Editorial

Accounts of Theodore Powys naturally include his wife Violet, though often as a background figure, sometimes patronisingly. Theodora Scutt, the adopted daughter 'Susie' Powys, who lived with her for thirty years, has provided dispassionate appraisals (notably in *NL* 28, July 1996); these are inevitably coloured by their incompatibility. Sylvia Warner delighted in Violet (calling her the 'essential vitamin' that saved Theodore from despair) as did Stephen Tomlin and others, but few can have rejoiced in her friendship so much as Mark Holloway in the description reprinted here. James Stern reports her reading Jane Austen aloud of an evening; Theodora says Violet fell asleep, but she did read stories to Julia Mathews and her sister as small children, which they loved. Violet's grandson John and Joy Coombes describe her in later life. The young Juanita Casey saw Theodore as sage and magician, with Violet – as for many others – a provider of excellent teas.

Also in this *Newsletter*: reports on two interim meetings (Ely in April, Dorchester in June) and on the exhibition of JCP material in the National Library of Wales (with an account of the fortunately not too disastrous fire there); a review of W. J. Keith's new book, on the Powyses and religion; a glimpse of Llewelyn Powys in his Swiss sanatorium, via a Louis Wilkinson novel; a visitor from New Zealand to JCP in East Chaldon; the aged JCP's recipe for the art of growing old, from pills to psychology; and a dinner of Powys enthusiasts in Paris. 'News and Notes' spreads its net. Llangollen beckons once again. Finally, tributes to Patricia Dawson, with a selection of her poems: her drawing of a fruitful apple tree is on our cover.

ON OTHER PAGES

A Meeting in Hampstead
Saturday 23rd November 2013

JCP as Diarist

Our past Chairman **John Hodgson** will lead the discussion of JCP's diaries at a meeting at **The Friends Meeting House, 120 Heath Street, Hampstead, London, at 2pm on Saturday 23rd November.** The venue is located very near Hampstead Underground station.

What do JCP's diaries tell us about his family relationships, his friends and professional associations, his relationship with Phyllis Playter, his daily routine and habits, his walks and observation of the natural world, his knowledge of world events and contemporary politics? What do the diaries tell us about his reading, his ideas for new books, the development of his writing, and his ideas and philosophy of life? What do the diaries reveal about JCP's inner life or are they an act of concealment? Whom is JCP writing for? These and many more questions will be explored in a discussion, with readings from the full text of JCP's diaries during the period he lived at Phudd Bottom in upstate New York, especially during the years **1932 to June 1934,** as well as for the month of **March 1940** when he was living in Corwen in North Wales. This will include new transcriptions of JCP's diaries recently produced by members of the Powys Society.

All are welcome. The event is **free** although a contribution towards costs of refreshments after the discussion would be very much appreciated.

If you wish to attend this meeting ***please notify Hon. Secretary*** (see inside front cover).

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Chairman's Report, 2012–13

Somehow it does glide on, our weird 'Powys Society'. Several of us have been members for over 40 years, yet amazingly, the texts still come alive when we meet, and there are new insights and discoveries to be made – and new friendships. But if the convivial conferences and meetings continue to take place, with *Journal* and *Newsletters* coming through the door, that is only because, behind the scenes, individual members each give so much; their time and energy mustn't go thankless!

For example, suspended between Dorset and Haarlem, Louise de Bruin liaises with Charles Lock in Copenhagen in editing the *Journal,* and with Jeremy Bird as typesetter; she also works with Anna Pawelko as Conference Organiser; and this year, together with Max Peltier, another much appreciated volunteer, has seen through the press Bill Keith's *Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and The Powyses.* Anna is also our

valued Treasurer. Peter Foss as ever provides guidance and expertise. Michael Kowalewski is always on hand for help and advice with the Collection. Kate Kavanagh continues to bring out three entertaining *Newsletters*, with Stephen Powys Marks on the practical side; she is also working on JCP's diaries from the American years. The 1940 Diary project is overseen by Chris Thomas (a London meeting on the Diaries, led by John Hodgson, will take place in November). Chris, as secretary, is active in every department, including welcoming new members – fifteen this year, nearly all recruited through Frank Kibblewhite's Powys Society website. Warm thanks to all of you who've made another year run smoothly. Digitisation of our publications is one of the long-term challenges we must now prepare to meet: but for this we must find a new cast of volunteers. Please, dear readers, make contact with Chris Thomas: we really do need your help.

2013, marking the half-century since JCP died, has been celebrated with an exhibition at the National Library of Wales, where a major JCP archive is held. The Society is very grateful to our colleague Geraint Phillips, curator of manuscripts at the NLW, for organizing this, and I would like to acknowledge the excellent support and assistance we continually receive from the National Library of Wales and especially from Geraint, who is responsible for cataloguing their Powys material, for his continuing support in raising awareness of JCP's work. I was saddened to learn of the fire at NLW earlier this year (see report in this *Newsletter*) and very glad to hear that none of the documents in the historic collections were damaged or destroyed.

Among other ongoing projects, the society has liaised with Cecil Woolf, who will publish next year Peter Foss's long-planned edition of Llewelyn Powys's 1910 *Diary*. We also made a grant to Marcella Henderson-Peal, towards the transcription in Paris of JCP's correspondence with Jean Wahl. Powys enthusiasm in other countries and languages underpins our own, with Jacqueline Peltier's *lettre powysienne* as flagship. The most time-consuming saga of all, the issue of the Society's Collections, may at last be resolved by next year, with Exeter giving a renewed use to these materials within a University community.

The pattern of more intimate meetings in London, Ely and Dorchester seems to work well (in May I led an Ely group, including our President, on JCP's *Weymouth Sands*; and felt we'd all participated in a really worthwhile exploration). Meanwhile, booking for the Llangollen Conference in August is good. So our Society does have at least the appearance of solidity, even if, in reality, it is mostly down to a few fragile individuals. I note with melancholy that those who disappear are often the deceased; in the past year we particularly lament the loss of Patricia Dawson, a much loved and active member until a few years ago. We have been lucky to have our President, Glen Cavaliero, still so vigorous, at Street and at Ely. A new year beckons!

Timothy Hyman

To order **Mary Casey's *Under the Shadow of the Oath***, see instructions on page 48.

Etching from Patricia Dawson's Porius *series:*
Merlin restores Blodeuwedd from her transformation into an owl.

Hon. Treasurer's Report for 2012.

The Powys Society accounts for 2012 are set out on page 5 : they have been approved by the Society's Honorary Auditor, Jane Roberts of Hills and Burgess Accountants, Leighton Buzzard, and the Society is once again most grateful to her for her work and advice on behalf of the Society.

The paid up membership for 2012 was 280 members, and I would ask members to encourage those interested in the work of the Powys family to join the Society.

Our income from subscriptions in 2012 was £4820.07.

The cost of producing the *Journal* in 2012 was £2269.48, and *Newsletters* £2217.33, making a total of £4486.81, which was a substantial decrease on the 2011 figure of £5532.44.

The cost of the two Day Meetings in Dorchester and Ely in 2012 amounted to £140.50.

Anna Pawelko

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2012

INCOME				
Subscriptions		for 2012 (280 Members)	£4838.57	
		- refund	18.50	
			£4820.07	£4820.07
Publication Sales			£121.47	£121.47
Conference		Registration fees	£7378	
		Conference book sales	£482	
		Less refunds	- £340	
		Less expenses	-£277	
		Less Wessex Hotel	£6709.25	
			£533.75	£533.75
Other		Bank Interest	£17.83	£17.83
Gift Aid Refunds			£1309.50	£1309.50
				£6802.62
EXPENDITURE				
Powys Journal		Cost of printing	£1732	
		Typesetting	£537.48	
			£2269.48	£2269.48
Leaflets		Cost of printing	£156.66	£156.66
Newsletters 75-77		Printing	£2217.33	£2217.33
Day Meetings		Dorchester	£114	
		Expenses Ely meeting	£26.50	
			£140.50	£140.50
Expenses	Curator		£80	
		Secretary	£323.43	
		Treasurer	£69.41	
		Publications Manager £115		
		Chairman	£125.30	
		Committee	£484.45	
			£1197.59	£1197.59
Other expenditure	Alliance of Literary societies		£15	
Postage			£289.16	
			£304.16	£304.16
				£6285.72
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE				**£516.90**

STATEMENT OF FUNDS AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2012

Cash at bank 31st December 2012 **£22,871.54**
Community Account £1,422.69, Instant Saver £4,423.15, Business Saver £17, 025.70

Notes. The Gift Aid refund consists of £775.25 for 2011 plus £534.25 for 2012. In 2013 the amount will be smaller as it will relate to one year only.

Cash turnover in 2012: total receipts £14,128.87. Total payments £13,611.97 *Anna Pawelko, Hon Treasurer*

Committee Nominations 2013–2014

The following Honorary Officers have been nominated and have agreed to stand:

Nomination	*Proposer*		*Seconder*
Chairman	**Timothy Hyman**	Tony Head	Sonia Lewis
Vice Chairman	**Peter Foss**	John Hodgson	Peter Lazare
Hon. Secretary	**Chris Thomas**	Robert Carrington	Jacqueline Peltier
Hon. Treasurer	**Anna Pawelko**	Julia Mathews	Louise de Bruin

For the Committee the following has been nominated by a Society member and has agreed to stand:

Nomination	*Proposer*	*Seconder*
Louise de Bruin	Chris Wilkinson	Raymond Cox

If these nominations are approved at **AGM** the Committee, from August 2013 will consist of those named above and **Stephen Powys Marks, Michael Kowalewski** (Collection Manager), **Shelagh Powys Hancox, Trevor Davies** (who all have one year left to run of their three-year term of office), **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter* Editor) and **Jeff Kwintner** (who both have two years left to run of their three-year term of office). **Charles Lock** (editor of *The Powys Journal*) serves as *ex-officio* member.

All paid-up members of The Powys Society are invited to submit to Hon. Secretary new nominations for service on the committee from August 2014, at any time during the course of the forthcoming year. The deadline for submission of new nominations is 1 June 2014.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

AGM 2013

The Annual General Meeting of The Powys Society will be held at the Hand Hotel, Llangollen, at 11.00am, on Sunday 18 August 2013. All members of The Powys Society are welcome to participate in the meeting whether or not they are attending the Conference.

AGENDA

1 Minutes of AGM 2012 as published in *Newsletter* 77, November 2012 and matters arising.
2 Nominations of Honorary Officers and members of The Powys Society Committee for the period 2013/2014.
3 Report of Hon. Treasurer and presentation of annual accounts for year ending 31 December 2012.
4 Report of Powys Society Collection Manager.
5 Report of Hon. Secretary.

6 Chairman's Report as published in *Newsletter* 79, July 2013.
7 Date and venue of annual conference 2014.
8 AOB

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

The Powys Society Conference 2013

The Hand Hotel, Llangollen
Friday 16th August – Sunday 18th August
'PLACING JOHN COWPER POWYS'

Programme

Friday 16th August

16.00 Arrival
17.30 Reception: welcome by the Chairman
18.30 Dinner
20.00 **Glen Cavaliero**: 'Endurance and Enjoyment: the Pleasures of Powys'

Saturday 17th August

08.00 Breakfast
09.30 **Robert Caserio**: 'Powys amid English and American Autobiographies of the 1930s'
Coffee
11.15 **Charles Lock**: '*Wolf Solent* and World Literature'
13.00 Lunch
Afternoon free – guided walk to place of local Powys interest
19.00 Dinner
20.30 Readings from **T. F. Powys's Fables** by P. J. Kavanagh and John Hodgson, followed by discussion with members and panel

Sunday 18th August

08.00 Breakfast
09.30 **Katherine Saunders Nash**: 'The Serpentine Narrator: John Cowper Powys's Turn from Lecturer to Novelist'
11.00 **AGM** followed by discussion
13.00 Lunch
15.00 Departure

For details of all speakers and presentations please see Newsletter *78, page 6.*

John Cowper Powys and Douglas Stewart
a New Zealand connection

The article below was first published in *The Western Morning News* (an independent 'historically Liberal' daily paper based in Plymouth) on 28th August 1937. The author, **Douglas Stewart** (1913–85), was born in New Zealand and published his first volume of poetry there, but his importance lies more with Australia where he spent most of his working life, and where he is credited with influencing the development of its literary culture. He was an award-winning poet, playwright, short story writer, compiler of anthologies of Australasian poetry, and a literary editor and critic.

He was literary editor of *The Bulletin*, a popular weekly Australian magazine, from 1940 to 1960, and made an important contribution to the development of literary and artistic culture in Australia. He reviewed *Owen Glendower* for *The Bulletin* in 1942, describing it as *a window on one of the strangest minds of our time.* As a young man in New Zealand he read books by Llewelyn and TFP as well as JCP's *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance*, which had a powerful influence on his own early poetry. When Douglas Stewart sent JCP some of his poems he received an enthusiastic reply from Wales encouraging him to come and visit.

Douglas Stewart subsequently worked his passage by ship to England in 1937 and visited JCP in East Chaldon, on one of his yearly visits from Corwen. We know exactly when Stewart made this visit as JCP wrote to Llewelyn from Chaldon on 26th July 1937 saying *At this moment ... I am writing alone in Hilda's house waiting the appearance of a young poet called Stewart from New Zealand* ... Over 40 years later, in his memoir, *Springtime in Taranaki*, Douglas Stewart described the impact JCP made on him on this visit: *... so exuberant, so extravagant, so strange and wild and uncontrollable ... he stays in my mind as one of the three people I have met in my life who have conveyed to me the impression of genius: of talent and personality quite beyond the ordinary.*

In the memoir he also described his meetings in Chaldon with TFP, Valentine Ackland and Sylvia Townsend Warner. More information about Stewart's visit can be obtained from a letter from Valentine Ackland to Elizabeth Wade White dated 27th August 1937 (included in Peter Judd's *Catalogue & Finding Aid to the Elizabeth Wade White Papers* at NYPL – see googlebooks; and printed in full in *The Akeing Heart*, pp.67–9): *There is a new young poet. I hope there are many. But this one arrived in Chaldon from New Zealand, to visit John Powys, and learning that Dove and Seagull were near at hand came on to our doorstep. He is called Douglas Stewart and his book is called* Green Lions *and has some good things in it but he had better stuff with him in manuscript. A very rich and solid poetry ... He spoke of the difficulty of writing poetry in New Zealand. All the place names and plant names were taken straight from the Maori and though beautiful in themselves do not assimilate with the English language. You will see it presents difficulties. The green lions are waves.*

Douglas Stewart kept up a correspondence with JCP until the 1950s (JCP also

from ***Cicely Hill***

Patricia Dawson, a Powys friend for 40 years

In 1979, soon after my husband died, Patricia sent me the small print reproduced on this *Newsletter* cover – a bare apple tree, the roots mysteriously visible through the earth and two pyramids of apples lying under the boughs.

Patricia's message on the back is written in a hand distinctive and individual as the image itself. The apple-tree print has known five houses since then and now hangs on the wall by my fireside, a companionable and magical reminder of its maker and her works.

from ***Sonia Lewis***

Remembering Patricia

From my first meeting with Patricia at a Powys Conference I sensed someone with a deep feeling for the moment. This simple being present seemed to stem from her imaginative ideas and rich memories. I thought of her as a wise-woman, somewhere between a sage and a sorceress with her dowsing pendulum to hand.

She was both quiet and still but beneath this very English reserve she was strongly defiant. Like JCP she would often be outraged by something that many might not even notice, the details that make life worthy. Patricia had an Edwardian elegance, a thorough Powysian whom JCP would have recognised.

To be with her was just a question of letting the tuning happen. I felt privileged that 'we two had met'.

from Patricia's son ***Giles Dawson***:

Having trained as a textile designer at Croydon School of Art in the early 1940s, Patricia resumed serious artistic production in the late '60s following marriage to Jim and the nurture of three children. Already adept at lino-cuts, Patricia went to Morley College to learn how to etch, and was soon exhibiting in the crypt of St John's Smith Square and frequently at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. JCP's The Brazen Head *inspired etchings and a group of sculptures, one of which was used for the cover of the Picador paperback re-issue of the novel. She went on to make a series of etchings based on scenes from* Porius, *with other works inspired by Powys books. It is hoped to exhibit all this work and much more at a memorial weekend in London in the near future. Patricia, with Jim (who for some years looked after advertising for* The Powys Review) *attended many Powys events. Jim died in 1998, but Patricia continued to go to conferences when she was able. She greatly valued the contact, conversation and friendship of many members.*

Patricia's etchings are represented in the collections of the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. At the memorial event it will be possible to purchase examples of those of her prints which exist in multiple form. Members of The Powys Society will be in the loop, but you might like to register interest with < gilesvdawson@gmail.com >.

Patricia V. Dawson: Five poems from Wet Leaves

The Last Act

All those things you might
have said before, but dared not,
coming out, and there was I
paralysed by pity, tongue
numbed for want of
an appropriate response.

And then followed warped memories
of a time before I knew you,
but which you bully me
for not remembering.
In plays and novels it is not like this.

Advice to a War Criminal

Change your name
move to another country
smile at your neighbours.
Be kind to their children
and their animals.
And when you are tracked down
make quite certain
that you are very old and barking mad.

Vision On
(after the first showing of JCP on film)

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

The Stroke

She was my Plimsoll Line,
someone I relied on
to stop me overloading.

Sometimes she talked
so much good sense,
it toppled into comedy,
but never turned to gibberish,
as now.

Trapped inside a head
that I have tuned into
for seventy years
she must be making sense.

At school, in a Latin play
she was Ariadne.
"Cape hoc linum," she said,
as she handed Theseus
the thread that took him in
and from the maze.

In this cruel labyrinth
the path is far more tortuous,
presents a problem
that even she
will find it hard to solve.

Wet Leaves

All my life I have searched
for new teachers, but find,
at the end, the best
are the leaves rotting
in the drain by my window.

Weymouth Sands *at Ely 13th April 2013*

Another friendly and illuminating meeting, of about a dozen people, organised by **Sonia Lewis** at the excellent restaurant/ gallery, the Old Fire Engine House by Ely cathdral. One room this time was dedicated to Sonia's pottery – delicate flowerlike vases in bloodred and transparent primrose, with earthier stoneware dishes — accompanied by Japanese-inspired watercolours of branches and blossom, by Peter Cavaciuti.

Timothy Hyman our Chairman, leading the discussion, had brought a collection of visual references to *Weymouth Sands*: a copy of the 1931 Ward Lock guidebook JCP would have consulted (with its evocative advertisements); old postcards; a Chesil Beach stone; and a picture of Sea Holly (the "love charm" that Perdita and the Jobber ritually eat, in the chapter we were to focus on). Tim's painting "John Cowper Powys Introduces Me To A Circle of His Admirers" (exhibited 1990) is on the cover of the PSNA's *Powys Notes*, 1995 – the circle of admirers suspended above Weymouth Bay in "a kind of *affectionate substance*".

Tim first read *Weymouth Sands* at the time of the huge Bonnard exhibition at the Royal Academy in London (1966) and illustrated his feelings for the book by an reproduction from his own book on Bonnard, one of the series of a woman in a bath, where he sensed that its colour and sympathy connected with Powys's treatment of the people in his story. There is also the element of water, essential to the background of Powys's book. (We may remember that JCP classified his dominant elements as water and earth, Phyllis's as water and air). Wilson Knight in his writings on Powys stresses the influence of water in the "age of Aquarius".

Sonia Lewis (standing) Owen Lewis, Chris Michaelides, John Hodgson, Chris Thomas, Glen Cavaliero.

Weymouth Sands had appealed to Tim more than *Glastonbury* or *Wolf Solent*, in spite of the world-weariness shown by most of its characters, since the strong presence of Weymouth itself – the fetishization of place — always gives a lift, a gathering of spirit, a sense of identity through place, an extra significance. Many of the characters give voice to this, filtering their thoughts through an incantation of place names, a sacred hieroglyph of shared associations making a shared mythology. Jobber Skald above all is aware of this: in the 'Sea-Holly' chapter, looking down from Portland, with Perdita, on Weymouth bay , 'his own land, his own sea' — it's not familiarity that 'bowls you over ... it's as if they were *making something*'.

Tim referred to Glen's evaluation of *Weymouth* in his book on JCP as novelist (1973 – Glen said he now had reservations about his views then). For Glen, *Weymouth Sands* connected with another south-coastal town, Eastbourne, where he grew up. The construction of JCP's book, with its non-obvious"plot", and the sometimes confusing shifts between the huge numbers of characters (70), he now feels to be deliberate, and the lack of line spaces between change of scene intentional, to keep the flow (as if a stream-of- consciousness in Weymouth itself). And JCP himself asserted the necessity of *longueurs*. Both Glen and Tim supported the ending of the book (Perdita turning Jobber's killer stone into a paperweight), that to KK seems an anti-climax. Alternative imaginings (casting the stone back onto Chesil Beach, or into the crack on Portland Bill – ending with waves as the book began ...) were severely dismissed as quite un-Powysian, too like a bad movie. There is a temptation to edit *Weymouth Sands* into a more 'ordinary' novel ... John Hodgson demonstated a Powys character digging, inserting the blade and thinking for four pages before lifting up the spadeful.

Discussion touched – among other things — on possible connections with Gogol (a favorite of Phyllis), about whom Nabokov remarked that one letter only stands between "comic" and "cosmic"; and connections with Goethe – no ultimate "Mothers", but the coven of gossiping housekeepers, those prisoners of house-care, cut off from the sea and wider horizons. Sonia noted the importance of these minor characters and their alternative lives —

> In the steam of their kettles, in the smoke of their chimneys, half the natural responses to the life of the race they served had evaporated from their devoted veins ... Lizzie Chant began to show signs of returning from the sanity of Not Being to the insanity of Being ...

Perdita – hypersensitive yet determined – is clearly based on Phyllis. Jerry Cobbold (Charlie Chaplin? whom Powys met) appeals to some more than others, notably *not* in "Sea Holly", for his explosion of scabrous misogyny in the pub. He is the clown as subversive "Joker", both comic and demonic. (A footnote: what was Jerry playing on the piano – Scriabin?) Is Sylvanus's moustache a disguise, or seat of his power like Samson's hair? After losing it, his character develops positively.

The symbolic natures of the two Weymouth sands — dry sand for Punch and Judy, erotic encounters, taking off and putting on stockings; wet sand for children's castles and the joys of paddling in sea, "the juice of life".

As well as water, there is the influence of stone. Portland, the stoniest of places, is central. Stone, sand and water interact — sand midway between stone and water. The small stone with seaweed attached, that the Jobber throws into the sea, when he and Perdita first meet: is he the stone, she the seaweed? Or do we connect this stone with the other stone he carries as an obsessive burden — his manhood? his heart? his self, which belongs in the sea? Or is this a typical Powys compulsive or subconscious act, with no other meaning at all?

KK

Powys Day, Dorchester 8th June 2013

The scholarly surroundings of the Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society library at the Dorset County Museum once again provided a stimulating venue for our annual Powys study day in Dorchester. On Saturday 8th June a small group of members gathered around the table in the centre of the library for a discussion of selected passages chosen by members from writings by and about the Powyses on the theme of love, friendship and family relationships. On this occasion we were also joined by members of the South Dorset Group of the Ramblers' Association who later accompanied us on a brisk circular walk from the centre of East Chaldon to Chydyok, Llewelyn's memorial stone and West Chaldon. Historical photographs showing images of Chaldon village, Chydyok, and Rat's Barn in the 1930s as well as modern photographs of the stone memorials in Chaldon churchyard were displayed on the library table to help us identify the locations of some of the places on our walk.

We began our meeting by reading the passage from *Welsh Ambassadors* in which Louis Wilkinson recalls a visit he made to Montacute vicarage in 1903–04, and

describes the powerful impression made on him by the imposing figure of the Powys father presiding over the family at the head of the dining-room table. He remarks on the "the strong thick wall of Powys solidarity", speculates about the inheritance of Powys family character traits, and gives a short description of the attitude of Mrs Powys to Llewelyn's illness ("These young men", he quotes her as saying, 'seem to want to live for ever"). This led to debate about the veracity and reliability of Louis Wilkinson's account of his visit to the family and especially his portrait of the Powys mother. (For some comments on Louis Wilkinson's relationship with the Powys family see the introduction to the article, 'The Little Boy with Bellows' by Louise de Bruin in *The Powys Journal* XXII (2012) and the note by W. J. Keith on JCP's review of *The Buffoon* in *NL* 76 (July 2012). For further commentary on the same passage see *Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and the Powyses*, by W. J. Keith).

Our conversation continued with a discussion of other aspects of Powys family life suggested in *Welsh Ambassadors*, especially the way the Powyses' relationships with each other may have influenced their writings in later life.

Rosemary Dickens read a passage from Llewelyn's essay 'The Wassail Bowl and New Year Customs' for its depiction of old seasonal family traditions; **Julia Matthews** read from Theodora Scutt's book *Cuckoo in the Powys Nest* selecting a very vivid passage about Theodora's memory of her uncles and aunts visiting Theodore at Christmas time; **Jeremy Bird** read passages from TFP's 'The White Weathercock' in *The House with the Echo* to illustrate Theodore's views on love and relationships with young country girls.

We welcomed **Rosemary Chinchen**, one of our visiting non-members, who told us about the friendship between her aunt and Lucy Penny at Buckland Newton in the 1950s and showed us examples of their correspondence. **Michael Kowalewski** showed us a unique association copy of one of the earliest English translations of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* made by Alexander Tille and published in 1899 by Fisher Unwin. (The translation by Tille was originally published by Henry & Co in 1896.) This copy is inscribed to Katie by Edward Garnett (1868–1936), the influential publisher's reader, literary editor, husband of JCP's favourite translator of Russian books, friend of D. H. Lawrence and proponent of Nietzsche's philosophy. **Louise de Bruin** told us that this was one of Katie's favourite books. She told Gerard Casey that she wished to be buried with this book as well as with her copy of Whitman's poems. Michael also showed us letters to Katie and some old family photographs that had been slipped in to the book including a photographic portrait of the Powys mother and father. This rare copy of a scarce book, including the photographs and the letters, has been generously donated to The Powys Society Collection by Lis Whitelaw who received them from Rosemary Manning (1911–88), the author and literary executor of Alyse Gregory.

In the afternoon we made our way to the village of East Chaldon for our walk to Chydyok. We were blessed with perfect sunny weather. The air was warm. Chydyok Lane looked very inviting, with its picturesque old cottages, brightly coloured flower-

filled gardens and heavily scented climbing roses underneath a radiant blue sky. Immediately in front of us we could see a brilliant white chalk-lined path, leading in an undulating rhythm, amid the immense downland scenery, towards the distant horizon. We passed Appletree Cottage where the sculptor Elizabeth Muntz had lived and worked with her sister, the novelist and mediaevalist, Hope Muntz. Buttercups, foxgloves and pink campions filled the hedgerows. We paused at stages to listen to readings. A recital of Katie Powys's poem 'The Valley' was given. The poem exactly describes the landscape of the downs and seemed very appropriate: *Here lies a valley where the Spirit breathes ... the sun loves the valley. He blesses with rays of brilliant light.* At Chydyok we explored the farmhouse, found the remains of Llewelyn's hut in the overgrown garden, and listened to readings from JCP's description of the house, written in a letter to Phyllis in1924, as well as Edna St Vincent Millay's poem 'The Ballad of Chaldon Down'.

On the cliffs above Chydyok there was a light breeze blowing. The sea, far below, was intensely blue. In the distance we could clearly see Portland and the White Nose and hear the cries of many gulls. We made good progress and reached Llewelyn's memorial stone. We rested here, listened to more readings and walked back to East Chaldon along a flintstone track, bordered with clumps of gorse and wild thyme, leading across the downs to West Chaldon. We visited the churchyard in East Chaldon to look at the stone monuments of Sylvia Townsend Warner, Valentine Ackland, Elizabeth Muntz and Janet Pollock and to examine Katie's cross, restored by fellow member John Sanders, which we found was still in good condition. We left the village in cars and drove to the crest of the ridge dominated by the Five Marys. On the other side of the hill the whole of the Dorset plain suddenly came into view spreading out in a vast panorama of green fields and purple brown heathland. It was the perfect ending to a very enjoyable Powys day.

Chris Thomas

Exhibition: Authors of Wales: John Cowper Powys

The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, 9th March 2013 to 4th February 2014

Geraint Phillips writes:

The National Library of Wales, in Aberystwyth, is marking the fiftieth anniversary of John Cowper's death with a small exhibition which chronicles his life and highlights his major achievements. On display is a selection of books, photographs and manuscripts, together with the craggy and imposing bronze bust of the 91- year-old JCP by the sculptor Oloff de Wet. There is also an opportunity to watch an extract from the 1994 HTV drama documentary *The Great Powys*.

Around half of the fifty items on display are manuscripts from NLW's rich and extensive collection of primary source JCP material. John Cowper's childhood years are represented by two pieces of juvenilia – 'The Knight of the Festoon', and 'Llewelyn Meredith' – which he composed as a pupil at Westbury House preparatory school, in Sherborne. They reflect his nascent interest in things Welsh, and his early infatuation with Walter Scott's romances. His first serious literary endeavours are represented by one of the numerous surviving drafts of narrative prose which he wrote in his twenties, and referred to collectively in his *Autobiography* as 'an interminable and totally unpublishable story, a story in which I let myself go to the extreme limit'.

JCP's theatrical lecturing style is captured in a pencil sketch by one of his students, Maria Vernie Pease, at Goldsmiths College, around 1903. The sketch is endorsed with a wry comment by JCP: 'I think she over-emphasised my chin'. JCP met Phyllis Playter after giving a lecture on Dostoyevsky at Joplin, Missouri, in 1921. Many years later Phyllis recalled that, 'the lecture was so powerful that three people in the audience fainted. I knew he was the man for me.' The exhibition includes one of JCP's earliest love letters to Phyllis (of which NLW holds over eight hundred), together with a draft of one of his many poems to her. In 1929, on Phyllis's urging, he began keeping a diary, a practice which he continued for the next thirty-three years. Something of JCP's significance as one of the 20th century's great diarists is conveyed by selection of five of his diaries, including the one for 1929.

JCP's voluminous correspondence with members of his family is represented by letters to and from Llewelyn, and by a letter to Marian which was returned to John Cowper by the wartime censor because it was deemed unreadable and contained drawings. There is also a rare letter to JCP from his father, Charles.

While in America, JCP developed friendships with several prominent US writers, and the exhibition features letters to him from Henry Miller and e.e. cummings. It was also in America that John Cowper reached his maturity as a novelist; one of the most precious items on display is part of the holograph of *Wolf Solent*, showing the novel's opening paragraphs. Among NLW's most recent Powys acquisitions are three manuscript pages containing the ending of *A Glastonbury Romance*. This revised ending, with its references to the goddess Cybele, was sent by JCP to his publishers a fortnight after the original ending. He described it in his diary for 1931 as: 'the Cybele pages, that end of Glastonbury invented by the T.T. & due entirely to her original genius.'*

JCP entered his second great phase of creativity after moving to Corwen in 1935. In Wales he cultivated friendships with eminent Welsh scholars, antiquarians and literary figures who – often writing to him in Welsh – readily assisted him with his researches for *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. On display is a letter in Welsh to JCP from the poet and scholar W. J. Gruffydd, expressing his appreciation of *Owen Glendower*. An example of JCP's own Welsh can be seen in the manuscript of an address which he delivered on the occasion of his ordination as a member of the Powys Gorsedd at Corwen in 1936. The final item in the exhibition is his last diary, showing his final entry, on Sunday 28 May 1961: 'We are now, both of us, Phyllis & John, still downstairs and it is now half past six.'

The exhibition runs until 8 February 2014, and admission is free.

* I would be grateful for any information on the current whereabouts of the remainder of the *Glastonbury Romance* holograph, if indeed it still exists. It appears that chapters 1–12 and 17–24 were sold by JCP to the bookseller George Sims in 1954. Sims immediately sold them on to a Mr Baston, and thereafter the trail goes cold.

[*Geraint Phillips is Manuscript Curator at the National Library of Wales*]

Ray Crozier writes:

I am grateful to the March *Newsletter* for alerting me to this exhibition in The National Library of Wales. Since I was spending a week in Dolgellau I took the opportunity to visit the library, situated majestically on Pengalis Hill overlooking the town and the sea. The exhibition is quite small but engaging and informative and I noticed that it has received positive comments in the visitors' book. The selection comprises primarily printed material and manuscripts drawn from the Library's extensive collections such as the John Cowper Powys and Phyllis Playter manuscripts: books, letters, diaries and, less obviously, an address book, and the script of a speech in Welsh delivered on the occasion of his ordination as a member of the Powys Gorsedd at Corwen in 1936. In addition there are several photographs, including one that I had never seen before, of JCP and Phyllis Playter walking together outside their Corwen home, the well-known sculpture head by Oloff de Wet and an excerpt from Herbert Williams's 1994 drama-documentary film *The Great Powys*, where JCP was played by Freddie Jones.

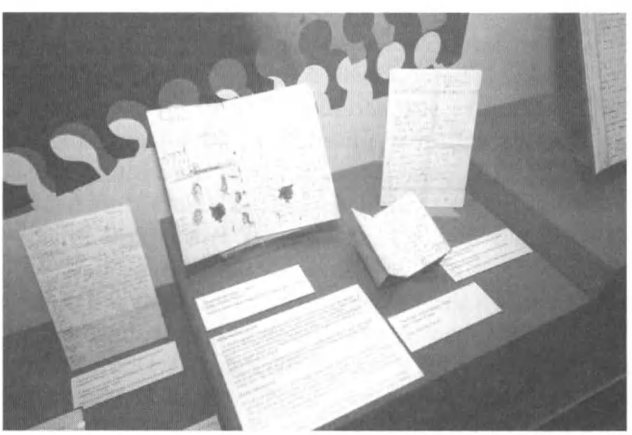
There are copies of editions of JCP's published books, including translations, manuscripts – the opening paragraph of *Wolf Solent* – and open pages of the dairies of the years 1929, 1930, 1937, 1939, and 1961. Display cases present material from his childhood: handwritten historical romances, 'Llewelyn Meredith' and 'The Knight of the Festoon', both written c.1883 at Westbury House, Sherborne when he was about eleven years old, already showing his interest in Wales. I was fascinated by a sketch drawing of JCP lecturing at Goldsmiths College London, c1903, by a student, Maria Vernie Pease, portraying him leaning across the lectern, pointing to the audience, with the hood of his academic gown flowing behind him.

There are, for me, two particularly moving exhibits, a diary entry from 1930 and one from 1961. The entry from 1930 gives the epitaphs he had drawn up for his and Phyllis's graves, with the request that they should be buried 'near Phudd'.

> Her body said, "I long for Death". / "I am at peace", her spirit saith.
>
> Let Life, let Death take any shape, / Defy—Enjoy—Endure—Escape!

There is much here to interest admirers of John Cowper Powys and the Powys family even if they are familiar with at least some of the material. The exhibition shares the gallery with one on *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse* * (it has a terrific portrait of Sir Thomas Parry by Kyffin Williams). The two subjects are presented under the joint title, *Authors of Wales*, and this conjunction may draw attention of visitors who are not aware of JCP or who know little about him (this was certainly the case of the family who were in the exhibition room at the same time as myself and my wife). Finally it was pleasing to see Morine Krissdottir's biography *Descents of Memory* on prominent display in the Library shop.

* The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English, *edited by Gwyn Jones, 1977, contains passages from 'The Ridge' by JCP.* *KK*



Fire at National Library of Wales

Shortly after 2.30pm on Friday 26th April, a devastating fire broke out at the National Library of Wales. Fortunately nobody was injured and all the archives and historical collections, including the library's collection of Powys books and manuscripts as well as the JCP exhibition on the ground floor, were undamaged. Some items in the historical collections suffered the effects of smoke and water and have been transferred to a laboratory in Oxford for salvage; latest reports indicate that some of these items seem to be beyond repair. The fire was so severe that the whole building had to be evacuated and 300 staff relocated. The fire itself was confined to the area of the roof of the administration block and 'Third Library Building' on the south side of the site. It required crews from other parts of Wales to help extinguish the conflagration, which took nearly four hours. The library was closed for three days after the fire and reopened on 30 April. It appears that the fire was started accidentally by workmen handling propane-powered blow torches, causing the wooden parts of the roof to ignite.

Our colleague at NLW, and curator of the JCP exhibition, Geraint Phillips, sent this message to me: 'The fire was reported in the local press and on the national Welsh media, particularly on Welsh language radio and TV. But curiously, it went largely unnoticed by the British media. I wonder whether a fire at the Bodleian or the BL would have been as under-reported?' *Cambrian News*, a local newspaper, published in Aberystwyth, reported on 1 May that the fire was a dramatic wake-up call and a reminder of the vulnerability of the nation's heritage of irreplaceable books, manuscripts, maps, works of art and historical archives and documents. The total cost of the fire is reported to be in the region of £5 million.

What might JCP have thought about all this? He would of course have been horrified at the prospect of seeing the 'old Welsh books' he loved consumed by fire. He also had connections with Aberystwyth and at one time considered living in the town after leaving Phudd. He had great admiration for the Welsh scholars at the library who he thought would be able to give him help with his 'Merlin' book. I like to think of JCP consulting with avid attention his personal copy of the great *Myvyrian Archaiology*, or handling with silent awe and reverence a precious and rare Welsh book like the little volume of the *Imitatio de Christi* translated into the Welsh language, which the book-dealer, George Lewin, rescued from his bombed-out house in London during the Blitz and which he brought with him to Corwen.

Video clips and photographs of the fire at NLW can be viewed on the BBC News Wales website and at Wales on-line. The full Fire Investigation Report and a list of all the water and smoke damaged items undergoing repair or which were destroyed or are beyond repair (items contained in 140 crates), can be found on the website of the National Library of Wales at <www.llgc.gov.uk>

Chris Thomas

Violet, Theodore and Mappowder

John Powys – Granny Violet

I remember Violet from quite early on as we evacuated from Kent to Dorset when the flying bombs started [*c.1944 when John was 4 or 5*]. The countryside was quiet save for aeroplanes flying over. We were first at Place Farm where we had a room, then in a cottage in Mappowder (no. 584).

Granny Violet ran the Lodge and received visitors. Theodore had had a stroke previously and used to slip out of the back window & go for a walk. The Lodge was a hard place for her to work. They had the space between the house and the churchyard wall roofed over with tin sheets and a chemi-closet at the end which she had to empty by digging a hole in the back garden even with frozen ground! plus burn all the rubbish too. The bath was in the scullery with a cover over and coal kept in it. She did not like small boys (but she did when I was a teenager). The covered sideway was full of rotting furniture (harmoniums etc) and smelled of rats and cat droppings.

Young Violet with pony.

She had some lovely cats – I remember 'Blue Boy', a Russian Blue, a lovely big smoke coloured cat, among others. She also kept 'Gleanies' (guinea fowl) who would wander the front yard and road.

She certainly didn't like Mrs Jackson the Vicar's wife, but got on fairly well with the local farmers' wives with the occasional falling out, as being intelligent she couldn't abide some of their sillinesses. She tended to hoard the wartime food parcels, as Sally [*John's mother*] discovered when she helped clear the 'Lodge' when Theodore died. I believe she used to argue with Susan but I did not hear much of it.

Eventually she was persuaded to have a new brick house built in [*the garden of her aunts' cottage, later Isobel's*]. This proved ideal for some time but it eventually became full of dogs, and the garden of sundry donkeys. Violet was generous to a fault and had a job to keep account of funds. Then Potocki [*Susan/ Theodora's natural father*] appeared on the scene and after a while persuaded her and Susan to sell the house (she was also looking after her Aunt Gert) and move into a caravan until they could get a bungalow built at Lovelace's Copse where they lived in a chicken house and Llewelyn's ex-Chydyok summerhouse! They never got planning permission as there was no water laid on. It was the winter of 62/63 and freezing and Violet [*aged 75*] was looking after Aunt Gert in a small caravan with intermittent facilities. Her heart started to wear out. Rescued by friends, she arrived in Hastings [*to her son Francis's family*], and I was requested to go down in my old van to pick up Aunt Gert, the parrot and furniture. It was a long long trip and Gert refused to come away. Their 'copse' was slimy mud from pigs and the furniture loaded in the van STANK, it was the only time I deliberately smoked a cigarette. Yuk.

Eventually Gert came to stay with us too but used to 'wind up' and exasperate Violet. V. had her dog 'Tip' with her too, as well as the parrot. They had two rooms and a bathroom here. I used to take them out in my 'Standard' car that I was very proud of. Sally had to look after them both till Gert went into a nursing home.

Violet was often ill in hospital. Mandie's [*John's wife's*] mother was a nurse there and liked her as did Mandie's gran who got on very well with her. She was well liked by everyone and had a lovely sense of humour. Sadly she eventually passed away, much missed by everyone. She met Amanda and liked her very much, it was sad she couldn't have seen our wedding. We spent our honeymoon in Dorset and Mandy left her bouquet on her grave. It would have been lovely if she had been well enough to live a lot longer as she was jolly and humorous and a good friend. She died in 1966 [*aged 79*] and was buried at Mappowder on 26th November.

***Amanda Powys** adds*:

I met Granny Violet in 1964 at St Mary's Terrace in Hastings when I became John's girlfriend and she was being looked after very well by Francis & Sally. She had an old parrot and a border collie called Tip. 'Vilie' was the pet name that Francis & Sally called her. John would take her out to see the things she loved, like donkeys and Spring lambs.

I visited when she was back in hospital again in 1966. John and I were engaged and she had been delighted and bought us lovely yellow blankets. She was however, clearly unwell but so very young at heart. She asked the nurse to draw the curtains round her bed and when the nurse had left, Violet winked and smiled and said that was better as she did not want to be with all the old people !

*from **Joy Coombes***:

My husband Harry Coombes and I first met Violet Powys in Mappowder some years after Theodore had died in 1953. Harry was writing a book about T. F. Powys and wanted to learn about his life in Dorset, and the background to his interesting and unusual novels. As I walked through the village on that first occasion it seemed as if I was walking through a countryside from 'Mr Weston's Good Wine'.

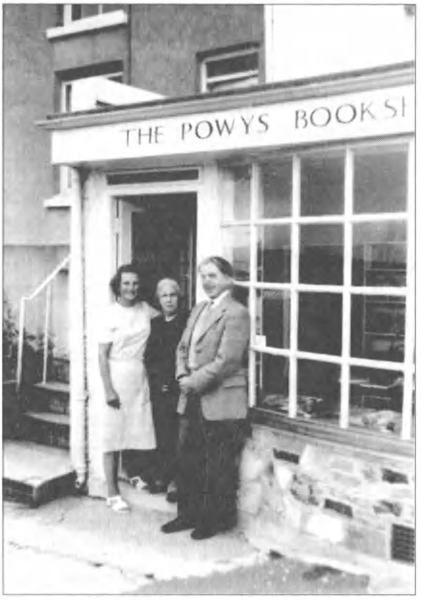
We met Violet in Mappowder in the late 1950s. and we were both so interested to learn about their life together. Violet no longer lived in the cottage beside the church but she and her adopted daughter Susan, later known as Theodora, lived in a house in the main village road. This was diagonally opposite to Lucy, Theodore's sister, with whom we always took tea when visiting Violet. I still remember her beautiful porcelain cups and saucers! Whilst at Mappowder we would go over to see Louis Wilkinson, who lived in a neighbouring village, and enjoy conversation and welcoming drinks.

We visited Violet several times and stayed with her. We felt very fond of her, as she was affectionate towards us. She chatted cheerfully although her health was not good. She would describe her childhood and village life.

Violet's house had both cats and dogs in it, as Violet's obsession was cats and Susan's was dogs, but Susan also loved horses. I remember one day a big dog jumped up on to Susan's lap and she fondly embraced it, heavy though it was ... Our last visit to see Violet in Mappowder was when her house had been disposed of and she was living in a caravan on a wooded piece of land where Susan was living with her father, Count Potocki, in a converted sort of barn.

The portrait of Theodore Powys by Augustus John which had been hanging in the main room of the house in the village seemed to have disappeared. We asked where it was or if it had been sold but there was no answer. [*it was acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1958 — see* NL *69, page 18*]

We were worried and upset at the conditions under which Violet was living. The caravan was damp and Violet was quite unwell. We advised her to move to Hastings and live with her son and his wife, Francis and Sally, but she could not decide what to do ... Before we went Harry talked to Violet and told her that he would phone Dorset County Council to tell them about the dangerous conditions to health which one of their residents was living in. Violet begged him not to and only a few days later we had a phone call from Francis to tell us his mother had arrived in Hastings. What a relief!!



Violet with Joy & Harry Coombes, 1965.

Visiting her there, and to stay some days, was always a very happy time for us. Violet lived there for the last few happy years of her life. We always exchanged letters and here is one that Violet wrote to us:

My dear Joy and Harry,

How are you? I had been hoping I should see you. Is there any hope of seeing you both? When you were here last you thought you might be able to come and bring the children. Sally and Francis say they hope you will come.

There is a circus coming here on next Thursday. I went to one last year the first one I have ever been to . I can't get about very well, I have had so many weeks in bed. I had 9 or 10 weeks right away. Francis and Sally went to Buckland Newton at the beginning of February and when they came back I was ill. And then it goes on, up one day in bed the next. I am not allowed out by myself and Francis and Sally are very busy. Francis is at the shop in turn with Sally and then any moment Francis has he is doing his photos he went abroad for as he said a working holiday and took such a lot of photos and now he is developing them and sorting them out.

What have you been doing since we saw you? Aunt Gert is still going strong, John

has taken her out in his car. He took her to Newhaven to meet the ship Francis came back on and she stood up to the journey well. I was a wreck the next day ...

Julia Mathews lived in Mappowder as a child and remembers 'a really sweet sort of 1950s / 1960s village life where children and older generation were drawn together – "the village brings up the child" ... I always thought Violet was adorable, my mother got on well with her, she spent time with my sister and me and so did her Aunts. We used to watch David Attenborough on TV with them.'

Julia and her sister called Violet 'Little Grey Rabbit' after the Alison Uttley books which she gave them every Easter and Christmas. 'She liked that. She *read* us stories whereas Theodore took us for walks and *told* us stories about fairies. I used to walk her collie dog, Tippy. The new house at Mappowder was full of cats and dogs – apart from Tippy there were Susie's Alsatians and Violet seemed a bit defeated ... but she did love her TV!'

James Stern

from a letter to 'the Brookses', early 1953 (TFP's last year) in A Life in Letters 1904-1993 *by Miles Huddlester, 2002.*

Yesterday was a Red Letter day: Theodore Powys. Fascinating. He & his wife ('Vilutt') & adopted daughter Susie, 20, live in what was once the school of the village of Mappowder, which is near absolutely Nowhere. As you know he has almost always been a 'hermit'. I often wondered how hermits — he in particular — write fiction. I'm now convinced she — a Dorset peasant girl of 66, they have been married 48 years — tells him the stories (*echt* village gossip) and he, rolling them round his allegorical tongue & spitting them out & allowing them to curdle in his Biblical bowl, writes them down. Or did. He has not written anything for 16 years. 'I am out of business.' 'Writing makes my head ache.'

From pictures I always thought he looked like a prehistoric grandmother; he doesn't at all. He looks like a sage with a ruddy complexion, huge white eyebrows, the hooked nose, a mane of white hair, & black eyes which stare at you. All through tea he rolled cigarettes of black tobacco & passed them round for each person to lick (the paper) before handing them the cigarette. But his hands shook a bit & he wasn't very good at it. After 1/2 an hour a row of 'bad' ones lay by his plate. Then he 'undid' them all & replaced the tobacco in a little tin. He's very conscious of his age (he's only 77) & maintains it's by far the best time of life — 'for then, you know, one enjoys everything; every day is a year. No ambitions, no fears, no regrets. Once ceases to be; one just isn't anything.'

In the evenings V. reads Jane Austen (tonight they are to finish *Emma*) aloud to him & Susie. At breakfast they discuss what they have read the night before. V. was promptly told to produce *Emma* for me to read a passage aloud. Which I did, whereupon TFP exclaimed: 'Mr. S., he has a voice, a voice of his own, not someone else's — that's a rare thing.' Wasn't that nice?

James Stern (1904–93), Anglo-Irish writer. He and his wife Tania returned from New York to England in the 1950s and lived in Wiltshire. He was a friend of the Elwins and of Louis Wilkinson and visited JCP in Blaenau in 1960 (see NL 77, page 51).

Mark Holloway
from Recollections of the Powys Brothers *ed. Belinda Humfrey (1980): 'With Theodore Powys in Mappowder'.*

Although displeasure [*at the memory of D. H. Lawrence and his beard*] had brought a certain emphasis into her voice and made her bridle at the memory of some ancient emotion that may have been more durable, there was no malice there. I don't believe there ever was. That coquettish smile nearly always came as a kind of benediction or flash of gaiety at the end. It could lift one's spirits out of any depths and dispel all unpleasantness ...

... Violet I have left to the end. If, for me, Theodore had been the chief attraction of staying in Mappowder, I immediately discovered a rival attraction in her. I have never understood how anyone with an ounce of susceptibility could fail to feel great affection for her. In appearance she was short and plump and delightfully animated. She had lively eyes and a pretty mobile ingenuous mouth. When she smiled it was with an immensely engaging suggestion of demureness which always made me and still makes me try to think of her as she must have been as a girl. She had a Dorset accent and that West Country intonation which likes to draw out the tail end of a sentence to its fullest length, and a manner of speaking to you as if what she had to say was important and confidential, but need not for that reason be solemn or deadly dull. She had no intellectual pretensions. She was frequently upset, at any rate on the surface, by village feuds and gossip or by the hundred and one difficulties that beset a country housewife with little money or labour-saving equipment; yet only just under the surface was a delightful readiness to respond immediately to the slightest kindness or appreciation, to a sympathetic remark or a small teasing joke. And even in the midst of a tale of woe or indignation, she had only to see an endearing, interesting or amusing incident – one of the cats in a whirl on the floor, or a van passing that aroused her curiosity, a smile on the face of the listener – to react like a child, her whole face lighting up and the flow of her talk swerving, as it were, to include this new experience. She seemed to be the embodiment of that living moment which is the present and to be soundly, if unconsciously, in love with life.

She must have been irresistible as a girl – so much was obvious; but how many men of Theodore's background, I wondered, would have had the wit to see in her the consolation of a lifetime? There was a good deal of teasing on both sides between them – those routine teases of middle and old age which enfold little protests and challenges as real and valid as rules in an institution. Yet one did not doubt for an instant the devotion of each to the other or the success of what seemed to some people a strange marriage.

To me it seemed natural, all of a piece from Theodore's point of view. Violet represented his chosen sphere of life: the village. She represented all that a young man who had put a mental fence round a few square miles of rural life could possibly desire in earthly happiness. Some of the Powys family could not see this, or did not wish to; and some friends and acquaintances of theirs had towards Violet an attitude that was almost condescending. They thought that a man with Theodore's mental and creative ability could not be happy – some of them, I believe, thought that he *ought* not to be happy – with a girl whose horizons of the mind were no wider than those normally found in the daily routine of a country town or village, although these can be just as far-reaching, in a different way, as some of the more arid perpectives of intellectuals. Yet Violet was all that a man could wish for in a woman. In addition, she was the life-line of a shy and retiring man with his human environment, who could bring him all the talk of the village and countryside. It would come bubbling out of her like refreshing water out of a well, and Theodore would drink of it and meditate upon it on his afternoon walks and it would percolate into his short stories and novels.

For her part, I have often wondered what she thought inwardly of her strange husband, not very sociably inclined ever and often quite hermit-like, with his large garrulous splendid-looking brothers and sisters, his pessimism, his preoccupation with death, his endless writing of stories in countless exercise books? He was not at all the sort of husband normally encountered in a village, and cannot have made life easy for Violet, although his charm and wit and the spiritedness and joy which are evident in his writing and which were still evident in him in old age, would have impressed any girl let alone one as responsive as Violet. Nevertheless, without that basic optimism and enjoyment of life which I believe she had, and that straightforward housewifely preoccupation with the practical matters of the day, without that village concentration on the essentials, her life could have been much more difficult, if difficulty is to be thought of, than his.

When I think of her now I see her standing in that small living-room at The Lodge in which we first met, and not in the house she lived in after Theodore's death, in which I only visited her twice, or in her son's house in Hastings, in which I saw her for the last time. She is standing in the middle of the room and saying to Theodore, as she occasionally did say, not always entirely as a joke: 'You and your old books !' That is because Theodore is looking, rather helplessly and hopelessly, for a particular volume he wishes to lend me. 'You and your old books – always more of them; never any less, is there Mark? Really, I don't know what we're going to do if any more come in — you can't hardly move as it is. And what with them gathering dust and the cats jumping up on them, and they tumbling down all over the place – w-e-ell, I reckon they're a real nuisance, I do really. It's not as though half of them was ever read, is it, I mean to say I know some are valuable and all that, but others you wouldn't want to accept as a gift ... .' While she rattles on, eyeing me with an expression half of offended propriety and half of mischievous intent, Theodore is lifting a book here and a book

there in the evident hope that he may come upon what he is looking for by chance. His face is superlatively enigmatic, carefully not noticing either of us though turned in our direction: that ever-about-to-be-witty, that nearly-but-not-quite-grim mouth below the alarmingly intelligent but friendly eyes, remains aloof. Now Violet, with a vestigial toss of the head which I always wished I could have seen in the fulness of its prime, is suddenly suffused with that bewitching smile. Provocatively, she ends: '... One day I sh'll give them all to the dustman – or to Mark.'

Theodore, in massive stillness, is looking at us both as a judge will look at counsel: undeceived. 'Vi'let – just look under that paper there.' It's a command, mild but firm, and an indication that he is not to be drawn. Violet lifts the paper; the book is not there; she decides to get the tea. The subject is forgotten for the time being, with a promise from Theodore that if the book is found, he will lend it me. He goes to the armchair on the left hand side of the fireplace, tips it slowly and relentlessly forward with an expression of masterful intent on his face until a sleeping cat jumps out of it, and then seats himself in it. He warms his hands in front of the fire. In a moment he will make toast.

Those cats! During the months I was in Mappowder, I think there were five of them. I remember chiefly a tough, battered, thickset, square-shouldered slow-moving black cat called Albert, who was particularly faithful to Violet; and Janey, the forever restless little mother cat. Two or three of them were nearly always in movement about the room, leaping hither and thither, and one used to take flying leaps from perches of convenient height on to Violet's back, landing more or less on her right shoulder-blade, and grappling its way on to her shoulder. She often winced when it crashed on to her, its claws out to secure a hold, and protested reproachfully, sometimes angrily, but nearly always ended on a note of pleasure, her pretty mouth upturned at the corners, charmed by a cat's flattery. . ..

Those were happy days that I would like to return to. I wish I were going up to The Lodge this evening, carefully rationing my time as I always had to, because I always wanted to stay longer. I remember once, when I said I must be leaving, noticing that Theodore had glanced at the clock, he remarked: 'Well – it's been *very* pleasant to see you, Mark.' That was almost certainly Powysian politeness. He then added: 'I think half an hour is *just* the right time for a short visit. Charlie Smith always stays half an hour, and we always part friends.'

Mark Holloway (1917–2004) was a writer, essayist and publisher's reader. He wrote Heavens on Earth, *a biographical history of Utopian communities in America (1951), and* Norman Douglas: A Biography *(1976). He spent several years with Joan Lamburn, at this time (1940s) staying in Vera Wainwright's cottage in Mappowder. He was eighteen years younger than Joan; Joan, who eventually married Louis Wilkinson, was 19 years younger than Louis. He later lived in Hastings, a friend of John and Amanda Powys and their family.*

Juanita in Mappowder

We have encountered Juanita Fisher/ Berlin/ Casey in recent Newsletters, visiting JCP in Blaenau (where he was thrilled to take her for a real gypsy) and in a short but poetic image of TFP as a Japanese netsuke (repeated here). She died last year. These extracts are from her autobiography Azerbaijan! *(called after an uncle's favorite expletive – Millersford Press, 2008). Her time at Mappowder was as a girl still in her teens, living with John Fisher (known as 'Crusoe', the unofficial squire of the village, widely loved and admired and a close friend of Theodore's) whom she later married. Juanita gets a mixed report from Theodora in* Cuckoo in the Powys Nest *– a good and kind older friend and riding companion, but indirectly the cause of Place Farm, beloved of Theodora, being sold and the village diminished. Juanita's memoir prolongs several of the TF legends, such as his response 'Who made that rat' when told an alarming noise was 'only a rat', or avoiding visitors by climbing out of his study window (not possible, according to Theodora).*

Our Christmas pudding arrived at the back door conveyed by Theodore Powys's young daughter, Susan, who was to become a good friend in the drifting limbo of my life while I explored the brooding house, the ever-enigmatic Crusoe and my own unmapped way.

I hadn't yet met Theodore, or Susan's adoptive mother Violet, but we were issued with an invitation to tea as the wrapped pudding was handed over shyly and Susan scurried away over our fields back to her home. I'd never heard of the celebrated literary Powys brothers and as we walked across the fields towards the village I was warned about Theodore's idiosyncrasies and extreme shyness and not to make a fool of myself – a great precursor to meeting one of the most individual, though retiring, writers of English literature.

Crusoe would wander into his tiny lodge in front of the Church to discuss philosophy, poetry and Theodore's haunted-by-God musings on the meaning and non-meaning of life. I read his books, appreciating the descriptions of his fated characters in their beautifully described Dorset backgrounds, but with, I regret, a puzzled trepidation and only half comprehension. The natural world of birds and hedgerows, the downs and skies, were his obvious delight, but the allegorical futilities, cruelties and doom-laden atmospheres in which God, as Tinker Jar or the Only Penitent, moving in truly frightening ways, were puzzling and depressing – nearer Milton's than my generation, emergent as I was in my own youth's effervescent belief in its perpetual summer.

The little lodge nestled beside the churchyard, and the door was opened by Theodore himself, grey hair fluffed like a heron chick's, with a kindly yet austere face, standing aside, self-effacing, quietly and politely, if a shade reluctantly; a hermit allowing, I felt, a tolerated interruption into his sanctum, followed by a slight draught. Softly spoken, he murmured a few words I didn't catch, not looking directly at me but with a hint of a smile, and we were welcomed by Violet bustling in from her kitchen with Susan following with a plate of scones, eager to sit beside me to talk.

Violet was as chatty as Theodore was reserved; a strange contrast, yet obviously comfortable with each other, a true marriage of opposites at this stage in their lives; I wondered what had drawn them together in youth.

I was to see much more of Theodore, and was privileged to be invited to walk beside him when he was out on one of his rambles through the lanes, seldom talking – that overwhelming need of humans to parry and fence words – but communicating in companionable silence like grazing beasts along the hedgerows. If we met him by chance in the car he would turn away and keep his back to us, even though he knew it was us, hating all modern encroachments to his beloved natural world's ever-retreating boundaries and sensibilities, withdrawn, fragile, and fearful, among the meadowsweet and campion.

Although Crusoe had known Theodore Powys over many years and considered him a friend, almost as master to his disciple, I never thought of him except in the way you were extra careful with a Meissen figure; any hint of a troublesome emotion, yours or his, was enough for Theodore to fade into the nearest gap in the hedgerows. He was evasively shadowy to the point of being his own shadow and the very few times I felt an unexpected sideways twinkle from his searching for omens among stones in the road, it was no more than a momentary shaft of light escaping the cloud of his own Madder Hill. It had that tweak of surprise when, turning over a tiny, intricately carved, Netsuke of a monk, you discover the face hidden inside the cowl is that of a cunningly smiling mole.

I never saw much of Violet except when we went up to tea, but Susan wandered down and we were good friends, although I only saw her occasionally when I was in the kitchen, a rare occurrence, near supper time. Then we had a visit from a very odd writer, who had stayed with Crusoe over the years and was a friend and biographer of all the Powys brothers ...

Louis mooned around, alone and palely loitering, and spent most of his time up at Theodore's little lodge. He and Crusoe talked for hours into the night discussing poetry, the Powys family and philosophy, but they too were touched by that melancholy negation that the reclusive Theodore, bowed under his belief in nothing except Death, exuded a depressing nihilism, which insidiously affected me as well, a slow infection, invisible but deadly, a kind of Black Death of the spirit ... For Theodore everything from woodlouse to man progressed relentlessly towards that all-powerful realm of the extinction of desires and vain aspirations. The bringing of man's flesh and soul not to everlasting Life, as all the churchmen pray for in the churches of his stories, but to 'everlasting Death', an end he embraced as contentedly as he fled from life's tribulations, which he found almost unbearable.

For Theodore, God stalked the Dorset downs as Wold Jar, the travelling Tinker Jar, looking down, seeing everything in the villages below, bringing dreadful retributions and very few rewards, but Himself 'the only Penitent', charged with making the world and its wickedness. It was difficult not to be affected by his unease, and I returned from walks feeling like a hen on a wet day with the henhouse

door slammed shut.

He lived as quietly in his little lodge as any hedgerow wood mouse, unperturbed that his garden might appear unkempt by callers who, if he spied them first and didn't like the look of them he would avoid by climbing through a back window into the churchyard. As Philip Larkin wrote in a review of *The Brothers Powys* by Richard Perceval Graves: 'He lived in remotest Dorset, pondering on God and darning his stockings'... .

With thanks to Sonia Aarons of the Millersford Press.

Review

W.J. Keith: Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and the Powyses

The Powys Press, 2013, ISBN *978 1 874559 44 3*

***Michael Kowalewski** writes:*

W. J. Keith's new book, published by The Powys Society, is very timely. The issue of the relation of all the Powyses to religion and philosophy has become a hot topic with several researchers publishing studies on that theme, such as Stephen Batty on Theodore.

Keith begins with the Powyses' common roots in the Victorian vicarage of their father and extensively discusses issues of the character of the father and mother, who are portrayed in several studies, notably Louis Wilkinson's, as sadistic and masochistic; also of the family forming a kind of phalanx against the world – all debunked by Keith with help from Louise de Bruin. Branching out in three very different directions from that common trunk, almost like the Karamazov brothers, Llewelyn takes the polytheist and pagan role of life worship, Theodore on the contrary a biblical, allegorical death worship, strongly Christian in tone, and John flies through endless cosmic spaces, finding at the end his ichthyosaurus ego, creator of all these multiverses, lurking in the mud.

Keith examines the three brothers in turn, following from a discussion of myth strongly influenced by 60s guru Alan Watts. He cites here a 1951 letter of John to his son Littleton, published as an appendix in Belinda Humfrey's *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*. In that letter, John describes his own views as 'Profound abysmal Mephistophelian Hatred Hostility & Revenge'; Theodore's as "*God knows*!!! – but with a very clearly marked tendency *to go to church a very great deal*!!'; and Llewelyn's 'an angry indignant almost fretful & peevish irritable disapproval of all the ways of the Living God!' Actually the letter, although fascinating, is seriously misleading – not least about John himself. This is intentional I think, just to wind up his son the priest. The most interesting comment in that letter is this one, also cited by Keith: 'For myself, I feel friendly to Jehovah as the Tribal god of the Jews as I do to Zeus or

Jove. It is the Father of Jesus I hate so deeply ...': a sentiment he also expressed in his essay on St Paul in *The Pleasures of Literature.*

The other interesting issue in the letter concerns the youngest sibling, Lucy, who has 'a real actual *religious impulse and emotion'* – which implies that the religious impulses of the others are not real. The feeling remains that the fundamental attitude of all the three brothers was the aesthetics of religion as part of their vision of life, rather than faith in any kind of evangelical way and with a profound admixture of what might be called sceptical mysticism – or is that mystical scepticism?

Llewelyn is perhaps the easiest to characterise. The first dozen pages of *Love and Death* are beautifully written expressions of his life-worship, which mingles religious phraseology with a complete rejection of scientific materialism and transcendental claims alike. 'For honourable worship... the existence of God is in no way necessary.' He continues, 'it is sufficient if the spirit of man hold itself in suspension, hold itself in an awareness so passionate that the human conceptions of cosmogony become of little moment.' Keith finds Llewelyn contradictory but I see no difficulty in his pagan life worship, unless dualistic categories are applied to it.

The problem with Theodore is not so much what he believed but that no one before or since has believed exactly what Theodore believed. However, Alyse Gregory's journal in 1951 mentions Theodore's interest in Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic. Theodore also possessed Simone Weil's 'Waiting on God'. Gerald Brenan who married Llewelyn's lover Gamel Woolsey wrote a book on John of the Cross in the 1970s which was clearly the fruit of a lifetime of investigation that would have percolated to the Powyses. These are pointers to Theodore as an apophatic theologian of divine suffering and absence, with a profound vision of metaphysical evil in the physical world.

John's is the most complex path. He certainly seems to have ended a sceptic about life after death, but like all the brothers found eternity not in personal immortality but in the ecstatic contemplation of 'eternity in a wild flower'. He seems to have gone through three phases – the American phase of the philosophical works and cultivating an intense life-illusion; a Wessex phase of a kind of interweaving of cosmic grandeur with everyday life in a personal mythology of good and evil; and finally the Welsh phase of historical and archaeological investigations of impossible fantasies and historical romance, blending Grail legend with the intimate psychic life of superabaundant and unique individuals caught in metaphysical debates about the ultimate Yes or No to life. Keith teases out the threads of John's spirituality extremely well with abundant illustration.

Keith also deals with later Powyses, notably Lucy's daughter Mary Casey and her clear Platonic spirituality as revealed in her novel about Plotinus, *The Kingfisher's Wing*, a very appropriate coda to the theme and variations spun by the other Powyses. Keith's book is certainly not the final word on the issue of the Powyses' religion, but it carries the argument several steps forward.

Louis and Llewelyn

Following on from W. J. Keith's account of Louis Wilkinson and the Powyses (*NL* 78 pp. 32–37) **Peter Foss** adds that after Louis's novel *The Buffoon* with its portrayal of JCP as 'Jack Welsh', his next novel *The Chaste Man* (1917) has a fascinating portrait of Llewelyn Powys as 'Cyprian Strange'. This is almost the main interest of the book, though it is a good novel anyway; it was published under LW's own name and is quite scarce.

Peter Foss covers this subject fully in his *Study of Llewelyn Powys*, pp.71–3; some extracts follow.

> *A Chaste Man* is itself an excellent book - a story about the tensions set up within a failed middle-class marriage aggravated by the hero's amorous attachment to an adolescent girl ... Towards the end of the novel Oliver Lawrance (the 'chaste man') goes to Switzerland with his consumptive sister, Letty.
>
> While at the sanatorium in Switzerland Oliver makes the acquaintance of one of the patients – 'a particularly good-looking young man of about Lawrance's age' – Cyprian Strange. On their first meeting, 'he took oV his straw hat, and bowed to them with a radiant smile ... . He was beautifully dressed in grey; his double-breasted coat had a perfect hang, and his brown boots looked expensive, but not too new. His young but not boyish face was extremely sunburnt; he had crisp short curls of a blond gold, glistening'.
>
> Louis Wilkinson gives a fairly intensive critique of the character and what might be called the 'style' of Llewelyn Powys – that is, those gestural aspects of his personality which offered themselves as expressions of the man in his social context. 'Lawrance,' says Louis Wilkinson in the novel, 'could not make up his mind if his manners were good: they were certainly easy; they had a vivid nonchalance that was unusual and taking. He succeeded in being companionable at once, but not in the least intrusive or stressed ...He often wondered if he really liked this debonair curly-haired young blade or really disliked him, and in the end he concluded that he both liked and disliked ... Letty's brother was still, however, mistrustful to a certain point, and irritated now and again by some shades of Cyprian's way with him, a way that could bear remotely the implication, friendly enough, that he was a bit stupid and a bit crude'.
>
> An aspect of this 'cynical flippancy" is shown in Strange's conversational style which reproduces something of the 'bland yet stinging aplomb' which Louis Wilkinson describes in the book. '"Well, it's some time since I had my last little haemorrhage",' says Cyprian Strange; and '"There's nothing we can't do really. It all depends on how to do it. Style is everything. They'd stand a good deal from me," he added, with a conceit so lightly weighted that the other could not resent it'. At one point during Cyprian's 'vicious blitheness' of monologue, Lawrance bursts out '"Oh, that's absurd! You like saying sensational things, you can't believe them"', after which Cyprian concedes that he has often thought the opposite of what he has just been saying ...

Bearing in mind that the portrait of Llewelyn Powys in *A Chaste Man* is to some extent a debunking of Llewelyn's life and social self as it appeared to Louis Wilkinson in the Clavadel years of 1909-11, there are still aspects of the portrait which are revealing of Llewelyn's personality. There is, for instance, the real conversational style with its bluster and plangency, and there is the extent to which this style was a mask veiling a deeper, opposing strand of thought and feeling. The 'opposing strand' sometimes comes out as contrariness ("Old Muller told me a week ago that I was killing myself. Of course he knew why. Yet I wanted to live. I admit I wanted to live") born of the fierce choices he was forced to confront as a consumptive invalid; and sometimes as a 'pose', adopting social and philosophical attitudes in order to ride the conflicts that the choices raised in his mind.

Peter Foss's forthcoming Introduction to LlP's 1910 diary explores the coincidences between it and Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain *(1924). Louis's sister Christabel died as a TB patient in Switzerland; Llewelyn visited her grave.*

News from Cecil Woolf publishers

Peter Foss's book of Llewelyn Powys's 1910 diary, under the title *The Conqueror Worm* and covering the Clavadel year, is forthcoming from Cecil Woolf (scheduled for summer 2014). It is a much larger diary and will be produced in hardback, with substantial Introduction, annotations and illustrations. There will be a pre-publication offer to Powys Society members. Part of the blurb reads:

Here we encounter the full horror of the consumptive illness, together with the bizarre treatments which were part of the sanatorium regime. In periods between blood-spitting, Powys read voraciously, formulating his life-affirmative philosophy... In addition to quotations from his reading, he included letters from family and friends, rendering the diary an important archive for Powys biography. We are also given a remarkable picture of his fellow 'inmates', a medley of characters reminiscent of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, which has affinities with the diary. We also gain insight into the 'dangerous liaisons' in which Llewelyn indulged, giving the account a febrile intensity which reflects something of the nature of the illness itself.

The Conqueror Worm

by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49)

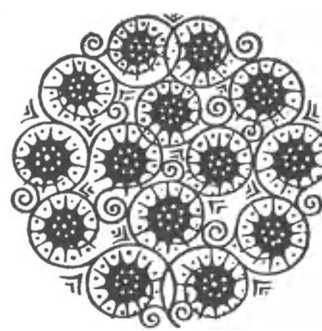
Lo! 'tis a gala night
Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,
And hither and thither fly—
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their Condor wings
Invisible Woe!

That motley drama—oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore,
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot,
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout
A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
The scenic solitude!
It writhes! – it writhes! – with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And the angels sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.

Out — out are the lights — out all!
And, over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy "Man,"
And its hero the Conqueror Worm.



News and Notes

Patricia Dawson, well known to The Powys Society, died in May aged 88 (*see pages 8–10*).

Peter Kane Dufault, poet resident of Hillsdale, NY (*see Newsletter 65*), died in April, aged 90.

Two long and fulfilled lives.

* * * *

la lettre powysienne

Jacqueline Peltier writes: 'I wanted *lettre* no.25 to be a commemoration of JCP's death, exactly 50 years ago. There are three main papers: one is his own paper on *Arabia Deserta*, published in *The Dial*, followed by an excerpt of the book itself. The second paper is by Bill Keith, 'Re-reading *Wolf Solent*', and the third paper, rather a longish one, concerns the poet **William Cowper** and endeavours to understand why JCP was always praising him. This paper was written in English first, and written for my own satisfaction, wishing to understand the reasons for JCP's attraction to William Cowper. I don't know if I succeeded, and can only hope it might interest other people.'

Editor would like to pay tribute to the excellent bilingual *lettre*, always serious and full of interest, which both widens the field and acts as counterpoint to the Society.

* * * *

There was a serious **fire** in the roof of the **National Library of Wales** on 26th April. Damage is reported as chiefly to office space, and to the unlucky material (on footbal and Welsh Chapels) being processed there. The main archives and the current 'Writers of Wales' exhibition on JCP were fortunately not affected. (*See pages 16-19*).

* * * *

The June issue of ***Dorset Life*** has two articles of interest to Powysians: an article by John Newth about **Wolfeton House** (the possible inspiration for Nevilton House in JCP's novel *Ducdame*, visited recently by a group from the Society) and an article by Steve White about the restoration of St Andrew's church at **Winterborne Tomson**. ARP was closely involved with the earlier restoration of the church and is buried in the churchyard. The article includes comments by Stephen Powys Marks on reasons why ARP chose to be buried here.

* * * *

Peter Haring Judd's ***The Akeing Heart,*** *Passionate attachments and their aftermath: Sylvia Townsend Warner, Valentine Ackland, and Elizabeth Wade Wright* (privately published in New York 2013) is available on Amazon, ISBN 978-1484867181. 392pp. NB Philippa/ Katie Powys was a friend of all these and is mentioned, but there are no letters of hers in the book. (*See page xxx* for VA's letter about Douglas Stewart, 1937.)

* * * *

In May Faber reissued a book first published in a limited edition last year by **Quive-**

Smith Editions: *Holloway* by Robert Macfarlane, Stanley Donwood and Dan Richards. Inspired by the landscape of South Dorset and the work of the environmentalist **Roger Deakin**, it may be of interest to Powysians as it explores the Chideock Valley and other familiar places. [*from* **Michael Caines** — *more about this in a future NL*]

* * * *

The first conference of the **Jack Clemo** Society took place at Wheal Martyn near St Austell from 31st May to 1st June. Jack Clemo was an admirer of T. F. Powys and visited him at Mappowder (see *NL* 45 and *The Powys Review* 6). David Gervais has written on Clemo and TFP and hopes to address the Clemo Society in future.

* * * *

John Gray's new book *The Silence of Animals: On Progress and Other Modern Myths*, 'a study of the human condition through the prism of literature' was reviewed by **Jane Shilling** in the *Daily Telegraph* on 16th February.

With utopianism discredited by the 20th century, and 'meliorism' - a brighter future arrived at by gentler means – dismissed as illusion, Gray observes the antics of his fellow humans 'with a complicated mixture of distaste and compassion ... But even for readers who disagree with him, his book is full of richness: he is extraordinarily well read. Llewelyn Powys (younger brother of the better-known John Cowper Powys) and J. A. Bilker are not exactly household names, but their nature writing, as quoted by Gray, is too ravishing not to explore further. And he sends one back, generously, to the writings of Norman Lewis, J. G. Ballard, Richard Jefferies, Alexander Herzen and a host of others. For that alone, his book is a pleasure to read.'

John Banville in the *Guardian* commented: 'Religion he sees, rightly, as a poetic response to the world and our predicament in it. He quotes with approval from one of his favourite obscure authors – Gray is a great recuperator of lost reputations – the cheerful unbeliever Llewelyn Powys, who confessed that when he visits "an old grey church" and kneels amid the "curious peace of the place" he feels half inclined to believe: "Why not?"'

* * * *

Michael Kowalewski notes that in *The Western Canon* by the influential American critic Harold Bloom JCP appears in the appendix, with *Weymouth* and *Wolf* featuring as part of his canon of the 'age of chaos'. (Bloom, however, said he repudiated this appendix.)Michael also records: 'in a letter to the editor of Britain's oldest and largest Polish language paper, the *Polish Daily*, (edited by my father years ago) concerning ties between Sherborne and Poland, I mentioned that a Polish translation of *Wolf Solent* exists.'

* * * *

Mysterious quotation found! **Anthony O'Hear** has finally traced the elusive epigraph from JCP in his *The Great Books*:

> To read great books does not mean one becomes 'bookish'; it means that something of the terrible insight of Dostoyevsky, of the richly-charged imagination of Shakespeare, of the luminous wisdom of Goethe, actually passes into the personality of the

reader; so that in contact with the chaos of ordinary life certain free and flowing outlines emerge, like the forms of some classic picture, endowing both people and things with a grandeur beyond what is visible to the superficial glance.

It is from JCP's *The Secret of Self Development*, originally in a Little Blue Book, 1926, reprinted by Village Press 1974 – that *annus mirabilis* of Jeff Kwinter's Powys republications.

* * * *

Wormwood magazine has an article on JCP by **Adam Daly**.

* * * *

Cecil Woolf points to *A Book Addict's Treasury* (by Julie Rugg and Linda Murphy, 2005) an entertaining and instructive anthology of quotations on various obsessions with discovering, handling, owning, collecting and even reading books, in which JCP scores four (from *The Meaning of Culture*), with a description in the introduction as '*impossibly fey*'. CW 'looked up the meaning of this word in the OED and, after "Fated to die, at point of death", it gives "disordered in mind (often with overconfidence, etc), like person about to die" '.

* * * *

Amanda Powys wonders if TFP might have had a distant memory of vans marked WESTON in East Anglia, where an ancestor of hers ran a ginger beer and mineral-water factory under that name.

* * * *

History Today (June 2013) in its page of centenaries has a short piece on *Death of John Cowper Powys, June 17th 1963*. 'Novelist, poet, philosopher, translator of Rabelais and Dostoevsky ... One of the strangest literary figures of his time ... largely incomprehensible yet strangely compelling. He himself had no doubt of his stature ... He believed that the dead of past centuries communicated with him and that he had experienced the events described in his historical novels ... Attempts to escape from his own personality into those of his characters ..." The well-worn list of pecularities follows (raw eggs, Blaenau, bizarre fantasies).

* * * *

from **Conrad Vispo:** *The Columbia Paper* (from Columbia County, NY, May 9th 2013) has a article *Perspectives On Place: Spring through the centuries: Tweets from the past* by **Anna Dubon,** in which the author traces differences in Spring weather and plants, with changes through the years, quoting briefly, among other local records, from the 1934 and 1931 diaries of 'literary Harlemville resident' JCP.

* * * *

Clifford Musgrave's *Life in Brighton* (Faber 1970; The History Press 2011 with new introduction by Stephen Musgrave) devotes a good deal of space to John Cowper Powys 'a story-teller in the tradition of Dickens and Dostoevsky ... a writer who was particularly sensitive to the unique spirit of Brighton, and especially to certain sexual overtones and undertones which form part of the complex emotional tone-colour of the place'. He quotes extensively from *Autobiography* (*Girls' school? School of girls? I saw them like gleaming porpoises, shoals and shoals of them, waiting for*

their new professor at West Brighton ...) with a long description of the town in the 1890s, its streets still thick with dust, its winds like 'a sort of *aerial ale*', the jostling life of the colossal pebble beach. 'He goes on to speak, with all the frankness of a Rousseau or a Restif de la Bretonne', of his mania for 'sylphs', and the terrifying eyes of the even more obsessed elderly starers with their 'look of being hopelessly *damned*'. A discussion of old bookshops leads to JCP's association with Alfred de Kantzow.

Clifford Musgrave, librarian and museum curator and leading authority on the history of Brighton, was responsible for the post-WW2 restoration of the Brighton Pavilion. He was an admirer and friend of Llewelyn Powys. The Musgraves' visits to Chydyok in the 1930s are recounted in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*. Their letters have been donated to the Powys Collection (see NL 66).

* * * *

The Powys Society plays a mysterious background role in ***The Editor's Wife***, a novel by **Clare Chambers** (Century, 2007). We are told that the Editor in question is a fan of John Cowper Powys ('unjustly overlooked ... shared enthusiasm for a writer — particularly a neglected one – is a great accelerant of friendship') and he urges the hero to read *Maiden Castle*. He gives a lecture on *Wolf Solent* at a Powys Society meeting 'in the upper room of a pub in Battersea', to an audience of 'lonely fanatics, hippy post-graduates and older female academics with unbrushed hair and misbuttoned cardigans' who resemble, and in one case are, Iris Murdoch. Questions are 'dominated by one or two pedants trying to demonstrate their great erudition ... pieces of pure self-advertisement. Even the benign world of Powys appreciation, it

Escapist: John Cowper Powys, c.1940.

JUNE 17TH 1963

Death of John Cowper Powys

Author of *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932) and *Porius* (1951), novelist, poet, philosopher, translator of Rabelais and Dostoevsky, John Powys was one of the strangest literary figures of his time. Readers often found his work largely incomprehensible, yet strangely compelling. He himself had no doubt of his stature and was astonished not to have won the Nobel Prize for literature. He believed that the dead of past centuries communicated with him and that he had experienced the events described in his historical novels. In a letter to a friend in the 1950s he said he was 'really scared of thinking of myself or facing myself' and that his novels were attempts to escape from his own personality into those of his characters.

Born in 1872, the eldest of 11 children of a family that traced itself back to Welsh Borders country gentry, John was descended on his mother's side from the poet William Cowper. Two of his younger brothers, Theodore and Llewellyn, also became well-known writers. He married Margaret Lyon in 1896, but they were not happy and in the 1920s in the United States he met Phyllis Plater, his love and his muse for the rest of his life. From 1935 they lived at Corwen in the mountains of North Wales, where he could satisfy his lifelong mystical delight in landscape and country walking.

John's wife Margaret died in 1947 and his only child, Littleton, in 1954. In 1955 John and Phyllis moved a few miles to a tiny house in the slate-quarrying town of Blaenau Ffestiniog, high in the mountains of Snowdonia. John was living mainly on raw eggs and two bottles of milk a day. He worked on what he called a Freudian paraphrase of the *Iliad* and various short works that Richard Perceval Graves, the Powys brothers' biographer, called bizarre fantasies. He grew gradually weaker, stopped writing and died quietly in the local hospital, aged 90. He was cremated and his ashes were scattered in the sea at Chesil Beach in Dorset.

A page from the very recemt issue of History Today.

seemed, was not free of petty power struggles.' Warm white wine, orange juice and greasy peanuts follow, the fanatics loitering awkwardly and slinking off, the rest in 'unbreachable clusters'. Apart from the author's scorn of such an occasion, and its role as contrast with the hero's beloved, no reason for naming the society appears, unless as an example of the Editor's saintly simple-mindedness: the hero's first and only novel, greatly admired by the Editor, is turned down by the publisher's senior partner and the Editor loses his job.

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from a letter from ***Arnold Bennett*** *to Frank Swinnerton* (in Arnold Bennett *by Reginald Pound, 1962*)

> I met Theodore Powys at Dorothy Cheston's the other afternoon. Believe me, a damned strange fellow. On the strength of his unbalanced interestingness I bought 'Black Bryony' and I began to read it today. It promises. I also bought the other Powys's 'Ebony and Ivory' and thought nought of it. I hope you'll meet John Cowper Powys, as I want a sound opinion of him. Dorothy, who knows him and his sister passing well, speaks very highly of him. I know another brother, an architect, who is not interesting, but just nice and decent, like me.

* * * *

Kenneth Hopkins

The London bookseller Collinge & Clark recently took delivery of a collection of rare pamphlets, including typed copies of poetry collections and lecture texts, by **Kenneth Hopkins**. (See their website for current details). This discovery was **Michael Caines**'s subject in the 'Freelance' column of the TLS, 17th May 2013, investigating Hopkins's spoof publication of 'Enfant Terrible' waspish sayings of Samuel Butler (author of *Erewhon*) which were taken seriously in some quarters. (Among KH's other literary 'discoveries' were previously unknown work by Emily Dickinson, Edith Sitwell and Ezra Pound.)

Kenneth Hopkins (1914–88) was a leading light in the early years of The Powys Society. As a young aspiring poet he introduced himself to Llewelyn Powys and to JCP, corresponded with them, published them, wrote about and campaigned for them (his *The Powys Brothers* a 'biographical appreciation' appeared in 1967). Other rare titles by Hopkins are both from Warren House Press and privately printed.

The bookseller **Bertram Rota** currently has a good collection of titles by KH, including some signed presentation copies. Present staff at Rota's still have vivid personal memories of KH for whom the firm performed duties other than book collecting and apparently used to import his favourite tobacco from USA. Anthony Rota (1932–2009), head of the firm and President of the International Antiquarian Booksellers Association from 1988 to 1991, was a close friend of KH and wrote the obituary published in *Powys Review* 22. Bertram Rota also published JCP's *Letters to Nicholas Ross* in 1971.

KH's huge collection of books of eighteenth and nineteenth century poetry can be found at the McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa. Hopkins's *English Poetry* (Phoe-

nix House, 1962) has dedicatory poem to JCP. His correspondence with Gerald Pollinger at London Metropolitan Archives is described in NL 72, March 2011. An obituary by Glen Cavaliero is in PSNA's *Powys Notes*, Spring 1988. [CT]

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Dandelion Fellowship News

from **Neil Lee-Atkin**: Two of our Dandelion Fellowship and Powys Society members have books published this summer. *The Adventures of Harry the Hippie* by Reb Lee [*aka N L-A*], published by New Age Poetry Press (May 1st 2013) ISBN 978-0-9522108-2-5 (paperback: 366pp: RRP £9.99) is available on Amazon and Kindle. The author states in his foreword: *The writing of this novel began as an experiment, an exercise in curiosity, and as with Alice (in Wonderland) it simply got curiouser and curiouser; in fact it took me on a ten year journey to Nowhere in Particular, cost me a small fortune, and left my brain cell seriously depleted.* According to the blurb, *This is a hilarious tongue-in-cheek unlikely tale of fun and adventure aboard a converted paraffin-powered trawler named the Moroccan Bud, on a zany drug-smuggling escapade around the Mediterranean.*

Songbook for Haunted Boys & Girls by **Wayne McNeill** is published by Smithcraft Press of Toronto, Canada, and will be available from August 1st from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and on Amazon Kindle. The book marks Wayne's debut, and the author writes: *My book, I hope, is a song you put on and listen to over wine. The song isn't lip-synched; it was written and sung by a man who lived every wrinkle in his face. It's a book of encouragement, I think. It's a cynical age and I don't think my point of view is the common one. A sturdy and unpretentious affirmation of life, expressed simply, was my aim.*

Wayne is a long-time member of the Powys Society and a founder member of the Dandelion Fellowship who says his work is *influenced by the pagan essays of Llewelyn Powys*. He was born and raised in Toronto, and his poems and short prose pieces have appeared in various Canadian magazines and periodicals. His work has also been represented in several anthologies, most recently 'The Dominion of Love'. His forthcoming book, he says *Might be regarded as a memoir told in short prose poems or very short stories. It is in part a portrait of the Greek neighbourhood I live in: the shops, restaurants, pubs and patios, as well as the local characters. It is also about growing up, growing old, and reasons for continuing: books and music, food and drink, the changing of the seasons. It's a book of encouragement, I think. It also mentions JCP and TFP, along with Llewelyn.*

NB My new email address is < atkin.neil@sky.com >

Booked into the George Hotel again this August and hoping for a bumper turn out at **East Chaldon on August 13th**!

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Thanks to all contributors, credited and uncredited, especially Chris Thomas, Susan Rands, Peter Foss, Shelagh Hancox, Jacqueline Peltier. KK

A Powys Dinner in Paris

from ***Marcella Henderson-Peal***

A Powys Dinner was held at Le Zimmer restaurant in Place du Châtelet in Paris on January 25th 2013, organised by **Edouard and Karine Mangin.** Edouard writes on Powys and Powys translations under his *nom de plume*, **Edouard Lecèdre,** on the Blog of **Catherine Lieutenant** (translator and publisher of *Rabelais*). He produced a long and very interesting article about JCP in January this year.

Seen in the photograph (L to R) are **Bernard Dupas** (a friend of Elmar Schenkel), **Judith Coppel Grozdanovitch** (translator), **Goulven Le Brech** (co-author of JCP *Une Philosophie de la Vie*), **Karine Mangin, Denis Grozdanovitch** (articles on JCP, preface to *Psychanalyse et Moralité*), **Marcella H-P, Edouard Mangin**, and **Sylvie Vaudier** (see her 'My Conference' in *NL* 77, p.10). Jacqueline Peltier and others were unfortunately unable to join the party.

M H-P reports a jolly evening with conversation both lively and interesting, mainly concerned with JCP and how each got involved with the Powys brothers, with many a Powysian anecdote. Goulven and Denis discussed parallels between JCP and French philosophers, and Judith is thinking of possibly translating *Atlantis*, following the new impulse to Powys readership in France with Christiane Poussier's translation of Llewelyn's *Black Laughter.* Furthermore, in March Denis Grozdanovitch was to launch his new book *La Puissance discrète du hasard* ('the discreet power of chance') where there would be a chance to meet Jean Wahl's student Faiza Mikhail, whom JCP called 'Cleopatra'.

A good start to what looks like the first of many other such Powys dinners. A mini Paris Powys Society is born!

John Cowper Powys and Douglas Stewart
a New Zealand connection

The article below was first published in *The Western Morning News* (an independent 'historically Liberal' daily paper based in Plymouth) on 28th August 1937. The author, **Douglas Stewart** (1913–85), was born in New Zealand and published his first volume of poetry there, but his importance lies more with Australia where he spent most of his working life, and where he is credited with influencing the development of its literary culture. He was an award-winning poet, playwright, short story writer, compiler of anthologies of Australasian poetry, and a literary editor and critic.

He was literary editor of *The Bulletin*, a popular weekly Australian magazine, from 1940 to 1960, and made an important contribution to the development of literary and artistic culture in Australia. He reviewed *Owen Glendower* for *The Bulletin* in 1942, describing it as *a window on one of the strangest minds of our time.* As a young man in New Zealand he read books by Llewelyn and TFP as well as JCP's *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance,* which had a powerful influence on his own early poetry. When Douglas Stewart sent JCP some of his poems he received an enthusiastic reply from Wales encouraging him to come and visit.

Douglas Stewart subsequently worked his passage by ship to England in 1937 and visited JCP in East Chaldon, on one of his yearly visits from Corwen. We know exactly when Stewart made this visit as JCP wrote to Llewelyn from Chaldon on 26th July 1937 saying *At this moment ... I am writing alone in Hilda's house waiting the appearance of a young poet called Stewart from New Zealand* ... Over 40 years later, in his memoir, *Springtime in Taranaki,* Douglas Stewart described the impact JCP made on him on this visit: ... *so exuberant, so extravagant, so strange and wild and uncontrollable ... he stays in my mind as one of the three people I have met in my life who have conveyed to me the impression of genius: of talent and personality quite beyond the ordinary.*

In the memoir he also described his meetings in Chaldon with TFP, Valentine Ackland and Sylvia Townsend Warner. More information about Stewart's visit can be obtained from a letter from Valentine Ackland to Elizabeth Wade White dated 27th August 1937 (included in Peter Judd's *Catalogue & Finding Aid to the Elizabeth Wade White Papers* at NYPL – see googlebooks; and printed in full in *The Akeing Heart*, pp.67–9): *There is a new young poet. I hope there are many. But this one arrived in Chaldon from New Zealand, to visit John Powys, and learning that Dove and Seagull were near at hand came on to our doorstep. He is called Douglas Stewart and his book is called* Green Lions *and has some good things in it but he had better stuff with him in manuscript. A very rich and solid poetry ... He spoke of the difficulty of writing poetry in New Zealand. All the place names and plant names were taken straight from the Maori and though beautiful in themselves do not assimilate with the English language. You will see it presents difficulties. The green lions are waves.*

Douglas Stewart kept up a correspondence with JCP until the 1950s (JCP also

refers to an article by Stewart in a Sydney newspaper in a letter to Katie in 1948) and as late as 1960, when a close friend of JCP, Clifford Tolchard, informed Phyllis that he was planning to live in Australia she remembered Douglas Stewart's visit in 1937 and recommended they make contact. Douglas Stewart was able to help Clifford Tolchard publish some of JCP's letters in the Australian magazine *Meanjin Quarterly*.

Douglas Stewart's occasional error in the article for *The Western Morning News* may be forgiven (he calls JCP's father vicar of Weymouth) because his admiration for JCP is honest and sincere and expressed with great vigour. He also gives us a fresh first-hand account of what it must have been like to encounter JCP, at the height of his creative powers, and accompany him on a walk across the Chaldon Downs. In his memoir Douglas Stewart recalled his meeting with JCP, and TFP and their East Chaldon literary friends, with a sense of privilege and deep gratitude: *How amazingly kind they all were to this absolutely unknown young person from New Zealand, with nothing to his name but a solitary slim volume published at his own expense and a few poems in a notebook!*

JCP's letters to Douglas Stewart can be found at the National Library of Australia and at the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales. The Mitchell Library also possesses a holograph manuscript of an 11-page article by Douglas Stewart, which is unsigned and undated, called *John Cowper Powys Let me share in his England* (this is possibly a longer version of the piece written for *The Western Morning News*). Full details of these holdings are included in *Douglas Stewart – a bibliography*, compiled by Susan Balyn and Jeff Doyle (1996).

Chris Thomas

Portrait of Douglas Stewart
sourced from Library, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

DORSET NOVELIST AFRAID OF ADDERS?

John Cowper Powys

CHAT WITH A NEW ZEALAND POET

By DOUGLAS STEWART

I wonder if the English realize that they own England; that it is so much their own private property. Though my mother was born at a Wiltshire vicarage and my father's speech has a tang of Scotland, I feel, coming to the Westcountry from New Zealand, that I am the guest of a strange people, whose lovely possessions I can admire, but never share.

As a guest, who has been royally entertained, I shall be eternally grateful to the Dorset taxi-driver who drove me from Wool Station to meet John Cowper Powys, for though it was Powys who had invited me to that part of the world, it was the taxi-man who first conferred upon me the exquisite privilege of seeing Chaldon. The taxi-man, who is Everyman, owns England, and I felt he might really have refused to allow the outsider to trespass.

BUT, of course, it is to Powys that my gratitude is really due. Years ago a New Zealand poet told me that I simply must read a book called "Wolf Solent", and when I had met in it the exciting Gerda, who could whistle like a blackbird, and who (Powys told me) is a creature purely of his imagination; and the poet Jason Otter, who is drawn from Powys's brother Theodore; and Wolf, who is Powys himself, I told all my friends, too, that they must read this wild mixture of poetic fantasy and earthy realism.

I had read the immense "Glastonbury Romance," the brutally powerful "Jobber Skald," and the profound wisdom of "The Meaning of Culture," as well as "Wolf Solent," before I sent Powys a copy of "Green Lions," my own poems, and received the amazingly generous reply that led to my meeting him at Chaldon.

CUDGEL OF A WALKING-STICK.

Powys, whose father was once vicar of Weymouth, lives now among the mountains of Wales, but was on holiday in his native Dorset when I went to see him. I was standing at the door of the cottage where I was to stay, staring with delight at the remote perfection of the village, thatched roofs, and white-washed walls, against a background of rolling green, when Powys, half shambling, half loping up the street, waved his great cudgel of a walking-stick at me, and roared out my name.

His body is big and lean, and loose-limbed. Because of his close-cropped, grizzled hair and immense hooked nose, I

would depict him, if I were a caricaturist, as an old eagle perched on, or skulking behind that dead, tree-like, inevitable walking-stick.

That was what he looked like when I met him; but later, when I was able to study his face in repose, I saw that the caricature would be a lie. It is his stony, primitive, receding forehead, his snake-black, extraordinary eyes, like holes in rock, that reveal his true character and justify his own claim to "formidable and terrifying genius."

THE FEAR OF ADDERS.

He is a fantastic man, this maker of fantastic literature. Perhaps, because a lifetime lecturing in America must have taught him the dramatic value of exaggeration, or simply because he likes to "astonish the bourgeois," he is at times deliberately eccentric. It may be natural for him to bow his head against a stone and pray vaguely, but desperately, to the "Earth Spirit," but, is he really so terrified of vipers that when he walks in the fields with Theodore, as he told me, his brother has to go before him "thrashing the ground with a stick"?

And yet it may be true. In his life, as in his books, you never know quite where you are with Powys. And you feel, all the time, that he is taking a rather malicious delight in your bafflement. Like all men of genius, he has a great deal of the child in his composition, and he contrives to act or speak with the embarrassing innocence of an infant, extracting at the same time an almost goblin triumph in your discomfiture. Really, it is astonishing when you are walking before breakfast with a great novelist, and from the interesting topics of modern poets and the ancient bards, Housman and Rabelais, Meredith and the Marquis de Sade, he keeps reverting to a theme song about the disasters of his internal economy. Such appalling details!

TWO NEW BOOKS.

But Powys has known suffering: there is no doubt about that. And it has helped to quicken his sympathy with all living creatures, so that he was telling me in one breath how glad he was that some of the Scotboro' negroes had been freed, and in the next how he had lately completed a book about hell, wherein the damned were seen gloating over the vivisection of a dog, and where the Marquis de Sade admitted that sadism, compared with the horror of cruelty in the name of science, was a ladylike virtue.

Powys has two new books in hand, a novel with characters drawn from the Welsh, and a collection of essays on "The Pleasures of Reading." He described to me the amazing way in which his books are produced. His working day in Wales begins with a walk up a mountainside before breakfast.

That meal, which consists of two raw eggs (and at Chaldon I saw him eat them, with a sort of ritualistic ferocity, like a cannibal devouring an enemy), is soon over, and then, after he has read his morning paper, the business of the day begins. Lying full length on his couch, Powys writes and drinks milk, writes and drinks milk, writes and drinks milk without a break until 4 p.m. At that hour he goes out for another walk, and after tea at 6 has a further two hours lying on his couch, writing and drinking milk.

A MARTIAL FURY.

Walking, as you can see, plays an im-

portant part in his life, and long boyhood rambles with his brothers over the green fields and lanes of Dorset must have bred and quickened in him that Wordsworthian passion for nature which illuminates all his writing and sparkles in his conversation. Walking with him is like marching with an invading army.

He does not saunter; he charges at the countryside; he does not point out a wild flower; he thunders out "Ah, St John's Wort!" with the air of a Chiang Kai-Shek shouting "Ah, reinforcements!"

There is a martial fury in his gestures as he shouts hurrah for Hardy, or with one wild sweep of his cudgel annihilates Meredith, "The Shropshire Lad," and the American poet Robert Frost for spurious rusticity.

The air about him is full of a jostle of voices, as if all the army were talking at once. "My brother Theodore!—St. John's Wort!—Vipers! That's Tansy!—My brother Llewellyn!—I simply feel malicious about Meredith!—Mugwort! —My dear Mr. Stewart, how extraordinary!—Stonehenge! You must see Stonehenge!—My brother Theodore!—Amazingly pretty young girls!"—That's how it goes.

I met Theodore Powys, too, while I was at Chaldon, and found him full of a sweet courtesy, almost of courtliness. He spoke delicately of country things. John Cowper Powys has the crude fire of genius, but for the lamp of style and beauty go to Theodore's "Mr Weston's Good Wine."

I said at the beginning of this article that the visitor feels "outside" England. The writings of men like these enable me, in New Zealand, to taste the magic of this country; and to have Powys—in so lovely a county as Dorset—show me, and let me share for a while its beauties, was a privilege well worth coming 13,000 miles.

Green Lions
by Douglas Stewart

The bay is gouged by the wind
In the jagged hollows green lions crouch,
And stretch,
And slouch,
And sudden with spurting manes and a glitter of haunches
Charge at the shore
And rend the sand and roar.

And inland, in offices and banks
Though trams clang down and heavy stone resists
The mutter of distant carnage still persists,
And men denied the jungle of young years

Grow taut, and clench their fists.

(*from* Collected Poems 1936–1967)

JCP: the art of growing old

7 Cae Coed
Corwen
Merionethshire
N.Wales
July 29th 1953

My dear Lecler

your Magazine "Everybodys" is my favourite of all our Magazines, and its only rival in my regard is "The New Yorker", so I esteem it a great privilege to answer your questions.

O no! I would not want an interview ... I am terribly nervous about interviews ... but I congratulate you on this enquiry which when you have published it & it's in print in Everybodys I certainly shall greatly enjoy.

1. My father & mother both came from long-lived families & he lived long himself and so would she if she hadn't had quite as many as eleven headstrong children.

2. Always walking as much as possible, even when, as for forty years it was my destiny to do, I spent the greater part of my time in Railway Trains — and always taking aperients (of some sort) to keep my bowels moving — for constipation is my chief danger. Taking Scotch Whisky as a cure for every sort of illness especially for every sort of cold. Never eating new bread but always eating a great deal of bread and drinking a lot of black coffee in America and black Tea over here in both cases with lots of sugar but no milk or cream. For the last Ten years I've followed exactly the same rule in diet never changing it. Walking from about 7.30 a m to 9.30 a m on an absolutely empty stomach every day and after that lying on my back all day writing or reading—and going to bed always at the same time & staying there from about 12.30 a m to about 6.30 a m.

I never have had for Ten years any other meals but late breakfast and late tea and at breakfast I eat a quarter of a very stale loaf of bread with no butter on it or anything else on it and swallow two fresh raw eggs and at tea I have the same, only with one raw egg instead of two. In both cases I drink many cups of very strong black Ceylon tea with a lot of sugar in it ... and then, between those two meals, from about Noon to 5.30 p m or 6.pm, I drink two pint bottles of fresh cold milk ... Meat fish vegetables butter honey Treacle jam fruit or any [or any] sort or kind of nuts I have not touched for at least Ten years. But every day I take 3 pellets of Redoxon to supply whatever it is we get from fruit & vegetables.

3. I would say I have for the last twenty-five years confined my reading to the sort of classics which I learnt as a boy at school and which imply lexicons and dictionaries and I think I have long had an instinct or inkling that my best self-interest lay in the

direction of childishness — and this particular self-preservative instinct steadily increases, no doubt aided by all those tendencies that make us talk of "Second childhood" — and is quite deliberately, & not always un-maliciously, cultivated by me. So that roughly I truly might say that I have rigorously and eagerly and zealously cultivated Second Childhood for twenty years.

4. I would answer, without hesitation, to have found somebody to live with, with whom you feel always completely and absolutely at ease, but at the same time whom you trust and respect, and in whose good graces, as we say, you are anxious to remain.

With the best of good wishes for your good luck in being able to handle this excellent enquiry as you wish.

Yours sincerely John Cowper Powys.

John Cowper Powys
Over Sixty-Five: Response to a Questionnaire

I fancy it would need a born biographer (rather than a good doctor or a good psychologist or a psychoanalyst more subtle than the cleverest student of Freud, Adler and Jung) to say how far my very individual regimen of life has made it possible for me to grow old and to still enjoy being alive; in fact to prefer being alive to being dead. But I certainly have worked out, as the years have passed, an extremely definite regimen of life for myself, the chief essentials of which are as follows:

1. *Will* with all your will-power at every moment when you are not asleep to enjoy life wherever it may have led you and whatever it may have given you or taken away from you.

2. *Fight* with all your will-power and with all your endurance and with all your energy against life in its totality, against the universe or the multiverse, against space and time, against your whole environment both visible and invisible, both outward and inward, in fact fight constantly and without ceasing against life, wrestling with it, and saying to it: 'I *will* enjoy you, I *will* enjoy you, I *will* enjoy you, until I am dead!'

3. *Transfer* to those senses which are strongest in you, or even to the one sense which is strongest in you, as much as you can from the rest. In my case the dominant life-giving sense is *sight*, though I have only one eye left — and the other is completely blind. But you must transfer, I say to myself, all the ecstasies that you might get, that other people *do* get, from the senses which you have lost, or have never had any inclination to cultivate, to the pictures brought to you *by your sight*.

4. In any case this *transference* from the other senses means that I use all my will-power and all my fighting-power to enjoy life unless I am asleep as if at every single moment it were offering me a picture painted by one or other of the painters I love

best. And this picture I not only see but force myself to feel and hear and smell and taste as if it were the sounds, the tastes, the smells and feelings that please me most in the world.

5. And I force myself to enjoy what I see around me wherever I am as if it were a picture painted by one or other of my favourite painters or perhaps even by myself, if I could paint well enough!

6. With regard to other people, I try to be kind and sympathetic and helpful to them without allowing them to interfere with me; and when in their presence I do my utmost to see them as a satisfying part of a particular picture.

7. And as to any life after death, I do not believe in it nor do I let it trouble me at all.

8. To sum it up: I fight to live and live to enjoy and I am ready for death when it comes.

Note by ***Paul Roberts****: These are the unpublished answers to a questionnaire – dated August 28th 1955* [sic] *– sent to John Cowper Powys* [*aged 83 in 1955*] *by Rene* [*Lecler*] *of* Everybody's *magazine* [*letter definitely 1953, typescript 1955 coule be an error?*]. *Typescript from the collection of the late Kenneth Hopkins.*

Handwritten letter from the collection of photocopies donated by PR to the Powys Society Collection. This and others were intended for PR's unpublished book of JCP essays, England Revisited, *a sequel to his* Elusive America (*Cecil Woolf, 1994*). [KK]

Newly published (2012, see Review in *Newsletter* 78)
Under the Shadow of the Oath, A Selection from the African Journals of **Mary Casey**, edited and introduced by Louise de Bruin.

This book must be ordered either from Amazon or direct from Louise de Bruin < lsedebruin@gmail.com >.
On Amazon it is available for about £10 including postage;
Louise will also charge £10.

Websites and e-mail addresses: Please note that for consistency these are generally shewn between angle brackets < >.