

∞∞∞∞ 2012 ∞∞∞∞ TWO MEETINGS ∞∞∞∞

A Discussion Meeting has been arranged
at Ely for **Saturday 31st March 2012.**

Glen Cavaliero has agreed to introduce the discussion, which will be on
Owen Glendower Chapter 12 ('Mathrafal'). Details from Sonia Lewis.

A Powys Day at Dorchester is planned for **Saturday 9th June.** Frank Kibblewhite will deliver his postponed talk on
Theodore and Llewelyn — 'Two Dorset Visionaries'. More details
in the *March Newsletter*, or contact Chris Thomas.

Editorial

The beauty of the Powys Society (as WJKeith says in his letter — **p. XX**) is its diversity, and this the Newsletter's role should surely be to represent. Another happy conference is reported from different angles, by veterans and newcomers. The Llewelyn Walk was enjoyed as ever. A second instalment of Theodore's letters to his sisters comes from Mappowder in the 1940s. John Cowper appears as reviewer in 1928 of Proust, a writer whose indirect approaches and intense analysis might be thought to have echoes in JCP, if only to accentuate their differences. As David Gervais says, with JCP any influence is 'likely to take the form of turning similar premises to quite different ends.' We look back at the 1970s, with poems to JCP by Terry Diffey. Altogether elsewhere, Marcella H-P describes the Basque country as JCP might have seen it, an alternative Wales.

STOP PRESS Anna Pawelko has heroically offered to act as Treasurer

ON OTHER PAGES

AGM 2011	2	T. J. Diffey: Three Poems for JCP	20
Conference reports, 2011, by KK,		Theodore & his Sisters, letters II	21
Jeremy Hooker, Janice Gregory,		<i>Dorset Year</i> for sale	39
Kathy Roscoe, Colin W. Thomas	5	JCP and Proust	40
'Mr. and Mrs. Powys'	11	News & Notes	44
Littleton Albert Powys	15	Swedish JCP Society	46
Celebrating Llewelyn Powys's		Review: Philippa Powys	47
127th Birthday	16	Basquing in Powys	48
Letter from W. J. Keith	19	Quatrefoil, by A. R. Powys	52

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting *The Hand Hotel, Llamgollen, 21 August 2011*

Present Timothy Hyman (Chairman), Chris Thomas (Hon. Secretary), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter* Editor), Stephen Powys Marks, Anna Pawelko, Louise de Bruin, Trevor Davies, Charles Lock (*Powys Journal* Editor), Glen Cavaliero (President) and some 35 members.

Apologies were received from Peter Foss (Vice-Chairman), Michael Kowalewski (Collection Manager), and John Dunn (Hon. Treasurer).

Minutes of 2010 AGM

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2010, published in the November 2010 *Newsletter*, were approved.

Nomination of Honorary Officers and members of the Committee 2011-12

The Secretary informed members that since publication of nominations to the Committee was published in the July 2011 *Newsletter* John Dunn said he no longer wished to stand due to other private commitments. The Secretary invited members to provide nominations and second candidates for Hon. Treasurer. Nominations may also be submitted in writing, or by e-mail sent to the Secretary.

Other nominations to the Committee published in the July Newsletter were approved. The Hon. Officers and Committee members from August 2011 to August 2012 are therefore: Officers: **Timothy Hyman** (*Chairman*), **Peter Foss** (*Vice-Chairman*), **Chris Thomas** (Secretary), Committee: **Louise de Bruin**, **Anna Pawelko**, **Trevor Davies**, **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter Editor*), **Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Manager*), **Stephen Powys Marks**, and **Shelagh Powys Hancox**. **Charles Lock** (Editor of *The Powys Journal*) continues to serve as *ex-officio* member.

Report of Hon. Treasurer

The Secretary explained that the final set of accounts for 2010 had not been made ready in time for publication in the July *Newsletter*. However the outgoing Hon. Treasurer had prepared a full set of accounts for the AGM. The Secretary explained that there were some figures which needed to be clarified so the accounts should be considered provisional. The Secretary gave a brief summary of the Treasurer's report, described key facts and figures, and invited those present who wished to study the details to inspect a printed copy of the provisional accounts following the AGM. The Secretary noted that the Treasurer stressed in his report that although current paid-up membership is in a healthy state it is vital that all members do all within their power to help encourage new membership and that existing uncommitted funds should be utilised to support projects aimed at increasing wider awareness and knowledge of the Powyses.

Appointment of Hon. Auditor

The Secretary explained that the 2010 accounts had been independently reviewed by Hills and Burgess Accountants, who have issued a Certificate of Inspection.

Hon. Secretary Report

The Secretary reported that sixteen new members have joined the Society since the last Conference. This figure includes seven new members who joined in the first half of 2011 but there have been no new members since May. The Secretary encouraged members to make payment of their annual subscription fees early in the year to help facilitate cash flow and if possible to set up Standing Orders or recurring PayPal payments. This helps to cut down on costs, saves time, and makes management of membership much simpler.

The Secretary informed members that he had met with Edmund Hopkins, son of Kenneth Hopkins, the biographer and close friend of the Powyses and the Society, to receive a donation to the Collection of one of JCP's walking sticks and a maquette of a bust of JCP made by Oloff de Wet. The project to transcribe JCP's diary for 1940 is ongoing but the Secretary invited more members to join the team to help share tasks and make progress with transcription. The Secretary informed members that the Committee is engaged on developing a project to produce an illustrated book about the Powyses, provisionally entitled *The Powyses – a pictorial biography*, scheduled for publication in either 2012 or 2013. The Chairman invited members to offer any images of the Powyses or manuscript material which might be digitised and reproduced in the book.

The Secretary reported that he had received some positive feedback congratulating the Society on the design and content of our website. Since the Society's website is our main portal for stimulating interest and providing information about the Powys family we need to continue to review and develop its appearance, design and functionality. Members congratulated the webmaster, Frank Kibblewhite, for his efforts to keep the site informative and up to date with new content.

Curator's Report

The Secretary described some of the highlights regarding the Collection noted in an e-mail which Michael Kowalewski submitted to the AGM including an inquiry from a US musicologist, Charles Brewer, concerning some long-playing recordings sent to Llewelyn and Alyse Gregory of Hildegard Watson singing; a donation by Simon Williams in Australia of two letters from JCP to his great-uncle thanking him for sending food parcels to Corwen during the second world war; an exchange of correspondence between Michael and an English theologian, John Milbank, who teaches at Nottingham University, and who has written enthusiastically about JCP's novels and endorsed his ideas.

Chairman's Report

The Report for 2010–11 was published in the July 2011 *Newsletter*.

The Chairman reiterated the value and importance of our website to the Society and especially in helping to stimulate interest in the Powyses. The Chairman congratulated Kate Kavanagh and Stephen Powys Marks on production of three excellent Newsletters during 2010–11, and thanked Charles Lock, Louise de Bruin (*Deputy Editor*) and Jerry Bird for their hard work producing volume 21 of *The Powys*

Journal, especially in view of the sad loss of Richard Maxwell as Editor.

The Chairman referred to the meeting of Hon. Officers of the Committee with the Director of the Dorset County Museum at the beginning of 2011. The Chairman explained that the Museum is dependent solely on a small number of volunteers to help manage and supervise their collections and had proposed that the Society might apply for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help support upkeep of the Collection, thus effectively charging the Society a fee for rented space. Although users of the Collection are content with access to the Collection we have to consider its long-term future and consider other possible locations especially as space at the Dorset County Museum is now very limited. The Chairman explained that we are committed to the Agreement with the Dorset County Museum but this is due to be reviewed with the Museum in 2012. The Chairman invited members to debate opinions about the future of the Collection in an open forum after the AGM. In the discussion about the Powys Society Collection that followed the AGM members asked the Committee to form a sub-committee to identify the legal status of the Agreement with DCM, locate the documents referred to in the revised Agreement, identify precisely the written wishes of the benefactors of the Collection and consider possible alternative locations for Collection.

Date and location of 2012 Conference and Venue

Members agreed the venue of the 2012 Conference at the Wessex Hotel in Glastonbury, to take place from 17–19 August 2012; and the venue of the 2013 Conference at the Hand Hotel in Llangollen.

AOB

Glen Cavaliero congratulated Timothy Hyman on his recent election to RA.

Grateful thanks were extended to Anna Pawelko and Louise de Bruin for hard work organising the Conference. Thanks were extended to Trevor Davies and Sonia Lewis for managing the bookroom and to Raymond Cox for filming presentations and the evening entertainment of a reading of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* adapted by Kate Kavanagh.

A rare inscribed copy by Gertrude Powys of Katie's book *The Blackthorn Winter* was auctioned and purchased by Jacqueline Peltier.

Frank Kibblewhite informed members of recent publications by the Sundial Press of novellas by Katie Powys, *Sorrel Barn* and *The Tragedy of Bugdale*, edited by Louise de Bruin and introduced by Cicely Hill, and a reprint of *The Sailor's Return* by David Garnett. Louise noted that Katie's novella *Sorrel Barn* includes closely observed descriptions of farming life and vivid portraits of the Powys parents derived from her childhood spent in Montacute.

Stephen Powys Marks described his work sorting and collecting his large archive of family letters and memorabilia.

A note about the web: references and addresses come in various forms, some using underlining. Underlining can obscure the fairly common use of the underscore character `_`, so all references in this text have been converted with angle brackets to this form: `<rymd.cox@gmail.com>`

Conference reports 2011

Llangollen V 2011

Dinas Brân beckoned for the fifth time and the delightful (though stair-challenging) Hand Hotel seemed unchanged. Friday dancing in the bar to the electric organ, deafening amplified rhythm on Saturday (adding an only faint reminder of Time to the world of Folly Down in the ballroom.). The garden by the rippling Dee now brightly restored, the river-edges in this dry season thick with wild plants. To one side, the churchyard with its poignant tombstones, the church itself with its fine wrought-iron screen and dark roof with stiff carved angels. The town friendly as ever. Walks were planned, with excellent helpful leaflets by Chris Thomas, from Corwen to painted Llangar church, where the seat dedicated to JCP overlooks the meeting of the waters; and from Corwen to Mynydd-Y-Gaer / Caer Drewyn, scene of *Porius*.

The **Book Room**, ably managed by **Trevor Davies**, offered as usual rich pickings old and new, with a display of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Powys family archive material brought by **Stephen Powys Marks**.

Stephen Batty gave the first talk, on TFP and Nietzsche.

Nietzsche (1844–1900) – like Blake – was ‘discovered’ in the early 20th century as an inspiring example of a free – arguably superior – spirit (in Nietzsche’s case, later, dangerously so, as interpreted in the wrong hands); his influence continued in Existentialism and notably in the work of Bonhöffer, moving towards a ‘religionless’ Christianity. It has been remarked that Theodore’s early style resembles Nietzsche’s quasi-Biblical English translation; he preserved Nietzsche’s portrait and wore for some years an assertive Nietzschean moustache. Nietzsche’s prophetic utterances (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*) and apocalyptic scenery (mountain-tops, symbolic animals) are perhaps distant presences in the background of Theodore’s middle-earth. In discussion, Jeremy Hooker noted the duality in TFP between cruelty and Franciscan compassion – a balance more difficult to accept after the violence of the 1914 war – as also was the violence of Nietzsche’s pronouncements.

Jonas Holm Aagaard’s ‘Reading the Will’ – the opening chapter of *Glastonbury* – dealt with the subtle influences of typography on how a text is read. The industrialist Philip Crow in particular offered examples, with his repeated I ... I ... I ... suggesting a row of electrical pylons ... The subliminal effects of a word’s repeated appearance (at the top of a page) was investigated: the suggestive, pylonesque syllable WILL with its multiple meanings in English (as opposed to its Latinate twin “testament”) and frequent rhymes echoed within the book (Mill – Phil – Hill – several Williams – a Till-y). Chapter headings have been Aagaard’s speciality (his essay on this theme is in the latest *Powys Journal* – he particularly admires Lewis Carroll’s ingenuity). But the author’s intention (or lack of it) is often irrelevant, as over time and reprinting the text of a book accumulates its effects – intentional and accidental. (It would be

interesting to study the effect on reading *Porius* from the somewhat eccentric typography in the new edition – no running chapter titles, book title & author sideways in margin.) But as Aargaard says, one can enter a book as if into a room, looking up at its roof and admiring its magnificent possibilities.

Jeremy Hooker followed, on the poems of Mary Casey and of Gerard Casey, making an impressive and clearly argued case for them both as substantial Modernist poets, reading from their poems and his own long poem dedicated to Gerard.

Mary (b.1915, daughter of Lucy Powys and Hounsell Penny) married Gerard Casey in 1945. They lived in Kenya and later in Mappowder. She died suddenly in 1980; Gerard (born in South Wales of Irish parents) lived on in Mappowder until his death in 2000. Both wrote extensively in prose and poetry, in Mary's case mostly published posthumously.

The poems of both Caseys were Modernist in form but with a strong sense of tradition (as other Powyses in different ways sought original forms for traditional wisdom); in both Caseys this was essentially Christian. Both were learned linguists. The crucial influence on Mary was Plotinus (from whose life she made a novel); a presiding idea is that of 'Aloneness'; and of an 'edenic' inner paradise. Interacting with this are the tensions of 'personhood' and life in the world that lead to poetry, together with her sense of mystery, of the power of friendship, of being alive – 'quickness'. Her poems often develop from her journal. As with the seventeenth-century 'metaphysicals', her poems are concentrated, with concrete images that strive to renew, sometimes to startle, to restore religious language to the secular.

Gerard's writing in contrast is expansive, apocalyptic, eschatological – aware of judgment: his illness and the suffering in his life showed him the inadequacy of detachment. A poetic mentor was Seferis (in his book titled from the legendary Clashing Rocks) and poetically he related to Pound and to David Jones, to whom his book-length *South Wales Echo* is dedicated. Among the Powyses, his adopted family, he was of course close to Will whose African life he shared: as writers he moved in spirit from John Cowper towards Theodore in later life.

Patrick Wright on Sunday morning – introduced by Tim Hyman as a writer with a sense of the absurdity of history as well as its depth – followed "the ground beneath



Patrick Wright & Tim Hyman. (KK)

Llewelyn's feet" along the coast of Dorset, eastward from White Nose towards Swanage, noting the conflicts between owners and workers of the land, nature and army tanks. The nostalgic topographical writing following WWI – the England longed for by the survivors – became overlaid by accounts of rural poverty and eccentric semifeudal landlords, by brave and sometimes successful attempts at political organisation, by the "encroachment" of tourism and new building. Llewelyn – seen as a model countryman by the enlightened H. J. Massingham – wrote sympathetically about the country life he saw and whose problems he knew. Since then, the Dorset Llewelyn walked in and described so well had altered drastically by the time PW himself explored it, pipelines and firing ranges invading the green chalk valleys. An interesting talk, touching on less-known writers (such as Mary Butts) connected with Dorset, the utopian theories of prehistoric anarchist civilisation, the destructive effect of iron (perpetuated in the army tanks), the conflicts between beauty and employment.

The entertainment, a dramatised version of TFP's *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* performed by sixteen lively readers, went well. Richard Graves was a magnificent Mr W, John Hodgson his attendant angel Michael, Chris Thomas the visionary gravedigger Grunter, P. J. Kavanagh the sad vicar (and boisterous pub landlord), Tim Hyman poetic Luke (and Mr Mumby), Chris Uren Mr Kiddle, Stephen Batty and Trevor Davies the unpleasant young Mumbys. Cicely Hill and Mary Simmonds were equally convincing as the girl heroines, Tamar and Jenny. Marcella Henderson-Peal and Jacqueline Peltier took on the two Kiddle girls, Kate Kavanagh cackled as evil Mrs Vosper, and Chris Michaelides was Mrs Grunter, the voice of the village. Pat Roberts as Narrator, and Robin Irving as sound engineer, held all together with spirited spoken sound effects, Mozart, and a threatening lion's snarl.

KK



Reading Mr. Weston's Good Wine. (MH-P)

Jeremy Hooker: The 2011 Conference, A Personal View

It was so good to be back, to be among friends, some first made at the JCP Centenary Conference in 1972, or shortly after, and to be in the warm atmosphere I remembered from Powys conferences before I was forced to 'drop out', due to serious illness, more than 10 years ago. Our disabilities prevented us from enjoying the outdoor pleasures that Llangollen affords, and the hotel was not best suited to our needs; but Louise and Anna went out of their way to make us as comfortable as possible. And the stimulation and entertainment indoors more than made up for our confinement. Anyway, I've always been happy to imagine the landscapes and places of JCP's Welsh romances.

After more than 10 years away, what changes did I note, apart from certain sad absences? The range of papers was more remarkable than I remembered. In recent years Powys studies have moved on; so much ground has been covered that, now, more detailed approaches, and approaches with a wide reach, have largely replaced the need to confirm Powysian qualities and themes. Thus, we heard fascinatingly detailed papers from Jonas Holm Aagaard, which effectively turned upon one word in *A Glastonbury Romance*, and from Stephen Batty on quite recently available early writings of TFP, which reveal more of his reading of Nietzsche and the Bible. Patrick Wright took us for a deep and wide-ranging critical exploration of the social 'ground' of Wessex. But what, Timothy Hyman in the Chair, asked, did Patrick really think of Llewelyn? I hope he will agree to return another year to tell us.

We have come a long way since I first 'discovered' Powys writings, in the late sixties, when there was little in the way of criticism, and not much biographical material. The Powyses spoke for themselves, eloquently; few spoke about them. Yes, we've come a long way. I wonder, though, how far we've moved outside the circle of enthusiasts, into the world of 'common' readers.

I was grateful to be able to introduce the poetry of Mary Casey and Gerard Casey to a number of people who will not have been aware of it. In my ideal university of the future postgraduates will be exploring their work in detail. Ah, well, that's unlikely to happen. It's reasonable to hope, though, that other speakers at other Powys conferences will take the exploration and appreciation of Mary and Gerard's poetry further. The performance of Kate Kavanagh's adaptation of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* as a play for voices was delightful. Everyone spoke his or her part admirably. I'll not soon forget Mrs Vosper's cackle, or Mr Weston's gentlemanly tones combining god-like melancholy wisdom with an author's vanity. Stephen Batty took the unlikely part of one of the wicked young men. Without him to drive us to Llangollen and back we wouldn't have made it. I'm so glad we did.

Janice Gregory: A First Encounter

By far the most inspiring aspect of the conference for me was of the Powys Society members themselves, with their intellectual appreciation and boundless enthusiasm

for literature. Who else could have produced a pitch-perfect script and production of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* with only one read-through? It was magical to be in the audience. The subdued lighting, the flawlessly delivered lines of TFP's characters interspersed with the occasional lion's roar was transporting. I attribute the plays' success to the players' love of Powys' words, sensibility and characters.

I was also transported by the intertwining of the Powysian spirit with its natural settings. My conference began with the Llewelyn birthday walk on August 13 in East Chaldon. As you may know, a group of us met at 'The Sailor's Return', and walked a couple of miles past Chydyok, where Llewelyn and Alyse Gregory lived, over hill and dale to Llewelyn's tombstone. There we had a brief ceremony. Neil Lee picked wild flowers that had been in Alyse's wedding bouquet; he gave them to me to put on the grave. The group then gathered round as Neil read from Llewelyn's diaries. The cows came up behind us to see what was going on and of course the downs, the white chalk cliffs and the endless ocean spread out before us.

At the other end of the conference, a group of us hiked to Mynydd-Y-Gaer in Corwen. Chris Thomas read magnificent passages from *Porius* as we stopped along the way. Near the summit, John Hodgson, comfortably perched on a rocky ledge, read opening passages from the book which described the Welsh landscape of variegated greens, misty valleys, the winding River Dee, various sheep and cattle, and villages that once again stretched before us. Fabulous!

In between these experiences lay the heart of the conference: enlightening lectures and endless engrossing conversations. I came to the conference to learn about my great aunt and uncle. I found fascinating people with unique stories and a passion for the beauty of the English language and good literature. What a joy it was to talk non-stop about novels, authors, poetry, quirky characters and life journeys.

I am profoundly grateful for the generous and welcoming spirit of the Society members who made the event so memorable. Frank Kibblewhite answered my initial inquiries about the Society with such literate, gracious e-mails that I knew last January that I would be in Dorset and Wales this August. Honour and Rob Timlin were wonderful companions on the Llewellyn walk and throughout the conference. Jacqueline Peltier inspired me with her insights and compassion for Alyse Gregory. Kate Kavanagh, who asked me to write this piece, had long ago met, coincidentally, another aunt, uncle and cousin of mine. I am grateful for the conference organizers, Louise de Bruin and Anna Pawelko, and all those who made it possible. And now, Michael Kowalewski, in an act that means so much to me, is copying and mailing Alyse's journal typescripts. Thank you and so many others for a magnificent time. I carry your spirits with me here in America.

A Fulfilling Event

I have been a member of the Powys Society for only a year and was initially in two minds about attending the Llangollen Conference but I am so glad I decided to go. It

was a weekend which I spent floating on a cloud that I did not come down from for several days after, and then felt quite flat, as if something was missing. There were many aspects that I enjoyed about the conference but the greatest thrill was being surrounded by other devotees of the Powyses and being able to indulge in endless talk about their works and in my own case especially those of JCP.

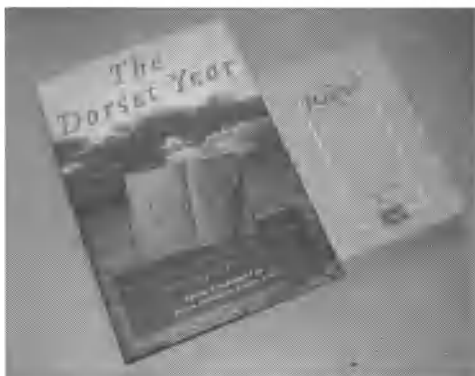
I have been immersed in the philosophical writings of JCP for two years or more and have compiled an anthology of his life-philosophy. I am thoroughly enjoying the experience and the challenge but it has been a rather isolated process with the exception of being able to discuss JCP with my partner and on occasions with David Goodway who planted the idea in my mind. The Conference and engaging with the people who comprise the Powys Society is just the outlet and stimulation I needed and it was both a socially and intellectually fulfilling event. Many thanks for a wonderful experience.

Kathy Roscoe

End of Conference

On a Sunday afternoon, out of an empty hotel, I climbed Dinas Bran, slowly, often regaining my breath, for a third time on a third visit to the Powys Conference at Llangollen. Just before the last push, I felt light and easy, and strode manfully into the Castle to be nearly blown over by a wind from the west. I sat there a long time on a small slate of a ledge, admired some dogs running about, once again confused the distant viaduct with the aqueduct at Trevor, and felt the vastness of the Dee valley green shadowed in trees. How quickly the conference passes! The build-up long, the end quick and perfunctory. Every time we go away to enter somewhere, and take part, we experience the quickness of things, and their ending....

Colin W. Thomas



Copies for sale: see page 39 (the Journal shows you how big The Dorset Year is!).

Patrick Quigley
'Mr. and Mrs. Powys'

The highpoint of a Powys Society conference can often take place on the margins. At the reception before the 2011 conference in Llangollen I met two local people, David and Janet Jones. David grew up in Cae Coed in a house close to John Cowper Powys and Phyllis Playter. He and Janet used to visit them after the move to Blaenau Ffestiniog. He told me about the new plaque in Welsh and English dedicated to Powys on the library in Corwen. They couldn't stay for the conference, but invited me for tea on the following Sunday. Luckily I had arranged to stay for two extra days in the Owain Glyndwr Hotel. It was as if destiny had arranged this meeting after the Powysians had scattered like a flock of birds.

On Sunday evening David arrived at the hotel and drove to his house in Carrog, a village along a secluded road between Corwen and Llangollen. Through the late-summer foliage I could glimpse the bright waters of the river Dee. After a career in nursing, David and Janet retired to this beautiful house where the back door looks onto the slopes of the Berwyn Mountains. They can watch hawks flying across the valley from their kitchen window. I used to think that North Wales was a barren land, but the fertile valley with its hidden places and secret streams was the perfect place for legends to grow. A short distance across the river was Owain Glyndwr's Mound where he announced his revolt against the English king in 1400.

David was born in 1940 and lived at No. 4 Cae Coed. His father, John Evan Jones,



Peter Tait & Patrick Quigley at the Conference. (MH-P)

a monument mason with a business in Corwen, moved into the house in 1935. His mother, Edith, was a district nurse employed to help with Phyllis Playter's mother and aunt when they moved into No.8. His father became friendly with John Cowper and David was often a visitor in No.7. John Evan provided the headstone for the spaniel, the Very Old, in March 1939. The headstone can still be seen in the garden above the houses. *The Very Old. The Black. Born Poughkeepsie New York 1927. Died Corwen North Wales 1939. Greater Love Hath No Man.* The small stone hidden beneath the trees is one the most poignant physical survivals of John Cowper Powys' two decades in Corwen.

David showed me a book of Welsh poetry from his father's collection with an inscription in Welsh from "Mr. and Mrs. Powys." "We knew them as Mr. and Mrs. Powys. In those days it was unthinkable for a man and woman to live together without being married." He knew Powys was a famous writer, but saw him mainly as an elderly neighbour, no more eccentric than other villagers. Mr and Mrs Powys were always welcoming; John Cowper was usually reclining on the sofa, writing on a board across his lap. No 7 was a favourite port-of-call for tramps and they would visit the Jones' house as well.

John Cowper and Phyllis were regarded as a bohemian couple. David remembered many visitors and had the impression they travelled a lot to London. Phyllis was notable for going about in black clothes and for her lack of cooking skills. 'She used to have her dinner in the hotel every day except for Sundays,' David recalled. 'My mother made an extra dinner for her on Sunday and we brought it to the house.'

As we ate the produce of the garden in Edeyrnion he talked about local pride in the Powys connection. He was Chairman of Corwen Community Council when the development organization, Cadwyn Clwyd, provided funds for a plaque. John Cowper was the obvious choice. After the meal he showed me more Powysian mementoes – a signed photograph of the aged writer and a letter from Francis Powys thanking him for his kindness to the family. Francis sent him John Cowper's personal copy of *Porius*, No.1 of the special leather-bound first edition of 1951. But the best of all was the folder with original letters from John Cowper to David.

The letters were all in the distinctive John Cowper script with the words getting smaller as you read down the page, curling around the edges to fill the available space. Each page was distinctive – even when the comments were of everyday matters, the text was a spontaneous act of creation. I had seen copies of his script in books, but this was my first time to handle a real letter with the beautiful writing in fountain-pen ink. The words were as clear and legible as the first time the letter was taken from the envelope.

The tone was invariably cheerful, describing the events at the time of writing. July 1st, 1959, was notable for the visitors to 1 Waterloo. First was Gamel Wo[o]lsey, "who must be descended from some brother or Cardinal Wolsey. The other was called Gladys Ficke a widow lady whose husband we knew well. Then a little while before we had a visit from James Hanley the Novelist and his wife, a lady who is descended

from the sister of Stephen Langton the Archbishop... So we've been having lady descendents of great church leaders."

On July 30th 1959 Powys wrote to David: "No child since Miss Playter and I have lived together has left so many memories in our minds as you." In response to a letter from David he talked about his favourite poets, Milton and Keats. He was full of enthusiasm for the energy animating the great poetry of the ages. He ended with writing news -- the novel 'All or Nothing' had been accepted by MacDonald's and the advance paid. He had finished 'You and Me' and was halfway through 'Two and Two,' "but when this will be finished and typed I doubt if even Heaven knows." As I read I followed a sentence around the margin and onto the second page. Reading a Powys letter involves a rotation of the pages as you travel in the imprint of his thoughts: "My only surviving brother, William E. Powys of Kenya, East Africa arrived here yesterday – I mean in this country but I have not yet heard from my sister Katie Philip[p]a, our Poetess, or my sister Lucy, the youngest of us all..."

A letter of October 9th 1959 was more personal: "O my dear David what a wonderful letter! Nobody understands these things as well as you do! Thank heaven we've known each other just exactly as long as we have and always have suited each other as we have both of us advanced in years. O my dear David you are so right about the joys of recollection. I live now by what I learned at School and College." He cited Charles II's apologia on his deathbed: "Please excuse me, Gentlemen, for being such an unconscionable time in dying."

David left Corwen in 1958 to begin a long career in nursing that led to him becoming Emeritus Professor of Nursing in the University of Sheffield. He met Janet in October 1958 when they started training at the West Middlesex Hospital and passed on the news to Blaenau. John Cowper wrote back: "May you and your girl be as happy as my Phyllis and I have been for all these years." On December 23rd he thanked David for sending a picture of a Chinese goddess: "You could not possibly have chosen anything more suitable for us two queer and eccentric ones in our little Half-House in Blaenau! We both adore this picture for there is something about its wavering dissolving floating receding returning vanishing reappearing escaping ascending haunting look which suits both of us through and through." John Cowper often jumped from one subject to another, but showed no sign of mental decline. He apologized for finishing quickly: "I have such a lot of letters to answer that I shan't get to the space-travel story I am writing now called "Topsy-Turvey..."

David brought Janet to visit them in Blaenau where Janet was surprised at Powys' frankness and eagerness to discuss sex. When David and Janet married in 1962 they received a fulsome letter.

"My dear David. We congratulate you most heartily on your marriage and hope you & Janet will have a long and happy life together. So many things about you come back into my mind when I think of the years we knew you when you were growing up. I was walking with you & your father once when you were quite small and we were passing the Lower School and he was telling me something about his childhood and

you said rather plaintively “Where was I then?” Here is a little present for your wedding from Phyllis and me and we shall look forward to hearing about your wedding when we next see you & Janet. Always affectionately and sincerely, John Cowper Powys.”

David remembered John Cowper in the hospital in Blaenau shortly before his death in 1963. He was very frail, but in good mental health and able to hold a conversation. David moved to Gwyneth and for a long time there was no contact with 1 Waterloo. One day the Matron of the Blaenau hospital suggested he look in on Phyllis. He found her alone in the cold and dark. She had spent the money she had inherited and had no income. When he asked about bank accounts she produced building society books, but had no idea what was in them. He brought the books to Cardiff and had the accounts updated, ensuring Phyllis had enough money to live on.

It was getting dark, time to return to the Owain Glyndwr and prepare for a day exploring Corwen – the ancient church of Llangar where Powys loved to sit at the eerie meeting of waters between the Dee and the Alwen and many other locations from the great novels, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. John Cowper Powys was inspired by the landscape like no other writer and you will find traces of him in the stones and trees in the valley of Edeyrnion that has been recreated and re-enchanted by the power of his imagination.

I was grateful to David and Janet for inviting me into their home and for their generosity in sharing their Powys memories. It was much more than I expected from a Powys conference, but more experienced Powysians tell me such encounters are not that unusual. It was an unexpected connection to the great writer whose mind became lighter and freer as he got older, but who never lost his sense of humour and appreciation of others.

Powys plaques

A heritage plaque, with text in Welsh and English, commemorating the residence of John Cowper Powys in Corwen, has recently been placed in the centre of the town and installed outside Corwen library and Information Centre. Thanks are due to the effort of residents who, backed by Corwen Community Council, nominated JCP to the Edeyrnion Heritage Plaque Scheme which aims to celebrate the cultural and historical significance of people and places associated with the Edeyrnion area.

The heritage plaque in Corwen joins other plaques, dedicated to JCP, installed elsewhere. There are plaques in Llangar churchyard, in Dorchester, at 38 High East Street, and in Blaenau Ffestiniog, at No 1 Waterloo (for more details of the plaque at Waterloo see *Newsletters* 27 and 28 (1996) and 55 (2005). It is a pity however that the Corwen plaque does not include JCP's birth and death dates, that the Blaenau plaque seems just *too* big and that the plaque in Dorchester, installed by the Dorchester Heritage Committee, is spoiled by a factual error – JCP did not live in

Dorchester in 1936 but moved from Rat's Barn to a flat above a grocers shop (now the Ski Shop) at 38 High East Street in October 1934 and left for Corwen on 2 July 1935.

Now that JCP's literary achievements in Corwen have been awarded visible public recognition the prospect emerges of raising wider awareness of his life and work by making topographical references to some of the scenes and locations in his books in official local guides and maps. It is notable that on the day after JCP arrived in Corwen he wrote to Llewelyn and described the things he had just seen: a huge and ancient stone bridge, the deep and formidable river Dee, Caer Drewyn, 'Corwen's Mai-Dun', and the old dark panelled walls and thick-pane glass windows of the Owen Glendower Hotel (also recently awarded a heritage blue plaque). The places which would dominate JCP's creative imagination and his everyday life during the next twenty years had already made a deep and lasting impression on his mind.

Chris Thomas



Littleton Albert Powys, elder brother of the Revd Charles Francis Powys.

Born in 1840, he was a bachelor and a soldier, fought in Afghanistan (!), and died there from cholera in 1879; he was buried in Kandahar. His death meant that in due course the family inheritance came to CFP, which enabled him to support his numerous offspring in various ways (image by courtesy of Stephen Powys Marks). See articles in Newsletters 24 'Another writing Powys', 25 'Recollections of Little Children', and 45 'My Rich Bearded Uncle'.

Celebrating Llewelyn Powys's 127th Birthday

Saturday August 13th 2011 marked the 16th anniversary of the Llewelyn Birthday Walk, inaugurated by John Batten in 1995 after discovering a bequest in Llewelyn's will that the sum of £100 be deposited with the Landlord of the Sailor's Return, 'so that on each successive occasion of my birthday, my friends may drink to my memory'.

At that first meeting to raise a glass to Llewelyn at the Sailor's Return in 1995, four or five of Llewelyn's 'friends' made the exhaustive climb up over High Chaldon to pay their tributes by laying a posy of Alyse's wedding flower (yarrow) and Llewelyn's favourite dandelion and ground ivy, at Llewelyn's Memorial Stone, Thus the Llewelyn Birthday Walk was born.

I suppose if the Powys Society Annual Conference can accurately be described as a 'literary convention', then the Annual Dandelion Club* Gathering and Llewelyn Birthday Walk, which takes place every year on August 13th at East Chaldon in Dorset, could just as equally lay claim to being a 'literary un-convention'; for this annual event is more a fellowship, a loose gathering of old friends who share a poetic vision than a convening of academic literary minds. An almost tangible *kindred spirit* conviviality dwells at its heart, which beats in rhythm to the unconventional tune of Llewelyn Powys' earth-rooted pagan philosophy and poetic faith, and therein perhaps, lies the secret of its continued success.

This year's gathering was exceptionally memorable, even if the weather wasn't, for it was a day typical of this Jekyll & Hyde summer with intermittent spells of sunshine and heavy cloud as the Friends of Llewelyn Powys met at the Sailor's Return to celebrate the 127th anniversary of his birth. Chris Gostick opened proceedings by welcoming everyone, and in reminding us all why we were here paid special tribute to John Batten, the founder of the Birthday Walk. In light-hearted response John accepted full responsibility, lamenting that he was entirely to blame and offered his humble apologies. After raising our glasses (in my case, a tea-cup) to Llewelyn's memory, Chris proposed the toast to 'absent friends', especially remembering Janet Pollock (née Machen), a regular at our annual gathering who had for many years rented Chydyok and kindly accorded many of us the memorable experience of staying in Llewelyn and Alyse's half of the house. Indeed, a number of us had visited St. Nicholas' churchyard that very morning to pay our respects and to lay a bouquet of dandelions on the stone which bears Janet's name. Chris then introduced a very special visitor, and we were delighted to welcome Janice Gregory, the great-niece of Llewelyn's wife Alyse, who had joined us all the way from her home in Concord, New Hampshire, USA, and who proved herself an entertaining and endearing walking companion throughout the August afternoon.

Seventeen were present to raise a glass, but following an excellent lunch John Batten had to attend a prior engagement, and John and Jayne Sanders left to continue the holiday they'd interrupted, John being unable to complete the walk for

the first time in a dozen years owing to a back injury. It was good to see Frank Kibblewhite, and we left him in the amiable company of Richard Burleigh and the bar-staff as once again, and for the tenth time in sixteen years, thirteen of us -- the almost inevitable 'Baker's Dozen' -- set off at 1:30pm in good spirits, bound for High Chaldon. A fresh south-westerly breeze kept us cool as we crossed the village green to the Chydyok Road, and began the long steep climb up the deeply rutted flint-strewn track which winds its way up to join the Coastal Path about a mile to the west of Dagger's Gate, and almost adjacent to Bat's Head. We paused at Chalky Knapp, as Llewelyn often did, to admire the splendour of the surrounding landscape and the broad sweep of the ewe-cropped emerald valley below, and gazed with some trepidation at the thin grey ribbon of chalky flint track ahead, as it curved its way ever steeper upward toward, and beyond, the familiar tall chimneys of Chydyok.

My son Jason (known to Central TV viewers as "*Jason the Druid*") led the way up past Chydyok and along the Gypsy Track which Llewelyn sometimes referred to as the 'Roman Road', alongside Dennis White who once again had kindly driven Rosemary Dickens and her father Norman down from Salisbury for the occasion. Skilfully dodging the herd of curious young bulls which seemed intent on joining the party, Chris Gostick and Linda Goldsmith led a following group which included walk regulars Rob & Honour Timlin and Bruce & Vicky Madge, whilst alongside walked Janice Gregory with Byron and Eirlys Ashton once again gracing our company all the way from Caerphilly in Wales.

The weather remained kind to us as we reached Llewelyn's Memorial Stone, facing south and set against a dramatic backcloth of ocean and sky; and as dappled sunlight streaked the English Channel with shimmering sheets of silver along the tops of the dark rolling troughs of the cloud-shadowed sea, Janice Gregory placed the traditional posy on the large rectangular block of Portland Stone which marks the final resting place of her late Great-Uncle, Llewelyn Powys.

We lingered awhile at the Stone, and a couple of cows helped to swell the ranks of listeners as I read entries from Llewelyn's 1911 Diary, written exactly one hundred years previously during that 'long hot Edwardian Summer', by courtesy of Peter Foss who had graciously given his permission and had supplied the appropriate text at my request. As we were celebrating his 127th birthday, it had been my intention to look back to this very day a century earlier, to Llewelyn's 27th birthday. Peter had sent me copies of the diary entries which covered the 2nd and 3rd weeks of August, but unfortunately there was nothing entered on 13th -- frustratingly Llewelyn's birthday was the *only* blank page!

From the other pages we learned that Llewelyn was at Montacute, where he was intent on regaining his health and strength by 'walking ten miles every day'; his favourite walk being along the lanes to Tintinhull. One entry records that 'it was the hottest summer ever in England' ... the temperature recorded at Kew Gardens was 100 degrees in the shade'. Llewelyn describes visits to a variety of village hostelries for refreshment along the way, and in one of them we learn that his preferred tippie is

‘a pint of gin and ginger ale’ .Very refreshing!

As we sauntered back across Chaldon Down along the old Gypsy Track in the afternoon sunshine, we paused in sight of Bat’s Head, and Chris Gostick read a section from Llewelyn’s essay of that name (*Dorset Essays*, 23 & 27). The second paragraph captured the mood of the moment quite perfectly:

Men have sought for the secret of life in temples and in cathedrals. They have worshipped in moonlit groves and before the sacrificial stones of monolithic circles. With closed lips and shut eyes they have waited and listened for God in cornfields and vineyards. I think there are few places more fitted for such moods of religious receptivity than is this undisturbed sea cliff. Here for thousands upon thousands of years the sunlight and the sea and the masterless winds have held tryst together, and nature, under the sway of so mighty a trinity, shows without reluctance her hidden moods; moods violent and material; moods of a severe and chaste beauty; and moods that are full of a deep and tremulous earth poetry.

We stopped at Chydyok on the way back and chatted to David Simcox who lives next door, the side of the house once tenanted by Gertrude and Katie Powys. Janice was eager to view the words, ‘Good Hope Lies at the Bottom’ which Llewelyn had inscribed in the concrete at the bottom of the pond in the front garden, but the pond held not only water, but a burgeoning abundance of ornamental water reed, which made it impossible to see beneath the surface. However, any disappointment that this may have caused was immediately dispelled and replaced with a buzz of excitement when David Simcox pointed out something that most of us had never noticed before -- the distinct shape of two ankh’s built into the brick pathway which led from the front gate to the door of the cottage. One ankh was clearly defined, whilst the other had been damaged and had become misshapen over the years, but the figuration was still readily discernible. For the majority of us, this was a fascinating new discovery.

Rosemary and her father, Norman (aged 95) said their goodbyes for another year and were whisked away from Chydyok in Dennis’s car, whilst the remainder set off back down the track to the ‘Sailor’s Return’. Richard Burleigh had been ‘holding the fort’, and Bruce Madge kindly provided us all with tea – ten pots of it!

A memorable day, and also a day of change, for following the handing out of certificates to Dandelion Club members, Chris Gostick pointed out that the use of the term ‘Club’ was a misleading definition, and commented that ‘surely, what you describe as a loose gathering of the friends of Llewelyn Powys’ constitutes more a ‘Fellowship’ than a ‘Club?’ The suggestion gained favour, and it was agreed unanimously that henceforth we shall be known as ‘The Dandelion Fellowship (The Friends of Llewelyn Powys)’. We were delighted to welcome Janice Gregory as our latest member, and can now claim an albeit small but worldwide membership which includes members in the USA, Canada, Tenerife and Australia! I will of course be sending out new Dandelion Fellowship certificates to all members of the former Dandelion Club.

Finally, as many may be aware, next year in 2012 the Olympic Games comes to Weymouth from July to September and access to certain areas may be restricted for

security reasons; enquiries are being made, but as yet it remains unclear whether or not we will be able to undertake the Birthday Walk. However, should this be the case and the walk cancelled, for those who wish to join us in raising a glass to Llewelyn's memory on his birthday, the Dandelion Fellowship will be gathering as usual at noon in the 'Sailor's Return' at East Chaldon, where all will be warmly welcomed.

Neil Lee-Atkin

from W.J. Keith

Dear Timothy,

I was most interested in your article on the Brighton meeting in the latest PSN that has just been arrived, partly because I have long admired Diffey's contributions to Powys scholarship over the years, and had wondered why he seemed to have faded out. I read, though, with some surprise his complaint that the Society had got too 'professionalized'. As it happens, that's the word he used to describe the neglect of JCP by serious philosophical circles.

I should point out, however, that as a former academic myself – but for some years a rebellious one (a bit notorious in some parts of Canada for my comments on what has happened in the universities in our time) – I have the absolutely opposite response. It's the one society that I remain actively engaged with because, as I see it, there is such a welcome mixture of professional and amateur, general readers with academics. I've been impressed ever since I joined by the way these intermingled so freely in the conduct of the society and in the discussions at the Conferences. This was especially evident, as you hinted in your Chairman's report, with the speakers at last year's meeting, beginning with Weston and ending with O'Hear. I note how much useful – indeed, essential – work has been done over the years by such non-academics as Louise de Bruin, Kate Kavanagh, Jacqueline Peltier, Susan Rands, and recently by Chris Thomas. Moreover, neither you nor the previous two chairmen have been academic in the strict sense of the word.

I'm writing because I think it's very important to try to preserve this balance. When I first joined the Richard Jefferies Society, it was a decidedly local — even parochial — affair, and along with a very vigorous and highly talented Chairwoman, I worked hard when I was President to infuse a more scholarly (better word than academic!) attitude into the Society, and I think we succeeded. The standard of commentary is higher without getting unduly erudite. But it lacks — and can never have — the unique quality of the Powys Society because it's the colourful nature of so many of the Powyses themselves that provides the stimulus of interest among a wide range of people. Our Conferences are so enjoyable because it remains an exchange of interest without (or *hardly* ever, as Gilbert and Sullivan might say!) becoming an occasion for people to deliver something that would look well on a c.v. (Mind you, the academics in the Society are often intellectual odd-balls, thank God!!)

Apologies for burdening you with all this, but I thought it might be helpful to you to know about other reactions. I'm sorry to miss this year's Conferenxce (I particularly wanted to hear Hooker's lecture), but I've aged a lot in the last few months, and I think my travelling days are over.

All the best,
Bill

T. J. Diffey
Three Poems for John Cowper Powys

II

And when they flung his ashes in the sea
from that high bank of shifting stones
the thought occurred to me
now he is severed from wife and child.
Wrong. He travelled light. He travelled.
Yes, he had a wife and child.
We learn of them little, and far less
than of that very shingle say
that watched his dust
go down in the sinking sea.
From him we learn
what it is to be a pebble
on a treacherous shore
or a green dock in a dry field,
what every leaf and weed
in hedgerow thinks.
When he has taught
the multiversal all
how can death be noticed
more than just
a significant wave
of that daunting sea?

III

I look from tired eyes
on the Gwynedd tree,
and draw my strength
from your eternal
walking on hills,
from your sermons
generous to the weak
sons of men.

The future is not closed.
The dark tree on the snow line
in the movement of these words
from spirit moving in the wind
still has grown and is living still.
You have widened out
the bounds of thought,
of life and of death.

V

After Reading Powys on Hardy

We who presume to know
so much about poets,
who bandy "Hardy thought this"
with "Keats felt that",
and "Browning did another thing",
are put to shame by your tact.
Did he come by that falcon's glance
strenuously, are was it his
natively endowed? I mean
was the steadiness of his seeing
deflected ever not by the emotions
we may too readily think were his,
but by passions more private,
actions more secret?
This would be impudent to ask
but that the person he built
excludes all trace of palpable self.
So that for this too
we must admire him.
A falcon is not much concerned
with himself.
In a man this is remarkable.

These poems, from a set of seven, were printed in The Powys Review 5 (Summer 1979). They were among a number of contributions to the Review by Terry Diffey (reader in Philosophy at the University of Sussex, editor of The British Journal of Aesthetics). It was good to re-welcome Terry in conversation with Tim Hyman at Brighton in May this year (see NL 73).

Theodore and his Sisters

part II 1939–53

TFP to Lucy, 1939

[this letter belongs at the end of Part I]

East Chaldon
Dorchester
December 21st 1939

My dearest Lucy

Thank you so much for the lovely pullover and the chocolate. I wonder if the same fair hand knitted the jersey that did the last. Do thank Mary. I feel ever so warm. I took off rags to put on a whole garment. May I do the same when I come to die. How is Hounsel. Give him my love and a great deal to you and to Mary. Isn't it cold weather?

Yours ever, Theodore

Susan & Violet wish you all good wishes and very much love

∞

Afraid of the bombs, TFP left East Chaldon very suddenly in the summer of 1940 [see Part I in NL 73]. Violet had seen an advertisement in a newspaper of a little lodge available in Mappowder. She and Gertrude went to see the lodge, which had been a tiny local school, and decided to take it. So from a biggish house they moved to a very small one and a lot of their furniture and chattels had to be sold. The lodge had been converted by Mrs Samuel Jackson, wife of the current Rector of Mappowder church who became a good friend of TFP's.

∞

Theodore to Katie, 1940

The Rectory Lodge
Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
[addressed to Chydyok. Marked Aug 1940]

Private except for Gertrude & Alyse

My dearest Katie, very many thanks for your letter. I was so pleased to have it and we all send a great deal of love to You and to Gertrude and to Alyse and to Doris who is a member of Alyse's household twice a week.

I saw a man to day who owns cattle and who was nursed when he was a Baby by Thomas Hardy, he says that Thomas used to beg a dinner from his Mother. "And that is how," said this Gentleman, 'you can get rich'. This worthy also said, that though he could tell a lie as well as another if it was proper, yet (only yesterday) he shook a man as a dog does a rat because he wanted to get the Truth out of him. Perhaps that is what one ought to do to God – to get the Truth out of Him. And as the Kingdom of Heaven can only be entered by Violence (I don't know quite where this Scripture can be found, but it's in the Bible). Anyhow one has to shake the truth out of most things. And even then it's hard to find.

I wonder Herr Hitler did not think of Bombing the Brewerys at first instead of the Churches. I could assure him that he could blow up all the Churches and lose the war. But if he once starts to bomb the beer !!!! Sometimes the safest place is to be near the target in this war but not always.

LCP and another old gentleman name Mr More or Moor, came over and spent their time in catching little white eggs in our 6 cabbages. They were in excellent spirits and in the best of Health. They seemed to be always after these little white eggs and quite enjoy it. 'Bombs' they said had fallen near Sherborne, about in the fields, like cocoanuts – They were quite merry over it. The Old Man Mr More never once looked toward The Church Yard.

yours ever

Theodore

∞

Theodore to Gertrude, 1940

The Rectory Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
September 18th 1940

Dearest Gertrude

Very many thanks for your letter and for the Wool. Unfortunately we have mislaid the two other balls of grey wool that you sent me with the one on the needles that I have knitted. They were lost in the Great Muddle which still continues as a little muddle, but I hope they will be found before I have finished like the three which you have now sent me. I don't know what will happen next in this country. If only [~~hope crossed out~~] the Germans can be prevented from coming all may yet be well; But I fear it will be very much of a touch and go if they do come.

Violet sent two replied paid Telegrams to Francis and after five days she received a reply. She has now had a letter. They are getting on quite well and sleep in the Anderson shelter and do not seem as much worried as we were about them. I do not know when the few things of our and your piano will be sold in Mr Dukes sale room at Dorchester. Mr Woods men gave a very poor opinion of what we had to sell. So that you must not expect too much for your Piano. I will end you the money as soon as ever I hear how much it made.

The Guinea fowls that came over with the furniture have flown away to a little farm across the field. The farmer who comes from Bridport says they may stay there if they want to. We have no where to keep our sticks in the dry no shed of any kind which is rather inconvenient, and so I am writing to Maycy[?] and Webb of Blandford to try and buy some fire lighters. Llewelyn used to have some. I expect you see the hill near Shaftesbury from your way as we do from ours thus [*drawing*].

With much love to Katie and Alyse. I hope you do not walk to[o] far away from your dug out when the Germans are about.

Yours ever Theodore

∞

The Rectory Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
[no date –1940?]

Dearest Gertrude,

I am enclosing a cheque for One pound. That is all your piano made at Dukes sale. I am

very sorry that the Money is so little. All our things sold Very badly indeed. They went for next to Nothing. Indeed as our things went your piano did not do so badly. The other day they tell me there was a piano almost as good that went for 5 shillings. But I am sorry it was so little.

Many thanks to Katery for her letter telling me the news. I pray heaven that you are all well. Much love to you my dear and to Katie and to Alyse. I do hope all is well.

yours ever

Theodore

I am sorry Dukes list is lost. Violet has mislaid it. She will send the cutting when she finds it.

∞

The Lodge
Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
December 24th

[no year -1940?]

Dearest Gertrude

You lifted a burden off my shoulders by sending me these stamped envelopes. No present you could have given could more have helped me. I hate to have always to bother Violet about stamps and just now to worry her is a real cruelty. So you see my dear what a benefit you have conferred upon us all. I kiss you and send my thanks.

We have all had colds, Susan and Violet are better except for Violet's cough that still troubles her at times. Mine is still a little unpleasant too. But the weather is splendid. I am afraid the Germans may try to come to England. If so I pray that they may land in Suffolk. Do you think they will come? JCP is more nervous about those Little Men.

Yours ever

Theodore

The Socks are entirely perfect. And very warm and soft. Thank you so much

∞

Theodore to Katie, 1941

[address printed] The Lodge
Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
February 15th 1941

My dearest Katie,

Thank you very much for your letter and these lovely sweets. I have a cold on my chest and a cough that rather torments me at night. So these fine peppermints are just the very sweets I needed. How fortunate it was that you do not like them, and it's lucky too that Susan does not like peppermint either. And Violet does not very much like this kind. So you see I am fortunate in all ways. We are so very sorry that this indigestion still worries you, I don't like Bemax much it is rather too sweet. Francis used to take it. Littleton has his own plan, he just stays in bed and lives on Milk until he gets better but you do not like milk. I daresay powdered milk would be better for you than plain milk. I expect it is the rest that really makes Littleton get better.

I don't get up until nearly One and I generally sleep pretty well through the early hours. And if I stay awake for an hour or two I usually fall asleep again. But I do get discontented if I am much awake in the middle of the night from eleven to 2 or 3 o'clock. I don't like staying awake then at all. That is the worst time for me. If you are wide awake at three, some people say eat a biscuit, but I don't do that. But anyhow you should sleep again at about 5 or half past 5. Even if you did not sleep till six you would be all right. But if you go right on awake till 8 or 9 that is horrible. I should be very worried indeed if I did that.

If one can get into the habit of lying in a sort of half stupid half senseless state and just think of any silly thing, of Charlie Blake or Montacute hill or Mr Rogers in a hedge or gone bust . And accustome [*sic*] yourself to think of something outside yourself that night[?]. Perhaps invent a story about the Holy and playful God PAN. But anyhow whatever one says there one lies in bed and unable to sleep with the very devil in one's brain and no hope of ease. Even pain gives one something to think of. And when it goes, if it does go, you try to sleep and sometimes do.

I wonder how the Moles get on with all the plough ground, perhaps they like it. But I don't think they do because the worms must be harder to catch. There is a blackbird or two though not many about here and the thrushes are scarce. I have not heard a blackbird sing at all yet nor a thrush, this is odd. Only a robin I hear sometimes.

I don't walk far and the weather has been bad, but still I don't manage badly, I feel pretty much the same as when I was at Chaldon. Has Alyse Swift's Journal to Stella, I think you might like that, but of course I cannot be sure. Any how Alyse would be [a] capatel [*sic, after crossings out*] reader of that book.

Ever so much love to Gertrude and to Alyse and so much to you.

Yours ever Theodore.

Very much love from Violet and Susan. Violet's cough still goes on but her cold is on the mend.

Charlie Blake was a son of the big Blake family in Montacute, all life-long friends of the Powyses. Mr Rogers was the manager of the Abbey Farm at Montacute.

∞



*TFP in Winfrith, 1931
(photo by Vera Wainwright).*

The Lodge,, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
April 17 1941

My dearest Katie

Very many thanks for your letter and for enclosing the letter from Captain Cook which I was

most interested to read. I hope very much that Alyse's cold did not trouble her much. Our colds are better and except for some other little disorders we are pretty well. Violet and Susan thank Gertrude for her post card.

The tiny garden we have here is not yet dug. So far we have been unable to get the man who came in the Autumn to come again. But we expect him or his son every day. There is plenty of time for when I first lived at Chaldon I planted the potatoes on the 20th of May and had a very good crop. And our garden is still rather wet.

We were lucky too about Holiday makers. 'It's an ill wind &c ?'

With ever so much love from us all to yourself and Gertrude and to Alyse. I have been Reading Lulu's books again with the greatest pleasure. I do pray that J.C.P. may be better now.

yours Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
May 10th 1941

Dearest Katie

Since Gertrude told us a day or two ago that you had been so ill and she too, we have all been very anxious about you. How good the Gods were to allow Alyse to be so strong an arm in such a tempest. I believe you are both better now, your letter gives hints that you are and I pray that by the time this reaches you Gertrude's temperature will be quite normal and yourself out of bed.

The weather has been extremely cold here. The spring is quite two weeks behind. People are only beginning to plant their seeds and potatoes and I don't expect the man will come to plant ours for a week or two. The last week in May will be quite soon enough for this frost bitten spring.

One can die very suddenly in this war. Jack has told me that Frances Wilkinson her daughter Betty and her old Mother, who once broke her leg at Saxmundham in Suffolk, were all killed by a bomb in Plymouth as by a flash of Lightning. Oliver Wilkinson who is in the Navy saw their dead bodies.

Susie has another sore throat and is in bed. Violet is rather overworked and tired and so I hope Susan is not going to be ill again. My head is about the same one day not so well, and another a little easier. I fancy if I had been as ill as you and Gertrude have been, I should have been taken a little way down the road, where in the Summer one's bones would be dried in a pleasant stony sandy clay and in the winter one would be in a fine puddle the dry sand being changed into a very sodden muddy sop. But still no doubt a refreshment to poor bones after the Summer heats.

Will you tell Gertrude and Alyse how much we have enjoyed Lulu's Book.* And Gertrude's pictures which we think very good indeed. Please tell Alyse that I liked especially Lulu's quotation from Dr Johnson that falls in well with my own Ideas and as I do not remember it in Boswell, nor have I ever heard it quoted before I read it with great pleasure and very much admired Lulu's wisdom in putting it there. I wish we had not lost, by the help of some puck or pixie Lulu's Dorset and Somerset Essays when we moved, that belonged to Violet.

We all send very much love, and hope you are both nearly at least out of the wood.

Yours ever

Theodore

* A Baker's Dozen, with decorations by Gertrude Mary Powys, and introduction by JCP (John Lane, *The Bodley Head*, 1941). Can anyone identify the Johnson quotation?

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
December 5th 1941

Dearest Katie

Thank you very much for your letter. We had never heard that Mr Bryer Ash had died. He certainly did not look at all well when he was here in the Summer. He was a most generous buyer of books. A very loving father & husband. And very fond of Llewelyn and of J.C.P. and also of Littleton whom he met lately. He also gave John wise advice about his book on Weymouth.

I am about the same in my head. Sometimes alas rather touchy and easily put out of temper. Though I try not to be. Not of course, about the presents, it is absurd to think about that. No one would expect it.

I am glad indeed that you are out again after your bad cold. It was a bad one Gertrude said. Susie and Violet are pretty well. Violet finds the damp very bad here. The lady at the shop has a dreadful cold.

I have never read a life of De Quincey. He was a great favourite with Gerald Brennan. I am sure the life you have must be very interesting.

Though it has been very damp there has been little real rain. There has been no water in the deep ditches & last year there were continual floods. There are still some leaves on the nut bushes – only a few. But we have had no very fierce gales nor hard frost nor great rains yet.

We all send very much love to you and to Alyse and to Gertrude. Do please thank Gertrude very much indeed for her letter to me. I hope both Gertrude and Alyse have escaped the bad colds which are going about.

And a happy Christmas to Gertrude Mary to Alyse and to Catherine Edith Philippa
yours ever
Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
December 25th 1941

Dearest Katie,

Many thanks for your present of tea. I do not know how I could live without drinking tea. I remember an old Doctor in a Russian book who drank tea all day I wish I had been him.

Littleton sent Susie a poetry book about Animals. A bad selection of Poems. But an 18th Century or early 19th Anonymous one I copy for you at least a verse or two.

The old horse

My clothing was once of the linsey woolsey fine,
My tail it grew at length, my coat did likewise shine
But now I'm growing old my beauty does decay,
My master frowns upon me one day I heard him say
"Poor old Horse"

[another page missing?] Does anyone recognise this?

∞

Theodore to Gertrude, 1942

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton Dorset
August 4th 1942

Dearest Gertrude

I hope that you will excuse this very dirty piece of Susan's lesson paper. The truth is that Violet has unluckily come to the end of her writing paper, so that I am forced to use this or else I could not thank you for the 2 lovely Volumes of the 'Chaplet of Pearls' that you have sent to Susan for her Birthday. I shall hope to read this book aloud which will I know give us all the greatest pleasure. So you see you have really done us a great good. And to do a real kindness is not so easy as anyone might think. This is a lovely Edition and such good print. I wonder if it comes from Mary's shop. I do not know if you asked Mary about the Rider Haggard that I wanted - "King Solomon's Mines" — I shall not buy one at Sherborne until October or November, and by then I may conclude? that Mary's man has not a cheap copy in good print.

I expect Alyse safely received the 2 De Quinceys that I returned to her by post a few days ago. I wonder if you and Katie have read them. If not I think that you would both enjoy them as much as I have done.

Violet was busy all yesterday baking cakes and making pies and custards for Susan today. She is going to have a little party. Susan was awake at six o'clock this morning, which is really four! She is now trimming the white Rabbit. I will not post this note today, because I hope to have a little one of Susan's to put in tomorrow.

[] expect you had the Thunder storms yesterday, I hope they were not very bad. With much love to yourself and to Katie & to Alyse.

They said the Germans were going to land near Weymouth two days ago. But that was only their fun to try to wake up the home guard.

This was Susan/Theodora's 10th birthday.

∞

Gertrude to Theodore, 1944

Chydyok
E. Chaldon
Dorchester
9 Sep 44

Dearest Theodore

I heard from Cousin Katie she has had a nasty accident. Her heart always missed the 5th beat. She says her father's did too. She was staying at Mattishall & was feeling well, she thinks she had been walking too much for her 82 1/4 years. Anyway she went quickly up to bed & as

soon as she had got to her room she fainted & fell & broke her leg high up. Hit her head against the bed in her fall. Her heart had missed 2 beats.

Now she is in a nursing home

Plantation Nursing Home

20 Christchurch Rd

Norwich

has been for 4 weeks and will have to be there for 2 or 3 more. Her leg is mending. They hope she will walk again. Mary is in Norwich and will call in Rose Smith -- & introduce her to some people. But Cousin Katie says the Close is different from what it was with so many away. Then when C.Katie is well she will v much hope to see her. She knows her house well. Miss Frere used to live in it. Whoever Miss Frere might be. I don't know, but her name is most familiar to me from hear say.

Poor Mrs Lucas was stung on her eyelid by one of my Bees. It swelled so she couldn't see out of her left eye at all. And made her feel quite ill. It is better now. I think the bad season has made them especially wild. Rushing about to steal anything they can get.

Thank Violet very much for her postcard. I am glad the packet got safely to you. Tell Violet all went well at Sherborne but I was so sorry to see Elizabeth looking so very delicate. Already [*sic*] to talk but unable to do so. Littleton looked pretty well.

The trains were crowded, little children & their parents going to Weymouth to see the sea — and taking in their hands their Mother's wooden [*sic*] Jam spoons to dig in the sands with. Their Fathers holding old paint cans in their hands for their buckets.

Now here is Mrs Lucas ready to go. Very much love to you & Violet & to Susie. I hope all is well.

Last night I dreamt I was at Mappowder.

Always my love

Gertrude

Cold wind slight storms

∞

Theodore to Gertrude, 1944-5

The Lodge, Mappowder

Sturminster Newton

December 25th 1944

Dearest Gertrude

Very Many thanks for your letter and for sending Robbery Under Arms to Susie. I have wished for this book all my life — and am at once beginning to read it to Susie and to Violet. The Book of Poetry you sent has a funny mistake in it. Your Cousin William Cowper is name[d] 'Thomas'. Perhaps the reason is that Cowper comes between Thomas Gray and Thomas Chatterton But think that the Editor and all the rest of them let this go in. Fancy Thomas Cowper!

Thank you very much for the Honey it has just come in pat with our bad throats.

Ever so much love

yours ever

Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton Dorset
January 22nd 1945

Dearest Gertrude

Thank you very much indeed for these lovely socks. I like both yours and Katie's very much indeed.

We were all very pleased with your letters. Susan is delighted that you tell her that she may come for a short visit to Chydyok in the summer. She is writing to thank you for your invitation. Our colds are better, though I hardly could believe that mine could go away as it seemed to be so fixed in my head and chest. We will try to be carefull [*sic*] not to get any more, as we hope you will be.

It was Mr Dibben who spoke to you that day he was staying with a friend at the other Chideock. He lives in London now and looked much thinner. He lost everything he had by bombs and had a narrow escape himself. No sooner was he almost bombed to pieces in Bristol than he was sent to London where the Bombs were worse.

I do not remember going to Strafford where Mr Smith was Rector. Perhaps I did not go. But then I never could remember going to Mr Butler's either when we were at Dorchester. But I did go to Carne [*? Calne*] with Harry Smith the Bank clerk who gave me six large bars of Chocolate Cream. I remember the taste of them now, I ate them or one or two bars going across the field path. I cannot remember whether I was ill or no. With ever so much love to you to Katie and to Alyse yours ever

Theodore

I remember going to Frampton Rectory with you and walking in a wood and being very much frightened.

Added by Violet: Very many thanks for Parcel. I will write very soon. Susan is longing for her visit. Violet.

(There are other letters from Gertrude to Violet in the Collection.)

∞

[2 postcards (*ceiling fresco from the Louvre and a river lock at Wareham*) to Chydyok]

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
June 11th 1945

Dearest Gertrude, Very many thanks for lending me Elizabeth Ham. I expect you were as interested as I am in her life at Dorchester & Weymouth. What a wonderful story the miner told. yours ever with much love

Theodore

Much love to Katie & Alyse

The autobiography (written c.1850) of Elizabeth Ham (1783-1859), was published as Elizabeth Ham, by Herself in 1945.

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton

July 17th 1945

My dear, Very many thanks for this excellent honey. Dr S very much enjoyed seeing you all.
Much love to yourself Katie Alyse and Bernie. Yours ever
Theodore

Doctor Charles Smith of Sturminster Newton became their new doctor and friend. After a great personal tragedy he would later become a kind of hermit living in a little bungalow on the heath not far from East Chaldon.

Theodore to Katie, 1945

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
December 25th 1945

Dearest Katie,

Thank you very much — I have been thinking a great deal more about Mr Wallis than about Christmas a festival that I always wish over. I wonder in what part of the Church Yard Mr Wallis is buried? And how is Mrs Wallis? she is about my age and Mr Wallis used to call her Dumpy. I think of all the times I saw Mr Wallis — of how George Jacobs drove us and Betty and Georgie to Bere Regis to see Mr Pitman, I think — and the pleasure Mr Wallis had drinking at the two Inns and then I remember so well Fanny Jacobs' wedding in the old barn the dust and old Jacobs in all his glory and latter [*sic*] how I met so often Mr Wallis breaking stones — once in a pit in that valley on the path to White nose. And how I always wondered how he could just hit the flint right. He would not allow there was much art in it. He had those dark glasses on. For hours and hours he would crack those flints as easily as God Almighty will one day, and perhaps very soon will crack this world. And the little splinters will fly — And what splendid blue cheese did Dumpy give us [when] we were just married and home brewed beer when we went to see them at Ower Moign too good to be true. But all now gone of it —————

yours Theodore

Theodore to Gertrude, 1946

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
July 10th 1946

Dearest Gertrude

How ever did you manage and however did Katie manage to save up so many points and so much money as to send us this lovely tin of Golden Syrup — to say nothing of the splendid Strawberries Gooseberries and the Map which will interest me extremely. The school children of Mappowder are all [going?] to Bristol to day, & Susan with them because Mrs Jackson did not require her seat in the Omnibus.

We all send ever so much love to Yourself Katie and to Alyse. Please tell Alyse that I have been wonderfully happy with her Santayana. And as she said I might do so I am lending this book to Dr Smith for two weeks and no more. He is very careful and never exceeds his time when he borrows a book.

We all send much love to Bernie. Will you tell him that Mr Prentice*, who I think he met, and his Wife are going to Chinon in September.

Yours Theodore

* *Charles Prentice of Chatto & Windus, editor of TFP. Bernie O'Neill and Theodore visited Chinon, birthplace of Rabelais, in 1903.*

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
October 4th 1946

Dearest Gertrude

Very many thanks for the Review and for the packet of Kellog – we have not had any for a long time. I am so glad you got your post war credits all right. We did too. I divided mine with Violet, and my share goes to build a little shed for the pony in the tiny field that we hire.

I hope you will find Jack quite well at Corwen. We all send our love to Phyllis and to him. You must tell me how he is when you have seen him.

Mr Inglefield our new Shopman comes from Cardiff. It is certainly a very noisy City, so Charles Prentice said. But I hope you will find it quiet.
with all our loves

Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
October 23rd 1946

Dearest Gertrude

Many thanks for your letter. I am so glad that you are safe home again. I do not think ticket taking can be a pleasure. It was never a pleasure to me and you are well out of it. Poor Faith is unlucky. Will you tell her how sorry we are about her accident when you next write to her.

It is certainly a wonder that Jack can be well enough to take these walks. And looks so well too. Your Picture is in a grand setting at Cardiff. But I wish the gentleman from Cardiff who is at our shop would get a little more Weetabix or Kellog to sell to us. He is often completely out of tobacco. Much love to Katie & Alyse and to YOU

yrs Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
October 30th 1946

Dearest Gertrude,

Very many thanks for the parcel. Violet and Susy send you much love and gratefulness too. And so do I. What a traveller you are becoming – To Cardiff to Corwen and now to Sherborne. They ought to ring the bells at Sherborne when you arrive as they used to do when a visitor came to Bath. Much love to Katie & to Alyse.

We have had two [fine ?] days may this last till Xmas. Theodore

[*On an attached leaflet from St Marylebone Parish Church, underlining 'I would be grateful if you would send me 2s.6d., which is the price of the Brochure: Hugh J. Matthews, Rector' with added comment*]

You would certainly need to be grateful if you ever got it, Master Hugh who has a mind to be Bishop Hugh.

Anyhow I am grateful very grateful for the Kellogg bran.

[*another note*] It is also the price of St Julian's tobacco

∞

Theodore to Katie, 1946

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
November 20th 1946

Dearest Katie

Very many thanks for your letter which was handed to me by Alyse. I am so glad that you are better. It is most horrid not to be able to go out when one's mind wants to, which it always does when one is ill.

The Place I think most about near to Rats Barn is the old lime kiln about a hundred yards up the path to the sea. Growing in the pit to the right, near the field there used to be an Elder bush. In the midst of which I had a very good resting place. The Demon of that, but it is a friendly Demon, and many a time has he contented me with lonely hidden thoughts. But he was not best pleased with the stench of Mr Tod's dead sheep that old Mr Critchel cast into the kiln –

with all our love yours Theodore

∞

Theodore to Gertrude, 1947

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
May 19th 1947

Dearest Gertrude

Thank you ever so much for the uncut Edition of Cowper in two large Volumes. Do you think the Owner died before she could cut the pages. The young ladies' Prize is interesting too. Did you buy them in Gentlemans Walk.

I long to hear about your travels. We are so sad that we did not see May before she went away. But anyhow we enjoyed her visit here.

Much love to Katie and Alyse and to yourself.

Poor Elizabeth and Willie! they must have had a nasty journey.

Much love to them too and to the Children.

Yours

Theodore

∞

Gertrude to Theodore, ?1946-47

Littleton Powys's second wife Elizabeth Myers died in May 1947.

[no address or date – marked 'late']

Dearest Theodore

Here is the wasp nest cure but hard to procure and perhaps dangerous to use except by 'an agent'.

My bus drive was not a bad one but very crowded. Everyone in good tempers. When I got to Sherborne I sat on one of the seats near the abbey and took off my goloshes and my gaiters for the rain had not come to anything. Then I slowly walked up Cheap street and saw the lady called Mrs Palmer. I wished it had been her husband whom I like. When I got here Littleton was polishing the shoes in the yard and Elizabeth was just finishing her bath.

We soon drank coffee. Violet had given me so good a breakfast that the tea shops in the town had no attractions for me. The good man next door thinks with me that some Bees must have had a little honey in the Church roof, and all the Bees that came into the church were mauroders (maroders) (mauroders). Robers [*sic*]. They are about a great deal just now. He has been much troubled by wasps too.

I have enjoyed these 2 days never to be forgotten very greatly. I am glad the cow in the field was not a wild one. Always my love Gertrude

I wont forget to write to Cousin Katie.

It was curious to hear the Church as a large Hive from your room.

How beautiful those Ham Hill windows of the Mappowder church are.

Last night I dreamt I was at Mappowder.

Cold wind slight storms

∞

After selling her house in Hampshire Lucy travelled to Africa with Will and Elizabeth in May 1947, staying until spring 1948.

[2 odd pages]

The cat is saying a lot of meows so I must go and see what [it is about?] .

She just caught a baby slow worm & brought it in here & I want to take it away & put it in long grass as I am fond of slow worms. I don't think you are. Lucy wrote me a very good letter of their journey out. She liked Kartoum best. She felt frightened in Cairo as the Egyptians did not seem friendly - & glided about all day & night in long garments & high hats. She saw a herd of

elephants feeding. They all were bad when the plane came down to refuel which it did every two hours after they left Cairo – and left the flying boat & were in a smaller one – I mean a smaller Plane which only carried 10 people.

Mr and Mrs Webb are getting into one of the New Council houses on Monday, and so are Mr and Mrs Pitman. The lane is very bad all full of Bricks & rubble, holes & dangers. They say people called Digby are going to have the Vicarage. Mrs Lucas says they are very 'high up'. I hope they will enjoy the Ghost. Perhaps the high up voices of the Digby family will quiet it. If we can't come before Mr Prentice we will come towards the end of Aug. But I hope we may see you early in July and I shall []

∞

Theodore to Gertrude, 1947-9

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
July 1st 1947

Dearest Gertrude

I am writing instead of Violet, who is in bed at the moment with a nasty chill. She will be up I hope a little tomorrow, and will be quite all right again in a day or two.

We shall be most delighted to see Katie and yourself any afternoon Next Week, and shall look forward very much to your visit. If possible let us know which day, but anyhow come one day ... We are so glad that you will be able to come and stay at Mrs Kelly's later on. Mrs Kelly sometimes has her relations in August so I daresay she would be better able to put you up early in September. We shall look forward to that time.

You will miss Mr Brodie I am sorry he is leaving. These Digbys seem to haunt all the country side. There never was such a family. We shall look very happy in September when we see you and a pot of honey. And very happy when we see you and Katie next week. with love to Katie and Alyse and yourself.

yours ever

Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
November 8th 1947

Dearest Gertrude,

Very many thanks for your letter and the enclosure – which was most interesting. But, that is not all I have to thank you for. Because when you saw Littleton, you, having poor Theodore in your mind mentioned my lack of Trousers. This morning Littleton has sent me two pairs and a Coat – what do you think of that! You see how your words are listened to. And when you next feel a stillness about you or hear a great wind about the home or see those lanterns in the heaven shine more than usually bright – you might remember the Eternal as you did Littleton of Brother Theodore

Very much love to Yourself and to Katie and Alyse.

Last January when some of my bedroom ceiling fell – it was a Crash – Katie was lucky not to be hurt.

yours ever Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
December 18th 1947

Dearest Gertrude

We have received your very good and welcome gift of honey and mead. The Aunts I fancy would have liked the mead. But I was much too greedy to part with it. And said to myself – ‘Given me’ as we used to say at Mr Blake’s school when one had what another wanted.

I had such a delightful letter from Katie the other day – telling me of a walk she had. I did indeed envy her. And I do pray to the Divine Felicity that she may draw near and nearer to the true wonder of life Beauty. And Beauty can only be seen truly as Katie sees it. Indeed I envy her. With much love to yourself – Katie and Alyse and may your Christmas be very happy.

your Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton Dorset
December 29th 1947

Dearest Gertrude

I do not know which present to thank you and Katie for first. Katie’s chocolate was just the thing for it gave pleasure to a little boy, a lady, Violet, Susan and myself. Indeed we made a meal of it and very good it was. And so dearest Katie you have all our thanks and wishes for a friendly New Year – and may this new Year be Friendly to us all.

I am sure Dearest Gertrude that these socks are the very best and my feet will be very warm now that there is a snow flake or two about. The little book about Tom Fearless and Theodore looks very good and your letter as most welcome this morning. I pray that all will be well at Chydyok all this next year and many years that come hereafter.

Ever so much love to Yourself to Kate & Alyse yr

Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset
March 27th 1948

Dearest Gertrude,

This is a tiny note to wish Yourself, Katie and Alyse a very happy Easter – And to thank you for sending this lovely pot of Honey and nobs [*sic*] of Sugar. Both most welcome.

Charley Smith could do nothing on Friday but talk about his visit to you and how kind you and Katie and Alyse were to him and how much his daughter and himself enjoyed all they did. he said the Garden was wonderful and that Katie must be a better gardener than Adam.

I don't think he gets that sort of welcome every day – your kindness was just what he loves. He said you all looked so well – very well and happy and very young. With much love

yours

Theodore

∞

The Lodge
Mappowder

February 25th 1949

A private letter

Dearest Gertrude

Thank you very much for your letter. Charley Smith was very sorry to miss you. He says Katie cooked him a splendid dinner. And Alyse led him into her Magic chamber and so he was very happy. That was a lovely day.

The mild weather is wonderful. You must have some lovely days at Chydyok. Vera Wainwright is back again I have seen her once. But we are still a little nervous about asking her in here.

A Bold woman called Mrs Allum has just come in and is still here with a streaming cold. Violet is talking to her and I am writing in the back kitchen and as soon as I hear the door I will gargle with Milton. What a wicked old murderess this horrid old woman is. She runs about with Death in her hand. Not very kind. Violet still has her cough and feels very unwell – I hear



TFP in front of the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Mappowder.

this horrid old woman cough and sneeze. If Violet catches this cold we are done for.

Much love to Katie yourself and Alyse

Theodore

Violet thanks you very much for your letter and the points. That old hag is gone. I have opened the window.

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset

June 15th 1949

Dearest Gertrude

Thank you very much for the lovely Jelly that Charly Smith brought to me this morning. Both he and John very much enjoyed themselves at Chydyok. He told me that you both looked very well, and that made us very glad. He said the House and garden and the two ladies there were quite perfection, as far as any thing can be perfect. The garden he always gives the highest praise to, because he says it is just what a garden ought to be. He and John both bathed at Durdle Door. And went down Scratchy no, up Scratchy. The sea must have been cold! They both enjoyed the splendid tea they had with you. Lucy was away and Alyse was away too, give them much love when they come home, and Ever so much love to Yourself and to Katie

yrs ever Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder,
Sturminster Newton, Dorset.

July 30th 1949

[in trembly writing]

Dearest Gertrude,

Charley Smith brought to us yesterday a present from Chydyok. A pound of Sugar. But he did not say who was the kind and loving giver. And so there is nothing else that I can do but to thank most gratefully ALL Chydyok. Yourself, Katie, Lucy and Alyse.

And to each one give a great deal of love. When Adam and Eve went trembling behind the trees through fear and dread of God, if only a good kind angel had put into Eve's hand a pound of Mr Farrow's sugar, all the terror and horror and shivering of nature would have left them. They would have met God most happily and begged his pardon.

Thank you

Theodore

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
Dorset

September 27th 1949

Dearest Gertrude

Violet thanks you very much for your letter. She is writing to you to day or tomorrow. We were happy to see Katie and Elizabeth.* They were so very kind and we were so glad to have them. And I hope all will go well about Tadnol.

I was a bit carried off my feet by the idea and the kind thoughts of Elizabeth. But I am one of those who Go No Wither [sic]. If there was a house to let about here – which there never will be – like the houses with One floor that Coke of Norfolk put up for old people I would not mind moving into it. But Tadnol would not do for us.

Lucy talks wisdom. Lucy is wise. Tadnol too lonely. The Mappowder God fairy or Fairy God says No — I do wish Lucy could come somewhere near here. And Violet is always looking and hoping and praying for a better home. I daresay one day she will find one. I do not worry for myself only for her. But I must not help her into anything when there would be for Her more hardship more trouble than here. Remember that text wh. you saw on your Travels –

love to Katie and to Lucy
yours ever Theodore

* Elizabeth Powys, wife of Will. In a letter to Elizabeth Wade White (who had visited briefly in the spring and was staying with Valentine Acland in Frome Vauchurch) Katie says she is sorry to have no time to see them as she has been rushing around with Elizabeth from Africa, helping Lucy to house-hunt. After considering several possibilities for settling down again (among them in Tadnol), in 1950 Lucy finally bought a cottage in Mappowder to be near TFP.

∞

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton
December 23rd [no year — 1949 ?]

Dearest Gertrude

Firstly I praise you for the envelopes. Next your wonderful socks. You see I could not have posted this without an Envelope. Otherwise the socks should be first. But you know how I ware [sic] out socks so I really do enjoy a new pair.

I am sure Lucy arrived safe. Willie started off with a great splash a smoke cloud and a rush. He must be a great driver. He sent us a lovely picture of the Lodge. He is a great painter. Poor Mr Miller and poor Mr Cob[b]! I hope you are not too cold. We shiver. Your chocolate is very good. For goodness sake take care of yourself.

yours ever Theodore

Mr Cobb was a farmer and friend at West Chaldon. Jack Miller was a well-known local figure at East Chaldon and for many years Katie's lover.

∞

Theodore to Katie, 1952

The Lodge, Mappowder
Sturminster Newton Dorset
December 27th 1952

Dearest Katie,

You have saved me many a sad sigh by sending to me this warm pair of socks to say nothing of the cigarettes in the toe. Very good of Katie.

I feel a little happier about Lucy. I do hope all will be well

Much love to Yourself

Theodore

love to Charles and Gilfrid if still with you

Lucy had been diagnosed with TB in the second half of 1952 and spent the better part of 1953 in a sanatorium in Bridport, then returning to Mappowder.

∞

Theodore to Lucy, 1953

November 1953

There will be NO COMPLINE this evening. Dr Jackson is going out to indent a new Vicar somewhere. So you may REST in peace.

love T.F.P.

Theodore died on November 27th, 1953

Letters from The Powys Society Collection (a haphazard selection by unknown hands). The two notes to Lucy included by courtesy of Louise de Bruin, to whom thanks for notes and assistance. KK

Photos of Theodore Powys by courtesy of Louise de Bruin.

FOR SALE

The Dorset Year: The Diary of John Cowper Powys: June 1934 – July 1935

This copiously illustrated, informative and finely produced volume of 328 A4 pages, edited by Morine Krissdóttir and Roger Peers, was produced by The Powys Society in 1998 but is now very difficult to find in good condition.

We have three copies of The Dorset Year for sale to members:

One copy, standard edition, soft bound, mint condition:

£55.00 including postage and packing.

Two copies, **de luxe edition, hard bound**, illustrated dust wrapper, green cloth, gold stamped spine panel, gold stamped lettering of JCP signature on front cover, illustrated front and back end-papers (not part of standard edition), **mint condition**, with original bookmark:

£125.00 per copy including postage and packing.

Please send orders (not money) to:

Chris Thomas (Secretary, The Powys Society)
Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG

JCP and Proust

Marcel Proust (1871–1922): his seven-book novel *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* was published from 1913 to 1927 (the final parts incompletely revised). Scott-Moncrieff's English translation *Remembrance of Things Past* (he favoured Shakespearean titles) appeared 1922–31 (it was revised in 1981 and 1992).

JCP wrote two long articles on Proust, in 1924 and 1928; and an essay (the last one) in *Pleasures of Literature*. The earlier review, for the *The North American Review*, is a helpful introduction and guide to what might have seemed a daunting work, unfamiliar in form (*But, after all, it is well that there should be in the world one great fictional masterpiece that utterly baffles and thwarts our human mania for the thrill of sequent happenings ... and fortunate indeed are those for whom this man has re-stretched the wind-harp of human receptivity till it is taut as it never was before ...*) By 1928, and the review printed below, most of Proust had been translated, but JCP must have read *Le Temps Retrouvé*, Proust's recently published posthumous last volume, with its long final summing-up of the Narrator's experience, in French.

Jacqueline Peltier's perceptive essay in *The Powys Review* 31/33 (c.1997) notes what JCP had in common with Proust (born only a year before him) — the strong influence of family, poor health, fairly late development, brilliant oratory, a huge correspondence, a yearning for solitude and seclusion, and above all, the significance in both lives of moments of ecstasy. She also sees their difference: for Proust the ecstatic moments, fusing reality with imagination, past with present, came from chance happenings (an uneven paving stone, the feel of a linen table napkin, the famous madeleine dipped in tea); for JCP such visitations came to a mind & spirit deliberately willed to be receptive. She also suggests that JCP under-estimated the extent to which *À la Recherche*, however circuitous, was planned and crafted (Proust said that he wrote the last chapter soon after the first).

David Gervais's clear and helpful booklet (*John Cowper Powys, T. S. Eliot and French Literature*, in Cecil Woolf's 'Powys Heritage' series), comparing the different species of critic represented by T. S. Eliot and JCP, suggests that with Proust, JCP's approach, from empathy, rather than Eliot's analysis and generalisations, was more enlightening. 'It is ... clear from all Powys's criticism that what interested him in great writers was the fact that they each see the world in uniquely individual and idiosyncratic ways ...' Despite and because of their difference, JCP could learn from Proust, though 'influence is therefore likely to take the form of turning similar premises to quite different ends.' JCP says that from Proust he learnt *a certain trick* of taking the unpoetic details of daily life as extraordinary and significant. *But poetic or unpoetic, they are as they are because we are as we are.*

In *The Pleasures of Literature* JCP pronounces Proust and Joyce *the two most formidable writers of the present epoch*, profoundly admiring both though not entirely in sympathy with either. He contrasts the often brutal satire and parody in *Ulysses* (1922) with Proust's *serpentine progress through the hearts, nerves and brains of all his*

people with an intensity of analysis so exquisite, so fine-spun, so levelling, that ... we are prepared to argue with him in our own minds, so real have his people become to us... Comparing the use of 'streams of consciousness' in Joyce, where the thoughts come directly from the person thinking, with Proust's more usual invisible "I" in the background, projecting the soliloquy-stream on to the lesser 'I' of the story, he introduces a third example with Dorothy Richardson, a writer who appealed strongly to him personally; and he ends, after some wise words from his favourite French writer, Rabelais, with a moment of illumination (literally) from Richardson's *Pilgrimage*:

She thought of the autumn sunlight, held it in her mind, thought of it as existing in their minds and in the minds of everyone in London today; the hint of an answer, the moment one paused to look at it, to every problem in the world.

KK

NEWYORK HERALD TRIBUNE BOOKS, SUNDAY, MAY 13, 1928
BOOKS ABROAD

The Sensation of Timelessness in Marcel Proust's Work

Proust the Platonist

By JOHN COWPER POWYS

The last two volumes of "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu," entitled "Le Temps Retrouvé," fall into our hands as something much more "fatal," in the proud Nietzschean sense, than the final chapters of a mere piece of fiction. The delay in their publication has so whetted our appetites that their appearance arrests us with the lively shock of something other than the merely "posthumous" ... as if the very accent of the great writer reached us out of the unknown.

A minority of Proust's readers have long suspected that the peculiar strain of sharply defined mysticism — mysticism kept within certain very rigid and entirely logical limits — which like an underground water course runs through the whole book would burst out at the close in a manner likely to startle those who have relished so shrewdly the more purely materialistic aspects of his work. Such cautious minds — devotees of "the visible world" — need not, however, be dismayed. The metaphysical implication of the vast sensuous biography is so carefully contracted, so precisely compelled toward a particular issue, that its convoluted advance, with parenthesis following upon parenthesis like the coiling ripples on the back of a swimming snake, remains, along with its startling conclusion, well within the firmly planted, clearly staked out limits of normal human reason.

It is as though Proust brought up out of the secret hold of his life's vessel a wonderful poop-lantern of transparent glass, just discovered as the ship is entering the harbor. Hung triumphantly now at the stern of the boat, this lantern casts a clear stream of unblurred light over that long foam path left by the vessel's keel which stretched back to the receding horizon!

The secret thus disclosed is not a theory; nor is it the explanation or analysis of any spiritual hypothesis. It is an experience.

The middle-aged hero of the story has just left his "*Le roi Lear*", de Charlus, whose feeble condition evokes from the unsympathetic Duchesse de Letourville a blunt recommendation to go home — "*Vous feriez mieux de rentrer*" — and he himself is on the point of entering the court of the mansion of the Prince de Guermantes when he stumbles upon an unevenness in the flagstones. He has no sooner regained his balance than a flooding wave of the most delicious happiness flows over his whole being. The present and the past lose themselves in something that is timeless and he recalls with incredible vividness a parallel unevenness in the flagstones of St. Mark's at Venice! It was as if this sensation of the eternal called out to him — *Saisis-moi au passage si tu en as la force et tache à résoudre l'énigme du bonheur que je te propose*. "Seize me as I pass, if you have the strength, and try to solve the mystery of happiness that I lay before you."

As he waited a few minutes later in the deserted library of the Prince until the piece of music then being played was finished, two further little jolts to his sensitized consciousness touched, by a conspiracy of chance, the same strange chord. A passing servant in his efforts to avoid interrupting the music tapped a plate with a spoon, and this trifling noise brought up to our hero's mind certain hammer taps on the wheels of the train that had brought him to Paris; brought him there at a moment when the loveliness of the country had left him completely cold, when he "had seen but not felt" * the magic of certain trees outlined against the sky. The cold critical clairvoyant intelligence of which he had been the victim had spoilt for him his faith in literature itself, in the value of the art he wished to follow, in his own power as an artist. He had come to discover this on a particular evening at Tansonville as he read the journal of the De Goncourts, but at the moment when the train stopped he realized that this deadly futility had extended itself still further and had begun to sterilize his reactions to the beauty of nature. The accidental tapping of this plate by the servant's spoon brought back now all the ecstasy of well-being which that hammer stroke on the train wheels, associated with the trees against the sky, ought to have evoked, but had failed to evoke in him.

Nor did this beneficent play of chance stop there; for a second servant, recognizing the visitor, brought him, to refresh himself while he waited, a tray of "petits fours", a glass of orangeade and a napkin. It was when he came to wipe his mouth with this last object that he received, from a peculiar stiffness in the napkin, a sudden vision of what he had seen as a child from the hotel window at Balbec, where a napkin had had the same sort of texture and had affected his lips in the same way.

But what he was compelled to note in all this was that these overpowering waves of mysterious happiness were identical in their essential nature, in spite of the complete diversity of the particular sensations that summoned them out of the deep. They were, in fact, identical with that long-remembered ecstasy, reverting to his earliest childhood, which he associated with the taste of a "madeleine" dipped in an infusion

of herbal tea. He notices that from the two separate moments of this strange ecstasy, divided perhaps by years, all that is transitory vanishes away, leaving only what is timeless. It is this sensation of timelessness which is the only kind of nourishment by which a strange being within us can live and breathe and be conscious. To put it in Proust's own words — *Une minute affranchie de l'ordre du temps a recréé en nous pour la sentir l'homme affranchi de l'ordre du temps.* "A minute freed from the time order has created in us — in order to feel it — a man freed from the time order."

Past and present were indeed at these moments so transcended in the sensation of timelessness that it became impossible to distinguish them from one another.

L'être qui alors goûtait en moi cette impression la goûtait en ce qu'elle avait de commun dans un jour ancien et maintenant, dans ce qu'elle avait d'extra-temporel, un être qui n'apparaissait que quand par une de ces identités entre le présent et le passé il pouvait se trouver dans le seul milieu où il pût vivre, jouir de l'essence des choses, c'est à dire en dehors du temps.

"The being who then tasted in me this impression tasted it in that which it had in common between a former occasion and now, in that which it had of timelessness, a being who only appeared when by one of these identities between past and present it could find itself in the only atmosphere where it could live to enjoy the essence of things, that is to say outside time."

Proust does not hesitate to draw the full logical implication from all this; which is, of course, that the fear of death — since death is an event in time — no longer troubles him or casts its shadow of futility over the finer essences in life and art. It will be seen however that his logical sequence of thought, for all its cogency, moves along such a very narrow and very slippery series of stepping-stones that it will hardly bring much comfort to normal mortality. He does not, for instance, assume that this timeless being within him, born to enjoy these timeless sensations, is identical with his ordinary self, with the middle-aged individual now waiting in the library of the Prince de Guermantes. But identical or not, this singular being is "within" him; for it is, after all, the lips of "Marcel" that have tasted the "madeleine" and the feet of "Marcel" that have stumbled over the uneven flagstones!

In addition to the implication about death, this careful advance along so narrow a path — marked, like a coastguard track, by a line of chalk-stones showing white in the twilight — carries immense significance in regard to the aesthetic problem. Proust, in fact, does not hesitate to put into his hero's mouth a fierce attack upon both the "realistic" and the "propagandist" methods of art. The true "reality" turns out to be something not found in appearance at all, but in the degree of penetration which one's impression achieves, "into a profundity where these appearances matter little". That accidental sound, for example, made by that spoon against that plate was found to be more precious to the renewal of his spiritual life than any number of conversations, "*humanitaires, patriotiques, internationales*"!

With regard to this aesthetic implication of his metaphysical, or shall we say psychological, discovery, serious doubts will certainly arise in many readers' minds.

The Platonic view of art seems to clash here with what might be called the Shakespearean view; and their reconciliation is not easy. It remains, however, that the more we ponder upon this surprising soliloquy in the Guermantes library, the wider does the gulf seem to yawn between the Proust of detached cold-blooded social curiosity and this other Proust of the “bonheur” of timeless “essences”. It is at any rate this second Proust who has the final word; for the last sentence of *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* suggests a vision of human personality itself, much more resembling the vast “giants” of William Blake’s mythology — *êtres monstrueux occupant une place prolongée sans mesure* — [“monstruous beings occupying a limitless space”] — than the localized personages of merely rational observation such as move to and fro upon the restricted, superficial, mundane stage of his hitherto reputed master, the worldly and punctilious St. Simon!

* Coleridge: “I see, not feel, how beautiful they are”

Saint-Simon, Duc de (1675–1755), chronicler of life at court during the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV. His coolly ironic Mémoires (said to be Proust’s favorite reading), were published in full in 1829–30.

News & Notes

Conference DVDs

Copies of a 3-DVD set from the 2011 Conference are available. The set contains all four talks and the reading of the adaptation of *Mr Weston’s Good Wine*.

The set is £6, from Raymond Cox, 4 Lulworth Close, Halesowen, B63 2UJ
e-mail: <rymd.cox@gmail.com>. Tel: 01384 566383

If you would like a copy please make the cheque payable to R. E. Cox, not The Powys Society.

Previous conferences, from 2005 to 2010 are also on DVD and copies can be made of these. Not all the talks from some of the conferences were included. Please enquire if you are interested in any of these. Details are available on the website.

∞

JCP’s 1939 diary and NLW

We are indebted to Geraint Phillips at the National Library of Wales who has helped to arrange the publication, in digital format, of a complete copy of JCP’s diary for 1939. The original text of the diary, including the front and back inside covers, (which contain some useful information), can be viewed on the digital mirror of the NLW web site at:

<<http://www.llgc.org.uk/drychdigidol/jcp/JCP00001/index.html?lng=en>>

Or on the home page of the NLW site go to Digital Mirror, select Manuscripts from the drop down menu on the left hand side and then select John Cowper Powys.

There is a live link to the 1939 diary from the Powys Society web site in Links at:
<<http://www.powys-society.org/The%20Powys%20Society%20Links.htm>>

Geraint has also written a short introduction to JCP’s life and work for the NLW web site to accompany the text of the 1939 diary.

∞

Duckworth/ Overlook have now brought out the new edition of *Porius* in paperback (identical to hardback; RRP £18.95).

∞

The French literary magazine *Le Groggnard*, in its latest number, September 2011, has an article about JCP by Pierrick Hamelin – *John Cowper Powys, entre la pierre et les étoiles* [‘between stone and stars’] and a translation of an extract from *In Defence of Sensuality* (*Apologie des sens*).

See:

<http://legroggnard.hautetfort.com/list/archives_du_groggnard/le-groggnard-n-19.html>

∞

Inspired by our visit last June to Wolfeton House, the **Charminster Book Club** is now discussing *Ducdame*.

∞

from Michael Kowalewski

John Milbank is arguably the leading theologian in the UK. His movement called ‘Radical Orthodoxy’ is an amalgam of postmodernism and theology and has become very influential. His book *Theology and Social Theory* is one of the must-reads for anyone interested in the issues of religion, secularism and society. In his *The Future of Love* (SCM Press, 2009) in chapter 9, page 175, he writes: ‘I favor [*sic*] the wild Anglo-Celtic empiricism of Bede, Grossteste, Wyclif, Cudworth, Shaftesbury, Berkeley, de Quincey, Coleridge, Ruskin, Chesterton, J. C. Powys, or Peirce and Royce ...’. He goes on to describe this approach as an acceptance of the fragmentary: ‘The long but fragmentary gesturing to the inaccessible is the key to the natural alliance of the most radical Anglo-Celtic empiricism with Platonism ...’. He obviously sees JCP as part of a certain kind of vision he is sympathetic to. He also mentions Powys’s *Porius* in the context of the Celtic imagining of the British Isles as being the realm of fairies and giants, in an essay on children’s fiction called ‘Fictioning Things: Gift and Narrative’ (*Religion and Literature* 37, 2005).

John Milbank’s Theology and Social Theory – beyond secular reason (Blackwell Publishing, 1990, revised 2006) has an extract on google books. Milbank also refers to Powys in a lecture posted on the internet at:

<http://theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/papers/Milbank_StantonLecture3.pdf> CT

∞

Glendower — from the internet

Further to the letter from David A. Cook (Head of Dept of Media Studies, Univ. of N.Carolina at Greensboro) printed in NL 63 (March 2008 — reprinted from the *TLS*) on the plagiarisation of *Owen Glendower* by Martha Rofheart (1917-1990) in her popular Welsh historical romances, the internet (via Amazon) provides this useful anonymous uppercute: —

Owain Glyn Dwr? Hardly

by **Deborah** – from: *Glendower Country* (Mass Market Paperback), June 29 2011

You’d think a writer who claims to have been “inspired” by her Welsh grandfather’s tales, a writer who goes on to write a novel about one of the greatest figures in Welsh history, and who uses a number of Welsh words in that novel, would have bothered to open a book on Welsh history, or at least a Welsh dictionary. That way she might have placed her cardboard characters in something approximating medieval Wales (and England and Italy), rather than a phony medieval melange out of Hollywood in the 50s, as well as avoided the embarrassment of misusing “ap/ab” (son of) as “daughter

of”; describing “arglwyddes” (lady) as “an obscure Welsh title”; and (mis)translating “Glyndyfrdwy” as “the two streams”. Alas, it wouldn’t have taught Martha Rofheart how to develop a plot, or to create realistic characters, or to write in general. And was it really ... necessary to ... use ... all ... those ... ellipses ... ? ... Save your time and money; read *Owen Glendower* by John Cowper Powys. Powys was an infinitely better writer — as Rofheart obviously knew, since she plagiarized him copiously, along with others, in her earlier novel. This gets one star, because there’s no option for a negative star.

∞

1, *Waterloo*

from Roly Tree

I thought some of the society’s members would like to know that John Cowper Powys’s former home in Blaenau Ffestiniog is now up for sale. I purchased the property a year ago with the intention of letting it out as a holiday rental once it had been repaired and tidied up. However, due to a change in circumstances I’m having to sell it.

Anyone who’s interested can find it at:

<<http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-20145951.html>>

It would be great to see it go to someone who would appreciate its history.

The Swedish John Cowper Powys Society

Lars Gustaf Andersson writes:

I have had the pleasure to function as Chairman for the Swedish John Cowper Powys Society – *John Cowper Powyssällskapet* – during two periods: from the beginning in 1999 to 2004, and then again from 2005 to 2011. Most of the Swedish members live in the Stockholm area, but even if I myself am located in the South, in Lund, I think I have a fair overview of the society and its members. The task as Chairman has always been facilitated by the fellow members and the Board, and for several years by our Honorary Chairman and Founder, the late Sven Erik Täckmark. There are many happy memories that we can share with each other, and there has indeed been a lot of good work done for the promotion of John Cowper Powys and his books. The important outcomes are of course our bilingual newsletter, the Swedish editions of *The Meaning of Culture* and *The Autobiography*, and all the conversations we have had, when gathered in Sven Erik’s little flat in Stockholm or at other places, or by telephone and by mail, now mostly electronically delivered.

But it is a fact that the activities have diminished lately. It has been hard to arrange meetings and run the ordinary society errands and even to collect the members’ fee. One of the reasons could be that Sven Erik no longer is the natural epicentre and source of energy for us; in fact the last time the Swedish Powysians were gathered in some numbers was at the funeral service for Sven Erik. Be that as it may, but several of us have discussed how to start anew and find new forms for our interest in John

Cowper Powys. That is why the members at the last annual meeting, June 11th in Stockholm, voted and finally confirmed a change, proposed by the Board. What we want to do is to reorganise our society into a more informal one; thus letting go of Board functions, e.g. Treasurer, and also giving up the efforts to fund our activities with members' fees. Instead we are working towards what in Swedish is called *vänförening*, i.e. 'a union of friends'.

If you wish to continue to support the promotion of Powys in Sweden you are hereby invited to join the new Swedish John Cowper Powys Society; we will not change the name of our society, nor the goals of it, but formally it will from now on have the character of an informal network, hopefully with a nexus in our website: <<http://www.bjorner.com/powys.htm>>

For further information, please contact me at:
<Lars_Gustaf.Andersson@litt.lu.se>

or by ordinary mail: Lars Gustaf Andersson, Plåtslagarevägen 8, SE-227 30 Lund, Sweden.

Best wishes

Lars Gustaf Andersson (July 27th 2011)

Review

John Hodgson: Impossible Longings

Philippa Powys: Sorrel Barn & The Tragedy of Budvale,
with an introduction by Cicely Hill (Sherborne, The Sundial Press, 2011.

ISBN 978-1-908274-02-1, hardback, pp. 278, £29.50)

Recalling his meeting with Philippa ('Katie') Powys shortly before her death, Glen Cavaliero writes, 'she was, if one may say so, ultra-Powys. With her cropped hair, weatherbeaten face, stooped figure and corduroy trousers, she resembled an old countryman; her voice was vibrant and emphatic'. *The Blackthorn Winter*, recently republished by The Sundial Press, was the only one of her novels to appear in her lifetime. Several more remain in manuscript, and here we have two of them, *The Tragedy of Budvale*, written in the 1920s, and *Sorrel Barn* from about ten years later.

Katie's life was tragically scarred by unrequited love, and it is the violence of frustrated passion 'nearly beyond the control of the mind' and its concomitant jealousies that propel her stories. In *Budvale*, Kit Cary is driven to rape and murder by his ungovernable passion for his cousin May. In *Sorrel Barn*, the Romanian Zola, unhappily married to the boorish ex-soldier Frank, is in love with the farmer John Marsh. Although her love is reciprocated, the impossibility of this relationship unhinges the farmer's brain. The authentic ferocity of the anguish in these stark stories commands respect, but it must be admitted that Philippa's psychological range is narrow, and in each story the only way out of hopelessness is in melodrama. In her sensitive introduction, Cicely Hill quotes Llewelyn Powys writing of Philippa, '... if only the gods had given her the mastery of language that she has of imagination, the world would have

welcomed more of her novels'. But the truth might be the other way round, for it is their evocation of the Wessex countryside that makes these stories memorable.

Philippa writes with an unmistakeably Powysian voice which is yet entirely different from any of her brothers. Philippa's countryside is a place of work, and she writes vividly of agricultural tasks, milking cows, making cheese, washing sheep. Philippa's cows and horses live and breathe with a vivid presence that recalls her beloved Whitman – 'I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd' – and they are everywhere. Even a mat on the floor is 'dog-lain'. Her 'bird haunted' landscapes are precise, beautifully spatial, economical, punctuated by sounds: 'The weather for the last two weeks had broken up, and there had been a spell of rainy days, with winds that made the leaves rustle and laid low the coming corn.'

Philippa's natural world offers no assuagement or philosophical consolation: her cabbages 'sleep a vegetable sleep' without becoming symbolic or metaphysical. Her descriptions of village life are also busy and populated. Her villagers are not comic rustics, but are gossipy and intrusive and express themselves in a version of Dorset dialect that is more fluent and less mannered than we are used to in John Cowper or T. F. Powys.

Philippa's writing is most successful when it makes least effort. Her narrative climaxes are cries of despair, but besides 'the frustrations of impossible longings' that are Philippa's theme, there is still an indomitability of spirit and steadiness of vision that give these stories life.

The book has been published by The Sundial Press, with evident love and dedication, as a handsome and opulent hardback. This limited edition of 100 copies is not aimed at a wide audience, but no Powysian advanced motorist will want to be without it.

Marcella Henderson-Peal

Basquing in Powys

It's the third night since I came back from Llangollen that I have been sleeping outside under a plane tree. A couple of bats flap by, there 's an owl somewhere further away. It sounds a bit worried. Some leaves grow so big towards the top of the tree and they are concealing the pale receding moon. Hundreds of stars have spilled out into the dark hole of night gaping open above me. I look up at the stars and think of Llewelyn lying awake and coughing but happy by the Dorset cliffs' edge.

Tea, bread and butter. Day has come now and I read the mountains as some people read their morning paper. The news is good. The world is purple, slate grey and green and smells of grass and honeysuckle.

Lizards scuttle off as I stir myself into some form of activity. Slithering away into every crack of the old paving. One of them doesn't bother to move. It keeps still and motionless poised on the wall. I sit down close. Opposite. Quite still. I watch the beat of its breath under its prehistoric skin. Its expressionless eyes hardly stare out. It lies, crouched, waiting, yet not. Behind the lizard, across the hazy horizon, the Pyrenees also stretch out lazily like great monstrous saurians.

I'd like to communicate in some way with the lizard but it's not looking very

responsive. I just watch it and watch it, imagining its feelings, its sensations. I wonder if it can sense my presence, that there are mountains a few miles away and to the West, a bay and further out still, breakers and a green sea and Hercynian folded cliffs. I stop imagining these sensations and start feeling them. Awareness becomes Being. The lizard and I sit motionless under the same sun, on the same stone. Busy birds fly above, a buzzard neighs swooping down in the valley. I can feel the air on my skin. It changes, blows one way then another with tiny variations in intensity. My mind is a blank. I am seeing with my skin, sensing warm breath and bare chills, listening to the slightly dryer rustle of leaves as summer drifts into autumn. No thoughts, no activity. I am there, united with the stone, the sun, the leaves and the lizard. There, in the peaceful nothingness I become my ichthyosaurian self.

Dear John Cowper Powys, showing people the way to attain such basic and primeval contentment. Did he really believe it was something you could do anywhere? I am not sure about that. Not anywhere. Cosmic communion with the lizard is more possible where I am sitting just now. A very special part of the country, one he would have loved had he known it. One that goes beyond the Celtic soul into a much older realm of imaginative creation.

Within a few hours I have travelled from Llangollen, North Wales, Dinas Bran, outlandish Welsh place-names to an old farm called Tuturroenea, in the Basque country, facing the Rhune mountain. The invisible enchantment of Wales has been transmuted into the soul of the Basque soil. A kindred soul. The Celts of Wales and the Basques, a pre-Celtic people, have much in common and can lure the imaginative mind high above their mountains to the thresholds of their myths.

Nowadays, three million Basques live on either side of the Pyrenees Mountains. They live in three provinces on the French side and four on the Spanish side. What John Cowper would have found appealing are many elements from the magic of the natural setting and the mysterious Basque people and their impossible language. Legend has it that the Devil tried very hard to learn Euzkarra by listening at the door of a farmhouse. He spent seven years on the task and finally could only manage to utter two words. Welsh and Basque seem to disregard vowels completely. Whereas Welsh is cluttered with LLs, DDs and Ys, Basque is all Zs, Xs and Ks.

Nobody knows where the Basque originate from. Their language is more ancient than Indo-European languages and the grammar as in Welsh is quite hellish. There is strangely relatively little vocabulary. Language must be useful. However, there is a tradition of versified improvisation and the Basque bard is called a Bertsolari. It is an ancient form of slam poetry. The written word is quite a modern concept here, oral tradition has persisted for aeons, ever since pre-neolithic times. As in Wales, Euzkarra the Basque language has been taught in schools for 25 years now. Before that, speaking it was not allowed. The Basque have a strong sense of identity, are prouder than pride and their claims to autonomy have been seeped in bombs and blood. Crushing the language was a way of crushing the people. Most children have Basque names now. The names that are not translations of catholic saints' names such as

Michael (Mikel) and John (Ioni) include wonderfully pagan sounding names such as Ximista (lightning), Ihintza (dew), Eguzki (sun), Ortzi (rainbow) etc... With names like that, you have got to be different...

Basque paganism was very strong and still is in many ways. Because of its remoteness, stuck between the Bay of Biscay and the Pyrenees, it was christianised quite late. Sources differ but some say parts of the lowlands in Spain were christianised in the 4th century or even beforehand, but the new faith didn't reach the peasants and shepherds of these parts till closer to the 11th or 12th century. Even when christianised, the Basques carried on mixing pagan elements to their faith, beliefs and traditions and still do. Nobody would dare tell a Basque what exactly to believe in, not even God!

As in most pagan beliefs, Basque pagan elements are mostly feminine. They acknowledge the magic of giving life and reproduction but they concern both organic and spiritual reproduction. The first breath of paganism takes beings beyond the shape of organic life into the magic of life-awareness. Mythical pagan gods are mainly chthonic and include Mari the vital power of the Earth-being (Lur) and Sugaar who represents the threats from the sky. He looks a bit like a Tetzacoatl-type dragon and is also called Herensuge. They would meet on the top of the mountains, the spirit of the gods' abode. Incidentally, at the end of mass in our village church, the priest blesses the congregation with the words « may the Spirit of the Rhune (highest local mountain) be with you » !

Most of the gods of the old religion would seem dwell on earth or below it. There are no Olympian-like deities. The sky is just a void, a place where the gods may circulate on their way to one place or another. There are also water nymphs with bird claws, the « Laminak » whose peeled-willow limbs John Cowper might have looked for, peering through the woods by the many brooks and streams. Their male counterparts are supposed to have built the cromlechs in the mountains. The many caves where pre-neolithic Basques dwelt are also the home of Aatxe, a Mithras-like young red bull who could also take the shape of a man. Bull-related sports such as bull-runs and bullfights are still practiced in a lot of villages. The bulls used are descended from the aurochs.

Out of the woods would come Basajaun, a bear-like creature still much alive now in folk tales and legends. The local version of the Cewry Giants are the rock-throwing Jentilak who lived in remote hills inland; one of them became a Santa Claus character and he brings children gifts. These giants were a very strong and tall legendary people, possibly of the Stone Age, who never discovered iron and its uses and were gradually pushed further inland. Many legends mention them. The giants must also beware of Tartalo the huge Basque Cyclops.

There were naturally people practicing magic and establishing relations with the gods, the surrounding natural world and the magic elements of reality. These people were the harmless Sorginak. In 1610 the Spanish Inquisition coincided with a revival of pagan practices and herbal medicine. This resulted in over thirty so-called witches

being severely punished: twelve of the tiny border village of Zugarramurdi were burnt at the stake. On the French side, Pierre de Lancre was sent from Bordeaux to put a stop to witchcraft mainly in the towns of Dax and Saint Jean de Luz. The witches were in fact immigrant Portuguese, Moors and Gypsies who would read fortunes. The fisherman's wives were accused of supposedly immoral behaviour while their husbands were away in Newfoundland hunting whales. Reading the records of these awful deeds would have stimulated John Cowper's sadistic inclinations and he would have had Urquhart writing about the unauthorised history of the area. I can imagine the thoughts boggling around his head during long walks in the woods with a Basque canine version of The Old.

Giants, witches, dragons He would have had to walk the hills with a makila, a special walking stick with a concealed spike. The shepherds used it as a weapon to fend off the wolves and bears that peopled the mountains till not so long ago. Many a pilgrim on his way to Compostela could have done with the help of such a bludgeon. The makila would have greatly appealed to Mad Bet's murderous intents up on the Tor. John Cowper would have delighted in the craftsmanship of the pommel and one can wonder what text he would have chosen to be engraved on the handle to make it his very own. Had he spent his old age in a tiny village his body would have been interred in a cemetery with the best view of the area. His grave would have been erected by a local stone-mason. It would have been a disc-shaped headstone with an engraving of the Basque swastika picturing the four winds and also an engraving of what characterised his life and pursuits. Now what would Phyllis have chosen for him...

Whether he would have chosen conversion to catholicism or not, he would have delighted in a Basque mass. Most of the prayers and hymns are spoken in Euzkarra which makes it all the more mysterious and sacred, an incantation more than a prayer. Whether you believe or not, you get carried away with the beauty and the power of ritual. The churches themselves, in the tiniest remote village, are richly decorated with gold and baroque altars. Very different from the peacefully stark Welsh chapels However, Welsh choirs can be paralleled in the beauty of their singing by their Basque counterparts. Singing is second nature here and a gift to the life forces and God. The Basque also dance on special occasions in church and make offerings of food to the altar during mass in honour of Brotherhood meetings. There is the Trout Brotherhood, the Pink Garlic Brotherhood, the Cherry and the Cured Ham Brotherhoods, the members of which walk down the aisle in a procession with their medieval gowns and staffs, holding the offerings of their trade in baskets. I saw the parish priest walk away after mass with the sacrificial trout now destined to become a tasty Sunday lunch.

Women are important in society and therefore are seated before the altar in Church, on the flagstones and tombstones beneath which the members of the family used to be buried. Those that bear life are close to the previous generations and have honoured them by producing their descendants. Think of all the powysian conversa-

tions about lineage that are conducted in JCP's novels, as in *Ducdame!* The men sit in galleries on either side of the church. If the church is by the seaside, a fishing boat hangs from the ceiling to bless the sailors.

Women in the Basque country could inherit the family farmhouse if they were the eldest. Their husband would come and live in the house and take on the house's name as a surname. Houses bear a descriptive name: Etxeberry is the new house, Elizondo, the house by the church. Younger siblings could stay if they worked on the farm, or they would join the army, take orders or emigrate to America and Latin America. There was no Lord, no feudal system: a true democracy to John Cowper's liking that he could have described to Emma Goldman. It was however a democracy that kept itself to itself. Even if a few Moors and Portuguese found their way to the coastal towns, the Basque don't mix. They are proud of who they are as the Welsh are. They are also genetically unique: most of them are rhesus negative and belong to the O blood group system; their DNA makeup includes unusual elements. Some imaginative people believe they come from Atlantis, so JCP could have included them in his eponymous novel. Why not? They play ball games of Basque *pelote* that are similar to those played by the Maya. Whether they share the same roots or whether the games were imported by the Conquistador, many of whom were Basque, is another story.

There is a lot going on behind the hills of Euzkadi on either side. There are the ghosts of lost gods still wandering about and reinterpretations of the new God. There are cosmic forces of freedom and pride surfing the air, riding buzzards over the fields. There are no Arthurian Legends, no Merlin, no castles, but there is something older, more primeval, from an earlier time long time ago.

I give a last look to my lizard; several more are now basking in the sun next to it. I see them wink. These tiny beings, descendants of the Dragon god Herensuge, have been reading over my shoulder. They know John Cowper. They met him years ago in Wales. He was an odd man. He would kneel before them and recite an incantation to them in an ancient language. The language of the old gods. Was it Welsh or was it Basque?

