



The Powys Society Newsletter

DECEMBER 1988

THE 1988 ANNUAL WEEKEND CONFERENCE

Hope Hall, University of Exeter, was the appropriately named venue for this year's Conference. A larger number of delegates than usual arrived in time for a sherry reception held through the generosity of Bill Degenhardt who could not attend the meeting due to ill health.

The lectures by Glen Cavaliero, Charles Lock, and Nikolai Tolstoy, obviously well received, were erudite and entertaining. An innovation was an afternoon of four discussion groups on different topics. Some delegates expressed frustration at not being able to attend all of them; surely a sign of their success.

One highlight of the Conference was the evening 'In Honour of Isobel'. Stephen Powys Marks produced a lively and graceful script, drawing from his own private collection of Powys family letters. We hope that it gave as much pleasure to Isobel as it gave to the rest of us.

The long Annual General Meeting contained business of importance to the future of the Society (see separate report). It was followed by the perennially popular Book Sale, presided over by Francis Feather. By then we were hopelessly behind schedule, but Oliver Wilkinson, the last lecturer, miraculously calmed us down and drew us back into a charmed circle of laughter, admiration and fellowship.

Intense and sometimes tense, but always exhilarating and warm-natured, the Exeter Conference will be one to remember.

SOCIETY EVENTS, WINTER 1989

A Walk around Chaldon Herring

Sunday, Jan. 15, 1989.

A member has suggested that it would be appropriate for a Society devoted to the Powyses to get together occasionally to walk. Undeterred by winter, we are arranging a walk around Chaldon for Sunday, January 15. Members (and family and friends) should meet at "The Sailor's Return" pub at 11.30-12 if they wish to buy an early lunch. The walk will leave from the pub at 1.00pm sharp. We can walk past special Powysian haunts in the village and, weather and stamina permitting, thence to Chydock, former home of Llewelyn, Alyse, Gertrude and Katie. The Chairman is living temporarily in Chaldon and invites the walkers back to tea.

The walk is not strenuous but wear wellies and warm clothes. There is no charge but small donations to the Society are always welcome.

Could you please contact Morine Krissdottir (tel.: 0305 852 028) if you wish to come.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

THE POWYS SOCIETY WEEKEND CONFERENCE 1989
WILL BE HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
SEPTEMBER 15th - 17th 1989.

MARK IT IN YOUR DIARY. FULL DETAILS IN
NEXT NEWSLETTER.

THE POWYS REVIEW

Members will be pleased to hear that there will be two issues of the Powys Review in 1989 and that the price to the Society will be the same as last year - £8.10 including postage, per member, for the two issues. This was agreed at the first meeting of the new Committee held on November 5th. At that meeting a "full and frank" discussion took place concerning the historic connection between the Review and the Society. This was an important clarification and recording of a rather unusual relationship. Because some members at the last A.G.M. were obviously unaware of or confused about, this relationship, the main points should be repeated here.

1. The Powys Review began under the auspices of the Society and the first 4 issues were published by the Society.
2. In 1979 the editor, Belinda Humfrey, assumed full financial and editorial control of the Review. She is the owner and publisher of the Review.
3. The relationship of the Review to the Society is, then, one of total independence, on both sides and has been since 1979. The Society buys its members the journal at the market price. This is an unusual situation, possibly unique, amongst literary societies.
4. This relationship has advantages for the Society: the Society has no editorial or financial say in the Review but neither is it in any way responsible to it or for it.
5. Equally, the relationship has advantages for the owner of the Review: she is not accountable either financially or editorially to the Society and she has an assured market of over 200 subscriptions.

This loose connection of equals has generally worked well; it is to be hoped that it continues in one form or another. It is essential, however, that all members understand precisely what the relationship is -- one of peculiarly Powysian independence.

PROFILES ON MEMBERS

Many members commented enthusiastically on this column so we will continue it. All members are invited to send in (no more than) 200 words about themselves and their interest in the Powyses. In the meantime we continue profiles of the members of the Committee.

Tim Hyman: Vice Chairman

I was born in 1946, brought up in London and educated at Charterhouse. At 17 I went to the Slade. After many difficult years, when I felt intensely isolated as a painter (living for ten years in a Sussex village) my work began to be shown, and I had a series of one-man exhibitions in London. Towards the end of the seventies I'd published essays in defence of Figurative painters such as Beckmann and Balthus, and I was asked to mount a controversial exhibition of the equivalent British contemporaries. "Narrative Paintings" toured, and I began to lecture widely. In 1980-81 I made the first of three painting-and-lecture trips to India. I moved back to London and in 1982, married. In 1983-84 I was 'artist-in-residence' to Lincoln Cathedral.

I first read J.C.P. in 1966 and in 1970 I felt impelled to write on A Glastonbury Romance. That essay led to contact with Wilson Knight, who put me in touch with the Powys Society. I owe several lasting friendships to this obsession; and John Cowper has probably shaped my aesthetic more than any single painter.

Stephen Powys Marks: Committee Member

Spending much of his time writing, but in very different fashion from his illustrious great-uncles, Stephen Powys Marks, architect and Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians, earns his living travelling all over the country taking public inquiries on planning matters, and writing decisions and reports on them. But the pen work (or, these days, the electronic processing of words) does not stop there:

he edits an annual journal, the Transactions of the Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings (a small professional society), and the twice-yearly newsletter of the London Topographical Society (of which he was for many years the secretary), making contributions both to these and to the Powys Review and other journals. He has been responsible, as designer or publisher or both, for various reprinted books, maps, and views, including the Powys Society's new leaflet, greetings cards and other small works, and the re-issue in 1981 of his grandfather A.R. Powys's Repair of Ancient Buildings. He is an avid collector of books, amongst them private press books, books on architecture and the history of London, and, of course, books on and by members of the Powys family; he also collects wood engravings. He and his wife live in a spacious Victorian vicarage in Somerset.

Paul Roberts: Committee Member

I was born in Southampton in 1953 and was brought up there and in Winchester, the eldest of five children. Memories of childhood visits to Dorset first brought me to read Weymouth Sands and Wolf Solent. The books were a revelation. Someone, at last, had bridged the space between Literature and the world as I knew it.

Being a reader of John Cowper Powys was a lonely business then and it is strange to think now of all the friends this apparently unknown writer has brought me since. Then one day, having moved to London, I came across the Village Bookshop and met Jeff Kwintner. I owe a good deal to Jeff, some of it frustration. Every time I thought I had cracked the secret of J.C.P. he would ask another question and I would be thrown back to the beginning again. It was also through Jeff that I first met Kenneth Hopkins; another revelation.

I now live in Cheshire with my wife Jan and daughter Helen and teach at a school in Lancashire. I have written several articles on the Powys family and am working on a number of projects, including the Uncollected Essays of John Cowper Powys in three large volumes.

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING EXETER, SEPTEMBER 1988

The following is a brief summary of the business dealt with at the A.G.M., 4th Sept. 1988. There were several important and lengthy discussions. Members wishing a full account of the minutes should write to the Secretary, Griffin Beale.

The meeting was under the chairmanship of Morine Krissdottir, Chair of the Society. 40 members were present.

A. The Secretary introduced the Constitution that had been submitted to all members for comment. After a thorough discussion and debate, two motions were passed:

i) That the Constitution as presented be approved, effective Sept. 4, 1988, except in its reference to the election of the Committee at this A.G.M. (39 in favour; 1 opposed).

ii) That the Committee as defined by the Constitution be elected by the A.G.M., the election to be under the direction of the President and that succeeding elections be conducted in accordance with the terms of the Constitution. (38 in favour; 2 absentions).

The effect of the two motions is that for the first time in its 20 year history the Society has a Constitution, and officers and a Committee with authority to conduct its affairs.

B. The Chairman reported on her work, particularly in connection with (a) drafting the constitution; (b) publishing 4 Newsletters; (c) consultations with members of the Committee and meetings of that body; (d) arranging the current Annual Conference.

C. The Secretary, Griffin Beal, reported in particular on (a) the revision of the membership list; (b) efforts to publicize the Society, especially through the help of Stephen Marks; (c) discussions by the Committee of the present financial arrangement under which more than 80% of the Society's membership income goes to support the Powys Review; (d) efforts to improve the Society's finances by increasing membership and by having the Society made a recognized charity.

D. The Treasurer, Susan Rands, circulated copies of her report to the A.G.M. The report was approved subject to a correction by Margaret Eaton, who pointed out that the first four Powys Reviews were in fact the property of the Society. The Treasurer's report is available to all members. Write to Susan Rands, Victoria Farm, Bradley Lane, Nr. Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8LW.

E. The President, Glen Cavaliero, conducted the Election of Committee members and officers, with results as follows:

Chair:	Morine Krissdottir
Gen. Secretary:	Griffin Beale
Treasurer:	Susan Rands
Committee:	Margaret Eaton, Michael Everest, Belinda Humfrey, Susan Huxtable-Selly, Stephen Powys Marks, Paul Roberts, Subi Swift

F. The constitution requiring that the Society appoint an Auditor, the President proposed that Peter Hewson, F.C.A. be so appointed. The proposal was accepted.

G. Gerald Pollinger reported on a variety of matters related to the state of Powysian publications, current and prospective.

H. The Editor of the Powys Review, Belinda Humfrey, reported on the achievements, significance, and financial situation of the Review and its relationship to the Society. There was a thorough general discussion in the course of which several proposals were made: that the Review be separated from the Society; that the subscriptions be increased; that a fixed proportion of the Society's revenue be set aside for the Review; that the number of issues per year be reduced. While members present were asked to indicate their feelings on these proposals, the Chairman pointed out that the Committee would have to look carefully into the whole question of publications.

The meeting then adjourned.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Thanks to the energy of Powysian authors and editors, many of them members of the Society, and to the persistence and hard work of Gerald Pollinger, a steady stream of books by or about the Powyses and their circle is now being published. Some of these are forthcoming books, definite, but too early for publication dates. When these have come forth, the Newsletter will have details and brief reviews.

1. SINGULAR FIGURES, six lectures by John Cowper Powys, edited by Paul Roberts: John Wilkie.
2. THE LETTERS OF J.C.P. TO HAL AND VIOLET TROVILLION, edited by Paul Roberts: Cecil Woolf.
3. POWYS: VISIONS AND VICIES, collected by G. Wilson Knight, edited by John Christie: Cecil Woolf.
4. THE LETTERS OF J.C.P. TO KENNETH HOPKINS with an Introduction by Glen Cavaliero: Rigby and Lewis.
5. DEATH'S OTHER KINGDOM by Gamel Woolsey: recently published by Virago Press, following ONE WAY OF LOVE.
6. FABLES by Theodore Powys, edited by Lawrence Mitchell: Rigby and Lewis (Spring, 1989).
7. BIOGRAPHY OF THEODORE F. POWYS by Lawrence Mitchell: The Brynmill Press.
8. VARIORUM OF THE ONLY PENITENT by T.F. Powys.
 MARK ONLY by T.F. Powys
 BOTTLE'S PATH by T.F. Powys
 THE TWO THIEVES by T.F. Powys
 THE MARKET BELL by T.F. Powys

To be published by the Brynmill Press, two in each year, part of a programme devised by Kenneth Hopkins and compiled, edited and introduced by Lawrence Mitchell.

9. (a) A GLASTONBURY ROMANCE by John Cowper Powys: new edition just published by Overlook Press (Viking Penguin) N.Y.
- (b) Motion pictures and television rights options renewed by composer Richard Tony Arnell, plus operatic rights.
10. AFTER MY FASHION by John Cowper Powys: motion picture and television rights renewed by Elsbeth Cochrane of MYWAY PRODUCTIONS.
11. ROMER MOWL AND OTHER STORIES by John Cowper Powys: French contract with R. and Cie.
12. CONFESSIONS OF TWO BROTHERS by John Cowper Powys and Llewelyn Powys: French lanugage contract: Granit.
13. THE ART OF GROWING OLD and THE ART OF HAPPINESS each by John Cowper Powys both German hardcover and pocketbook: Goldmann Verlag.

Rigby & Lewis have recently published Village Love by Adelaide Phillipotts Ross at £9.95. Also available are Kenneth Hopkins' The Bent Pin and Mary Casey's The Kingfisher's Wing. For these and other good books for discerning readers contact Bob Rigby of Rigby & Lewis Publishing, 21 Alexandra Terrace, Teignmouth, South Devon TQ14 8HA.

Other encouraging news, reported by Glen Cavaliero, is that the COMPLETE PORIUS may yet see the light of day. Professor Bob Blackmore has appointed Wilbur Albright to edit it. More information in the next Newsletter.

THE NEW PAMPHLET

The new Powys Society pamphlet is enclosed with this Newsletter. We hope members approve. Its production was a joint effort: the illustrations and wood-engraving are the work of Gertrude Mary Powys; Glen Cavaliero, Lawrence Mitchell, Charles Lock and Morine Krissdottir wrote the texts; Stephen Powys Marks designed and produced it.

The pamphlet is the first of a number of initiatives the Committee hope to take in an attempt to bring the Powys brothers and their circle to wider public recognition. This can be done only with the help of Powys enthusiasts. We would like to ask every member to present a pamphlet to a person or an organization that might be interested in joining the Society, or learning more about the Powyses. Any suggestion members might have for further distribution would be warmly welcomed by the Secretary.

THE CONFERENCE BOOK SALE

My first reaction to a conference book sale was total bewilderment, but Louise de Bruin assured me that it was fair, fun, and an indispensable ritual in the Society Annual Weekend. And so it has been.

This year the Book Sale netted us £183.70. Over the years it has given the Society a small but essential reserve fund.

A bibliophile and an astute business man, Francis Feather lectures us when necessary (and it often is) on the financial side of the Society's business, organizes and runs the book sale, and is always available to give sagacious advice to the officers.

We are not a demonstrative group but all "the regulars" at the conferences recognize the role Francis Feather and his wife Kay play in the Society and we are grateful to them.

M. K.

KENNETH HOPKINS

VIRAGO PRESS have published two of Camel Woolsey's books which KENNETH HOPKINS introduced to them. Virago's editor, Lynn Knight, wrote the following (quoted with permission): "I heard about Kenneth Hopkins's death....and felt very sad -- though I know he missed his wife and his death shouldn't have been a surprise. He used to write such wonderful letters to us and I'm sorry there'll be no more....It was lovely to see the kindness of the obituaries....he was obviously cared for very dearly."

LUCY AMELIA PENNY, nee POWYS

Members may like to know that this autumn the gravestone for Lucy's grave has been erected in Mappowder churchyard. It is a simple piece of Purbeck marble, smooth on the face and rough behind, with a traditionally shaped head, on a small plinth. It is inscribed, as Lucy wished, just with her name, the dates 1890-1986, and the message 'Thank you'. It is located in the eastern part of the churchyard.

CHRISTINE STEPHENS, who died peacefully on 20 September, will have been known to all those of our members who attended the meetings and conferences during the time when her husband Derrick was our secretary. Her help to him, both in public and behind the scenes, was unstinting, and she fully shared his personal concern for the Society's welfare; her charm and enthusiasm will be recalled with affection by very many of us, not least by those who enjoyed her hospitality in Cambridge. We send our sympathy to her two sons, David and Hugh Stephens, and to her daughter, Clare Brown.

Glen Cavaliero.

THE CONSTITUTION AND CHARITABLE STATUS

Following the adoption of the Constitution at the A.G.M. in September, the Charity Commission has confirmed that the Constitution will be acceptable for registration under the Charities Act, 1960, subject to one minor amendment to the Object clause. The object clause was as follows:

The object of the Society is to promote the study and public recognition of the writings, thought, and contribution to the arts of the Powys family, particularly of John Cowper, Theodore and Llewelyn, and also including the other members of the family and their close associates.

The Charity Commission and the Inland Revenue require the following amendment: "Please delete 'study' and replace with 'public education'."

Clause 6.1 of the Constitution provides for additions or alterations to the Constitution;

Additions or alterations to this Constitution shall be made only through the conducting by the Committee of a mail ballot of all the members of the Society and the approval of them by two-thirds of the members who vote. A period of at least two months must be allowed for such a ballot to be taken.

At a meeting of the Committee on Nov. 5, the following proposal was made and seconded and the Committee voted in favour of the proposal:

A mail ballot of members of the Society be sent to all members to vote for the amendment as required by the Charity Commission.

Members will therefore find a ballot paper following this article. We hope all members will vote on this important issue. A large majority of the Committee considers that it would be in the best interest of the Powys Society to apply for registration as a charity.

The potential financial advantages alone would make such a step worthwhile. The Society's income from subscriptions could be increased by at least 25% if every member covenanted his or her annual subscription. This would not involve any cost to members and would enable the Society to freeze the current subscription for some time to come. The tax on income from investments could also be reclaimed. In future legacies to the Society would be deemed to be charitable and would not abate, as occurred in the case of the Wilson Knight bequest. Finally, the Powys Society would gain an added respectability and weight which could increase the opportunities for grants and greater public recognition of the Powys family.

If the approval of two-thirds of those members who do vote is obtained, it should be possible to submit the formal application for charitable status by the spring of 1989 provided the three year audit of the Society's accounts, requested by the Charity Commission, is completed within a reasonable period.

We therefore hope that all members will vote in favour of the proposed amendment to the Constitution. Please vote and return your ballot paper to the Secretary, Griffin Beale, as soon as possible.

G.B.

-----please cut here-----

BALLOT BALLOT BALLOT BALLOT

I am in favour of amending the object clause of the Constitution to read:

The object of the Society is to promote public education and the public recognition of the writings, thought, and contribution to the arts of the Powys family, particularly of John Cowper, Theodore and Llewelyn, and also including the other members of the family and their close associates.

YES.....

NO.....

Please return as soon as possible to Griffin Beal,
Secretary, 39 Church Street, Bridgwater, Somerset
TA6 5AT.

THE WILSON KNIGHT BEQUEST

Members will be pleased to hear that the administration of the estate of the late G.R. Wilson Knight has at last been completed after almost four years. By his Will Professor Wilson Knight left a great many legacies to friends and organizations, including a legacy of £1,000 to the Powys Society. Early during the administration of the estate one half of each legacy was paid to 'individual' legatees and one half of each 'organization' legacy was paid into a separate high rate account pending completion of the administration of the estate.

The remaining capital was insufficient to pay the second instalments of the legacies in full. The Executors were able to pay legacies to charities in full but the non-charitable legacies had to abate and the Powys Society and the other non-charitable organizations received 89.58% of the capital of each legacy; in our case £895.85. However, with interest earned during the administration of the estate the final amount payable to the Society totalled £1,272.77. The Committee has now invested this sum in a separate high interest account.

A TALK ON THE POWYS FAMILY

An audience of almost 70 attended the talk at the Dorchester County Museum on Oct. 15 given by Elizabeth Lawrence entitled: "A Wessex Eleven -- the Magnetic Powys Family."

Elizabeth Lawrence drew upon descriptions of the family from letters and works by the family and other writers closely associated with the family. The talk was accompanied by photographs and slides, some of which were unpublished, as well as delightful recordings of elderly Montacute people who knew, respected and loved the family.

The talk was a great success and of interest to the specialist and non-specialist alike. The new Powys Society pamphlet was available and also roused considerable interest. It is to be hoped that this talk will be repeated.

JOHN COWPER POWYS: LETTER-WRITER

John Cowper wrote many letters to many people. Indeed, he complains to his brother Littleton in an unpublished letter dated Jan. 4, 1938 "Oh dear but my correspondence is so terrific that day after day all morning and afternoon is wasted in answering! I make it a strict rule however that after tea I write Owen and Owen alone!"

As Chairman of the Society, my hope is that eventually J.C.P.'s letters will be traced, catalogued and made easily available to Powysians. Many are in University collections but unknown numbers are still in private hands. The search sometimes leads into strange by-ways. Knowing that J.C.P. had written to Aleister Crowley (The Great Beast), Gerald Pollinger contacted Crowley's literary executor for information and received the following amazing reply (quoted with permission):

In 1950 I sent Karl Germer, who had been Crowley's main source of income since 1925, a wooden packing case of manuscripts and books of the Crowley archive; among the MSS were the few Powys letters I mentioned. (I took no copies of them; I was overwhelmed with the stuff.)

"What happened to the Powys letters? Germer died in 1962, leaving his considerable collection of Crowleyana to his third wife, Sasha. And Sasha had the lot stolen by that lunatic Charles Manson and his 'family.' A member of the 'family' a disturbed child, a boy. Now, when the Manson lot went out robbing houses and murdering people, they locked this child up in a chest -- so goes the story I was told -- but one night the poor crazed child struggled free and set the house on fire! And that was the end of the Powys letters to A.C. and a lot of other valuable letters, books etc. How Crowleian!"

BOOKS WANTED

"MacDonald edition required of "Maiden Castle". I will pay up to £15. Please write to Mr A.C. Elmy of 49 Torsway Avenue, Blackpool FY3 8LD."

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership fees remain at last year's rate: U.K. £10 Abroad £12.

This fee includes two Reviews for 1989 which will cost the Society a total of £8.10. That leaves £1.90 to produce three Newsletters, pay for stamps and office supplies, and occasional publications.

If every member could remember to pay his or her subscription for 1989 promptly in the New Year it would make the work of the Society much easier.

Please send to the Treasurer (address below).

The Powys Society

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Griffin Beale

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