

Editorial

Members will be saddened to learn of the recent death of Frederick Davies, a much respected member of the Powys Society. Few who heard Frederick speak of his friendship with John Cowper Powys and Phyllis Playter at the Powys Society Conference, or who later read his essays in *The Powys Review*, will forget his passionate defence of two people to whom he offered long years of dedicated friendship. Many will also feel both admiration and gratitude for his tactful and scholarly editorship of John Cowper Powys's *Diary* for 1930, which was published by the Greymitre Press in 1987.

Although I met Frederick no more than, perhaps, half a dozen times I was struck by his kindness and personal charm, ruffled only when that which he held dear was questioned, when, despite his frailty, he could become an awesome opponent.

Having spent much of his professional life as Head of English and French at Pensby Boys' School, Birkenhead, Frederick also acquired an important reputation as a translator, particularly from the Venetian dialect, from which he translated a number of plays by Goldoni. Other translations included works by Daudet, France and Labiche and several of these are

currently available in the *Penguin Classics* series. In addition, Frederick was inspired to write a novel for children by John Cowper Powys, to whom he would read each chapter as it was completed in weekly instalments. He was also the author of two crime novels, published in both England and America. During the 1960s he was elected a Fellow Commoner of Churchill College.

For his devoted and uncompromising advocacy of the importance of John Cowper Powys and of the role of Phyllis Playter in his life and work, for his literary scholarship and for his kindness to those whose achievements were greater than their egos, Frederick will be sadly missed.

Another pillar of Powysian studies, Kenneth Hopkins, was remembered on January 6th when a number of his friends and admirers gathered for lunch at the King's Arms Hotel, North Walsham. An enjoyable lunch, generously provided by Reuth Ambre, was followed by a number of tributes, particularly from our President, Glen Cavaliero, a valued friend of Kenneth's for many years. Following lunch, the party adjourned to the Parish Church of Saint Nicholas for the presentation of a memorial bench, purchased by subscriptions from friends in Britain, Europe and America. The

bench, which has the inscription "In Memory of Kenneth Hopkins FRSL, Poet and Author: 1914-1988" was gratefully accepted by the Reverend Martin Smith and the Mayor of North Walsham.

No doubt there will be other memorials, but two which will be of interest to our members have already been arranged. BBC Radio Norfolk is shortly to produce *Where Ought I To Be?* - a piece by Charles Roberts of the *Eastern Daily Press* which interweaves biographical narrative with music and selections from Kenneth's poetry and prose. This promises to be a memorable event and there is hope that a national broadcast may follow. The journal *Papers On Language And Literature*, published by the University of Southern Illinois, is to bring out a special issue largely devoted to Kenneth in September. In addition to a fascinating bibliographical essay on the published and unpublished works by Professor Betty Richardson and my own biographical essay, *Love, Death and Wit*, it will include the first publication of Kenneth's own witty account of his experiences at Southern Illinois, *Amateur Professor*.

Further details will be published in the *Newsletter* as they become available.

That tireless propagandist for all things Powysian, Sven-Erik Tackmark, informs us that the Director of Upsala University Library, Thomas Tottie, has agreed to mount an important exhibition on the life and work of John Cowper Powys. The exhibition, which is scheduled to open in late September, will comprise some 140 items, including books by and about John Cowper Powys, together with translations, press-cuttings, photographs, original letters and copies of *The Powys Review*, the *Powys Society Newsletter* and the *Powys Notes* of the Powys Society of North America.

The University of Upsala, which was founded in 1477, is an important cultural centre for Sweden and any exhibition in so prestigious a venue will not only be very professionally mounted but will also attract considerable attention. The University intends to distribute press releases to one hundred newspapers and magazines and the opening ceremony, at which Sven-Erik Tackmark plans to make a presentation, will be widely reported. Naturally, we too will report this exciting and important exhibition in future issues of the *Newsletter*. Should there - could there - not be a similar exhibition in Britain?

Professor Ernst Verbeek's study of John Cowper Powys, *De Goden Verzoeken (Tempting The Gods)* has at last been published by Van Gorcum. The book is not only an important contribution to Powys studies but is also a most handsome production, generously illustrated and with an invaluable bibliography of works by and about its subject. We are delighted that Benjamin Stassen, photographer, translator and the editor of the splendid JCP issue of *Plein Chant*, has agreed to review the book at length in our next issue.

Meanwhile, the efforts of our own Society continue to grow, as an increasing number of members become involved in our activities. Our aim is to increase public awareness and appreciation of the lives and works of the members of the Powys family, and that can only be achieved if we combine the energy and ideas of our members. The greater the membership, the greater the energy and although you may not feel that you can encourage exhibitions or publications, you can encourage local libraries and bookshops to stock Powys books and, perhaps, act as a recruiting officer.

Finally, my apologies to Frank Kibblewhite and Louise de Bruin (not to mention Anthony Trollope) whose names were unaccountably transformed in our last issue.

Paul Roberts

Subscriptions

There has been a gratifying response from members to our request that they pay their 1990 subscription early and, if possible, by standing order. 31% of members are now paying by standing order. However, 118 members have not yet paid their 1990 subscriptions. Subscriptions are due on January 1st of each year.

For the convenience of those who have forgotten to complete the form in the last *Newsletter*, another is enclosed. Please note that Society finances do not permit us to send out *Powys Reviews* for 1990 to members until they have paid their 1990 membership.

Books for Sale

A new, complete, stock list of *The Warren House Press* is now available. The list contains many items of *Powys*

interest, as well as works by Kenneth Hopkins, John Redwood Anderson, Clifford Bax, Nancy Cunard and others, *all of which are now offered at considerably reduced prices.*

Those wishing to receive a copy of the list should write to *The Warren House Press*, 7 York Terrace, Sale, Cheshire. M33 7LW.

London Meeting

This year's London Meeting of The Powys Society

Will take place at 2.00 pm
on
Saturday 26th May 1990
at
Liddon House
South Audley Street
London W1

when
Paul Roberts
will speak on

John Cowper Powys,

Journalist

Profile

The Profile in this issue of the *Newsletter* comes to us from Jim Morgan, who has also contributed a short article.

"I was born a Scorpio (12.11.25) in a nondescript back street of North London, one of a straggle of streets around the foothills of John Betjeman's Highgate. I had little formal education, the war soon putting an end to my Grammar School years. I became a messenger boy at fourteen for a national daily and had an exciting time running around blitz-torn London.

My National Service began as a "Bevin Boy" working down a pit in Mountain Ash, South Wales, but not having the necessary brawn, I soon escaped and joined the Army to serve in India and Palestine.

After 'demob' in 1948 I began a totally undistinguished career in various clerical jobs. I tried to educate myself by voracious reading and attending evening classes at the City Literary Institute and Morley College. I ended up as servitor of the welfare state, a clerical officer in local DHSS offices in West London.

In 1982, fed-up with Civil Service asphyxia, I took early retirement and came with my wife, Joan, to live here in this beautiful historic town of Lyme Regis. From its shores you can sometimes see Chesil Beach and remember John Cowper Powys's ashes scattered there."

Jim Morgan

Walks in Powysland

On Sunday 29th April, there will be an exploration of Sherborne. It will take the form of a quiet afternoon stroll, with the emphasis very much upon informality.

Almost entirely flat and lasting approximately three miles, the exploration will begin at 1 pm sharp from outside the ticket office at Sherborne railway station. Sensible shoes will be required.

An early lunch is available from various hostelryes. However, afternoon tea is a problem, so a thermos flask is also suggested.

Participation in the walk is free, but £1.10 in silver coin will be needed for entrance fees to the museum and castle. Perhaps rather more if you

would like to buy guidebooks and postcards from the Abbey. Members and non-members welcome.

On Sunday 3rd June, there will be a circular walk from Yeovil to Bradford Abbas and back via several places of interest. The walk will last for about six miles, with one steep hill. As far as possible the walk will be across country, avoiding roads, so once again, sensible shoes are required.

The walk will begin at 1.30 pm sharp from the War Memorial in *The Borough* in Yeovil town centre.

Those requiring lunch may care to visit the nearby Three Choughs Hotel in Hendford (tel: 0935 74886). Ample parking in nearby Petters Way, but beware the one-way system.

Yeovil can be reached by train from Waterloo or Exeter to Yeovil Junction, but about £3.00 will be needed for a taxi into town.

Participation in the walk is free and both members and non-members are welcome.

Conference News

THE 1990 POWYS WEEKEND CONFERENCE

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, CIRENCESTER

AUGUST 25 - AUGUST 28

The Conference this year should be a particularly stimulating one. The theme is "*Being Missed: The Powyses In Exile*". The title comes in part from something Professor Ben Jones wrote in a recent issue of *Powys Notes*. "But the Powyses were often missed. Being missed ... has something to do with being alien." As you can see from the list of speakers, this topic has attracted much interest.

This year, we revert to the "3 Day" meeting, which some members prefer. To avoid the holiday weekend traffic, we are beginning *Saturday* evening, August 25th, and leaving after breakfast *Tuesday* morning.

We have chosen the Royal Agricultural College for its excellent facilities and its position in lovely countryside. We have booked Bledisloe Court, a prize-winning residential block, and arranged to have our evening

meals, evening lectures, and after-lecture gatherings in the Bathurst Wing, which is very handsome and very private. The cost of the Conference is likely to be in the region of £111.

We are delighted to have persuaded Bob Carrington to arrange an evening of readings and music. We hope to have as always our book auction, so please begin setting aside your contributions now! In addition, we would like to have new books and other items for sale relating to the Powyses and their Circle. If all this is not exciting enough, there is always the AGM!

It would be very helpful to the organizers if those members who are interested in attending the conference, would fill out the form provided. We do not need a definite decision or money until July. However, to save money on postage, we will send further details of the conference only to those members who indicate their interest in attending.

SPEAKERS AND TITLES

- H.W. Fawkner: "The Minerals of John Cowper Powys"
Richard Graves: "The Powyses Revisited"
Ernst Verbeek: "John Cowper Powys: Tempting the Gods."
Charles Lock: "The Rhetoric of Elsewhere: Llewelyn Powys
and the Description of Place."
John Williams: "Theodore: Absence and Exile in Innocent Birds."
Ben Jones: "Exiles and Presences"

J.C.P

He died in Blaenau Ffestiniog, North Wales, in his ninety-first year. Died, like William Blake, clapping his hands and singing. He always said - despite an inveterate belief that there are worlds, dimensions, other than our own - that he thought, on balance, death meant personal extinction. And preferred it so.

It was an incredible life. Harrowed for most of his days by burning stomach ulcers, he existed on a regime of dry, stale bread and hot, sweet tea. Wrote those massive West Country novels while stretched out on a couch, a board propped on his knees, in his tiny cottage under the mountain. And wrote, not only the novels, but exhortatory tracts, poetry, literary essays, an intimate journal, while keeping up a vast correspondence. How on earth did he do it?

When he was in hospital once the nurse who attended him said, "This is no man, but a god". A fellow-writer, in a recently re-published memoir, described him as "a neanderthal man in technicolour, the most beautiful male human being I have ever seen". Well! And then there are those stories from friends, family and acquaintances, which prove that he was, at least, an extraordinary human being. He himself, only half self-mockingly, claimed to be a re-incarnation of Taliesin, the sixth century bard and magician. His father, old Reverend Charles Francis, boasted his family descended from the princes of Powys and had a family tree to prove it.

Is it any wonder that the English literary establishment tended to dismiss him as a 'charlatan' or (I quote) a 'third-rate windbag'? It was a repeat of the Hotspur/Glendower encounter in

Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, where the fiery Englishman, impatient at Glendower's hocuspocus, scoffs at the Welsh leader's claim to be able to call up spirits ... 'Why, so can I, but will they come when you do call for them?'

Well, he certainly called up spirits, how else explain his transformation from the obsessed, guilt-ridden man of his thirties and forties into the 'happy introvert' (as Priestley called him), the serene Taoist of his last years?

On one of his birthdays - was it the eightieth? - I wrote congratulating him and thanking him for the inspiration I found in his work. I dared to enclose a few poems, mostly on Welsh themes, as an offering of tribute, and he was good enough to reply. Well, twice, as he evidently forgot he had already written and, scrupulous correspondent that he was, wrote again. I still have those two letters. I didn't, as too many did, pursue the correspondence, for I knew his right eye had gone dead and he was trying to save the other one for his work, on which he still depended for his daily bread.

His correspondents were many and world-wide, from every walk of life, from Japanese professors to Welsh grocers, from bards to bricklayers, from tramps to distinguished scholars. For

all his massive learning he never talked down to anyone. He aimed his writings at that fabulous entity, the Common Man, whom he - unlike so many who merely pretend - really did believe in. He hated dictators, vivisectors, bigots and priests of every kind, followers of the old religions and the newest and most terrifying of all, that of state science.

He believed in Nature, in poetry and magic, in a multiverse and not a universe, in polytheism not monotheism, in creative chaos not a rigid, imposed order, human or cosmic. Friend of the Spanish anarchists, of Emma Goldman, he was of the order of bards and an orator of marvellous magnetism and power. He was loved by Isadora Duncan, who once filled his room in Patchin Place, New York, with baskets of red roses.

One of his late admirers, the Shakespearian scholar, Wilson Knight, a believer in Spiritualism, attended a seance in Plymouth a few months after his death in 1963. A visiting clairvoyant, Miss Horsfield, told Knight that she had seen throughout the service "this figure standing by him". She described the apparition as a man with "gaunt features, high cheek bones and unruly hair" - John Cowper without doubt. He was an occultist, she added, and knew as much as anyone about the continuity of life. Well - I think,

pace Wilson Knight, that he would not have liked to be called "occultist". That implies esoteric knowledge and he always wrote and lectured to pass on his belief in the restorative and inspirational powers of great literature to anyone who had ears to hear.

Thousands of folk all over the world have cause to thank him for his work. From Henry Miller, who tells, in his *Books in my Life*, how he saw him dance his 'dithyrambic dance' (as he described his platform performances) at the Cooper Union in New York in the thirties, to my friend, Jack Rushby, Liverpool 'brickie', who stumbled on *The Pleasures of Literature* at sea with the Royal Navy and from its essays began to explore the world of books he once thought the exclusive domain of the 'educated'. To Ron Hall and Philip Callow, novelists both, but then working-class lads from the back streets of Coventry, whose lives were changed when Ron took down from the shelves of the public library *A Glastonbury Romance*. And myself, who found on the secondhand shelves of a Bloomsbury bookshop, *Autobiography* and bought it seeking insights into the life of his youngest brother, Llewelyn, whose epicurean philosophy then infatuated me. I soon changed my allegiance, seduced by John's eloquence, and became a convert to his 'defence of sensuality'. Not a sensuality of sexual, gustatory

self-indulgence, but of an awareness of every simple sight and sound around us. Old tree stumps, smoke drifting from chimneys, rain on the pavements, the moon and stars, those common sights and sounds that have accompanied man's life on earth through all the generations. He taught that the mind can be its own physician, that in truth, 'the kingdom of God is within us' and we can, by the magic of the imagination, transform ourselves, not into gods - that is given to few - but into happy human beings, grateful to the gods for our brief lease of life on this mysterious and beautiful planet.

When he died his body was cremated and the ashes scattered on Chesil Beach. I have an old photograph of him standing on the shingle there, cap pulled low over his face, mac wrapped round his tall, lean figure, leaning against the wind on one of his famous sticks.

Wherever you are now, John,
greetings, salutations and much thanks
...

Jim Morgan

THE TALIESIN TRUST

We have recently received details of the Taliesin Trust, a charitable organisation supported by the Welsh Arts Council, which offers creative writing courses to individuals and groups in the beautiful setting of Ty Newydd, Llanystumdwy.

Members seeking further information should contact:

The Taliesin Trust
Ty Newydd
Llanystumdwy
Cricieth
Gwynedd
LLS2 OLW

Reviews

FATHER ADAM by T F Powys
Brynmill Press 1990 £8.40 124 pages

Ian Robinson's Brynmill Press have published this hitherto unprinted story in a thoroughly admirable way. The first appearance of a substantial work by T F Powys is an exciting and significant event, and this edition is provided with a range of editorial apparatus appropriate to such an occasion. The notes are kept separate from the text, so the often levelled

charge of over-zealous annotation coming between the reader and the author cannot be brought in this instance. The editorial matter consists of a preface, afterword, an account of the text, six pages of notes and a loosely inserted sheet giving further information about the text. In addition to satisfying the reader's curiosity about the circumstances surrounding the composition of *Father Adam*, and explaining the editorial principals used to put the book into print, they also add to our understanding and enjoyment of the story; surely the first aim of any editorial commentary.

As far as the text of *Father Adam* is concerned, it has to be said that this is not a previously unknown *Mr Weston's Good Wine*. But, to quote Ian Robinson's afterword, "Having said the obvious, let us celebrate the originality and power of the work! The interesting thing is not *Father Adam's* imperfections but the way the tale does show this author's unique strengths." However, such imperfections as are evident are slight. Turning the pages of *Father Adam* we find ourselves firmly placed in a recognizably Theodorian world. The form is pitched somewhere between allegory and fable; the two themes of religion and village life which connect all T F Powys's work are prominent here. The prose is also characteristic of the author, being firmly rooted in the rhythms and diction of the *Authorized Version*.

The story begins with one Ralph Crew, whose life's work is to bring about a kind of counter-reformation, by instigating a return to Mosaic Law centred on a strict obedience of the Ten Commandments. To help him in this work he recruits a disciple, The Father Adam of the title, whom he discovers lecturing a crowd upon "the stupendous and alas! so often forgotten subject of hell-fire..." However, within pages of signing an agreement to preach a return to a strict adherence to the Decalogue, Father Adam encounters a young woman sleeping in the middle of an ancient stone circle, and finds himself compelled to worship her. I am reluctant to reveal too much of the story, but if I say that the girl's name is Eva, perhaps that will be enough to indicate that the story develops in a characteristically Theodorian way.

Father Adam easily bears comparison with the rest of Powys's published writing. T F Powys had a conscientious and discriminating approach to his art, and I daresay that his audience shares these qualities; and yet I have no hesitation in recommending *Father Adam* to them.

This volume is the first of a series of T F Powys books from the *Brynmill Press*, including *Cottage Shadows*, *The Market Bell* (which is the next title to be published), and a biography by Professor J Lawrence

Mitchell. Thus, *Father Adam* not only deserves congratulation for its own excellent sake; it is also the herald of what promises to be a very exciting and splendidly presented series.

Finally, a word must be said about the production of this book - the type face, layout and overall design all conspire to give the book an unfussily handsome appearance, which admirably compliments and enhances the tale it contains.

Alan Howe

Society Accounts

THE NEW ACCOUNTS

As the Society's new Treasurer, I have, after discussion with the Auditor of the previous three years' accounts, prepared entirely new accounts for the year to August 1989, preceding the last AGM, replacing those which were then issued. These have now been audited without charge by our new Auditor, Stephen Allen, an accountant member of the Society, and are printed in this newsletter. The next accounts will cover the short period for September 1st to December 31st 1989 in order to bring the accounts in line with the calendar year which corresponds with the period of membership and is required by the constitution; these will be audited and published before the AGM this year and presented at the AGM. Thereafter, the accounts will cover calendar years.

The new accounts are rather fuller than those prepared by my predecessor, so I thought members might like to know what I hope to show and the basis on which the accounts are prepared. The accounts follow one of several conventional formats, with an 'income and expenditure account' and a 'statement of funds'; previously our accounts only showed a modified version of the former element.

The former shows income and expenditure attributable to the year in question, and the difference between them. The latter is designed to show what the Society is worth at the end of the period, related to its worth at the beginning. This 'worth' is not the same thing as the cash actually in the bank, because we might be owed money or we might be holding money not yet due or money for expenditure which was due but not made in the period, or we might have made payments in advance for the next year. All these anomalies are accounted for. There is one further complication, namely that our funds are shown in two parts, so that the bequest from Professor Wilson Knight can be recorded separately.

Stephen Powys Marks

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 1989

<i>Income</i>	£	<i>Expenditure</i>	£
subscriptions [1]	2276.44	<i>Powys Review</i> 23 [3]	997.45
book sale at AGM	183.70	newsletters	562.73
sale of <i>Powys Review</i>	102.50	leaflet	146.75
postage charges for sending		constitution	22.90
T F Powys broadsheet [2]	5.00	officers' expenses	174.54
interest on deposit a/c	108.54	committee travel	72.00
		subscription to Association of Literary Societies	10.00
		application for charitable status	10.00
		N Tolstoy's travel expenses	33.60
		hire of Liddon House	20.00
		book for Naomi Mitchison	8.50
		cost of overdraft	14.74
			<u>2073.21</u>
		excess of income over exp.	602.97
	<u>£2676.18</u>		<u>£2676.18</u>

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

<i>I General fund</i>	£	£
funds at September 1st 1988		1594.71
excess of income over expenditure		602.97
funds at August 31st 1989		<u>£2197.68</u>
represented by		
bank accounts at August 31st 1989		
deposit	2441.84	
current (debit)	<u>(20.70)</u>	
	2421.14	2421.14
less		
creditors	86.96	
sums received for TFP broadsheet [2]	<u>136.50</u>	
	223.46	<u>223.46</u>
		<u>£2197.68</u>
 <i>II Wilson Knight fund</i>		
fund at August 31st 1989		<u>£1325.47</u>
represented by Halifax Building Society account, including apportioned interest, at August 31st 1989		<u>£1325.47</u>

NOTES

- [1] This includes small donations, subscriptions in advance, and some over- and under-payments on conversion of foreign subscriptions.
- [2] These relate to the broadsheet with a sonnet by T F Powys and portrait of TFP, produced by Larry Mitchell for the conference in 1988. The sheets have been presented to the Society; Mr Mitchell is to be reimbursed his actual cost from sales, and thereafter any income will go to the Society. The sums shown as received are being held for the repayment.
- [3] This figure covers only one issue of *Powys Review*; a second volume will be issued later in 1989.

Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer