



The Powys Society Newsletter

MAY 1988

EDITORIAL

Perhaps every literary society sooner or later arrives at a place where it pauses, and then either goes on with renewed commitment or fades quietly away. 1988 may be the critical year for the Powys Society. The recent deaths of Kenneth Hopkins and Rosemary Manning, two founding members, started me thinking of two other dead friends, Gilbert Turner and Wilson Knight, who were equally important in the establishment of the Society. These four, and many others, worked hard for a Society whose avowed aim in the founding year of 1967 was "to establish the true literary status of the Powys family." It may be necessary to pause in 1988 and ask ourselves if this is still the purpose of the Society and if so, how effectively we are fulfilling its aim.

Re-assessments are often painful but, as often, life-enhancing. With sadness let us go forward into joy.

M.K.

A TREE FOR LUCY

On May 14 a tree was planted in Mappowder Churchyard in memory of Lucy Powys Penny.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION

Drawing up a constitution is a chore everyone prefers to put off, but one seems to be essential to the well-being of an organisation. A constitution is, so to speak, the skeletal structure, allowing a body freedom, within well-defined limits, to expand and flourish. The officers of the Powys Society are presently drafting a constitution which they will publish in the July Newsletter. Members will be asked to comment, suggest changes, etc. A constitution re-drafted in light of comments received, will be presented for approval at the A.G.M. in September.

NEW GREETING CARDS

What appears to be the letterhead of this Newsletter is in fact the latest in the series of greeting cards that Stephen Powys Marks has produced for the Powys Society. Most of you will recognise Montacute Vicarage. It is "a sketch by Gertrude Mary Powys, 1898, from The Caddisworm, a Montacute miscellany of verse and sketch."

The cards make a delightful gift, and the sale of them contributes to the Society's slender bank balance. Best of all, Stephen has hit upon a wonderful way of making Gertrude Powys's sketches more widely known.

10 buff coloured cards with envelopes, £1.50 (postage 25p extra, any quantity). Obtainable from Stephen Powys Marks, Hamilton's Kilmersdon, Nr. Bath, Somerset. The first series of a village street is also available, for the same price.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our treasurer reports that so far about half our members have forgotten to send in their 1988 subscriptions. We would be grateful if you could do so soon. Please send to Susan Rands, Treasurer, Victoria Farm, Bradley Lane, Nr. Glastonbury, Somerset. BA6 8LW.

QUERY FROM PAUL ROBERTS

"As part of my work in editing The Uncollected Essays of John Cowper Powys, I have gathered together over seventy essays which have never been published in any form before. However, two titles have so far eluded researches both in England and America:

- a) "In Spite of Civilization" in Wine and Good Living Vol. 1 No.2, published in New York, May, 1934.
- b) "The Actual Walt Whitman" in New York Evening Post, June 19, 1920. I would be grateful for information about these and also any information regarding essays not recorded in Langridge or Thomas. Please write Paul Roberts, 29 St. Mary's Road, Sale, Cheshire. M33 1SB.

ROSEMARY MANNING

The death of Rosemary Manning means for many of us the loss of a deeply valued friend. Rosemary first started to visit Lucy Penny in Mappowder soon after the death of Alyse Gregory in 1967. She continued calling through all the years that followed whenever she found herself in Dorset. We all three -- Lucy, Mary and I -- looked forward to her visits. She had a lively sense of humour and the times she spent with us were time of laughter. After Mary's death she became even more attentive and understanding and a visit from Rosemary never passed without a lifting of our spirits.

Her life was not without much inner conflict and affliction and she would speak of her gratitude for the friendships and support she found in the Powys Society. She valued all three brothers as writers but found in herself an especially deep response to Theodore's work.

Rosemary was marked by a sensitive concern and response to suffering in all its forms. To adapt words well known to us all from Hardy - whose poetry she would on occasion read to us - 'she was a good woman and did good things.'

Gerard Casey

KENNETH HOPKINS

Kenneth Hopkins took a copy of Boswell to hospital with him during his last illness. It seems appropriate not only because he loved eighteenth century literature and was familiar with its obscurest by-ways, but because he was a man of letters in the eighteenth century sense, and probably the last of them. He liked to say that he was 'working-class before it became fashionable'; certainly his literary education was largely self-acquired, which is to say that he read for pleasure and not just to pass examinations. He could be maddeningly modest about this; but he was not only a critic with catholic tastes but a poet in the tradition of Robert Herrick, and a scholarly writer whose books - especially Portraits in Satire and The Poets Laureate - make the past come alive in the words of an author who is present himself in every line. Kenneth Hopkins was a most lovable man, very brave and honest, with real wit and generosity of heart. You can see the latter qualities in his recent anthology, The Bent Pin, a book to please not only fishermen. It conveys the variety of response and pleasures that Kenneth shared with others, in his life and books alike.

Glen Cavaliero

It must have been some eight or nine years ago that I first wrote a letter to The Warren House Press, enquiring after books by Kenneth Hopkins and the Powys brothers. Imagine my delight when, almost by return of post, a reply arrived from Kenneth himself. So began a correspondence which was to become one of the great joys of my life, for Kenneth's letters were a reflection of the man himself, warm, humorous, and constantly illuminated by a vast knowledge and love of English literature.

For me, the most general of general readers, it was like suddenly discovering a bridge between the everyday and that world of letters which had previously existed only on library shelves: Blunden, de la Mare, Tomlinson, Hanley, Visiak and Powys, he had stories to tell of them all. Instead of growing conscious of my ignorance I became lost in wonder at the world he was unfolding.

It was only later that I began to read Kenneth's works of literary criticism, but there I found the same breadth of humanity, generosity of spirit and wealth of knowledge. What Kenneth, in his own words, sought to provide in such books as English Poetry and Portraits in Satire was "plain, honest, uncomplicated appreciations of books and authors, for the benefit of the world's majorities." Indeed, his description of Edmund Blunden's criticism would apply exactly to Kenneth himself: "...few contemporary writers possess so notably the power of appreciation. Criticism for him is the art of finding what is best in a writer and passing the good news on."

There were many facets of Kenneth's work, but it is as a poet possessed of a genius for the lyric rarely equalled in our times that he will be remembered.

Over the years there have been those who have studiously ignored Kenneth Hopkins. That is their loss, and posterity will prove them wrong.

Paul Roberts

Kenneth Hopkins' association with the Powyses began in 1935 and his friendship with John Cowper Powys continued until John's death in June 1963. The deepness of this friendship is revealed in the unpublished correspondence between the two men.

Kenneth made a major contribution to Powysian studies and his The Powys Brothers, 1967, remains the best introduction to the Powys family. Kenneth gave the Powys Society incalculable support over many years. He frequently addressed its meetings and encouraged people to join.

Kenneth's delicious sense of humour was perhaps his greatest gift. When one was in his company there was always an abundance of laughter and happiness. A man of great charm, kindness and wit - he is sadly missed.

Griffin Beale

6.

THE 1988 POWYS WEEKEND CONFERENCE
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER, SEPTEMBER 2 - 4

Plans for the 1988 Powys Conference are now as firm as any Powysian gathering is likely to get. We have persuaded a number of scholarly and/or provocative speakers to pour forth on a variety of topics, hopefully of interest to all. We have also re-instituted an afternoon of discussion groups on various topics. The only problem for members may be in deciding which group they wish to participate in.

We are particularly pleased that we have been able to organise an evening to honour Isobel Powys Marks, with readings of unpublished letters to A.R. Powys from his sisters and brothers, and from A.R. to them.

At some time as yet to be determined (probably mid-night of day one -- knowing his enthusiasm) Larry Mitchell has a collection of photographs to show and an interesting question to ask us.

The happy ritual of the book sale, an A.G.M. which might prove too lively for pacific souls, and time for conversation and laughter in the resident (licenced) lounge will round off the weekend.

We have shortened the conference this year, thus lowering costs, in the hope that more members will attend. Arrangements can be made for those who wish to stay over Sunday night.

We look forward to seeing old friends -- and new ones. Many members have never attended a conference. Come to Exeter this year and meet other Powysian addicts.

If you have any questions or suggestions concerning the Conference please write or phone Griffin Beale or Morine Krissdottir.

CONFERENCE DETAILS

SPEAKERS will include Glen Cavaliero and Nikolai Tolstoy on J.C.P., Charles Lock on Llewelyn in Switzerland, Oliver Wilkinson on his father, Louis Marlow. The discussion groups, in which we hope everyone will participate, will be loosely grouped around T.F., Llewelyn, and J.C.P. led by Subi Swift, Larry Mitchell, and Griffin Beale. If members have another topic they would like to discuss, let us know. A detailed programme will be sent out in July.

COSTS are based on single study bedrooms.

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| Full board (inc. coffee and tea) per day | | £23.95 |
| Bed and Breakfast | per day | £15.40 |
| Lunch per day | | £ 4.60 |
| Dinner per day | | £ 5.75 |
| Coffee and biscuits | per day | .50 |
| Tea and biscuits | per day | .40 |
| General Charge | | £10.00 |

The total cost for the Conference, based on two days full board and the general charge, is therefore £57.90.

THE UNIVERSITY CHARGES US FOR THE ESTIMATED NUMBER ATTENDING. IT WOULD KEEP THE ULCERS AT BAY IF YOU WOULD FILL IN THE FORM BELOW BEFORE JUNE 30.

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THE POWYS SOCIETY
 ANNUAL SUMMER WEEKEND MEETING
 SEPTEMBER 2 - 4, 1988
 HOPE HALL, UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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Please indicate any special dietary or accommodation needs:

I should like to attend the weekend meeting in full and enclose a cheque made payable to THE POWYS SOCIETY for £57.90.

I should like to attend part of the weekend and enclose exact details of when I shall attend, with a cheque for £.....

Please return to the Secretary:

Mr Griffin Beale,
 39 Church Street
 Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 5AT

Readers will note the insert advertising Judith Stinton's new book. The Newsletter is anxious to inform Society members of new publications or articles of relevance to the Powyses and their circle. We would also like to hear about talks given, theses finished, books reviewed. For this information we depend on members. Please let us know details of any article, book etc. you think would be of interest.

There will be an article on the Powys family in the June issue of Book and Magazine Collector. Members who have difficulty in obtaining a copy may order one direct from the publisher at 45 St. Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5 5RQ. The magazine costs £1.80 including postage. Cheques payable to Diamond Publishing Group Ltd.

Sven-Erik Tackmark gave a lecture on J.C.P. for the International Literary Union in Stockholm in April. Sven-Erik reports that this is the first public talk in Sweden on John Cowper since Cedric Hentschel's University of Upsala lectures in the 1940's.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

In French: Romer Mawl and Other Stories, D. Moulins, editeur. pub. by R. & C. Pascal.

In German: The Art of Happiness, the Art of Growing Old, and In Defence of Sensuality published by Goldman in p.bp and hardcover.

GERALD POLLINGER reports that a number of exciting publishing possibilities are in the delicate negotiating stage. More information in the next Newsletter.

The Powys Society

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