

BUNHILL FIELDS MEETING

6TH DECEMBER 2014 — SEE PAGE 3

Editorial

When Kate invited me to take on the role of **guest editor** of the November *Newsletter* I felt, at first, a sense of uncertainty and trepidation. But this quickly turned to a feeling of excitement at the prospect of selecting material. In fact the process of collating the contents of this month's *Newsletter* has been, what JCP would have called, a 'thrilling' experience. This has made me fully appreciate the time and effort Kate and Stephen devote to this task giving us, unfailingly, three excellent newsletters every year. I am indebted to Kate for her guidance and advice and to Stephen for his expertise. I am also very grateful to members and non-members for their generosity and willingness to provide contributions.

So here is *Newsletter* No 83. It does not really look very different from other issues. There are the regular features such as the AGM, reviews of new publications, and reports of meetings and the annual conference. This years Conference was another very joyful event which reintroduced us to our past President, the Shakespearean scholar and pioneering Powyisan interpreter, G. Wilson Knight, in the form of our Chairman's talk, and his fund of personal memories about the great man. The

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Conference also provided opportunities to meet colleagues and new members, explore the beautiful countryside around Sherborne as well as make a memorable visit to Wyke Manor near Bradford Abbas. There are news items, notes and articles covering a variety of topics including Eric Barker, Henry Miller, JCP's schooldays, LCP's passion for cricket, a previously unpublished poem by Peter Foss, and a description of musical pieces, inspired by some of JCP's novels, composed by Anthony Green who is one of our newest members.

I hope members will enjoy reading this edition of the Newsletter.

Chris Thomas



*Chris Thomas introducing talk by
Marcella Henderson-Peal.*



*Tim Hyman introducing talk
by David Gervais.*

CONFERENCE SCENES

Richard Graves relaxing.



*Jonathan Goodwin (speaker)
and John Hodgson.*



Meeting in London

2 pm, Saturday 6 December 2014

at Bunhill Fields Friends Meeting House, Quaker Court, Banner Street,
London EC1Y 8QQ (near Old Street Underground station)

Our past Chairman, **John Hodgson**, will lead a discussion of JCP's essay *Pair Dadeni* or '*The Cauldron of Rebirth*'

Pair Dadeni was first published in a Welsh translation by JCP's friend, the poet and Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum, Iowerth C. Peate, in the Welsh newspaper *Y Cymro* on 13th April 1945. The essay appeared in English in the magazine, *Wales*, Vol. VI, No 2, 1946, and in a separate pamphlet published by the Druid Press in the same year. It was also included in JCP's book of essays about Wales, *Obstinate Cymric*, published in 1947. The genesis of the essay goes back to 1943 to JCP's exchange of views, with Iowerth C. Peate and Alwyn Rees, author of *Adfeilion*, on the so called 'aristocratic' nature of Welsh folk culture. But the essay also reflects JCP's experience and response to the events of WWII, when most of it was written, and deals especially with his hopes for the future. In a footnote to JCP's letter to him, dated 13th April 1945, Iowerth C. Peate says that the essay represents JCP's '*hopeful answer to what he had called "gloomy Spenglerism"*'. The influence of the German philosopher of history, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), and his pessimistic ideas about the decay of civilisation, in his book *The Decline of the West* (first published in German in 1918 and 1922 and translated into English in 1928), which JCP called '*the greatest book of our time*', looms over the essays in *Obstinate Cymric*. In our discussion we will aim to elucidate JCP's attitude to WWII, his opinions on the nature of Welsh culture, his interpretation of Spengler's view of history in relation to his personal Saturnian philosophy and his vision of the future of Wales and Europe in the immediate post war period. For helpful background reading members may wish to refer to the volume of letters to Peate, *John Cowper Powys, Letters 1937–54* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974).

All are welcome. The event is free although a contribution towards the cost of refreshments would be appreciated. If you wish to attend this event please notify Secretary by e-mail, post or telephone (see inside front cover of Newsletter).

A digital copy of *Pair Dadeni* will be sent on direct application to the Secretary.

Directions: Bunhill Meeting House may be found through a rectangular archway off Banner Street, a short walk from Old Street Underground station. It is set on the edge of the recently replanted and refurbished Quaker Gardens.

For more information about the venue please see:

< <http://studymore.org.uk/bunlet.htm#location> >

The Conference Sherborne, August 2014

(notes by KK)

Yet another very friendly occasion, in this pleasant hotel outside the town, surrounded by extensive lawns and tall cherry trees as well as a *boules* pitch and other games. About fifty cheerful people attended six interesting and varied talks.

★

Timothy Hyman our Chairman, introduced by our President Glen Cavaliero, started us off on the first evening with reminiscences of Wilson Knight – known to most of us from his brilliant books on Shakespeare (especially *The Wheel of Fire*, 1930), for *The Saturnian Quest* (1964) on JCP, and of course from JCP's letters to him (Cecil Woolf, 1983). Knight was also an actor and gave one-man performances in his seventies, notably of *Timon of Athens*, ending in nakedness; he had strong theories about the value of the body, demonstrated in his book of photographs of himself, remarkably taken in his 50s, in poses representing various types, called *Symbol of Man* and published in 1979.

Tim first came across Knight's books when a student at the Slade, and corresponded with him about JCP before meeting him at the 1972 Cambridge Conference. GWK spoke there on 'JCP as Humorist', and participated in several more Powys Society conferences: speaking on 'Powys and the Kundalini spirit' at Sherborne in 1977, and performing his 'Timon' at Weymouth the following year.

GWK ended by living in Exeter, in the home left to him by his brother Jackson Knight, the authority on Virgil. It was called Caroline House after their formidable mother; GWK's book on his brother deals with their difficult triangular relationship. TH stayed in the house, describing GWK's eccentric kitchen arrangements, peculiar utterance, and touching kindness. GWK's messages to the world of the value of masturbation (a value shared by JCP), and his hopes for an androgynous future, are elements among others in his essentially transcendent view of life and the world.

(**Richard Graves**, who also went to the house while interviewing GWK for *The Brothers Powys*, recognised him as 'a well of spirituality'.)

★

Peter Foss, introduced by Louise de Bruin, gave the first talk on Saturday morning, on Llewelyn Powys's diary for 1910, *The Conqueror Worm* (still in process of publication), and on Davos in Switzerland as a crucial place in Powys lives, both then and during Llewelyn's final three years, illustrated by contemporary and recent photographs. This diary is much thicker than the ones previously published, with a whole page for a day (like JCP's): it is expected to appear in hardback from Cecil Woolf. Two photographs of young girls are stuck inside its cover – one of his niece Isobel aged six, one probably of Marion Linton to whom he was once engaged. It contains copies of letters received (letters that have been published are frequently mis-transcribed), as well as details of life and inmates of the sanatorium, often described with nicknames. Treatments of tuberculosis in 1910 were sometimes crazy and frequently dangerous.

One photograph is of patients lying in an outside annexe, their blankets covered with snow.

A remarkable number of the Powys family and their friends visited Llewelyn in Switzerland, starting with JCP who first escorted his brother to the sanatorium. Peter Foss described the valley of Davos 5,000 feet up, the moraine shelves and landmark *Frauenkirch* spire. Clavadel, favoured by the English community, is on the corner of a branch valley, with its various buildings and the tall gothic sanatorium inspired by Fida Gadmer, tutelary genius of the place and mentor of Lise Gujer in with whom Llewelyn and Alyse stayed in 1936–9 and where he died. Lise had met Llewelyn as a girl – she nursed him after his near-fatal walk across the Furka pass – and adored him all her life. His fascination for women was ascribed to a combination of good looks, distinction, innocence, poetic sensibility, delicacy and sincerity.

Peter Foss has traced Llewelyn's walks and identified almost all the places and people mentioned in the diary, many also in drawings by Gertrude Powys on her extended visits. Lise Gujer's celebrated woven pictures are often taken from designs by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, another Davos resident: one previously unidentified is interpreted by PF as a symbolic scene or herself with Llewelyn. Kirchner's rather strange portrait of Llewelyn, formerly owned by Lise, is on the reverse of a better-known work 'Tango Tea' (present whereabouts unknown).

★

A different mountain in the Powys world is being quarried by **Marcella Henderson-Peal** (English but lifelong French resident), who with Jacqueline Peltier has revealed a wealth of connections between John Cowper and French writers loosely grouped as 'existentialist'. JCP as we know was wary of *isms* and did not think of himself as a 'philosopher' in any academic sense, but felt a strong affinity in the way he looked at life with those he met or corresponded with – as witness his letters to Jean Wahl printed in the latest *Powys Journal*.

Marcella's talk on JCP and France, introduced by **Chris Thomas**, dealt in particular with the kindred spirits Jean Wahl (1888–1974), Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) and Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962), also with the students and friends of these, with JCP's translators, and writers such as Simone de Beauvoir who were interested in JCP, his ideas and his methods (chiefly sparked by *Wolf Solent* and *Weymouth Sands*); later enthusiasts for JCP include Frédéric Worms and, of course, Robert Misrahi (see *Newletters* 81 and 82). They hold in common, as did JCP, a belief in the uniqueness of being (and of every Being), and that while being actively *in* the world, *we may be open to transcendence*. Childhood, 'angst', memory, and 'sensuality' in the Powysian sense, are recurrent themes.

Wahl visited Blaenau, having first written to JCP in 1937. Bachelard wrote that one 'reads Powys as one reads Dostoevsky ... [he] leads the reader to dream and to meditate', and brings Wolf's Gerda and her blackbird song into his *Water and Dreams*. Marcel, in his 1931 article on *Wolf Solent*, notes its 'strangely nuanced and unusual lyrical sensitivity to life ... a poem rather than a novel ... a symphony or a tapestry ...';

and quotes Wolf's statement that 'life would not be worth while if it could not be perceived through child-like eyes'.

Inevitably, many names came up in the talk that were only familiar to some of the audience, but Marcella's enthusiasm and clarity in her depth of research came across inspiringly, opening no few windows on pastures new.

★

Our free afternoon was spent variously in the leafy hotel grounds, in Sherborne itself, in Weymouth, or in the moated garden of Wyke Farm Manor near Bradford Abbas, offered tea by its hospitable occupants and tenant farmers, Mr and Mrs Loxton. The lovely house, dating back to 1650, possesses many historic features and is described in Pevsner's book about the buildings of Dorset. Wyke Farm Manor is also a possible original candidate for Mr Urquhart's house, King's Barton Manor, in *Wolf Solent*.

★

After dinner Tim Hyman introduced **David Gervais**, well known to the Society for his many books and articles, especially on comparative literature. David began his talk on Theodore Powys, whom he considers an undoubtedly great writer, by describing him as an antidote to such as Martin Amis, where a sneer is predictable as a full stop. TFP is a different sort of writer to any today – nearer perhaps to Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*. Where beyond Montacute Rectory did he come from? In *Soliloquies of a Hermit* he says that belief is too easy a road to God – his ways are violent and problematic. But the version of God in *The Only Penitent* is serene, not anguished.

Among David's perceptions of TFP are that, like D. H. Lawrence, he is one of our great English modernists, and the most original, though *not* eccentric. He is an *artist*, as much as Kafka or Proust. Most great writers are realists, he is an allegorist. Not didactic as are Lawrence and Conrad, he provides no morals to his stories, and there is always a surprise element. He is subtle, silent, numinous, comic, terrifying, rueful, ironic, double-edged, often simultaneously; fascinating for the many possible interpretations he offers. He always leaves a margin for comedy. He has a Rabelaisian tolerance of humanity. His changes of tune and key are more usually found with poets. He makes important use in the stories of moments of silence (as when Time stops in *Mr Weston*). Shorter works are better suited to allegory, but chapters in the longer books are often self-contained as separate stories. He was well aware of his technique.

David finally gave a short reading from the story 'God', where the deified top hat becomes a mystical sacrifice. This reading David dedicated to Barrie Mencher who has recently died. It was good to see Elaine Mencher at the Conference.

★

The first talk on Sunday, introduced by **John Hodgson**, was by Jonathan Goodwin from the University of Louisiana, author of *Journal* articles (on *Glastonbury* and *The Brazen Head*) but a newcomer to our conferences (the friendliest he's ever been to, he said at the beginning of his talk). His subject this day was JCP's *Atlantis* (1954).

He first came to JCP through his studies of 1930s novels, and through science fiction, which *Atlantis* among other things is. A special interest is the *character system* and importance of minor characters. Another is *computational analysis* (computer listing of frequency and associations of words and names). This method reveals, for example, that Odysseus, the main character, actually has less to say than the Fly and the Moth. Athena, his counterpart, remains offstage. Other characters form contrast-ing pairs – Enorches the cruel and violent nihilist priest, *versus* Zeuks the Rabelaisian natural magician.

Powys's own brand of anachronism combines different stages of civilization, science-fictionish monsters with modern psychology and naturalism, and also Tibetan reality, the power of thought, actual *eidola* capable of working on impression-able brains. It is possible to think of *Atlantis* as the future. Alternative sexualities make 'an open horizon of erotic possibility'.

JCP's fascination with Homer is usually with the *Iliad*, whose characters (an aged Ajax) also appear on the Ithaca scene. The adolescent Nisos has a symbolic struggle with the Fates, Odysseus an encounter with an elderly Dryad. The godly flying horses survive an attack by Enorches.

It's hard to see whether (even with the help of Phyllis) JCP had much of a planned plot. Atlantis itself (the sunken island) only appears towards the end. Its monstrous Typhon's scientific plans for the world are summarily smashed by the Club of Hercules. But the New World seemingly cannot accept the paganism of Zeuks, who dies before they reach it.

Questions after the talk suggested several similar fantasies (among them the Mighty Mekon from *Eagle* comics, *Prediction* magazine, and Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*). A recurring theme in these, as in the late JCP books, is *morphing*. When asked, John Cowper often (though not always) claimed *Atlantis* as his favourite book.

★

Following the AGM, **Larry Mitchell** spoke about Katie Powys, JCP, and Walt Whitman, 'The Poet of Passionate Friendship', apropos of the 1881 drawing of Whitman given to John Cowper by the artist and by him to his sister Katie (see *Newsletter* 67, page 48). It has now joined the Cushing Library archive in Texas.

There was limited time for this talk, and Larry produced an admirably clear and entertaining history of JCP's lectures on and influences from Whitman, whom he thought, with Poe, would most surely survive. He shared his enthusiasm with Llewelyn and then with Katie, some thought to excess: Whitman became her lodestar and was a bond with her friend Stephen Reynolds. She asked for her copy of *Leaves of Grass* to be buried with her. Several essays on Whitman by JCP were published, culminating in the magnificent one in *Pleasures of Literature*. His later favourite Edgar Lee Masters he considered Whitman's natural and truly American child. For JCP, Whitman's optimism transformed the ugly detritus of America into poetry. 'Doctor' Powys's praise of the Great Good Poet in women's clubs and girls' schools (his rota of

'second-rate venues') was proudly reported in local papers.

In 1923 Katie Powys visited Patchin Place and the unsubstantiated story goes that with Phyllis she climbed into Whitman's former home at Camden (then empty, later a museum) and carved her name on a chair. Another story, more convincing, is that when nearing his end JCP asked Frederick Davies for a copy of Whitman's poem, 'As I ebbed from the ocean of life ...'

I, musing, late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,
Alone, held by the eternal self of me that threatens to get the better of me, and stifle me,
Was seized by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,
In the rim, the sediment, that stands for all the water and all the land of the globe ...

★ ★ ★ ★

Conference Points of View

A tweet spotted on Twitter

3 day Conference weekend here in Sherborne, Dorset — going with a zing! And so many wonderful, fascinating people here.

Marcella Henderson-Peal

It was a beautifully organised conference.

Susan Rands

An excellent conference.

Terry Little

I enjoyed the conference in Sherborne. It was a success. I found the gathering friendly and approachable.

Sonia Lewis

I liked Tim's talk best of all because it was like going inside one of his paintings – the way he ranged and swooped around the subject then focused on a small detail. I liked the genuine feeling of 'life' and being able to respond quickly to each moment.

Hilary Bedder

From my first arrival at reception I sensed there was a good friendly feeling and a happy atmosphere. We were all made to feel very welcome

John Morfett

This was my 3rd conference I liked the location and was pleased with the venue and interesting conversations with other members.

Dawn Collins

It was lovely to be able to share interests with other members. It was a very refreshing experience.

Raymond Cox

I very much liked the venue of the conference this year. This was a good choice of location and provided plenty of space for car parking. I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet other members with shared interests in some favourite subjects such as ley hunting.

A Visit to Wyke Manor

by *Chris Thomas*

On our free Saturday afternoon, at this year's Conference, some members visited Wyke Manor located near Bradford Abbas, adjacent to the railway, halfway between Sherborne and Yeovil. The manor house is mentioned in the Dorset volume of Pevsner's *Buildings of England*: 'A stately mid 17th century stone manor house, surrounded by a moat. There is a date 1650 on the N doorway. It is instructive to note that at that date strict symmetry was still not considered necessary. Two storeyed fronts, with a pair of cross-gables round the sides. That means rooms set two-deep, a 17th century advance in planning.' Nearby the impressively large tithe barn and adjoining farm lands were once in the possession of Sherborne Abbey. Wyke Manor is now owned by Winchester College and has been leased to tenants since 1824. This beautiful old building, half hidden by trees, reveals, from the south side, only its chimneystacks on its gable ends, 'in the Dorset way', notes Pevsner and looks down on the course of the winding river Yeo. Earlier in the day we speculated whether Wyke Manor might be the original inspiration for King's Barton manor in *Wolf Solent*. Tony Hallett, in his article about *Wolf Solent*, (*The Powys Review* 24, 1989) refers only to Clifton Maybank house, Compton, and Montacute as possible models for King's Barton. However the specific geographical location of Wyke Manor, so close to Bradford Abbas, which JCP called, in a letter to Llewelyn, the 'locale' of *Wolf Solent*, seems a much better fit and coincides much more closely with the topography of the sketch map produced by JCP to illustrate the setting of the novel.



Members enjoying tea and conversation in the garden at Wyke Manor: Susan Rands, Mrs Loxton (tenant of Wyke Manor), [Mr Loxton in background], Kate Kavanagh, John Hodgson, Chris Thomas, Robin Hickey, David Gervais.

We made our way, by car, from the Conference venue to Wyke Manor, following the old Bradford road, which is the same route taken by Wolf Solent and Darnley Otter by dog cart at the beginning of the novel. The scenery certainly matched JCP's description of the landscape: '*To his right, as they drove along, the ground sloped upwards, – cornfield after cornfield, of young green shoots – to the great main ridge between Dorset and Somerset ... To his left the Vale of Blackmore beckoned to him out of its meadows – meadows that were full of faint grassy odours which carried a vague taste of river mud in their savour because of the nearness of the banks of the Lunt*'. We parked the car in a narrow grassy lane, followed a field path, and approached Wyke Manor, along a short driveway. We studied the low stone-built facade, set back in a small courtyard, and tried to imagine Wolf Solent, in the library, at work on Squire Urquhart's scandalous Chronicle of Dorset families. We did not have an invitation to the house and so we very cautiously knocked on the heavy door. We saw, carved into the lintel above the door, the date of 1650, mentioned by Pevsner. We did not expect to be admitted but having explained our purpose, the tenants, Mr and Mrs Loxton, graciously invited us into their house and showed us their lovely garden. The old moat, now filled with trailing wild plants, bounded the far end of the garden. Sitting quietly in the sunshine, looking at the distant view of Honeycomb woods and softly rounded, green hills, it felt as if we had entered a magical retreat, the sort of place Henry James called a 'great good place'. Mrs Loxton served tea and told us about the connections of the house with Winchester College. Later, having returned home from the Conference, I learned more about this, from the archivist at Winchester College who told me: '*Winchester College acquired property in Sherborne, Wyke and Bradford Abbas in the 1820s via an exchange with the Marquis of Anglesey. We gave him property in Milborne Port in return. We leased [Wyke manor] back to the Marquis of Anglesey from 1824 and the lease transferred to Thomas Sampson in 1853. From 1860, it was let to George Wingfield Digby, and then to the Loxton family from the 1930s.*' Mention of the name of Wingfield Digby is interesting as they also inherited ownership of Sherborne Castle in 1856.

It was hard, however, to reconcile the relatively insignificant size of Wyke Manor with the description JCP gives of King's Barton Manor in the preface to the 1961, Macdonald edition of *Wolf Solent* in which he refers to Squire Urquhart's 'castellated', 'big', house. This reference may have misled the designer of the dust wrapper of this edition, of *Wolf Solent*, to produce an image of King's Barton Manor making it look like a large, rambling country house, influencing, in turn, the reader's imagination. Yet JCP's mention of the location of the house '*midway between the two counties of Dorset and Somerset*', and references in the novel itself to mullioned windows, a short driveway, and a '*small and unimportant dwelling*' certainly suggest the model of Wyke Manor. JCP, surely, also could have glimpsed Wyke Manor on his journeys, by train, to Sherborne just as he says in *Autobiography* he could see 'the noble tower of Bradford Abbas church'. When JCP created Kings Barton, with its mullioned bay windows, casements, heraldic devices and abundant gardens, he must also have drawn on his memory of some the features of other large houses in the area including

Clifton Maybank, Compton, Montacute, Brympton d'Evercy, and especially Newton Surmaville.

Our visit to Wyke Manor prompted more speculation about the origins of King's Barton Manor and the character of Squire Urquhart. The description, in various modern sources, of the extensive and beautifully tended gardens, ornamental plantations, parkland, herbaceous borders, apple orchards, and Wellingtonias at Newton Surmaville house, sloping down to the river Yeo, suggest the garden at King's Barton Manor, with its '*dark velvety grass*', and which JCP says '*melted away into herbaceous terraces and shadowy orchards*'. I looked across, again, to Honeycombe woods and recognised the connection. Newton Surmaville house, situated, on a terrace, just outside Yeovil, was built, between 1608 and 1612, for a rich local merchant, Robert Harbin, and was famous for its library of rare books, consisting of over 4,000 volumes on law, theology, travel, science and history. Descriptions of the library naturally make you think of Squire Urquhart's library. From 1909 Newton Surmaville was occupied by Revd Prebendary, Edward Harbin Bates-Harbin (1861–1918).

The Revd Bates-Harbin was a well known, eminent antiquarian, and local historian, President, Hon. Secretary and Trustee of the Somerset Archaeological and



Revd Edward Harbin
Bates-Harbin

Natural History Society, original member and general editor of the Somerset Record Society as well as author of numerous articles for *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*. He published a *History of the Manor of Newton Surmaville*, edited Thomas Gerard's *Particular History of the County of Somerset*, prepared an index for Collinson's 1791 *History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset* and edited the Somerset section of Leland's *Itinerary*. His meticulous editions of the *Quarter Sessions of Somerset, 1607–1639*, for the Somerset Record Society, gave Harbin access to a wide range of civil and criminal court cases that could easily have suggested, to JCP, Squire Urquhart's obsession with '*lewd Dorset court trials*'. In addition Harbin's history of an old Somerset family, called De Urtiaco in *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* (1896), also suggests JCP's name of Urquhart.

These details fascinated me and I pursued associations with the Revd Bates-Harbin on returning home, after the Conference, to look for more documents that might connect JCP with the real antiquarian Squire, Lord of the Manor and possible inspiration for the character of Squire Urquhart. The evidence, in fact, seemed to me quite clear. JCP must have known about Bates-Harbin and his writings. Revd Bates-Harbin had

family connections with the Phelps family at Montacute, which the Powyses must also have known about given their close acquaintance. Rhoda Phelps (1759–90), the daughter of Edward Phelps (1725–97), married William Harbin (1762–1823), who was Edward Harbin Bates-Harbin's earlier predecessor at Newton Surmaville, whilst their daughter, Maria, married her cousin, Robert Phelps (1791–1855) who was also vicar of Yeovil. This sounded intriguing but there are closer connections between Revd Edward Bates-Harbin and the Powyses for, in 1916, both CFP and Harbin were present together at the funeral service for John Ponsonby-Fane (the brother-in-law of William Robert Phelps) at Brympton. Brympton d'Evercy house was a place which the Powyses occasionally visited and is mentioned by JCP in *Autobiography*. The names of CFP and Harbin are included in the report of the funeral in the *Taunton Courier* for 20th September 1916. It is also likely that CFP and Colonel Henry Edward Harbin, the uncle of Revd Bates-Harbin, were acquainted with each other for they shared work on local committees and may have met through parochial business for the Rural District Council. Perhaps too JCP received news from members of his family about a report in the *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, for 1910, of the 62nd annual meeting of the Society in Yeovil and their visit to Newton Surmaville house where Revd Bates Harbin was paid a great tribute. JCP may also have been given news of the long obituary of Harbin in the *Taunton Courier*, 18th September 1918, or, at a time, much closer to the start of his writing *Wolf Solent*, he may have received news of a story printed in *The Western Gazette* on 19th June 1925, which described the outing of 80 members of the Society of Somerset Men in London, to Newton Surmaville, where their host was Harbin's widow, Hilda, who gave her guests a guided tour of the house which the newspaper recorded in some detail. All this information may well have inspired JCP to combine together features of Newton Surmaville house with Wyke Manor to create King's Barton Manor and imagine the character of Squire Urquhart

I felt very sorry to leave the garden of Wyke Manor. The stone walls of the old house seemed to glow warmly in the late afternoon sun. I could still smell the odour of wild flowers and damp moss as we all filed through the half-timbered rooms. It seemed natural to think we might be accompanied by the ghosts of the past. JCP's novel had been transformed in my mind by contact with its real locations and the author's inspirations. Returning to the driveway of Wyke Manor, and walking towards the lovely views of the Yeo valley, I held on to the hope expressed by Wolf Solent at the beginning of the novel: '*... this wonderful country must surely deepen, intensify, enrich, his furtive inner life, rather than threaten or destroy it.*'

My thanks are due to **Susan Rands** for generously sharing with me her in-depth knowledge of west-country families and the country houses of Dorset and Somerset as well as sending details of books and other source material dealing with the life and work of the Revd Edward Harbin Bates-Harbin. His photo was obtained from:

< www.frenchaymuseumarchives.co.uk >

DVDs of the Conference

Sherborne, August 2014

The 2014 Powys Society Conference is available on **3 DVDs** with a total viewing time of 5 hours 44 minutes.

DISC ONE

Marcella Henderson-Peal: 'JCP's literary and philosophical reception in France from the 1930s', introduced by **Chris Thomas** (63 m)

Jonathan Goodwin: 'JCP's *Atlantis*'
introduced by **John Hodgson** (53 m)

DISC TWO

David Gervais: 'Novellas of T. F. Powys'
introduced by **Timothy Hyman** (77 m)

J. Lawrence Mitchell: 'John Cowper Powys and Walt Whitman'
introduced by **Kate Kavanagh** (31 m)

DISC THREE

Timothy Hyman: 'Remembering Wilson Knight'
introduced by **Glen Cavaliero** (54 m)

Peter Foss: 'Llewelyn Powys, Davos and the 1910 diary – an illustrated talk', introduced by **Louise de Bruin** (66 m)

The cost of the 3 DVDs is **£8.00** including postage to UK addresses. Please send cheque to Raymond Cox (**NOT** to the Powys Society) at:

Please order from

Raymond Cox, 4 Lulworth Close, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2UJ

For delivery to overseas addresses please e-mail Raymond Cox at
<rymd.cox@gmail.com >

Copies of the 2013 set (only) are still available, also at £8.00.

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting The Sherborne Hotel, Sherborne, August 17th 2014

Present: Glen Cavaliero (*President*), Timothy Hyman (*Chairman*), Chris Thomas (*Secretary*), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), Louise de Bruin (*Conference Organiser and Publications Manager*), Michael Kowalewski (*Collection Liaison Officer*), Anna Pawelko (*Treasurer and Conference Organiser*), Stephen Powys Marks, Shelagh Powys-Hancox and some 40 members

Apologies were received from: Charles Lock (*ex-officio, editor Powys Journal*), Peter Foss (outgoing *Vice-Chairman*), Trevor Davies, Jeff Kwintner.

The **Chairman, Timothy Hyman**, opened the meeting and extended thanks to all who attended. The Chairman said he felt this had been a strange year dominated by matters relating to resolving the situation regarding the Collection, finalising the tripartite Collection Agreement between the Society, Exeter University and the Dorset County Museum, as well as arranging the physical transfer of the Collection from Dorset County Museum to the University of Exeter – a process which, he said, had taken two years of the time and effort of the members of the Committee to complete. The **Chairman** said that he felt very happy with this year's Conference and enjoyed the lively and harmonious atmosphere. The Chairman concluded his introduction by reading a passage from *Wolf Solent*, Chapter 7, 'Yellow Bracken', in which Wolf has a vision of Blacksod as an imaginary city, (Macdonald, 1961, p.157).

Minutes of 2013 AGM

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting as published in *Newsletter* 80, November 2013, were approved.

Nomination of Honorary Officers and members of The Powys Society Committee 2014-2015

Nominations to the Powys Society Committee published in *Newsletter* 82, July 2014 were approved. The Hon. Officers and Committee members **from August 2014** will therefore be the following:

Officers: Timothy Hyman (*Chairman*), David Goodway (*Vice-Chairman*), Chris Thomas (*Secretary*), Anna Pawelko (*Treasurer*).

Committee members: Louise de Bruin (*Publications Manager and Conference Organiser*), Shelagh Powys Hancox, Michael Kowalewski (*Collection Liaison Officer*), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), John Hodgson, John Dunn, Charles Lock (serves *ex-officio, editor of Powys Journal*), and Jeff Kwintner

Jacqueline Peltier nominated Stephen Powys Marks for Honorary Membership which was seconded by Larry Mitchell. The nomination received approval by all members present. Louise de Bruin said this award was long overdue for someone who had worked so hard for the Society for many years producing *Newsletters*, *The Powys Journal*, Conference Programme and many other publications and items, to a very high standard, as well as for all his detailed work on the genealogy of the Powys

family. Stephen was warmly congratulated by all members.

The Chairman appealed for volunteers from the membership to come forward and offer any skills or specialist interests which they think might contribute to the work of the Committee.

Hon. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, **Anna Pawelko**, referred members to page 3 of *Newsletter* 82 and publication of the annual accounts of The Powys Society for the year ending 31 December 2013.

The Treasurer summarised current balance of the three Powys Society accounts:

Business Saver Account: £13,000

Community Account: £1,000

Instant Saver Account: £7,000

Collection Liaison Manager's Report

The Collection Liaison Manager, **Michael Kowalewski**, informed members that following approval given by members at the AGM in 2013, to finalise arrangements with University of Exeter to negotiate a three way Agreement with Dorset County Museum and the Society, to transfer the Powys Society Collection to Exeter University, this had now been achieved. An Agreement was signed, in January 2014, between all three parties and the Collection transferred to Exeter University at the beginning of June 2014. A firm of professional art movers was hired to make the removal who carried out the transfer exactly according to specifications. The Collection is now housed at the Special Collections Archives at Exeter University where the books are stored in the same position and order as they were at Dorset County Museum and all documents contained on shelves in conservation boxes. The Collection Liaison Officer said that access to the Collection is open freely to everyone including members of the public on direct application either to Christine Faunch, Head of Heritage Collections at Exeter University, or through himself who will pass on requests to Exeter.

The Collection Liaison Officer thanked the **Secretary** for help in arranging the transfer and especially gave thanks to **Morine Krissdóttir** for invaluable advice and assistance in creating a new inventory of the Collection. **John Hodgson** expressed his personal thanks to **Michael Kowalewski** for ably and steadfastly managing the transfer of the Collection.

Hon. Secretary's Report

Membership: The Secretary, **Chris Thomas**, said that, during the course of 2013/2014, 16 new members had joined the Society, 5 members retired or had voluntarily withdrawn from the Society; 2 members deceased; 20 members were removed from the subscription database for non-payment – making the current total membership of **249**. The Secretary said that we may be experiencing a new pattern of membership – some members may want to join for just a short period, or initially for one year only, others receive gift subscriptions which are only valid for one year.

David Gervais responded to this information and said that it looks as if the

Society's membership, although in decline, is still flourishing quite well. Other literary societies are also flourishing, said David, but some have even smaller membership levels than The Powys Society. So our numbers are encouraging but we might do well to learn from other societies and their promotional activities. David said he thought the Committee should consider reviewing the balance and structure of the Conference programme and include more opportunities for readings from books by the Powyses. **Michael Caines** suggested that a good idea, to help widen awareness of the Powys Society and the writings of the Powyses, would be to organise an open, annual, **essay competition** in partnership with the English Department of a university. **Larry Mitchell** suggested that in light of the move of the Collection to Exeter University they might be willing to help establish a regular competition. Other suggestions to help stimulate new membership included making wider use of **group e-mail messages**, and circulating news about the Society's activities broadcast by **social media** such as Twitter and Facebook.

The Secretary said that the Committee would discuss these proposals and see how these very helpful ideas could be developed in the future.

Richard Graves (former Chairman) announced that the *Daily Telegraph* for 16 August had published an article by Michael Henderson, a staff writer for the newspaper, about *A Glastonbury Romance*, which might encourage general interest. Richard Graves said that he also wondered whether it might be possible to secure sponsorship, from a well-known organisation, of an annual Powys lecture. The Chairman invited Richard to take this on, explore possibilities and report back to the Committee on findings. This idea had already been floated with Exeter University and it seems possible, said the Chairman, that these two proposals could be combined. A sponsor might also provide some help with the organisation of an essay competition.

Renewal of Subscriptions: The Secretary repeated message from last year and said that we can make financial savings and reduce the costs of overheads such as postage if members who do not pay their subscription by standing order could renew their membership early in the year preventing sending out of reminder letters. This initiative will also help save time and other resources.

Proteus and the Magician: The Secretary thanked **Jacqueline Peltier** for her excellent editing of the Henry Miller/JCP letters and her work with **Marcella Henderson-Peal** organising the launch event of the book in Paris in May. The Secretary said that the event was such a success we should hold a similar event in another European city or again in Paris, in a future year, to help celebrate our collaboration with international partners in the Powysian world.

E-mail from David Solomon: The Secretary referred to a letter of congratulation on the production of *Proteus and the Magician* which was sent on 10th August to Jacqueline Peltier from **David Solomon**, who is a long standing member of The Powys Society: 'It has been a real delight to sit under a tree eavesdropping on the intimacies of these two extraordinary people. I greatly liked your introductions and your footnotes,

which are beautifully judged to provide just the right amount of guidance and elucidation ... Thank you so much for making the final days of my stay in Burgundy so absorbing and pleasurable.⁸

A New book on TFP: The Secretary said that Jacqueline Peltier had sent the Committee news of a new book just completed about TFP: *'I have just received a mail from a French-speaking Tunisian writer and academic who had been studying with Professor Jean-Jacques Mayoux (an authority at la Sorbonne & who knew JCP's works well). Mr Zouheir Jamoussi is familiar with Theodore Powys, who, he writes, was "une vieille connaissance" Jacqueline Peltier said that Mr Jamoussi had written his thesis on TFP in 1971 and had now completed a book on him called Theodore Powys's Gods and Demons, partly based on his thesis. He is now wondering if there is anyone in England who might be interested in publishing the book.'*

Two graduate students: they are currently engaged on work for doctoral dissertations that include examination of the novels and philosophy of JCP – at Leiden University in the Netherlands (mainly on James Purdy) and the other at Leeds University (on environmental consciousness in modern writers).

Henry Miller Symposium at Goldsmiths College: The Secretary informed members of this symposium which will take place on 19th September 2014 and said that he had arranged for details of *Proteus and the Magician* to be made available to all delegates.

Louis N. Feipel letters: The Secretary said that digital copies of previously unpublished and unseen correspondence between JCP, Llewelyn, TFP, their publishers and Louis N. Feipel, librarian and Director of Publication Rights at Brooklyn Public Library in the 1920s, have just been donated to the Society. Louis Feipel, whom George Bernard Shaw called *'the prince of proofreaders'*, was committed to raising the standard of contemporary book production. The correspondence covers the period 1924 to 1932 and deals mainly with editorial mistakes, misprints and orthographic inconsistencies in published works by JCP, Llewelyn and TFP as well as recommended improvements to the manuscripts of forthcoming books. Louis Feipel provided a similar service for other famous writers of the period such as D. H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, Conrad, Arnold Bennet and Galsworthy.

The Powys Journal: The Secretary said that arrangements have been agreed with ProQuest (a global information content and technology company that provides web based tools and applications for academic libraries and other institutions) to digitise all back copies and current issues of The Powys Journal. There are plans to upload The Powys Journal to digital platforms called Periodicals Archive and Literature Online which will be freely available to library subscribers to ProQuest databases early in 2015.

Powys Society Collection

Valuation: The Secretary said that the Powys Society Collection had been provided with a professional valuation, for insurance purposes, in February 2014, of £136,000 by Richard Bearnese of Bearnese, Hampton and Littlewood, a firm of auctioneers and

valuers based in Exeter.

Removal of the Collection: The Secretary added to information already provided by the Collection Liaison Officer and explained why the Collection had been transferred to Exeter University. In 2012 the Trustees of the Dorset County Museum informed the Powys Society Committee that they considered the deposit of the Collection at the museum an anomalous arrangement and offered three options – either pay an annual fee to cover overheads, transfer ownership to the Trustees or remove the Collection entirely from the museum. The Committee consulted with members at the AGM in 2012 and we were requested to explore possibilities of a new location for the Collection.

During the past two years the Committee has worked to put in place arrangements for the transfer of the Powys Society Collection from the two small rooms at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester where it has been located since 1991. The relocation has been made necessary by the limited space available, and difficult access. After a period of review, considering possible alternative locations, discussion with DCM, and consultation with members of the Society, the committee decided that the Special Archives at the University of Exeter would provide the most suitable place for the Collection, especially as they already have a very good working relationship with Dorset County Museum. Their storage facilities were impressive, they expressed willingness to utilise the Collection in their teaching programme, and they already possessed an extensive archive of other writers associated with the west-country such as Ted Hughes, John Fowles, Agatha Christie, Daphne du Maurier, John Betjeman, Ronald Duncan, Henry Williamson, Rupert Croft-Cooke, Charles Causley and Jack Clemo. .

We agreed with the Trustees of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society that the best solution would be to allow the DCM to transfer the Collection on the basis of a loan to Exeter University. The Committee believes this will lead to greater opportunities for the resources of the Collection to be much more widely used by a new generation of researchers, students and general readers in a new professional academic and archival context. A new Agreement, to enable the transfer to take place, has been drafted and signed by all three parties although the original contract with the Trustees of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, which terminates in 2042, is still in place. The new Agreement also terminated in 2042. A copy of the new contract may be obtained on application from the **Hon. Secretary** and will, in due course, be posted on the Society's web site.

The Society's close connection with the Dorset County Museum will be maintained through regular meetings and the development of the Powys display in the Writer's Gallery, including other Powys-related items owned by the museum, such as the Peter Powys Grey Collection and paintings by Gertrude Powys. The Committee wishes to thank **Morine Krissdóttir** for her assistance during the course of the move. Morine has produced a **new inventory** of the Collection which will be gradually integrated with the existing on-line archives catalogue at Exeter University.

Access to the Collection at Exeter will be freely available and open to all members of the Powys Society, university staff and students as well as members of the public. Full details of how to access the Collection at its new location will be posted on the Society's web site in due course but in the meantime members may wish to contact the Collection Liaison Officer, **Michael Kowaleski**, for more information. To see other objects and items relating to the Powys, such as the papers donated to DCM by Peter Powys Grey, members may wish to apply direct to DCM and arrange an appointment to access their archives.

Richard Graves congratulated the Committee on achieving a successful outcome to what seemed like an intractable situation. The membership approved the endorsement by Richard Graves.

David Gervais said, however, he was not convinced that Exeter University was the best place to deposit the Collection and said he thought arrangements had been made without discussion with members.

The **Secretary** responded and said that the process of the relocation of the Collection had been reported to members at each AGM since 2012 and all members had been consulted on proposals but the Committee had not received any notice of opposition to the plans.

Chairman's Report

The **Chairman** referred members to his annual report published in *Newsletter* 82, July 2014.

Date and Venue of 2015 Conference

Members voted to hold the 2015 conference at the **Hand Hotel, Llangollen, from 21st to 23rd August 2015.**

President's Vote of thanks

The **President** warmly extended his thanks to work undertaken by the Committee and Conference organisers during 2013 and 2014. The President also noted that in 2017 **the Society will mark its 50th year** and encouraged members to consider how we might celebrate this significant milestone in our history.

NOTICE

The Chairman informed members that a meeting will take place on **Saturday 6th December 2014** at 2 pm at the Friends Meeting House in Bunhill Fields in London on the subject of JCP's essay *Pair Dadeni*, included in his book *Obstinate Cymric*.

Everyone is welcome to attend. The event is free. *See notice on page 3.*

Chris Thomas
Hon. Secretary

The Powys Society Collection

The Powys Society Collection has been transferred from the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester to a new location at Exeter University. **Please see AGM report for more details.** The move has been made necessary by changed conditions and restricted space available at the Museum. The original contract between the Trustees of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society and the Society (see *Newsletter* 43, July 2001), which expires in 2042, remains in place but a new Agreement, which will also expire in 2042, has been signed to allow the transfer to take place on the basis of a loan of the Collection from DCM to Exeter University.

If you would like to consult the Powys Society Collection at its new location please contact **Christine Faunch**, Head of Heritage Collections, University of Exeter, Research Commons, Old Library, Prince of Wales Road, Exeter, EX4 4SB, telephone 01392 723879, or e-mail:

< c.j.faunch@exeter.ac.uk >

For more information about the Powys Society Collection please contact our Collection Liaison Officer, **Michael Kowalewski**, The Old School, Melbury Osmund, Dorset, DT2 0LU, telephone 01305 83552, or e-mail Michael:

< michael.sonam@btinternet.com >

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary



G. R. Wilson Knight as a young man in 1926, author of Klinton Top, image scanned from the Frontispiece (see page 42).

Dorchester meeting, 19th July 2014

A modest but interested group met in the library of the Dorset County Museum for a talk on **John Meade Falkner** (1858–1932), whose well-known adventure story *Moonfleet* centres on Chesil Beach, the miles-long shingle bank between Bridport and Portland – its stones self-grading in size from peas to dinosaurs’ eggs – that also features in *Weymouth Sands*, and in JCP’s life – and death, his ashes scattered into its famously dangerous undertow.

Kenneth Hillier, founder and secretary of the flourishing John Meade Falkner Society, spoke about JMF’s childhood in Dorchester and Weymouth (son of a clergyman, like JCP), his interrupted public-school years, his happy ones at Oxford (he wrote guides to Oxfordshire and Berkshire, among others) with bicycle excursions to his beloved Burford (where he was buried); his job as tutor to the Noble family leading to a career in the Armstrong armaments firm in which he rose to be Chairman and became extremely rich; his passionate interest in medieval book-collecting (especially missals) and archaeology (reader in Palaeography at Durham University, nowhere happier than in the library there). His private life was discreet and outwardly uneventful: like many men of his time, successful in the world, he remained a boy at heart.

Falkner wrote conventional but charming verses (a collection is printed by the JMF Society) and the three novels he is most remembered for: *The Lost Stradivarius* (1895), a supernatural tale of demonic possession related by a Victorian spinster sister; *Moonfleet* (1898), a ‘ripping yarn’ / coming-of-age adventure of a boy with a father-substitute (a little recalling *Kidnapped*), related (like *Treasure Island*) by the boy’s older self; and *The Nebuly Coat* (1903), a ‘proper novel’ set in a town dominated by its unstable church tower and dysfunctional ruling family, with a complex plot and several characters described in some depth.

Kenneth Hillier described the unforgettable effect on him, at 10 years old, of *Moonfleet* spookily read aloud by a headmaster (like many such, a disappointed actor) – the boy hero trapped in an underground vault, and crawling up a cliff on a foot-wide path, encountering a decomposing sheep that had failed the attempt. *Nebuly* is narrated in the author’s own voice, and includes reflections such as the one on Romance – it either has you in its spell or it doesn’t, and if it does it’s for ever.

There were a good few interruptions and questions from the group. **Susan Rands** is always knowledgeable on local history and families and asked if Falkner didn’t find working with armaments a conflict with his life as a writer? This would be unlikely, since in those days (perhaps up to 1945) the production of armaments was, for most people, a patriotic business – wars, at that time, always seemed to be in progress or possible, and the Empire, of course, had to be maintained. Some members said that they were worried about gruesome scenes in the book, such as the hero’s panic when shut in the vault, or a man falling down a well and his head cracked like a coconut. This could be said to be standard fare in books for boys of the period. However

Kenneth Hillier said that JMF does not deal with these things in a sadistic way, unlike for instance, at times, Conan Doyle. Other questions were unanswered or unanswerable – how religious was JMF? Could he be described as an Anglo-Catholic/ pagan? What books did JMF himself admire?

We discussed the connections between JMF and JCP – for instance in their shared close descriptions of scenery, the evocation of town and townspeople in *Weymouth Sands* and *Maiden Castle* and in *The Nebuly Coat*, as well as their similar descriptions of the sea and its moods, in *Maiden Castle* and in *Moonfleet*. We noted as well that JMF's literary style represents in some ways the model that JCP modelled his earliest work on, as well as from which he departed. Both men were closely acquainted with Dorchester and loved the Dorset countryside and coastline. Both men were friends with Thomas Hardy but do not seem to have known each other.

Kenneth Hillier told us that JMF was admired by many contemporary writers such as Hugh Walpole, Graham Greene and V. S. Pritchett who rated his small literary output very highly. Bernard Jones, a keen Powysian, produced a short monograph of the life and work of JMF, published in the *Dorset Worthies* series. Kenneth Hillier also told us that JMF's novel *Moonfleet* has been filmed for TV several times, the best and closest to the book in 1984 (a copy is obtainable via the JMF Society). The Hollywood film with Stewart Granger (directed by Fritz Lang, 1955), complete with seductive Spanish dancers, bears very little resemblance to the original book. Kenneth Hillier informed us that there are also some drawings, made by JMF's sister, on display in the Dorset County Museum.



Fleet Old Church.

After lunch the Powys group was led by Kenneth Hillier, and his wife Christine, to the tiny church, or chancel, at East Fleet, in a beautiful setting, surrounded by tall trees and soft green fields, within sight of the Fleet lagoon behind Chesil beach. This is the real location of the opening scenes of *Moonfleet*. The location was breached by a violent storm in 1824 when most of the buildings in Fleet village and half the church were washed away. All that now survives of the original church is the chancel. Inside the lovely chapel there are memorials to a local family called Mohun – a name which appears in Falkner's novel. The remaining cottages in the village have been smartened and rebuilt as neat houses. A fortunate five Powysians went on to Chesil beach itself, near Abbotsbury, where JCP's ashes were scattered by Gerard Casey, on 26th June 1963 (see the deeply moving account of this in Mary Casey's diaries *A Net in Water*), to sit in sun on the stones, plum-sized at this point and endlessly varied, with the blue sea lapping peacefully at the steep shore.

KK, CT

Llewelyn's 130th Birthday Party

Those of a more fanciful disposition may consider that some mysterious (perhaps even spiritual) essence casts a strange influence over the annual gathering of Llewelyn Powys admirers at the *Sailor's Return* in East Chaldon to celebrate his birthday on August 13th and to raise a glass in his memory – or is it serendipity which plays the major role? Whatever the reason for the strange occurrence, it remains that, remarkably, for the thirteenth time in nineteen years, the proverbial 'Baker's Dozen' – or 'Thirteen Worthies' – attended this year's celebration of Llewelyn's 130th birthday!

I had mistakenly reported in the July Powys *Newsletter* that this year marked the 20th anniversary of the Llewelyn Birthday Walk, when in fact it was only the 19th; the error probably the result of one of an increasing number of 'mind-slips' from your elderly correspondent, who confused the discovery of the clause in Llewelyn's will by John Batten in 1994 with the inauguration of the Birthday Walk the following year! So, In lieu of anticipated future mind-slips, fellow Dandelions please take note that NEXT year will mark the 20th anniversary of the Birthday Walk. ...

With apologies already received from Bruce and Vikki Madge & from Richard Burleigh who was sadly unable to travel; also from Chris Gostick, who for the first time in living memory was unable to attend, and from new member David Cooksley who had to cancel owing to a strained back, I and two fellow 'Dandelions' set off from 'oop north' for the five-hour drive down to Dorset with some trepidation. I knew that my two companions, Sean & Debbie Lowe were only staying for the toast to Llewelyn before speeding off to spend the day in Portland and imagined that for the first time, I could well find myself struggling up the 'long and winding (and steep!) road' alone.

The Dorset coast was experiencing the last remnants of 'Hurricane Bertha' and the weather didn't look too promising with 'gusting winds from the south west and intermittent sunshine and thundery showers' forecast for the day. Nevertheless we arrived in full sunshine at the *Sailor's Return* around noon, immediately recognizing the familiar green camper van in the car park, and there to greet us was Byron Ashton and his lovely wife Eirlys who had driven over from Caerphilly in Wales, along with their friend Tony. Within minutes Rob and Honor Timlin arrived, followed almost immediately by Ged Redman who had very thoughtfully brought a posy of dandelions all the way from his home near Bridgewater in Somerset. Then almost simultaneously John Sanders arrived with his wife Jayne, along with Salisbury artist Rosemary Dickens and her friend and by now, regular and very welcome attender, Dennis, who had driven her down from Odstock in Wiltshire. With my fears of being a lonely pilgrim well and truly vanquished, we all adjourned cheerfully to the pub where a head count revealed that twelve of us would shortly be raising a glass to Llewelyn, and to 'absent friends', when suddenly to our surprise and delight in walked Janice Gregory, Alyse Gregory's great-niece to complete, once again, our magical Baker's Dozen.

Alas! Janice was the last ray of sunshine for awhile, for as I rose in Chris's absence to welcome everyone and to propose the annual toast to Llewelyn, the sky suddenly darkened, a distant rumble of thunder echoed across the downs – and it began to rain! We duly raised a glass to Llewelyn's memory, and to 'absent friends'. Within minutes it was persisting-it- down, so we enjoyed an excellent lunch and waited for the storm to pass, watching forlornly through the windows as the rain bounced off the hard surface of the car park outside and drummed incessantly on the roofs and bonnets of the parked vehicles.

By the time the storm had passed it was two o'clock, and our numbers for the Birthday Walk had been reduced somewhat with the departure of my two Derbyshire friends to Portland. The number of walkers was further reduced when Rob Timlin revealed that he was unable to walk, having recently undergone knee surgery, so he & Honor stayed behind at the pub and kept Jayne Sanders company, whilst the rest of us set off on our annual pilgrimage to Llewelyn's Stone set high on Chaldon Down.

As in previous years Dennis drove Rosemary up the steep and deeply rutted 'int-strewn track as far as Chydyok, whilst Eirlys and I followed in Ged's car, leaving the indomitable John Sanders and the seemingly indefatigable Byron Ashton to, bravely, accompany our American visitor on the arduous trek up and over Chalky Knapp.

Thus eight of us congregated outside Chydyok, reminiscing about previous visits and paying tribute to Janet Pollock, whose graciousness and generosity of spirit had made it possible for us to share the memorable experience of staying in Llewelyn & Alyse's part of the house before it was 'modernized' and turned into a 'holiday home' by the Weld Estate. Janice took great interest in the latticed gable window, which had been her Great Aunt Alyse's 'window on the world' during her long and lonely sojourn there following Llewelyn's death in Switzerland in 1939, and prior to her removal to Morebath almost twenty years later. Janice was horrified to hear from John Sanders that during his stay in Alyse's old attic room he had been kept awake at night by the rats running through the rafters in the roof. I can confirm however, that they were only mice.

There was a stiff breeze gusting from the south west as we crested Tumbledown and hordes of small rain-bearing clouds were scudding swiftly across an otherwise azure sky as we caught our first glimpse of the sea, and then the unfolding spectacular panorama of white chalk cliffs, flickering like the shadows of a lantern-show in the intermittent flashes of sunlight all the way eastward from Bat's Head to St Aldhem's Head in the far distance. My companions were in full agreement when I expressed the opinion that no matter how many times one had previously crested this hill and had suddenly come upon this spectacular vista, it never ceased to delight the senses and take away the breath; but it also occurred to me that I'm always breathless by the time I reach this point on the walk anyway.

The clouds fled, the wind eased and the sunlight sparkled on the wave-tops of the English



Channel as we paused for a group photograph beside the five-bar-gate which opens onto the old Dagger's Gate Road, before turning westward and negotiating our way through a 'ock of down-land sheep towards Llewelyn's Stone, with the familiar Obelisk standing sentinel now in clear view.

As we turned the corner at the top of the Obelisk Field and caught our first sight of Llewelyn's memorial stone it became immediately apparent that something was not quite right, and closer inspection confirmed that the large block of Portland Stone no longer faced south west towards Portland as it had always done, but instead, now faced due south down the line of the field fence! Soon we were standing beside it. An examination of the base revealed that it had been moved about eighteen inches eastward towards the zinc water-trough beside the barbed-wire boundary fence, and we were left to speculate how and why this could have happened.

Janice Gregory was given the honour of placing the posy of Dandelions on the stone, after which I read from the first two pages of Llewelyn's section of *Confessions of Two Brothers*, a passage which for the first time explained his basic philosophy, and which constituted his first published work, co-authored with JCP from 1916.

The weather Gods were kind to us and now provided the best weather of the day, and so we lingered for a short while, drinking in the atmosphere and enjoying the magnificent surrounding landscape, before Janice expressed a wish to see the Coastguard's Cottages where Llewelyn and Alyse had lived following their return from America in May 1925, so thus we divided, with Byron and Eirlys accompanying Rosemary and Dennis back towards Chydyok, after saying their goodbyes, whilst John, Ged and I set off with Janice westward to explore the secrets and delights of the White Nose.

On arrival at the old Coastguard's Cottages we directed Janice to number five, readily identified by the old cast-iron water-pump which stands in the garden outside the front window of her great-aunt's former home which she shared with Llewelyn for six years before their removal inland to Chydyok late in 1931. Next we explored the headland, first showing Janice the perilous old zig-zag 'Smugglers Path' leading to the small rocky beach five hundred feet beneath the White Nose, down which Llewelyn & Alyse often climbed so that Llewelyn could enjoy bathing naked in the sea in complete privacy. Finally, we examined the ruins of a small stone building which at one time had a roof formed by the upturned keel of what was reputed to be the last smuggler's boat captured by the local coastguard. For a short time Llewelyn had used it as a temporary study. It had also been used as a store by the soldiers from the nearby observation or look-out post during the war. All that now remains is a slight depression in the long grass, and a boat-shaped row of low stones which once formed the stern end of the long vanished building.

On returning to Chydyok we all piled thankfully into Ged's car for a lift back down to the village which proved both exhilarating and exhausting. We talked about all things Powys as we trudged wearily but happily in Llewelyn's footsteps along what he often referred to as the Old Gypsy Track savouring the here and now reality of time and place, whilst enjoying the sense impressions of a memorable day of good fellowship spent in the excellent company of friends.

We made a brief excursion to 'Beth Car' so that Janice could see Theodore's old home, and finally got back to the *Sailor's Return* to find that everyone had long since left, except for Jayne Sanders who sat patiently in the car awaiting her husband's return and wondering why he had been away so long, and of course being archetypal Powysian males, we all blamed Janice! It was a memorable day of good fellowship spent in the excellent company of friends.

Neil Lee

John Cowper Powys's winning English Essay Prize, 1891 an extract

At this years Powys Society Conference, Rachel Hassall, the archivist at Sherborne School, kindly made available copies of documents relating to the Powyses including pupil records, letters, newspaper cuttings, references in The Shirburnian (the school magazine), a list of books borrowed from the school library by JCP, LCP and Llewelyn, photographs, biographical details, and extracts from the school admission registers. The list of books borrowed from the school library by JCP and LCP is fascinating for it throws into relief the differences between the two brothers as well as their similarities. In 1890 and 1891 JCP borrowed books by Charles Kingsley, Tennyson, and Coleridge as well as books on modern history, the history of the Christian church, the Jewish and Eastern churches, and books of Sermons, whilst Littleton, in the same period, was reading books on country sports, on shooting and angling as well as books on English history, the novels of Scott, volumes of Shakespeare, Charles Kingsley, Thackeray, Byron and Milton. The record is also fascinating as it confirms exactly what JCP says, in Autobiography, about his visits to the library, describing how, on Sunday afternoons, he used 'to sit for hours in the school library, a lovely, old, medieval building, with deep, window seats, that had leather cushions, searching through all manner of ancient and modern volumes ... I was ensconced here in an oasis of happiness ...'

*Among the other items on display was a very interesting document – an extract from JCP's winning entry for the school essay prize in 1891. In John Cowper Powys, A Record of Achievement (1966) Derek Langridge refers to the essay and says 'there appears to be no extant copy of the essay'. However, although a complete copy of the essay does not seem to have survived, an extract was published in Prolusiones Shirburnienses 1879–1891. Rachel Hassall explained to me in an e-mail dated 26th September 2014, that the longer title of this publication is Prolusiones Praemiis Anniversariis Dignatae et in Auditorio Scholae Shirburniensis Recitatae and that 'the volume is an amalgamation of winning English prize poems and essays that appear to have been published annually and were later bound together.' This extract must therefore represent JCP's **first appearance in prose** in printed form. The publication of the essay, in Prolusiones Shirburnienses, helps extend the picture JCP gives us of his last year at Sherborne school, his heroic stand against his tormentors, and the recital of his prize winning poem, 'Corinth', on Commemoration Day, 1891, which he describes so well at the end of Chapter Four, of Autobiography. The essay displays JCP's youthful knowledge of classical history and was written when he was 18 years old. This slight piece of juvenilia, with its curving rhythmic lines and nice sense of irony, evokes features of JCP's future stylistic mannerisms, and looks forward, in at least one other way, to his later mature creations. For here, the reader cannot fail to notice one of the earliest occurrences of JCP's predilection for the frequent use of the exclamation mark!*

CT

Ancient compared with Modern Ideals of Patriotism

What a grand thing this Patriotism is when it implies the highest aspiration of our nature! Where could be found a loftier ideal than the devotion of a life's work to the service of one's country? Is not the sacrifice of self for others the finest instinct we possess? The true patriot is one who is jealous for his country's honour and proud of her conquests but he is more than this ... The true patriot must love his country with a love that sees beyond her present material happiness, a love that is not satisfied,

till all that is evil is rooted out from her midst. Thus, to a certain degree, every philanthropist is a Patriot, and the noblest Patriotism is simply Christianity. Patriots of this sort are the salt of the earth; without them and their saving influence a people is as bread that hath no leaven. What a contrast to this many sided Patriotism is the conquest of Cannae!★ Perhaps in all history there is no Patriotism, so narrow, so shortsighted, and yet so mighty in its effects, as that of Hannibal. Rome had trodden down the country, Rome he hated with unquenchable hate and swore never to rest from battle till she lay at his mercy. He played his game against the Roman people and he lost out. His country's ruin followed on his own, and the last barrier to the world-wide empire of his foes was swept away.

Of the earlier sovereigns of England none had so fervent a love for his country as the first Edward. Of all the heroes who have shed their blood for Scotland, he whose deeds were longest remembered among the people for whom he bled, was the patriot Wallace; yet the latter suffered a traitor's death at the hands of the former. This same Edward, the lover of his country, the upholder of her rights, the framer of just laws for her government, was yet the slayer of Simon de Montfort! What then are we to think of these lessons of history, this chronicle of failure and success, of endless craving after right, and continual lapse into wrong, of wars and intrigues, thrones overturned, dynasties uprooted, nations annihilated and blotted out, in spite of lofty ideals and proud imaginings? One thing at any rate is certain; as civilisation advances and the world gets wiser, so the patriot's sphere of action expands, and the light he follows is a safer guide.

John Cowper Powys

★ *The battle of Cannae took place on 2nd August 216 BC, on the Apulian plain, in southern Italy, near the river Aufidius (now called Ofanto) when the Romans were defeated by Hannibal's combined army of Carthaginian, Celtic, Spanish, African and Numidian forces. The outcome of the battle was, however, inconclusive, as Plutarch related in his Life of Marcus Claudius Marcellus, the Roman consul and military leader. Hannibal continued to harass the armies of the Roman Republic for several more years but failed to exploit his extraordinary tactical success at Cannae. Accounts of the battle at Cannae can be found in classical sources, such as the Histories of Polybius, and The History of Rome by Livy which no doubt JCP read and translated in Latin classes. Perhaps the Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography which JCP borrowed from the school library, between 12th and 20th February, 1891, was intended to help him with his planned essay on Patriotism in the ancient world. There is also an account of the battle of Cannae by the great German historian, Theodore Mommsen, in his History of Rome, published in German between 1854 and 1856, which JCP may also have known in an English translation, which was first published between 1862 and 1866.*

CT

Littleton Charles Powys (1874–1955), cricketer

This is the first time the Newsletter has published information about LCP's career as a cricketer. For other items about LCP in past issues see especially Newsletter 45, April 2002 (letters to Lucy); NL 48, April 2003 (correspondence with Louis Wilkinson); NL 52, July 2004 (cover and various topics; NL 53, November 2004 (an alternative view; NL 68, November 2009 (The Joy of It and N&N); and NL 71, November 2010 (review of The Joy of It reprint). Other details of Littleton's prowess at cricket can be found in Oliver Holt's article on Littleton in The Powys Review 10, Spring 1982, and Littleton's own essay, 'Llandovery 50 years Ago', in the same issue. Littleton kept up his association with cricket at home at Montacute for, on 29th March 1899, The Taunton Courier reported that William Robert Phelps had been elected President of the Montacute Cricket Club and that both Revd C. F. Powys and L. C. Powys had been elected Vice-Presidents.

CT

Rachel Hassall, School Archivist, Sherborne School writes.

In *The Joy of It*, L. C. Powys recalls his lifelong love of cricket: 'From the first time I played cricket on the lawn of Rothesay House, Dorchester, I had loved it, and from my earliest days in the Prep. I had made heroes of the great players in the School XI.' In 1893, he became one of the great players when he was made captain of the Sherborne School XI. He was described in the Characters of the 1st XI as 'A determined bat, not extra lucky, with too much style; a useful bowler with somewhat awkward action; capital field and excellent captain.'

On 8th July 1893, during the annual game between the School 1st XI and Sherborne Cricket Club, Littleton completed his first century. The School magazine, *The Shirburnian* (July 1893) reported the game: 'Powys won the toss, and with Stevens rapidly hit up 59 before the first wicket fell. Wright did not trouble the scorers, but when Dixon joined Powys a longer stand was made, and at lunchtime the score was 76 for 2 wickets. Dixon left at 80, after compiling a careful 12, but Ridout stayed until 130 appeared on the telegraph. Bensly did not stay long, but Prichard stopped while Powys completed his century, and with the score of 213 for 5 wickets the innings was declared closed. Powys must be congratulated on his brilliant innings, marred only by two chances, which included a six, a five, and 10 fours. This is the third match in succession in which a century has been registered for the School.'

A review of the 1893 cricket season in *The Shirburnian* of November 1893 reported that: 'Nor



Littleton Powys taking guard.

must the name of Powys be passed over without a special tribute. Succeeding to the Captaincy under peculiarly embarrassing circumstances [the former captain, H. H. Joy, left the School suddenly in June 1893, though later became the first pupil to gain a Classical Scholarship at Trinity Hall, Cambridge], he rose to the occasion, and tackled the job most manfully, plugging [sic] into his duties with a heartiness and pluck which deserve the eternal gratitude of us all ... On the whole then, though the general result – 3 matches won and 5 lost – does not look very grand on paper, Powys need never be ashamed, when he meditates hereafter on the season of his captaincy, either of himself or his team.’

L. C. Powys’ batting analysis for the 1893 season:

16 Innings, total of 285, highest score 124 not out, average 19.

L. C. Powys’ bowling analysis for the 1893 season:

57 Overs, 9 Maidens, 180 Runs, 10 Wickets, average 18.

After leaving Sherborne, Littleton returned to play for the Old Shirburnian XI, and from 1928 to 1948 he was Vice-President of the Sherborne Pilgrims’ Club, which had been founded in 1923 by his school friend, G. M. Carey, ‘to recognise athletic talent, whether shown at School or afterwards, to promote cricket and football tours, to encourage all forms of athletics, and to keep members in touch with one another and with the School.’ (photo from Sherborne School Archives)

Stephen Powys Marks adds

Reproduced on the cover of this *Newsletter* are the two sides of a postcard sent at the end of 1913 by Littleton to his uncle at Yaxham Rectory (SPM Collection). This was to tell him about his timely purchase of a house and land next to the house he and his wife Mabel had occupied since he took over as Headmaster of Sherborne Prep in Summer 1905; this was very soon after his marriage on August 4th 1904 (see JCP’s dedication in a book in *Newsletter* 80, page 26). In *The Joy of It* (1937) Littleton explains that this would allow the school to expand, and it is obvious from the pride with which he had this photo of laborious work in progress printed to send out that providing for cricket remained extremely important to him:

In 1913 an opportunity came ... Its acquisition [see LCP’s message] not only saved us from the cost of building, but gave us much more room, and provided us also with extra gardens, greenhouses, an orchard, three paddocks which were converted into two cricket-fields, some magnificent elm-trees, and woodland and undergrowth which delighted the hearts of the boys. (p.156)

It is the greatest shame that in 1923 he had to give up the School for health reasons, though he continued for some time to live in Quarry House in Sherborne, designed by his architect brother A. R. Powys. Mabel died in 1942, and then in 1943 Littleton married again, the writer Elizabeth Myers: she died in 1947. When Littleton and Elizabeth married, they moved back into Quarry House. I had the delight of staying there once, and hearing Littleton praise his brother’s thoughtful provision of gentle stairs for his older brother’s arthritic joints.

A Tribute to John Cowper Powys by Henry Miller

In an essay entitled, 'When I Reach for My Revolver', Henry Miller included a very fine tribute to his friend John Cowper Powys whom he called 'a great spirit'. It is such a fitting acknowledgement of the admiration Miller felt for JCP that it seems a pity not to include the whole passage in a Powysian context. The tribute complements, and also repeats, some of the things Miller says elsewhere about JCP in, for instance, The Books in My Life and The Immortal Bard.

In August 1953 Henry Miller returned to his home in Big Sur, in California, following an extended seven-month tour of France, Spain and England. It was on this tour that he visited JCP in Corwen at the end of June 1953. He refers to this visit in the essay. In a letter dated 2/9/53 (see Proteus and the Magician, p.97) Miller commented on the visit calling JCP a 'heroic, legendary incredible figure' and told him that his wife, Eve, said she would never forget their visit referring to him as 'that great man'! In the same letter Miller said to JCP 'You're a blessing on the world and a joy to behold'. Miller's essay, which was probably written during the first half of 1954, describes the writers and other people he met on his trip, his reading and his views on the current state of Europe. The essay was first published in Synthèses 97, June 1954, a 'European review' published in Brussels, in a French translation by Pierre Lesdain entitled Quand je saisis mon revolver. It was first published in 7 Arts, No 3, 1955, an interdisciplinary publication edited by Fernando Puma and published by Falcon's Wing Press, India Hills, Colorado. This issue of 7 Arts can be accessed on the internet archive.. The essay was later reprinted in a collection of essays by Miller called Stand Still Like the Hummingbird published in 1962, as well as in various other places and collections of Miller's prose pieces.

There is an interesting reference to the essay in a letter from Henry Miller to the ex-consular official, former US Ambassador to Ethiopia and Miller bibliophile, J. Rives Childs, dated 5th April 1958, in Collector's Quest, the correspondence of Henry Miller and J Rives Childs 1947-1965, published by the University of Virginia (1968), in which Miller mentions his corrections for the French version of the essay. A footnote refers to revisions to the French text he made in English, in pencil and ink, '60 suggestions for corrections to the French text' and a fair copy in typescript which Miller sent to Childs. When Henry Miller forwarded JCP a copy of 7 Arts, No 3 with his article and personal tribute, JCP wrote back enthusiastically (on Feb 2nd 1956) saying how much he appreciated the trans-disciplinary nature of the publication and especially liked the reproductions of paintings (which included works by Chagall, Matisse, Bonnard and Rouault), and declared: 'I am so thrilled and honoured by your praise in this Book of the 7 Arts on the Wing! It is a really deep glory for me what you say.'

CT

from Jacqueline Peltier:

'Pierre Lesdain', the translator of the article by Henry Miller was actually a pseudonym. His real name was Georges Lambilliotte (1897-1970). He was in fact the brother of Maurice Lambilliotte, the director of a magazine called La Volonté in 1947, and then of Synthèses.

He became a literary critic. Although he was Belgian, towards the end of his life he finally came to live in the north of France, in a little town, Dainville, in the Pas-de-Calais. His papers were given by his daughter to the local department of archives after he died. He wrote a great many letters to different major French writers such as André Dhôtel, Blaise Cendrars, Anaïs Nin, Louis Aragon or André Gide, but he was particularly friendly with Henry Miller, supported his work and also wrote him about 200 letters.

Extract from

‘When I Reach for My Revolver’, by Henry Miller

Here is a man who gave the best years of his life to America, who exerted a considerable influence over many of our contemporary writers and artists and who some fifteen years or so ago returned to his native heath, to a tiny remote village which none of the great world figures ever penetrate. Here, year after year, he has been turning out one profound, beautiful book, after another, most of them I blush to say, unknown to our compatriots. In this ripe spirit I found a man of letters who is indeed an honor to his calling, one of the few writers alive, I might add, who can be looked upon as an example to other writers. I can only say of him that he is the youngest, the most alive spirit I have ever encountered. He has evolved a philosophy of his own – a philosophy of solitude or a philosophy of “in spite of” as he calls it – which he practises and which keeps him literally “as fresh as a daisy”. He radiates joy and well being. He acknowledges as his sources of inspiration Homer, Dante, Rabelais, Goethe, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Walt Whitman. He introduces their names frequently in his conversation and never tires of quoting their words. He is not only the most tolerant and gracious individual I ever met but like Whitman himself – for whom he has the highest reverence – a man who has flowered from the roots. Though he exudes culture and learning, he is at home with children, nobodies and idiots. His daily routine is so simple to be almost primitive. It begins with a long morning prayer for the protection of the creature world against the sadistic men of science who torture and vivisect them. Without wants he has become free as a bird, and what is more important he is acutely aware of his hard-won freedom and rejoices in it. To meet him is an inspiration and a blessing. And this man, who has so much to give the world, who has already given abundantly, is hardly known, hardly ever mentioned, when the subject of letters comes up. It ought to be written over his door, as coming from the Lord Jehovah himself: “I am the one who fished you out of the mud. Now you come here and listen to me!”

Review

Wise Old Codgers by Lindsay Clarke

Proteus and the Magician: The Letters of Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys
edited by Jacqueline Peltier, The Powys Press 2014. ISBN 978-1-874559-46-7

Lindsay Clarke is a well-known writer, poet, teacher, novelist, author of *The Chymical Wedding*, which won the Whitbread Prize in 1989, and of other books about the mythography and 'matter' of Britain. His latest book, published in 2012, is *The Gist*: a celebration of the Imagination. This review of *Proteus and the Magician* is an adapted version of a review originally commissioned by and published in *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine for November 2014.

CT

At first glance members of The Powys Society might be surprised to encounter a book that brings the visionary author of *A Glastonbury Romance* into close association with a writer principally notorious for the explicit sexual ebullience of *Tropic of Cancer*. In some ways the preoccupations of these two novelists might seem as far apart as the landscapes depicted on the book's cover – the Welsh hill country above Corwen and that of Henry Miller's home on the Californian coast of Big Sur. Yet in a time when so much fiction is written in a lean, almost anorexic prose, it's salutary to recall how once, and not so long ago, there were novelists who appealed to their readers' senses as well as to the intellect by regaling them with a feast of language, and that prominent among them were these two writers, of different generations but kindred temperament, whose imaginations travelled far beyond the current vogue for ironical scepticism in their need to articulate a vision of cosmic range.

Henry Miller has so long been renowned for the unabashed gusto with which his books demolished sexual taboos that it's hard to imagine him as the shy, would-be novelist, uncertain of his gifts, who attended the public lectures on the inseparable themes of life and literature which Powys delivered with astonishing eloquence to American audiences in the 1920s. Miller never forgot how Powys's passionate *hwyl* had made his own imagination combust with visionary delight, and in later life, with his own (then scandalous) literary credentials established, he wrote to the almost 80-year-old Powys expressing his grateful admiration. The next twelve years saw a mutually affirming, life-enhancing exchange of letters between two men who rejoiced in the shared conviction that (as Powys once wrote), 'it is wisdom in us terrestrial mortals to make what imaginative use we can of *every phase* of our earthly condition', and also that 'everything in life is sacred and everything is a huge jest.'

The Powys Society has now performed a valuable service by making their correspondence fully available in English for the first time, and Jacqueline Peltier has done an exemplary job of editing the letters. Her insightful introduction places the friendship in the context of both lives, while her textual notes clarify possibly obscure points and references. Facsimiles of some letters are also provided along with three

relevant appendices and bibliographies of the major works of both authors.

Correspondence between friends is not intended for publication, but these two daimon-driven writers are far too genial to leave the reader with any sense of intrusion, even when Miller asks his friend not to share with others the pained feelings he confesses over the breakdown of his marriage. Powys's missives are like mighty rambles, gathering thought as they go, taking in reflections on the giants of world literature and philosophy, his peculiar sexual proclivities, his devotion to ritual, his *pro*-Semitism, his love for the landscape around Corwen, and much else. A virile honesty is the mark of both men (even though Powys describes himself as 'old-maidish'), along with a huge openness to a world which took scant note of their prolific existence.

Both writers lived their lives as matters of serious spiritual consequence, Miller drawing inspiration from Zen Buddhism, while Powys felt more kinship with the Taoist tradition, though in many ways his vision was closer to his intuitive apprehension of Druidic wisdom. Yet both are larger, more elusive figures than such generalized labelling suggests. They have their differences of perspective too. Powys challenges Miller's advocacy of 'love' – a word he considered hopelessly debased; and by countering Miller's unitary view of things with his vision of a pluralistic 'multiverse' he anticipates (as in many passages of his magnificent novel *Porius*) the later insights of Archetypal Psychology into that imaginal polytheism which illuminates consciousness as the poetic basis of mind.

What emerges throughout, however, is the warm affection with which each of these wise old codgers recognizes in the other a fellow pioneer into the vast terrain which, after the great achievements of the Nineteenth Century, still remained to be explored through fiction. Above all, the book is a timely reminder of how many of our finest writers drew their creative energy from a profound and exalted sense of the sacred and from the lived experience of the human imagination as a vital participant in larger orders of being.



Proteus and the Magician

price £10.00 in UK, £15.00 outside UK, postage included, is available direct from the Secretary (see inside front cover for contact details).

Please make cheques payable to The Powys Society.

John Cowper Powys and Eric Barker

from **Anthony Head:**

In the last *Newsletter* 82 (July 2014), the question was asked whether the poet Eric Barker, on a visit to his native England in 1959, also went to see John Cowper Powys. The answer is that he did. In a letter to Barker dated 21st February that year, John expresses his delight at the news that Barker intends to visit him at Blaenau Ffestiniog and that they will meet at last, after a correspondence that seems to have begun in July 1932 when John replied to a letter of appreciation from Barker forwarded to him at Hillsdale from England (where Barker had possibly sent it c/o a publisher). John also expresses concern about the availability of accommodation, but in his next letter, dated 6th March, he tells Barker that Phyllis has 'got a room for you in a very nice Hotel called The Abbey Arms for *April 11th*, and she has waited to tell the landlady any further details about your stay till you arrive.' He then gives details of directions and times of trains from London.

The visit presumably took place as planned, for in his next letter, dated 18th July, John says 'it was *simply wonderful* seeing you and hearing you and asking you questions.' This was their only meeting, though what appears to be John's last letter (undated but internal evidence suggesting late 1959) ends with the wish 'We both hope you'll be able to live in England again. Ever your devoted old friend and so says Phyllis ...' Perhaps Barker, who was born at Thames Ditton, in Surrey, in 1905 and had emigrated to America with his family in 1921, had expressed a desire after his visit to reside again in the land of his birth. There is not a great deal of biographical information about him available, but it is almost certain that he never did.

Barker was still living in California in 1968 when his poem 'In Memory of John Cowper Powys' first appeared in print, five years after John's death, in a journal called *Spectrum* (along with another unrelated poem), as a brief accompanying note makes clear. The note ends thus: 'The uniqueness of the friendship between these two writers was that it was introduced and carried on for over 30 years through correspondence, with the exception of one meeting which took place in Wales when Mr. Powys was in his eighties. Mr. Barker rates John Cowper Powys among the literary great.' As a matter of incidental interest, the poem as first printed here differs slightly from what was obviously a revised version reproduced in the *July Newsletter*. For one thing, it is broken more suitably into four stanzas, but the main difference is in the opening lines:

When the sad tongues
Of Blaenau's ivied bethels
Tolled us the news of your death at ninety-one,
I walked through the rain to the Abbey Arms
And found the barmaid weeping at the window ...

Barker would also still have been in California when his second wife Madelynne Greene, a figure of significance in her own right as a folk dancer and teacher, whom

he had married in 1936 or 1937, died suddenly during a lesson in early 1970. Barker himself died three years later, though where and how, I do not know. But obviously the notion of the poet himself being in Blaenau around the time of JCP's death is indeed a purely poetic one.

Although his work would not be likely to hold much appeal for a modern readership, Barker was a versatile and accomplished poet, and both his poetry and his friendship with JCP would be worthy of study. He was awarded the Shelley Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America in 1963, and also declined the offer of being Poet Laureate of California. But with his letters to John presumably no longer extant, any such examination would have to rely on a full transcription and unravelling of John's letters to Barker – a (daunting) task for another day. (The Barker papers at Syracuse University contain 151 letters to him from JCP, as well as seven from Llewelyn to Eric and/or Madelynne from the latter half of the 1930s, one from Alyse Gregory to Eric on Llewelyn's behalf, one from Phyllis to both Eric and Madelynne, and one from Marian Powys to Eric lamenting that she had missed him on a trip to San Francisco.)

The short Introduction to Barker's poetry reprinted in the July *Newsletter* from *Directions in the Sun* is, as Paul Roberts has noted, an edited version of the already short essay on Barker published in full in *Elusive America* (1994) and reproduced from a MS at Colgate University. This was the second of the five volumes of poetry that Barker published, issued in hardback by Gotham Book Mart of New York in 1956, not 1955 (though this is the year in which each of the Prefaces by Merle Armitage, JCP and Robinson Jeffers was written).

Barker's next collection was a shorter, plain blue paperback volume with a hand-sewn binding called *In Easy Dark*, privately printed by Hardy and Ruth Hanson in December 1958 in a limited edition of 600 copies. It is this volume – not an earlier one – that has a Preface by Henry Miller, dated January of that same year. It also has a one-page biography of Barker that includes the following:

And the Welsh writer, John Cowper Powys, to whom Barker's poetry has a very special appeal, has written: 'In the direction of actually resolving (in poetry) our human souls into the inmost spiritual being of the element with which we are at the moment concerned, Eric Barker, to my knowledge, has gone farther than any living poet.'

I am not sure where this quotation comes from, but possibly from a note Powys wrote around this time to the Bollinger Foundation recommending Barker for an award, which as his letter of 18th July 1959 reveals Barker didn't get ('O how damnable indeed that you missed that *Bollinger Award*! but you *were* an angel to spend so much money coming over at all ...'). The title page of *In Easy Dark* is followed by the printed dedication:

TO JOHN COWPER POWYS
WITH
LOVE AND ADMIRATION

This book was republished in hardback in 1961 in both America (New Directions,

New York) and Britain (Andre Deutsch, London) as *A Ring of Willows* – the title of one of the poems in the volume. JCP ‘rejoiced’ at this news in his last letter to Eric.

Two later volumes were *Looking for Water* (October House, New York, 1964), a collection of new and selected poems published in both hardback and trade paperback, and *Under Orion* (Kayak Books, Santa Cruz, 1970), a paperback that included the slightly revamped poem in memory of JCP. But it is Barker’s *first* published volume, *The Planetary Heart* (The Wings Press, California & New York, 1942), a handsome hardback of 74 pages, which is of most interest, since it is for this book that John Cowper Powys wrote a lengthy eight-page Introduction. The volume also has a Foreword by Ben DeCasseres, and includes a poem titled ‘Seaweed’ that is dedicated to JCP. In a long letter from Corwen written on 30th April 1942, in which John says he will happily write an Introduction for the volume, he adds a postscript at the top that reads: ‘Posted on May 16th *along with Preface!*’ It is obvious from this letter, too, that John has seen all the poems already – he expresses his dislike of only one. So this Introduction, listed by Derek Langridge (*John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement*, 1966) but never to my knowledge reprinted, must have been written in the first couple of weeks in May 1942.

It is a typical JCP product of its kind – mannerly, extravagant, fifty words where ten would do – yet for all its fanciful metaphors and autobiographical meanderings, it contains perhaps the most complete (in places, one might even say succinct) expression of Powys’s views on the deadening effects of ‘the New Poetry’ and the enduring laudability of traditional poetic values. Apart from being yet further evidence of the lengths to which John would go to help other aspiring writers, it is an affectionate testimony to a poet for whom he obviously felt a deep affinity, a poet for whom *A Philosophy of Solitude* had been a turning-point in his life and who cherished the picture of JCP he kept on the wall of his isolated home on the California cliffs.

We hope to publish JCP’s introduction to Eric Barker’s book, The Planetary Heart, in a future Newsletter.

CT

News and Notes

In his new book, *American Smoke* (2013), **Iain Sinclair** includes a section in which he describes how, in 1967, the American poet **Charles Olson**, author of the *Maximus poems*, friend of Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and the Black Mountain poets, visited Dorchester. He was given a special guided tour of Maiden Castle by Roger Peers, then curator at the Dorset County Museum and later joint editor, with Morine Krissdóttir, of *The Dorset Year*. Sinclair says: ‘Picture Charles Olson on the earth ramparts – where we all go as we pass through – of Maiden Castle. They stood, collars up, pipes in mouth, to catch the teasing song of a lark. John Cowper Powys saw this landscape as a receptacle for the mysteries of that great underworld sea into which

human consciousness must sink, independent of the fretful dreams and demons that oppress it.' CT

Skylight Press has reissued **Iain Sinclair's** *Suicide Bridge* (1979), which now includes a previously unpublished chapter called 'John Cowper Powys, Victim of the West'. CT

When the poet, **Charles Olson**, died in 1970, friends, who cleared his three-room apartment, found two large rucksacks filled with the books he had bought in England, in 1967, with the aim of helping him to comprehend English society. Amongst these books was a copy of **The Glass Cage** by Colin Wilson, first published in 1966. **The Glass Cage** is dedicated to 'the memory of John Cowper Powys'. See **Charles Olson's Reading: A biography**, by Ralph Maud. CT

From **Michael Caines**: The latest book from the poet and jazz musician **Roy Fisher** is *An Easily Bewildered Child: Occasional Prose* 1963–2013. It includes two letters from JCP written to Fisher in 1956 in response to fan mail from him, along with a two-page introduction, first published in *The Powys Journal* in 2008. The book also contains pieces on Fisher's own life and poetry, and on his fellow writers, and is available from Shearsman Books for £12.95. < www.shearsman.com >

From **Tim Hyman**: I found this passage in a letter to me of May 1979, from one of the contemporary British painters I've most admired, **Ken Kiff** RA (1935–2001). 'My feeling is that Powys's greatness is very much connected with the child and the feminine. (I don't claim originality for the thought! – but the feeling is genuinely my own, all the same – & the direct result of the extraordinary experience of reading the novels) – And as for people who tough-mindedly dismiss all that, their loss is very great. (I think Powys is prodigiously talented – naturally, there's so much to be said about that) ...'

The exhibition of the great Italian renaissance painter and master of colouristic effects, Paolo **Veronese**, at the National Gallery, in London, earlier this year ('Veronese – Magnificence in Renaissance Venice') reminded me of JCP's description, in *Autobiography*, of how, tired of reading too much Ruskin and looking at too many Tintoretto frescoes, he first discovered the paintings of Veronese by reading the novels of **Gabriele d'Annunzio**. In *One Hundred Best Books* (1916) he also describes with great passion the novels of d'Annunzio and says he particularly admires the speech, in *The Flame of Life* (*Il Fuoco*, 1900), of the Master of Life 'with its incomparable eulogy upon Veronese'. The richly textured surfaces and materials in Veronese's paintings and the barely concealed atmosphere of sexuality in d'Annunzio's novels must have worked together to make a deep impression on JCP at this time. D'Annunzio 'teaches a shameless and antinomian hedonism' said JCP in *One Hundred Best Books*.

CT

★ ★ ★ ★

Whilst in Paris for the launch of *Proteus and the Magician* I visited Montparnasse cemetery to see an object with a strange and unexpected Powysian connection. Tucked away amongst the ivy and gravestones in a quiet corner, close to a boundary wall, there is a familiar looking sculpture. This is *The Kiss* by **Brancusi** which shows two figures in a close embrace. It's a very beautiful monument, reminiscent of images by Giotto and Rodin, and is one of several versions on the same theme which the famous Romanian sculptor produced in his lifetime. The carved limestone sculpture marks the burial site of a young Russian girl, Tania Rachevskaja, who committed suicide in 1908. Brancusi was asked to provide a memorial stone. The image seems to have preoccupied Brancusi who also inscribed it in a copy of Edna St Vincent Millay's poems, a poet he greatly admired, (as, of course, did JCP and Llewelyn), and which he later presented to a visitor to his studio. Edna St Vincent Millay also visited Brancusi in Paris during her trip to Europe in the early 1920s. This connection with modern sculpture made me think of JCP's sympathetic encounter with Brancusi's bronze sculpture called 'Golden Bird', at the Arts Club of Chicago (it's now at the Art Institute of Chicago), which he recorded in his diary for 18th January 1930: '*It was a nice thing to touch and I did so!*' Later, after JCP's death, Phyllis translated some of Brancusi's aphorisms for David Nash, the sculptor in wood who was her neighbour in Blaenau Ffestiniog, and with whom she shared a love of Brancusi's works. **CT**

★ ★ ★ ★

On Saturday 16th August *The Daily Telegraph* published an article about *A Glastonbury Romance* by journalist and Telegraph staff writer **Michael Henderson**. It is available (see below). On 27th June 2014, in *The Daily Telegraph*, Michael Henderson also mentioned JCP in an article about the Glastonbury Festival: '*Joseph of Arimathea, we are told, brought the Holy Grail to Glastonbury. John Cowper Powys wrote one of the greatest novels in the English language about the place, and John Steinbeck, researching a book about the Arthurian legend, spent a year there.*' **CT**
< <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/11039033/John-Cooper-Powys-is-a-writer-who-changes-how-you-see-the-world.html> >

★ ★ ★ ★

In his book *Ultimate Things* **Professor Keith** says that he was helped in his understanding of the Powyses and their approach to religion by reading a book by the scholar of Zen Buddhism and oriental religions, **Alan Watts**. He says that the approach to religion adopted by Alan Watts is compatible with the Powyses and that in a book by Watts called *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* he continually found remarks that link up with Powysian attitudes and interests. This should not be surprising for, thanks to the publication in English of Henry Miller's letters to JCP, we now learn that Alan Watts was a great admirer of JCP's books. In a letter dated 22nd October 1951 Miller says to JCP that when Alan Watts visited him he 'sang your praises'. **CT**

★ ★ ★ ★

Anna Pawelko spotted this recent reference on Twitter to a blog spot about reading *Wolf Solent*:

< <http://upstategirl-laurajwryan.blogspot.nl/2014/06/my-thoughts-on-reading-wolf-solent-by.html> >

★ ★ ★ ★

From **John Sanders**: Last March I spent a weekend with a friend who was dog/house sitting in a village called Croesor near Porthmadog. This was an ideal opportunity to visit Blaenau Ffestiniog 12 miles away. Although I have been reading JCP for over forty years this was my first visit to No1 Waterloo. I can say that it was well worth the 24-mile round trip, even though there was a large white van parked outside of the house. Another Powys connection came from an elderly lady I met in the village of Croesor. Her name was Giovanna Bloor, and at a time in the past she owned a book shop in Blaenau, and remembered Phyllis Playter (but not JCP).

★ ★ ★ ★

Patrick Quigley, retired local government official, author and member of the Powys Society has been honoured by the Polish government with a 'Pro Memoria' medal for his recent biography of the husband of Countess Markievicz, entitled *The Polish Irishman: the Life and Times of Count Casimir Markievicz*. The book is published by the Liffey Press. The medal was presented by a representative of the Polish Government, Mr Jan Ciechanowski, Head of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression. The ceremony took place at an event in the residence of outgoing Polish Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Marcin Nawrot. A press release reports '*Casimir Markievicz fought for Polish independence in World War One at the same time as his wife, Countess Markievicz, was fighting for Irish independence. Both were deeply involved in the history of their countries. Casimir Markievicz was a Polish count who fell in love with Ireland's Joan of Arc. His pictures hang in the National Gallery of Ireland and in Poland. Despite his famous name, he has been overshadowed by his wife's reputation. He was a Renaissance Man – artist, playwright, novelist, theatre director, and actor in silent films, but most of all, a man who loved to sing and dance. Patrick Quigley depicts the rebel Countess in a new light – as an artist, lover and mother. Dublin in the early 1900s was the city of Joyce and Yeats, AE and Synge. Casimir knew them all and set Dublin's gossipers abuzz in the years from 1903 to 1913. The Polish Count and the Irish Rebel is the first study of Casimir's work and shows that his relationship with Constance and Ireland was a major part of his life. Their love changed with time but did not die.*

★ ★ ★ ★

From **Paul Roberts**, who is researching the life and work of the neglected poet and close friend of JCP, **John Redwood Anderson**: I've now gathered a huge amount of material – though some aspects of his life are not well covered – and many people have been incredibly kind and helpful. I think I've got a pretty good idea of the main aspects of his life and work and it's now a matter of putting it together. There is actually quite a lot of prose work to be uncovered, from three essays written for the *Theosophical Review* between 1906 and 1909 up to an unpublished memoir of his friendship with Montague Summers and an account of his experiments with canna-

bis!! I've also discovered that Colgate University has about one thousand pages of correspondence between Anderson and JCP. One day someone ought to publish it.

Kate Kavanagh, returning from a recent visit to New York, reports Columbia County paradisal with sun through green leaves. The Grotto, where JCP so often walked, flowing much less than seen before, but perfect for a bold bather in its deep pool (*see page 52*). Phudd Bottom house spick and span with hanging flower baskets. Patchin Place in NY unchanged, maybe looking a little subdued, but still quiet and shady beyond its crooked gate.

From **Marcella Henderson-Peal**: I attended my first ESSE (European Society for the Study of English) conference this year which took place in the delightful city of Kosiçe in Eastern Slovakia at the foot of the Tatra range and welcomed 700 participants. I gave a paper at the manuscript round-table on JCP's French translator Marie Canavaggia's correspondence (to and from) JCP, Phyllis Playter and Lucy Powys. The correspondence which covers two decades is most entertaining and gives rare details of the literary scene in 1950s and 1960s Paris, interaction with publishers and critics, responses to Marie's enquiries for details while translating *Autobiography* and many other informative anecdotes. There was some powysian talk behind the scenes too as I was very happy to be able to catch up with Angelika Reichmann who is currently engaged with research-work on Coetzee. Also, most of the Scandinavians I met had all heard of, or indeed had even read, JCP through the good work of Harald Fawcner and Janina Nordius. It felt rather like home from home just a mere ten days after the Conference in Sherborne and the unexpected tea party at Wyke Farm.

The Crowcombe Connection (2)

In *Newsletter 82* (July 2014) Peter Lazare recalled his personal memories of Crowcombe and its church, his visits there as a child, as well as its connections with JCP and *A Glastonbury Romance*.

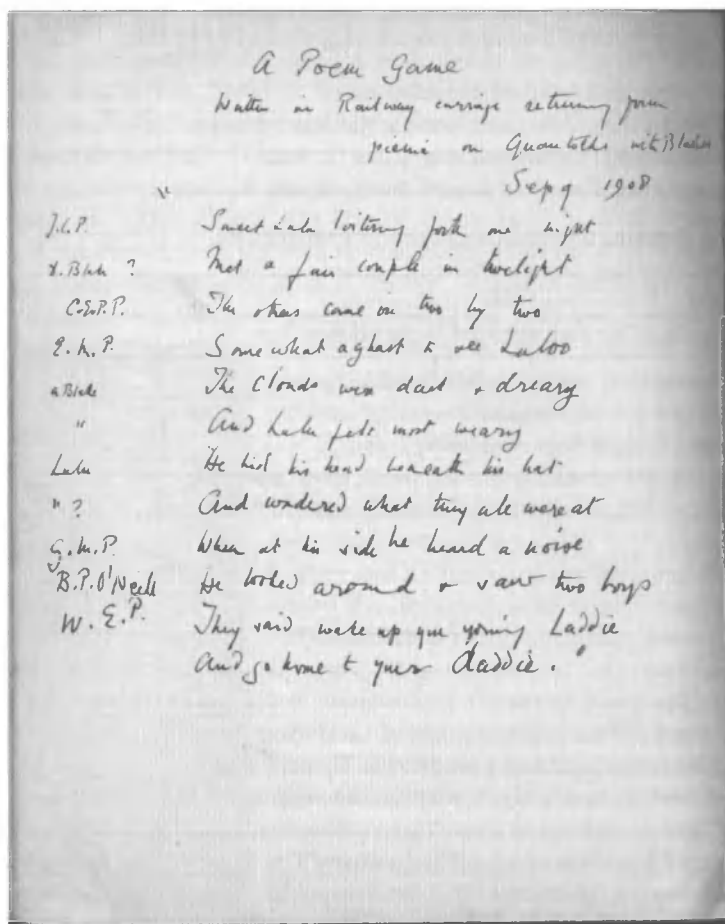
from **Peter Foss**

Crowcombe, of course, was known to all the Powyses, as was the Quantocks more generally. Llewelyn included an essay, 'On the Other Side of the Quantocks', in *Earth Memories*. There was a memorable one-day trip there in September 1908 which Llewelyn recalls in his diaries a number of times.

In Louise de Bruin's Powys family collection there is a postcard sent by Katie on the occasion when members of the Powys family and their friends walked from Minehead to Crowcombe (it is postmarked Crowcombe, 9th September 1908). The postcard shows a scene of Minehead, and on the back are all the signatures of the

people in the party which included: Katie, Harvey Blake, WEP, Dorothy Blake, JCP, Monica Blake, Lulu, Humphrey Blake, Marion, GMP, Bernie O'Neill. The Blakes of South Petherton were huge friends of the Powys children, and they were all in love with one another.

Peter says that one day he hopes to be able to write a more detailed note about all the members of the walking party and their inter-relationships. CT



This page from *The Caddisworm*, a Montacute manuscript family miscellany, started in August 1897 and largely maintained by Gertrude Powys, sheds more light on this outing (SPM Collection). Here is a version of the game of Consequences, played by the same people (paper ht 7.7 ins). Earlier in *The Caddisworm* are 52 lines of verse written by Katie, evidently some time later, 'dedicated to Monica in remembrance of Sep 9 1908'. I look forward to Peter's 'more detailed note'.

Stephen Powys Marks

Answering a Mobile on White Nose

(a previously unpublished poem by Peter Foss)

The White Nose (or White Nore) is the chalk headland east of Weymouth referred to by Hardy as resembling The Duke of Wellington's nose. The White Nose is the subject of an essay by Llewelyn Powys in Dorset Essays and is often referred to by JCP in Autobiography where it appears as one of the 'well known sea marks' which, as a child, impressed themselves on his imagination 'through a mythological haze of enchanted wonder.' CT

You, in your split level loft, Barnsbury, NI,
Me, on the edge of the chalk world at Wellington's nose;
You discarding Hockney socks by a Conran bed,
Me, layered and woollied for a rucksacker's trek.

Here, quacking my squelching boots in a badger's set,
There, strutting your stuff before an ormolu mirror;
a) lifting a dachshund over a cliff-top stile,
b) sipping Chardonnay to the *Sicilian Vespers*.

He, texting and tinkling on his digital gadgets,
Me, fighting a wind with a flimsy Pathfinder,
You, deciding to ring to see where I was,
Here, caught between world and world, wave upon wave.

Klinton Top

Immediately after our Chairman's presentation at this year's Conference an auction was held of a special association copy of G. Wilson Knight's only published novel *Klinton Top*. The lucky successful bidder was Byron Ashton.

The novel, with its brooding, romantic atmosphere, about a tragic love affair, was written by Wilson Knight in 1926–1927, in his early 30s, whilst he was Senior English master at Dean Close School near Cheltenham. The Brontë-like inspiration, and the relationship between character and landscape in the novel, would surely have appealed to JCP, as would the literary references in the chapter headings to Shakespeare, Shelley and Wordsworth. These were references that would of course emerge in Wilson Knight's 'interpretation' of Shakespearian themes, beginning with *The Wheel of Fire* in 1930, whose metaphysical and religious speculations had already attracted the support of T. S. Eliot, and in his study of the romantic poets in *The Starlit Dome* in 1941.

After originally failing to secure a publisher, *Klinton Top* was finally published by

Redcliffe Press in 1984. The novel was reviewed by Peter Foss in *The Powys Review* 16, 1985.

Wilson Knight could have been thinking of his own book when he described JCP's *Rodmoor* (dedicated to 'the spirit of Emily Brontë'): 'It has a quality all its own. It is a strange book, but grips the reader, holding him with a keen suspense.' Wilson Knight's ability to evoke atmosphere and the spirit of place may be sensed in a paragraph taken from towards the end of the novel:

The crest of Klinton Top lay close in the gloom through the long murk of the hours before morning; then across the Wexe valley the first paleness appeared below the rim of night, the air quickened with the scent of day; and lining the black of the eastern ridge, the dawn blushed crimson. Then spread outwards and upwards from pole to pole a sky-lake of burning copper, driving the last shadows beyond the western hills.

And the sun surged up.

The copy of *Klinton Top* auctioned at the Conference is inscribed to 'Isobel' [Powys Marks], Exeter, dated 1st Sept 1984 and signed by G. Wilson Knight. Included with the book is a holograph letter from Wilson Knight to Isobel which is transcribed here.

CT

5 March/84

G. R. Wilson Knight
Caroline House
Streatham Rise
Exeter
EX4 4PE

Dear Isobel

Yes - as I told Lucy recently in my answer to her letter I shall love to see you all again. If you have written to James I shall await his decision as to date. If he rings me up or calls in we can easily arrange that - If I don't hear from him I shall contact him.

I am so pleased you like Klinton Top. Letters about it from many people have been most encouraging.

Lucy's was one of them: she seems well and bright. Now Spring is really coming and we shall all be the better for it.

Recently I had some X-rays at the hospital for prostate trouble. There might be a slight operation but I think it unlikely. I am feeling well apart from that though I am less active in 1985 and don't walk far. I look forward to seeing you all.

Love from Richard

I'm interested in you picking out Helen for special mention - many people have done that including my devoted typist at Cheltenham in 1927! When she last saw me about 4 years ago she still remembered it. She died suddenly run over by a car.

Llewelyn Powys – The Man Behind the Myth

A new book by Neil Lee

Neil Lee's book, Llewelyn Powys – The Man Behind the Myth, is now available exclusively to members of the Powys Society in a soft bound, pre-publication form, comprising the text only, without an index, dedication or acknowledgements. However, Neil has just announced that Powys Society member, Rosemary Dickens, has made a very generous donation of £5000.00 towards the cost of production and future publication of The Man Behind the Myth.

Neil contributed a note to Newsletter 80 (November 2013) on 'Reading Llewelyn', a response to the talk on Llewelyn Powys delivered by Arjen Mulder at the Powys Society Conference in Street in 2012, and published in The Powys Journal xxiii (2013). CT

Neil Lee writes:

I'm a local Derbyshire historian and not a biographer. *The Man Behind the Myth* is a non-academic, personal understanding of Llewelyn Powys's life and philosophy, written in layman's language, gleaned from a study of the man, his published work, his letters, books written about him and other literary miscellanea. The book has been written, ostensibly, to seek out the truth of Llewelyn's character and much vaunted 'philosophy' and to purge me of my 25-year obsession with both.

The book is a direct result of the author being plied with numerous rare volumes of Powys books by fellow-devotee Gerald Redman, over a twenty-year period, and would not have been written without the urging, encouragement and enduring friendship of fellow Powysian Chris Gostick. Grateful acknowledgement and thanks are also given to Jacqueline Peltier for her help and valuable input and information with regard to Alyse Gregory.

The book has been privately printed and is not intended, at this stage, for public sale. The book is limited to 100 copies which are available exclusively to members of The Powys Society, free of charge, on a first come first served basis. However a **small donation** of £2.00 towards the cost of postage and packaging would be appreciated.

Orders may be sent by e-mail to < atkin.neil@sky.com > or by post to Neil Lee, 1 Church Hill, Spredlington, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 2DX.

*Please make **cheques payable to Rev Neil D. Atkin**. Members may contact Neil by telephone on 01673 860535.*

For
Elizabeth Harvey
From
John Cooper Powys
to
Commemorate
her
visit which did
bring me so much
Happiness

Sunday July 19th 1959

"a motion & a spirit that
impels
all thinking things, all objects
of all thoughts

&
rolls through all things^{so}
W. Wordsworth

This inscription is in a copy of the 1949 small-page Bodley Head reprint of *The Art of Happiness*. Elizabeth Harvey was a close neighbour and good friend of my mother Isobel when our family lived in London in Newton Road, off Westbourne Grove. Elizabeth was an active member, and some time Vice-President, of SWWJ (Society of Women Writers and Journalists, founded in 1894, still going strong). The book was given by Elizabeth to Isobel, from whom it came to me.

Stephen Powys Marks

He first came to JCP through his studies of 1930s novels, and through science fiction, which *Atlantis* among other things is. A special interest is the *character system* and importance of minor characters. Another is *computational analysis* (computer listing of frequency and associations of words and names). This method reveals, for example, that Odysseus, the main character, actually has less to say than the Fly and the Moth. Athena, his counterpart, remains offstage. Other characters form contrasting pairs – Enorches the cruel and violent nihilist priest, *versus* Zeuks the Rabelaisian natural magician.

Powys's own brand of anachronism combines different stages of civilization, science-fictionish monsters with modern psychology and naturalism, and also Tibetan reality, the power of thought, actual *eidola* capable of working on impressionable brains. It is possible to think of *Atlantis* as the future. Alternative sexualities make 'an open horizon of erotic possibility'.

JCP's fascination with Homer is usually with the *Iliad*, whose characters (an aged Ajax) also appear on the Ithaca scene. The adolescent Nisos has a symbolic struggle with the Fates, Odysseus an encounter with an elderly Dryad. The godly flying horses survive an attack by Enorches.

It's hard to see whether (even with the help of Phyllis) JCP had much of a planned plot. *Atlantis* itself (the sunken island) only appears towards the end. Its monstrous Typhon's scientific plans for the world are summarily smashed by the Club of Hercules. But the New World seemingly cannot accept the paganism of Zeuks, who dies before they reach it.

Questions after the talk suggested several similar fantasies (among them the Mighty Mekon from *Eagle* comics, *Prediction* magazine, and Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*). A recurring theme in these, as in the late JCP books, is *morphing*. When asked, John Cowper often (though not always) claimed *Atlantis* as his favourite book.

★

Following the AGM, **Larry Mitchell** spoke about Katie Powys, JCP, and Walt Whitman, 'The Poet of Passionate Friendship', apropos of the 1881 drawing of Whitman given to John Cowper by the artist and by him to his sister Katie (see *Newsletter* 67, page 48). It has now joined the Cushing Library archive in Texas.

There was limited time for this talk, and Larry produced an admirably clear and entertaining history of JCP's lectures on and influences from Whitman, whom he thought, with Poe, would most surely survive. He shared his enthusiasm with Llewelyn and then with Katie, some thought to excess: Whitman became her lodestar and was a bond with her friend Stephen Reynolds. She asked for her copy of *Leaves of Grass* to be buried with her. Several essays on Whitman by JCP were published, culminating in the magnificent one in *Pleasures of Literature*. His later favourite Edgar Lee Masters he considered Whitman's natural and truly American child. For JCP, Whitman's optimism transformed the ugly detritus of America into poetry. 'Doctor' Powys's praise of the Great Good Poet in women's clubs and girls' schools (his rota of

against Britain – the US was said to be the more democratic, less class-bound, less-inhibited society, replacing a Victorian repressiveness with a Whitmanian yawp – why did, at the very least, these two extraordinary men find acceptance in the UK more than in the US? Perhaps the US was at the time more in the grip of what, in my book *Theory After Theory*, I term ‘the resolved symbolic’, which promoted a certain modernist idea of form against anything else that was messier, whether messier in a more realistic or more experimental direction. It could also be that British society just had greater room for eccentricity, and allowed eccentrics like the ones mentioned above (of the four, only Davie really was not one) to be part of the literary world, whereas in the US, especially before the emergence of the Beat poets, there was more emphasis on conforming.

One cannot describe the two writers as formally alike. Although there are scenes of violence and unorthodox sex in Powys’s fiction, Powys clearly finds it daring – even though he withheld comment – of Purdy to model *Cabot Wright Begins* on ‘a well-known young rapist who ravished nearly three hundred young women’ (102). In formal terms, Purdy was much more a modernist. Powys had a Victorian reach and heft, whereas Purdy had a more rigorous sense of *le mot juste*. Powys wrote a wealth of nonfiction (criticism, mystical philosophy, heady ‘self-improvement’ manuals), and it could well be, as David Balcom Stimpson has recently argued, that his true genius lay in his nonfiction. Purdy, aside from some plays, dedicated himself exclusively, in a Jamesian way, to the house of fiction. Though Powys at this time did not read much new fiction, preferring to meditate on older books like Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (which both Purdy and Powys loved for the right reason: its style), he wrote appreciatively of Purdy’s *Malcolm*, prizing especially the role played by an inanimate object, the bench, in the odyssey of the book’s young protagonist; a fascination with the inanimate was one of Powys’s hallmarks. On a *prima facie* basis, it is difficult imagining *Glastonbury Romance* being of appeal to Purdy, who did not exactly write long novels filled with Celtic mysticism and multiple plots; even less so Powys’s later strictly historical and Welsh books, such as *Porius* and *Owen Glendower*. Purdy, though, expresses a fascination with King Arthur and an ambition to read Malory (who was quite ‘in’ at the time via T. H. White), and reads Charlotte Guest’s version of the *Mabinogion* when urged to do so by Powys.

The two writers allow each other to suggest new avenues or tangents for their imagination. This was not universal: Powys says he is too old to really get into the words, as opposed to the significance, of Dylan Thomas. Yet, on the other hand, Powys shows respect to the – much-younger – Tennessee Williams (though, despite his decades of residence in the US, he cannot quite bring himself to spell ‘Tennessee’ correctly, a lapse no doubt reciprocated by Tennesseans trying to spell the name of the place where Powys then lived, Blaenau Ffestiniog). Yet he also understood why Purdy would not want to be classed as a ‘gay’ writer in the way critics at times seemed to class Williams.

Part of the honesty of the correspondence between the two men is their direct

ventilation of their differing sexualities. Powys, through an ingenious series of reflections on the difference between Latin 'homo-' meaning *male*, and Greek 'homo-' meaning *the same* – speaks of how, in his youth, 'it was grander to be "Homo" than "Hetero"' (referring to the Aesthetic era, the height of Oscar Wilde, and so on) but, though dispositionally sympathetic to the style of homosexuality, Powys found himself bound 'to submit to fate and remain hetero'. Yet one would hardly say Powys – famed for once saying he had a horror of the best-known form of heterosexual sex – was 'straight' in the sense, say, that General Eisenhower was straight. Nor did Purdy write as a member of the 'gay community' the way even a Williams or a Frank O'Hara or a John Rechy did. But nonetheless their sexualities were different, as Purdy acknowledged by repeatedly remembering himself to Powys's life companion, Phyllis Playter, his 'American lady'. On the other hand, Purdy vehemently rejects the label 'homosexual', which he indeed uses derogatorily of others, especially those who describe the concerns of his work as homosexual. In one eloquent passage of rebuttal, Purdy says to Powys that, if his work is homosexual, then so are *'Hamlet, Don Quixote, Oedipus Rex, The Iliad, Moby Dick, Leaves of Grass, Bouvard et Pécuchet, The Way of All Flesh'* – notably including works by straight as well as gay writers, though giving inferentially (to use today's term, one no doubt inimical to Purdy) 'queer' readings of the Flaubert and the Butler that I think are quite probative. One can see this as a very American desire on the part of Purdy, to not want to be relegated to an interest-group ghetto, to have his work contend with the best to soar on a level of aesthetic accomplishment that would, in an artistic sense, forge *e pluribus unum*; to be judged by the content of his character, not his incidental sexual disposition. Both Powys and Purdy rejected Freudian models of psychology – putting them on a very outer rung of a Fifties culture for which Freud was gospel, and anything that was abnormal by Freudian canons into the realm of the aberrant. The two writers were kindred spirits in preferring myth and imagination, not psychological impulses, as the bedrock of creativity.

The correspondence sees Purdy well on his way to his major work, such as *Malcolm, The Nephew*, and *Cabot Wright Begins*. Powys, on the other hand, is writing the work of his old age, fantasy novels such as *Up and Out*, works which Powys's most recent biographer, Morine Krissdóttir, saw as reflecting a notable decline in quality, but which other Powysians value at least as amusing quirks. Powys, like many writers, undoubtedly remained stronger writing 'nonfiction' – in this case, mainly letters – than fiction as he entered extreme old age. It is in this regard that Powys's advocacy of Purdy is so remarkable. Though one of Purdy's three major English advocates, Sir Angus Wilson, might well have been drawn to Purdy through the gay affinity, and another, Dame Edith Sitwell, dispense praise rather liberally, there was no other younger writer Powys lauded as much as Purdy, and the affinity was necessarily a literary and aesthetic one. Also, perhaps, territorial. Every American writer necessarily has British writing at his or her back as part of a tradition. Powys, on the other hand, had spent so much of his life in the US as to become, in a strange way,

contrarily American. Purdy's work spoke of an alienation and a loneliness that was very American. Indeed, it was seeking out this enabling alienation that partially underlay Powys's leaving Britain and beginning a long, itinerant life discovering an always-elusive yet perennially-beckoning America. But, even aside from any geographical determinants, there are just pure affinities: both Powys and Purdy loved the stars, and much of their small talk is astronomical. They were lovers of 'great literature' (not just their own) and supporters of each other, unusual men who, though never meeting each other in person, gravitated towards each other's souls in an epiphany of cognitive kinship.

Although what we have here are the elder Powys and younger Purdy, with Purdy now dead it seems natural to compare the writers in old age. Powys spent his last twenty-seven years in two small North Welsh towns, Corwen and then Blaenau Ffestiniog. Though his surname was Welsh, Powys was largely English in background and orientation, and spent, as we have said, decades in the United States. Yet North Wales for him became an imaginative homeland in which he wrote books, such as the two Welsh historical novels, that some might see at his best, even though he was sixty-three when he moved to Wales. Purdy, on the other hand, had completed, at the end of this correspondence, most of the work best known to the general reader, the work that led critics such as Irving Malin to herald Purdy as an exemplar of 'the New American Gothic'. Despite Krissdóttir's opinion of Powys's very late works, they are read and treasured by many, whereas Purdy's last really significant work of fiction is 1989's *Garments The Living Wear*. In a sense, Powys found in Blaenau Ffestiniog an imaginative redoubt in old age that Purdy, in Brooklyn Heights, did not possess. The literary establishment neglected both Powys and Purdy. But Powys chose this neglect deliberately, by striking out on his own, and in America, and embracing outsiders of all and sundry sorts, and if he minded that he was not as famous as his work deserves to be, he took it philosophically. Purdy, on the other hand, was by all reports – and by his own caustic jeremiads in numerous interviews, repeated till the end of his life – bitter about his sidelining by the powers that be. This became all the more difficult for Purdy in that, in England, there is a visible establishment, with the two great universities and a monthly idea of 'literary London', which simply does not exist in the same cohesive way as in America, where most imaginative writers feel some sort of alienation or neglect by the larger society, and where any concentration of power is so impalpable as to be impotent to rebel against.

Neglect, though, is odious, especially as it compels those who love writers like this always to be publicizing them. The editors mention Purdy's recent championship by the late Susan Sontag, the late Gore Vidal, and Jonathan Franzen; Powys has also had a raft of prominent champions in the recent past, such as the late Iris Murdoch, George Steiner, Margaret Drabble. Periodically, banner articles are written in general-interest journals by such figures, urging a Powys or Purdy revival, and commercial houses of various levels of prestige and repute bring out new editions. After a brief hubbub, though, the wave eddies out, and the revival does not take.

Perhaps the answer is not to presume readers will take orders from above, but that, like Powys and Purdy themselves, they will read wildly and heedlessly, reading for their own pleasure and instruction, not because people with access to corporate media outlets tell them to do so. In this way, Powys and Purdy might serve as not just people for us to read, but also as models for our own reading. This is most likely more than our present age can bear, which is why, as Powys said of Purdy, both these gifted geniuses remain writers 'who are for the future & in the future alone will find their true appreciation' (22). Perhaps that future is still far off, perhaps it has finally come.

A Chronology for Louis Wilkinson

I so enjoyed Bill Keith's article, in the latest issue of *The Powys Journal*, on the fiction of Louis Wilkinson, in many cases published under the *nom-de-plume* Louis Marlow, that I felt I would like see them set out together in date order. The published article gives a most illuminating account of the circumstances of the writing and of the succession of the novels, but in the 'Works Cited' lists them in two places under the two names and in alphabetical order.

So here is my consolidated listing, marked M for books by 'Louis Marlow', and W for those by 'Louis Wilkinson'. I have included several other works for completeness. I hope you find this useful.

Stephen Powys Marks

- M *The Puppets' Dallying* (1905)
- W *Blasphemy and Religion, A Dialogue* (1916)
- W *The Buffoon* (1916)
- W *The Chaste Man* (1917)
- W *Brute Gods* (1919)
- M *Mr. Amberthwaite* (1928)
- M *Two Made Their Bed* (1929)
- M *The Lion Took Fright* (1930)
- M *Love by Accident* (1930)
- M *Swan's Milk* (1934)
- M *Fool's Quarter Day* (1935)
- M *Welsh Ambassadors* (1936)
- M *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, ed. (1943)
- M *The Devil in Crystal* (1944)
- M *Forth Beast!* (1946)
- M *Sackville of Drayton* (1948)
- M *Seven Friends* (1953; greatly enlarged, 1992)
- W *The Letters of John Cowper Powys*, ed. (1958)

My musical inspiration from John Cowper Powys's works

by Anthony Green

It is always fascinating to learn from members, and especially from new members, how they first encountered the Powyses, which Powys is most important to them and how the works of the Powyses have inspired them in their own creative fields. Anthony Green is a new member who joined the Society earlier this year. He lives in London. He is a composer, musician and concert pianist. Here he tells his story, how he discovered the work of John Cowper Powys and how he has been inspired to compose several pieces based on JCP's books. Anthony most recently performed his 'John Cowper Powys Symphony', in a version for piano, in a recital at the Schott Music Room in London on 10th May 2014, in a programme that also included music by Haydn, Berg, Schoenberg and Beethoven.

Anthony Green will perform the second part of his John Cowper Powys Symphony at the Schott Music Room, 48 Great Marlborough Street, London, W1F 7BB on 28th February 2015. For more information about the event please contact the Schott Music Shop at <www.schott-music.co.uk> or telephone: 0207 534 0710. CT

From 1979 to 1981, I was studying composition, musical analysis and piano in Budapest, Hungary, on a British Council exchange scholarship. One of my fellow students, Simon Murphy, had been reading *Wolf Solent*, which he had borrowed from a British resident in Budapest, and lent it to me. JCP had only been a name as far as I was concerned up to this point, but I was immediately taken by the extraordinary atmosphere of the book, with its almost tangible rendering of landscape and human (especially sexual) emotions, and its atmosphere of suppressed, or not so suppressed, evil, in such characters as Squire Urquhart and Mr Malakite. I set to music the poem 'The Slow Worm of Lenty', which Jason Otter recites to *Wolf Solent*. It was scored for soprano, flute, clarinet and cello, and it received two performances in 1984, both by the Morley Musica Viva Ensemble, directed by Michael Graubert. Perhaps reading the book at the time cured me of some of the homesickness I was then feeling – many commentators have drawn attention to JCP's extraordinary genius for evoking scenery and its effects on his characters – comparable to, perhaps even greater than, that of Thomas Hardy.

The British Embassy library in Budapest had a generous supply of JCP's work – I went on to read *Rodmoor*, *Weymouth Sands*, *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle* when in Hungary. At the time in England most libraries were well stocked with his work (this is now unhappily not the case) and our local library had *After My Fashion*, which must have been soon after it was published for the first time. Much later I managed to obtain second-hand copies of *In Defence of Sensuality*, *Autobiography* and *Owen Glendower*.

My own work included pieces for piano, chamber ensemble, and orchestra including over 70 pieces inspired by scenery. In 2008–2009 I wrote my Piano Sonata

No 5, which is subtitled 'Homage to John Cowper Powys'. It is in five movements – the first is entitled 'A Portrait of JCP': this movement is alternately energetic and reflective and comes to an indeterminate end. The second movement is a piano version of the earlier piece 'The Slow Worm of Lenty' and the following two movements are variants of it. The fifth movement – 'The Glastonbury Passion Play and Flood' picks up the musical material from the end of the first movement, first depicting quiet scenes in Glastonbury, but building up to two climaxes, the first when there is a riot at Mr Geard's Passion Play, followed by Owen Evans's heart attack when he appears as Christ on the Cross. The music quietens down but builds up to a second climax when the flood engulfs Glastonbury near the end of the book. At the very end there is a quiet theme depicting the surviving characters making a new life.

In 2011–12 I wrote 'A John Cowper Powys Symphony': this is divided into two parts, each consisting of three movements. Part I comprises 'The coast from Weymouth to St Albans Head' – inspired by parts of *Weymouth Sands* and *Autobiography*; 'The First Cause' which I see as something akin to the 'big bang' – the piece begins quietly and then builds up to an explosive climax; and 'A Second Portrait of JCP'. Part II consists of 'Maiden Castle', which attempts to depict the emotional bleakness of much of that novel; and 'Glastonbury Variants' in thirteen sections, portraying the town and some of its characters in the Romance – 'Glastonbury Town', 'John Geard', 'Philip Crow', 'Owen Evans', 'Tom Barter', 'Sam Dekker', 'Nell Zoyland', 'Will Zoyland', 'Dave Spear', and 'Paul Trent', followed by a coda. The last movement of Part II is called 'Epilogue – after the Flood'. It starts with the theme that appears at the end of Piano Sonata No. 5 and develops it further. The Symphony was written without any prospect of an orchestral performance so I arranged it for solo piano. Part I of the Symphony was performed at the Schott Music Room in May 2014 and Part II will be performed in February 2015 in a concert at the Schott Music Room that also includes works by Haydn and Beethoven.

*At the Grotto
near Phudd Bottom,
Columbia County
(see page 40).*

