Editorial

For the first twenty-one years of its existence the Society had no constitution. This was remedied in 1988 when a document was drawn up which guided the conduct of the Society's affairs for the next 8 years. In 1996 some members of the Committee felt that there was need for an amending, perhaps 'modernising' of the Constitution, in particular the section which laid down electoral procedures. There had always been free informal access to Committee membership and officers had, by what is best described as 'talent spotting', recruited a succession of members with administrative experience or specific skills or expertise. The machine was certainly not 'broke', but we decided to 'mend it'. It was subsequently made possible for any two paid-up members to nominate a third for membership of the Committee. It may, or may not, be surprising that four years passed without any such nominations, but now that drought has been followed by a flood.

The Society is doubly fortunate in having a small group of people who have for years devoted their time and expertise to its affairs and now no shortage of others anxious to take their place. In these circumstances it is our collective responsibility to play our part by exercising our right to vote. All paid-up members will find the necessary papers attached to this *Newsletter*.

The Chairman's report of the Society's activities during the past year speaks eloquently for itself. However, Paul Roberts does not directly refer to the fact that he is standing down in August. In his first twenty-five years of membership he has served us as Secretary, *Newsletter* Editor, Vice-Chairman and Chairman, and written extensively about the Powyses. We thank him and wish him another quarter-century of Powysian achievement.

John Batten

ON OTHER PAGES

Memorial Service for Isobel Powys Marks 1906–1999

On 10th June 2000 a Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Isobel Powys Marks, much loved Honorary Life Member of this Society, was held in the beautiful Norman church at Winterborne Tomson (*see back cover*) which had been saved from dereliction by her father, A. R. Powys.

The congregation was made up of members of her family and friends and the service conducted by the Rector, The Revd Hugh Maddox. Antonia Young (daughter) read Isobel's account of 'Montacute before the First World War' and Edward Powys Marks (grandson), Chloe Minerva Young (granddaughter), and Tordis Marks (daughter-in-law) shared with us their recollections of Isobel. Recurring themes in these addresses were: her loving and caring nature, her life-long love of travel, her independence of spirit and even in late old-age, creativity and a zest for life.

The service concluded with the interment of Isobel's ashes in her father's grave, after which there followed a touching and apparently spontaneous little ceremony. One by one members of the family stepped forward and placed upon the ashes a flower brought from a garden she had loved and then a handful of Dorset earth.

Those visiting St Andrew's Winterborne Tomson should notice the elegant rack which holds the visitors' book and various pamphlets. On its shelves are carved memorial inscriptions to Oliver, Eleanor and Isobel, the three children of A. R. Powys. The bottom shelf has just been added for Isobel's inscription.

Members of The Powys Society present at the service were: Eve Batten, Louise de Bruin, Angela Pitt, Susan Rands, Chris Gostick and John Batten .

Chairman's Report

Those who attended the 1999 Annual Conference of The Powys Society will have carried away with them a wealth of lasting memories and impressions. We enjoyed five fine lectures and, in a new departure, a symposium in which three members of the Society discussed with their audience 'The Difficulties of Finding Readers' for the works of the Powys family. Two elements of the Conference stand out, however, above all others and are, I suspect, already establishing for themselves an almost mythical status in the memories of those who shared them.

The tour of Montacute had always seemed something to look forward to, but in the event it was more exciting and memorable than we could ever have anticipated. First, we were kindly, and unexpectedly, invited inside the former Vicarage, so familiar in the mind's eye to readers of *Autobiography*. Then we were taken to Pitt Pond and, at the swinging back of those great, functional gates, so mundane from the outside, we seemed to enter a realm of stillness and magic. The beauty of that afternoon is beyond my powers of description, but one knew at once that one had entered the world of Powysian fiction.

The second event to which I refer was *Whispers of the White Death*, a play for voices written by Peter J. Foss and based on the Clavadel diaries of Llewelyn Powys. Not only was this a marvellous event in its own right, but it has since taken on a greater significance with the death, less than a month later, of Oliver Wilkinson, whose powerful performance must still echo in the minds of those who witnessed it. It was indeed fortunate that we were able to publish *The Powys Brothers*, our double audio-tape featuring readings by Oliver, together with Freddie Jones and Christopher Kent, earlier at the Conference. This was a project in which Oliver took enormous interest and pride and those who loved and admired him will be grateful to have such a record of his unique performances as John Cowper Powys.

Inevitably, in a Society such as ours, each year will bring its losses and it would be wrong to suggest that we value one member of the Society more highly than another. Nevertheless, when the deaths were announced of Oliver Wilkinson on September 17th and of Isobel Powys Marks on December 9th, no-one involved in the Society can have escaped the sensation that our losses had been grievous. Both had characters of more than human size, both were commanding and charismatic personalities, and both had enormous reserves of dignity, that quality so often lacking in today's hurried world. With such qualities, both Oliver and Isobel could easily have adopted superior attitudes towards those around them, but nothing could have been further from the truth. Just as they shared the qualities of magnetism which made them such impressive figures, so they also shared a zest for life, a genuine interest in those around them, particularly young people, a pride in the achievements of others and a deep humility. Each was, in my experience, entirely without malice. Both Isobel Powys Marks and Oliver Marlow

Wilkinson embodied those qualities which we have come to regard as truly Powysian – and the only compensation for their passing is the rich fund of memories they have left behind. The literary world, it seems, is sometimes one in which it is important to present yourself as being more important, wiser and more deserving of the attention of others than those who surround you. Both Oliver and Isobel had that magical gift (so abundant in John Cowper Powys) of making others feel more interesting and more important than themselves.

We recall too Martin Rivers Pollock, the husband of Janet Pollock and an eminent scientist upon whom Llewelyn Powys had a great influence when he was a young man. Martin was eloquently remembered by Aubrey Manning in *Newsletter* 39.

In terms of publications, the Society is producing the usual three issues of the *Newsletter* and a special tenth edition of *The Powys Journal*.

The Society and its publications have also received some welcome publicity in the May 2000 issue of *Country Living* magazine, with the publication of 'A literary dynasty in Dorset', a four-page article about the Powys family based largely on *The Dorset Year*. Details of the Society and its publications were given at the end of the article and have created a significant level of interest.

The Society's web site, which is currently being re-designed, also offers huge opportunities for the development of the Society's work.

I am deeply grateful to my fellow Officers, the members of the Committee and those members of the Society at large who have made my period as Chairman so exciting. It has, over the last quarter of a century, been a great privilege to be actively involved in the development of the Society and its work. Much has been achieved by the hard work, good will and dedication of those who genuinely admire the Powys family and wish to promote the aims of the Society. Now, with our membership at its highest ever level, we can look forward with confidence to another successful and productive year.

Paul Roberts

All who knew him will be sad to hear that **Derek Langridge** died recently. An appreciation will be published in the November *Newsletter*. .

Hon. Treasurer's Report for 1999

The accounts for 1999 are set out on the next two pages; they have been approved by the Society's Hon. Auditor, Stephen Allen. Once again I am most grateful to him for his advice and his work. (Comparison figures for 1998 are shown in parentheses after 1999 figures.)

Our paid-up membership was 307, which is a record. 181 subscriptions were paid by standing order, also a record, and 58 were under covenant, allowing us to reclaim £248 tax (£205 shown in the accounts was an estimate before making the claim in 2000). The total subscription income, including tax refunds due, amounted to £4,653 (1998: £4,431); this represents 60% of our total income of £7,752. Net income from our own publications was £1,998 (£2,116); however, out of this income we paid honoraria of almost £600 to the editors and designers of *The Dorset Year*. Donations (£460) were much lower than last year's figure (£2,176) as this had included the proceeds of the Powys books which Mrs Averil Sykes, a former member, had given the Society. In previous years we have transferred some of the donations to the Wilson Knight benefactors' fund, but this year we have not done so as more was spent on the Collection (£1,102) than was received in donations. This year we made moderate profits on the Conference and on an East Anglian tour in May (£358 in all).

As in previous years the largest part of our expenditure has gone on our regular publications, *The Powys Journal* and three issues of the *Newsletter*; the net cost of producing these, including distribution but excluding copies of the *Journal* taken into stock, was £4,077 (£4,078). This represents 89.9% of our subscription income, just under our target of 90%. Our total gross expenditure on publication work, comprising *The Powys Journal*, the *Newsletter*, and part of the preparation work on the Talking Book project and the whole of its production costs, was £5,537 (£9,570). A new general leaflet, essential for publicity, cost £96.

We had an excess of income over expenditure of £1,046 (£1,218), but as in previous years the value of stock pre-dating the year has been written down by £662 (£508); the resulting excess of income less writing down, £384 (£710), has been added to our General Fund. Our net worth at the end of the year was £10,388 (£10,004) of which £3,495 (£3,310) was represented by the value of stock. There has therefore been a small increase in our net worth of £384 (£709) with a slightly larger increase in our cash resources of £469 (£59 decrease). Thus the Society's finances were, once more, in very good health at the end of 1999, but I need to point out once again that the Society holds funds only in order to carry out its charitable purposes: accumulation of itself is not one of these. We are in a good position, therefore, to continue with the conservation of the collection and other appropriate activities.

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 1999 and of the surplus for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985.

J. S. Allen, Chartered Accountant, 12th June 2000

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1999

Income [1]		£	£	*1998*
subscriptions	for 1999 (307) [2]	4,373.07		
	tax refund due on covenants, 1999	205.00		
	for 1998 paid in 1999 (5)	75.00	**4,653.07**	*4,431*
donations [3]	Conference book sale (donated books)	406.05		
	other	53.96	**460.01**	*2,176*
publication sales (excluding postage)	stock publications [4] 2,304.30			
	less cost of publications sold 909.23	1,395.07		
	Talking Book 1,068.04			
	less fees (£251.68), cost (£359.55) 611.23	456.81		
	commission on other publishers' books	146.26		
	net income	1,998.14	**1,998.14**	*2,116*
	The Dorset Year, advance receipts		–	*3,760*
East Anglia meeting	fees received (£953) *less* expenses (£906.45)			
	surplus (5.1%)		**46.55**	–
Conference	fees received (£4,293.50) less expenses (£3,982.33)			
	surplus (7.8%; 1998: *deficit*, 4.7%)		**311.17**	*–203*
grant from British Library for conservation work			–	*561*
fee for use of collection			**67.60**	*100*
interest on bank accounts (paid gross)			**215.16**	*511*
			£ 7,751.70	*£ 13,452*

Expenditure [1]		£	£	*1998*
The Powys Journal IX (1999),[5] cost of members' (317), complimentary and copyright copies [6]		1,680.36		
cost of distribution		352.18	**2,032.54**	*2,135*
The Powys Journal VIII, cost of supplying to late subscribers			**7.60**	–
Newsletters (3), including cost of distribution (£442.42) [6]			**2,044.27**	*1,943*
Powys Checklist, complimentary copies to new members			**5.00**	*7*
The Dorset Year, cost of advance and complimentary copies			–	*3,788*
The Dorset Year, honoraria to editors and designers			**598.28**	*311*
Talking Book, Phase I [7]			**189.00**	*437*
Powys Collection			**1,102.12**	*2,847*
Powys Reference, expenses			**26.70**	–
stationery and leaflets (including new general leaflet, £95.85)			**197.66**	*150*
bank charges			–	*1*
officers' expenses (£236.52) and committee travel (£265.90) [3]			**502.42**	*615*
	1998		**6,709.59**	*12,234*
excess of income over expenditure	*1,218*	**1,046.11**	**1,046.11**	*1,218*
less writing down of stock [8]	*–508*	**–661.90**	**£ 7,751.70**	*£ 13,452*
excess of income *less* writing down of stock *carried to Statement of Funds*	*710*	**384.21**		

The Auditor's Report is printed on page 5.

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

I *General fund* [9]	£	£	*1998*
funds at January 1st 1999		**5,108.25**	*5,177*
excess of income over expenditure *less* writing down of stock		**384.21**	*710*
less part of donations transferred to Wilson Knight benefactors' fund [10]		**000.00**	*–779*
funds at December 31st 1999		**£ 5,492.46**	*5,108*
represented by:			
stock *The Powys Journal, The Powys Review,* and books at cost at January 1st 1999		**3,309.52**	*2,542*
add cost of new stock publications, including *The Powys Journal* IX surplus to distribution [11]		**2,121.25**	*2,708*
less cost of publications sold	1,268.78		
complimentary *Checklist* to new members	5.00		
writing down of stock [8]	661.90	**–1.935.68**	*–1.940*
value of stock at December 31st 1999		**3,495.09**	*3,309*
cash at bank at December 31st 1999 [12]		**3,238.36**	*2,039*
sums due to the Society [13]		**842.61**	*410*
		7,575.06	*5,758*
less subscriptions received in advance (for 2000: 25, £379.17; for 2001: 3, £45.33)		**–424.50**	*–650*
creditors (mainly DY honoraria, TB fees, Powys Collection)		**–1.659.10**	*000*
		£ 5,492.46	*£ 5,108*

II *The Wilson Knight benefactors' fund (WK)* [9,14]	£	*1998*
funds at January 1st 1999	**4,896.18**	*4,118*
transfer from General fund [10]	**000.00**	*778*
funds at December 31st 1999	**£ 4,896.18**	*£ 4,896*

NOTES

1 Cash turnover: total receipts, £14,451.32; total payments, £13,330.18, of which £2,121.25, relating to the cost of publications (*see* note 11), is carried forward in the General fund. Other adjustments, relating to cost of publications sold etc., subscriptions paid in advance, and sums owing to or owed by the Society, give excess of *Income* over *Expenditure* for the year (before writing down of stock) of £1,046.11 (1998: £1,218), all as shown in the accounts.

2 This figure comprises 267 (181 by standing order) paid in 1999 (£3,771.57) and 40 paid in advance in 1998 (£601.50).

3 In addition, committee travel costs of £151.80 were not claimed; regarded as donations + £460.01 shown = £611.81.

4 This includes *The Dorset Year* (74 ordinaries, 2 specials) £1,467.61.

5 *The Powys Journal* IX: gross cost £2,230.36, *less* cost of copies taken into stock at run-on cost £550 = £1,680.36.

6 Total net cost of producing and distributing *The Powys Journal* IX (£2,032.54) & 3 *Newletters* (£2,044.27): £4,076.81 = 89.9% of 1999 subscriptions, including tax refund due for 1999 (1998: 92%).

7 *Talking Book*: Phase I (preparation and recording) treated as educational expendiure (1998: £436.62; 1999: £189; = £625.62). Phase II (production), £1,526.22, added to stock value. Total cost: £2,151.84. Fees to copyright holder (6%) and 3 readers (5% each) payable on sales.

8 This is arrived at by writing down the value of stock at January 1st 1999 by 20%; new stock in 1999 is not affected.

9 General fund £5,492.46 + WK £4,896.18 = **Society's net worth at December 31st 1999, £10,388.64** (1998: £10,004).

10 No transfer has been made in 1999 as work to the Collection (£618.35) exceeded donations and unclaimed expenses (£611.81 – *see* note 3).

11 Undistributed copies of *The Powys Journal* IX, £550; *Talking Book*, £1,526.22 (*see* note 7); *A Glastonbury Romance*, remaindered copies, £16.98; *Newsletters* copied, £28.05.

12 Current account £152.69 + deposit account £7,981.85 = £8,134.54, *less* WK £4,896.18 = £3,238.36.

13 Sums due to the Society: tax refunds due for 1997, £204.61; for 1998, £205; for 1999: £205 = £614.61; Hengrave Hall advance fee, £50; cheques in hand £178. Total £842.61.

14 All interest has been retained in the General fund.

Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer

The 29th Annual Conference of the Powys Society
Kingston Maurward College, Dorchester
Saturday 19th to Tuesday 22th August 2000

As announced in the November *Newsletter*, the Conference remains at Kingston Maurward for a further year, although once again we are avoiding the Bank Holiday weekend to minimise travelling difficulties. Regrettably the Conference price will probably need to be raised slightly to around £165.00 for those fully residential for the whole Conference, with the usual pro-rata arrangements for part-attendance and day visitors. This is the first price rise since 1996. There are still places available, members wishing to attend contact Chris Gostick.

VISIONS OF WESSEX
Programme

Saturday

12.00 - 4.00 Committee Meeting
4.00 Arrivals and Tea
6.00 Dinner
Bus to Dorset County Museum
Lecture by **Roger Peers** on *Maiden Castle*, followed by **Reception**

Sunday

9.00 **Rob Timlin** *"Jimmy Plays Hop-Scotch": The Role of Redfern in* Wolf Solent
Coffee
11.00 **Greg Bond** *Patience unto Eternity: T. F. Powys*
Lunch
2.00 **Patrick Couch** A Glastonbury Romance *and Absolute Subjectivity: A Phenomenological Consideration*
Tea
4.00 **Ian Hughes** *The Collapse of the Philosophical Romance: Male Posturings and Female Subversion in* Maiden Castle
Dinner
7.00 **Annual General Meeting**

Monday

9.30 **John Williams** *The Poetry of Francis Powys: "Fear is the ruler of these paths."*
Coffee
11.00 **Professor Constance Harsh** (Colgate University) *John Cowper Powys's American Lectures during the First World War*
Lunch

2.00 **Henning Ahrens** *Light and Darkness in* Wolf Solent
4.00 A visit to **Maiden Castle**, followed by supper in Dorchester

Tuesday

Breakfast and Departure

Book Sale *See page 47.*

The Annual General Meeting of The Powys Society

will be held at Kingston Maurward College of Agriculture, Dorchester at 7.00 pm on Sunday, 20th August 2000

AGENDA

1 Minutes of the last AGM (22nd August 1999)
published in the November 1999 Newsletter
2 Any matters arising from the Minutes
3 The Hon. Secretary's Report
4 The Hon. Treasurer's Report and the Audited Accounts
published in the July 2000 Newsletter
5 The Chairman's Report
published in the July 2000 Newsletter
6 To note the election of Honorary Officers and Committee Members for 2000/2001
7 To note that Morine Krissdóttir has been co-opted to the Committee as Hon. Curator of the Powys Collection for a further year.
8 Appointment of Hon. Auditor (Stephen Allen)
9 Date and location of the 2001 Conference
10 Any Other Business

Chris Gostick, Hon. Secretary 17 June 2000

Hon. Officers and Committee Members for 2000/2001
Notice of Election

A full slate of nominations for Hon. Officers and Committee Members for 2000/2001 was published in the April *Newsletter* as required by the Society's Constitution, together with an invitation to the membership to make additional nominations. A number of such additional nominations have been received by the Hon. Nominations Secretary appointed by the Committee, within the time-scale laid down and an election is therefore required.

If your subscription to the Society for 2000 was received by the Hon. Treasurer before the dispatch of this *Newsletter*, or you are an Honorary member of the Society, you will find attached to the *Newsletter* an Official Ballot Paper and

particulars of all the candidates standing for election. This is the first time that these procedures have been used since the adoption of the revised Constitution in 1996. Please ensure that you use your vote.

All members are requested to complete and return ballot papers as soon as possible, and to be valid they **must be received** by TUESDAY 15th AUGUST 2000, as required by Rule 4.6(e) of the Constitution. Completed ballot papers should be clearly marked **Ballot Paper** on the outside of the envelope and returned to Bruce Madge, Hon. Nominations Secretary, The Powys Society, 20 Linden Avenue, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR7 7DU.

The outcome of the Election and a full list of Hon. Officers and Committee Members for 2000/2001 will be reported to the Annual General Meeting on Sunday 20 August, and will appear in the November *Newsletter*.

Chris Gostick 20 June 2000

Reclaiming Tax
Gift Aid Declarations instead of Covenants

The Government has brought in a new régime for charities claiming back the tax you have paid. Covenants have been abolished – although existing covenants can continue until they expire (but see below).

Now, you can sign a **Gift Aid Declaration** that a donation you make to a registered charity, including subscriptions (subject to limitations relating to the value of the benefit given to members), should be regarded as a Gift Aid donation. This Declaration can apply to a single payment, whatever the size, or to all subsequent donations you make; it can apply to donations already made (after April 6th 2000) as well as to future ones. The old rule that a covenant must last for at least four years has gone, as has the rule that the covenant must be signed before the donation; there is no need for the signature to be witnessed.

Payment of either income tax or capital gains tax enables you to sign a Gift Aid Declaration. A Declaration can be cancelled at any time, so there is no commitment to several years' payment, and therefore you need not hesitate to sign a Declaration. However, because the Declaration can only be effective when you have paid enough tax to cover what the charity will reclaim, you must cancel it if you cease to pay tax.

The new system is simpler all round. For you, the Declaration is quick to complete, while for us the procedures are also much simplified, so I shall be asking existing covenanters to sign a new Gift Aid Declaration to supersede their present covenants. I shall also ask all the other UK members who haven't had covenants to help us with a Gift Aid Declaration. Each subscription paid under a Declaration would bring in nearly £4, so there is the potential for reclaiming

almost £900 in a single year instead of an average of £230 in each of the last four years under the existing covenants.

To take advantage of the new system, I will send out with the November *Newsletter* new Declaration forms with subscription reminders for 2001, and in future, membership application forms will include a Gift Aid Declaration.

Stephen Powys Marks

John Cowper Powys Sällskapet
(The Swedish John Cowper Powys Society)

We are pleased to announce the foundation of the Swedish John Cowper Powys Society. The objects of the Society are twofold; firstly, to work for recognition of John Cowper Powys and for the publication and dissemination of his writings and secondly, to encourage this recognition through meetings with lectures and discussion.

Though it confines its scope to John Cowper, the Society is the third Powys society to be formed and it is the first one in a non-English-speaking country. It follows in the footsteps of the British and American societies, founded in 1967 and 1983 respectively.

The idea for the Society's creation came in November 1999 when Håkan Stockhaus and Gunnar Lundin, members of a literary society dedicated to the Swedish writer Victor Rydberg, were in conversation with their fellow member Sven Erik Täckmark regarding another of his passions – his long time interest in John Cowper Powys. Sven Erik is, of course, known as JCP's correspondent 'Eric the Red'.

On the 26th of February 2000 fourteen people gathered at Sven Erik Täckmark's apartment in Stockholm for the Society's inaugural meeting and the election of its first committee. The Society's officials include Lars Gustaf Andersson (of the Department of Comparative Literature, Lund University) as Chairman, Patrick Couch as Vice-Chairman, Håkan Stockhaus as Honorary Secretary, with Sven Erik Täckmark as Honorary President. The Society expects to have a membership of around 35 within the next few months and will apply for charitable status in Sweden in the near future.

One of the first tasks the Society has set itself is to make publicly available Sven Erik's translation of *Autobiography* that he made in the late 1970s which has as yet never been published.

John Cowper Powys's writings were first translated into Swedish in 1935 when Natur & Kultur published 'Modern själskultur' (*The Meaning of Culture*) in a translation by Alf Ahlberg, followed by 'Lyckans väsen' (*The Art of Happiness*). Studiekamraten's Publishing House republished the former in 1994 under its

original title 'Kulturens mening'. In 1975 and 1977 the publisher René Coeckelbergs presented the novels 'Wolf Solent' and 'Dårarnas dans' (*Ducdame*) in Sven Erik's translation. In recent years, writers such as Ingemar Algulin, Göran Börge, Harold W. Fawkner, Carl Erik af Geijerstam and Eva Ström have championed Powys to the Swedish public. John Cowper's writings have also been the subject of a number of doctoral dissertations and theses by students at several Swedish universities. His brothers' writings are, however, almost unknown in Sweden.

If anyone would like to join the Society or would like further information, please contact:

JOHN COWPER POWYS SÄLLSKAPET
c/o Lars Gustaf Andersson, Plätslagarevägen 8, 227 30 Lund, Sweden
(e-mail: lars_gustaf.andersson@litt.lu.se)
or Sven Erik Täckmark, Åsögatan 82, 118 29 Stockholm, Sweden.

Roland Horton on behalf of JOHN COWPER POWYS SÄLLSKAPET

Letters to Theodore from his Mother

The Powys Collection contains 21 letters from Mary C. Powys to Theodore written between July 1902 and July 7 1914 – three weeks before her death. They are of interest for the light they throw on the domestic happenings at Montacute Vicarage and they also cover a period when John, Will and Bertie were embarking on new careers while Llewelyn was struggling with illness and Theodore was making a false start, Gertrude spent some time in Paris and Marian worked in Newquay.

Montacute Vicarage
July 25 1902

My Dear Theodore,

I am very much pleased that you will be able to take up John's work in his school next winter. I send you my very best wishes and I think it was very brave of you to try it, & I believe with thought & care you will get on & I will ask that you may have Heavenly Blessing on your new undertaking. Bertie has got a camera and is beginning to photograph, I think it will improve in time. Dear Gertrude is ready to stand to be photographed at any time in any weather.

We had our S School Treat on Wednesday, and fortunately it was a fine day between two wet ones. The clouds were dark and threatening at the time of the Teas, but the rain did not come down. The Teachers and friends have tea after the children and after them the servants and helpers.

I hope you will lecture clearly and simply so that young minds can take it in &

learn for their good. Your letter pleased and interested us very much. With ever dear love,

I am Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys.

Montacute Vicarage
Sept. 17 1902

My Dear Theodore,

I thank you very much for your letter. I am very glad to have it for we did not know your address. I am so glad that the people you are with are kind and look after your meals as well. Should like to know what the hymn book is that they use at the church near you for I should like to send you one.

When I read the account of Charles Lamb in the 19th Century Literature Saintsbury [??] I liked it very much indeed. I wonder if you have that valuable book to help you. The kind patient care he took of his sister, who was so afflicted at times is very touching. He was fortunate to have sufficient regular employment and get time for reading and writing his unequalled essays, of which the lightness of touch, & humour & originality of thought & expression is quite unsurpassed. Your sisters and Llewelyn have gone today to Bruton, & I hope Littleton will come to see me on Friday. Llewelyn goes with Willie to Sherborne on Tuesday.

I travelled home comfortably on Thursday last week it was a very wet day but I had no difficulties, and I had a very loving welcome home.

I often think of you and we shall all be glad to hear how you prosper. May God Bless you in your new work, dear Theodore. From Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
Sunday afternoon March 21 1909

My Dear Theodore,

We are very thankful to read in your telegram to Gertrude that you have another little son, and we congratulate you both, and we are most thankful that the child is born, I trust that all will go on well with Violet and the baby.

I hope that Miss Ford will come to you as soon as possible, and that you will be relieved of the anxiety in seeing Violet well nursed. Please give my love to Violet – little Dickey will be pleased to have a little brother.

With much love to you and Katie, I am

Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
March 23 1909

My Dear Theodore,

I thank you for your card written on Sunday telling me of the birth of your little son Francis. I like the name very much and so does yr. Father and also yr. Sisters.

Your Father was given the name Francis after his Aunt Fanny (Miss Frances Powys) and we gave it to you. We are pleased that you call your new little son Francis.

I hope that you are able to rest at night and are easy about Violet who I hope will go on well under the care of her nurse.

I have heard from Willy this morning, he is very pleased with the news. He helps with the milking & they begin at 6o'c. in the morning, he says the birds are all singing now.

With much love to you all, and my especial sympathy and congratulations to Violet.

I am Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
Jan. 27 1910

My Dear Theodore,

I thank you very much for your letter and kind invitation to Katie for 19 March, if all is well she will accept it, and she thanks you and Violet for asking her. She hopes to write to you on Sunday, she will be rather busy today and tomorrow.

Dorothy and Isobel leave tomorrow morning. Bertie thanks you for sending his shoes which he received safely last evening – he sends his love to you and he knows you will be glad to hear that he has had a kind offer from the Society for 'Protection of Old Buildings' to work at the repairs and measurement of a Gentleman's old house in Kent, which is a good appointment if Mr. Weir agrees to it. Bertie will talk it over with Mr. Weir.

We are glad that the Reading Room has begun so well, & we wish it good success, it was a most kind plan of yours, & a real help to the village

I saw in the Standard last Saturday the arrival of John's ship in New York on the 30th Dec. so I hope to hear from him soon. Also that L. Wilkinson's ship 'Umbria' arrived safely on 2nd Jan.

Bertie will vote for Mr. John Burns, I am glad of that, for he is a good man. Living at Battersea it is good that Bertie should vote for him.

Goodbye dear Theodore with our love to you all.

I am Yr. Very Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
Feb. 23 1910

When Katie went away from home she asked me to have these scissors sharpened & sent to you in case they are the ones you missed. So here they are, and I hope they will be your lost ones. It is a beautiful day after the rain and wind, for about a week the storms lasted, & last Sunday it was tremendous, the wind & rain as we went to church was more than I have experienced for years. You must have felt

the storm being near the sea, we hope no hurt has come to your house etc.

I am sorry little Francis cries out at night it is often so when little ones are cutting more teeth. I thank you for your letter. I had a nice letter from Llewelyn, he is allowed to walk out now. Your brother John has sent me a very good photograph of himself with his fur coat & cap on. He seems to be getting on fairly well and is better.

With love to you and Violet and the little boys

Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
Oct. 6th 1910

My Dear Theodore,

I thank you for your letter, we are always glad to hear from you. It was very nice of you & Violet to send a photograph to Nurse Ford and it is nice that your doctor was pleased to have one – F. Pippard did his best I am sure & was quite anxious about the success of them.

There certainly ought to be railings or a barricade by that part of the river in Dorchester to prevent such sad accidents. I remember the part below the prison where the dangerous path is.

Mrs. Hussey and her eldest daughter are staying a few days at M. House & Gertrude is gone for a walk with Miss Hussey this morning to Ham Hill. She is a tall girl and she has a particularly quiet nice manner, she is rather like her brother Victor – he is now in England until next spring when he returns to India.

I have had a nice P. Card from Llewelyn he really is better & stronger and can stand up & do his toilet. He writes more cheerfully, he is able to read his books without fatigue & he has much liked reading Don Quixote all through, he says he finished the book yesterday, which as Pepys would say, 'troubled me.' But perhaps you would like to read his card, so I will enclose it and you can return it at your leisure.

Gertrude wishes me to say that she will write to you soon but today and tomorrow are rather full days for her. May is quite well and finds the sea air at Newquay does her good, & she is interested in her employment. Lucy is coming here today for dinner and the afternoon to help eat some nice fish and cream, a birthday treat for Gertrude. Gertrude will send some books with pleasure & will send some titles. With love to Violet

Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
June 27 1913

My Dear Theodore,

Your Father thanks you for your letter, he was pleased to receive it. The

children who have measles are going on well so far.

We are very glad to have Gertrude home again, she enjoyed her time in Paris very much, her friend Miss Dumas was most kind and helpful.

John is now at home at Burpham, I dare say he will come here before long. When the measles are over we shall hope to see you. I will let you know how things go on. Willie is carrying his hay now and I expect he will cut more fields as the weather continues so fine and dry.

The new farmer at the Abbey is named Mr. Dare, they have a large family. They have just cut the hay in Lawsall field – a very good crop.

We all send our love to you and to Violet and the boys. I am

Yr. Very affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
March 27th 1914

My Dear Theodore,

I thank you very much for your letter and was very interested in your quotations from Wesley's journal – What a storm?

Powys family group on the Terrace Walk at Montacute Vicarage, c. 1913
standing: Llewelyn, Miss Dumas (see line 3 above), Lucy seated: Marian, Gertrude

We are rejoicing in a beautiful day. Today your Father is going to Yeovil by train & will walk home.

We shall be delighted to see you the week after next, the 6th or 7th of April. John hopes to arrive on the 13th Ap. And will come via Bristol here for one night. I trust all will go well with him & his home voyage – he hopes to come by the 'Mauritania', but he has a lecture in New Jersey near the time she sails so he is just a little afraid he may not catch it – but hopes to.

Aunt Dora has gone to Sherborne for one night and then to Lucy for Sunday and then home. I am glad Francis likes the P. book.

With our love to you all. Yr. Ever affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
June 9th 1914

My Dear Theodore,

It rained a great deal last night but it did not come thro' Lulu's tent. We have had an interesting letter from Willie, he has shot 2 wild boars and a small deer, & he likes going riding by the lake on the 'hippo' paths which wander about in the jungle, he hears them snorting like engines and splashing in the water. Two natives went with him the day he shot the deer. His native boy cooks milk puddings well & Willie likes them. He is going to interview a government official about some plan. He sees very large owls in the trees.

Marion Linton is staying here this week. We like her so much, she lives mostly at Abingdon now with her Aunts.

We are going to Seaton next Tuesday the 16th, our address will be c/o Mr. Scott, 7 West Cliff, Seaton. John hopes to take rooms for him and Margaret while we are there, which will be pleasant. I am sorry to say he has not been so well lately – having been troubled with his old complaint. I have nice letters from May, she is well. This week Katie is having a few days with Mrs. Stracy at Eastbourne.

Gertrude and I were very pleased with Violet's kind letter, please thank her for it.

With our love to every one. I am
Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

C/o Mr. Scott,
7 West Cliff,
Seaton.
June 18th 1914

Thank you very much for your letter. We are very comfortable in these lodgings. The windows look on to the sea & there is a pleasant field in front, in a corner of which Llewelyn has placed his tent quite near to the house. We are having beautiful weather and the sea is very calm. Llewelyn is taking Father this evening

for a walk towards Beer where there are some caves and very ancient quarries. John is here, he is better but he soon gets tired, & has to be very careful about his food. He is going to Sherborne tomorrow where Margaret will join him for the Commemoration Day on Saturday, and they will both come back here for a week on Monday.

I hope the rain on Sunday refreshed your dry ground, we had a very heavy thunder storm at Montacute, it was all round and went on for some hours. I have never read much of Bernard Shaw. I have no doubt his rebukes to parents are often deserved. I hope Violet's sister Betty will be happy, I send her my best wishes as she is going to begin married life. I hope the young man will be steady and good to her. It is helpful for you to have a clock you can hear to direct you as to the time.

Willie has agreed to work on a government farm at a good salary. He goes there in a month's time – about 20 miles from Mr. Barry's.

With love from us all to you and Violet. I am

Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

Montacute Vicarage
July 7th 1914

My Dear Theodore,

We came home last Friday after a very pleasant holiday at Seaton. We have had a great deal of rain this last few days and fine weather is wanted now for getting in the hay, there is a good deal about. Llewelyn is better but he is keeping quiet and not walking much. We hear from Margaret that John is better, he was not very well at Seaton. I think that Father told you that Willie's address is now c/o East African Syndicate Ltd., Gilgil, British East Africa. Llewelyn heard from him this week, he has been deepening a well, not an agreeable employment, in mud and water deep down a well. He says a man came to buy cows, & he told Willie, on his way riding on a mule he was followed by 2 lions, and with great difficulty and speed got away from them, at last they were tired of the pursuit and turned off. How many dangers there are in that country – Willie says it is the lambing season & the baaing of the sheep & lambs make him think he is on the Abbey Farm when he wakes up in the morning, but the howling of an hyena soon tells him where he is.

Perhaps you have been told that Mr. Parker of Chilthorne Rectory died suddenly. Your Father took the funeral last Monday and the service there on Sunday morning.

With our best love to you & Violet & Dicky and Francis. I am

Yr. Affectionate Mother

Mary C. Powys

An Old Dorset Ditty

In the mid 1930s the Australian poet and novelist Kenneth Mackenzie (1913–55) showed the composer Horace Keats (1895–1945),[1] 'an old Dorset verse which he had written from memory'. This is in fact the same 'old Dorset ditty that [Wolf Solent] had read somewhere' and which prior to his first love making with Gerda, in an empty cow barn, 'suddenly floated into [his] mind'. Kenneth Mackenzie appears to have taken Wolf Solent literally, as, according to Horace Keats, he 'could not remember the origin of the poem but adjudged it to be an old Dorset verse, its authorship lost in antiquity'.

It was the floor of the barn, that was 'thickly strewn with a clean dry bed of last autumn's yellow bracken' that triggered a memory in Wolf's mind, and as he held Gerda 'tightly against his beating heart, it was not her words but the words of that old song which hummed through his brain:

There'll be yellow bracken beneath your head;
There'll be yellow bracken about your feet,
For the lass Long Thomas lays in's bed
Will have no blanket, will have no sheet.

My mother has sheets of linen white,
My father has blankets of purple dye.
But to my true-love have I come to-night
And in yellow bracken I'll surely lie:

In the yellow bracken he laid her down,
While the wind blew shrill and the river ran;
And never again she saw Shaftesbury town,
Whom Long Thomas had taken for his leman!' (148–9) [2]

Horace Keats added a melody to Powys's poem, on July 20th 1935, and called it 'Yellow Bracken'. Eventually Horace Keats read *Wolf Solent*, and came across the source of the poem. This led to an exchange of letters, when Keats wrote to Powys in 1938 seeking copyright permission for his setting. On 29th June 1938 Powys replied as follows:

Dear Mr. Keats,

What a funny thing to be able to write 'dear Mr. Keats'! Are you any connection with or of our greatest poet?[3]

Yes of course you have my full permission as far as I can give for I don't know enough of publishing law to know technically [if] I ought to ask my publishers or not. But it seems to me that an author can give such a right ... So go ahead: as far as I can say so! I am delighted and proud that you should have put my song to words. Yes I invented that ditty myself and called it Dorset.

I hope you get this all right for I am not quite sure of the name of your town or city whether it has an 'r' or an 's' in the middle of the word and is Mosman or Morman. But I'll chance it by making that letter look like anything or nothing.[4]

Keats then sent a copy of his song, because there was another letter from Powys, on 10th October [1938]:

Dear Mr. Keats,

Aye! — how indescribably romantic and weird it still is to me & natural, to you!! To write those words at the head of a letter!! I am very grateful for this beautiful song for such I know it is.

This is the first time in my life I've had a piece of music copied out for me! How wonderfully you've copied it! To see music copied has one quiet interest for me of a literary nature for by copying music Jean Jacques Rousseau earned one of the few honest livelihoods that writers have earned!

But neither my lady nor myself nor anyone here in 8 little houses of this new working-people's suburb of Corwen have a piano, or can read music! So alas we will have to wait till we get out, about 9 miles by bus along the great Holyhead highway to the house of our friends Mr. & Mrs. James Hanley — (the sea writer, if (I wonder) you know him?) who are very musical and have a piano: & if they come to see us ere we can get out to them I expect they would be able to sing us this song of yours, Sir, by reading it without a piano.

Certainly I confess I never realised how I had caught the spirit of a real old ballad till I saw it between your music. I am very proud of it and know I shall be thrilled by it when I hear it tho' alas not musical enough to do it real justice. But if I were able to do it justice I couldn't feel more gratitude!

Keat's song was sung by several Australian singers in 1936 and 1937, but he was unable to get it published, despite a number of attempts. Eventually it was published by Wirripang in 1995. According to Horace Keats' son Brennan, 'this song is still very popular, in fact it is about to be performed at three recitals next February and will be recorded by ABC Classic Enterprises later on this year, for a CD of Keats' music for the Federation Year of 2001'.

The melody has also been transcribed for various instrumental arrangements, including an oboe arrangement by Charles Mackerras (now Sir Charles), and in a letter to Brennan Keats he commented on its intriguing changes of time and its almost 'blue last chord'. Brennan Keats has advised me that he is 'currently producing the string quartet arrangement my father made of 'Yellow Bracken', so ensuring that the poem and music will reach an even wider audience'. He also noted that 'each of the scores for these transcriptions has a copy of the poem included as a permanent memento of the music's origins ... In so doing I continue

my father's tradition of attaching equal importance to both poet and composer'.

As far as I am aware Keats' song has never been sung in Dorset, and unless the Hanleys did indeed première it, never in the UK. Perhaps some musical members of the Powys Society can remedy this at a future conference?

Robin Wood

NOTES

Horace Keats' son Brennan Keats very kindly gave permission for the use of material from his web page, and from his biography of Horace Keats. The main source for this piece , including the transcription of the two letters, was the Brennan Keats' web page (*see end of this note*), which quotes from the biography of his father: J. Brennan Keats, *A Poet's Composer: The Biography of Horace Keats 1895–1945*, published by Publications Wirripang, PO Box 50, Culburra Beach, NSW 2540, Australia; Phone: +61 2 4447 2366. Postage outside Australia $10.00 Bankcard, Visa, Master Card welcome. The sheet music for 'Yellow Bracken' is also published by Publications Wirripang. You can see the first page of the song on the web site under the heading 'Catalogue of Songs':

<http://www.wirripang.com.au/home.htm>

1 Horace Keats was an accompanist and composer, born in Tooting, London. He went to Australia on a tour in 1915, accompanying a singer and stayed. He was then engaged by the baritone Peter Dawson to tour Australia in 1915. He fostered the cause of Australian poets and was involved in radio broadcasting, as well as writing music for radio, plays and ballet.

2 John Cowper Powys, *Wolf Solent* (1929) (London: Macdonald, 1961).

3 According to his son's biography, Horace Keats was in fact related to a Captain Keats who sailed with Drake.

4 The original letters from John Cowper Powys are now in the New South Wales State Library, as part of the Keats Collection.

Reviews

Mary Shelley. A Literary Life, by John Williams

London: Macmillan, 2000. £12.99. ISBN 0 333 69831 2.

SUBVERSIVE STRANDS IN IDOLATRY

John Williams is well known in The Powys Society as the former editor of the *Journal*, a valued member of the executive Committee, and a learned and entertaining speaker on T. F. Powys. Perhaps less well-known is his expertise in the Romantic period of literature and biography in general.

This finely crafted book is William's second one (the first was on William Wordsworth) in the Macmillan 'Literary Lives' series which emphasises the professional, publishing and social contexts which shaped the writings of English-language authors. It is an interesting and – in the case of Shelley in particular – a very relevant approach. Although this new biography explores her many other writings – 7 novels, short stories, essays, biographies, travel-writing, letters, her journal as well as her editorial work on Percy Shelley's poetry and prose – Mary Shelley is probably best known as 'the author of Frankenstein'.

In an unpublished letter to his brother Littleton Powys, some incident

prompted John Cowper to remember reading Frankenstein to their Grandmother's cook when he took her out rowing in Weymouth Bay. He does not say what he or the cook thought of the novel, or how they got back safely to shore, given this double act of reading and rowing.

As Williams points out, 'Mary Shelley's life was inescapably literary.' It was also inevitably melodramatic. Her mother was Mary Wollstonecraft, the political writer and feminist; her father William Godwin, the author and philosopher with anarchical views which captivated the Romantic poets. Mary's mother died in childbirth, Godwin remarried, and she grew up very unhappily in a disfunctional family of half-brothers and sisters. She met Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet, who was a great admirer of her father's theories about the comprehensive reform of society. Although he was already married, Mary eloped with Shelley when she was 16. They went off to Switzerland, taking her half-sister Jane, to found (they hoped) a radical community of friends. It was not successful, and pursued by debt-collectors they soon returned to London. There Shelley's first wife Harriet became pregnant again, as did Mary. Jane (now calling herself Claire) became pregnant by the fellow-poet, Byron. They went back to Switzerland, and this stay lasted for three months. It was during this second experiment in communal living that Mary Shelley began writing *Frankenstein*, over which she worked in the next few years. Back again in London, another half-sister, Fanny, commits suicide as does Shelley's wife Harriet. Mary became Shelley's second wife in December, 1816. Claire has a daughter, Allegra, and Mary gives birth to her third child.

In January, 1818, *Frankenstein* is published and, by February, Percy is anxious to be on the road again, so off they sail – Shelley, wife Mary, 'sister' Claire, 3 children, 2 nurses and the accompanying paraphernalia of a nomadic life – 'in the teeth of a March gale'.

Back in Italy Mary Shelley began work on another novel, wrote various short stories, did all the transcription work for her husband. She was by now 22, pregnant with her fourth child (the first had died prematurely, the second of malaria, the third of a fever), she was estranged from her beloved father Godwin, who nonetheless continued to demand money from them that they seldom had, the nurse had had a child by Shelley and Mary's relationship with Percy had become understandably somewhat strained. She wrote in her Journal of August, 1819 a characteristically ambiguous 'We have lived five years together & if all the events of the five years were blotted out I might be happy.'

At the point of almost complete breakdown, she wrote her second novel, *Mathilda*, and then a third novel, *Valperga*, thus establishing a life-long pattern of coping with bereavement and pain by turning life situations into a world of fiction. As Williams says, 'These were all literary lives, forever exploring paths which led from actual existence into fiction, fable and dream, and out again.' (13)

And so it went on – intrigues both sexual and political, constant nightmarish travel, unceasing hack writing in an attempt to stave off total poverty. In May,

1822, Claire's daughter Allegra died, Mary herself almost died of the miscarriage of a fifth child. On July 1 of that year Shelley and a friend were drowned in a storm.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's death was what Williams calls 'a key moment for the development of [Mary Shelley's] literary life. From this point on she was driven to write and rewrite in fictional form different versions of the narrative of her life with Percy.' (92) The first 'version' begins with a long letter to her friend Maria Gisborne in August, 1822:

> Mary's letter is not the work of a woman whose spirit is broken. It is a strong, dramatic narrative where the author sets about dealing with the trauma through the use of literary form. ... Just as the device of fiction in *Mathilda* and *Valperga* had carried Mary out of her depression before and during her time at Pisa, so here it enabled her to cope with the next, even more demanding crisis. The letter casts the terrible reality into fictional form, and in that way it can be confronted, written and read through to its devastating conclusion. (90–91)

The rest of her life Mary Shelley spent trying to make a living by writing – for herself, her only surviving child and her ever-needful father – battling poor health and, above all, determined to rehabilitate the poet to a public either hostile or indifferent to his work and reputation. This task was accomplished with the publication of the four-volume edition of *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* in 1839. She used her Preface and the editorial machinery of extensive notes to produce 'a vindication of his character and a critique of his work that would display him as one of the greatest poets and thinkers of his age.' (171) It was an immense task of editorship, particularly, as John Williams points out in one of his many delightfully sly asides, 'when it comes to reconstructing a virtuous Percy Shelley'.

The question that arises out of this book is why did Mary Shelley devote her life to this reconstruction to the detriment and finally the undermining of her own ability as a writer? A woman friend wrote her angrily:

> Good God! To think a person of your genius ... should think it a task befitting its powers to gild and embellish and pass off as beautiful what was the merest compound of vanity, folly, and every miserable weakness that ever met together in one human being! ... You could write on metaphysics, politics, jurisprudence, astronomy, mathematics – all those highest subjects which they taunt us with being incapable of treating, and surpass them ... . (168)

Inevitably for Powysians, the same question arises. Why did Alyse Gregory leave an intellectually prestigious job in New York to live in a Dorset cottage and devote herself to caring for a sick writer-husband? Why does any accomplished professional woman immolate herself on the altar of her man's 'genius'? And why, in the process, does she feel the necessity of making that companion greater than

and more virtuous than he was? I have been reading Jacqueline Peltier's sensitive monograph on Gregory and re-reading Alyse's Journals (a photocopy now in the Powys Collection, thanks to the generous gift of Judith Stinton) and am forced once again to ponder on this aspect of the human – not only or even necessarily the feminine – psyche.

John Williams does not tackle this question head on, but he is obviously aware of it and is compassionate and thoughtful in his final analysis of Mary Shelley as a writer:

> Everything she wrote ... reflects the fractured, complex world she was forced to inhabit all her life. Her novels are a commentary on the way she was constantly being challenged to think and act by different people who had their own memories of her past, and whose voices were for ever jostling for dominance over her own. The narratives she produced in these circumstances are forced continually to turn back and look again at situations from which there can be no clearly discernable way forward.

There is of course a shadow side to this, or what John Cowper once called 'our Frankenstein echo'. Her idolatry is constantly counterpointed with subversive strands in her fiction. Williams points out that the only way she could confront Shelley, the man she remembered, as opposed to the poet she eulogized, was through her fiction. For example, in January, 1824 she published the article 'Recollections of Italy' where Percy appears in the persona of 'a sensitive saccharine poet of nature'. Three months later she publishes a malicious, gloriously satirical story told at the poet's expense. In her novel, *The Last Man*, the central character is Adrian/Shelley 'showing courage and compassion as the country (and the world) slides into anarchy. Yet what Mary writes is in the end an uncompromising denial of the Shelleyan dream.' Adrian, the leader, dreams of a community of 'enlightened individuals, eliminating injustice, famine and disease' but all he does in reality is lead his followers to oblivion.

Williams astutely ends his book on this note of vast ambiguity:

> In his play, *Bloody Poetry*, Howard Brenton has Byron playfully challenging Mary to a duel; they have to choose their weapons. Byron suggests rhyming couplets, Mary opts for 'Home truths', to which Byron replies, 'I – am dead.' Mary Shelley had played an influential part in establishing a mythology of Romanticism centred on the personalities of Byron and Shelley, but as Brenton seems to suggest, her literary life (not just her published work) was equally about destabilising that mythology, and we have yet to appreciate to the full her contribution of her 'home truths' in that respect.

This is a well-crafted and crafty biography, written in John Williams' characteristic style of lightly-worn erudition, and will be a valuable source book for those interested in the romantic legacy in Powysian writings

Morine Krissdóttir

John Cowper Powys in Germany Today
An Additional Note (June 2000)

I presented some press reactions to German editions of *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Weymouth Sands* in the April 2000 *Newsletter*, and now the editor of the *Newsletter* has drawn my attention to further material. This is significant in that it appeared in *Die Zeit*, probably Germany's most respected weekly paper, and certainly the weightiest (literally so), with considerable influence in cultural affairs. *Die Zeit* devoted a whole page to *A Glastonbury Romance* when it came out in 1995 (*Die Zeit*, 8. 3. 1996), by one of Germany's best-known critics, Fritz J. Raddatz. Now a full page on *Weymouth Sands* has followed (4. 5. 2000). This article does not say much about Powys's novel, nor about Powys himself, and even if this is disappointing, it paradoxically means that Powys is now an author Germans are expected to know.

The whole point is familiarity. The reviewer, Rolf Vollmann, referred to Powys in an earlier full-page article in *Die Zeit* this year (5. 1. 2000), entitled 'What was in the beginning?' Here Vollmann discussed the first lines of novels by authors such as Italo Svevo, Thomas Mann, Thomas Hardy, Balzac, Hans Henny Jahnn, Proust, George Eliot, Theodor Fontane – and John Cowper Powys. The company an author is seen to keep is often the best advertisement for his work, as long as this remains largely unknown and unread. And the first sentence of *A Glastonbury Romance* has retained its reputation in Germany for being the worst opening to any novel in the whole history of literature. This is superb advertising, if the novel is seen to be worth the effort it takes to read it anyway.

Rolf Vollmann's review of *Weymouth Sands* is entitled 'As if it were always a matter of going for the whole', and begins with a wonderful anecdote from nineteenth-century Austria. Friedrich Hebbel reviewed Adalbert Stifter's long and undramatic novel *Indian Summer* and offered the crown of Poland to anyone who could get through it. Vollmann's review goes on to compare John Cowper Powys's works to those of Hans Henny Jahnn (1894–1959), the one German author who has often been seen in literary kinship with Powys. The point of comparison is not much more substantial than the fact that the crown of Poland is still up for grabs. Vollmann wants that crown because he has managed to read Jahnn, and he read Jahnn only because he wanted to know what the link to Powys was. Reading all of these very long novels is an athletic feat, as well as an aesthetic pleasure. This is a challenge that a reader of Vollmann's review may well take up, particularly as Stifter's *Indian Summer* is a kind of paradigm, now an undisputed classic of anti-materialist, individualistic, artistic self-assertion in the face of nineteenth-century industrialisation. Through the rest of the review names are dropped like hairpins: Paul Valéry, Thomas Hardy, Klopstock, André Gide, Rilke: what counts is the company you keep.

Vollmann goes on to discuss *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Weymouth*

Sands, praising Powys's vision of an alternative world and his gift for creating a plethora of living characters, full of emotion and soul, and also the author's gentle wit. The significance of the size of the breasts of a girl to the male heroes of novels is discussed, and Jahnn and Powys are seen to differ on this point. The two differ also in that Jahnn's characters are only pale shadows of the author's own self, whereas Powys's characters may be created from a part of the ego of the author, but then become living models for a world much more complex and much larger than our own world. Vollmann's review closes with the greatest possible praise: 'Powys wrote his novels at a remove from all contemporary trends, it has been rightfully said. But quietly startled, one day you realise that all the truly great books of the now disappearing, notorious twentieth century ... were written at a remove from their own time.'

Powys Society members have already completed the long-distance run through the works of John Cowper Powys (although, as far as I know, not one of us has the crown of Poland). German reviewers, it seems, are now recommending that others put on their jogging shoes. This is also remarkable in the context of contemporary German literary affairs. Most of the media have been concentrating on a general cult of trendy young authors writing on lifestyle in Germany today, and representing a break with the past. To rediscover an eccentric Victorian is itself an eccentric endeavour.

The two articles can be found at present under http://www1.zeit.de/tag/kultur.html (then type Powys into the search function).

A more substantial contribution to popularising Powys in Germany is an hour-long radio feature by Elke Heinemann. This was co-produced by the national station DeutschlandRadio Berlin and the regional stations Bayerischer Rundfunk and Südwest Rundfunk. All three broadcasted the programme in May and June, and a further station, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, has also shown interest. Heinemann writes in the admirable tradition of the literary feature in German radio, which introduces an author through a collage of excerpts from his works, statements by the critics, and a critical commentary from the radio author. Using this method for an author as prolific and hard to pin down as John Cowper Powys is not easy, but Heinemann has provided an entertaining, and thoroughly researched, introduction to all aspects of his life and work. Her choice of title is 'The More the Better', and the subtitle translates roughly as 'The Extravagant Writer'.

Heinemann begins by giving a general introduction to Powys's philosophy and temperament, and draws on *Autobiography* to present the author's view of himself as an obsessive individualist and magician. She then runs through the Powys family legend, John's education and lecturing, and concludes with excerpts from and comments on the major novels. The enduring impression is that of an unbelievably complex man with a remarkably simple philosophy on life: 'Enjoy!'

Some time ago the Powys Society *Newsletter* ran a series inviting members to

describe how they came to be interested in the works of the Powys family. In my case, a BBC World Service radio programme was to blame. A famous person, whose name I have forgotten, was asked to introduce a book which had a lasting influence on his life. The book was *Wolf Solent*, which I bought and read lying on my back in an English garden. From then on I was hooked, and I am sure that Elke Heinemann's work can have comparable effects on some German readers.

A new publishing venture is likely to enhance John Cowper Powys's reputation further in Germany. The mail-order publisher Zweitausendeins already has three Powys books available: these are *Autobiographie*, *Glastonbury Romance* and *Wolf Solent*, and all three are licenced editions of other publishers' translations at greatly reduced prices. Now Zweitausendeins is preparing its own series of books by John Cowper Powys, and branching into a totally new area for Germany, and for contemporary Powys publishing worldwide. Three of Powys's philosphies and guides to good living are to be published by Zweitausendeins in the autumn, in what will be, as far as I know, their first German translations. There are no German titles available yet for *The Art of Happiness*, *In Defence of Sensuality* and *The Art of Growing Old*, and press material is not due out until the end of July. The Zweitausendeins website has no details on these works at present. The publishers tell me, however, that the texts have been translated, and also that negotiations are under way for a fourth book, *In Spite Of*. This certainly makes Germany one of the most vibrant places around in John Cowper Powys publishing today, as these books will present a side to Powys's work which is generally neglected everywhere. More German reactions to Powys seem guaranteed this year, and English readers can perhaps think themselves a little unfortunate that no publisher of English books is showing anything like the interest now evident in Germany.

The crown of Poland goes on loan to German publishers and critics, for their collective efforts to introduce John Cowper Powys to the reading public.

But only if the people of Poland agree! **Greg Bond**

Llewelyn's Birthday 13 August

This year the date we have traditionally celebrated by meeting, toasting and walking falls on a Sunday and it is hoped that this will enable more of us to turn out. We will assemble as usual at *The Sailor's Return*, East Chaldon, at noon. After a bite to eat we shall drink a toast to Llewelyn Powys, and then those so minded will walk to Chydyok and on to his memorial stone where the traditional wreath will be laid. We hope to walk on from there and pass his earlier home in one of the coastguard cottages at White Nothe. That will depend upon sufficient cars and willing drivers being available to meet the party at Osmington Mills and return us to Chaldon. If you have been before you will probably come again – if not, why not try it this year? Friends are welcome.

A. R. Powys, Roger Clark and West Pennard Tithe Barn

Six hundred yards almost due south from my house and visible from the upstairs windows is a small solitary fifteenth-century tithe barn. Graceful and modest in its little field of half an acre next to the road between West Pennard and Baltonsborough, it so enhances the landscape and puts to shame the few modern buildings in the vicinity that it questions the very notion of progress. It is always known as the West Pennard tithe barn but in fact it is just over the boundary in the parish of West Bradley. Indeed it is but a few yards from where three parish boundaries meet, West Pennard, West Bradley and Baltonsborough; most of these three parishes were within the 'twelve hides' of Glastonbury Abbey and the barn would have stored the produce paid as tithes from all three. It was built in the heyday of the Abbey's prosperity, like most of Somerset's fine churches, when the county was growing rich on the wool trade. Two abbots of Glastonbury at the beginning of the fifteenth century ruled for remarkably long periods; John of Chinnock from 1374 to 1420 and Nicholas of Frome from 1420 to 1456 and it was one of these that must have ordered the building of the barn.

For five centuries it survived remarkably well but by 1930 had fallen into serious disrepair 'with nearly half its roof gone and with one end and part of the adjacent roof smothered with ivy'. The tenant farmer[1] 'had already gone so far as to obtain an estimate for removing the remains of the old roof, lowering the walls and erecting a flat-pitched corrugated iron roof'.[2]

But on 29 December 1931 Roger Clark, Director of the successful shoe-making firm, C. and J. Clark of Street. drove by on one of his many jaunts about the countryside. He was a man of wide and cultured interests; 'family and local

West Pennard Tithe Barn, November 1935

history, dialect, archaeology, people and buildings, a real sense of the value of the past and of himself being part of a long heritage – these were essential ingredients of his life'. On this occasion he noted that 'the old court barn[3] near Pennard is a fine barn but falling into decay and I think I must see if it can be rescued for the National Trust some time'.[4]

A year later he was at Long Sutton where there is a Court House which he was interested in saving, to meet Mr MacGregor, partner of A. R. Powys 'who is making a survey of the Court House for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings on my account for I am thinking of buying it to repair. It is in a sad state of decay'. Two weeks later he bought it for £600[5] and on 7 January 1932 he called on A. R. Powys and J. MacGregor at the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S.P.A.B.) at the Adelphi and arranged for them to carry out the repair of the Court House at Long Sutton. On 9 September he went with MacGregor to look at the Court House and thought it had begun to look 'very comely'.[6]

The very next day MacGregor, who was Technical Adviser to S.P.A.B., inspected the Court Barn at West Pennard. Although Roger Clark is said to have paid only £5 for it at auction funds were still wanting for its repair, and for four years it remained in the same ruinous condition. It was not until the early spring of 1936 that A. R. Powys produced the following eloquent appeal for funds for members of S.P.A.B.

Court Barn, West Pennard, Somerset

The barn at West Pennard, near Glastonbury is one of the smaller of its kind. It is perhaps the smallest in England to receive from the men who built it that gracious but appropriate finish which cannot be otherwise defined than as making it a perfect work of Art. It is nowhere elaborated beyond that point which essentially lies within the needs of work-a-day agriculture. Its fine finish is as well related to the simplicity of its purpose as is the rich elaboration of a mediaeval cathedral to the right pride of the Church and the glory of her services; and because of this right fitness it calls from a sensitive man the same glowing pleasure as is had from grander buildings; for an appreciation of the aesthetic is essentially a recognised purpose, properly achieved. The barn roof built with fine oak-work, shaped and joined as carefully as any timbers in the roofs of a church or manorial hall, yet there are no mouldings or elaboration unsuitable to its purpose.

Lately the roofs of the Parish Church have been skilfully repaired, nor has the parish paid the debt incurred in this good work. She is doing her full duty by her buildings of value. The long and close association of village life with Church and barn calls us to secure that both buildings so typical of rural life should be maintained with the same skill that was given them when they were made. They are contemporary; not that the

church has not in its walls and foundations work that is much older. From the manner of its building the barn is known to have been completed in one operation in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Every twenty-five years or so it was re-thatched, until about one hundred years ago when it was covered with hand-made tiles. The changing usages of farming and poor times through which this industry has passed has of late years prevented its owners from continuing this necessary work. The consequence of neglect has followed. A part of the roof has fallen in. For four years the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has attempted to interest any person or body who might wish to join it in the preservation of this barn. At last opportunity has come which enables it to do more than seek their interest. Definite offers have been received by it. The National Trust has written that it will accept the barn if it is given it, when well repaired, and with an income that will pay for future repairs. A man has offered £100 toward the cost of the work on condition that the Society finds the rest of the money. It is its wish to do this: and it now makes one of those rare appeals, which so seldom issue from its offices, to its loyal members and their friends, asking them to enable us to fulfil this object. Nor must the owners' goodwill to the scheme be left untold. They are willing to hand the barn and the land immediately about it, to the National Trust. Further, Mr. E. E. Bowden, an architect in whom the Society has well-proved confidence, has undertaken to give his experienced supervision without charge. It was under his care that the church roofs of West Pennard have just been repaired.

The Society therefore prays you to make such a money contribution to this work as the case and your means make proper. The Society will act as Treasurer for the Fund, and the money collected will be placed in its bank until the final payment is made.

Replies should be sent to me at 20 Buckingham Street, Strand, WC2.

Signed A. R. Powys [7]

The date of the second photograph of the appeal shows that it was written only a month or so before he died, on 9 March 1936. Roger Clark went to the funeral at Winterborne Tomson and describes it:

He was only 54 and I gather died of cancer. I did not even know he was ill. It is a very great loss. He was so wise and sensible and so thorough. I liked him very much. He stayed here on several occasions and I always wanted to see more of him. I can't think how they will replace him.

The tiny church was one he had rescued and repaired for the S.P.A.B. as their memorial to Thomas Hardy. It had been rebuilt and re-furnished about 1700 and never touched since; a curious semi-circular east end, two rows of horse box pews, pulpit, sounding board, screen, altar rails, a table,

all of light oak and of charming simplicity; plain whitewash, pretty roof divisions, clear glass – all repaired and cleaned just perfectly and in a farmyard.

I recognised at once John Cooper [*sic*] Powys, a strange looking creature with a mane of rough grey hair and an aquiline nose who kissed two other brothers in the church and repeatedly some of the women outside.

A second parson gave a very nice and sympathetic address on Powys' life and work. It was all very nice. Not many there but those who came either family or members of the Society. MacGregor's wife there and Bowden the architect on the Pennard Barn. I was very glad to be there.' [8]

The funeral was reported in *The Times* as follows:

MR. A. R. POWYS

The funeral of Mr. A. R. Powys took place on Thursday at Winterbourne-Tomson, Dorset. The Rev. Richard Askew and the Rev. G. Davis officiated.

Among those present were:—

Mrs. A. R. Powys (widow), Mr. J. C. Powys, Mr. L. C. Powys (brothers), Mrs. Littleton Powys, Mr. T. F. Powys (brother), Miss Powys (sister), Mrs. Llewellyn Powys (sister-in-law), Mrs. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Herbert Marks (son-in-law), Miss Evelyn Powys, Mr. and Mrs. W. McGregor;

Mr. Rivers Pollock, Mr. and Mrs. Roger Clark, Mr. Noel Eaton, Major H. C. C. Batten, Mr. W. H. R. Blacking, Mr. Lesley, Captain T. N. Robinson, Mrs. Scott Maxwell, Miss Rogers, Mr. William Weir, Mr. Norman Jewson.

Mr. G. F. Prior, Mr. G. L. Brown, Mr. Roland Stephenson, Mr. Seymour Schofield, Mr. J. S. Wilson, Mr. H. Everett, Mr. Owen Fleming, Sir Sydney Cockerell (Director, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), Mr. Detmar Blow, and Mr. C. W. Pike (representing the Wessex Society of Architects).

Neither John, Roger Clark nor any member of the Powys family appear to have commented on the presence among the mourners of two particularly distinguished men whose names appear again and again in the annals of the period: Sir Sydney Cockerel, the friend of every man of letters worthy of the name such as Hardy, Gosse and A. C. Benson, and Detmar Blow, the handsome and highly fashionable Arts and Crafts architect so popular with the intelligentsia such as the Souls among the aristocracy. He too built with local materials and restored buildings to their original style.

The fifty-ninth annual report for May 1936 for the Committee of S.P.A.B. states of West Pennard Barn that:

> In March an Appeal for funds was issued to enable this interesting barn to be repaired and handed to the National Trust to be held in perpetuity. The total cost will be about £400. The Committee knows well how tiresome appeals can become, but it would remind members that it seldom issues an Appeal itself on behalf of a building, though often recommending the appeals of others. In this case the Committee has no hesitation in asking for the liberal support of members of the Society in carrying out the work.
>
> For four years the Society has attempted to secure the preservation of the barn, and its thanks are most surely due to the one member who has given it courage to undertake the work and issue the appeal by his gift of £100, and to the architect who has undertaken to supervise the repairs without charge.
>
> This barn is an unusual building. It was constructed early in the

fifteenth century with all the refinement and high finish that one is accustomed to find in the great tithe barns of such monasteries as Abbotsbury and Glastonbury; yet it is a small building perfectly adapted to the needs of a village like West Pennard, and when re-conditioned it will again be let for use as a barn. It is also unusual in that it retains at the east end considerable remains of a stone built pigeon house, bounded by a rectangular fish pond, making altogether a rather complete establishment.

The one member, and as it seems the only member, to put up the funds, was Roger Clark. The architect, Ernest Bowden, must have begun work soon after the publication of the appeal for when Roger Clark visited the site on 28 April 1936 he found the progress 'interesting but slow'. It was still 'slow' on 9 May. On 13 May Clark met Bowden there, 'a nice man, perhaps lacking in push. I have thought the work seems to hang very much the last two or three weeks. He seems to think it has gone well. Anyway he seemed to appreciate my coming over.' On 4 July the work still seemed 'very slow' but by 17 September progress was visible and the cost was rising. The roof was on 'but much pointing to do still – and over £400 spent and not finished yet. I think the job has no doubt been slackly overseen – key men away elsewhere and Mr. Bowden has no idea how long the work will take. I have put up £350 already and did not mean to put up more but it looks as if I may have to. Any way it will be a beautiful result.' [9]

On 21 October the barn was 'still unfinished. It seems interminable. I think Bowden must have no idea how to estimate time', and on 7 November it was 'mostly done but three or four buttresses in a very unsound state. I fear money has run out and Mr. Bowden is not there to check work done.' However, on 17 December Roger Clark, a most generous benefactor was able to note that the repairs to West Pennard tithe barn were, now quite completed and looking very fine and good for hundreds of years.' [10]

Roger Clark was a most hospitable man and seems to have kept virtually open house for anyone in whose work or personality he was interested. In every way he supported the operatic productions of Rutland Boughton and the Little Plays of St Francis of Laurence Housman, who became a friend of the family. Clark's younger sister, Margaret, married Arthur Gillett who had been a Cambridge friend of E. M. Forster. In July 1953 Forster stayed with the Clarks and Roger describes him as 'a charming person and quite simply friendly'. On 9 July they took him for a drive to show him the beauties of the neighbourhood; they went to 'Mells, and Orchardleigh, Beckington, Frome and Nunney and home by Pennard Barn and Baltonsborough' and Forster proved himself 'a delightful companion for such an outing'.[11] He must, on such an expedition, have heard talk of A. R. Powys as they passed Pennard Barn and he may even have met him as a fellow guest at the Clarks' house in Street.[12]

Susan Rands

REFERENCES

1 James Lees Milne, *The National Trust* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1946 Edition), 46. 2 *Ibid.*
3 Percy Lovel, *Quaker Inheritance 1871–1961* (Bannisdale Press, 1970), x.
4 Journal of Roger Clark, Clark Archives, Street.
5 *Ibid.* 6 *Ibid.*
7 Text kindly supplied by David Bromwich, Somerset Local Studies Library.
8 Journal of Roger Clark.
9 *Ibid.* 10 *Ibid.* 11 *Ibid.*
12 Cf. Glen Cavaliero's letter to the editor, Powys Society *Newsletter* 35, 31.

The Powys Journal Volume X

As usual at this time of year, a new volume of *The Powys Journal* is almost ready to go to the printer, so that it can be handed out to paid-up members at the Conference. It has been edited by Paul Roberts, and contains almost entirely original material by several members of the Powys family, with commentaries from experts, a number of reviews, and an Index to Volumes I to X.

Letters to the Editor

Dear John, Like Neil Lee, I too was struck by the throw-away comment in *Newsletter* 38, of P. J. Kavanagh that Llewelyn's writings seem so far removed from any reality that he cannot read them. The fact that you have received no letters other than Neil's on this, may not be an indication that your readers accept Kavanagh's verdict on Llewelyn. I, for instance, did not bother to respond simply because the comment of Kavanagh was so silly, so unsubstantiated and so dismissive, that it did not warrant any serious response. He is entitled to like or dislike whomsoever he pleases. But that kind of outright rejection does not invite others to enter into any sort of literary debate. The fact that someone may be a 'heavyweight' literary critic, clearly does not preclude them from the odd 'lightweight' comment.

Best wishes from the most Southerly of all your members!

Jonathan Schrire, Cape Town.

Dear John, I have just read and enjoyed the April *Newsletter*. I thought the poem on the last page excellent, and enjoyed LP on Hardy. Just one thing bothers me about this, a very small thing it must be said. In the last paragraph on page 20 there's a strange person by the name of Masterlinck mentioned. I feel sure this must be Maeterlinck, he of *The Bluebird* and *Pelleas and Melisande*. It is just a hunch, and I've no wish to belittle Neil Lee's efforts in transcribing LP's handwriting!

Barry Cronin

A footnote to the review of Herbert William's novel, A Severe Case of Dandruff *(Newsletter 39).*

Dear John, I take it you are the 'JB' who wrote that nice review of my book in the *Newsletter.* This is just to say how much I appreciate the trouble you took over it. I was especially pleased with the comparison you drew between Ralph's sanatorium and Llewelyn's at Davos and I particularly enjoyed Peter Foss's piece.

In the time I was writing about I think all TB patients felt a sort of kinship with each other, and I have always felt drawn to Llewelyn Powys's work because he too suffered from 'the bug'! And strangely enough, it was another ex-TB patient who first told me about the Powys brothers. He had written to JCP via his publishers after reading *A Glastonbury Romance,* and to his great surprise, had received a letter in return from the great man, then living in Blaenau Ffestiniog! This friend – Geoff Watkins – showed me the letter at half-time at a rugby match in Cardiff and although I can't remember the contents, I have a clear memory of that unmistakable handwriting. I little thought that one day I would be bold enough to try writing about JCP myself.

Herbert Williams

Dear John, Re Edward Woods mentioned in Peter Foss's Davos article. My family knew him. He ended up as Bishop of Litchfield. I am sure the Powyses would have known him and his wife through the Johnson family. Edward was descended from Elizabeth Fry who was born Gurney, a Norfolk family name and his wife was a Buxton, also from Norwich.

Edward would have been younger than JCP, possibly a contemporary of Llewelyn's. He was an outstanding person with exceptional good looks and a saintly nature. I wonder if a foreign posting at such an early stage in his career may have had some connection with a health problem. He was an exceptionally open airy sort of person, the first Bishop who although gaitered was always hatless. Jim* was very impressed by Edward Woods when he covered a service he took to commemorate Bunyan at a church in Bedfordshire, during which he read large chunks of *Pilgrim's Progress* with great gusto. Edward Woods was a great friend of Edward VIII who visited him frequently. The latter has been much maligned of late but I have never heard ill of him from those I have known who met him.

Patricia Dawson

* *Jim Dawson, Patricia's late husband, was a journalist.*

Dear Editor, Since the 70s over 3,000 extraordinary and perfectly realised crop circles have been 'made' mainly on the Wessex chalklands of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. It so happens that many of our members and 'Powysotica' are exactly in these places. It is surely a subject which would have fascinated John Cowper and for all I know references to them appear somewhere in his work.

I am a subscriber to the journal *Cereologist* and like most of its readers and co-researchers am sure that we are in a don't-know situation with regard to their

cause. A small minority of them are seriously regarded as hoaxes, made by humans. The rest remain a genuine mystery. All are well crafted, many are very large and extremely complex in form. Almost none have been seen in the making and it is something of a wonder that they appear close to roads and habitations - after very short summer nights of only six hours of darkness. This would be long enough to complete a simple shape, but not long enough it would seem to make the large, complex and finely detailed ones.

May Pringle, of Petersfield, says she 'has come across numerous cases of people still living who played in crop circles as children in the 20s and 30s. Circles have been recorded in Russia, Japan, America, Canada, Australia, Eastern Europe, France, Spain, South Africa, Israel and other countries. There is scientific evidence with regard to huge electrical discharges, molecular damage within stems and so on. The many photographs in books, calendars, etc. testify to their high 'craft skills' and their beauty. I would like to know whether any members have had experience of these formations, or an instinct about them, and whether there are any references to them in Powys literature.

Graham Carey

John Sanders, is an extremely modest man and a carpenter by trade. Janet Pollock had drawn attention to the fact that the wooden cross marking Katie's grave was in need of repair and John took on the job without hesitation. However, he did hesitate when I approached him for permission to print extracts from his letters on the subject to Janet and to me, but was finally persuaded. Ed.

... The cross is now solidly planted in the ground, with its surface sanded and coated in linseed oil. I have appointed myself guardian of the cross and will in future keep Katie's memorial in good order. I expect you [Janet] can remember Katie. She must have been a fascinating lady. Probably not easy to get to know, but I can empathise with her love of the Chaldon downs and her need for solitude. ... Before I went on the walk I mentioned earlier I made a second visit to Chaldon churchyard. Katie's cross was undergoing inspection from a local cat which was sitting on S.T.W. and V.A.'s grave stone. I wondered what Theodore would have made of it and was reminded of the conversation between the corpse, the candle and the slow-worm. I could imagine the cat asking the cross where it (he) had been as she had missed him; and the reply: 'Oh I've been a-travelling, to the Midlands - to be restored.' (And that in a boasting, superior voice - a Freddie Jones voice!)

In his letter to me John drew my attention to the entry in *The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner* (edited by Claire Harman) for 19 December 1972. On that day Sylvia and Janet met a Mr Potter (a stonemason) and his son at Chaldon to have Valentine's grave stone put in place. The entry runs: 'Then Mr Potter cum filius drove up; there was the stone on a little trolley. He & his son & Janet pushing got

it up the path & to the place. They began cutting the turf. Then Mr House arrived, all sextonly, and was much better at bedding slabs than they. All wooden posts, [he] said, apropos of leaning Katie, go at ground level, "between wind & water". He liked this phrase & used it several times.'

John explains that Katie's cross is still leaning slightly, but this is to do with the concrete socket in which it stands.

With thanks to John Sanders and Janet Pollock

A Glastonbury Romance For The New Millennium

This article incorporates a paper of the same name in the magazine *The Right Times*, April–June 2000, Issue No. 9. This magazine is produced by The Friends of the Rollright Stones, an organisation which exists to promote the care of the Rollright Stones, and to support the objectives of the Rollright Trust, a registered charity. The address for obtaining copies of the magazine is: The Editor, PO Box 333, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 8XA, Price £2.50. It was written for an audience largely unfamiliar with JCP. I gave a lecture incorporating some of this material at the 1991 Society Conference. It was not considered suitable for publication at that time because of the evident difficulty of incorporating a 'mathematical' paper of a controversial nature (do I hear the words 'ley-line' anywhere?) with what is after all a 'literary' topic. It is hoped that a future paper in this *Newsletter* will demonstrate that it wasn't only John in the Powys family who seemed to know (albeit unconsciously) something the rest of us aren't aware of. Since the 'mathematical' aspects have now been published, it seems appropriate that the Powysian aspects should see the light in the *Newsletter*.

On Good Friday, April 1930, John Cowper Powys started to write his masterpiece novel, *A Glastonbury Romance*. It was the day of the 1930 Oberammergau Pageant, and no doubt he chose this day particularly, because he wished to write a novel about a Glastonbury Pageant. There were however two important differences between Powys's Pageant and the Oberammergau Passion Play. Firstly, Powys's Pageant was <u>not</u> just a Christian event, it also incorporated Celtic mythology, including that of the Arthurian Legend. Secondly, and more importantly for this paper, it took place not at Easter, but on Midsummer Day.

He had been introduced to the Glastonbury legends the year previously, by his brother's mistress, Gamel Wolsey. It was a decade since Bligh Bond had published his controversial work, *The Gate of Remembrance*, detailing how Spirit communication had assisted him in his excavations of Glastonbury Abbey. There was already in Glastonbury a sense of spirituality that did not wholly derive from Christian history.

The literary output of John Cowper Powys is monumental. He lived from 1872 until 1963. From 1905 to 1934 he was a travelling lecturer in the United States, drawing audiences of thousands in Carnegie Hall, to hear him lecture about the great figures in Western Literature. It could well be argued that the writings of JCP were one of the first fanfares ushering in the Age of Aquarius, the New Age and Living Earth philosophies. He was a pantheist, attributing feelings to rocks, stones, rivers as well as the planet itself. Although he disliked being called a Mystic, a reading of any of his six major novels would convince you otherwise. In his novels it can be said that almost everything exists only to propound JCP's personal philosophy. In a nutshell this was that since Science and Religion were both 'Dogmatic' and generally opposed to each other, the only sensible course for the thinking person would be to say, 'A plague on both your Houses', and that everyone should develop their own 'Life-Illusion' with which to face the world. The only constraints he would apply are that you should never be cruel, and never deliberately destroy another person's 'Life-Illusion'. In his novel *The Brazen Head*, one of his characters says:

> There was what he was pleased to describe as an invisible dimension that existed over the whole surface of land and sea; and that into this dimension rushed all the thoughts and feelings and passions of everything that was subject to these things ... and that everything that existed had such feelings, not even excluding rocks and stones and earth mould. He further held that this invisible dimension was much more crowded and much more active at certain geographical points ... for not only must there be ... feelings that we must think of as feelings of our Mother, the Earth, but there must also be ... semi-conscious vibrations corresponding to the feelings of all the material elements whereof the substance of the planet is composed.

In the Oct–Dec 1999 issue (No. 7) of *The Right Times*, I described a large triangle of sides very close to the whole numbers 20, 24, 35 (*see figure, over*) linking St Michael's Chapel on top of Glastonbury Tor, Winchester Cathedral High Altar, and the centre of Avebury derived from the scientific literature, with Stonehenge located at a place inside the triangle exactly ten units from Avebury such that the direction of the Midsummer Sunrise, 40 degrees 54 minutes in neolithic times, exactly coincided with the direction of Grimes Graves, the largest neolithic flint mine in Europe. The line (SD) also formed a mutual diagonal for a system of 'almost' Pythagorean triangles. A line drawn from Stonehenge to Grimes Graves in one direction follows the Icknield Way for much of the distance. When extended in the opposite direction, south-westerly towards the midwinter solstice sunset, it reaches the sea at Chesil Beach, Dorset, two miles from where the ashes of John Cowper were scattered by his family.

Such geometrical arrangements, incorporating Pythagorean triangles and a Megalithic Yard of 0.8291 metres, have frequently been described in the scientific

literature, but only within stone circles. My paper shows a large-scale geometric construction based on a megalithic mile of 2.7851 kilometres, equal to 3360 megalithic yards. The significance of the number 3360 is that it contains more divisors than any number below 5040, and is thus an ideal unit. The accompanying diagram shows the 'Facts and Figures', and if there are any mathematicians within the ranks of the Society they are invited to check them. Other members can of course look at the map references and check them on the map, but I warn you that they are not the usual Ordnance Survey six-figure references, accurate to 100 metres, but ten-figure references accurate to 1 metre. By the way, a scientific article which I wrote many years ago, seven years before I joined the Society, was accepted by *New Scientist* magazine, but they had cold feet just before publication, and said I had to prove that my figures were not the result of chance alone. This I was unable to do.

All the above introduction has been necessary for me to write, as I now wish to try and demonstrate the remarkable way in which John Cowper's life led him from Grimes Graves to Chesil Beach, from Sunrise to Sunset, using some of the most important parts of his writing to reinforce my argument.

Although born in Derbyshire, he moved to Dorchester when he was eight years old, and from the time he was born the summer holidays were spent with his grandparents at Northwold, in Norfolk. The nearest station, where they got off for Northwold, was Brandon.

The first part of *A Glastonbury Romance* follows the story of John Crow, who arrives at Brandon Station for a funeral, and subsequently travels back to Glastonbury, calling at Stonehenge on the way. The first paragraph of *A Glastonbury Romance* has been described as 'the Beecher's Brook of English literature'. If you can't jump it, you will fall, and never read Powys again. So hold on to your horse, and remember that we are talking about the Sun Line to Grimes Graves.

> There occurred within a causal radius of Brandon Station one of those infinitesimal ripples in the creative silence of the First Cause. In the soul of the great blazing sun there were complicated superhuman vibrations [connected] ... with the feelings of a few intellectual sages who had enough imagination to recognise the conscious personality of this fiery orb as it flung far and wide its life-giving magnetic forces. Roaring, cresting, heaving, gathering, mounting, advancing, receding, the enormous fire-thoughts of this huge luminary surged relentlessly to and fro, evoking a turbulent aura of psychic activity.

Brandon Station is less than 200 metres from the Midsummer Sunrise line, and is also the station for Grimes Graves, which is less than three miles away. Neolithic man was able to pick up this 'turbulent aura of psychic activity', so that walking this line from Stonehenge was no more difficult for him than if it had been marked out with luminous paint.

John Cowper's life moves on from childhood to Cambridge University. His

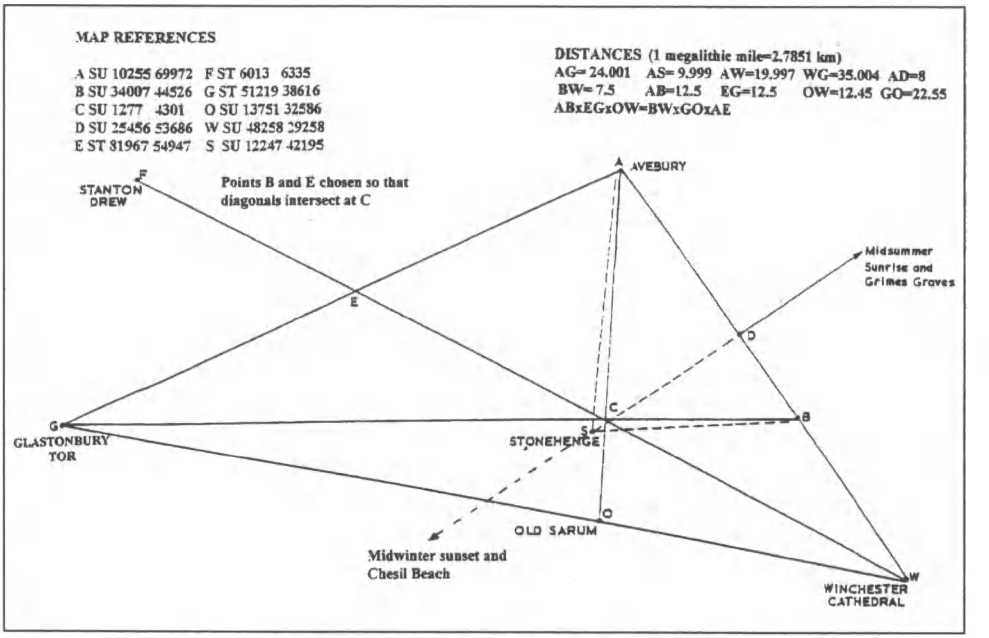
college was Corpus. Although not passing through his college, the line does go through Cambridge, passing the edge of Midsummer Common(!) and through the Fitzwilliam Museum. In his *Autobiography* Powys describes a moment of vision that he had walking in the fields near Cambridge, which affected his whole life. He said:

> I remember the exact spot where it took place, not far from Trumpington Mill, in the umbrageous purlieus to the rear of the Fitzwilliam Museum ... It caught me up in a kind of seventh heaven, it certainly penetrated every recess of my being ... It has a power upon me that is like the power of a hidden Mass, celebrated by no human hands, that vision of 'Living Bread', that mysterious meeting point of animate and inanimate had to do with some secret underlying world of rich magic and strange romance.

Could he have walked across the Midsummer Sunrise line?

John Crow's journey, and John Cowper's life, moves on to Stonehege. In his 1929 Diary, John Cowper describes a visit he made to Stonehenge and says: 'I prayed to the actual stones of Stonehenge, to help me write such a book on Glastonbury as has never been writ of any place.'

And what has John Crow to say in this place? What inspirational thoughts came to him as he wandered amongst the stones, in those happy times when the might of English Heritage security didn't prevent you from doing so?



The geometry of the Megalithic Mile.

> This stone is called the Hele Stone ... Hele, can't you see what it is? ... It's Helios, the Sun!... He felt too far drunken with the magnetism emanating from these prehistoric monoliths ... I believe that this stone ... is far older than the rest. I think stone worship is the oldest of all religions.

We must continue along our line, but I cannot resist a quotation, further on in the book, about his ultimate destination, Glastonbury.

> I expect the deepest rooted superstition here, if you could compel Glastonbury Tor to speak, would turn out to be the religion of the people who lived before the ancient Britons, perhaps even before Neolithic man.

Finally we move towards Chesil Beach, leaving John Crow to his adventures in Glastonbury. On the way we pass within 400 metres of the Cerne Giant. The Cerne Giant, together with a character called John O' Dreams, and five companions, in the *final* chapter of John Cowper's *final* book, *All or Nothing*, published in 1960, describe themselves as 'Our little group, living so close to the Chesil Beach'. They go to see Queen Boadicea in the Tower of London. The Queen is described as having been born 'far up the Icen Way'. The term 'Icen Way' occurs three times in this last small chapter. The Icen Way is of course the Icknield Way, the road to the lands of the Iceni tribe. John was, whether consciously or unconsciously, drawing his writing, his life, the Icknield Way, and the Midsummer Line to a close.

As I mentioned earlier, John Cowper's ashes were scattered at Chesil Beach. Another of John's characters, in the novel *Weymouth Sands*, has this to say about Chesil Beach:

> He would fall into a daydream or a vegetative trance, in which all manner of scenes ... by the shallow backwater called the Fleet, or along the crest of Chesil Beach, seemed to grow in importance, until they acquired for him a sort of mystical value, as if they were the casual by-paths or hidden postern gates, leading into aerial landscapes of other and much happier incarnations.

John Cowper Powys even had something to say about Chance and maps. I quote from his novel *Wolf Solent*:

> It was as if there were some special aesthetic laws which Chance delighted to obey; and this always gave him a peculiar satisfaction to contemplate this bizarre rhythm. At such moments he felt himself sacrificing action, emotion, sympathy, every human attribute, in a sort of ecstatic pondering over what this artistry of chance was accomplishing. He felt as if he were in the presence of the unrolling of a sort of psychic map. The figures on this map ... were a sort of eddying vortex of significance upon a stream that was always evolving itself into mystic diagrams! Chance, in fact, was for ever at work fulfilling its own secret aesthetic laws, but every now and then, as at this fatal moment, its creation became especially vivid, and the whole 'Psychic Map' upon that flowing stream became violently and

intensely agitated.

This quotation from the novel *Maiden Castle* concludes this paper:

> The power of the underworld that our old bards worshipped ... is the power of the Golden Age! Yes, it's the power our race adored when they built Avebury and Maiden Castle and Stone Henge and Caer Drwyn ... the power that rushes through me when I go out there ... pointing towards Maiden Castle ... can never disappear out of the human heart now it has once appeared. It moves from the possible to the impossible, it abolishes cause and effect ... it'll break through, and when it breaks through, these four thousand years wherein the world has been deceived and has left the way will be redeemed, and what was intended to happen will be allowed to happen, and the superstition of Science will be exploded for ever!

There's a thought for the new Millennium.

Michael Everest

Members' News and Notes

Sven Erik Täckmark has been working with a Swedish poet on the translation of *A Philosophy of Solitude* and 'hopes that some publisher will take it'. His next project, regardless of poor health, would be the translation of *In Spite Of* and *The Art of Growing Old*, the problem is that he does not any longer have the books. If anyone can make a paperback of either available Sven will be very grateful.

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Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe spotted a passing reference to JCP made in 'Front Row' (BBC Radio 4) on 4 May. It was in an item on Mayors in literature and the arts (to coincide with the London mayoral election) presenter Mike Lawson spoke to Kim Newman, referring to *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as being virtualy the only significant British reference to mayors, as opposed to their prominence in American literature and cinema. In referring back to Hardy, Newman remarked that there was also a Mayor of Glastonbury in JCP's *A Glastonbury Romance* and that this book dealt with the aspect of elections (and appealing to the public) in some measure.

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A New Collection of Essays, ***Postmodern Powys***, by Joe Boulter, will be out in time for the Annual Conference. It contains new essays on John Cowper Powys, including: A Postmodern Reading of Powys via G. Wilson Knight, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jean Baudrillard and Gianni Vattimo. Wolf Solent, Parody and Postmodern Fiction. Jacques Derrida and Deauthorisation in Powys's Autobiography, Owen Glendower and Walter Scott, and has bibliography and notes.

Joe Boulter is Senior Scholar at Somerville College, Oxford.

Published by Jeremy Robinson (John Cowper Powys Studies Series), PO Box

393, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5XH. 84pp. ISBN 1 86171 047 X. £7.49 / $12.00. *Special offer to Powys Society members*, £5.99, post free.

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Herbert Williams is one of the founding editors of a new poetry magazine, *Roundhouse*, which comes out three times a year. Although based in Wales, submissions are welcomed from poets living anywhere and Patricia Dawson is already among its contributors. As well as poetry it runs prose articles on poets and aspects of poetry. A year's subscription is £9, made payable to Roundhouse at P.O. Box 433, Swansea, SA1 6WX.

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Global Haiku, Twenty-five Poets World Wide, an anthology edited by George Swede and Randy Brooks, Mosaic Press, ISBN 0 88962 713 4, price $15. Contains nine of Cicely Hill's compositions.

The Tanner 'In A Large Way'

This article is by the great-great-great-granddaughter of the Revd John Johnson (1769–1833), 'Johnny of Norfolk', Rector of Yaxham in Norfolk and grandfather of Mary Cowper Powys. It tells the story of his father, ***John Johnson of Ludham.*** *It first appeared in the* Quarterly Journal of the Parson Woodforde Society *and is published here, together with the portrait miniature of John Johnson the tanner, with the author's consent. Ed.*

On 14 April 1778 James Woodforde 'took a ride' of a few miles to take part in a Rotation at the home of his friend Castres Donne, the curate of Mattishall. After the death of his mother, widow of the Rev. Roger Donne, vicar of Catfield, Castres provided a home for his sister Anne in what Woodforde called 'a very small, poor cottage', near Mattishall church. Besides Woodforde and the two Donnes, those present at the Rotation were George Howes and Thomas Bodham, who had not yet made up his mind to give up his Cambridge Fellowship and marry Anne. Two children were staying in the house, Catharine Johnson (Kitty), aged 11, and her brother John, aged 8 and on holiday from Gresham's School, Holt. Woodforde found them 'fine children', and added that their father was 'a Tanner but in a large way and lives near Catfield'. Their mother was Castres' and Anne's sister Catharine.

The tanner, John Johnson of Ludham near Catfield, was baptised in Holt on 28 May 1717, the third son of William Johnson and Mary Crofts. When or why he set up his tannery in Ludham I do not know, but an earlier inhabitant of the village, Castres' grandfather Roger Donne, was described at his marriage as a tanner, so the craft was presumably already practised there. John Johnson almost certainly lived in the Great House, a property built in 1680 and about a mile from the

village. It is now refaced with flint and called the Stone House. To the rear of the house were barns and a meadow which stretched down to the River Ant, and there is a tradition in the village that this was the site of a tannery. The road on which the house stands is called Johnson Street. Over the years John Johnson acquired considerable property in the village and beyond, and was one of the foremost landowners in the district.

His first wife was Mary Bacon: nothing about this marriage is known except that the couple's first child, John, died in 1747, and in 1751, two years after giving birth to a daughter, Sarah, Mary herself died. After her death John cast around for another wife, and, date unknown, married Hannah, surname unknown. She also had a son John, but he too died as an infant. Their daughter Hannah Maria (known as Maria), was born in 1758, and her birth was swiftly followed by that of another daughter, Anne. Both girls lived to marry and have children, but long before this their mother had died, after giving birth to another son, who lived for only a few days.

Castres Donne's eldest sister Catharine was 25 and still living in Catfield in 1765 with her parents when she became John Johnson's third wife, and took on the job of mothering his three surviving children. A branch of the Donnes lived in Holt, where John Johnson was born, and the two families were already on friendly terms; this was the first of several marriages between them. In the year of his marriage to Catharine, John Johnson gave Dr William Donne of Dereham, Catharine and Castres' uncle, the huge sum of £1000, for which Dr Donne mortgaged his house, the George Inn, and the bowling green in Dereham. The £1000 was needed to set up Dr Donne's son Tom in London as a 'silk throwster', Tom was to return it on receiving a legacy that he had been promised by his Donne grandmother.

The year 1770 seemed to be an auspicious one. At last the tanner had a son, another John, born to Catharine the previous November, and their daughter Kitty was a robust two-year-old. Furthermore, John senior had perfected a method of improving the tanning process, an invention sufficiently important for

him to request from the Patent Office in London a licence, that he 'should and lawfully might use, extend, and vend [the process], within England, Wales and the town of Berwick-on-Tweed'.

His method of tanning shoe leather, printed by the Patent Office as 'A.D.1770 ... No. 958' but taken from John Johnson's own description reads as follows:

> Into the scouring vatt, which will contain about six barrells, is put five barrells of water as it comes from the pump or spring. Into that quantity of water I put seven pounds of spirit of vitriol, or the same quantity of either the spirit of sea salt or aqua fortis, tho' I more frequently make use of the vitriol only. When the scouring is thus made, the hides that are designed for sole leather are put into it for working, or more generally in an older scouring first, and if kept with handling and shifting, as in the common way of working of soles, will be compleately wrought in twenty-four hours; a worker thus made [*sic*] will compleately work six, sometimes seven, sole hides. When the hides are thus wrought, they are laid away with bark, and treated as in the common way of tanning, until they come into the second layer of bark. Then, before the leather is laid in the vatts that will hold fifteen sole hides, when barked down with about fifteen bushels of bark into fourteen barrels of wooze, I put seven pounds, or, if necessary, ten pounds of spirit of vitriol ... [then] it lays still for at least ten or twelve weeks. After another soaking in 'the wooze', for a further twelve or fourteen weeks, 'they are drawn out of the vatt, in order to be dryed for sale, compleately tanned'.

The Patent Office granted his request, and John Johnson prepared to go to London to receive, and pay for, the official document. For this he had to have a court dress made, comprising a 'raspberry-cream colour coat', a woollen and silk waistcoat, edged with green braid, with buttons of plaited metal thread, and satin breeches. Years later his son John gave his half-sister Anne 'a small piece of lace... that belonged to our Father's Waistcoat as he had two lac'd Waistcoats made up when he went before the house respecting his patent'.

Then the blow fell: on 26 July Catharine suddenly died. There is no hint in any of the letters of this period as to why this happened. Her husband was devastated. He must have felt that he was obliged to attend the summons to London to appear 'before the said Lord the King in his Chancery', on the stated date, 4th August, presumably just after Catharine's funeral. He brought home a large parchment which stated

> He hath with much application, Study and Expence invented and found out a new method of Tanning Leather through bringing which into use in this Kingdom will he conceives prove very advantageous and beneficial to our Subjects and will also tend to Encrease of the Public Revenue. He is the first and sole inventor of the said new method of tanning by vitriol oil.

The document with a large red seal and in its own box is still extant in the

family.

He had paid over £73 for the patent; out of this the Secretary of State's Office, the Attorney General, the Signet Office, The Privy Seal Office, the Lord Chancellor's Office and the Crown Office had all had their cut. The venture proved profitable for John Johnson sold it to three other tanners: on 8 October 1772 Benjamin Murrill of Beccles paid £115, and John Huggman of Halsworth paid £120 'for leave to make use of his Patent'. Even his apprentice Wiliam Edwards, was obliged to pay £115 before he could use spirit of vitriol, for according to John Johnson's lawyer, 'Mr. Wright of Norwich', the apprentice had been bound before the patent was taken out, and therefore 'was not entitled to use it any more than a stranger'.

Catharine had been much younger than her husband, who was now 53, too old and probably too dispirited to look for a fourth wife. Three months after her death Castres told his sister Anne: 'My Bro. Johnson is shrunk almost all away, but that Mrs. [William] Donne says proceeds from laying alone', and he adds daringly, 'Do ask her, for I forgott it then, How it comes about that my Coz is so preposterously bulky.'

Sarah, the eldest daughter, struggled to bring up Maria, Anne and John, while the Donne grandparents at Catfield took Kitty to live with them. Catfield was close enough to Ludham for frequent visits to be made, often in a carriage borrowed from the tanner, whenever coach repairs and lame horses allowed. When young John was three, Harriet Balls, another of Castres' sisters, and married to a Catfield farmer, wrote to tell Anne Donne of Mattishall that Kitty 'went yesterday to see brother John ... they had not the happiness of seeing her Papa. Miss Johnson [Sarah] is very well, as is the sweet Boy – he and his sister were very gracious to each other, and sat on one Chair.' John Johnson seems to avoided social contact after Catharine died, and Anne Donne was told in 1771, 'we never see him, he is so taken up with barking affairs'.

Just down the road from the village lived the excise man, on the alert for smuggling and non-payment of dues. On every pound weight of tanned skin a tanner had to pay ½*d* – or so it seems from a contemporary document from Iteringham, where one Michael Towne got away without paying for 10 years by suborning the exciseman. (He was found to have 259 lb of skins and '1335 pieces of soles'.) This document reminds Michael Towne that tanners must 'give or send notice in writing ... when they take their hides or pieces of hide or skins out of the wooze to be dried'. No tanner may take his hides away from the yard when dry until he has paid the duty and the hide has been stamped. He must keep scales and weights, and render an account in writing every three months. Even if the excise officer was satisfied, a supervisor could appear at any moment to check up for himself.

John Johnson's new tanning method seems to have brought in widespread custom. The *Norfolk Chronicle* for 6 October 1784 bears this advertisement:

> Many applications have been made to Mr Johnson of Ludham for his leather in the Retail way, as he does no Retail Business, this is to inform all country shoemakers that they may be supplied with very fine well-seasoned Sole Leather manufactured to the greatest Perfection by the above Mr Johnson.

In this year his daughter Anne married William Heath of Hemblington, who I believe was a cousin of Woodforde's visitor of 1794, Robert Heath Marsh (*Woodforde Journal* XXX1, 3) *The Norwich Mercury* of 1 May 1784 described her approvingly as 'a young Lady whose many amiable qualities cannot fain making happiness the certain attendant of the connubial state'. (On her death in 1807 the young John wrote: 'The black wax is for my poor Heath who died on 4th October, and leaving nine dear children to wish for her in vain.')

Two years after Anne's wedding her sister Maria married their cousin William Clopton Johnson, the son of the tanner's brother Samuel, who was vicar of Wiverton. Sarah who had looked after them all so well, had died unmarried in 1775, aged only 26. After her two half-sisters married, Kitty returned to Ludham to look after her father, until he 'submitted to Fate' on 26 July 1785. He bequeathed his house and much of his land, including the tannery, to Maria, and so her husband became a considerable landlord, benefiting from a further 88 acres at the time of the Enclosure Awards in 1802.

Thomas Bodham had at last married Anne Donne in 1781, and after John Johnson died they enlarged his house at South Green, Mattishall, to give Kitty a home. Castres Donne, now vicar of Loddon, looked after John in his school holidays. Kitty became the wife of a lawyer of Mattishall, Thomas Hewitt. Her daughter, another Kitty, married Castres' grandson, William Bodham Donne, who had also been part of Anne Bodham's capacious household, in the last years of her long life. John metamorphosed as William Cowper's 'Johnny of Norfolk', but that is another story.

Margaret Sharman

Acknowledgements
Much of the background to this article is based on research carried out by my grandmother, Catharine Bodham Johnson, and by my father and aunt, John and Mary Barham Johnson. The Iteringham document is in the Norfolk Record Office (BULL4/19/12) and the tanning specification was obtained from the Patent Office. I am also indebted to Mrs Beulah Gowing for her extensive knowledge of the history of Ludham.

Correction

I am most grateful to Margaret Sharman for drawing my attention to an error which ought to be corrected. In the notes to the family tree in my article 'What's in a Name?' in *Newsletter* 28, p.20, I stated in Note h that John Johnson of Ludham, noticed above, was first cousin of the poet William Cowper. It was the Revd John Johnson's mother, Catharine Donne (1740–70, the elder John Johnson's third wife) who was so related. Her father, Revd Roger Donne, was the brother of Anne, mother of the poet. **SPM**

The Powys Society Collection – Hon. Curator's Report

The Society now has many new members, some of whom may not be aware of when or under what circumstances they have a Collection of world importance. The Collection began in 1992 when Francis and Kathleen Feather, now living in Zimbabwe, gave the Society their invaluable collection of manuscripts and books specifically to be the foundation of a Powys Collection. This was added to significantly by the gift of E. E. Bissell of his own private Powys library. Since then, other benefactors continue to make this an ever-growing assemblage of Powysiana. Both the Feathers and Mr Bissell made it clear that they wished it to be housed at the Dorset County Museum and consequently a long-term contract to that effect was drawn up and approved both by the executive Committee and by an overwhelming vote of the A.G.M. An Advisory Committee was set up, which consists of representatives of The Powys Society and the Museum. Its function is to insure close liaison between the two bodies, to secure the well-being of the collection, and to consider long-range plans for it. Although the Collection itself remains the inalienable property of The Powys Society, the Museum administration has proved to be extremely supportive and helpful despite the financial restraints all such institutions are presently feeling.

The whole idea of assembling a Collection in the first place was to make its valuable information available to all members, not just academics. However, the Curator works totally on a voluntary, non-paid basis so inventorying its vastness and answering requests is not always as immediate as would be wished. On the other hand, when the Curator is contacted for an appointment by a member to see or work in the collection, she has always arranged for it to be available. Her telephone and e-mail are posted in the inside front page of every edition of the *Newsletter*.

Although the maintenance of the Collection has always been a top priority of the elected Committee, there have never been the necessary funds to conserve and catalogue this prestigious collection, to pay for a full- or part-time staff, or to purchase hardware and software which would create Web access to its catalogue as well as allowing the Curator to scan requested material; and to digitalize selected material for mounting on the Internet. In the hope of raising funds for these goals a bid was made to the National Lottery. This application had been put together very professionally by Bruce Madge, Head of the Health Care Information Service, British Library, with the assistance of Morine Krissdóttir. A

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.

significant amount of voluntary time and effort was spent on the application and, according to the Guide for Funding Libraries and Archives, all the criteria and conditions for this lottery bid were fulfilled. Sadly, despite this, the bid was rejected, raising grave doubts about the priorities of the National Lottery funding – which appears not to be attuned to the special needs of a literary collection.

On a more positive note, work continues on the collection, both on its cataloguing and conserving. This past year has seen a significant growth in the number of e-mail requests from all over the world for information. The requests range from 'what was JCP's birth hour' to questions about specific details of a TFP edition of *Uriah on the Hill*, to requests for information from a writer who has now scripted an hour-long documentary on Powys for Radio Berlin, to requests to check for accuracy on the facts presented in an article. By the way, this excellent article, by Dr Lawrence Millman, will be published by the *Atlantic Monthly* in its August issue. Internet is an efficient and effective way of using the archive, allowing it to be used by a much wider clientele. This has been made possible because the Powys Collection now has its own web site, ably designed and set up by Chris Gostick, secretary of the Society. The web address is

http://www.powys-archive.telinco.co.uk/powys.htm

Of ever-increasing concern to all museums, galleries and archives is the question of copyright, especially in the light of new legislation, forthcoming European directives, electronic licensing and a general tightening-up of regulations in the very difficult area of 'intellectual property'. The Curator has spent many hours on this and has most recently participated in a day-long seminar in London sponsored by the Museums Association.

The award-winning literary gallery at the Museum continues to arouse spin-off interest in the Collection, which provided much of the original material in the Powys section. Judith Stinton is presently completing a guide to the Gallery. Publication details will be available in the next *Newsletter*. Alas, our failed lottery bid included a request for money to fund a touch-screen system to be based in the Museum's Literary Gallery, which would have given the public and the schools more information about the Powys Family and its Circle, but some generous sponsor may one day make this possible.

Lastly, but most importantly, the Curator, the Museum, the Advisory Committee and the many members of The Powys Society who know them, would like to wish the Feathers and their family in Zimbabwe 'bonne chance' in this very difficult time in their and their adopted country's existence. Our thoughts are with you, Kathleen and Francis.

M. Krissdóttir
June, 2000