departure for Wales. During the year both John and Llewelyn are involved in libel actions. John's concerns his portrayal of Philip Crow in *A Glastonbury Romance*, and Llewelyn's, a home for backward girls at East Chaldon Vicarage. Both cases are resolved, one in and one out of court, each with a financially crippling outcome. *Autobiography*, already published in America, is published here, and having already begun *Maiden Castle*; at the request of Simon and Schuster, Powys writes *The Art of Happiness*. *Weymouth Sands*, also out in America, has to be changed beyond recognition before Lane will publish it for fear of another libel. John Cowper also becomes aware that potentially conflicting books about the Powys brothers, by Louis Wilkinson and Richard Heron Ward, are in preparation.

These events are the background to 'The daily round, the common task' recorded in the Diary – no task being more common than the daily lighting of fires with its attendant disasters which could make Phyllis 'disdrastic, distractic, distracted & desperate and very very upset'. The reader will find it a relief to reach the entry for 10 June 1935, when no fire was lit. However, the daily round – his walk in Dorchester with the dog – the Old, is never any less satisfying for the reader than it was for him. He records the fishes, birds, flowers, trees and local people that have interested him on each outing and these entries sometimes contain descriptive writing that is Powys at his ecstatic best. As, for example, the entry for 4 March: 'Yesterday I watched for the first time the song of the Blackbird actually proceeding from its yellow bill! But as with some magical power the Blackbird flung out these deep cool mellow bubbles of black water of liquid sound, beyond joy & sorrow! Like Nietzsche's poem in Zarathustra – in praise of life. They hung about that yellow bill in the air & seemed independent of it as if the soul of the Blackbird outside its body were melting into this mystic sound that hovered like an aura around the bird. The sound was gayer than I had expected – and yet more than gay - a cool dark bubble of liquid sound floating away – getting larger as it dispersed – and in some mysterious way suggesting the colours of green & yellow & black.'

A recurring theme is what Powys called 'the giving of alms' – to tramps who passed through the town or set out from its workhouse each morning. They were variously the objects of his pity or his admiration, but none touched his humanity and his vulnerability as hauntingly as an old man, laden with bundles and bent double, 'head and feet coming together in life's pilgrimage', in whom he saw the likeness of himself at seventy-five. The entry recording this incident ends as follows: 'Finally I gave myself in him five shillings but what he really wanted was an almshouse room to himself ... he had a face very like my own but bearded. The only thing I could have done was to have made myself responsible for him for the rest of his life. This I had not the spirit to do. It made a lasting impression on my

mind.' Which is evident because the incident is referred to in three consecutive entries. How many of us, even fancifully, would consider becoming 'responsible' for some pathetic old wayfarer for the rest of his life?

For John Cowper's companion, arrival in England to confront the Powys family and the rigours of Rat's Barn must have been an experience to threaten any but the most devoted relationship. Domestic storms-in-teacups interspersed with periods of harmonious happiness constitute a fairly conventional view of 'married' life, but Phyllis' upsets and tantrums seem to play an inordinately large part in J.C.P.'s daily record. This is probably no more than an expression of his overwhelming desire to please her and a lack of confidence in his ability to do so. When each month, she withdraws from the world with her 'sickness', in great agitation he buys her ginger-beer, or beer, or malted milk, or peppermint, or cigarettes, although he knows that the crisis will soon pass. It seems likely that Powys' accounts of his companion's upsets are an exaggerated reflection of his own anxieties. He actually reports that, having read his diary, Phyllis said that she could not imagine herself to be the shrew it had made her. The reasons for their departure from Dorset were complex and it is not clear what part Phyllis had in the decision. Had she kept a diary it would surely have thrown light on that, and the relationship between (as they were designated above the door-bell in High East Street) Mr. Powys and Miss Playter.

Absorbingly informative introductions have been a feature of the various collections of letters and essays of John Cowper Powys published in recent years. This diary is no exception, and early on Morine Krissdóttir introduces us to hitherto unrevealed details of the *Glastonbury* libel case, details which Powys himself conceals or distorts. The fascinating and complicated story is then unravelled in subsequent notes based on unpublished correspondence. There is no doubt that in its treatment of the *Glastonbury* case *The Dorset Year* has made an important contribution to Powys studies. The effect of the lawsuit on John Cowper's creativity as he ineptly negotiates with lawyers and publishers, struggles to get *Maiden Castle* under way and laboriously converts *Weymouth Sands* to Sea Sands (*Jobber Skald*) is a matter for conjecture.

This diary does not shed nearly as much light on the better documented Llewelyn libel. It is one of the problems or disciplines of the Diary that no matter how major or trivial the events of the day, there is still the same space to fill. J.C.P. is not to be diverted by this family crisis, he devoted about as many lines as usual to his routines, and to my exasperation, several more to his difficulties in finding the lavatory in the cellars beneath the court! The case lasted three days and Llewelyn was back at Chydyok when the judge summed up in such a way as to convince John Cowper that it would be won. When after two or three hours the jury returned, having found that 'they all had malice' he travelled to Chydyok to break the news. In the Diary he expresses his disgust and disappointment at the verdict and itemises the damages – incorrectly. They are detailed and elaborated

upon in a typically detailed note.

The 'Vicarage Row' as it was called, had its repercussions within the family, as did other overtly less dramatic events of that year. Theodore had not attended the trial and Llewelyn, sick and given to rages, was angry with him. J.C.P.'s *Autobiography* had been panned in *The Sunday Times* and Bertie had sided with the critic – in print. Littleton had been uprightly unable to come to terms with the fact that John and Phyllis were effectively 'married'. They had occupied separate rooms when visiting Quarry House. Both Llewelyn and Alyse had harshly criticised *The Art of Happiness* which John Cowper had written with great sincerity, and he knew that when Richard Heron Ward's book came out it would praise his work and be critical of Theodore's. During April Morine Krissdóttir noted these tensions within the Powys clan and writes: '*John has already moved from the centre of their past solidarity and is now on the circumference.*' It is hard to imagine that those tensions did not influence at least the timing of the decision to move to Wales.

This being a pre-publication review I have not yet held this book in my hand, although I cannot wait to do so. Its elegantly designed A4 format has allowed hundreds of side notes and photographs to add interest and substance to the text in a clear and aesthetically pleasing manner. Head notes at the beginning of each month map the background of its main events and whet the reader's appetite for the side notes, which are sometimes more interesting than the Diary itself. For example, on page 38 a head note tells us: '*Llewelyn's "blood spitting" presages a major collapse, as previous experience must have taught them. A strain of perverseness appears to be Powys trait; calling for Dr. Goodden at this juncture is an example. There is a practising doctor in nearby Winfrith. Dr. Goodden is 82, long retired and living further away in Upwey. He is visiting Llewelyn that summer as a book collaborator, not as a doctor. And the injection is from morphine vials given to Llewelyn years before by a Jungian friend, Mabel Pearson, and unlikely to be effective whoever gave it.*' John Cowper tells us on the same page '... they were getting Dr. Goodden and also ice from Cosens on Weymouth Harbour Quay from Norway!' Roger Peers, in a side note, points out that: '*Cosens and Co. Ltd., steamboat proprietors, Custom House Quay, were also ice manufacturers, West Street Weymouth, so the ice came unromantically from down the street, not from Norway.*' Just occasionally the reader may find a side note unnecessary to the point of irritation, as for example explanations of D.V., Bradshaw and Lohengrin. On the other hand one becomes so reliant on them as to feel let down when a tantalising entry is not elaborated. At the first mention of the Hangman's Cottage I felt thwarted because no grisly details were forthcoming, although there was a photograph beside a later reference.

As to the vast number of photographs, ranging in size from a full page to a postage stamp, they are of astonishing quality and in many cases published here for the first time. Their subjects range from an almost unbelievable art deco

ironmongers shop in Dorchester, to a knife grinder, a chair mender, the workhouse and the judge in procession before the assizes. They include all the members of the Powys family and almost the entire supporting cast from that dramatic year. There are also clear maps of Chaldon, Dorchester, Weymouth and the route usually taken by Powys with the Old from High East Street along the Frome. The enthusiastic walker will find these invaluable when visiting these places and the Weymouth map is virtually a guide to the locations in *Weymouth Sands*. It would have been helpful to have had their page numbers somewhere more obvious than in the index.

The cover design by Bev Craven is an arresting sunshine and seascape overlaid with the open Diary and one of John Cowper's Swan pens – in fact the pen with which he is alleged to have written *A Glastonbury Romance*, given to the Society's Collection by Margaret Eaton. I had some difficulty in reconciling a sea image, rather than a view of Chaldon or Dorchester, with the content of the Diary, although there is a reference to the sun reflected on the water 'with a curious purple tinge'; and striking covers sell books.

The Dorset Year is the most ambitious publication to appear under the imprint of The Powys Press. Its publication is a landmark in the history of The Powys Society, and what is more, were John Cowper accorded the recognition he deserves, would probably be hailed as a landmark in the publication of literary diaries. Nothing relating to the Powyses has been so sumptuously presented and the breadth of its scholarship and sources is unsurpassed.

The publication of *The Dorset Year* has not been undertaken on a normal commercial basis and for that reason our thanks are due to all concerned: John Powys, the copyright holder; Morine Krissdóttir and Roger Peers, editors; Stephen Powys Marks who compiled the Index; and Bev Craven and Sarah Linden, designers.

John Batten

I'll Stand By You: The Letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner & Valentine Ackland edited by Susanna Pinney.

London: Pimlico (Random House), 1998. £15.00, ISBN 0 7126 7371 7

Some writers are blessed not only with talent but with luck: it occurs to me that Sylvia Townsend Warner was one of those. She seems to have been passed from helpful friends to loyal publishers to ecstatic reviewers, to knowledgeable critics and biographers. In this latest book, published in June 1998, she has been yet again well served by the editor, Susanna Pinney, who has undertaken the delicate and precise task of introducing and selecting the letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland.

Warner was an early admirer of T. F. Powys, and as an indirect result of her

attempts to get his writings published, she met Charles Prentice, a director of Chatto & Windus. Prentice not only published T.F.'s *The Left Leg* in 1923 (and subsequently much of his other work) but also published Sylvia Townsend Warner's first novel *Lolly Willowes* in 1926. *Lolly Willowes* was an outstanding financial and critical success, as was her second novel *Mr. Fortune's Maggot* (1927). On the strength of a growing reputation, in 1929 she was invited to New York as guest editor of *The Herald Tribune*. There she met and was fêted by the trend-setting literati. As a consequence of a suggestion by Louis Untermeyer's wife, she submitted a story to *The New Yorker* which was accepted – the first of more than 150 stories of hers that *The New Yorker* published in the next 40 years. Her association with that magazine was to make her financially secure for the rest of her life.

The contrast with Theodore Powys's success – or lack of it – as a writer could not be starker. The Powys Society Collection at the Dorset County Museum has a considerable correspondence between Charles Prentice and T.F., review clippings, and Chatto & Windus contracts and business statements. Chatto & Windus also acted as Theodore's agent, selling his stories to literary magazines and newspapers, negotiating foreign publications, etc., so that a fairly detailed record of one aspect of his writing career now can be examined. Reviews were respectful, Prentice ever-encouraging and resourceful, but sales were always disappointing.

Nor has T.F. had the critical or biographical attention paid to him that Warner has enjoyed. Since her death in 1978, a number of books revealing the details of her life and work have appeared. A biography by Claire Harman in 1989 was followed by *The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner* in 1994. A selection of her *Letters*, edited by William Maxwell (1982) and the Warner/Garnett letters (1994) have given us a further indication of the range of her interests, friendships, daily activities. Indeed, her admirers have enjoyed a veritable feast of information about her life. A very large part of that life – the essential part Sylvia would have said – was her love-affair/marriage with Valentine Ackland which lasted from 1930 until Ackland's death in 1969.

Now we have the letters – love/loving letters in the broadest and finest sense – of Sylvia to Valentine and Valentine to Sylvia, written over that long period. The reader may well ask – do we need to know more?

As Susanna Pinney writes, in her brief editor's note, 'Sylvia was proud of their relationship and wanted it known ...' After Valentine's death, S.T.W. collected the voluminous correspondence, annotated the letters herself and wrote a series of narratives which explain and connect events. Although Harman's biography in the meantime has given us most of the information these 'narratives' contain, Pinney wisely has kept them. They not only make the book self-contained, the story of two lives, but they are Sylvia's own interpretation of events, written with the wit and candour that is Warner's alone.

One reason this volume is so satisfying is that it is (thanks in part to Susanna Pinney's sensitive and professional editorship) a finely balanced dialogue. Both Sylvia and Valentine are allowed to speak, and the result is a richness and complexity that a volume of monologue letters never achieves. It seems to me that the publisher of John Cowper Powys's letters has erred in precisely this way, by not including both sides of the correspondence when it is available and the letters worthy of publication. The most recent example is *Powys to Sea Eagle* – J.C.P.'s letters to his sister Katie. *Sea Eagle* is well edited and at least covers a long period and not confined (as has too often been the case) to the repetitive letters Powys wrote in his old age. But Katie's letters are extant – and are a revelation both of her personality and her relationship with her brother.

I'll Stand By You contains numerous references to the Powyses and their circle, and much else of historical interest to the Powysian. However, despite many enticing external references, it is as the narrative of a marriage between two articulate and loving women that makes this book compelling: Valentine, elegant, needful, mistrustful of herself and her talent; Sylvia, quick-witted and witty, sociable and giving in all senses of that word. It is a measure of the women's honesty and literacy that I found myself alternately raging and sympathizing with one or the other. But inevitably the reader is an outsider, standing before the mystery of tormenting love.

Despite the grief and the ashes, after 22 years Valentine could write this: 3 October 1952 '... I don't believe that anyone in the world, ever, has loved more perfectly than you have loved, and I don't believe that anyone has loved more completely, for everything and in every way, than you are loved by me, my dearest and most true heart.' To which Sylvia responded the next day: 'Do you remember the ceremony of the Brides of France – that on the frontier they were undressed, and crossed it in only a shift? ... I crossed my frontier in a shift, my darling, and left everything but myself on the yonder side of that flimsy wooden door painted pink. And not till I lay in your arms did I know that what I had gained was love, and that what I had sought, too, was love.'

So I must answer my own rhetorical question. In many ways I found this a painful book to read, but yes, there is always more for the reader to learn if the subjects are as universal as creativity and loving.

Morine Krissdóttir

Subscriptions

Most members have now paid their subscriptions, as a result first, of the good number who, very helpfully, pay by standing order, and secondly as a result of the response to reminders which went out with the last *Newsletter*. Thank you !

Just a reminder: the annual subscription, covering the calendar year, is £13.50 for UK members and £16 for those overseas, with a student rate of £6.

Priest and Poetry Lover, Fr. Littleton A. Powys

By Michael Hanbury, O.S.B.

(*First published in* The Beda Review, *September 1955. (Bissell Collection)*)

This year's *Clifton Diocesan Year Book* shows, opposite to the Diocesan Obituary – a list of secular priests of the Diocese who have died since 1925 – a small photo of the Rev. Littleton A. Powys, whose first anniversary occurred on February 16th this year. He is the only priest so distinguished, and it was undoubtedly a happy choice to commemorate a convert whose work in the church was cut short before he could gain fame and responsibilities commensurate with his gifts. Much good he did, but in a largely hidden way, and as his active priestly life was limited to seven or eight years he became known to comparatively few.

There was indeed much to edify in his life, and also some things that were unusual, more especially the poem he composed under most difficult circumstances, shortly before his death. Altogether it seems that a short sketch of his life and character to supplement the obituary notices in the *Times*, *The Beda Review* and one or two local papers, may be acceptable. My own knowledge of Fr. Powys was slight: for what follows I have to thank several relatives and friends who knew him very intimately indeed.

His first distinction was as the only son of Mr. John Cowper Powys, famous as a writer and lecturer and author whose books, it must be added, are of a highly individual and unorthodox kind from any Christian point of view. Mr. J. C. Powys moreover is the eldest, and now the only survivor, of that remarkable literary trio, the Powys brothers, whom at least one literary critic of repute has compared with the Brontës. Not from a religious point of view, however, for all three Powyses have turned away from the Church of England in which they were brought up, and have evolved religions – or irreligions – of their own.* The late Mr. Llewelyn Powys, in fact, was in some of his writings, aggressively anti-Christian. There were Christian influences from others of the family certainly: Fr. Powys' mother, an Anglican followed him into the Catholic Church, and it may be said that the 'Powys brothers' are descended from three generations of parsons on both sides of the family! Yet even so it is clear that, for a Catholic priest Fr. Powys came of unusual parentage.

The main facts of his life may now be briefly recalled. Littleton Alfred Powys was born on August 30th 1902, at Burpham, near Arundel, Sussex, and educated at Sherborne, having for headmaster at the prep. school there his beloved uncle and namesake, Mr. Littleton C. Powys. Altogether he was 8 years at Sherborne, leaving in 1920. His uncle and one time headmaster describes him as 'a very affectionate warm-hearted boy, very fond of children'. At school his chief interests lay in Natural History and Poetry; though not very good at games, he

* I am told that Mr. T. F. Powys returned to Christianity in the last two or three years of his life.

shot well and was in the Sherborne viii. He left Sherborne for Corpus Christi College Cambridge, a college to which his father and both grandfathers had gone before him. On leaving Cambridge he worked for a year or two in the office of his uncle, Mr. T. H. Lyon, an architect, but then decided to seek Holy Orders. After studying at St. Stephen's House, Oxford, he was ordained to the Anglican Ministry in 1928. First a Curate at Folkestone till 1930, he soon returned to St. Stephen's House as Vice-Principal, a post he held from October 1930 to March 1936, leaving to become Rector of Wiston in Sussex. On the outbreak of war he became a Chaplain to the Forces, and saw service in France until the evacuation of the B.E.F.

Then came the big change in his life, for in this year, 1940, he was received into the Catholic Church. I have heard little as to how he was led to this step, but evidently his time as a C.F. in France helped him a good deal. A cousin of his writes that he would often say that when he was in France he felt he was putting up a 'rival altar'. He had, too, the same authority tells me, 'a great sympathy and liking for French literature, people and spirituality', and for an Anglican was conspicuously at home with all three. After his 'reception' he went to study at the Beda then, on account of the war, domiciled at Upholland. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1944.

And now as to the man himself. To begin with his exterior, he was tall, fair and, from childhood, strikingly good-looking, with which went an easy, affable manner, making him 'persona grata' everywhere. He was always much sought after for parties and social gatherings of all kinds. 'Handsome is as handsome does,' however, and judged from that more exacting standpoint also, he emerges equally triumphant. He seems in particular to have won golden opinions from all under whom he worked: here in illustration, are three of them. Canon G. A. Michell, former Principal of St. Stephen's House, Oxford, his Anglican theological college, writes:

> His outstanding quality was an exceptional degree of innate charm, which was felt by people of all ages and classes, who 'took to him' at once. He struck me as having an *anima naturaliter Christiana* – a simple child-like faith. As a student he showed signs of real interest in his studies, and I anticipated that, given the opportunity, he would pursue them. As Vice-Principal he was unfailing in the fulfilment of his duties, and his popularity with the students was a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the establishment.

At both the Beda where, to some extent, he had to begin all over again, Fr. Powys endeared himself in the same way. Mgr. Duchemin, so long the Rector there, in sending me a copy of the obituary notice that appeared in *The Beda Review*, writes that it expresses well what he felt about Fr. Powys, adding: He was a splendid student and never showed any feeling of 'loss of dignity'. He had held good positions when in the Church of England. He was liked by the other men

and I found him a delightful companion.

Finally, Canon Hackett, the rector of St. John's, Bath, under whom Fr. Powys worked for most of his priestly life, sends the following impressions: I chiefly remember Fr. Powys for his apostolic vigour, zeal, and profound sympathy for all sorts and conditions of people. He took infinite trouble in helping people – disregarding the toil involved. I have known him to come in completely exhausted after seeing one and then another party to a problem or quarrel. Above all he loved children, and with them he was a child too – indeed in no figurative sense but literally, carrying on real conversations even with the tiniest tots. I remember hearing some of these conversations and there was never the least sign of pose or condescension on his part. He was always planning events for little children, and before they came off held long consultations with them: their opinions were invoked and they were given an active part to play.

He had real gifts as a preacher, or rather as a teacher. He never sought rhetorical effect, but he explained and enlarged on Christian teaching in such a way, and employing short, simple words, that he never gave a hint of ambiguity.

He was tireless in the instruction of converts; never wearying as he guided and shepherded these good people engaged upon what was for so many of them a great and terrifying adventure, as they left behind so many of the landmarks they knew. he was truly an 'alter Christus'.

As comment on this, the cousin of Fr. Powys already quoted, himself a member of an Anglican religious community says: 'His pastoral instincts were very strongly developed indeed' and adds: 'I think that is one reason why he was quite sure that the secular priesthood was his vocation, because of the continuous and varied ministry from individuals and families that this guaranteed him.'

The leading traits of Fr. Powys' character have now been shown, but there are other sidelights that increase one's knowledge of his personality. Canon Michell, to the tribute already quoted adds that he was 'psychic' and goes on to say: His experiences in that plane were infrequent, and merely odd. I remember the following incident. One day in May 1934 we motored to a place thirty miles from Oxford; I had known it all my life, and though the house was shut up, I wished to visit the garden. He had never been there before. A day or two later I referred to the trip and remarked upon the beauty of the rhododendrons. He said 'Yes' rather casually, and then 'what a very fine monkey puzzle that was!' I, thinking he was speaking of a tree we had passed on the way, and that I had not noticed, said 'Where?' He expressed astonished incredulity at my lack of observation; and proceeded to explain in accurate detail the exact spot in the garden where he had seen the monkey puzzle; and finished by saying 'You surely must remember it.' I could only reply: 'I remember it very well indeed, but my uncle had it cut down twenty years ago.' Canon Michell also mentioned a very different kind of experience that Fr. Powys had eight years previously; and which took place on the downs near his home at Burpham. 'This, except that it began with a bright light

which forced him to his knees, was indescribable and of unknown duration. It left him completely assured of the goodness of God, and in peace of mind as to the problem of innocent suffering.' Canon Michell says that so far as he knows this was the only experience of the kind ever granted to him, and that he regarded it with 'great gratitude and complete humility.' Humility indeed is the touchstone for the genuiness of such happenings, and one would like to know more of what seems to have been a true mystical experience, one that left precious and lasting effects in the soul.

With humility, there generally goes the gift of humour; and I am told that Fr. Powys had a very great sense of humour, and a delightful capacity for laughing at himself. His humour too, when applied to others, was always free from malice.

After his six years curacy at Bath, during which – which as *The Times* said after his death – 'he worked with that abounding love, energy and enthusiasm which were his outstanding characteristics', Fr. Powys was sent to Dursley, Glos., as parish priest, but in the year following moved to Peasedown St. John in Somerset. Here he served two chapels, one at Peasedown and one at the neighbouring village of Wellow. Fr. Powys had to rough it a good deal at Peasedown; there was no presbytery and he had a bed-sitting-room in a miner's cottage, where there were five young children. In other respects too his work in this parish was difficult. And then his illness began. For an account of this I cannot do better than quote his uncle, Mr. Littleton C. Powys, now of West Pennard, near Glastonbury, who living not far away, was able to keep in regular touch with him. Mr. Powys writes: 'In the spring of 1951 he had a motor cycle accident in which he damaged his right shoulder. And so in 1952, when he complained about the muscles of his right hand, the trouble was put down to the accident; but later on that year the trouble showed itself in the other hand. He then, as it was inconveniencing him at his work, went to a specialist on those things, and there he heard that he was suffering from a progressive disease of the nerves which would gradually upset the muscles of the whole body, and that he must give up his work.'

It must have been a great shock to one who had always been a healthy man, thus to find himself in the grip of a disease that would lead by degrees to ever greater helplessness till becoming fatal. One feels that he must have passed through a Gethsemani-like struggle to adjust his mind to it, for this he evidently did. His uncle continues: That was in the early summer of 1952; for till the autumn of that year he was still able to drive his car. He was taken to St. Teresa's Hospital at Corston near Bath, and there the Matron and staff and the Chaplain Fr. F., were very kind to him, and as he was still able to move about on his legs he was happy enough in the beautiful natural surroundings of Corston.

He used to come regularly to see me and have tea and a talk, and then when he found he could drive no more, Fr. F. used kindly to drive him ... These little meetings were always happy affairs and they were never without laughter. But gradually the disease progressed and he had to have a male nurse to help him; and

I found it very difficult to hear what he said. He was no longer able to go into the country except in a wheeled chair, and it was then that he devoted himself to Wordsworth's poetry and told me he was learning the whole of 'Tintern Abbey' by heart, so as to be able to say it to himself by night if he could not sleep.

The Powyses are all great nature lovers – nature worshippers they might be called in some cases – and mostly they have a strong taste for poetry also, and sometimes a gift for writing it. Fr. Powys was no exception: his special fondness even at school for both nature and poetry has been remarked already, and he was a man who changed singularly little. No doubt as he progressed spiritually he found God more and more in both these pursuits. Then, in the final stages of the disease, he felt a desire to write a poem himself. His uncle says:

> About five weeks before he died he decided himself to write a poem dealing with the natural elements which he loved, called 'An Ode to the West Wind'. I could not see how he would manage it, for he could not write and I could not hear what he said. But at this moment it happened that a Catholic girl, D.W. had offered to help at Corston, and from then till his death she never failed him, coming whenever she had any free time.

This helper had a wonderful gift for understanding him, and so in this way a poem of nearly a hundred lines was written and, after Fr. Powys' death on February 16th, printed and published by his uncle. Beginning:

> Rain-panoplied Enchanter of the sea,
> Blow o'er the black wastes of Atlantic waters,
> And in the fury of thy travel rouse —
> Majestic for the battle with the shore —
> Waves that will make leviathan in fear
> Dive to uncharted deeps ...

it goes on to describe some of the writer's favourite country scenes, and ends finally with an affirmation of his Catholic faith in the Mass.

> Hard by within a stone cast of the barns,
> Once stood a Saxon church, but there remains
> Hardly a standing stone; and yet a man
> May pause and pray, and wonder to himself
> Where the Priest stood, and with anointed hands
> Uplifted God to God.

It was really a remarkable and gallant feat so to compose the poem, albeit unfinished, under these almost impossible circumstances, and the words from a moving letter written by the helper at Corston to Mr. Littleton Powys shows this more clearly still. She refers to her intuitive gift for knowing what Fr. Powys was trying to say. 'I cannot really explain why I could understand Father so much better as a rule than others could,' she writes, but goes on to give at least a clue – 'I could really understand the feeling that Father had of wanting to do something as well as other people in spite of his disabilities. So with Father's determination

to do something and my determination to help as much as was humanly possible, and by the aid of a power higher than either of us, the Ode was written. Nobody will ever know what the poem cost, no one can imagine the conditions without having seen them, or the veritable dragging of each word from the very depths of his being.'

Fr. Powys was buried in the grave of his mother, who had died in February, 1947, in the Perrymead Cemetery, Bath, and the funeral was attended by a great many. With his usual kind thoughtfulness he had directed his executors to arrange for a luncheon after his funeral for all the priests who were present. They numbered no fewer than eighty. R.I.P.

Powys Books for Sale

Enclosed with this *Newsletter* is a new list of books. Last year the Society was given these and other books by a member of long standing who is moving house and giving up her membership, Mrs Averina Sykes. We are keeping a few for the Society's collection, but the rest are being sold for the benefit of the Society, particularly to help with the conservation of the collection. **Please buy !**

Letters to the Editor

Oliver Holt's death was announced in the April *Newsletter*. **Glen Cavaliero** writes:

Oliver Holt was the epitome of debonair benevolence, inspiriting to talk with, incisive, humorous and observant: above all he was a man in whom his cultural inheritance and his own artistic gifts were entirely at one – something evident in the delightful Christmas cards he designed and sent out for over sixty years. I have been rereading his recollections *Piper's Hill* (1992), with renewed pleasure at its evocations of birds and flowers and trees. Oliver's close knowledge of the world of nature was complemented by his love for poetry, and it is typical of him that he should follow a quotation from Wordsworth with these words:

> 'Even as I write now, half a century and more later, a wren's song from the apple tree outside my window throws me on its jet of notes these images of the past – if indeed moments intensely felt and gratefully remembered ever pass ... Such are the moments when, the bird's song being as it seems an act of praise and my own response to it another, the blending of the two have brought me as close as I can get to the presence and personality of the Creator.'

Most writers would have ended on that note of affirmation, but not Oliver Holt; he prefers to conclude with characteristically good-humoured modesty, 'Perhaps I should not venture to speak for the bird, since doubtless its own joy, needing no association with mine, is sufficient of itself.'

One feels that his friend and mentor Littleton Powys would have appreciated that.

Dear Sir, Further to your report of graffiti on JCP's plaque at 1 Waterloo Place:

I love Carrie in the spring time
I love Carrie in the fall,
But when Carrie's name is marked
On a house so finely plaqued,
I love Carrie best of all.

Could this be a spirit message from Theodore Dreiser – a reply to J.C.P.'s ghostly visit recorded when they were both in America? Sister Carrie is a novel, which made a very good film starring Laurence Olivier.

Patricia Dawson

What an elegantly Powysian explanation for something that I had thought to be the work of some love-lorn lager lout. Ed.

'Some Powys Cousins' (April *Newsletter*)

Charles Lock writes: You ask for information on the death of Warwick Gurney Powys. In *Powys to Sea-Eagle: Letters of J.C.P. to Philippa Powys* ed. Anthony Head (Cecil Woolf, 1996), 143 (letter no. 78, 26 March 1941), we read:

> The same [flu] that has been rushing thro' the States & that Warwick Powys died of on his birthday ... & was buried in Joplin.

I take this to mean that he died on 7 January 1941.

A Winterborne Tomson Miscellany

From Highways and Byways in Dorset, *Frederick Treves (1906)*

Next to it is Winterborne Tomson. The village of this place has long since departed, leaving behind only the manor house, some farm buildings, and the lowly church. It is among the outhouses that the church is to be found, for it is merely an appendage of the farmyard. It is a wizen old building, curiously small, with no more architectural pretence than a barn. Its east end indeed so fails in distinction as to present only a blind, round wall. Were it not for certain Gothic windows of a hesitating type and a squat bell gable, there would be small excuse for claiming that the building was a church at all.

The poor little sanctuary has long been deserted; the windows are broken and birds nest on the pews or under the cove roof. The churchyard is knee deep in grass and weeds, while its one surviving tomb is hidden by wild undergrowth. Inside will be seen the village church as it was one hundred years ago. The ancient oak pews are high and provided with doors. The pulpit is surmounted by a

sounding-board, a needless vanity, since a whisper could be heard from the altar to the door. On the pulpit desk is a red cushion; beneath is a cramped stall for the clerk. Opposite the pulpit is the manorial pew, still furnished with cushions and hassocks of ancient pattern. The altar is a plain oak table, covered with a red cloth, at which the rats have been tugging. At the west end is a singing gallery approached by a ladder-like stair. In the church porch hangs the rope for the bell. In each window bench weeds are growing, while everywhere is the taint of mould and the dank odour of decay.

As the little place was when the diminished congregation walked out of it for the last time so it is now. Some may have gone back for old memories' sake, or to look once more at the altar steps where they were married, but beyond this the church has been left as reverently alone as if it were the chamber of the recently dead.

From Arthur Mee's Dorset *(1939)*

(There is a copy of this extract, in Littleton's hand, labelled 'A very great tribute to Bertie', in the Bissell Collection.)

Two things stood there at the end of the Great War that had been keeping company for half a thousand years – one the old farmhouse with its gables and stone mullions, all that is left of a proud family seat of the 14th century, its companion a forlorn and deserted temple. Now something had happened which would delight the heart of Thomas Hardy. A manuscript of his in the hands of the S.P.A.B. had been sold and it was decided to use the money in restoring old villages in Dorset. When this little church was opened again there were 300 people present and the service took place out of doors.

Those who enjoy the delight of the recovery of this old place may spare a tribute of homage at one of the graves in the graveyard, for in it lies the man who accepted responsibility for repairing the church, as he accepted responsibility for saving and repairing an immense number of places in England, Albert Reginald Powys. For a quarter of a century he was the energising secretary of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, which owed its origin to William Morris but owed its inspiration to Mr. Powys. No man knows how many old cottages and old buildings have been saved through his enthusiasm and example, for not only did he save them through the Society but by his counsel and advice and by his writings.

If there is a better understanding of old buildings in the world today it is greatly due to this untiring man who died all too soon after a devoted life in which his recreation was, as he used to say, seeing country things.

Daily Telegraph and Morning Post, 17 April 1962 (Bissell Coll.)

SERVICES SOON IN OLD CHURCH USED BY PIGS

Regular services are to be held again this summer in 800 years old St. Andrews, a tiny 'church in a farmyard' at Winterborne Tomson, near Blandford, Dorset.

Once an estate church serving a thriving community, it fell into disuse when the population dwindled a century ago. Pigs and fowls were allowed to use it for shelter.

But yesterday a plaque was dedicated to the man who rescued it from decay, Albert Powys. As secretary of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, he led a campaign for its restoration.

NAMELESS GRAVE

He is buried in the churchyard. But, at his wish, the grave bears no name. Powys raised the money for restoration by the sale of Thomas Hardy manuscripts found in the Society's archives. At first these were regarded as waste-paper.* Sunday services will in future be held at St. Andrews from May until autumn.

Letter to the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post, *April 28 1962 (Bissell Collection)*

CHURCH RESTORED

Sir — Though the church at Winterborne Tomson in Dorset (a gem-like miniature, Norman and apsidal) suffered a spell of disuse and even desecration by pigs and hens, its restoration to a serviceable condition is not quite so recent as the report of April 17 would seem to suggest. I was there more than five years ago (after having heard it discussed in a broadcast by John Betjeman) and the work of the late A. R. Powys was then evident. The pigs and hens have long since gone. The west gallery was rather dusty and there may have been evidence of swallows or house martins! Yours faithfully, W Beech.

An extract from the pamphlet available in the church

... A larger wall tablet honours A. R. Powys, architect brother of the novelists John Cowper and T. F. Powys and secretary to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. During the period 1929–31 he was responsible for the gentle reparation of the fabric, using proceeds from the sale of certain manuscripts of Thomas Hardy, who had been an architect's assistant in the area.

A. R. Powys, together with his wife Faith, is buried in the churchyard, as is recorded on a stone set in the outer south wall. Today the churchyard appears empty apart from an unlettered brick-built tomb (a burial during winter when the water-table was too high to dig a grave?). It is however full, and no further burials can be made. Parish records from the 18th to early 20th century are now lodged with the County Archivist.

Editorial note: The ashes of A. R. Powys' son Oliver are also interred in the family grave and his name is inscribed on the book-shelf recently donated to the church by his sister, Eleanor Walton.

* The Editor would be pleased to hear from any reader who can throw light on either the nature of the manuscripts or the *Daily Telegraph*'s claim that they were almost destroyed.

Members' News and Notes

Robert (Jiggs) Kunkel 1930–1998 Members who met Robert at either of the last two conferences will be sad to hear that he died on 29 April. Fortunately he remained at home, cared for by his family, to whom we send sincere condolences. His friends know Robert had an indomitable sense of humour and in his last letter to me wrote: 'I won't be walking in the woods or pitching horseshoes, but I'm in no pain, my appetite is good and there is still much to enjoy. Obviously my investigation of incest in *Porius* has been a failure, viewed as a possible cure for cancer. I hope it is more successful as a very minor contribution to Powys studies.'

Readers will be able to enjoy another of Robert's contributions to Powys studies in the next issue of the *Journal*. This is a revised and much expanded version of his 'Glossary of Proper Names in *Porius*' published in *Newsletter* 27.

*****

Ann Holt, widow of Oliver Holt, recently presented to the Society's Collection a delightful Gertrude Powys drawing of Mabel Powys, Littleton's first wife.

*****

Chris Gostick has asked me to mention that he has received a couple of letters recently from people who for a variety of reasons are not normally able to participate in Society activities, but who would like to correspond with other like-minded people. The ideas and philosophy of John Cowper seems to be of interest to many, but he is sure there are lots of other topics too. If anyone is interested do please let him know, giving some indication of your particular interests, and he will try to put you in touch with a suitable correspondent.

*****

Jeremy Robinson, Crescent Moon Publishing, P.O. Box 393, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5XU, sends word of the forthcoming publication of a book on John Cowper Powys, *Amorous Life* by Harald Fawkner. It will be out this summer in time for the Society's Conference, price £7.49, available to Powys Society members at £6, payable to Crescent Moon.

He adds that Crescent Moon will soon be publishing a collection of new essays on J.C.P. Contributors will include Ian Hughes, Joe Boulter, H. W. Fawkner, Janina Nordius and Peter Christensen. A further collection of essays is planned.

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Viewing The Powys Collection On the free afternoon of the conference week-end (Sunday 24th August) Morine Krissdóttir will be at the Powys Room in Colliton Street. Conference goers may, by prior arrangement, view the Collection. Although there can only be a few items displayed, those interested will gain some impression of the size and scope of the Collection, what has already been done and the work in hand.

*****

Neil Lee tells me that he recently purchased a copy of *Love and Death* and discovered among its pages a sheet of paper with the following written in long hand (with a nib pen):

> 'It is in my opinion by far the most important book I have written. It is a song through "a green grass horn", such as they talk of in the ballads, a horn of a white unicorn that was a champion at butting and which is still shaped to stab ...'
>
> 'The book is my Testament, but it is a Testament rather than a New Testament, and of course I am a great one for the simple pleasures of life and very much dislike the cheapening of the altars of Eros with expressions like S. H., or the cheapening of them by vulgar license; but, in practice, personal taste and fastidiousness and fidelity and love of peace and a sense of style are enough for well descended spirits. What I deplore is the narrow clutch of a self-control that has been inculcated with all the force of a religion – for a safety's sake!! when the purpose of life should be to lie open and accessible to every feeling and thought and to live with order and purpose and form. L.P.'

Neil Lee adds: Is this a quote from Llewelyn written out by a previous owner and placed between the pages of the book as a reminder of what the author thought of it – or is it Llewelyn's own handwriting? He goes on to say that the phrase "a song through a green grass horn" etc. seemed to ring a bell, and what did the initials S. H. mean?

Can anyone throw any light on this? The writing bears some resemblance to Llewelyn's, but is much easier to read than his usually is. Ed.

Neil then adds the following appeal for a book exchange: He has a copy of The Woburn Books edition of T. F. Powys's *The Dewpond*, published in London in 1928 by Elkin Matthews & Marrot, complete with dustwrapper, in mint condition. It is copy 404 of 530 and is signed by the author. It was offered for sale at £45. Neil Lee wishes to exchange that book for any by Llewelyn Powys bearing the author's authentic signature. He will welcome offers from anyone interested.

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We welcome the following **new members** who have joined the Society since the 1997 List of Members was published (copies are available from the Secretary).

Dr Greg Bond, Dunckerstrasse 17, 10437 Berlin, Germany
P. E. Boulter, 97 Villiers Road, Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire WD1 4AL
Peter Brennan, 16b St Andrew's Road, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 3UB
Ruth Corfe, 3 Victoria Terrace, Fordington, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1LS
Patrick Couch, Odengatan 47 Itr, 113 51 Stockholm, Sweden
Frank Egerton, 76 Bridge Street, Osney Island, Oxford OX2 0BD
Marco Gisse, Hochstrasse 15, 35764 Sinn, Germany
Mr George Gorniak, Rockfield, Ash Tree Close, Grayswood, Surrey GU27 2DS
A. J. K. Green, 1 St Mary's Villas, St Mary's Road, Hay-on-Wye, Hereford HR3 5ED

Rosemary Hiscock, The Bield, Margery Lane, Lower Kingswood, Surrey KT20 7AY
R. J. R. Horton, Golfvagen 14 7 tr, 182 31 Danderyd, Sweden
David Jones, 3 Westfield Park, College Grove, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 3RP
Eivor Lindstedt, Manstorpsvagen, S–263 51 Hoganas, Sweden
Gordon Milne, 9 Lake Street, Oxford OX1 4RN
Arjen Mulder, Jacob van Lennepstraat 260 E, NL–1053 KB Amsterdam, Netherlands
Michael Wright, Flat 1, 54 Belvedere Road, London SE19 2HW

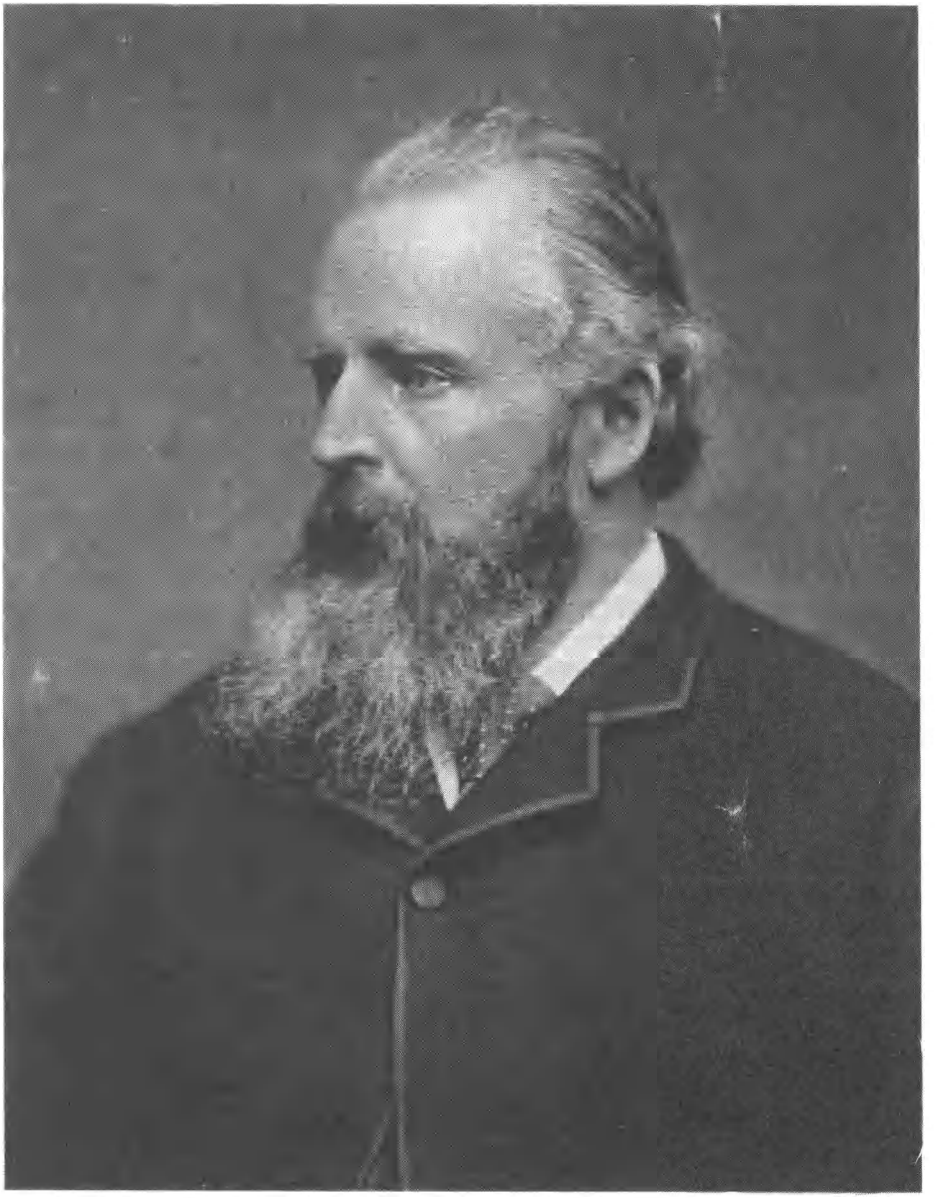
With apologies to anyone who may have been inadvertently left off the list.

Thomas Littleton Powys, Fourth Lord Lilford

Thomas Littleton Powys (1833–1896) was the eldest son of Thomas Atherton Powys, third Lord Lilford and Mary Fox, great niece of Charles James Fox. Of this marriage, Charles Powys, the father of Warwick, was the sixth son so Thomas Littleton bore exactly the same relationship to the Montacute Powyses as did Warwick.

Mary Fox's marriage was not entirely approved by her parents, specially her mother. In a letter to Lady William Russell dated 16 April 1830 Lord John Russell writes: 'The great event of the day is Mary Fox's marriage. She is to marry Lord Lilford a gentleman of about 28 years old, a peer with an estate, not I believe very large. I do not know him by sight, he is reckoned something of a fop. But she likes him very much and her spirits quite boil over. It appears Lady Holland prevented the match last year by her interference but this time it has gone better.'[1] At one time it had seemed possible that Lord John might have married Mary Fox himself, but he seems to have given her up without reluctance. Lady Holland's approval of the Lilford domain is remembered by her grand-daughter Caroline Drewitt: 'Even so fastidious a critic as Lady Holland, fresh from the attractions of Holland House, and not too well disposed in any sense towards the house of Lilford, found much to admire in the cheerful aspect and "liveableness" of my mother's country home.'[2] As the sole heir of Lord Holland Mary Fox must have brought much wealth to the Powys family and certainly she brought Fox papers for they were in the possession of her third son, the Revd E. V. R. Powys when John Drinkwater wrote his biography of *Charles James Fox* in 1928; but even the Royal Commission of Historical Manuscripts does not know where they are now.

It is thanks to Caroline Drewitt, the youngest of Thomas Littleton's seven sisters, that we know something of his life and personality. Her *Memoir* entitled simply *Lord Lilford F.Z.S.* was handsomely produced by Smith Elder in 1900, with an introduction by the Bishop of London, paying tribute to Lilford's



Thomas Littleton Powys, 4th Lord Lilford

'remarkable charm', 'intellectual power' and courage in illness. Thomas Littleton was well known as an ornithologist and President of the British Ornithological Union. The *Memoir* is illustrated by the famous bird artist Archibald Thorburn.

The book contains interesting extracts from the diary of Mary Fox during her girlhood at Holland House; she describes many of the conversations of the distinguished guests at her parents' dinner table. When Lady Holland died in 1845 she left the great collection of stuffed birds at Ampthill to her eldest grandson Thomas Littleton; then a boy of twelve his great interest in birds was already apparent.

When he was fifteen Thomas went to Harrow and his contemporaries are 'unanimous in stating that he made naturalists of them all. His interest in bird and beast life was so keen, his power of observation developed so rapidly that it was impossible to be much with him and not feel drawn to the subjects to which he gave a living interest.'[3] One is reminded at once of the memories of Louis Macneice and of Oliver Holt of Littleton Powys as a schoolmaster and how he too inspired interest in all nature. It is curious that Littleton was often called 'Tom' by his brothers and sisters as was this naturalist cousin. Coincidence, or did they know of him?

When Thomas Littleton was seventeen he sent his first ornithological contribution to the *Zoologist*. A few years later he joined the British Ornithological Union; a fellow member remembers him as 'always happy ... and courteous'. In the same year he went up to Christ Church Oxford where Godfrey Webb was one of his friends and sent his sister the following recollection of him at that time: 'Tom Powys was a well known figure at Oxford more than forty years ago, and he had many friends, but not exclusively amongst undergraduates, as was the case with most of us at the University, for his tastes and pursuits brought him into contact with all sorts and conditions of men. Farmers, whose land he used to frequent for snipe-shooting or when he was looking out for some particular bird, naturalists, bird-stuffers, rat-catchers, gamekeepers and strange doggy men, possessors of a young otter or a badger, all had a word or the touch of the hat for Mr. Powys of Christchurch. Even at this time his knowledge of the habits of birds and animals was remarkable, and enabled him to subdue the wildness and overcome the timidity of many a strange pet; he had badgers in his rooms, which occasioned some passing difficulties with the College authorities; tame snakes were not infrequently seen by visitors, when nerves were proof against the repulsion which most of us felt for the serpent tribe. He never realised how strange his predilection for curious animals appeared to ordinary mortals, and his kindness of heart, and love of "all things both great and small", made him fancy that other people felt as he did.'[4] He hired a stable and outhouses where he kept his collection.

In 1856 he went on a two-year voyage around the Mediterranean and his

sister's *Memoir* contains many letters to and from his friends about ornithological matters. In 1858 he stayed at a villa in Nice with his parents and Lady and General Fox, and there he met Emma Bradling, a very beautiful girl who had been painted by Watts. They were married on 14 June 1859, and had three sons, Thomas, John and Stephen; the eldest died tragically aged 21; his mother never recovered from the grief and died two years later.

Thomas Littleton succeeded to the title in 1861, and curiously 'from that time on he suffered from the hereditary enemy gout ... and there was scarcely a year in which he was not more or less invalided'.[5] However in the ample space of Lilford Hall and Park he was able to pursue his interest to the full. Aviaries were built in the courtyard and by the ponds which were set aside for water birds. In 1864 and 1865 he visited Spain, a country he had long been interested in. His sister publishes fascinating extracts from the diary of his travels which bears comparison with John Cowper's description of his visit to Spain in *Autobiography*. Lilford sent from Spain a long and acclaimed article to the bird lovers' publication *Ibis* which contributed to his election in 1867 to the presidency of the British Ornithological Society.

When in England he lived mainly at Lilford but also visited bird-loving friends in Devon and Norfolk, and once went on a tramp through the New Forest with Tennyson; in a letter to the poet's son he remembers this: '"I remember distinctly," my brother wrote, "that your father carried with him a little Homer, and I, a Don Quixote. I well remember, too, that he took a great interest in several of the rarer birds to which I called his attention, ie. the Buzzard, Pied Woodpecker, and Black Game. Besides the charm of his everyday conversation, he told me endless good stories, but what delighted me more than anything else, was his ever-ready sympathy with everyone and everything, not only *nihil humani ... alienum*, but every beast, bird, insect, tree, and flower seemed to be full of interest for him, as for me."'[6]

During the long winter months at Lilford, theatricals, as for the Hollands and the Montacute Powyses, were a favourite pastime, and Mrs Augustus Legge is quoted, 'I recall the enchanting days at Lilford when we all played together and dear Lilford's singing and acting were quite unsurpassed.' His son Stephen recalls his pleasure in a sea voyage with his father, 'the most indulgent as well as the most delightful of companions ...' and of 'whole days fishing for whiting'.[7] In the evening when they went ashore his father made 'the company merry with his songs of all nations', and he had 'memories of a steam launch excursion up the river, of picnics and of lingering in the twilight on the way back, while my father sang us song after song, and made the men perform in turn.' This musicality and ear for languages does not seem to have been inherited by any of the Montacute Powyses.

In 1885 Lord Lilford married his second wife, Clementine Hamilton, who shared his interests and became as accurate an observer as he was himself so that

she could help him when he was increasingly bound to his Bath chair; it was not gout that kept him there, but some form of paralysis that rendered him almost helpless. One is reminded of the mysterious illness of John Cowper's son, and whether they could have been related. Lord Lilford was very well attended in his last years and was even able to fish when his men carried his chair on to a small barge and baited his hook for him.

His rooms at Lilford were shared with many exotic birds: 'The Teydean Chaffinch, a species only found in the high zone of the Peak of Teneriffe, two Breeches Parrots, and a Hoopoe. The Black-collared Grackles had a distinguished stranger of their own kind beside them in the Chestnut-winged Grackle, the first bird brought alive to England, from the neighbourhood of the monastery of Mar-Saba near Bethlehem; the favourite habitat of the species being the caverns and fissures of the gorge of Brook Kedron. North America, South India, Brazil and Madeira furnished their quota of feathered beauty in the Blue Jay and Blue Robin from across the Atlantic, the Indian Green-leaf Bird, the Brazilian Troupial, and the Madeiran Blackcaps. Gould's Finches, the Pied Rock Thrush, the Bulbul from North India, and the White Crested Laughing Thrush from the Himalaya, in common with their companions, sang, chirped or twittered according to their vocal gift, and revealed sundry lovely markings of wing or tail as they plumed themselves in the sunshine'.[8]

In 1885, also, he began his great work in collaboration with Archibald Thorburn *The Coloured Figures of the Birds of the British Isles* but unfortunately became too ill to finish it. Nevertheless, till the end of his life, he kept up a lively correspondence with his friends and fellow experts; 'the service he rendered to the science of ornithology only ended with his life'. He was also a very kind and generous man as many a letter and delightful recollection published in *Lord Lilford F.Z.S.* bear witness.

Susan Rands

Notes

1 *Lord William Russell and his Wife*, Georgiana Blakiston (London: John Murray, 1972).
2 *Lord Lilford*, by his Sister (London: Smith Elder, 1900).
3 Ibid., 44. 4 Ibid., 48. 5 Ibid., 75.
6 Ibid., 87 7 Ibid., 91, 92. 8 Ibid., 135.

The Powys Review

Several members of the Society have received unsolicited copies of *The Powys Review* with an invoice and have rung us or written to us to know why. We would like to make it clear that *The Powys Review* has not been a publication of this Society since 1990, and that you should deal directly with the Editor, Belinda Humfrey (address shown in each volume).

What they said about the Powyses.

The following extracts are from Private Collection *by Jean Starr Untermeyer, published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965. (Bissell Collection)*

The author, born in Ohio in 1886, was a lieder singer, poet and friend of Sylvia Townsend Warner. She stayed at East Chaldon in the summer of 1934.

Sylvia had written me instructions and her regrets that she couldn't meet me in person. But Mrs. Way, her 'char', was at Miss Green as arranged when my taxi pulled up at one of the least promising of dwelling places. Near the road squatted a small boxy structure of yellow stucco, a storey and a half high, with a single chimney pot rearing cockily from near the centre of the roof. There was no thatch, no climbing roses, no leaded casements, none of the country endearments associated in the literary mind with rural England.

Among other things, Mrs. Way, a rosy-faced, white haired, round little woman, showed me how to manage the oil stove in the narrow kitchen. Three dumpy kettles were comfortably boiling, and tea, sugar, eggs, bread and a few staple supplies had been stored for my use by my affectionate friend. 'Mr. Way will be round by noon tomorrow and bring you a pot of of cooked vegetables from our own garden,' Mrs. Way assured me. 'And if you want lettuce they'll let you have some at The Sailor's Return.' She indicated with head and elbow the small pub on the opposite side of the road about two hundred yards away. The grocer's van, she went on to tell me, from which I might purchase dry groceries and meat, would come once a week and was due the next day. She turned up the lamp, lit the fire already laid in the small sitting-room, with its uneven stone-flagged floor, showed me up the half flight of stairs to the two upper rooms, and smilingly took her leave.

... Sylvia had prepared the Powyses for my coming, and I had not been there much more than a week when I was introduced to John Cowper Powys by the postmistress. ... It was rash of me to react by sending an invitation for him and Miss Playter, his companion, to dine with me, suggesting a menu of Chicken Curry Indienne, with rice and chutney, fresh fruit compote, cooked with honey and spiced tea and chilled white wine.

The day after the note had been dispatched, as I sat at my typewriter there came a timid knock at the sitting-room door. I opened it to see a slender, middle-aged lady with a longish oval face, folded in wings of dark hair, looking like a large, frightened bird.

'Are you Mrs. Untermeyer?' she almost whispered. I told her I was and invited her to come in.

'I am Phyllis Playter,' she explained, 'and I come to thank you for your invitation to Mr. Powys and myself, but I am afraid we cannot accept it.'

'Why not?' I asked and, hearing my own voice, realised the question seemed rude.

'We are expecting the Louis Wilkinsons,' she answered. I had read Louis Wilkinson's *Swan's Milk*, written under his pen name, Louis Marlow, and felt he would be a lively addition to any party. I was hungry for company.

'Well bring them along,' I ventured.

She colored and stammered, 'Oh, I am afraid we couldn't do that.'

Then, seeing how crestfallen I looked, she added kindly: 'You see Mrs. Untermeyer, John has an ulcer in his stomach, and can only eat bread and milk and a soft-boiled-egg.'

My proposed menu had frightened him off, but on my assurance that the diet would be adhered to, Miss Playter took back the revised invitation. The upshot was that they all came ... .* I met not only John Cowper Powys but other members of the Powys family – or should I say clan, since they were a race apart? ... All the Powyses, with the exception of Theodore, were exceedingly tall, imposing, with very round skulls and deep-set eyes, vital, tragic-looking, yet somehow theatrical. Miss Gertrude, the elder sister, lived with the younger Philippa, called Katie by her nearest friends. Miss Gertrude greeted one with exemplary politeness, and like John Cowper, showed a perfervid interest at the mention of any of her family.

Yet despite Miss Gertrude's exquisite manners, when I saw her standing on the highest ridge of ground behind Chydyok (their home), far above the sea, the gulls screaming overhead and the wicked-looking white goat tied in the yard, as if ready for the sacrifice, she struck me as a possible lady Macbeth, but in a Greek or Celtic setting. ...

Miss Katie's connotations were different. Riding down the hill to see her fishermen friends on a bony mare whose name, I believe, was Josephine, she struck me as Don Quixote in petticoats, and I think that a kind of quixotism was central to her nature, for me she seemed brave, unworldly and alert with kindness.

* *Readers of* The Dorset Year *will find John Cowper's reaction to Mrs Untermeyer's party in* his *diary entry for 27 August, on page 63.*

My First Publication

This article by ***John Cowper Powys*** *was published in* Mark Twain Quarterly, *Winter 1952. (Bissell Collection)*

I expect no author, however old he may grow, before death or blindness or complete dotage ends his career, can altogether forget his feelings at seeing his work in print for the first time.

In the year 1896, when I was twenty-two, a thin little book of my verse,

beautifully bound in a pale green cover ornamented by shining golden flowers, was published by William Ryder and Co. of London.

The *Bookseller*'s reviewer enquired: 'How many poets has England today? Has she half a dozen? Into this small exclusive circle Mr. Powys may one day come.'

So indeed I thought myself! And how well I remember being seated under one of those massive sea-breaking concrete groins on the beach at Hove, West Brighton, now officially known as Hove in the county of Sussex, and reading as only an author with his first work in print can read, quite alone and at an hour when that famous beach was practically deserted, and to no listener but 'the windy surges,' the first galley-proofs of any book, not to speak of one of my own, which I had ever seen. What things of marvel galley-proofs are! Were the pages which in the middle of the Sixteenth Century Dolet and Rabelais read fresh from the German press of Sebastian Gryphius, in the French city of Lyons or Lugdunum, 'ubi sedes est studiorem meorum,' as the latter calls it, more akin to a galley-proof or to a page-proof? More akin than to either of these, I daresay, to a Papyrus or one of Periclean age!

The next time I had to read in proof printed thoughts out of my own head – the head of an actor and preacher rather than of an artist or thinker – was when in New York City my lecture manager, C. Arnold Shaw, who was like a brother to me, published my first novel, entitled *Wood and Stone*, and my first semi-philosophical treatise, entitled *The War and Culture*. Thomas Hardy's novels were the inspiration for the former work, and the bold but not very heroic desire to confound the Kaiser by challenging the cultural influence of Professor Munsterberg was the rather obscure purpose of the latter.

In regard to *Wood and Stone*, which I was actually writing before the 1914 war broke out and when both my parents were still alive, I recollect so well going through certain moral tensions to which – (as I devour the fiction of the present day with exactly the same greediness – though how different it is! – with which I devoured every single one of Hardy's works as they appeared, beginning with *Tess* when I was a preparatory schoolboy) – to which I can clearly see our younger writers, both male and female, are airily and lightly immune. How far ought I, I kept asking myself, as I was writing that first of my novels, and I shall hold to the end that my novels, born preacher though I am, represent the most lasting as well as the most satisfactory way wherewith I have, according to that deep and world-old saying 'earned my living', how far ought I to allow myself vicariously to enjoy the wickedness of my wicked characters when they are feeling genuine delight in genuine wickedness? I will only say here that neither in the case of *Wood and Stone* or *Rodmoor* did I decide that it was necessary to resist the temptation to enjoy vicariously the wickedness of my wicked characters. Of course, most modern readers will roundly protest at this point and indignantly demand: 'What in the name of reason do I mean when I talk of wickedness?' *That question* I will answer at once. I mean only one thing. I mean cruelty. Even the most modern of modern

writers knows what cruelty is; and I would be surprised if such a one wouldn't be driven, by his or her conscience to confess, that in the course of his or her career, whether long or short as an author, there have arrived moments when they have enjoyed their own descriptions of cruelty.

Now this prolonged and imaginative crisis in my novel writing came to an end after I had written the first two of my novels, namely *Wood and Stone* and *Rodmoor*. With *Wolf Solent* and *Ducdame* I entered upon a completely new fictional epoch in my attitude to literary descriptions of cruelty whether mental or physical. I do not mean I avoided it as an element in life, but I avoided those peculiar and special aspects of it in which as a person, apart from authorship, I knew I might be tempted to derive pleasure. And ever since that extremely uncomfortable tug-of-war in my lively imagination I have followed very craftily and cunningly a categorical imperative of my own in and out of those dangerous reefs and shoals. Of course, I've introduced plenty of wicked people and wicked doings. Who can be a proper novelist without including these? But since finishing those two first tales I've followed the compass needle of an extremely clear cut difference between ocean-paths that to others *might seem almost identical.*

And that the 'sea-change' that I went through as a novelist was neither religious nor anti-religious, neither orthodox nor heretical, is proved by the particular nature of one sea-track of escape in the difficult art of aesthetic navigation which I worked out for myself by the use of some historical chart of those perilous waters that might very well have been written on papyrus for my especial help by Zenodotus, the greatest of the three famous Librarians of the ancient Alexandrian Library, and reached Weymouth Harbour in a Carthaginian bottle, for the chart recommended neither the orthodox course nor the heretical course as the best sea-course for my particular temper but on the contrary, though I was writing prose, a purely poetic one.

Remembering Llewelyn's Birthday, August 13th

In his will Llewelyn stated ... 'it is also my wish that the sum of £100 be invested in trust and the yearly interest paid to the nearest public house to Chydyok with the provision that on the 13th of August each year the interest be spent in free drinks for anybody who enters the tavern after seven o'clock in the evening'. So far as can be established this provision was never carried out, but it is clear that he hoped to be remembered in that way. In 1995 a group of members and friends assembled at The Sailor's Return, drank a toast and walked to Llewelyn's stone. It has been suggested that we do so again this year, meeting at noon. The arrangements will be informal but it would be helpful to know how many to expect. If you are interested in taking part please write or telephone Chris Gostick with numbers. **J.B.**

Chairman's Report 1997

1997 saw not only the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of The Powys Society, but also a number of important changes and developments in its work and personnel.

After serving as Chairman of the Society for ten years, Morine Krissdóttir decided that it was time to concentrate on her work for the Society's collection and I was delighted to be elected by the membership as her replacement. This is not only an honour, but also a great responsibility, and one that I will do my very best to fulfil with as much distinction as Morine brought to the role. This will be made much easier by the presence of Griffin Beale who, having served the Society in a variety of roles for many years, agreed to stand for election as Vice–Chairman. John Batten, with the assistance of his wife Eve, has been a distinguished Secretary to the Society, but he also felt it was time to stand down and was replaced by Chris Gostick, who has already proved himself to be a worthy successor. John is now editor of the *Newsletter* and members can see for themselves how fine a job he is doing in that capacity.

During 1997 we also embarked on a publishing project not only more ambitious than any we had previously considered, but one which would generally be regarded as far beyond the capacity of any literary society. This was *The Dorset Year*, the diary of John Cowper Powys for a period of some thirteen months during 1934 and 1935. We decided at the outset that the book should be the finest we could produce. The project was delayed by several months, but this was largely because we had given ourselves far too short a time for what proved to be a very complex enterprise. The finished book is nothing short of astounding, both in its intrinsic interest and the quality of its production and our most sincere and heartfelt thanks must go to the whole editorial and production team.

With the technical assistance of Thieu Klijn, the Society has also established a fine Internet web site, which provides links with a growing number of other Powys sites, as well as displaying a wealth of material about the Society and its work. Do try to access the site if you have not already done so.

The collection, housed at the Dorset County Museum, is a very important facet of the Society's work; during 1997 we have continued our efforts to improve access to the materials it contains, as well as cataloguing and preserving them for future use. This will become an even greater focus of our attention during 1998.

In addition to all of these new developments and projects, the Society has continued with its more routine, but no less important, work, producing three *Newsletters* and a fine *Journal*, as well as holding a very successful conference.

1997 has, therefore, been a year of both development and consolidation, during which we have celebrated past achievements and planned those of the future.

Paul Roberts

Treasurer's Report for 1997

The accounts for 1997 are set out on the next two pages, and have been approved by the Society's Auditor, Stephen Allen; once again I am most grateful to him for his advice and his work.

For this year we had a record paid-up membership to 308 (1996, 287); 175 subscriptions were paid by standing order, nearly 50 under deeds of covenant, bringing in more than £200 extra. The total subscription income, including the tax refunds due on covenants and subscriptions for 1996 paid in 1997, amounted to £4,614 (£4,343); this represents 62% of our total income of £7,467 (excluding advance payments for *The Dorset Year*, whether spent (£1,378) or carried over to 1998). Net income from our own publications was substantially lower at £584 (£885); we also received commission on sales of other publishers' books at the Conference (£239). Donations, mainly represented by gifts of books for the Book Sale, amounted to £324 (in 1996, £1,014, of which £707 was given for the new literary gallery at the Dorset County Museum). This year, for the first time, we have recorded the value of travelling expenses not claimed by Committee members as a form of donation; this amounted to £425. The resulting total of donations, £749, has been transferred to the Wilson Knight benefactors' fund. We made a significant profit on the Conference at the popular Dorchester venue. We also received half of a grant from the British Library for conservation work, £561, which will be spent in 1998 with a matching sum from the Society.

As before, the largest part of our expenditure has gone on our regular publications, *The Powys Journal* and three numbers of the *Newsletter*; the net cost of producing these, including distribution, was £3,502 (£3,908). This represents 75.9% of our subscription income, well within our target of 90%. Our total expenditure on publication work, including copies of *The Powys Journal* added to stock, *The Dorset Year*, *The Powys Clowns*, and purchases of books for sale, but excluding postage costs, was £4,796 (£4,377). We had a substantial excess of income over expenditure of £2,122 (£397); as in previous years, the value of stock pre-dating the year has been written down by £558 (£664), so that excess of income of £1,564 (–£267) has been carried into the Statement of Funds. Our net worth at the end of the year was £9,295 (£6,981), of which £2,542 (£2,790) was represented by the value of stock at the end of the year. There has, therefore, been a substantial increase in our net worth of £2,314 (–£268) and in our cash resources of £2,562 (–£401). These figures show that the Society's finances were in very good health at the end of 1997. **Stephen Powys Marks**

Auditor's Report to the Members of The Powys Society

I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved Auditing Standards. In my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view of the charity's affairs at 31st December 1997 and of the surplus for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985. *J. S. Allen, Chartered Accountant, 16th May 1998*

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1997

Income [1]		£	£	*1996*
subscriptions	for 1997 (308) [2]	4,291.11		
	tax refund due on covenants, 1997	204.61		
	for 1996 paid in 1997 (8)	118.00	**4,613.72**	*4,343*
donations [3]	Conference book sale (donated books)	226.10		
	other	98.14	**324.24**	*1,014*
publication sales	stock publications 808.73			
(excluding	*less* cost of publications sold 225.15	583.58		
postage)	commission on sales (Cecil Woolf books)	239.21		
	net income	822.79	**822.79**	*1,140*
The Dorset Year, part of advance payments [4]			**1,378.03**	
Conference	fees received	6,351.00		
	expenses	5,570.99		
	surplus (12.3%; 1995: *deficit*)	780.01	**780.01**	*–145*
grant for conservation work on The Powys Collection			**561.00**	–
interest on bank accounts (paid gross)			**365.35**	*194*
			£ 8,845.14	*£ 6546*

Expenditure [1]		£	£	*1996*
The Powys Journal VII (1997),[5] cost of members' (318), complimentary and copyright copies [6]		1,565.79		
	cost of distribution	289.54	**1,855.33**	*2,346*
The Powys Journal VI, cost of supplying 11 copies to late subscribers			**49.40**	*49*
newsletters (3 in 1997), including cost of distribution (£398.25) [6]			**1,646.75**	*1,561*
Powys Checklist, complimentary copies to new members			**7.00**	*7*
transport of G.M.P. picture from U.S. (1996: restoration of mask of Katie Powys)			**30.00**	*203*
Powys Collection			–	*90*
donation to Dorset County Museum for Literary Gallery (1996)			–	*1,000*
stationery, leaflets, letterheading			**280.70**	*123*
constitution, list of members			**170.80**	–
computer supplies			–	*59*
The Dorset Year [4]			**1,378.03**	*124*
The Powys Clowns, photocopying			**27.75**	–
Montacute Vicarage watercolour, laser copies			**9.68**	–
donations & unclaimed travel expenses transferred to Wilson Knight fund			**749.28**	–
officers' expenses and committee travel			**518.40**	*587*
			6,723.12	*6,149*
excess of income over expenditure	2,122.02		**2.122.02**	*397*
writing down of stock [7]	–557.96		**£ 8,845.14**	*£ 6,546*
excess of income *less* writing down of stock *carried to Statement of Funds*	1,564.06			

The Auditor's report is printed on the previous page

THE POWYS SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

I *General fund* [8]	£	£	*1996*
funds at January 1st 1997		**3,612.99**	*3,880*
excess of income over expenditure *less* writing down of stock		**1,564.06**	*–267*
funds at December 31st 1997		**5,177.05**	*3,613*
represented by:			
stock of *The Powys Journal, The Powys Review,* and books at cost at January 1st 1997	2,789.80		*2,657*
add cost of stock publications, including *The Powys Journal* VII surplus to distribution [9]	576.35		*1,237*
less cost of publications sold 225.15			
The Powys Journal VI to late subscribers 34.10			
complimentary *Checklist* to new members 7.00			
writing down of stock [7] 557.96	–824.21		*–1,104*
value of stock at December 31st 1997 [10]	2,541.94	**2,541.94**	*2,790*
cash at bank at December 31st 1997 [11]		**7,082.14**	*1,641*
sums due to the Society (including tax refund for 1997, £204.61)		**376.01**	*–*
		10,000.09	*4,431*
less subscriptions received in advance (30; 1996, 30)		**–429.50**	*–434*
provision for expenditure in 1998 on *The Dorset Year* [4]		**–3788.45**	*–*
creditors		**–605.09**	*–384*
		£ 5,177.05	*£ 3,613*

II *The Wilson Knight benefactors' fund* [8, 12]	£	*1,996*
funds at January 1st 1997	**3,368.49**	*3,368*
transfer from General fund	**749.28**	*–*
funds at December 31st 1997	**£ 4,117.77**	*£ 3,368*
represented by cash in deposit account	**£ 4,117.77**	*£ 3,368*

NOTES

1 Cash turnover: total receipts, £18,959.45; total payments, £12,597.30, of which £576.35, relating to the cost of publications (*see* note 9), is carried forward in the General Fund. Other adjustments, relating to cost of publications sold etc., subscriptions paid in advance for 1998, and sums owing to or owed by the Society, give excess of *Income* over *Expenditure* for the year (before writing down of stock) of £2,122.02, all as shown in the accounts.

2 This figure comprises 278 (175 by standing order) paid in 1997 (£3,857.30) and 30 paid in advance in 1996 (£433.81).

3 Officers' expenses not claimed were worth £425.04 and are treated as donations; with £324.24 shown = £749.28.

4 Advance payments for *The Dorset Year* were £5,166.48; £1,378.03 is shown as income for 1997 to cover expenditure incurred in 1997; the remainder, £3,788.45, is recorded as provision for expenditure in 1998 in Statement of Funds.

5 Gross cost £2,015.79, *less* cost of copies taken into stock at run-on cost £450 = £1,565.79.

6 Total net cost of producing and supplying *The Powys Journal* VII (£1,855.33) & 3 *Newletters* (£1,676.75 *less* £30 fee for insert = £1,646.75): £3,502.08 = 77.9% of 1997 subscriptions, including arrears for 1996 and tax refund due for 1997.

7 This is arrived at by writing down the value of stock at January 1st 1997 by 20%; new stock in 1997 is not affected.

8 General fund £5,177.05 + Benefactors' fund £4.117.77 = Society's net worth at December 31st 1997 £9,294.82 (1996: £6,981).

9 Undistributed copies of *The Powys Journal* VII, £450; *Fables*, £13.50; Redcliffe Press books, £112.85.

10 No value is attached to stock which has not involved cost to the Society.

11 Current account £260.23 + deposit account £10,939.68 = £11,199.91, *less* Benefactors' fund £4,117.71 = £7,082.14.

12 All interest has been retained in the General fund.

Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer

Curator's Report

Powys Society members were saddened to hear the news of the death of E. E. Bissell, a great collector, a Powys enthusiast and a generous benefactor. Together with the gift of Francis Feather, Mr Bissell's gift of books and manuscripts constitute the major holdings of the Powys Collection, which is the finest collection of Powysiana in England and a major world collection.

However, last autumn Mr Bissell was very pleased to hear that the Collection had received a British Library Conservation Grant to 're-house' the valuable and fragile manuscripts, letters, and typescripts of T. F. Powys. After consultation with conservators and the museum, suitable archival sleeves, folders and boxes have been purchased and the time-consuming process of sorting and labelling is now well-advanced. We have been advised to use some of the grant to put the most fragile material on microfilm.

Although the grant was for conservation of manuscripts only, the curator is undertaking the daunting task of putting an inventory of the T.F. material on computer at the same time.

While scholars may be most interested in close examination of variant manuscripts, there are many other treasures. For example, the large correspondence between T. F. Powys and his publisher, Chatto and Windus, gives a fascinating insight into a relationship that developed over a number of years. Charles Prentice, a director of the company, became reader, critic, editor, enthusiast, even literary agent for T.F., as well as a friend, and his letters exhibit a courtesy and a humanity that may have been unusual even in the 1920s and certainly unheard of in today's publishing world.

Needless to say, the T.F. material constitutes only a part of the Collection. There is an equally vast amount of matter by and about John Cowper Powys and Llewelyn Powys, other members of the family and the Circle, as well as a growing collection of wood-cuts, drawings and oils by Gertrude Powys.

The Committee of The Powys Society is well aware of the importance of maintaining this collection and making it accessible to members, and they have recently made a generous financial commitment, within limited resources, to furthering this goal. Space is one of the most difficult problems that must be addressed. Some of the most valuable and least-used books have been temporarily stored in the old Hardy study. In addition, three intrepid volunteers recently have managed to create a very necessary and useful small space so that visitors to the Collection do not have to do their research perched on the stairs! It is hoped that this space will double as a small gallery for some of the Gertrude paintings. In sum, it has been a busy and productive year for the Powys Collection.

Morine Krissdóttir