

## Editorial

We were very saddened by news of the death of Susan Rands, long time active member and past Treasurer of the Powys Society. Susan died on 25 March 2022 and will be very much missed by her many colleagues for her warm friendship and enthusiastic advocacy of the Powys family. The many tributes to Susan testify to the admiration and high regard colleagues felt for her.

There is a report on our first in-person discussion meeting since 2019 which was held at our favourite venue in Ely. We also look forward to returning to other in-person meetings later this year at our annual conference in Street and a special meeting to celebrate JCP's 150th birthday to be held, on Saturday 8 October, at his father's church, St Michaels, in Shirley, Derbyshire, including a visit to JCP's birthplace.

We have our usual collection of business notices including the results of the ballot on changes to the Constitution and a wide range of short news items in News & Notes.

Neil Lee-Atkin previews the annual Llewelyn birthday walk in August.

There are reviews of *The Meaning of Culture* and *A Glastonbury Romance* by Winifred Holtby, poet, novelist, socialist, pacifist and friend of Vera Brittain, as well as a note on the radical and wonderfully eccentric Chinese American writer H.T. Tsiang whose novel, *China Red*, was enthusiastically endorsed by JCP in 1931.

Our central feature is an article by Peter Foss about Llewelyn's time at Corpus and his founding of The Club of the Honest Cods. Peter includes much detailed information about Llewelyn and his Corpus pals. This is followed by JCP's poem about Corpus and Llewelyn's own memories of Corpus extracted from *Confessions of Two Brothers*.

The illustration on the front cover shows a very young-looking Llewelyn, in his Corpus Chess Club blazer, painted by Gertrude in 1907. Other contemporary photos of Llewelyn and members of The Club of the Honest Cods appear on the back cover

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and inside this Newsletter evoking the period of the early 1900s in Cambridge when Llewelyn and his friends engaged in light-hearted dinner parties and merry boating trips on the river Cam.

CT

Chris is virtually solo editor of NL106 and for some time has done almost all the hard NL work. I am happy to continue in the background as *emerita* with an occasional finger in the pie, so I hope readers are happy with this arrangement.

KK

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

**Kate Kavanagh** (Newsletter editor *emerita*) is looking for volunteers to help produce a list of all her photocopies of documents relating to the Powys Society Newsletter going back to 2001. Expenses and travel costs to and from Kate's home near Cheltenham will be reimbursed to volunteers. If this sounds like something you think might suit you please get in touch with Kate who will explain details of the project. Kate's contact details are on the inside front cover of the Newsletter.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

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### *In Memoriam*

**Susan Rands**

1930-2022

Susan Rands, who was an active member of the Powys Society and served as Treasurer in the 1980s, died peacefully at her family home in Glastonbury on Friday 25 March 2022. She was a good friend to many members of the Society and often welcomed the Society's officials, as well as guest speakers and visitors at our annual conferences and meetings, to her Somerset farmhouse. She had been unwell early in 2022 and spent a short period under observation in hospital but did not recover from a heart condition on her return home.

Susan had been a member of the Society in various capacities ever since coming back to settle in England in the early 1970s, after living in Singapore, Malaya and Germany where her husband local conservationist and expert linguist, Major Ian Rands, MBE, served in the British army. Susan contributed extensively to the Powys Society's periodicals and was the author of one of the Cecil Woolf Heritage booklets, *John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W.E. Lutyens* (2000). JCP was her main

interest, with friendships and connections with the Powys family.

Susan came from a literary background. She was the daughter of the American literary critic, Willard Connely (1888-1967), author of biographies and lecturer in English literature at Harvard University. Her step-father was Malcolm Elwin (1903-1973), friend of the Powys family, biographer of Llewelyn and publisher of his letters. Malcolm Elwin was befriended by JCP's champion, George Steiner and his wife Zara who used to visit Susan's mother and stepfather at their home in Devon. The Llewelyn Powys interest continued with Susan's younger sister Sally Connely (1931-2014) who inherited Llewelyn's copyright. After the death of Malcolm Elwin in 1973 Sally began the process of organising Malcolm's papers which have now been catalogued and deposited at Exeter University where they can be consulted.



*Susan Rands at Wyke Manor, 2014*

Susan was born in New York and sometimes liked to say that her American ancestry gave her a feeling of affinity with JCP's American connections. As a child she lived first in Gloucester Place in London, and then in Henley on Thames. Her mother and stepfather later moved to a bungalow above Woody Bay and then to Sedgebanks, above Putsborough, in North Devon. Susan was educated at Badminton School, when it was evacuated from Bristol to Lynmouth. She graduated from Somerville College, Oxford with BA Hons. in English, in 1951. In the early 1950s Susan was a staff member and contributor to the literary magazine *John O'London's Weekly*. Susan was skilled as a researcher studying West Country history and its literary associations beyond the Powyses. Between 1992 and 2008 she contributed many articles on literary and historical subjects to *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* as well as various other publications. She was always glad to offer to help other researchers. She will be much missed for this and for her humour and sympathy. Susan is survived by her husband, Ian, by two daughters, a son, three grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

**CT + KK**

## Tributes to Susan Rands

I met Susan at my first Powys conference in 2016, winding down in the bar as a newcomer after my Friday night maiden talk. She was friendly, intelligent, receptive, but I didn't retain her name. I subsequently kept finding well-researched articles by one Susan Rands and it took a couple of years before I realised this was the same person I had so instinctively liked on first meeting, and it was a lovely moment telling her in 2018 how much I liked her work. Kate suggested I contact Susan when I was asking around for archival information to put on the website. 'Susan doesn't do e-mail, you'll have to telephone her' Kate explained. I, for my part, don't normally 'do' phones, but I took the plunge and had a long delightful conversation with her. This led to Susan sending me a draft of an article she was writing, asking me questions about my interest in Coleridge, and the next thing I knew it was a full-blown correspondence. Her handwritten letters were long and vibrant, and with her age, I wondered whether this meant she was a bit isolated. Wrong! It was wonderful to read all the stories of ongoing friendship with her and realise how well and how fruitfully Susan was in touch with so many of us. I feel so lucky to have met her and rue my tardiness in still owing her a reply to her last full-on eight-sided letter. I feel the debt, but as debts go, it's a sweet one.

**Paul Cheshire**, Chair

In recent years I had many long telephone conversations with Susan not only about the Powys family but many other subjects including literature, history, art and architecture. Susan was a lively, energetic, stimulating and sympathetic personality. I remember so vividly walking with her along the lanes in Montacute and across field paths to Wyke Manor House on the outskirts of Sherborne and how she enthusiastically talked about JCP's writing and the Powyses. We exchanged letters and recommended books to each other. She often sent me photographs, documents and ideas for articles. Susan was a great source of information about the Powys family as well as the history of the Society. She was also a personal source of inspiration and support. I shared with her a great appetite for research and I happily recall swapping stories and anecdotes about the joys and frustrations of making visits to archive collections. I will miss my many exciting conversations with her.

**Chris Thomas**, Secretary

I worked closely with Susan putting together the obituary of Stephen Marks for PJ XXXI, and enjoyed reading her numerous earlier articles. I'm sure there will be many tributes to her and recognitions of her achievements

**Kevin Taylor**, editor *The Powys Journal*

Susan was a good friend, one of several met through the Powys Society for which I deeply thank it, and them. She could be severe but was always interested, and the uncommon natures of the Powyses (and of the Society) gave her plenty to work on. We had a good deal in common (Oxford, long marriages) but only occasionally met apart from at conferences and by telephone (no truck with internet for Susan).

I remember one walk from Glastonbury along a lane with honeysuckle in the hedges. Her enthusiasm was catching, often in unlikely places, as was her cheerfulness.

A ‘glass half full’ (i.e. positive) person, always good to be with.

**Kate Kavanagh**, Newsletter editor *emerita*

It is down to Susan that we are fortunate enough to have the Malcolm Elwin archive at the University. I have very fond memories of visiting her at the family home to collect some of the papers, and also of her being part of the Powys symposium we held here at Exeter.

**Dr Christine Faunch**, Head of Heritage Collections, University of Exeter

I had a long conversation with Susan on 1st March – thought it was a more recent week but I’ve checked my diary – when she told me she had a leaking heart, ‘but what could one expect at 92’. This is a great and major loss to her friends, to the Society... and to Powys & related research...so many accurate descriptions of the outstandingly delightful and intelligent, perceptive and compassionate Susan Rands whom I’m angry that I shall not meet or listen to and laugh with again.

**Belinda Humfrey**, editor *Powys Review*

What a shock. She was so unique and I will miss her very much. Always such a pleasure to visit her. I had worried about her already because I did not get a reaction to my Christmas message.

**Louise de Bruin**, Conference organiser

So very sorry to hear this. I am so glad to have met her in 2015 in Llangollen and spent a day with her in Corwen. She was an original and somebody who truly lived her life to the fullest. She was somebody of great wisdom and learning who integrated her knowledge into her life in such a way that made her conversation both instructive and inspiring. JCP would have loved her. It’s a very great loss.

**Nicholas Birns**, official representative of the Powys Society in USA

I am very sorry to know that I will never be able to share Susan's sense of humour again. She was a delight, and my condolences to her family too.

**Anna Rosic**, Conference organiser

What very, very, sad news indeed! Susan was a pleasure to be with and her learned conversation was both amusing and inspiring. As Nicholas has rightly suggested, JCP and the whole Powys family would have loved and treasured her. Susan was so full of life! Our last walk together was in the muddy fields round the Tor and wasn't she a good walker! I used to see one of her grand-daughters, a gifted musical young woman, who was studying an unusual type of choral singing in Paris. She adored her grandmother.

**Marcella Henderson-Peal**, official representative of the Powys Society in France



*Susan Rands at the Powys Society annual conference in Street, 2012.  
Courtesy Anna Rosic*

I'm so sorry to hear this news. Susan was a warm and generous friend, and very good company. She also loved John Cowper and was a serious researcher and critic, always original and fresh in what she wrote. Her short book on the Lyons connection is indispensable. She will be greatly missed by us all. Ailinion.

**John Hodgson**, past Chairman

This is such sad news. Susan was a delight to talk to at the conferences. I enjoyed her sense of humour and her knowledge of the countryside around Glastonbury, related to JCP. The Society has lost a lovely, knowledgeable and sociable lady.

**Robin Hickey**, committee member

I was shocked to read of Susan's death on the Powys Society website. She seemed in her usual good health when I spoke to her last October about Theodora's death. She will be missed at conferences, always pleasant to talk to. I remember her near Glastonbury on a wet August Saturday. The rain was pouring down and she strode along bareheaded in light clothes. When I remarked on the awful weather she nonchalantly replied, 'You get used to rain in the country.'

**Pat Quigley**

Susan was special, both vibrant and merry with a keen intellect. She gave me the feeling that she was a rebellious schoolgirl, one worth following for adventure! During one conference there was an arrangement to climb to the top of Glastonbury Tor for a reading. Belinda Humfrey and I somehow 'teamed up' with Susan. We were running late. Running was the operative word as the two of us followed Susan, dashing through Glastonbury, arms waving 'that's the vicarage', 'down there is Chalice well', 'Mad Bet lived there'... and so it continued. It was a tour de force of the topography of Glastonbury and we got later and later. Eventually the climb began and again Susan in the lead showing us sites in the near and far distance while nimbly ascending what was a fairly steep climb. On another occasion I was lucky enough to eavesdrop on a conversation between Susan and Glen. We were in the room of the vicarage of Northwold where the will was read out. This prompted a discussion between Glen and Susan as to what they would do with their book collections. Both were in complete agreement that they had had the good fortune to collect all these books and they hoped that in the future someone would get a similar thrill as they 'found' them again. The last time I saw Susan she began talking about being older – not yet old but older! She said that one of the things that got her out of bed in the morning was to go to look after

her daughter's horse. She said that especially when it was windy and cold her reward would be to see this horse running towards her, mane flying, seemingly wild and free. It was this spirit in the horse with which she could identify. Her spirit remains with those of us lucky enough to have known her.

**Sonia Lewis**

Susan Rands and I met over ten years ago thanks to a shared interest in the life and works of J.C. Powys's brother in law, T.H. Lyon. Her comprehensive research, before the benefits of the internet, has become not just an essential foundation for subsequent students of this architect but the walls upon which others simply layer decoration. She was hugely generous in gifting me her Lyon archive, which I treasure. I shall mostly miss spending joyful hours on the phone exchanging ideas about our latest discoveries and wandering off along exciting tangents. Though wonderfully well read in general and tremendously knowledgeable about the specific literary scene that Lyon inhabited, she was endlessly patient with my obvious lack of relevant cultural references and her insightful questions made me much better at my own analytical task. Apart from her intellect, Susan was a great friend and I shall always remember her as kind, and fun, and full of life.

**Angela Dodd-Crompton**

**Chris Thomas**

***A Select bibliography of articles and other publications of Susan Rands***

***The Powys Review***

**No.15, 1984/1985**

*Maiden Castle*: Symbol, Theme and Personality

**No.18, 1986**

*Rodmoor*. Aspects of its Provenance and Direction

**No.20, 1987**

Aspects of the Topography of *A Glastonbury Romance*

**No.24, 1989**

'This Super-Subtle Interpreter'; Aspects of Walter Pater's Influence on JCP

**No.25, 1990**

The Gateposts of Stalbridge Park

**No.26, 1991**

JCP's *The Inmates*, an Allegory

**Nos 27/28, 1992/1993**

The Topicality of *A Glastonbury Romance*

Littleton Alfred Powys, a talk between Kathleen Tranter and Susan Rands

**Nos 31/32, 1997**

The Glastonbury Libel

***The Powys Journal***

**Vol. XI, 2001**

Review of *Cuckoo in the Nest* by Theodora Gay Scutt

**Vol. XII, 2002**

The Influence of Charles Kingsley on JCP

**Vol. XIII, 2003**

The Powys-Fox Connection

**Vol XVI, 2006**

Dr R D Reid and JCP

**Vol. XXI, 2011**

The Phelipses and the Powyses: Two

Montacute Families

**Vol. XXXI, 2021**

Obituary: Stephen Powys Marks

***Powys Society Newsletter*****No.33, April 1998**

Some Powys Cousins

**No.34, July 1995**

Thomas Littleton Powys

**No.37, July 1999**

JCP's Ideal Woman

**No 38, November 1999**

JCP's Ideal Woman, part 2

**No.40, July 2000**

A R Powys

**No.44, November 2001**

What's In a Name?

**No.45, April 2002**

What they thought of each other

**No.48, April 2003**

Elizabeth Arnim

**No.49, July 2003**

Rose Macaulay and Hamilton

**No.54, April 2005**

Foyle's Literary Luncheon

**No.56, November 2005**

JCP and Norah Lofts

**No.59, November 2006**

A Powerful Metaphorical Drama (*The Sin Eater*)

**No.61, July 2007**

JCP and John Buchan

**No.63, March/April 2008**

Review of *Descents of Memory*

**No.66, March 2009**

Letters to Naomi Mitchison

**No.68, November 2009**

A Coincidence?

**No. 70, July 2010**

Review of *A Glastonbury Romance*

Revisited by W J Keith

**No.73, July 2011**

JCP's letters to his publishers: Wren

Howard and Jonathan Cape

**No.82, July 2014**

Obituary: Sally Connely, 1931-2014

**No. 85, July 2015**

Montacute and *Wood and Stone*

**No.91, July 2017**

Dorothy Cheston and JCP

**No.92, November 2017**

Dorothy Cheston and JCP, Part 2

**No.95, November 2018**

W J Keith and the Jefferies Society

**No.96, March 2019**

JCP, *AGR* and Lord P

**No.99, March 2020**

A clarification (JCP and his Parents)

**No.101, November 2020**

Obituary: Stephen Powys Marks

**No. 104, November 2021**

Dud No Man and Burpham

Notes on Enid Starkie

**Other Powys related Publications**

John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W E Lutyens, Cecil Woolf, 2000

Thomas Henry Lyon, Architect of Middlecott, Ilsington (1860-1953),

Parts 1-3, *Devon & Cornwall Notes and Queries*, Spring 1995, Autumn 1995 and Spring 1996

**Other Publications**

Susan Rands contributed extensively to *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*

between 1992 and 2008 mostly on subjects outside her interest in the Powys family such as: Letters to Thomas Hardy from the 5th Countess of Ilchester concerning the journal of Lady Susan O'Brien, *Somerset & Dorset Notes and Queries*, September 2000

Lady Susan O'Brien and her friendship with the Pitt family, *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries*, March 2001

Susan also contributed to other publications such as *Studies in Theatre Performance*, *John Buchan Journal*, and the Frome Year Book

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**Charles Lock**  
***Roger Angell (1921-2022)***

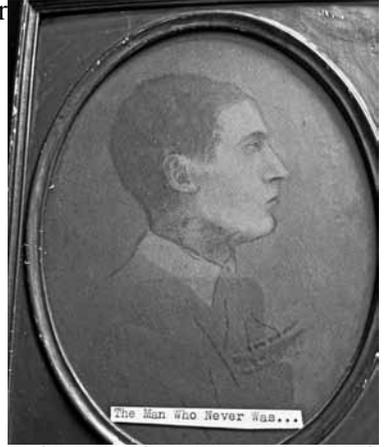
Roger Angell was the half-brother of Peter Powys Grey (1922-1992). The lengthy obituary in the *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/sports/roger-angell-dead.html> carries a picture of his father, the eminent lawyer Ernest Angell (1889-1973) and the man whom Marian Powys chose to make a mother of her. It was only in later life that Peter Powys Grey learnt the truth, observing that it was no doubt partly at JCP's contrivance that he, like another, should have an angel for a father. Ernest Angell had been a neighbour of Marian's in the wealthy enclave of Snedens Landing. As an adult, after leaving Snedens, Peter would on occasion meet Ernest, though without suspicion of his true significance. When Marian did reveal the story of his paternity Peter was dismayed to realise how much of his life, his schooling, and even the positions he'd held, must have been arranged and sponsored by his otherwise unacknowledging father. According to an entry in Peter's diary, kindly shared by Morine Krissdottir, after Ernest's death Peter received a gold watch that had belonged to his father. In the context of Ernest Angell's considerable fortune, a watch even of gold would be a mere token, but it was an acknowledgement. I never saw that gold watch, nor heard it mentioned. What was on occasion rehearsed was Peter's attempt to talk with his half-brother about Ernest Angell; this was firmly rebuffed, and I do not think the two ever met.

Throughout his childhood, Marian encouraged her son to suppose that his father was one Peter Grey, to whom she had been briefly married; he had almost at once been summoned abroad where he had fallen sick and died. Marian took considerable care over this deception: she was thereafter known officially, at Snedens Landings and professionally in New York City, as Marian Grey. For her son she made a sketch of her husband which, as a framed oval portrait, Peter treated with appropriate respect

until it was given the label: ‘The Man Who Never Was’. On the back Peter affixed this explanation:

“PETER GREY”

Curious and (to some) indeed fascinating pencil drawing by M.P.G. (c. 1921) of the ghostly husband who went off to Italy in the late fall of 1921 and conveniently died of malaria the following spring. Ernest Angell with hair.



*‘The man who never was’. Pencil drawing by Marian Powys. Copyright Charles Lock*

One might question the likeness that Peter identified between ‘Peter Grey’ and Ernest Angell; the image seems that of a barely embodied figure, an apparition, its features indistinct if not weak—in marked contrast to those of Ernest Angell and both his sons. His half-brother’s death now, at the remarkable age of 101, serves to remind us to mark this summer the centenary of Peter’s birth on 14 July 1922.

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**Chris Thomas**

***Discussion of Wood and Stone, Ely, 7 May 2022***

On a fine warm Spring morning on Saturday 7 May a group of members congregated in the upstairs sitting room of The Old Fire Engine House restaurant and art gallery in Ely to discuss JCP’s novel *Wood and Stone*. The event was our first meeting in-person since 2019. This was a very happy social occasion and a welcome opportunity to return to Ely to discuss a Powys book with other members in a friendly, relaxing and comfortable environment. The Old Fire Engine House always seems to encourage inspiring discussion. Many thanks are due to Sonia Lewis for making arrangements.

We began our discussion by considering Louis Wilkinson’s critical booklet *Blasphemy and Religion*, published by Arnold Shaw in January 1916 in which he contrasts *Wood and Stone* unfavourably with TFP’s *Soliloquy of a Hermit*. Louis especially attacks JCP for his lack of valid experience, his frivolous and flimsy characterisations and his insincerity. This was probably all part of Shaw’s strategy to

get his publications better known. Louis was however quite serious about the failings of *Wood and Stone*. His views anticipate the later criticism he made of *Wolf Solent* which appear in an undated letter he published in *Welsh Ambassadors* in 1936 (see a discussion of this in Newsletter 104 p.36 and 37.)

**Kate Kavanagh** said she was not surprised that Louis was so critical of JCP's novel in the light of the history of their relationship and mutual association with Frances Gregg. In 1916 Louis also published a novel *The Buffoon* which includes a caricature of JCP.

*Wood and Stone* was written quickly in the Summer of 1915 at JCP's home in Burpham and published by Arnold Shaw in USA on 5 November 1915. The novel seems to have sold well. **Kevin Taylor** noted that a second edition of 5000 copies was called for in December 1915 (Langridge refers to a second 'impression'). *Wood and Stone* was later published in England in 1917. However, there were few reviews and those that were published in, for instance, the *New York Times* and *Nation* in USA, found the book overall unwieldy and were troubled by the large cast of characters although the reviewers were impressed by JCP's psychological insights and descriptive power. One reviewer detected the influence of Peacock and Landor in scenes where JCP's characters participate in long conversations.

**Kate** said she thought that the ending of the novel was very unsatisfactory and facile and that JCP probably had no idea in advance how he was going to conclude the story. So, what is it all about? JCP's preface is not a great deal of help although he points up the theme of the conflict between love, sacrifice, fate and destiny, good and evil, Christianity and paganism, the ill-constituted and the well-constituted, the influence of the inanimate over human affairs, the exercise by certain individuals of tyranny and power – (Mr. Romer has a '*Napoleonic pursuit of wealth and power*'). But why, we asked, must Sacrifice and Power be conceived as Mythologies? JCP gives an indication of his purpose elsewhere in the novel: '*the personal fortunes of a group of tragically involved individuals, in a small Somersetshire village.*'

We remarked on the significance of the title of *Wood and Stone* noting that JCP said in letters to his sister Katie as well as to Glen Cavaliero, in the late 1950s, that it was his wife Margaret who chose the title (reflecting the themes of Christianity and paganism in the book). **Timothy Hyman** noted that Morine Krissdóttir says in *Descents of Memory* that JCP's original choice of title was *The Pariah* or *Planetary Opposition* and that he was influenced in this choice of title by Nietzsche, thus signalling another set of meanings and themes. **Kate** pointed to the possible source of the title in an early nineteenth century popular missionary hymn, *From Greenland's*

*icy mountains*, that both JCP and Margaret could easily have known (it was often sung in schools) and which Margaret herself might have quoted. The second verse ends: ‘*the heathen in his blindness/bows down to wood and stone.*’

Although *Wood and Stone* is often referred to as JCP’s first published novel it can also be read as a continuation of his earliest attempts at writing fiction described in *Autobiography*. We noted the continuation in *Wood and Stone* of some of JCP’s favourite themes of voyeurism, sadism, and sexuality - in a deliberately ambiguous scene in Chapter 5 the young coquettish Lottie Fringe is fondled by Mr Taxater and in chapter 10 Mortimer Romer is described as possessing ‘*a dark and perverse sensuality*’. We also noted JCP’s tendency to melodrama and Gothic effects such as in Chapter 12, Auber Lake. In Chapter 8 Hugh Clavering spies on a couple he sees from his vantage point on Nevilton Mount; in Chapter 24, The Granary, Clavering spies on Luke Andersen and Gladys Romer. JCP seems to enjoy portraying Gladys as a sadistic temptress. **Timothy Hyman** said these are false notes – *Wood and Stone* is like a children’s story. JCP was 42 when he wrote the novel but he was still immature in his approach to writing. We noted that JCP himself was disappointed with *Wood and Stone* and considered he didn’t reach the full extent of his powers as a novelist until he wrote *Wolf Solent*.

In his autobiography JCP referred to his early works of fiction and said: ‘*How my mind used to run on priests*’. In Chapter 8, the Mythology of Sacrifice, JCP focuses on the character of the Rev. Hugh Clavering and his thoughts as he climbs to the summit of Nevilton Mount. Hugh Clavering is clearly another incarnation of JCP’s obsession with priests. He is an Anglo-Catholic. **Joe Sentance** said that is why he is referred to as a priest. Clavering wears the biretta normally only adopted by Catholic clergy. He is ‘*a rebel to ecclesiastical authority*’ and believes in the Catholic doctrine of the Transubstantiation but compromises and agrees not to practise his belief. He is ‘*rent and torn*’ by his attraction to Gladys who has swept him ‘*out of the shallows of his puritanism*’. He is medieval and monkish; he is also a holy innocent like Parsifal, tormented by Gladys and by his own emotions. He is Parsifal to Gladys’s Kundry. **Joe** also said that it is interesting to note that in Chapter 9 JCP has Clavering employ Newman’s *The Development of Christian Doctrine* in his confirmation classes with Gladys, for, at the time the novel is set Newman was regarded in traditional low church, Evangelical circles as little less than Satanic. As a committed Anglo-Catholic, Clavering would have regarded himself as a celibate, which accounts for the agonies he undergoes in his barely controlled feelings for Gladys. **Joe** said he thought it extremely unlikely that such

a person would have been appointed to a small village church, Anglo-Catholicism being at its strongest in the big urban conurbations.

Chapters 8 and 9 are good examples of JCP's ability to represent interior dialogue. But according to his Preface he also had a wider aim to return to the '*atmosphere of the large mellow leisurely humanists of the past*' and to revive '*the old ample ironic way*' by which he means of course the style of Hardy. We noted that *Wood and Stone* has little in common with other novels published in 1915 such as new works by Dreiser, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson. In the Preface JCP writes highly critical notes about his literary contemporaries.

**Kate** noticed the influence of Keats in JCP's descriptions of the opulence of nature and the seasonal changes. We also noted the influence of environment on character especially the way JCP evokes an atmosphere of oppression, depression and death and the sense of being pulled down into the damp earth. In contrast to Nevilton, Weymouth is a place of freedom and fresh air whilst Italy represents sun and light.

We noted several scenes take place within a cosmic setting under the stars and the Milky Way – Chapter 19 is entitled Planetary Intervention and alludes to cosmic 'watchers' anticipating similar references in *A Glastonbury Romance*.

JCP's most powerful descriptions are devoted to evocations of Nevilton which accurately mirror Montacute in his use of invented place names and buildings clearly drawing on JCP's childhood memories. Memory and autobiography are key features of *Wood and Stone*. JCP's most vividly realised characters are based on members of his family or his circle of friends. We thought that all the characters in the book are in a way versions of JCP himself.

We looked at JCP's frequent use of metaphor, rhetorical devices and figurative speech. His characters are often referred to under an epithet rather than by their personal name such as Mr Taxater who is '*the apologist of the Papacy*', and Lacrima Traffio who is '*the luckless child of the Apennines*' and '*the forlorn child of classic shores*'. However, these stylistic tricks used too often can become very irritating!

JCP's interest in modern art is reflected in *Wood and Stone* - Ralph Dangelis is a post-impressionist artist. JCP cites Picasso and Matisse whose works he says have the power to liberate the imagination. But he also cites classic artists and in particular in Chapter 8 JCP references Raphael's last painting The Transfiguration. In Chapter 17, Sagittarius, James Andersen is encountered restoring the tympanum of Athelston church.

We noted how JCP brings radical politics into *Wood and Stone* – especially in the form of anarchism (represented by Philip Wone and Mr Quincunx) as well as criticism of Christian Socialism. There is a riot that takes place on Leo's Hill which

anticipates JCP's handling of crowd scenes in A Glastonbury Romance.

Shortly after our discussion Sonia Lewis sent me an e-mail message and said: '*such a free flowing exchange of ideas. It seemed to flow seamlessly...At first I was not at all sure about Wood and Stone being a good choice but it brought so much to light.*'

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### **Amendments to the Constitution**

Many thanks to members who responded to the invitation in Newsletter 105 to vote by mail ballot on proposals to make amendments to the Powys Society Constitution. The Constitution was previously amended in 2002. Many thanks are also due to Paul Cheshire and Marcel Bradbury who took on the task of consulting with the Charity Commission and bringing the Constitution up to date.

We received 37 responses. There was one spoilt response which did not indicate a vote *For* or *Against* and two votes *Against* the proposals. The remainder of responses all voted **in favour** of the proposed amendments. This means we have reached the target of two thirds response from those who voted approving the changes which is required by article 6.1 of the Constitution.

The changes to the Constitution were formally adopted at a meeting of the committee on 18 June 2022. The Constitution has now been updated with new text. In due course the Charity Commission will be notified of latest changes to the Constitution in accordance with their regulations.

**Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary**

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### ***Chair's Report 2021-2022***

As I write this, we have just had our first in-person Powys Society meeting at Ely after a two-year covid-restricted hiatus. It was a joyful reunion and a welcome return to The Old Fire Engine with its comfortable meeting space, excellent food round a large table in a private room, followed by fresh air in a spacious garden, and further discussion in the afternoon. These are the things of the flesh that Zoom cannot provide, and we look forward to further in-person events: our Summer Conference at Street in August, and a celebration on 8 October of JCP's 150th birthday in Shirley, the village of his birth, where we will hold our meeting in the parish church of which his father was Vicar, before taking a look at the Vicarage where he spent the first seven years of his life.

All these events are described elsewhere in this Newsletter, but I need to add an essential supplement to **Chris Thomas's** Ely report. Chris can hardly report favourably on himself, and it feels important to mention that Chris himself led the discussion at Ely, introducing *Wood and Stone*, laying the ground and anchoring the discussion, putting

forward new angles and a wide range of contextual information while giving everyone space to contribute. It is only since joining the committee and becoming Chair that I have realised and become increasingly grateful for the extent of Chris's largely untrumpeted work on all aspects of the Society's affairs.

**Timothy Hyman** stepped down as Chair and became our new President in August 2021 as a worthy successor to the late lamented **Glen Cavaliero**. Filling the shoes of someone who has been involved with the Society since the 1970s is a challenge, and I owe much personally to Tim for his empowering encouragement when I was considering taking on the Chair, and — on behalf of the Society — I thank him for his years of service and look forward to his continued participation in his new role.

The Zoom years have nevertheless brought exciting new developments which we can build on. **Kevin Taylor** hosted our Zoom meetings both for committee and for members' Powys Day discussions which allowed geographically distant members to take part. **Dawn Collins** who hosts the Society's Facebook page, also adapted the Facebook Reading Powys Group discussions so these could take place on Zoom and I very much hope these will continue, and that more members will take the plunge in joining Facebook to sign up for this group: it is a real force for good in connecting members of a Society that has a worldwide membership.

One significant achievement of 2021 for the Society was the publication of the six missing chapters of *Wolf Solent* in a special Supplement to *Powys Journal XXXI*. Thanks are due to **Kevin Taylor** the Journal's editor, **Morine Krissdóttir** who edited and introduced the chapters, aided by **Glenn Nash**, and to **Peter Brittain** and **Adrian Gattenhof**, whose generous donation covered the cost of this work. We also celebrate the publication of a collection of appreciations of JCP in the French quarterly, *L'Atelier du roman*. Contributors include **Marcella Henderson-Peale**, Official Representative of the Powys Society in France, and **Goulven le Brech** a member of the society who spoke at our conference in 2019. (See NL 105).

It remains to thank **Kate Kavanagh** for jointly editing the Newsletter, and **Robin Hickey** for her past service as Hon. Treasurer. The Society is hoping that someone will step forward to take up this important role! In the meantime I continue to stand in as acting Treasurer. Thanks are also due to **Marcel Bradbury** who has helped draft the change to our constitution that allows us to continue to hold remote meetings where necessary, and to our conference organisers **Louise de Bruin** and **Anna Rosic**. The Committee as a whole remains a lively and congenial group, and we look forward to meeting in person once again.

**Paul Cheshire**

## Annual General Meeting 2022

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held at 09.30am BST on Sunday 14 August 2022, and will last for approximately 1 hour. All paid up members of the Powys Society are welcome to participate in the AGM.

### Agenda

1. Minutes of AGM 2021 as published in Newsletter 104 November 2021, and matters arising
2. Nomination of Honorary Officers & Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2022-23
3. Powys Journal and e-books
4. Chair's Report as published in Newsletter 106, July 2022
5. Acting Treasurer's Report & presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2021
6. Hon. Secretary's Report
7. Development of Powys Society website and JSTOR
8. Social Media
9. Date and Venue of conference 2023
10. AOB

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

### *Committee Nominations 2022-2023*

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

	Nomination	Proposer	Second
Chair	<b>Paul Cheshire</b>	Joe Sentance	Marcel Bradbury
Vice-Chair	<b>David Goodway</b>	Tony Head	Julia Mathews
Acting Treasurer	<b>Paul Cheshire</b>	John Hodgson	Peter Lazare
Secretary	<b>Chris Thomas</b>	Jerry Bird	Marcel Bradbury

For the committee the following have been nominated and have agreed to stand:

Nomination	Proposer	Second
<b>Louise de Bruin</b> ( <i>conference organiser</i> )	Julia Mathews	Chris Michaelides

If these nominations are approved by members at the AGM, the committee, from August 2022, will consist of those above as well as Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor emerita* with Chris Thomas), Dawn Collins (*social media manager*) and Robin Hickey, who all have two years left to run of their three year term of service) and Marcel Bradbury, who has one year left to run of his three year term of service.

Anna Rosic (*conference organiser*) continues to serve as co-opted member; Marcella Henderson-Peal and Nicholas Birns serve as honorary committee members; Kevin Taylor (*e-books and editor of the Powys Journal*) and Charles Lock (*associate editor of the Powys Journal*) serve as ex-officio members of the committee.

**Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary**

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**Neil Lee-Atkin**

***The Llewelyn Birthday Walk***

The Llewelyn Birthday Walk & the annual gathering of the Dandelion Fellowship will take place on Saturday August 13th, meeting at 12 noon at the Sailor's Return in East Chaldon. All welcome. For enquiries & information contact Neil Lee-Atkin at [reblee.tom@gmail.com](mailto:reblee.tom@gmail.com)

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**New Members**

We are pleased to welcome five new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 105, March 2022. Our new members are located in London, Downham Market, Australia, Chatham and New Zealand. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **246**, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership.

**Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary**

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**The Powys Society Conference, 2022**

*The Wessex Hotel, Street, Nr Glastonbury*

Friday 12 August to Sunday 14 August

**'Strange Seas of Thought'**

***Programme***

**Friday 12 August**

16.00 Arrival

17.30 Reception and Chair's welcome (**Paul Cheshire**), with a toast to JCP at 150 (**Charles Lock**)

18.30 Dinner

20.00 **Louise de Bruin**: 'The Diaries of Katie Powys'

## **Saturday 13 August**

08.00 Breakfast

09.30 **Michael Grenfell**: ‘John Cowper Powys and William Blake’

10.45 Coffee

11.15 **Felix Taylor**: ‘John Cowper Powys and the reshaping of Welsh myth’

13.00 Lunch

Afternoon free – optional visit to Montacute and guided walk to St Michael’s Hill, Hedgecock Hill Woods and Ham Hill or self-conducted tour of places in Montacute associated with the Powyses

19.00 Dinner

20.30 Selected poems by Katie Powys read by **Chis Michaelides**, **Hilary Bedder** and **Robin Hickey**; with letters to Katie from JCP selected and read by **Richard Perceval Graves**

## **Sunday 14 August**

08.00-09:30 Breakfast

09.30-10.30 **AGM**

10.30-11.00 Coffee

11.00-12:00 **Morine Krissdóttir**: ‘Editing a Volcano’ with Q&A and panel discussion

12.00-13:00 **Charles Lock**: ‘Addition or Detraction? Thoughts on the future of *Wolf Solent*’

13.00: Lunch

15.00 Departure

**For details of speakers and presentations please see Newsletter 105, March 2022, pages 5-10**

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### **Auditor’s Certificate of Accounts; Independent examiner’s report to the trustees of The Powys Society**

We report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 December 2021.

#### **Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity’s trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity’s trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is our responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to our attention.

### **Basis of examiner's statement**

Our examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

### **Independent examiner's qualified statement**

In connection with our examination, no matter has come to our attention:

(1) which gives us reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in our opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Hills and Burgess  
Chartered Accountants  
20 Bridge Street  
Leighton Buzzard  
Beds LU7 1AL

7th February 2022

## The Powys Society

### Income and Expenditure Account For the year ended 31st December 2021

	£	£
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions	5,144.30	
Bank Interest	1.33	
Books	5,102.71	
Donations	<u>250.00</u>	10,498.34
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Printing	7,608.01	
Books	750.00	
Officers and committee expenses	1,188.86	
Translation expenses	605.61	
Accountants	120.00	
Paypal and Bank Charges	109.93	
Website Expenses	246.63	
Alliance of Literary Societies	15.00	
National Library of Wales	<u>60.00</u>	10,704.04
<b>Excess of Expenditure over Income</b>		<u>(205.70)</u>
<b>Opening Bank balances</b>		
Community Account	2,432.48	
Everyday Saver	2,150.21	
Business Saver	12,230.60	
Paypal	<u>512.37</u>	17,325.66
<b>Closing Bank balances</b>		
Community Account	3,971.40	
Everyday Saver	1,762.48	
Business Saver	10,231.74	
Paypal	<u>1,154.34</u>	17,119.96
<b>Decrease in Bank balances</b>		<u>(205.70)</u>

## Supplementary Note to the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021

### *Donations Received*

The accounts presented in this Newsletter show we received a generous donation of £250 from our member Ruth Hall, out of the proceeds of the sale of the late Jim Morgan's collection of Powys books. We also need to thank and acknowledge Peter Brittain and Adrian Gattenhof for their donation of £2,810. Because their donation was specifically intended to cover the printing costs of the *Powys Journal* Vol. XXXI *Wolf Solent* Supplement, it was presented to the auditors as a deduction from printing costs, which consequently appear in the accounts understated by £2,810. Once this donation is taken into account the total donations received in the year were £3,060 and the total printing costs before reimbursement were £10,418.

### *Gift Aid*

Due to a delay in processing, our 2021 Gift Aid tax claim of £465, which would normally have appeared in this year's accounts, was not received until February 2022. If it were not for this delay, our total income would have exceeded expenditure by £259.

**Paul Cheshire, Acting Treasurer**

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### **A Meeting**

**Saturday 8 October 2022**

**Shirley Village, Derbyshire**

A meeting is planned at St Michael's Parish Church Community Space, Church Lane, in Shirley village, Derbyshire, for Saturday 8 October, to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Cowper Powys.

The event which includes refreshments is free except for optional lunch at the Saracen's Head in Shirley. All are welcome. In the afternoon, following lunch, we plan to visit JCP's birthplace where we have kindly been granted access to the vicarage garden by the present owners.

Members may wish to make their own arrangements and take the opportunity of visiting nearby locations, described by JCP in *Autobiography*, such as Dovedale, Mount Cloud and Osmaston Park.

If you wish to attend this meeting and reserve a place for lunch at the Saracen's Head, please **notify Hon. Secretary** (see contact details on inside front cover page of the Newsletter) by **31 August 2022**.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

## Programme

- 10.00 Arrival, tea and coffee at St Michael's Parish Church Community Space, Church Lane, Shirley
- 10.30 Welcome address and talk, *JCP in Derbyshire*, by Chair of the Powys Society **Paul Cheshire**
- 11.00-11.20 Readings from Chapter 1 of JCP's *Autobiography* and *A Blank Verse Autobiography* (**Kevin Taylor and Chris Thomas**)
- 11.20-11.45 Tea & Coffee break
- 11.45-12.45 Open discussion of Chapter 1 of JCP's *Autobiography*
- 13.00 Pre booked lunch at the Saracen's Head, Shirley
- 14.30 Visit to Shirley vicarage garden, including photo opportunity, and readings from *Autobiography* (**John Hodgson**)
- 15.30 Tour of Shirley village
- 17.00 Departure



*The Saracen's Head, Shirley*

*JCP's birthplace Shirley vicarage*



## JCP tributes for his 150th birthday

An anthology of scrollable tributes to JCP on his 150th birthday has been posted on our website at [The Powys Society — about John Cowper Powys \(powys-society.org\)](http://ThePowysSociety.org). Here we reproduce two of the most recently received tributes by well-known public figures. [CT]

**From Professor Simon Heffer**, weekly columnist for the *Sunday Telegraph*, and author of books on the social history of Great Britain including *High Minds – the Victorians and the Birth of Modern Britain* (2013), *The Age of Decadence – Britain 1880 to 1914* and *Staring at God – Britain 1914 to 1919* (2019). Simon Heffer published an enthusiastic article about *Wolf Solent* in the *Daily Telegraph* on 24 November 2015.

I recall with great clarity the first time I encountered Powys, which was through *Wolf Solent*: I had never heard of either, which was shameful as I attended the same Cambridge college as he did and he is the only great novelist Corpus has ever produced. I was lent the book to pass a long train journey from Scotland to London and from the very first paragraph I was gripped. I read it in one sitting, sitting up into the night once I returned home to finish it. It embodies all Powys's greatest characteristics: his profound understanding of human nature, his deep association with the English countryside (from which by then he had been estranged for nearly 30 years) and consonance with the English people; his relationship with mysticism and his atavistic regard for the past. But beyond that, his prose is perfect. It is one of the truly great English novels and should be a central part of our literary canon. I do not doubt that one day it will be.

**From: John Gray. John's latest book is *Feline Philosophy* (2020). John Gray gave a talk on 'The Powyses and Religion' at our annual conference in 2015**

Everyone who has enjoyed and benefited from his work will celebrate John Cowper Powys's 150th anniversary this year. Of all twentieth-century novelists writing in English, he seems to me the one who most liberates the mind of the reader from conventional views of the human world. Subscribing to no orthodoxy, he conveys experience in all its miscellaneous variety, contradictions and strangeness. Capturing subtle and fleeting sensations, he has been described as the Dorset Proust. But John Cowper Powys is not only an intrepid explorer of the human scene. He leads the reader out into the numinous green woods and fields, the wind and the skies, and points to the unfathomable reaches beyond. No writer seems to me more needed, and more invigorating, in our unsettled times.

Peter Foss

*Llewelyn Powys and 'The Club of the Honest Cods'*

Llewelyn Powys attended Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, the *alma mater* of his father and brothers, from Autumn 1903 to December 1906. In June 1906 he 'ploughed' the History Tripos (failed his Finals) and had to sit them again in November of that year. Afterwards he returned to Montacute to begin the serious business of trying to find a job, opting for teaching by applying for posts through the educational agency Gabbitas & Thring.<sup>1</sup> By his own (later) admission, Llewelyn wasted his time at Cambridge; he was certainly no scholar in the conventional sense and couldn't apply himself sufficiently to do even moderately well ('*balked of academic distinction by ignorance and indolence*', as he said of himself).<sup>2</sup> He enjoyed his time too much and this is exemplified by his starting up a roistering drinking society which he called 'The Club of the Honest Cods' from the phrase in Rabelais introduced to him by his brother Theodore, whereby an 'honest cod' was an enjoyer of life, loyal in friendships and free of cant. Patrick Bury in his *History of the college* called it 'joyous'.<sup>3</sup>

Malcolm Elwin gives a summary of the club on pages 48-9 of his *Life of Llewelyn Powys* (1946). The club's minute book still survives in the college archives and reports that its name originated with Llewelyn in November 1904. It had about twelve members (but allowed more) with weekly meetings in chaps' rooms and dinners twice a year; its members sported green blazers and had blazoned goblets specially made and a punch bowl for holding a fierce concoction for which Elwin supplies the recipe. This included '*two half pints of brandy, two half pints of rum, three quarters of a pint of gin, two thirds of a tumbler of port*' in addition to juice, nutmeg and sugar. Very important to warm it by the fire.<sup>4</sup> In addition to drinking and boisterous companionship, the club organised dinners and jaunts and even a 'smoking concert'. The programmes for these exist in the society collection at Exeter. I first saw them and used them when they were in the collection of E.E. Bissell in the early eighties. One of the earliest cards is of a 'Smoking Concert' to be 'held in the rooms of Llewelyn Powys Old Court' on Saturday 5 May 1905. The invitation card is printed on the front with the college arms and a picture of the goblet designed for the club.

In Llewelyn's middle year especially (1905) the club flourished as there were fewer worries about exams. On 5 March they all went on a jaunt to the Newmarket races, and the programme for that event provides the schedule – leaving at 11.15 from the college gates, with lunch at The Wellington Arms, returning at 5.30 for dinner in Llewelyn's rooms at 7.30, then decamping afterwards for more inebriation.

The programme signs off: ‘Carriages at 12’ (they would need them).<sup>5</sup> For this printed fold-out programme Llewelyn had provided suitably suggestive quotations from the poets including Shakespeare and Milton. This is from *Comus*:

Meanwhile welcome, joy and feast,  
Midnight shout and revelry,  
Tipsy dance and jollity.



*The Club of the Honest Cods as they were in 1905, picture taken in the Old Court, Corpus Christi College, from Malcolm Elwin's Life of Llewelyn Powys (1946)*

Elwin provides us with a group portrait of The Club of the Honest Cods as of May 1905 (opposite p.50) seated outside the door to his staircase in the northwest corner of the Old Court – you can see the punch bowl and ladle and the minute book in the picture, and the goblets in their hands. They are all wearing their green blazers.<sup>6</sup> But what Elwin doesn't do is identify them, apart, that is, from the president Hodder in the centre. This can now be done; and so I give here the identification of the members

of the group beginning with the back row from left to right. They are: Kenneth McIntyre Kemp, Arthur Gledden Santer, Alfred Ferdinand Woode, Britton Stone Tabor; (middle row): Robert William Leslie Oke, Llewelyn Powys, Francis Edwin Hodder, George Reginald Smith, Clifford Calow Evans; (seated on the ground): Christopher Herbert Donaldson. This can be compared with the photograph taken in Llewelyn's rooms where the group, dressed for dinner at a set table in white waistcoats and dinner jackets, are all looking rather glum (as was the custom in formal photographs of this time). This is in complete contrast to how it must actually have been. The members present can be identified as (around the table from left to right): Hodder, Smith, Donaldson, Kemp, Llewelyn, Woode, Evans and Santer. As president, Hodder sits at the head of the table. This was his last year at CCC, and Llewelyn, who succeeded him as president, had been its first secretary in 1904-5, a task then taken over by Oke. The Newmarket jaunt programme included a spoof of *Widcombe Fair* ('Tom Pearse, Tom Pearse, lend me your grey mare') with a chorus made up of their nicknames:

*Chorus:*

With Bob Oke, McI Kemp, Sarah Graburn,  
Gledden Santer, Don Ion, Lulu Powys,  
Old Uncle 'B' Tabor and all.  
Old Uncle 'B' Tabor and all.<sup>7</sup>

Little can be discovered about the lives of these 1905 members other than that they were at CCC. As Elwin says, most 'faded from his life after Cambridge'. Several were in different years to Llewelyn. These included Hodder, matriculated 1902, and R.W.L. Oke (1884-1915), matriculated 1904. The latter distinguished himself in the First World War and was killed at 31 in a battle leading his company, the Royal Berkshire Regiment, near Armentières. He is remembered on the war memorial at Ploegsteert in Belgium and is traced by the War Graves Commission (see the photograph of him in uniform on their website).<sup>8</sup> Santer and Tabor were Americans and Llewelyn encountered them when he first went to New York on his ill-advised lecture tour in 1909. Characteristically they went on a razzle and got ratted ('*Crouched drunk under a public urinal*').<sup>9</sup> As for Hodder, who wrote poetry, Llewelyn remained in touch with him through several years and invited him to Montacute a number of times. He even had hopes of a romantic attachment to his sister Katie, but he was thought by then to have become too weak-willed and his hesitant melancholy personality irked the younger man who by this time had come through the formative trials of his



*The Club of the Honest Cods in 1905 sitting down to dinner in Llewelyn's Old Court rooms, with Francis Edwin Hodder at head of table. Courtesy Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin*

tuberculosis and had espoused more fully an epicurean philosophy. This is all made clear from the account given of him in his 1911 diary.<sup>10</sup> In 1937, rather ironically, Llewelyn dedicated *Damnable Opinions* in memory of Hodder. Robert McIntyre Kemp (1883-1949), who stands next to Llewelyn in the dinner photograph, later had a distinguished career as a barrister in India, advising the Indian government and editing the Indian law reports. He was Advocate General in Bombay 1935-7 and was knighted in 1937. Christopher Donaldson was Llewelyn's closest friend at Cambridge (apart, that is, from Louis Wilkinson – who was from another college and said in *Welsh Ambassadors* that he kept away from the 'bloods' whom Llewelyn consorted with).<sup>11</sup> Donaldson was real fun, and is clearly the figure indicated by 'D' in Llewelyn's *Confessions* page 189, whose 'ears and nails were always filthy' and who used to get drunk in low out-of-the-way taverns with common men 'relapsing

into alcoholic oblivion as a background to his dreams'. It was after a night of revelry that he and Donaldson stepped out into the quad at Corpus only to be met by the dean whom Llewelyn punched in the stomach with an empty bottle. He later recalled 'wild nights in the Old Court with Christopher Donaldson drinking draughts of neat whisky and daring the devil to snatch us to hell'.<sup>12</sup>

During May to June 1906, when Llewelyn should by rights have been with his head down revising for his exams (which he unsurprisingly failed), more jollifications ensued. The Bump Supper programme for 9 June 1906 exists, detailing a description in French of multiple courses. The supper followed the 'May Bumps' on the River Cam, where boats from the various colleges were rowed out into a wider section of the river north of the town and aimed to bump one another in a race that knocked out bumped boats to a finishing line. The race went from Baits Bite Lock to Chesterton. In large part it was an excuse to invite guests and family for a day out on the river; many had picnics (with full hampers of course) on the river bank at Fen Ditton. The Bump Supper menu card from Llewelyn's collection includes the signatures of all those attending, some rowers. They were: A.G. Santer, B.S. Tabor, R.W.L. Oke, D.S. Savory, J.P. Stevens, C.H. Donaldson, G.N. Graburn, T. Batterby, C.C. Evans, W.R. Rae, L.H. Forse, W.H. Kerridge,<sup>13</sup> R.S. Carey, K.M. Kemp, P.A. Hislam. Llewelyn had written his name 'Lulu' in scribbled letters across the names. Evans, Batterby, and Graburn were some of the rowers, and boats from Pembroke, Clare and Sidney Sussex colleges were bumped.

There exist two delightful snaps which are of a similar day in June 1904 on the banks of the Cam and showing Llewelyn attending upon a young lady and possibly her aunt or chaperone at a picnic among the rowers.<sup>14</sup> Llewelyn is more attentive (as he would have to be and would want to be) to the girl than to his friends, but Donaldson (looking really cheeky), and Kemp and Hodder are clearly identifiable. Llewelyn is smiling broadly and full of the joy of the occasion – an Edwardian idyll. Peter Martland in his piece in the *CCC Record* No.100 in 2021 (mentioned at the beginning of this article) suggests that the 'Honest Cods' were absorbed into the college Chess Club after 1906. This is deduced from the fact that Llewelyn is shown wearing a Chess Club blazer in the fine painting of him by his sister Gertrude, dated 1907, which was first published in my *Study of Llewelyn Powys* in 1991, and which the *Record* has re-published in full colour in the November 2021 edition. This painting is currently in the possession of Llewelyn's great-niece in Africa.<sup>15</sup>



*Photograph taken on the River Cam, probably in Jesus Meadow, in May 1904, showing Llewelyn attending to his guests, and Hodder in a boater. The attendants were probably college servants. Courtesy Louise de Bruin*



*On the Cam on the same occasion as above having lunch. At Llewelyn's shoulder is Christopher Donaldson, to his right Kemp, then Hodder; the other rowers are from Corpus. These photographs are from Katie's album and she has dated them, adding the remark 'Find Lulu?'* Courtesy Louise de Bruin

## Endnotes

- 1 A recent article in the *Corpus Christi College Record* No.100 (Michaelmas, 2021) puts Llewelyn's dates at 1903 to 1907; this must be because he would have registered in the autumn term of a fourth year in order to re-sit his Finals, and then collected his degree in 1907. But there is no doubt that he left Cambridge by Christmas 1906.
- 2 'Of Egoism', republished in *Earth Memories* (1934), is the chief account of his life at Cambridge, paying a moving tribute to his old college. See pp.226-7: '*I have often regretted that I made such an ill use of my three years' residence*'.
- 3 Patrick Bury, *The College of Corpus Christi, Cambridge: A History From 1822 to 1952* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 104. Bury's book is a consummate scholarly work, balanced but generous – exactly how a history of a college should be written. The club was as much riotous as joyous: '*What demon persuaded me to go carolling drunken ditties night after night?*' *Earth Memories*, p. 227.
- 4 I can speak for the potency of this since I followed this exact recipe when as a PhD candidate at St David's University College, Lampeter, I entertained guests at an 'Honest Cod party' in the early 80s. I don't remember anyone hitting the floorboards at that time, for I think most people opted for a milder alternative.
- 5 Maybe this was the dinner which is pictured in a photograph I procured from the HRC collection in Austin, Texas in 2002.
- 6 Also pictured in Patrick Bury's *History of Corpus Christi*, opp. page 104.
- 7 'Don Ion' must surely be Donaldson. Of interest in this photograph are the pictures which Llewelyn had placed around his fireplace and bookcase. Close inspection reveals many visiting cards of Powys family members, including all the brothers, a school cap with a tassel, a painting of Venice in a frame, and centrally placed a studio photograph of JCP. On the right above the bookcase is a postcard of Reynolds' painting *Age of Innocence*. There are familiar photos of the Powys family groups on the lawn at Montacute, and the pictures we know of the brothers and sisters ranged before the vicarage frontage (e.g. that reproduced in Graves's book, p.202). There is also a photograph of the Sherborne rugby team with Llewelyn aged 16 (from 1901) and quite a few Edwardian postcards of young girls in various states of undress. Of the book collection one can detect Warne's 'Chandos Classics' and Methuen's 'Standard Authors' series – popular selections of English poets and essayists.
- 8 Oke was a contemporary of Llewelyn's at Sherborne (at Wildman's) in 1898 before moving to Rugby. The extant websites give him as an undergraduate at Gonville and Caius, which is palpably wrong. See *The Sherborne Register* (1950), p.217.
- 9 See entries under 14-15 January 1909, p.21 in my *The Immemorial Year* (2007), notes 19-20 on pages 53-4. Tabor was from the mid-west but lived at this time in Manhattan. Santer's name is misspelt by Elwin.
- 10 See my edition of Llewelyn's 1911 diary, *Recalled to Life*, p. 115, and note 389 on pp.161-2. Bernie O'Neill had described Hodder as emanating 'an unhappy sense of frustration', torn between regret for the waste of his youth and his failure to find a spiritual purpose in his life.

- 11 ‘*I grudged his drinking cronies at Corpus the occasional evenings when he rioted with them*’, *Welsh Ambassadors*, p.89.
- 12 *Earth Memories*, p.223. The incident with the dean was recalled in Bernie O’Neill’s reminiscence written for Elwin in c.1945, where he says also that Llewelyn staggered back to his rooms and was ‘very ill’.
- 13 W.H. Kerridge (1881-1940) became secretary of the British Music Society and a writer on Soviet music and composers. He translated Karl Kautsky’s *Terrorism and Communism: A Contribution to the Natural History of Revolution* (1920).
- 14 Photographs in Katie’s photograph album at Mappowder, courtesy of Louise de Bruin. They were obviously taken by a professional, and are pasted into the album which has been damaged by damp and therefore hard to reproduce. My complete catalogue of the Powys collection at Mappowder (manuscripts, graphic work etc.) can be consulted on request to Louise de Bruin.
- 15 See my *Study of Llewelyn Powys* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p.377, Plate 3. Llewelyn commented on it in his diary of 1910: ‘How well he remembered the oil painting of this young man, his white hand, his lackadaisical posture, his Cambridge blazer’ (see my *The Conqueror Worm* (Powys Society, 2015), p. 98).

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### **Llewelyn Powys** ***Memories of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge***

[*These reflections and memories about Corpus Christi College, Cambridge by Llewelyn Powys have been extracted from Confessions of Two Brothers, 1916, pp.189-191. CT*]

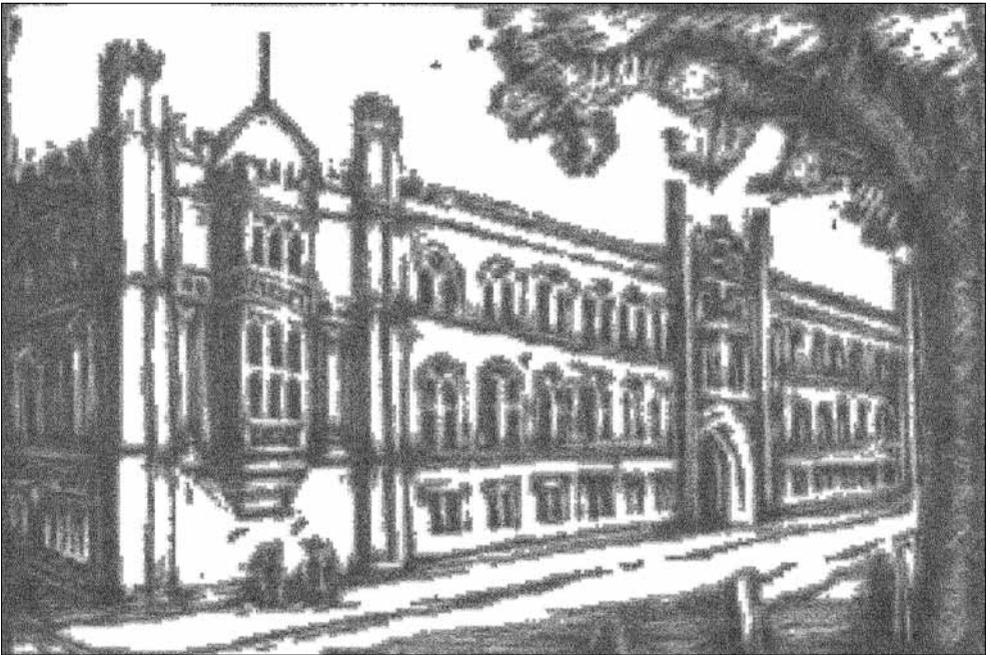
And then I went up to Cambridge. Perhaps no experience should be more bracing to a boy’s intelligence than his first entrance into a University.

To find one’s self free to think and say what one likes is a privilege seldom permitted, but here in these antique rooms where there are no old people, the crass system of things is no longer so shielded. One comes across strange types. J., who kept human bones in his room and who would sleep all day and go down to the Union at night with a great pipe in his mouth and an outrageous shock of red hair over his grotesque ‘cerebralist’ skull. L.U.W. (still after everything dearest and noblest of my friends), with his ardent antinomian philosophy and graceful Aubrey Beardsley appearance. D. of Corpus, whose ears and nails were always filthy and who used to spend weeks at a time drinking in low out-of-the-way taverns because as he said he liked to listen to the talk he heard in such places and liked to feel himself relapsing into alcoholic oblivion with these quaint human beings as a background to his dreams.

I remember perfectly well my first night in one of those old oak-panelled rooms—the weird sensation I got when raising my head I read on one of the beams supporting

the roof the words 'Pray for the Soul of John Cowper Powys.' I had not known it had been my brother's room and this simple fraternal petition shocked me into understanding the grave and striking import of our lives as conceived by the one true Catholic Church. I knew that there were many people who held that my brother had no Soul. Now that I look back on those short three years I feel that I wasted my time. The actual world as I saw it seemed to absorb so much of my attention. We formed a club called the Club of the Honest Cods, and we used to meet on Sunday evenings in the old court and drink hot punch and sing bawdy songs.

Only at rare intervals did the old beautiful, cruel, gay, miraculous world reveal itself. I remember standing one afternoon by the side of the river not far from Mr. Benson's house envisaging the deep volume of still waters flowing on and on year after year so, so detached, so profoundly indifferent to the lot of the wisest of all the animals who had chosen to congregate on its grass-grown banks. And sometimes at the high noon of night looking out at the illumined mullioned College windows, the smooth grass and the shining ivy leaves, I would experience vague intimations of the murmuring Universe far, far removed from Corpus and from my rowdy everyday existence.



*Corpus Christi College by Gertrude Powys*

## Llewelyn Powys *Of Egoism*

**Chris Thomas** writes: In this essay Llewelyn, *haunted by the figures of the past*, vividly describes his impressions, fluctuating thoughts, memories and strong emotions occasioned by a visit he made to Cambridge and the Powys family *alma mater* Corpus Christi College in 1926. The essay was first published in the *New Statesman* XXVIII (706), 6 November 1926, pp.108-110. It was reprinted in Llewelyn's collection of essays *Earth Memories*, which included wood block engravings by Gertrude Powys placed at the head of each essay, and was issued in the UK in February 1934 by John Lane, the Bodley Head. The first American edition of *Earth Memories* appeared in 1938. Other subsequent editions of *Earth Memories* include Books for Libraries Press, USA, (1969) and Redcliffe Press, UK, (1983). For more details see *A Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys* by Peter Foss, 2007, pp.66 and 162. Peter records that a notebook draft of the essay is located at Texas A & M University, Texas, USA. A recent edition of a selection of essays from *Earth Memories* with a Foreword by Anthony Head and Introduction by John Gray was published by Little Toller Books in 2015. This edition however does not include Llewelyn's essay *Of Egoism* and also omits Gertrude's engraving of Corpus Christi College which had appeared on p.219 of the first Bodley Head edition. For further reference see a critical review, by Stephen Powys Marks, of the Little Toller edition of *Earth Memories* in Newsletter 85, July 2015 and Anthony Head's reply in Newsletter 87 March 2016.

### **Llewelyn:**

Not long ago I found myself standing in the small hall of the Bull at Cambridge. Twenty years had passed since I had walked to the Senate House to take my degree. Twenty years had intervened since my feet, with the light step of youth, had gone in and out of the heavy gateway of what Matthew Arnold once described as 'a collegiate-looking building opposite.' My companion had left me and I awaited his return in a mood of suppressed excitement.

There it all was before my eyes exactly as it had been, and here was I actually standing in the 'Milton, and to God only knew how many men of the old time before them. Presently I could contain myself no longer, and noticing a porter quite near me I addressed him in the following manner: 'It is twenty years since I was last here.' The porter was an old man who had about him that look of decrepit agility which one observes in servants who make a living out of lifting, hauling and rolling about on their brass-tipped corners the heavy travelling trunks of rich men. He had a bald head and

a demeanour of gossipy obsequious impertinence. Yet as I ventured my too innocent remark I never for a moment suspected that it was this antiquated ‘boots’ who was destined ‘to put me wise’ in a way I should never forget. No sooner had I spoken than I observed a peculiar expression pass over his features, an expression of deferential ennui, an expression that, before he had uttered a word, made me recognise him philosophically as my master. When he did open his lips it was to tell me that the day before a gentleman had come in who had not been back for twenty-seven years and the day before that another who had not been back for thirty-five years, and before that someone who had recognised *him*, the porter, who had not been back for forty-nine years. ‘Gentlemen are always coming back, Sir; we get them all the time, Sir; every week, every day they are coming back, Sir.’

He had said enough. I knew at once that I had been caught nursing that childish illusion which tricks us into fancying that the experiences of our own personal life can be of any real interest to our fellow men. It is, of course, a most absurd notion. And yet how many of us will stumble into this man-trap, supposing in our provincialism that it is an easy matter to solicit the attention of strangers to the incidents of our life dramas, when in reality the only chance we have of catching the ear of the porters of this world is by recognising *them first* and little by little to entrap their egoism, so that, like billy-goats with white collars round their necks, they may feel it no hardship to be conducted down the road of our own romantic wayfaring!

But although I was careful not to give myself away again that afternoon, I did, I confess it, experience the most singular emotions. There was Corpus before my very eyes with the elm trees of ‘Cats’ [St. Catherine’s College, CT] standing on this side of the street just as I remembered them in the little engraving which used to hang over the chimney-piece, half obscured by paper spills, in the dining room of Montacute vicarage – in that little engraving in a black frame so often examined by me during the suspended interval of time between the ringing of the bell for prayers and the sound of the study door opening. And as I looked at the legendary familiar prospect a hundred memories invaded my mind like shadowy birds settling to roost, one after the other, in an ivy tod on an old wall.

Once more as a freshman I stood on Queens’ bridge by the side of my father and heard him say, ‘I have much to be thankful for, to be alive still when so many have died,’ words that I must have unconsciously treasured for the reason that I now cannot dissociate that portion of the river which flows past the college of Erasmus from them, though at the time, I am convinced they could have seemed of little moment, so eager was I for life, and so inaccessible must I have been to any hint as to the transitory nature of existence.

How happy it were if one could, when one had a mind to do it, put a finger against the long ticking minute-hand of Time! I should like to live it all over again. I would gladly once more suffer the blighting sense of humiliation I felt one autumn afternoon as I came out of the Union in Norfolk jacket, fresh as dry heather, and was accosted by a supercilious youth at the gate who asked me if I would be kind enough to tell him what horse had won the – naming a famous race. Never to this day have I forgotten the look of disdain, the look of urbane, commiserating impatience that flickered across his face as he turned away, leaving me to pursue my direction past Trinity, a ‘Corpus blood’ – a blood who was no blood! They were lovely days and it was wonderful to come up from the cow-trodden, rain-soaked woods and meadows of Somerset to the cobbled quadrangles of the University, to exchange the decorous winter tea-table at home with the heavy dining-room curtains fast drawn, and toast and eggs and old-fashioned scones, for wild nights in the Old Court with Christopher Donaldson drinking drafts of neat whisky and daring the devil to snatch us to hell.

By the end of my first term I had met Louis Wilkinson, that gentleman from Suffolk whose emancipated spirit has done so much to free my mind of cant. I went to take tea with him in his rooms at John’s on the other side of the river. Ralph Straus was there and I spoke so freely, so extravagantly, so blasphemously that Louis Wilkinson, I remember, got up and ‘sporting his oak’ lest some eavesdropper should cause him to be cast out of Cambridge. From that first afternoon we were always together, walking and talking and jesting, intoxicated with life! It was Louis Wilkinson who introduced me to J. C. Squire. I remember the shock-headed knave of hearts. He used to sleep all the day and was only to be met with when the sun was going down; shuffling above the cloisters in slippers and peering out like an owl from a holly bush all bemused with speculations. In those days he used to feed on knowledge as an ant-bear feeds upon ants at midnight. This was long before he became converted. Louis Wilkinson remained always unintimidated by prevailing prejudices. From the moment he was taken from his mother’s lap he confronted the world with unabashed aplomb. Like a true philosopher he has always been prepared to discuss anything at any time. And in those days it seemed that we could not bear to be separated, and indeed to this hour my spirits are never more ‘gay’ than in his company.

When I had left the Bull and entered into Corpus as far as the Old Court, renovated now to look like a picturesque Devonshire almshouse with the ivy that my grandfather planted removed and with a pretty tablet set up to the memory of Kit Marlowe, how I was haunted by the figures of the past! It seemed incredible that in the space of twenty years that death could have conducted the stooping forms of so many lusty dons out of

the college gates. Old Fanshawe! He was never one to foster false upward-bounding skylark ideals. There was an honest man if ever there was one! With his grey hat and well-balanced belly how he would move towards his rooms in the corner of the New Court sublimely unmindful of the daisies shining in the grass at his side! And how kindly the old man was. And how he could laugh, and what sound reins he had for absorbing old port from the cellarage! Many a time have I stood to watch him, speechless with admiration n at the spectacle, get up into the old horse-drawn tram, a moving monument of jocund dignity, on his way back to Shelford. Shelford! Who now wanders down those paths where 'Fanny' once walked, black skull-cap on head, and to what alien fields has sweet Cousin Amy been driven, fields far removed from the pleasaunce of her childish memories, the security of which, and the May-time beauty of which, even proximity to the railway could never destroy?

And the old master of Corpus, that relic of a great century, grown pathetically feeble – I have often felt proud to think that I entered the College when he still reigned at the Lodge. I used to look at his refined, ecclesiastical, academic face as he tottered into chapel, like a very ancient sheep that was being preserved for superstitious reasons by a set of vigorous priests, and feel upon my brow the breath of ninety forgotten summers, of ninety forgotten winters. Once or twice the old man took a part in the service, his quavering voice of a centenarian cottage woman, pronouncing the word 'humble' without its aspirate, as though in the old times out of which he came the God of the evangelical party had been a god to be feared indeed! With what a different glance I regarded the Rev.-, a pinched, fanatical would-be saint of the Anglican persuasion, with the narrow, limited vision of a Bishop's chaplain, who once pursued me out of chapel, exasperated past endurance by my ill-behaviour as I shogged off in my spotless white surplice towards my own godless rooms in the Old Court.

But about the Dean there was no nonsense. I can still see the look in his left eye slanting down upon us, as I knelt at the side of Alf Wood scribbling bawdry in my hymn-book, a look entirely devoid of petty spite, but firm, confident, circumspect as the look in the eye of a powerful toad, well versed in the statecraft of its kind, who watches with unclosed lid a tough skinned devil's coach horse crawling about under a dock leaf just out of reach of its tongue.

Many were the honoured figures to whom in my uncouth ignorance I failed to do homage. Mr Charles Moule, there was a true scholar, a scholar with the countenance of an English gentleman and the delicate, self-effacing spirit of a child of God. And the Rev. Charles Archibald Edmund Pollock, the most lovable of them all, he, who, under

a signed portrait of Robert Browning, used to instruct me in the difficult art of solving algebraical problems and who had, and still has, a heaven-sent congenital incapacity for treating life with the rude rigour it requires. Willingly enough, if it were possible, would I put myself once more under the direction of these men. They belonged to the old Corpus, to Corpus before it grew grand, before it became associated with the High Church party and celebrated Mass at dawn with fashionable applause.

I have often regretted that I made such an ill use of my three years' residence. I spent far too much of my time hanging about tavern doors, and that's the truth! What demon persuaded me to go carolling drunken ditties night after night? With such immemorial turf under my shoes, turf shining bright in the moonlight, and with such historical stones all about me, how came it that I could behave so badly? Seldom, too seldom, during those insubordinate terms did I ever attain to that fortunate mood of consciousness when a mortal soul, winged with the fluttering, poised wings of a kestrel hawk, surveys life with inspired vision. Balked of academic distinction by ignorance and indolence, I must need resort to the prerogative of a plough-boy and endeavour to indent my identity by means of the letters of my name cut rudely into the fine old oak which surrounded the fireplace of my rooms.

'Now that you have got your degrees what do you intend to do with them?' remarked the present Bishop of Derby as he led two of us towards the Senate House. Like sturdy hedge-rogues whose ears have been cropped, walking by the side of a duck-pond constable, we answered not a word. We had no conjectures to offer as to our future. But the query stuck to my memory for many years after, for I very soon discovered that it was by no means an easy thing in this world to come honestly by a good pair of breeches; though the manner by which we achieve the difficult feat when once it has been achieved, furnishes a subject of unflinching interest to each of us, as I had an opportunity of observing many years later when I watched my friend Dr. Watson, himself a man of substance, listening with deferential docility to a Detroit citizen explaining to him in detail what a 'nice little business he had built up.' 'And how many patients have you on your file, Doc?' I heard him ask before settling down to resume his story, an interpolated interrogation recognised by everybody in the small railway compartment as requiring no answer, merely being interjected by the stranger as a preliminary to a prolongation of his favourite topic. So, I thought, as I stood by a washstand in that swaying Chicago express, even the loquacious storekeeper is conversant with the elementary principle of life which teaches us, in human intercourse, to go angling for each other's egos as though they were little white minnows flashing about in dark, deep, cloudy waters.

**John Cowper Powys**  
*Corpus, Cambridge*  
from *Wolf's-Bane, Rhymes*, 1916

NOTHING can I recall,  
O Alma Mater, of thee  
Save a crumbling ivied wall  
And a world of obliquity

Nothing but shades discreet,  
Politic, glib of tongue,  
Pirouetting on tip-toe feet  
To where the Mass is sung: -  
  
The Mass, or whatever most  
In Evangelic places  
Prefers the Holy Ghost  
To flamboyant grimaces: -

Nothing: and yet I lie!  
Across my memory flame,  
Like blood-drops on ivory,  
The syllables of a name.

Like a red wound in the breast  
Of a god, like a maiden's cry  
For her ravished virginity,  
Like a torch that burneth a city,  
Comes to me over the years,  
A wraith of splendour and tears.

Christopher Marlowe shrive him, God!

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*News and Notes*

*From Paul Cheshire:*

**JCP's 150th anniversary year**

My letter to the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* highlighting JCP's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary was published in the issue of the TLS for 25 March.

**JCP and the TLS**

In the issue of the TLS for 18 February 2022 Neil Cooper noted in an article under the title 'Long Reads': 'Becca Rothfeld concludes her, to say the least, somewhat less than favourable review of Hanya Yanagihara's 700-page *To Paradise* (February 11) by pointing to its '*punishing length*'. Almost ninety years ago, Winifred Holtby reviewed John Cowper Powys's 1,173-page *A Glastonbury Romance*. Although not completely condemning the text ('*it has points*') in a letter to her friend and fellow writer Phyllis Bentley, and quite in keeping with her restrained style, Holtby wrote, '*I'm not sure I entirely trust the quantitative criterion*' – perhaps, in its own understated way, just as cutting as Becca Rothfeld's comment.' **Chris Thomas** adds: We have included a note

on Winifred Holtby and reprinted her reviews of *A Glastonbury Romance* and *The Meaning of Culture* elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter.

**From Kate Kavanagh:**

### **William Blake**

I am looking forward to Michael Grenfell's talk on Blake and JCP at this year's conference.

In about 1960 I was living in Buenos Aires, with many artist friends. I gave talks for the British Council (cultural mission) one of which was prompted by the excellent 1958 film *The Vision of Blake* with commentary by Bernard Miles. I don't think many, if any, of the artists I'd invited had seen or even heard of Blake. On the film his coloured engravings enlarged could have been by Michelangelo. I had prepared myself by reading the Nonsuch edition from cover to cover, impressed especially by the gnomic aphorisms (e.g. '*one thought fills immensity*'). The talk was translated to Spanish and printed by friends in their 'New Man' collection, to my pride and delight. This was about the same time as JCP entered my life with *The Meaning of Culture*, picked up second-hand by a friend in the States. They seemed to click.

**From Dawn Collins:**

### **Dorothy Richardson Essay Prize**

Dawn reports on the Powys Society Facebook page that one of our members, Ben Thomson, has been awarded joint winner of the first annual Dorothy Richardson essay prize competition, organised by the Dorothy Richardson Society for his essay, 'Pilgrimage, Oberland, 'Sleigh-Ride': Length, Genre, and Prose in Dorothy Richardson'. The essay will be published in issue No.12 of *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*.

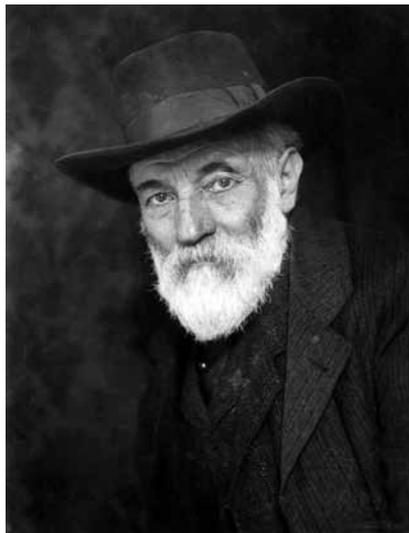
**From Chris Thomas:**

### **Orlam**

In April Picador published a long narrative poem called *Orlam* by singer-songwriter P. J. Harvey, written in the Dorset dialect and incorporating old Dorset folk tales, chants and rituals. Harvey grew up in the Dorset village of Corscombe and was helped to write her poem by consulting *A Glossary of the Dorset Dialect with a Grammar of its Word Sharpening and Wording*, by William Barnes, originally published in 1886. In a *Guardian* interview P. J. Harvey referred to Dorset as '*light and dark, ecstasy and melancholy*'.

## JCP and John Butler Yeats

Ron Burr has alerted me to a passage in a biography of the artist John Butler Yeats (father of the poet W B Yeats) about a drawing of JCP made by J. B. Yeats in 1907. This passage can be found on page 326 of *Prodigal Father*, the biography of J. B. Yeats, by William M Murphy published in 1978. The author quotes a letter, dated 28 December 1907, from JBY's daughter Lily to her sister Lolly. Lily was travelling with her father, aged 68, from Liverpool to New York on the Campania and told Lolly that one day, on emerging from her stateroom, she discovered her father surrounded by *all kinds of interesting people, amongst them...a writer named John*



*John Butler Yeats, photograph by Alice Boughton, c. 1910*

*JBY made of him.* Although he planned to return to Ireland, J. B. Yeats remained for the rest of his life in America where he became a significant figure in the New York avant-garde artistic community. According to the online database, New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957, JCP was indeed a passenger on board the RMS Campania which departed Liverpool on 21 December 1907 and arrived New York on 29 December 1907. It would be interesting to know if the drawing of JCP mentioned by the daughter of J. B. Yeats has survived anywhere. JCP does not refer to the portrait. He must have been thrilled by a chance meeting with the father of the poet he had so much admired since his youth. He mentions this meeting in a letter to Wilson Knight dated 29 June 1957 saying that he once crossed to America with the father and sister of W. B. Yeats and in a late letter to Louis Wilkinson, dated 28 June 1958 (Newsletter 76, July 2012, p.39), he describes meeting JBY on a voyage to New York but he says nothing of a sketch that Yeats had made of him: *I've always got on top notch with famous poets' parents! I remember going to New York with W. B. Yeats's Father. He was a darling old chap and earned his living in New York simply by his talk at dinner-parties — yes, earned his living by just being himself!* *The Dictionary of Irish Biography* notes that in America J. B. Yeats was recognised for his 'fluent conversation'. The editors of the Newsletter welcome any information from readers about a drawing of JCP by John Butler Yeats. For a recent vivid and concise account of the life of John Butler Yeats see *Mad, Bad, Dangerous to Know – The Fathers of*

*Wilde, Yeats and Joyce*, by Colm Tóibín, 2018. Also see *Family Secrets* by William M Murphy, 1995.

### **A dedication by Llewelyn**

Amanda Powys sent me a dedication by Llewelyn to his sister Katie Powys dated Christmas 1938. Inside a presentation copy of the 1st trade edition of his book *Glory of Life*, published in 1938 by John Lane, The Bodley Head, Llewelyn has written: ‘For my darling, darling Katie’. Llewelyn’s inscription reads:

#### A Storm of Wind

Arthur O’ Bower has broken his band,  
He comes roaring up the land;  
The King of Scots with all his power,  
Cannot turn Arthur of the Bower!

Llewelyn here quotes a traditional child’s riddle which may have been recited in the Montacute nursery (Llewelyn’s memories of the nursery at Montacute are recorded in *Skin for Skin*, 1926). The riddle appears in the fifth edition of *The Nursery Rhymes of England* edited by James Orchard Halliwell published in 1886.

### **F R Leavis, JCP and Lawrence Hyde**

The literary critic F. R. Leavis (1895-1978) was well known for championing the novels and short stories of TFP whose originality and creative spirit he greatly admired (see for instance Leavis’s footnote on TFP in *The Great Tradition* (originally published 1948), pp. 10-11 (Peregrine 1962) and Newsletter 102, March 2021 pp 12-13). Leavis was unimpressed by JCP. George Steiner in an essay on Leavis first published in *Encounter*, May 1962 and reprinted in *Language and Silence* (1985) noted that *JCP’s work lies outside the central but narrowing grasp of Leavis’s sensibility*. A brief reference to JCP in *For Continuity* (1933), Leavis’s first collection and selection of pieces which had previously appeared in *Scrutiny*, makes the point. Criticising for instance the weaknesses of a book by Lawrence Hyde called *The Prospects of Humanism* (1931) in his essay *The Literary Mind*, Leavis says: *...the innocence is so amiable that one would rather not have had to point out how completely it damns Mr Hyde as a thinker. It is not unrelated to the quality that enables him to discuss the ‘thought’ of Mr J. C. Powys seriously*. Lawrence Hyde cites JCP’s *The Meaning of Culture* and *In Defence of Sensuality* in the context of *the Pagan faith of the sensualist*, describes JCP as an *eloquent and imaginative writer* but critiques his philosophy of sensuality (which is what displeased Leavis): *...the centre of his Universe is the personal self...its aims are*

avowedly hedonistic: it is determined to reinforce its sense of individuality by feeling as intensely as it can...it contrives to increase its vitality by deepening its experience of loneliness, by giving itself up to contemplation...Mr Powys makes use of [the intellect] in order to intensify the life of the senses. Lawrence Hyde (1894-1957) was a student of anthropology, critic, philosopher, translator and the author of *An Introduction to Organic Philosophy* (1915), *The Learned Knife: an essay on science and human values* (1928), *Isis and Osiris* (1946), *The Nameless Faith* (1949), *Spirit and Society* (1949) and *I who Am: A Study of the Self* (1954). He also contributed articles to *The Adelphi* (a periodical founded by John Middleton Murry which he intended to use mainly to help promote the work of his friend D.H. Lawrence).

**From Rachel Hassall:**

**TFP's son Theodore**

I have been in communication with Amanda Powys about Theodore Charles Powys [son of TFP, also called 'Dicky', 1906-1931, who was tragically killed in Africa]. Amanda has discovered TFP's son listed on the 1921 census in Weymouth living with Gertrude and her father where he is named as 'Theodore Cowper Powys'. We decided to order Theodore's birth certificate to confirm whether his middle name was Charles or Cowper, but it was neither! His birth certificate gives his father's occupation as 'Head Gardner'. See birth certificate illustrated here.

Registration District <i>Marcham</i>										
Sub-District <i>Beare Regis</i>										
1906. BIRTHS in the Sub-District of <i>Beare Regis</i> in the County of <i>Wessex</i>										
Columns—	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
No.	When and Where Born.	Name, if any.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.	Original Name if added after Registration of Birth.
45	<i>Franklin Sixth October 1906 Chaldon Herring</i>	<i>Theodore Boy</i>		<i>Theodore Francis Powys</i>	<i>Wald Rodd, Powys formerly Dodds</i>	<i>Head Gardener</i>	<i>J. F. Powys Father Chaldon Herring</i>	<i>third December 1906</i>	<i>William Bullen Registrar</i>	

*Birth Certificate of TFP's son, Dicky also known as Theodore*

**Llewelyn Powys & Aston Martin: a very unlikely connection**

In *Welsh Ambassadors* (1936), Louis Wilkinson makes reference to Llewelyn's antipathy to *all the apparatus of modern life...to motor cars, to the cinema, to the wireless*. I was therefore intrigued by a letter quoted by Wilkinson in *The Letters*

of *Llewelyn Powys* (1943) in which while a pupil at Sherborne School in 1899 Llewelyn wrote to his mother saying:

*I am going out to dinner today to some people called Bamfords. Mr Bamford is a clergyman who goes on duty where he is wanted you know.* The Rev. Robert Bamford had in fact resigned his curacy due to ill-health and in 1894 he and his family moved to Sherborne where the Rev. Bamford died on 9 November 1898, aged 44. This suggests that either Llewelyn's letter was written before the Rev. Bamford's death or that he didn't know he had died. Putting that aside, the Rev. Bamford had three sons, all of whom attended Sherborne Prep School and Sherborne School. The eldest son, Robert Bamford (1883-1942), was the closest in age to Llewelyn and presumably the one he was expected to get along with at dinner. I am not aware that the Bamford family featured again in Llewelyn's life which is hardly surprising when one realises that it was Robert Bamford who in 1913 co-founded Bamford and Martin (the company that later became Aston Martin) and in 1914 he designed the company's first car, the Coal Scuttle.

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**Chris Thomas**  
*China Red*

Amongst the many items in the Powys collection acquired by Richard Simonds in 2021 from the estate of the late Michael Seidenberg (owner of the Brazenhead Bookstore in New York – see a note on Michael in Newsletter 102, March 2021, p.16) is a curious novel, *China Red*, by the extraordinary Chinese-American writer H. T. Tsiang (1899-1971). *China Red*, which first appeared in 1931, was self-published by the author. The novel was reprinted by Tsiang in 1932. Original copies of the book are now very scarce and command high prices. However, I found a somewhat faded and fragile copy kept in a protective envelope in the British Library. This modernist, experimental and idiosyncratic novel, with its distinctively graphic and highly coloured front cover, tells the story of a love affair between two separated characters, the protagonists of the novel, Chi and her fiancé Sheng who writes about his experiences in America. It is semi-autobiographical as the man's life history mirrors Tsiang's own life-story. The narrative is told in the form of an exchange of letters between the two lovers and is, by turns, humorous, ironic, didactic, and full of lively arguments and discussions comparing China and America, and Socialism and Communism with Capitalism. It is also melodramatic, and violent ending with a sketch of drops of blood and an incitement to rebellion.

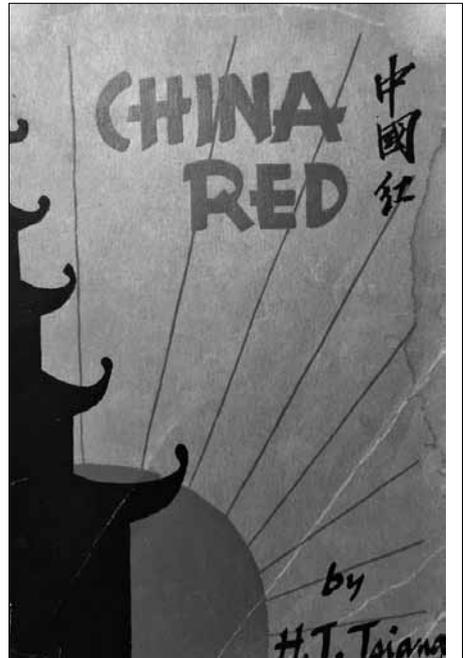
This is specifically of interest to readers of JCP as the book includes a blurb, apparently by JCP, approving the way Tsiang combines playful comedy with radical politics. JCP says:

*I was fascinated by China Red. The wistful, sly and mischievous humour, full of so many delicate vibrations like the wind in poplar-leaves, pleased me very much. The poignancy of the conclusion and its grim implications did not miss the mark either with me.*

Other blurbs printed inside *China Red* voicing approval include statements by Theodore Dreiser: *contains much that is colourful and moving*; and *Moscow News*: *it is something new, something vital*. On the back cover Tsiang quotes rejection slips he received from publishers such as Jonathan Cape and Alfred A Knopf.

However, Richard Simonds commented in an e-mail message to me that he had now started to question the authenticity of the blurb by JCP since JCP nowhere else mentions Tsiang and his novel. It is quite possible that Tsiang himself approached JCP either direct or through his publisher to request from him a comment on *China Red*. We know in fact that it was not unusual for JCP to be invited by publishers to endorse modern books or to make comments on modern literature. We also know for instance that he lectured in California in 1922 on for instance Galsworthy (*To Let*), D.

H. Lawrence (*Women in Love*), Zona Gale (*Miss Lulu Bett*) and Virginia Woolf (*The Voyage Out*). *The Argonaut*, a newspaper published in San Francisco, reported on 4 March 1922, that JCP *goes right to the soul of the books he discusses*. However, JCP rarely mentions these titles in a public setting ever again. Morine Krissdóttir in *Descents of Memory* notes that JCP was always keen to help other writers and records that he provided many blurbs in the late 1930s and 1940s endorsing their work. Even as late as 1963, when Gollancz re-issued a novel by JCP's friend E. H. Visiak called *Medusa* in their series of Rare Works of Imaginative Fiction, a blurb appeared prominently on the front cover under JCP's name: *A tremendous Book*. Moreover, in a letter dated 18 January 1943 to Louis Wilkinson



Front cover *China Red*, 1931

JCP, aware of the many endorsements he had written, referred to himself as *a blurb virtuoso*. Helpfully, some years ago, Robin Patterson compiled a list of all JCP's blurbs and endorsements as far as he could identify them which was published in Newsletter 21, April 1994, p.22-28, to which we might now add JCP's comments on *China Red*. In 1952 JCP also produced a long endorsement (he considered it a blurb) of Louis Wilkinson's *Seven Friends* (1953) which was later published by the Richards Press in the form of a four-page publicity leaflet.

H. T. Tsiang was a poet, novelist, playwright and later film and TV actor. He was just the kind of spirited, radical and unorthodox outsider figure, with an empathy for other helpless outsiders

who might attract the interest of JCP. In a later novel by Tsiang called *The Hanging on Union Square* and ironically subtitled *An American Epic*, (the design and typography of the cover is even more experimental than *China Red*), the protagonist, Mr Nut, a lonely and solitary figure, encounters a varied cast of misfits, eccentrics, political radicals and eccentrics (Mr Wiseguy, Comrade Stubborn, Mr System). Tsiang quotes blurbs to endorse his novel as well as rejection slips by publishers underlining his belief that: ... *publishers are capitalists...proletarian literature can be produced without them*.

Tsiang cut a striking figure in the artistic and literary scene of New York in the 1930s where he attempted to distribute his poems and novels on the streets. He was well acquainted with many of the avant-garde artists and writers, left wing, anti-establishment and bohemian figures that congregated in Greenwich Village who were also all well known to JCP and who JCP describes in *After My Fashion*. JCP mentions in *Autobiography* how whilst sometimes living in Greenwich Village he never however shared a bohemian existence or life style. In the 1920s and 1930s Tsiang was considered an exciting new talent who was admired for his powerful social criticism and representation of the struggles of the working class.



*H. T. Tsiang*

While still only a teenager in China Tsiang became deeply involved with radical politics. Inspired by the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 and motivated by the prospects of Lenin's world revolution he led an outspoken critical attack on Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang (the Chinese Nationalist Party) which he considered too conservative. In 1926 Tsiang exiled himself to America and entered Stanford University where he edited a newspaper *Young China* and a periodical *The Chinese Guide in America*. In 1928 he moved to New York, enrolled at Columbia University and produced his first self-published work a collection of poems (some of which had already appeared in communist publications such as the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*) called *Poems of the Chinese Revolution* which included a blurb by Upton Sinclair: *What he has written is not perfect poetry, hut it is the perfect voice of Young China, protesting against the lot of the under-dog*. In 1935 Tsiang self-published another novel satirising bourgeois existence called *The Hanging on Union Square* (reprinted by Penguin Classics in 2019) which was mentioned in the Talk of the Town column in the *New Yorker*, 6 July 1935: *we read the book and sort of enjoyed it. The moral is Communistic*. This was followed by *And China Has Hands*, published by Robert Speller in 1937 (reissued by Kaya Press in 2016) and a play *China Marches On* in 1938. In 1941 he became involved with Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop at the New School for Social Research in New York where he learned the techniques of epic theatre and agit-prop plays aimed at raising the social conscience of the audience. From November 1940 to July 1941 he was imprisoned on Ellis Island for breaching the conditions of his student visa. He was freed from jail thanks to the efforts of admirers such as the artist Rockwell Kent, the poet Archibald MacLeish and the critic, literary editor and novelist Waldo Frank, well known to JCP. Waldo Frank campaigned for Tsiang's release in a letter published in the *New Republic* in April 1941. In his letter Frank described Tsiang as a *patriot, student and champion of social justice* and a *courageous and gifted young man*. Frank also provided a foreword to Tsiang's novel *The Hanging on Union Square* which he said conveys *more truth than a shelf of reportorial novels* and referred to *China Red* with *its poignant, accurate lyricism' and its humour at once terrible and tender*.

In the late 1940s Tsiang moved to Hollywood where he appeared in films such as *Tokyo Rose* (1946), *Panic in the Streets* (1950) and *Ocean's 11* (1960) and in TV shows such as *Wagon Train* (1963), *My Three Sons* (1963) and *Dr Kildare* (1964). However, Tsiang did not abandon his earlier connection with communism. He was placed under surveillance by the FBI.

There is no evidence that whilst JCP was in America he ever met Tsiang or indeed that he ever read any of Tsiang's other books. But there is no doubt JCP would

have empathised with Tsiang's identification with communism since we know from *Autobiography* that JCP considered himself at this time sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and a champion of communists. JCP would also have surely sympathised with Tsiang's satirical attitude as well as the unconventional characters of his later novels including his attempts to challenge orthodoxy and give a voice to the 'underdog' and marginal elements of modern society. Tsiang too might well have found in JCP an ally for they both shared concern for the sufferings of ill constituted 'oddities', and misfits, who they saw all around them. In *Autobiography* JCP declared: *I shrieked and danced and yelled and roared and whispered and wept for the sake of all those lonely ones and funny ones* which sounds like something out of one of Tsiang's novels.

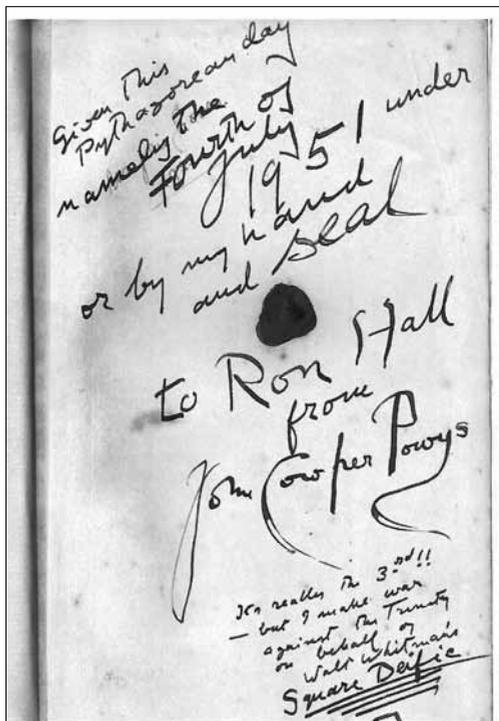
There are several good articles and websites on the internet devoted to H. T. Tsiang as well as useful information in the Penguin edition of *The Hanging on Union Square* and a study of his life and times by Hua Hsu in *The Floating Chinaman*, 2016.

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### Chris Thomas

#### *Three Inscriptions by JCP*

One of our members Adrian Leigh sent me a wonderful example of JCP's unique way of inscribing his books. This inscription in a copy of the first English edition, reprinted August 1933, of *A Glastonbury Romance* is dedicated to JCP's young friend, the novelist, Ron Hall. (For a note on Ron Hall and a selection of JCP's letters to him see Newsletter 89, November 2016 and see also Newsletter 95, November 2018.) This inscription is accompanied by what JCP calls a 'seal'. The inscription reads: *Given this Pythagorean day namely the fourth of July 1951 under or by my hand and seal to Ron Hall from John Cowper Powys. It's really the 3<sup>rd</sup>!! – but I make war against the Trinity on*



JCP's inscription for Ron Hall in *A Glastonbury Romance*

behalf of Walt Whitman's *Square Deific*. Ron Hall himself refers to this inscription in his introduction to JCP's letters to Henry Miller, published by the Village Press in 1975: *I can take his books from my shelves, treasuring the thumb print seal inside A Glastonbury Romance*. (See Newsletter 89, November, 2016, p.44). However, Adrian says that on close inspection he does not think that the seal bears JCP's thumb print at all but in fact can be shown to reveal the clear imprint of an armorial device of a gauntlet and forearm grasping a mace or wand. Adrian asks are there any other examples extant of a similar seal imprinted by JCP alongside an inscription? The inscription is of particular interest as well because it points to JCP's adherence to Pythagorean number symbolism and his passion for Whitman's poem *Chanting the Square Deific*. There are frequent references to these idea throughout JCP's work. In *Autobiography* JCP describes Pythagoras as *a great imaginative spirit* like Socrates, Plotinus, the Gnostic heretics, Goethe and Pater. In a letter to Katie Powys, dated 8 January 1948, he equated the number 4 with the

This Book  
belongs  
to  
Chydyote  
If any discover it left among  
the gorge-brooks  
Will they convey it please  
to the table of the Sofa  
of Miss Gertrude  
or  
to the table by the Bed  
of Miss Kate.  
Under the hand & seal of the  
author of the same  
John Cowher Powys  
Nov. 1938

JCP's inscription inside a copy of *The Enjoyment of Literature*,

Dutifully  
Inscribed  
For  
Fred Bacon  
by  
John Cowher Powys  
on the Fifth of July 1955  
our home as a family was  
for thirty years  
at  
Mountacute Vicarage  
from which  
by going up a little hill  
Glastonbury Tor  
was visible  
and crossing the Atlantic I had the American  
seas as the sun from above  
And with my Memory full of old  
Memories (not only of Wren's  
but of the Norfolk of my grand-parents  
in the "Material side") I wrote  
this book in Glastonbury in 1938  
My memory fails me when I try  
to record for how long I was  
writing of  
the  
United States  
which I learned my living  
as a lecturer  
and if most have been  
spent in America  
I wrote it  
as I will write all  
in  
Long Hand

JCP's inscription for Fred Bacon inside *A Glastonbury Romance*

Square Deific. In a letter to Nicholas Ross he refers to the ultimate 4 of Pythagoras and in *Porius* he says *Pythagoras swore that the number 4 and not the number 3 was the secret of God's most holy cosmos*. The number 4 was JCP's favourite number because it symbolised the multiverse and chance and stood against the number 3 which represented to him the block universe described by William James in *A Pluralistic Universe*. A letter to Clifford Tolchard dated 1 September 1948 makes his meaning clear: *I really must curb my obsessed compulsion for 4 & my obsessed revulsion from 3*.

A quirky and whimsical inscription was found by Amanda Powys in her Powys collection inside a copy of *The Enjoyment of Literature* which coincidentally mirrors a similar phrase in Adrian's inscription *under the hand and seal*. The inscription reads: *This book belongs to Chydyok. If any discover it among the gorze-bushes will they convey it please to the table by the sofa of Miss Gertrude or to the table by the bed of Miss Katie under the hand and seal of the author of the same John Cowper Powys November 1938*.

Norman Jones found an inscription dedicated to Fred Bason inside his first edition copy of *A Glastonbury Romance: Dutifully inscribed for Fred Bason by John Cowper Powys on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1955*. *Our home as a family was for thirty years at Montacute vicarage from which by going up a little hill Glastonbury Tor was visible and crossing the Atlantic I had the Arthurian legend as Sir John Rhys describes it. And with my memory full of old memories (not only of Wessex but of the Norfolk of my grandparents on the maternal side) I wrote this book in trains & in hotels my memory fails me when I try to record for how long I was writing it in the United States while I earned my living as a lecturer and it must have been typed in America for I wrote it as I still write all in Long Hand*. The later part of the inscription makes it sound as if JCP is actually referring to *Wolf Solent!* However, he also wrote to Ron Hall in 1951 referring to *A Glastonbury Romance*: *'I wrote Glastonbury on my lecture trips all over America in hotels.'* Frederick Bason was an active collector of authors' autographs and appears to have been in touch with both JCP and Theodore seeking copies of their books and examples of their signatures – other inscribed Powys books by JCP to Mr Bason can be found in several American archives - there's a letter from JCP to Mr Bason dated 1 July 1955 at University of Pennsylvania and an inscribed copy of *In Spite Of* for Fred Bason dated 1955 at Colgate. We published a letter from TFP to Mr Bason dated July 3 1929 in Newsletter 101, November 2020, p.16.

**Chris Thomas**  
***JCP and Winifred Holtby***

Winifred Holtby (1898-1935) was fiercely committed to her belief in the cause of women's rights, world peace and social justice. She shared her passionate beliefs and ideas with other notable life-long women friends such as Phyllis Bentley, Stella Benson, Jean McWilliam and Vera Brittain with whom she corresponded extensively on subjects such as modern literature, current affairs, politics and contemporary life. Winifred Holtby was a feminist, pacifist, poet, novelist, book reviewer, radical activist, socialist and journalist. She was the author of fourteen books, including two collections of short stories and six novels with settings mostly in the East Riding of Yorkshire: *The Crowded Street*, 1924; *The Land of Green Ginger*, 1928; *Poor Caroline*, 1931; and her most famous work *South Riding*, 1936 (which was edited by Vera Brittain). She was also the author of an early critical study of Virginia Woolf published in 1932.

During Winifred Holtby's career as a journalist, which commenced shortly after she graduated from Somerville College, Oxford in 1921, she contributed to well-known publications such as the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *Yorkshire Post*, *Radio Times*, *Everybody's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Country Life*, *The Queen*, *Nation and Athenaeum*, *New Leader*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *Clarion*, *Daily Express*, and the *Daily Telegraph*. In 1926 she was appointed Director of the independent literary and political review *Time and Tide* where she regularly produced leader articles, editorials, news reports, features and book and theatre reviews.

Winifred Holtby wrote reviews of books by JCP especially, *A Glastonbury Romance*, which she found disappointing and *pretentious*, lamenting JCP's *turgid and beglamoured prose*, though she was impressed by his *impressive creative power* and liked the reproduction of the photographic portrait of JCP by Sherill Schell. She also reviewed *The Meaning of Culture* and *Jobber Skald* though she thought JCP's characters were unconvincing and unrealistic: *they seem to belong to a cloudy Celtic twilight, populated by a nightmare. For myself, Mr Powys makes me long to read Jane Austen, but on others he obviously has different effects* (*Good Housekeeping*, August 1935). She also read TFP's novel *Black Bryony* (1923) which she described in a letter to Vera Brittain dated 28 February 1926 as: *whimsical, strange and beautifully written*.

Winifred Holtby's reviews of JCP's books are not listed in Derek Langridge's *John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement* (1966); they have not been reprinted and are rarely quoted (but see News and Notes in this Newsletter and particulars about a quote from Winifred Holtby's review of *A Glastonbury Romance* in the TLS in February this year). Now therefore seems a good opportunity to reproduce two of Winifred Holtby's

reviews of JCP in the Newsletter. I have not found any evidence that JCP ever corresponded with Winifred Holtby or commented on her writings or her campaigns. However, some commentators reference the work of both JCP and Winifred Holtby in the context of the development of British rural fiction and the English regional novel – see for instance W J Keith’s *Regions of the Imagination*, Toronto, 1988, on JCP; and see for instance Phyllis Bentley’s *The English Regional Novel*, 1941, for Winifred Holtby.



*Winifred Holtby*

For more information on Winifred Holtby see *Testament of Friendship: the Story of Winifred Holtby* by Vera Brittain, 1940; *Selected Letters of Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain (1920-1935)*, edited by Vera Brittain and G. Handley-Taylor, 1970; *The Clear Stream, a Life of Winifred Holtby* by Marian Shaw, 1999; *A Woman in her Time* by Lisa Regan, 2010; and *Letters to a Friend*, edited by Alice Holtby and Jean McWilliam, 2014.

## **Winifred Holtby** *Two reviews*

### ***A Remarkable Novel, But –***

A review of *A Glastonbury Romance* first published in the *News Chronicle*, 30 June 1933. When a novel is 1,173 pages long, opens with a seven line sentence in which the following words and phrases appear: ‘causal radius,’ ‘deepest pools of emptiness,’ ‘uttermost stellar systems,’ ‘infinitesimal ripples in the creative silence of the first cause,’ ‘heightened consciousness,’ ‘living organism,’ and ‘astronomical universe,’ and when it faces the world wearing upon its jacket a large portrait of the author’s exceptionally handsome profile, and recommendations by writers of repute judging it to be ‘one of the greatest novels in the world, to be classed with Tolstoy’s ‘War and Peace,’” the expectant reader may be prepared for something unusual.

And in this case his preparations will not prove superfluous. *A Glastonbury Romance* is undoubtedly a remarkable book. Its other qualities are more ambiguous.

For this huge, romantic, rich, eloquent and pretentious novel contains so much of both good and bad writing, true and spurious emotion, profound and muddled thought, authentic and distorted observation, that one could find in it grounds for quite ten varying opinions, all vehement and all contradictory. It is necessary to suggest certain characteristics.

In the first place, the theme seems to me admirable; the conflict for the domination of the town of Glastonbury between “Bloody Johnny” Geard, local preacher, who, having inherited a fortune becomes Mayor and organiser of a new sensual-mystic religious revival, and Philip Crow, industrialist, who wants to replace the superstitious and and obscurantist legends of the town by a progressive and dynamic productive community.

Such a theme offers scope for the criticism of two philosophies of life, for ample drama, characterisation, movement and reflection. And Mr Powys has made full use of it.

The whole texture of his book is fecund almost, almost sodden, with luxuriant growths of psychology, pantheism, emotional complication, tremendous situations, visions, miracles, politics, obsessions and experiences. The characterisation has an equal ebullient and dramatic opulence.

The Mayor works miracles, the antiquary, after approaching death when almost accidentally crucified while acting as the central figure in a Passion play, incites a half-wit homicidal maniac, who worships a mad woman, to a murder in which the wrong man perishes while protecting his friend; the vicar’s son Sam Dekker, sees the Holy Grail after seducing the wife of the local Marquis’s bastard and subsequently repenting; the industrialist seduces – or perhaps is seduced by – the wife of the communist agitator organising the strike against him; Miss Euphemia Drew falls in love with, but nobly renounces, her companion, who is loved by the organiser of the Passion play, who is half in love with the father of Tosstie Stickles’s twins, and who eventually dies for him.

The inhabitants of Glastonbury are, as may appear, very different from the inhabitants of Jane Austen’s Bath, or, indeed most small provincial English towns as described by say, Mr S.P.B. Mais, upon the wireless\*.

Mr John Cowper Powys has tried to take the kingdom of literature by violence. It is not an illegitimate experiment. The plot of *A Glastonbury Romance* is no more fantastic than the plot of *King Lear*, the characters are more maniacal.

And Mr Powys has qualities; he has an exuberantly creative imagination; he can conceive magnificently dramatic scenes.

At times Mr Powys can reveal something really important about human psychology: Miss Crow's reaction to her sentence of death, Cordelia's reaction to her marriage, Sam's experience with Old Twig after the Grail vision, Geard's massive and heroic sensuality of mysticism – these are authentic; they ring true; they carry their own effect.

But the accumulation of violent feeling is too great: Mr Powys has omitted to stiffen his edifice of human relationships with the small tedious yet real substance of day-to-day detail, the minutiae of common experience. His women, particularly, are bundles of receptive nerves – more like sea anemones than living people.

The whole tone of the book is over heightened into a nightmare unreality. Within the conventions of the stage King Lear can make its terrific impact upon readers and audience; but 1, 173 pages of that ferocity of human tempest are too much.

Also Mr Powys is not Shakespeare. His turgid and beglamoured prose is not poetry. His vision of the world lacks that fundamental and universal sanity. At the heart of his undoubtedly impressive creative power lurks the little worm of conceit called "I'll show 'em." At least, that, after one reading, is how this book appears to one reader. I may be wrong.

### **\*Note by Chris Thomas**

S.P.B. Mais (1885-1975) was a prolific author of travel guides and books as well as a popular broadcaster in the 1920s and 1930s. Between January and April 1932 he broadcast a series of talks on the BBC on his travels around England, Scotland and Wales visiting many small towns under the general title *The Unknown Island*. The talks were published in *The Listener* and later appeared in book form the same year under the title *This Unknown Island* with references to TFP, Dorset and East Chaldon including a chapter on Glastonbury. Prior to his career as a broadcaster and author S.P.B. Mais had been a teacher at Sherborne. On TFP Mais said: *Close by, though hidden in a fold of the smooth, green downs, is the attractive rambling village of East Chaldon, the home of Mr. T. F. Powys, whose interpretation of the Dorset rustic character serves as so odd a commentary to Thomas Hardy. It has been said that no railway company is likely to issue, on the strength of Mr. Powys's Dorset novels, a poster, "Come to Powys land." I suggest that it would be wise if they did so, for the land is as lovely as the novels are brilliant, while as for the truth in them, human behaviour is erratic and unaccountable everywhere, and searchers after the macabre will find instances of the gruesome as plentiful here as in less happy seeming areas. Tragedy, alas, does not confine itself to ugly places.*

## ***The Meaning of Culture***

A review of *The Meaning of Culture* first published in *Time and Tide*,  
11 April 1930

What is this culture? Mr Powys wisely avoids a definition. Rather he builds up a composite portrait of what culture can mean to the individual. *The Meaning of Culture* is no objective survey of contemporary possibilities. It is a solemn, poetical, personal, intensely subjective confession – the portrait of solitary, as opposed to social, culture. In spite of his chapters on “Culture and Human Relationships”, it is clear that Mr Powys does not think much of social life. Too many people are vulgar, stupid and frivolous; too many third-rate books are written; cities are mean and ugly; crowds are clamorous; one must escape, escape into a world peopled by the vivid ghosts of greatness, enriched by the legacy of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Proust. All cultures are contemporaneous; all greatness is accessible; nature is the universal mother and conciliator. Escape, elimination, the refusal of vulgarity, are the negative methods by which men can acquire culture; the pursuit of truth, beauty and goodness, as revealed in great art – these are the positive methods. Love is the enricher, but it is squeamish, difficult love. The book is oddly compounded of ripe wisdom and petulant platitudes. It misses much that is true of social culture; it visualises man at odds with his environment, cultured in spite of, not because of, his workaday life. Is this the final comment upon culture? The cultured Anglo Saxon of Mr Powys’s vision ... seems able only to live his full life by isolation from the group. Surely there is a middle way? The final goal is surely a society through which the highest potentialities of men can be realised, not in spite of but because of, their association with each other.

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**Chris Thomas**

### ***A Bath Chair Man***

In *Wood and Stone* at the beginning of Chapter 22, A Royal Watering Place, Luke Andersen arrives at Weymouth railway station and observes a *lethargic phalanx of expectant out-porters and bath-chair men, — each one of whom was a crusted epitome of ingrained quaintness...* I thought of JCP’s description when Richard Samways at the Weymouth museum sent me a photo of Llewelyn in a Bath Chair - a type of wheelchair with a folding hood usually pushed by an attendant, once popular at Victorian resorts and spa towns. Richard Samways said that Llewelyn is accompanied in the

photograph by *Mr H.J. Hill, the last licensed Bath Chair-man in Weymouth*. The photograph was taken in 1938 on the Esplanade in Weymouth. Perhaps JCP would have recognised the *ingrained quaintness* of the attendant. This photograph appeared in the *Dorset Daily Echo*, Saturday December 24, 1938 alongside an article by Llewelyn headed “Weymouth Memories” – “Boys Who Played Soldiers | Outside Victor House | Solid Townsmen Now; The Backwater | In Days Of Yore”.

In the article Llewelyn remembers the old-fashioned Bath Chairs of his childhood, *these sedate vehicles out of the past* and refers to the *decorative bearing and independent character* of the attendant, Mr Hill, from whom he had hired a Bath Chair. Llewelyn comments that he and Mr Hill shared something in common for when he was a young man Mr Hill, whilst he had been a servant at one of the Out-Houses of Sherborne School, had received lessons from a schoolmaster who had also taught Llewelyn *copy-book writing*. The photograph was also reprinted in *Weymouth Through Old Photographs* edited by Yvette Staelens, 1989, p. 23 (but with an incorrect caption). Llewelyn’s article subsequently appeared without the photograph in *A Baker’s Dozen*, 1939 (1<sup>st</sup> USA edition) and 1941 (1<sup>st</sup> UK edition), under the title Childhood Memories and was reprinted in *Scenes from a Somerset Childhood*, Redcliffe, 1986 also under the title Childhood Memories. For more information about the essay and photo see *A Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys*, by Peter Foss, 2007, p.204.



*Llewelyn and the last licensed Bath Chair-man in Weymouth. Courtesy Weymouth museum*