

THE POWYS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1988

LONDON MEETING

Saturday, March 5th, Liddon House, South Audley St., London, W.1 at 1.30 p.m. (Please note time change).

We hope to see many of our members at this meeting. Unfortunately, Kenneth Hopkins is unwell and regrets he will not be able to give his talk "Of Diaries and Journals." A disappointment to all of us, but he may be persuaded to speak another time. Since so many members have requested more opportunities for discussion and readings, we thought we might try the following: bring along your favourite Powysian passage and be prepared to read it aloud to the 'congregation'. If you are not too shy, explain why you chose it. So far I have not been able to decide which book, much less the passage. But I am discovering that it is an interesting exercise.

CALLING ALL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

There are a number of important initiatives and decisions the executive would like to consult the Advisory Committee about. We would like to have a session immediately after the regular London meeting on March 5th. Please attend if at all possible.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

These were due on January 1st. Would any member who has not yet paid his or her subscription please do so as soon as possible.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Quite frankly, we were startled by the large number of questionnaires that members took time to fill in and return. But we were delighted by the thoughtful, lively and innovative suggestions that were made. If there was ever a doubt, we are now assured that members care about the Society and its continuance. More importantly, they care about the Powyses. Again and again members noted how important the writings of one or another Powys had been to them at some critical point in their lives, and how much they wished their books were better known. Here are some suggestions made for improving the Society and attracting new members:-

- "explanatory leaflet with aims of Society to all new members"
- membership lists should be available "to encourage formation of regional groups"
- mail-shots, posters, exhibitions, bookmarks to publicize the Society and the Powyses
- "transcripts of talks", greater number of informal meetings and walks
- "more greetings cards"
- information about people standing for office should be made available to members before the AGM
- "regular Newsletter where members are encouraged to write short articles and share views"
- talks/readings on local radio and encourage members to write about the Powyses in their local papers
- "informal tone and consultation of members very welcome"
- small like-minded Societies might help each other-- joint conferences, free advertising in each other's journals and newsletters etc.

Thanks to everyone who contributed ideas.

THE ANNUAL WEEKEND CONFERENCE

The 1988 Conference will be held at Hope Hall, Exeter University, September 2nd-4th. We are limiting it this year to two days in the hope of enticing more members to attend. The programme is shaping nicely and will include talks by Glen Cavaliero, Nikolai Tolstoy, Oliver Wilkinson and Charles Lock. We plan to have an afternoon of discussion groups and more time for informal gatherings so everyone has a chance to talk about "their" Powys. Many of you will remember Hope Hall where we had our 1984 Conference. It has its own old-fashioned grotty charm plus a private (licensed) lounge, dining room and library. Details in the next Newsletter, but mark the date on your calendar now.

Thus far your secretary and chairman have made the Exeter arrangements. Now we would much appreciate help with the details. Are there any volunteers?

THE THOMAS HARDY CONFERENCE

In some minds, the Powyses, the West Country, and Thomas Hardy are inextricably bound together. There will be a chance to meet Hardy enthusiasts at a conference to be held at Dorchester between 24th and 30th July, 1988. In addition to lectures and seminars, the Conference will include coach tours of the Dorset countryside, poetry readings and musical presentations. The organizers have worked hard to make it an opportunity for expert and general reader to share their interest and enthusiasm for Hardy and his work. It should be a stimulating and enjoyable conference.

Applications and further details are available from Mr Furse Swann, (who is a member of the Powys Society). Write to him at Yoah Cottage, West Knighton, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8PE.

WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO ?

A member has asked what he got for his subscription. It seems to us a perfectly proper question and deserves a straight answer.

The membership fee for 1987 was £7.50 for U.K. and £10 for Overseas members. Out of that the Society bought each member two issues of The Powys Review from editor and publisher Belinda Humfrey. In 1987 this cost a total of £6.20 (including p.&p.) per member. The Newsletter, which helps to keep members informed of activities, new books about the Powyses and their circle, conference and meeting details, is produced by the Society's officers as cheaply as possible. In 1987 three issues cost around 80 pence per member.

The chairman, secretary and the treasurer write innumerable letters on the Society's behalf. Occasionally they send in a token bill for postage. The conference expenses are paid for totally by the delegates. Officers pay their own way. We do not pay speakers a fee.

The stated aims of the Powys Society are to promote the study and appreciation of the work of the Powys family. In their questionnaires, many members offered helpful suggestions on ways to fulfil these aims, such as posters, mail-shots, bookmarks in new paperbacks, an expanded Newsletter, more local events and exhibitions.

The remaining 50 pence per member (210 paid-up members in 1987) does not leave much room to manoeuvre. The membership fee was increased for 1988; unfortunately the fixed costs are likely to increase proportionately. We will continue to try to keep the Newsletter costs low, but the Welsh Arts Council has withdrawn its grant to The Powys Review, so the cost of buying it will be significantly more in 1988.

The Society seems to have two choices: go on as it is, or reassess its priorities. We would like to hear the views of our members.

Three Sherborne Memoirs by Oliver Holt.

Those fortunate enough to have heard it will recall with pleasure Oliver Holt's portrait of Littleton Powys, delivered to the Society at Weymouth in September 1981 and reprinted in the Powys Review, No. 10. The present well illustrated booklet contains a revised version of that essay, together with two others which recall the author's schooldays, first as a boy in the Sherborne Preparatory School, of which Littleton Powys was headmaster, and later at the Big School itself. All three are informed by a great zest for life, and portray the years immediately after the First World War with a vivid eye for detail and with generous humour. There are a number of delightful anecdotes, some shrewdly drawn portraits and, above all for the admirers of the Powyses, a picture of Littleton in his world that is a useful supplement to other, occasionally patronising, accounts of a man whose The Joy of It is surely the most undervalued of Powysian writings.

Three Sherborne Memoirs can be obtained direct from the author at South Vernigore, Welham, Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7NF. The cost is £2.50 plus 25 pence postage, and profits will go to the Friends of Sherborne Abbey.

Glen Cavaliero.

The Diary of John Cowper Powys, 1930.

The Diary has received some excellent reviews including one by Cavaliero, reproduced in the last Newsletter. P.J. Kavanagh in The Spectator, 12th Sept. 1987 calls it a "magical" and "important" book. Patrick Reyntiens in The Literary Review, Oct. 1987 praises Frederick Davies introduction and considers the Diary "a good introduction to Powys for those who have yet to taste him." Melvyn Bragg, who originated the highly successful Ten Great Writers series on Channel 4, chose the Diary as one of his "Christmas books." Now if someone could only convince Bragg to choose a Powys for some future series! The Diary is available from Greymitre Books, 36 Great Queen St. London WC2

The Bent Pin This book is a joy to behold, a 'joy to handle and a joy to read. The book is an anthology of poems about fishing compiled, with an introduction and notes by Kenneth Hopkins. Each poem is accompanied by the beautiful line drawings of Tony Whieldon which were inspired by the countryside around Crediton, Devon, where the artist lives. At £21 the book offers great value for money and the book may be obtained from Rigby&Lewis Publishing, 21 Alexandra Terrace, Teignmouth, South Devon TQ14 8HA.

A NEW BOOK BY GLEN CAVALIERO

Out of Season is a new book with 30 photographs of seaside scenes by Ian David Baker and a long introductory essay by Glen Cavaliero. The photographs capture the emptiness and futility of English seaside towns in winter, but they also convey peculiar beauty and humour. Glen Cavaliero's penetrating essay, drawn from first-hand experience, having been born and bred in a south coast resort, gives a nostalgic account of the English seaside town in winter as well as a fascinating glimpse of the lonely and eccentric characters who inhabited such resorts out of season.

Published at £4.95 and obtainable from Olive Press, 38B St. Thomas's Road, London. N4 2QQ.

HARDY'S INFLUENCE ON THE MODERN NOVEL

A series of essays by Peter J. Casagrande on the great Wessex novelist's influence on 7 novelists, George Moore, Proust, Lawrence, Alain-Fournier, Dreiser, Fowles and... the longest essay - J.C. Powys. Macmillan. £27.50

PUBLISHING NEWS

Much of our information comes from Gerald Pollinger who knows most of what happens in the Powys world (and sometimes before it happens!) A new edition of Glastonbury Romance has been published by Overlook Press. Rigby and Lewis will publish Theodore's Fables, a complete edition with the introduction and notes by Larry Mitchell. Larry reports that he is finishing a biography of T.F.P. to be published by Brynmill Press who are also publishing The Market Bell. Sven-Erik Mäckmark has now concluded the translation into Swedish of John Cowper's Autobiography, due for publication this autumn by René Coeckelberg's publishing company. A History of East Shaldon, by Judith Stinton, is to be published by Boydell in the spring and Kenneth Hopkins will bring out a new collection of poems, Ecstasies & Elegies, at about the same time.

Our attention has been drawn to a long review in Le Monde, 25th Sept., 1987 of a translation of The Brazen Head. La Tete Qui Parle, traduit de l'anglais par Bernard Genies, Flammarion, 150 F.

LLEWELYN POWYS - A BIBLIOGRAPHY

Margaret Eaton has completed the major part of the bibliography but has insufficient time to complete the work. The work on the books simply needs to be checked for the sake of completeness. Most of the work on Magazine and journal articles has been completed. Research on the Newspaper articles has not been completed and this would entail a good many hours work at the British Library Newspaper Deposit in North London. There is no separate bibliography devoted to Llewelyn. Margaret is willing to release all the material to anyone who has the time and energy to complete this most important work. For further details please write to Margaret Eaton at Lilies, Weedon, Nr. Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 4NS.

OUR THANKS TO MICHAEL EVEREST

- for putting our membership list on computer. Now we can concentrate on getting names, addresses and postal codes correct. One member noted he "hadn't had a Newsletter for years" and that "the Powys Review comes when it will, like a social security cheque." Embarrassed apologies. We hope to use Michael's generous expertise to produce a list of members for those who wish to contact fellow enthusiasts.

WARREST CONGRATULATIONS TO BELINDA HUMFREY

- who has been appointed editor of the New Welsh Review. We know she will do as fine a job as she does with the Powys Review.

By the time you read this, Powys Review 21 should be out. For those of you without a complete set of this marvellous journal, back numbers can be ordered from Dr Humfrey.

BOOKS FOR SALE/WANTED

We hope to include a books for sale and wanted section in later issues of the Newsletter. Members wishing to sell or acquire difficult titles are invited to write to the Secretary, giving details of the books they wish to sell or purchase. Please give a brief description of the condition of the book, the edition and the price. Members achieving a sale or purchase are invited to make a 10% donation to Society funds which would help to finance the Newsletter.

A Powys Catalogue

A recent list of 67 Powys books is available from Steven Ferdinando of The Old Vicarage, Queen Camel, Nr. Yeovil, Somerset. Telephone: 0935-850210.

The Powys Society

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