

# THE POWYS SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

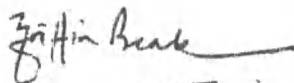
DECEMBER, 1987

FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN AND GENERAL SECRETARY

With more than a little trepidation we accepted the honour bestowed upon us by the Powys Society and we are now fully immersed in the deep waters of Society business. Perhaps murky tea is a more appropriate term: our first meeting with the President, Glen Cavaliero, took place in a London food store where, for the price of a set tea, you can sit for as long as you like. We covered a lot of boggy ground and drank an ocean of tea.

Unlike Geard, we intend neither to drown nor to stage a religious revival, but we hope that we can be of some use to the Society in the next few years.

Enticing new members is one priority; involving present members more in the running of the Society is another. But the Newsletter is our first consideration. It is the Society's official forum for the exchange of information, notes, queries, letters, announcements of new books, etc. and former secretaries have done a fine job of editing it. By sharing the task, we hope eventually to expand the Newsletter and change its format somewhat to allow more scope. The success of this venture depends on our members. Please send us material, and if you emulate Theodore and not J.C.P., we will do our best to print it. And wish us a safe journey!



Stephen Marks has produced for us greeting cards from a wood engraving by Gertrude Mary Powys. These beautiful folded cards on buff-coloured paper are plain inside so can be used for any occasion. Consider them for unique Christmas cards. Proceeds from the sale of them go to the Society.

They are a bargain at £1.50 for 10 with envelopes (postage 25p. extra, any quantity). Obtainable from Stephen Powys Marks, Hamilton's, Kilmersdon, Nr Bath, Somerset.



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The funeral service of Lucy Penny was printed for private distribution in her memory. Mr Marks invites any member who would like a copy to write to him at the above address. All of us who loved and revered her are grateful to the family for this remembrance.

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LONDON MEETING: Saturday, March 5 th, 1988 at  
Liddon House, South Audley Street, W1.  
at 2.30 p.m.

SPEAKER: Kenneth Hopkins: Of Diaries and Journals

This will be an exciting opportunity to hear about and discuss the role journals and diaries played in the lives of the Powyses and of their admirers. The London meetings have not been well attended in the past. Mark this date in your diary and bring a friend!

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One of the few privileges incoming officers have (or take) is to ask questions. We can imagine the comments around the vicarage tea table at the thought of a "questionnaire". Perhaps the Powyses would also have found amusing the idea of a literary society founded in their honour. Nonetheless the Powys Society has been in cheerful existence for twenty years and currently has 225 members. It seems to us an appropriate time to question how we can make membership more stimulating and more enjoyable; and how we can better fulfil the original aim of the Society, which is to promote the writings of the Powys family. So please suspend your disbelief long enough to answer our newcomer questions and pull out this middle sheet and return to the General Secretary, Griffin Beale.

1. Why did you join the Powys Society?

2. Which members of the Powys family are you particularly interested in?

3. Summer Weekend Conference:

(a) If you don't come to the yearly weekend conference, why not?

(b) If you do come, what changes would you like to see in the programme?

(c) Would you be willing to pay more for better accommodation? Would you prefer a university residence or a small conference hotel?

(d) What other improvements or changes would you like to see in conference arrangements?

4. London Meeting(s):

(a) Should they continue?

(b) How many per year?

(c) In what form?

5. If the Society is to continue to flourish we need to attract new members. Ordinary advertising has proved expensive and largely ineffective. Any suggestions?

6. In what ways would you like to see the Powys Society improved or changed?

The 1930 Diary of John Cowper Powys has had several favourable reviews. The following excerpts from a review in the T.L.S. October 16th, 1987 are reprinted by permission of the author, Dr Glen Cavaliero, President of the Powys Society.

"John Cowper Powys...did not begin to keep a diary until he was fifty-seven. The entries were continued until 1960, when he was eighty-eight, and have not hitherto been published, the originals being now lodged at the Central Library of Wales. Frederick Davies, who has edited the diary for 1930, was a close friend of Powys and his companion, Phyllis Playter, and writes informatively about them in a perceptive introduction. ...

Full of comments on Powys's literary aims and strategies, as well as of humorous inconsequence and accounts of his various visitors and neighbours, [the Diary] sheds far more light on the man himself than do his letters or even the Autobiography. It describes his anxieties, his sexual and domestic preoccupations, his always precarious digestion, his love for animals and the natural world, his need for solitude, and his profoundly personal commitment to his philosophy of contemplation. Above all it reveals his love for Phyllis Playter. ... Without doubt it was she who enabled him to become the great writer he was. Yet at the same time she herself was finding it difficult to adapt to a rustic, domesticated existence for which she felt unfitted; and the Diary is a moving and occasionally painful record of the relationship between two highly strung people of unusual intelligence and individuality as they tried to accommodate themselves to a new way of life.

Powys seems to have expected that one day his diary would be read by others. This handsome first volume is in a limited edition of 300 copies; its successors should certainly be made more widely available, whether in totality or in selections. Powys's achievement as a writer even now is undervalued; the diaries should find him new readers and will certainly be of absorbing interest to those he has already."

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The Diary of John Cowper Powys. 1930. Edited by Frederick Davies. From Greymitre, 36 Great Queen St London. #C2. £35.

## CALL FOR CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Plans for the 1988 Weekend Conference have already begun. We heartily invite members to submit for consideration papers they feel would be appropriate to be presented either in discussion groups or lectures. Our aim is to present a programme of interest both to the "specialist" and to the "generalist". Looking over previous conference notes, the popularity of John Cowper and Theodore is obvious. Is there anyone out there working on Llewelyn or other members of this fascinating family? Please send submissions or suggestions to the Chairman, Morine Krissdottir, or the General Secretary, Griffin Beale.

### Report on Conference 28th-31st August

This was held at the University of East Anglia and was attended by 48 members. The programme opened with a fascinating talk by Roy Fisher on John Cowper Powys as a literary influence. The Saturday morning session was devoted to T.F. Powys with Ian Robinson's address on T.F.P. as Theologian and Artist, which contained passages from The Market Bell which Mr Robinson hopes to publish. This was followed by an interesting talk by Larry Mitchell on T.F.P.'s farming activities in East Anglia in the 1890's, a part of Theodore's life that has not been previously researched. On Saturday evening there was a celebration of the work of Kenneth Hopkins. Kenneth has made a major contribution to Powys studies over the years and the readings, chosen by Paul Roberts, and the President's illuminating address were a richly deserved tribute to a fine and versatile writer. On Sunday morning Marius Buhing gave a thought provoking talk on T.F.P. and Samuel Beckett as modern mystics while our new Chairman took us up to lunch with a talk on the Eye Symbolism of J.C.P. The book sale raised £154.25 and our thanks are again due to Francis Feather. During the final session we had the pleasure of Jumping into the Multiverse with Cicely Hill, only to be brought back to earth again on Monday morning after a memorable conference. Our thanks to all who attended and contributed.

Copy Date The editors welcome submissions along the lines outlined on the first page. Please submit before March 10th for the Spring issue. The Newsletter is published three times a year.

The Powys Society Executive For the information of new members (and existing members who cannot keep up with the dizzy pace of the A.G.M.) the following were elected:-

Chairman: Morine Krissdottir

General Secretary: Griffin Beale

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Susan Rands

Advisory Council: Tim Hyman, Cicely Hill, Kenneth Hopkins, Margaret Eaton, Belinda Humfrey, Paul Roberts, Stephen Marks, Subi Swift, Michael Everest, Lawrence Mitchell, Marius Buning, Cedric Hentschel.

### ££ SUBSCRIPTIONS ££

At the last A.G.M. it was decided unanimously, if regretfully, that subscriptions would have to be increased if the Society was to continue functioning effectively. The new rates are as follows:  
United Kingdom £10 Abroad £12.

Since we are a small society with limited funds could you send in your 1988 subscription as your first New Year resolution fulfilled? Please send to Susan Rands, Treasurer, Victoria Farm, Bradley Lane, Nr. Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 8LW by 1st January, 1988.

## The Powys Society

President: Glen Cavaliero

Chairman: Dr. Morine Krissdottir, Goddards, Furley, Axminster, Devon EX13 7TR.  
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General Secretary: Griffin Beale, 39 Church Street, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 5AT  
Tel: 0278 422008

Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Susan Rands, Victoria Farm, Bradley Lane, Nr. Glastonbury,  
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