

Editorial

Zooms are now installed in many of our lives and it will be surprising if they don't persist – let us hope not entirely replacing personal contact. Non-computerists are being made to feel Unpeople – perhaps, conversely, they are a privileged élite. Reports in this NL describe several enjoyable On-Line discussions: on TFP's *Fables*, on JCP's *Brazen Head* and *Letters to Sea-Eagle*. We have tributes to Herbert Williams, expert on JCP in Wales, and to Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe, a long-standing member; two of the late Jim Morgan's 'Po-Whims'; the customary range of subjects in News and Notes; and a not entirely enthusiastic description of the revamped Dorset Museum by Jerry Bird. We have contributions on the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*, and on digitisation of the *Powys Review* by Kevin Taylor, as well as a piece on New Zealander Douglas Glass, who photographed JCP and TFP on several occasions. Our main features are a preview of the collected correspondence between Llewelyn and Louis Wilkinson, edited by Anthony Head and Chris Wilkinson; and a second instalment from the occasional diary of Phyllis Playter, a counterpoint to JCP's as a picture of daily life in the New York countryside in 1933, not long before their decision to move to England, and Wales.

Our New President

The committee of the Powys Society is very pleased to announce that we have appointed Timothy Hyman as President of the Society to succeed Glen Cavaliero with effect from August 2021. Timothy has served the Society for many years in a variety of roles, latterly as Chair. We congratulate Timothy on his appointment and wish him well in the future.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

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Jeremy Hooker

We extend our congratulations to Jeremy Hooker, long-term champion of JCP, also Llewelyn Powys, Richard Jefferies and other writers, who has been elected fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

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TWO ONLINE MEETINGS

to be held by Zoom video link

Saturday 14 August 2021 at 15.00 BST (Max 1.5 hours to 16.30):

Discussion of JCP's novel *The Brazen Head*: Chapter XXII, The Oracle. For more information, please visit the Events page of the Society's web site.

Saturday 27 November 2021 at 15.00 GMT (Max 1.5 hours to 16.30): Discussion of the deleted six chapters of *Wolf Solent*, led by Kevin Taylor. These six chapters, which were cut from the original edition of *Wolf Solent*, never appeared in print. They have now been published by the Society as a special Supplement to *The Powys Journal XXXI*, and will be distributed free to all members of the Society (see page 25).

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To join the Zoom discussions, **please e-mail Kevin Taylor** at ksjer.taylor@btinternet.com. Kevin will host the meeting and will send joining details in due course.

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Charles Lock

A Letter to the Editors of the Newsletter

Newsletter 102 has been particularly enjoyable, especially Rachel Hassall's double find: that JCP and LCP adjudicated the Poetry Prize at Sherborne School. Of this I'd never heard a word. And that they should so early have recognised David Cornwell's gifts. It seems that it was all hidden in plain sight: not hidden to those who had read Adam Sisman's biography: the sort of book that Powys Society members would overlook! On Blake and Cowper, Mary Barham Johnson owned the watercolour by Hayley, and the 'Visionary Portrait' of Blake with the spire of Chichester Cathedral in the background. Glen and I had it pointed out to us on a visit to her in 1991 when she was living in Sheringham. I wonder where it is now? She also had the portrait of Cowper's mother, subject of one of his most moving poems: 'Oh that those lips had language....'

All best wishes—and congratulations!

CT adds: Under the heading '*an accolade conferred by one Newsletter on another*' Charles Lock also forwarded to the editors a note from Sukey, daughter of poet Roy Fisher, about the first Newsletter to be issued by the Roy Fisher Archive at the University of Sheffield: *Roy liked this sort of project, friendly enough to be open to whoever fancies it, not striving to belong to a mainstream but ready to take its place in the academy if that's ever useful. He read every Powys Society newsletter, for example, in that spirit.*

Visit the Roy Fisher archive at: <https://royfisherarchive.group.shef.ac.uk>

Roy Fisher was a great admirer of JCP with whom he exchanged letters (see his article 'On JCP's Letters' in Powys Journal, Vol. XVIII, 2008). Roy Fisher attended

our annual conference in 1987 where he gave a talk on JCP's literary influence. He also attended our conference in 2007 when he read from some of his poems. Roy Fisher's obituary was published in Newsletter 92, November 2017. CT

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Timothy Hyman

A final Chairman's Report, 2020-2021

It was – as must be the case with many of us – a solitary, inward, passionate engagement with the fiction of John Cowper Powys that first impelled me to make contact with others similarly smitten. I was still in my early twenties, a mostly unexhibited painter preaching an unfashionable and eccentric gospel that owed much to JCP. Across all the subsequent fifty years, participation in that weird 'Powys Society' has continued: to deepen my knowledge, to nourish my imagination, to clarify my identity, to guide my life-way. One means to repay that debt was to enlist for 'duties' – mostly light; and then after forty years, to agree to take over from John Hodgson as Chair, though it was always understood that the whole team would share together any serious burdens. Thus Chairmanship has nearly all been for me, a pleasure; and I owe special thanks to the patient, wise, and ever-generous counsel of Chris Thomas throughout this past decade.

Chris was the prime mover behind the remarkable 2019 event held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, celebrating our Society's 50th Anniversary, but also allowing us, as it turned out, a last glimpse of our longstanding President, Glen Cavaliero. With Covid hindsight, this occasion and the summer Conference proved for most of us, our final meetings in fleshly form. Ever since, we've come together only as zoom-phantoms, and this has usually worked rather well, opening up new possibilities. In these pandemic months, the digital has played the crucial role among us. Kevin Taylor has brought out the Society's already very successful e-books for the key JCP fictions; Paul Cheshire has revolutionised our Website (digitising our *Newsletters*, among much else) and rendering it a superb research tool; Dawn Collins has set up a Facebook Reading Group... And so on. The whole apparatus has been transformed. Nevertheless, for the immediate future, we shall continue to produce *The Powys Journal* and *Newsletters* in printed form, as well as our own Publications; and we're assuming our members will soon resume their Walking, Eating, Drinking and Unmasked three-dimensional existence. Perhaps my own warmest memories are of our close discussion of some specific chapter, whether at the summer conferences or, more intimately, at Ely or Montacute. There truly is no digital substitute for that kind of informal group exchange.

Back in 2010 – when I'd just begun to touch my first computer – so many of our 1970s founding members were either already dead or growing decrepit; it seemed quite possible we'd be presiding over The Powys Society's fizzling out. The amazing development, especially in the past five years, has been the emergence of a whole fresh cadre of media-savvy, energetic Powysians, keen to undertake ambitious projects of the most various kinds. Fortunately, our Society does now appear to have funding for such initiatives. With *Journal*, *Newsletter*, Website, and Publications all seeming secure, I can feel confident, as well as grateful, in handing over to Paul Cheshire.

Annual General Meeting 2021

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held by **Zoom video link at 15.00 BST on Sunday 15 August 2021**, and will last for approximately 1 hour. All paid up members of the Powys Society are welcome to participate in the AGM.

If any member wishes to join the meeting on that day, please send an e-mail to Kevin Taylor at ksjer.taylor@btinternet.com. Kevin will be hosting the Zoom meeting on 15 August and will send you joining details in due course.

Agenda

1. Minutes of AGM 2020 as published in *Newsletter* 101 November 2020, and matters arising
2. Announcement of appointment of *President* of the Powys Society
3. Nomination of Honorary Officers & Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2021-22
4. Chair's Report as published in *Newsletter* 103, July 2021
5. Hon. Treasurer's Report & presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2020
6. Collection Liaison Manager's Report
7. Hon. Secretary's Report
8. Powys Journal, e-Books and digitisation project
9. Development of Powys Society website and JSTOR
10. Social Media
11. Date and Venue of conference 2022
12. AOB

Committee Nominations 2021-2022

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

	<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Seconder</i>
Chair	Paul Cheshire	John Hodgson	Joe Sentence
Vice-Chair	David Goodway	Peter Lazare	Ben Thomson
acting Treasurer	Paul Cheshire	Joe Sentence	Marcel Bradbury
Secretary	Chris Thomas	Marcel Bradbury	Marcella Henderson-Peal

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

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Seconder</i>
Kate Kavanagh (<i>Newsletter editor</i>)	Tony Head	Sonia Lewis
Dawn Collins (<i>Social media manager</i>)	John Hodgson	Janice Gregory
Robin Hickey	Anna Rosic	Louise de Bruin

If these nominations are approved by members at the AGM, the committee from August 2021, will consist of those above as well as Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*) who has one year left to run of her three year term of office, Marcel Bradbury who has two years left to run of his three year term of office, Kevin Taylor (*Editor, Powys Journal*) and Charles Lock (*Contributing editor, Powys Journal*) who serve as *ex-officio* members, Anna Rosic (*Conference organiser*), who serves as a co-opted member, and Marcella Henderson-Peal (*official representative, France*) and Nicholas Birns (*official representative, USA*) who serve as honorary committee members.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

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 2020.

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:

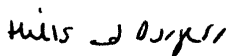
(1) which gives us reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- 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



18th February 2021

The Powys Society
Income and Expenditure Account
For the year ended 31st December 2020

	£	£
Income		
Subscriptions	5,248.12	
Bank Interest	10.69	
Books	4,884.54	
Gift Aid	1,420.07	
Donations	<u>2,550.00</u>	14,113.42
Expenditure		
Printing	5,575.94	
Officers and committee expenses	761.92	
Conference expenses	200.40	
Accountants	120.00	
Paypal Charges	67.64	
Website Expenses	698.83	
Alliance of Literary Societies	<u>15.00</u>	7,439.73
Excess of Income over Expenditure		<u><u>6,673.69</u></u>
Opening Bank balances		
Community Account	529.18	
Everyday Saver	624.17	
Business Saver	9,223.28	
Paypal	<u>275.34</u>	10,651.97
Closing Bank balances		
Community Account	2,432.48	
Everyday Saver	2,150.21	
Business Saver	12,230.60	
Paypal	<u>512.37</u>	17,325.66
Increase in Bank balances		<u><u>6,673.69</u></u>

New Members

We are pleased to welcome nine new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 102, March 2021. located in Totnes, Wrexham, Southampton, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Northern Ireland, Harrow, USA, Indonesia and Worcester. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **235**, 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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Paul Cheshire

Powys Society Website News

In April we added all back issues of the *Powys Review* to the website. This has been our most ambitious digitisation effort to date. Kevin Taylor prepared the material for digital files to be produced professionally by Newgen, a company based in India. Kevin then undertook the mammoth task of checking and correcting the resulting optical character recognition that renders the page images as searchable text. Compared with this, posting them on the website was comparatively easy.

It's a great feeling to have this precious twenty years of Powys scholarship online, accessible and searchable. All praise to Belinda Humfrey for her twenty years in post as editor, and thanks to her for giving us permission to put *The Powys Review* online. And thanks again to Kevin for driving the project forward!

This completes the project of making available online back issues of all Powys periodical publications, and information about past Society events. I plan now to let the website settle for a couple of years (subject to keeping news, events, publications and other postings up to date). Sooner or later however the Powys Society website will be updated and restyled. Every website has a limited lifespan: advances in technology stimulate and necessitate innovation in web-design. I am currently identifying with the help of the committee possible routes for taking that next step when the time comes.

*

Kevin Taylor

The Powys Review available online

In his 1992 Index to Numbers 1-26 of *The Powys Review*, Stephen Powys Marks opens by remarking that 'the need for an index to the *Review* is evident to anyone who has recollected an article or interesting illustration in one of its numerous volumes and has tried to find it'. An advantage of digital resources is that they not only enable the easy re-location of such remembered snippets via a search engine, but also allow electronic 'browsing' of a body of content which throws up additional interesting material and previously unsuspected

connections. While there is no substitute for a printed edition or a skilfully compiled hard-copy index such as Stephen's, a digital resource provides something supplementary: a different and more flexible way of accessing and engaging with a body of material.

Lingering over the bookstall at successive Powys Society conferences I attempted to amass a complete run of all 32 numbers of *The Powys Review*, produced between 1977 and 1997 under Belinda Humfrey's expert editorship – as reflected on by Belinda and by John Hodgson in *NL* 100 (July 2020). But there remained gaps: hard-to-locate numbers which proved elusive. Eventually, with the help of Belinda and of Kate Kavanagh, I had the whole set; but it was evident that these volumes were hard to come by, and would perhaps become increasingly so as they dispersed from individual collections and fell victim to rationalisation programmes within libraries. It was the thought that this fine corpus of critical and historical writing about the Powyses might be rendered all but inaccessible to future generations that motivated me to launch a digitisation project, with the Society's support.

I sent my set to Chennai in India for professional scanning, having cleared what permissions I could. I proof-read and corrected the resulting files and passed them to webmaster Paul Cheshire, who has compiled them in an attractive, fully searchable format on the Powys Society website (via the 'Publications' tab on the top menu). They join the digitised *Newsletters*, *la lettre powysienne* and other resources, as well as *The Powys Journal* now available (thanks to Paul) on JSTOR, in providing an accessible digital archive of Powys scholarship and critical writing that secures its value for posterity.

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THE POWYS SOCIETY

The Powys Review

The Powys Review, a periodical devoted to the work of the Powys family – in particular to the writers John Cowper Powys, T. F. Powys and Llewelyn Powys and their literary milieu – was published in thirty-two numbers between 1977 and 1997, all of them edited by Belinda Humfrey. Each printed volume contained a single number of the journal, except for the final three volumes which contained Numbers 27 & 28, 29 & 30, and 31 & 32 respectively.

This complete digital version of all thirty-two numbers of *The Powys Review* in PDF format renders the text as it appeared in the original printed copy, and is intended to make available to a new generation of readers a body of commentary and scholarship on this extraordinary family which would otherwise become increasingly inaccessible.

The Powys Review

Screenshot of introduction to the Powys Review on Powys Society website

Mary Kaye

Tribute to Herbert Lloyd Williams

8th September 1932 - 5th January 2021

Mary Kaye is the daughter of Herbert Williams. Herbert's film about JCP *The Great Powys* was made for Welsh TV in 1994 and shown at our annual conference in 1995. The film was reviewed by Christopher Wilkinson in *Newsletter* 24, April 1995. Herbert contributed an article about the production of the film to *The Powys Review* 29/30, 1995. Herbert's biographical study of JCP was published by Seren 'Borderlines' series in 1997 and reviewed by Patricia Dawson in *Newsletter* 32, November 1997; by Kate Kavanagh in the *Spectator* and by Glen Cavaliero in *Powys Notes* (USA), Spring 1999. Christopher Wilkinson reviewed 'A Lonely Giant', Herbert Williams' radio programme about JCP broadcast on BBC Radio Wales on 29 July 1997 in *Newsletter* 32, November 1997. There are reviews of books by Herbert Williams in *Powys Journal*, Vol, VIII, 1998 (*John Cowper Powys* - biography), Vol. IX, 1999 (*Looking Through Time* - poems), and Vol. X, 2000 (*A Severe Case of Dandruff* – a novel). Herbert reviewed *The Ideal Ringmaster* by Paul Roberts in *Newsletter* 29, November 1996.

Chris Thomas

*

Herbert Lloyd Williams was born in Aberystwyth, the youngest of six children. His father instilled the love of books and learning in his children and his mother was a keen diarist so it's maybe unsurprising that Herbert became a writer. Yet his life was almost cut short by TB. He contracted this aged 15 and was admitted to Talgarth Hospital aged 16 where he remained for two years. Having lost one of his brothers to TB with another brother and cousin affected by this cruel disease, Herbert wasn't convinced he would recover. Visits were scarce due to the distance and money being tight. Herbert spent these years contemplating life and death, willing himself to survive to save his mother from the heartbreak of losing another child. Many of his experiences at Talgarth are documented in his novel, *A Severe Case of Dandruff* (1999), where its central character, Ralph, echoes Herbert's angst. He used to say that it was in Talgarth that he received his education, learned what was most important in life and the determination to survive.

Herbert began his long career in journalism at the *Welsh Gazette* shortly after being discharged, learning the ropes from the old-school hacks. Around this time that he met his future wife, Dorothy Maud Edwards, a dental nurse. They married in 1954 and moved to Cardiff, where Herbert worked at the *South Wales Echo*.

Herbert continued there for over 20 years and had his own column. He was one of the first journalists to arrive at Aberfan on the day of that tragic disaster in 1966, an experience that had a huge impact on him. Indeed, he referred to it in many of his poems (such as *Black Harvest* and *Aberfan Dialogue*). He later joined BBC Radio Wales and remained in broadcasting, continuing to do so when he went freelance in 1979. Even though he is well-published in a wide range of genres, he always referred to himself as a poet first and he co-founded and co-edited *Roundyhouse* magazine.

His many awards include a Hawthornden Poetry Fellowship; top prize in the Rhys Davies Short Story Competition, which he later adjudicated; he was a Fellow of the Welsh Academy and member of the Society of Authors. For a time, he was the chair of the Welsh Union of Writers. In fact the Welsh Academy and Welsh Union of Writers organised a tribute event in 1999 to celebrate Herbert's work. He was 67 at the time but retirement was out of the question for a man who loved writing and he continued, proving his versatility by turning his pen to writing novels such as *Woman in Back Row* (2000); *Punters* (2002); *Marionettes* (winner of Cinnamon Press Novella Prize, 2008) and *Love Child* (2011); also his memoirs, *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (2011). Always a keen performer, he embraced the 'new' Poetry Slam scene and often joked that he'd be the oldest in attendance; but Herbert appealed to a wide audience and he was a hit with the young people there. Herbert lapped it up and his poem, *A Rap for St Valentine* won the Cardiff Poetry Slam in 1998. Opening verse:

*I'm gonna give you
St Valentine's rap
tell you like it is
make your feet tap
ain't gonna give you
none of that pap
I'm telling you all –
romance is crap!*

Herbert and Dorothy had five children: Peter, David, Alan, Mary and John. To us admiring children, Herbert was a family man and with our mother Dorothy, his muse, they created a happy home. Herb's natural ability to make up stories on the spot was a huge advantage and he employed this strategy regularly. Often we were characters in such stories and were so believable that I once cried, thinking that I'd lost a shilling at the funfair! His creativity fuelled our imaginations, diverting many an argument and soothing much angst. He had a wonderful singing voice...he could've given ol' blue eyes a run for his money. His voice was strong until the end, bursting into song at any opportune moment. An emotional, sensitive man, he was

like no other dad we'd met. His artistic temperament in full flow, quick to rise, easily abated. I can hear his infectious belly-laugh as I type!

The family grew, having, much-cherished, 9 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild.

Despite suffering from dementia and losing Dorothy in 2019, he managed a performance of his poetry in the December that year, to an appreciative crowd. He was amazing. Exactly a month later, he died.

It seems apt to end with an anecdote relating to JCP. When Herbert was working on either the JCP script or biography, he had a period of writer's block, full of doubt and despairing. He decided to print off a section to see if, by reading it on paper, it would help inspire him. To his astonishment, it printed in Greek! He could hardly believe it, not only because he hadn't changed the language (subsequently we could not find an option for Greek and it never happened again) but due to JCP's keen interest in Greek mythology. He mused that it was a sign from JCP himself, urging him to continue: a spiritual intervention. His moon-face was a picture and he was as excited as a schoolboy! Whatever it was, it worked: my dad had renewed energy as a result and obviously completed it all.

Herbert is sadly missed by many, as is Dorothy. What a team! We were blessed by their presence. Now resting together.

Belinda Humfrey

A Tribute to Herbert Williams

The delightful Herbert Williams, poet, novelist, biographer, eminent journalist, film maker, script writer for tv and radio, where to start? When asked to provide something for our Newsletter, I remembered first Herbert Williams's face – outstandingly open, honest, sharp and kindly. I realised that, alas, I had not seen him for decades; and then? Possibly at a gathering of the Welsh Union of Writers or more possibly of the Welsh Academy of which we were both Fellows. I think that Jeremy Hooker and I were the only English invited for the honour of being members of the Welsh Academy (English Language Section) in the 1970s – and that for our lit. crit. of Welsh writers. I suspect that I was nominated by Roland Mathias, poet, historian & editor of *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, known to us for his book *The Hollowed-Out Elder Stalk* (1979), on JCP's poetry. From the 1970s and my move to the University of Wales, I was shocked to discover how little of Welsh writing is known in England, so much of it of very high quality. So I soon found myself doing my best not only for better recognition of JCP, starting with a book of essays on him from a University Press—to get him on university

syllabuses – but also for the many other Welsh writers before and beyond Dylan Thomas.

With like motive came the work of Herbert Williams, known to us for his critical biography, *John Cowper Powys* (1997) and the HTV documentary film, *The Great Powys* (1994) – of course both published in Wales.

For recent recollections of Herbert Williams, I asked two of his Welsh friends (and mine), Sally Roberts Jones, poet, historian and publisher, and Mike Jenkins, poet and editor of the Red Poets. They produced more of outflowing fondness for Herbert than memories of him at poetry readings at their collaborative productions from Roundyhouse and Red Poets, at Merthyr, Swansea and Cork. Herbert could ‘bring the house down’ with poems like his ‘Black Harvest’, ‘Aberfan Dialogue’ and ‘The Price of Coal’. Much of his poetry relates to the ancient Welsh tradition of spoken poetry, performance poetry still so valued in his country.

However, I was told that there were double spread obituary appreciations of Herbert in the Western Mail and Cambrian News. These can still be googled. In *Y Lofa (Books for Wales)* is an appreciation of him, his poetry and prestigious awards.



Herbert Williams (1932-2021)

In the Postscript to *John Cowper Powys* (1997), pp.156-160, Herbert Williams states clearly why he wrote this book, from explanations of JCP's 'wizardry' as a novelist to lists of his eminent admirers and quotation of J.B. Priestley's description of him as 'a major writer, an original, a genius ... quite shockingly undervalued, often completely neglected'. The biography comes from a life's reading of JCP, from the 1950s, a labour of love from at least 'the early 80s', for I find from the Acknowledgements that at that time I supported Herbert's proposed idea for a radio programme about Powys and willingly 'provided information from time to time'. The biography is a very good book, rich in information and memorable quotation from a host of people, not a boring page, and is likely to capture both the new and experienced reader of JCP. Herbert Williams has raided all the available literature about JCP to the time of publication (an enormous task!), so he is not just narrating Powys's development in his works through the life, but quite interestingly looking at his character and relationships in a balanced way; one feels him sound if not always agreeing with basic interpretations and emphases. While Herbert obviously did not confront Phyllis Playter, nor her local stalwart supporters after JCP's death, Frederick Davies and Gilbert Turner, though the latter appears from *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*, he provides fascinating recordings of his own from local people in Corwen and Blaenau. I thoroughly recommend HW's JCP.

And the film? What marvellous success for Herbert Williams after years of trying! Even those uneasy at seeing Freddie Jones acting JCP, would like to see it again. How swiftly the years have fled since 1994!

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In Memoriam

Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

10 August 1946 - 9 January 2021

Michael was a long-standing member of the Powys Society who owned a large collection of Powys books which he bequeathed to the Society. Michael contributed several articles and news pieces to the *Newsletter* including a poem, *Dropping the pilot on the down*, which appeared in *Newsletter* 73, July 2011. Michael also served on the committee as a co-opted member between 2004 to 2006.

CT

Penny Haworth writes: Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe, born 10 August 1946, died peacefully on 9 January 2021 at Whittington House Care Home in Cheltenham after a long illness. He was a man of many passions: jazz and classical music,

railways, film and literature, and was a prolific and skilled poet and writer. John Cowper Powys was one of the authors he admired the most and his link to the Powys Society remained among his most enduring interests.

Andrew Rogers writes: It is very sad to hear of Michael's death. I remember him at various conferences and as a gentle soul, who was very thoughtful and kind. I do remember him fondly, but in a very general way. The reason we hooked up so to speak, was because neither of us drove and therefore were dependent on public transport, and would bump into each other arriving by train or bus and leave in the same fashion. We were also both shy characters and he was easy, intelligent company, and enjoyed a pint as well! The news of his death has left me feeling nostalgic about the conferences I did attend, because they were happy times for me – tinged with an aura of lost worlds.

*

Patrick Quigley

Bernard Scutt's Powysian connections

Bernard Scutt was born in Dorchester in 1911 and married Theodora Potocka in 1984 when he was 73 years old. Theodora was born in 1932 and adopted by Theodore and Violet Powys, growing up with the family as Susan (Susie). The couple first met on a Dorset road in a scene reminiscent of fiction by John or Theodore. Both were on horseback and going in opposite directions when Bernard halted and remarked that her horse had an ill-fitting shoe. He repaired the shoe and the romance bloomed.

Bernard was well-known for driving around Dorset in horse and cart and the pair were often seen at local markets. He had a minor film career as an extra in two iconic 1960s films – *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1967) and *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (1969). The former features Bernard in a speaking role where he delivers bad news to the main character, Bathsheba (Julie Christie). The adaption of Hardy's novel was filmed in Dorset with scenes set in landscapes rich in Powysian associations - Weymouth Sands, Bat's Head and Maiden Castle to mention a few.

Goodbye, Mr Chips was partly filmed in Sherborne Abbey and School which became Brookfield School in the film. Sherborne has many connections with the Powys family and was immortalized in *Wolf Solent* as Ramsgard. In a strange parallel with the death of the fictional wife of Arthur Chipping (Mr Chips) in the film, Alice Mabel Bennett, wife of the real-life headmaster of Sherborne Prep, Littleton Powys, died prematurely in 1942. Bernard's appearance was in a busy crowd scene and he did not appear in any more films. He died in 1994 and Theodora relocated afterwards to Ireland.

Thanks to Amanda Powys for information on Bernard and his connections to the Powys family.

Jim Morgan: Two Po-Whims

Invocation

Roll on, thou lubberly world, roll on!
Like an old tyre as kids we beat along
With a bit of stick
Obediently rolling down slopes
Impossibly up steep inclines
Staggering crazily here & there
Groggy under our pummelling
Until at last
It fell over on its side
In the dust of the gutter
With a flat sigh
And lay still

Ego

My father always warned me
Not to stare too long at the mirror
Or the devil will jump out of my eyes.
So I still avert my gaze
Not wishing to catch the devil
Though sometimes for devilment
I look long at that sad face
Facing me, the sullen mouth
Those disappointed eyes,
The lines graved on each cheek.
No devil affronts me, only time
Doing its dirty work.

Kate Kavanagh
Zoom meeting, 24th April 2021
on TFP's Fables

A good turnout, with several from America, appeared, with most taking part.

Kevin and Paul led the discussion of one of the more bizarre of TFP's *Fables*, 'The Seaweed and the Cuckoo Clock' (backed up by the more humanly credible 'John Pardy and the Waves').

Hester, an eccentric girl in a typical village, has a passion for marriage – for others that is, she being a committed virgin. The others being largely inanimate, and her idea of marriage being close companionship, she arranges furniture and objects around her house in unlikely proximity (in the manner of the surrealist artists in vogue at the time, 1929, as Tim Hyman pointed out; also, Nicholas Ross reminded, of metaphysical 17th-century poetry).

Cuckoo Clock, overlooked, is Hester's last candidate and with no likely partner remaining unwed, Hester brings willing seaweed from the shore to embrace him. Seaweed is delighted, but after some time begins to pine for the sea and her absconded husband, a wave.

A thief steals the clock with its festooned seaweed and, pursued by Hester, drops it on the shore by a rock. In his nervousness the clock emits a forbidden Cuckoo. The tide comes in, Seaweed swims away in ecstasy and the offended wave smashes the clock to pieces.

Against this not unlikely fate we contrasted the all-knowing, all-embracing Sea in 'John Pardy and the Waves', seducing the well-meaning, rejected, John with the promise of its ultimate delight – destroying a shipful of humans or overwhelming a city – the 'destructive sublime' (Robert Caserio).

Among others, John Williams and the late David Gervais have written on these Fables (or 'parables' as David G preferred), and discussion ranged from their affinities with the wilder shores of John Cowper, as in *Atlantis*; the relevance of Hester –symbolic organiser or super-ordinary housewife; the elements of unpleasantness in TFP, and his frequently cruel final twists; his references to the Bible and to alchemy. TF provokes questions, most unanswerable. How closely symbolic are the elements in the stories? Nature *versus* craft? All-powerful God – welcoming or destructive? Is John Pardy's seductive Sea a (or also a) destructive deity? Is TF making fun of non-physical 'marriage'?

We were led on to the affinities or differences between the Powys brothers, with personal reminiscences from Louise and Tim bringing them closer. Theodore, always, is the wild card.



Illustration to the first edition of TFP's Fables

News & Notes

from Chris Thomas:

Valentine Ackland

The biography of writer and poet, Valentine Ackland, by Frances Bingham, was published by Handheld Press on 20 May 2021. *Valentine Ackland: A Transgressive Life* is available as a paperbound book or in *e-pub* format. The biography includes references to Valentine Ackland's association with TFP and her relationship with Francis Powys and Katie Powys.

Peter Mayer

In his new book *Thebes, The Forgotten City of Ancient Greece* (Picador, 2021), classical historian and academic Paul Cartledge includes a generous tribute to Peter Mayer (1936-2018). Peter Mayer ran Overlook/Duckworth Press which published new modern editions of JCP's major novels (see obituary and tributes in *Newsletter* 94, July 2019). Paul Cartledge's book *Thebes* is dedicated to Peter Mayer.

A birthday gift for JCP from Phyllis

Whilst reorganising her house contents Amanda Powys found, amongst the items inherited from Francis Powys, a copy of *An Introduction to Welsh Poetry from the Beginnings to the Sixteenth Century* edited by Gwyn Williams, published by Faber and Faber in 1953. This was a gift from Phyllis on the occasion of JCP's 80th birthday. Phyllis has inscribed the book with the following words: '*For John from Phyllis 8 October 1953*'. Beneath the dedication Phyllis has also transcribed a quotation in Welsh from a poem in the book by the fifteenth century poet Dafydd Nanmor which reads: '*Mal bloddau prennau ymhob rhith, mal od, mal adar ar wenith, mal y daw y glaw a'r gwllith mae y undin fy mhendith.*' The translation of this quotation provided by Gwyn Williams reads: '*Like every kind of blossom from trees, like snow, like birds on wheat, as the rain comes and the dew is my blessing on one man.*' This very appropriate dedication must have profoundly pleased JCP when Phyllis presented him with the book on his birthday.

Albert Krick

Nicholas Birns in New York has been contacted by Victoria Kirsch in USA who has come into the possession of some items collected by JCP's helpful neighbour and handyman at Phudd Bottom, Albert Krick, nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Krick senior. In his diary JCP referred to Albert Krick as *kind Albert*. Victoria has offered to donate these items to the Powys Society. This material consists of original photos of JCP

(some of these have already been reproduced in past issues of the *Newsletter*), local newspaper clippings, a letter from JCP addressed to Albert and Dora Krick, postmarked Blaenau Ffestiniog, 24 November 1960, an envelope addressed to Mr. and Mrs. A S Krick, postmarked Corwen 4 March (May?)1948, an acrostic based on the names of Albert and his wife Dora composed by JCP, an inscribed copy of *The Meaning of Culture (to our nearest and dearest neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Krick, October 1929)*, and an inscribed copy of *A Philosophy of Solitude (To my dear friend Albert Sylvanus Krick to whom I owe more than I can say, May 1934)*. In due course Nicholas plans to bring some of these items to the UK for deposit in the Powys Society Collection at Exeter. The inscribed books are of special interest since they mark the beginning and end of JCP's residence at Phudd Bottom. We do not have any other original material directly connected with JCP and Albert and Mr. and Mrs. Krick in the Collection.

Clifford Tolchard

In N&N in *Newsletter* 102, March 2021, page 17, we published a reference to Clifford Tolchard's memoir of JCP which had recently been posted on a blogspot, *Joyceance*, and which had already appeared in a different version in Jeff Kwintner's edition of JCP's letters to Tolchard in 1975. The original version of Clifford Tolchard's memoir can also be found in *Powys Newsletter (USA)*, One, 1970, and *Powys Newsletter (USA)* Two, 1971, published by Colgate University Press (both are available as pdfs on our website).

Auction of books from the collection of Stephen Powys Marks

The sale of items from Stephen's estate took place on-line in an auction conducted by Aldridges of Bath on 30 March 2021, and consisted of 197 lots although a few were withdrawn prior to the auction. The sale included three paintings by Stephen's mother Isobel Powys Marks and six paintings by Gertrude Powys as well as original wood engravings by Agnes Miller Parker for the edition of JCP's *Lucifer* published by Macdonald in 1956 and a collection of books by and about JCP, Llewelyn and TFP.

from Louise de Bruin:

Anne Powys

I was lately reminded that in 2019 Anne Powys's *Wild Flowers of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* had been published by the South African publishing firm Struik Nature. It is a handsome guide of 400 plants, illustrated with beautiful photographs taken in their habitat. Anne is one of the three granddaughters of Will Powys and,

like her late father Gilfrid and mother, a passionate botanist. She also owns an eco-lodge – Sunyian Soul –the base for safaris under her guidance. Unfortunately a few years ago, just before I was going to stay with her, the lodge was burnt down by African cattle-raiders. In the meantime it has been rebuilt.

Filming A Glastonbury Romance

I found the following note among the letters that I am typing out at the moment and which were sent years ago to us by the grandson of Louis N. Feipel, 1883-1968, (Director of publications at Brooklyn Public Library and bibliographer who corresponded with JCP and Llewelyn about editorial errors in their books.) Mr Feipel found the note in an unidentified paper or magazine and transcribed it. It is a note dating from mid-year 1933:

Blasphemy

It was recently suggested to John Cowper Powys that negotiations be opened up for a movie based on his novel A Glastonbury Romance. Mr. Powys replied after the following unheard of fashion: 'I was indeed amazed at this idea. I cannot consider it for a moment. Such is my superstition about this work, which in spite of its small sale, I still regard, and I always shall regard, as a really unusual book, that I cannot express to you with what dismay I regard these people touching it. The truth is I am mystical enough to be extremely reverent on the subject of the Holy Grail!! I know I blaspheme the thing most indecently myself in the text – but that is a different matter. 'The Devils also believe and tremble.' My kind of blasphemy is the inverse side of a fantastical faith! The idea of this book, centering round the Grail, being produced in the movies is abhorrent to me. I cannot consider it.'

Chris Thomas adds: A modern film version of *A Glastonbury Romance* was at one stage proposed by filmmaker John Boorman who was inspired by Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and became interested in the cinematic possibilities of mythic Arthurian themes, which had fascinated him since childhood. He visited Glastonbury and made a film there for the BBC, read Jessie Weston's book *From Ritual to Romance*, and studied the medieval Grail romances in preparation for the adaptation of JCP's novel. Boorman developed a first script but the project was eventually abandoned before filming could begin when his producer moved on to another subject. Some of the Arthurian material Boorman was reading about, such as the figure of Merlin and the Fisher King, emerged in his film *Excalibur* (1981).

Alan Antliff: interview with Timothy Hyman

Alan Antliff's interview appeared in *Anarchist Studies* 29, Vol. 20, No.1, 2021, and included a reference to the links between Tim's painting, anarchism and the

work of JCP: *An important departure point for understanding Hyman's narrative paintings and their self-reflexive grounding as an act of free creativity is his indebtedness to another anarchist, British novelist, philosopher, literary critic, and poet John Cowper Powys (1872-1963). As Hyman started out in the 1960s, Powys' novels reinforced his pointed refusal of the then pervasive valorising of abstract art over figuration. Hyman adds, 'I also loved the man (born 1872, so I never met him), his anarchist creed, his creation of a world that challenges all Hierarchy, his walks, and above all his sense of the minutiae of the Everyday being inseparable from the Visionary'.*

from Kate Kavanagh: Revisiting Morwyn

Morwyn was a favorite of its author, and its first-person narrative gives it a special intimacy. Written before WW2, the anti-vivisection theme inevitably seems a bit dated, compared with the human horrors to come; but the two bugbears of Religion and Science can easily translate into wider meanings of 'religion' into ideology, 'science' into dehumanization. This reader does find the narrator's intense love for the young girl Morwyn possibly overprotected, compared to his other love, for the spaniel Black Peter; and his generalizations on women not always convincing. The description of an underground Hell inhabited by semi-transparent sadists, enjoying television screenings to their tastes, is odd enough to convince, but the book comes alive with its foreground characters. Classical giant Tityos fits in by virtue of his magical Tear. The Marquis de Sade has misguided charm. The Welsh mage Taliesin comes across less convincingly than tactful Socrates, and Rabelais of course is most sympathetic of all, with his reassurance of the ultimate benevolence of the System Of Things.

Theodora:

Patrick Quigley from Dublin reports a visit to Theodora after many months, in her care home in Boyle County Roscommon. She seems a bit more frail but recognised him and they had the customary chat about Theodore and old times. Pat says, she is reading *Demelza* by Winston Graham, one of his Poldark novels. She likes historical novels, Pat says so he always brings her a few.,

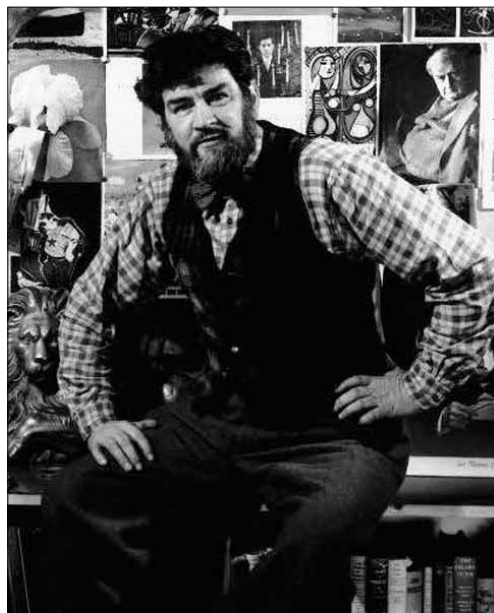
from Belinda and others:

On 29th May 2021 the Internet announced ***World Animal Free Research Day***. A Hyphen in the title (Animal-Free) might avoid confusion! But JCP would undoubtedly be interested. (cf *NL* 52 July 2004 p.37)

Chris Thomas

Douglas Glass, JCP and TFP

Douglas Glass (1901-1978) was a New Zealand artist and photographer. He emigrated to England in 1926 where he reconnected with his old friend, fellow New Zealander, writer, poet, and acquaintance of the Powyses, Geoffrey Potocki de Montalk (1903-1997) who arrived in London in 1928. According to his later studio assistant Glass was ‘very eccentric’. In 1932 both Glass and Potocki were prosecuted for trying to publish privately a book of Potocki’s obscene poems. Potocki served a short prison sentence for his efforts. Later Glass held a position as a teacher at the Maidstone College of Art and established a reputation as a portrait photographer of contemporary celebrities, including famous writers, musicians, artists, actors, statesmen, and churchmen. His portraits, which JCP admired, were regularly published in the *Sunday Times* Portrait Gallery between 1949 and 1960. Glass visited JCP in February 1960 (see JCP letter to Louis Wilkinson dated 3 Feb 1960 in *Newsletter* 77, November 2012, p.49) and planned a visit to TFP in 1947 (see letter from Glass to TFP dated 1 July 1947 in the Powys Society Collection at Exeter University.) Douglas Glass photographed both JCP and TFP on several occasions; the photo of ‘ancient Powys’ published in *Newsletter* 71, November 2010, p.56, may have been taken on his visit in February 1960. A photo of TFP by Douglas Glass taken in 1942/1943 appears as the frontispiece and on the cover of Harry Coombes’s book about TFP (1960). This photograph very much appealed to TFP (see Larry Mitchell’s article *In Search of T.F. Powys, the visual record*, in *Powys Review* Nos 27/28, 1992/1993, p. 4).



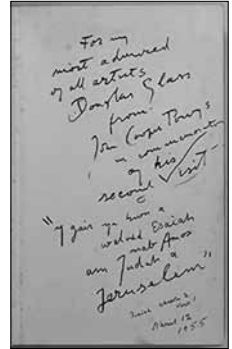
Douglas Glass 1901-78

Readers might be interested in dedications in two books currently offered for sale by Maggs Brothers which are inscribed by JCP to Douglas Glass and which help to date Glass’s visits to JCP:

Atlantis, 1954. First edition. 8vo. The inscription reads: *For my most admired of all artists, Douglas Glass from John*

Cowper Powys in commemoration of his second visit. 'Y gair yr hwn welodd Esaiah mab Amos am Judah a Jerusalem, [JCP has inscribed separately in a smaller font size the words: Isaiah Chapter 2 verse 1, April 12 1955]. The quotation in Welsh translates, in the King James version of the Bible, as The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Obstinate Cymric 1947, first edition, 8vo., original red cloth, dust jacket; an endpaper reads *For Douglas Glass from JC Powys July 6th 1949.*



Atlantis inscribed by JCP to Douglas Glass

Jerry Bird

The 'New' Dorset Museum

Now billing itself as simply 'Dorset Museum', the former Dorset County Museum in Dorchester reopened on 28 May after its £16.1 million makeover, funded partly by the National Lottery.

On my first visit I was struck by the immensity of the task undertaken by the architects and builders. The museum now has a far greater space to display its artefacts and works of art over three floors instead of two. How well it uses the extra space is something of a moot point.

The ground floor is largely given over to geology and paleontology with some spectacular fossils on display in the 'Natural Dorset' gallery; the beautiful Victorian fixtures and fittings have been stripped from the old library to make way for a café (which even opens for breakfast if you don't mind paying £6.95 for egg or beans on toast); the old convenience store next door is now the museum's shop, which seemed to me rather sparsely stocked. The library is now on the first floor where the paleontology used to be. John White's rectory, at the rear of the building has been restored as a children's learning area and venue for meetings etc, but there is no information about its importance in history (do they not want to attract American tourists?).

Access to the upper floors is by a massive central staircase cast in poured concrete, its somewhat brutalist feel only partially relieved by Roman mosaic floors which are wall mounted for viewing from the landings. The original Victorian Hall, the centrepiece of the original museum building, now seems somewhat forlorn as it stands empty but for the Roman mosaics in the floor and the (unlabelled) Jacobean plasterwork from Dorchester's Old Ship Inn on the far wall. There are one or two empty cases on the upper gallery of the hall so perhaps future exhibits are intended as well as it being just a venue for events.

On the first floor are two galleries – 'People's Dorset' and 'Hardy's Dorset'. On

entering 'People's Dorset' a vague timeline leads the visitor, somewhat counter-intuitively, anticlockwise through the story of Dorset's inhabitants from the early Stone Age to the twentieth century. 'Hardy's Dorset' is the old Writers' Gallery of yore, and is now dedicated solely to Dorset's most famous literary figure. Fortunately, the recreation of Hardy's study has been maintained (against the wishes of the director, so rumour has it!). Unfortunately, however, Hardy's interest in Dorset folklore, and his use of it in his novels is nowhere represented, and the replica Dorset Ooser mask is now across the corridor in the 'People's Dorset' gallery in a case next to a Mr Punch puppet, as if they were somehow related. There is now no mention anywhere of mumming plays, which Hardy so memorably recorded in *The Return of the Native*. In fact, Dorset's folklore seems to have completely fallen off the curators' agenda.

By now you will be wondering where on earth the Powyses have gone. Well, the second (top) floor is now the 'Artists' Dorset' gallery. Here the visitor will find a small collection of Christopher Wood and Alfred Mullins paintings (which are displayed by virtue of the fact that they belonged to a Dorset collector), along with some dour Victorian portraits, some interesting works by Blandford artist Alfred Stevens and a stunning collection of Elizabeth Frink's sculptures. Bizarrely, there is also a case displaying 'the art of the gentleman's waistcoat'! In one corner of this room is the Chaldon Herring exhibit; the information panel, which begins with a quote from Valentine Ackland, reads:

It was an extraordinary place: extraordinary things happened there and extraordinary people were to be found there.

Hidden away in the chalk hills with the sea beyond, a quiet Dorset village called Chaldon Herring became home to a community of artists and writers in the 1920s and 30s.

It centred on the novelist Theodore Francis Powys, one of 11 talented siblings. Theodore moved to Chaldon Herring in 1904 to focus on writing. When his novels and short stories were published in the 1920s, the village began to attract visitors. Some were writers or artists who stayed or settled there. Secluded rural Chaldon Herring offered them the freedom to live the way they wanted.

Theodore's bust by Elizabeth Muntz is displayed alongside the panel. Its label explains: 'Theodore's work includes novels and short stories with themes of life and death, good and evil, set in Dorset's rural landscape.'

Continuing anti-clockwise around the room (widdershins seems to be the curators' direction of choice), there are two oil paintings by Gertrude Powys (one of Chydyok and the other of Katie on a horse). Continuing along the wall we find another information board entitled 'John Cowper Powys 1872-1963', which reads:

The eldest and most successful member of the Powys family, John was a novelist, lecturer, literary critic, poet and philosopher. He visited Chaldon

Herring but never settled there, unlike his siblings Theodore, Gertrude, Phillipa (Katie) and Llwelyn. [*sic*]

John was born in Derbyshire. He studied at Sherborne School, Dorset, and then went to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Wessex, the setting for Thomas Hardy's fiction, inspired him. He wrote his own series of 'Wessex' novels based on the towns and countryside he grew up in – *Wolf Solent* (1929), *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932), *Weymouth Sands* (1934) and *Maiden Castle* (1936). His work was admired by other writers such as JB Priestly, Angus Wilson, CS Forester and Hugh Walpole.

After working as a touring lecturer in America for many years he returned to Dorset with his partner Phyllis Playter. They stayed for a short time in 1934 and 1935 before moving to Wales.

Next to the panel is JCP's portrait in oils by Gertrude, below which are displayed copies of *Wolf Solent*, *Maiden Castle*, *Weymouth Sands* and *Autobiography*, along with John's 'Swan' fountain pen. And that's it, Powys-wise. From the information you would not know that any of the Powyses other than John and Theodore wrote anything, while the misspelling of Llewelyn unforgivably adds insult to injury.

Also in the Chaldon Herring corner are a few other works by Elizabeth Muntz and a small display of books and artefacts relating to Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland. Sylvia and Valentine are given equal billing and you would think from the information they were Dorset's most famous lesbian lovers rather than neglected poet and successful novelist, as the display concentrates more on their relationship than their writing. Oddly, there is no mention of sculptor Stephen Tomlin, who 'discovered' Theodore's work in the first place, nor of David Garnett, the Bloomsbury writer who stayed in the village and immortalised its inn in his 1925 novel *The Sailor's Return*.

By not having a writers' gallery and concentrating on Hardy, and then Chaldon Herring separately, the curators have also let down other literary figures. William Barnes is represented (in the 'People's Dorset' gallery) more as an educationalist and philologist than a successful poet, and there is absolutely no mention at all of the two other Dorset dialect poets, William Holloway and Robert Young. Possibly the worst omission of all – unbelievably, T.E. Lawrence is nowhere to be found apart from a solitary copy of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in the museum shop. Neither is John Meade Faulkner anywhere represented, except for one chapter of *Moonfleet*, which can be found among the audiobook-style recordings in the 'Dorset Stories' room, as can a chapter of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – John Fowles being another Dorset writer whose importance is otherwise ignored.

A further omission is Frederick Treves, who is not even mentioned as a famous ground-breaking surgeon, let alone a writer of note.

All in all, more than somewhat disappointing from the literary point of view. It seems the museum's policy is to promote Hardy at the expense of other Dorset writers, whereas before the refurbishment, in the old writers' gallery the other authors, including the Powyses, were promoted by their proximity to Hardy, and adequately displayed. Sadly, apart from those with an interest in local history and archaeology, I can now only recommend the museum to enthusiasts of Elizabeth Frink and Thomas Hardy.

*

Kevin Taylor

Wolf Solent deleted chapters published for first time

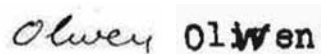
The six chapters deleted by John Cowper Powys from his first draft of *Wolf Solent* have always been known about, and have been consulted and quoted by various Powys scholars both in their manuscript form at Syracuse University and in typescript at the National Library of Wales; but they have never before been published. That is remedied in a special Supplement of *The Powys Journal* appearing this summer, with an introduction by former Powys Society Chairman Morine Krissdóttir. The project was made possible with the support of two Australian Powys enthusiasts, Peter Brittain and Adrian Gattenhof.

On 15 July 1928, publisher Max Schuster wrote to JCP: 'I think that the power and beauty of the book & the cumulative effect will be measurably enhanced by reducing it to something like 175,000 or 200,000 words'. Even then it would remain a long novel, and one can sympathise with the publisher's reluctance to put out a work 89,000 words longer still. Powys was perplexed and dismayed by the request, but he and Phyllis needed the money, so they buckled down and rapidly cut out chapters XIX to XXIV, reducing their content to fill a single chapter (which survived as Chapter 19, 'Wine', in the novel as published). In the process they took the chance to make some thematic changes, most notably to edit out the facial injury sustained by Gerda (see Ben Jones' article 'The Disfigurement of Gerda' in *The Powys Review* No. 2, 1977).

A telling detail reveals that the typist of these six chapters was Boyne Grainger, John and Phyllis' neighbour in New York. In her memoir *We Lived in Patchin Place*, Grainger writes:

I did make one recurrent and stupid blunder. In the name 'Olwen', with which I was unfamiliar, I misread the *w* for an uncrossed *i* and a *v*, making it into 'Oliven'.

This error, hand-corrected by Powys in the typescript, occurs in all six of the deleted chapters, proving that they



The image shows a handwritten correction of the name 'Olwen'. On the left, the name is written as 'Oliven' in cursive. On the right, the name is written as 'Olwen' in a bold, sans-serif font, with a small box around the 'w'.

at least (the rest of the work does not appear to have survived in typescript) were typed by Grainger. Our Supplement reproduces her version – which was otherwise very faithful to JCP’s manuscript – verbatim, allowing future Powysians to read the six chapters in full in order to reach their own conclusions about whether or not the novel, as published by Simon & Schuster in May 1929, was enhanced or diminished by the absence of these 89,000 words.

*

‘Reading Powyses’ Zoom discussion

The Brazen Head

Notes by Kim Wheatley, assisted by Dawn Collins and Kate Kavanagh

On 18th May 2021, fifteen members of the ‘Reading Powyses’ Facebook Group from both sides of the Atlantic convened on Zoom for a most enjoyable discussion of *The Brazen Head*. (Page numbers below refer to the 1978 Picador edition.)

JCP began *The Brazen Head*, his thirteenth novel, when he was in his early eighties and still living in Corwen; he completed it after moving to Blaenau Ffestiniog in 1955. Macdonald & Co published it the following year. His working title for the novel was *The Two Barons*; the publisher Eric Harvey supplied the eventual title. In a letter dated 19th February 1955, JCP told Nicholas Ross that he had deliberately set the novel in 1272, six hundred years before his own birth. In the same letter, he explained that ‘My romance centres round far the most important figure of the Middle Ages, namely ROGER BACON who succeeded in doing what no other human being has ever done before or since. That is to say Friar Roger Bacon ... imitated God and created a living Soul!’ In the novel, Bacon’s controversial invention, a ‘thing of brass,’ is not exactly a ‘*rational soul*’ (p. 82): it does not speak until the last page of the book, and its cryptic utterance, ‘Time was ... Time is ... And time will—’ breaks off when it is ‘destroyed’ (p. 348).

Dawn Collins led the discussion, quoting G. Wilson Knight’s view that *The Brazen Head* expresses JCP’s ‘darker compulsions’ (*Saturnian Quest*, p. 107). For Dawn, this book reads like the script for a Ken Russell film. Apparently JCP had trouble organising the novel. On 1st June 1955, he told Louis Wilkinson, ‘I keep forgetting my characters’ blasted names!’ Morine Krissdottir cites JCP’s diary for 14th June 1955, in which he acknowledges that Phyllis gave him ‘wonderful help in the difficult business of connecting the characters with the plot of the story’ (*Descents of Memory*, p. 41). In another letter to Wilkinson, on 22nd July 1955, JCP added, ‘I am so incredibly lucky with my Publisher. He and his wife came to spend half a day with us here and he has been of the utmost help to me in the actual naming, dividing, and arranging of chapters & scenes in my Roger Bacon book.’

Turning to the question of the book's sources, Dawn pointed out that the story of Bacon's brazen head recalls a play by Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c.1590) in which the brass head proclaims 'Time is,' 'Time was,' and 'Time is past' before being smashed to pieces. Sir Thomas Browne (read by Christie in *Wolf Solent*) also refers to Bacon's brazen head. **Chris Thomas** mentioned that in a 21 February 1957 letter to his sister Katie, JCP says that he had trouble reading Bacon's own writings in Latin when doing research for the novel; his most useful source was *Roger Bacon in Life and Legend* (1953) by Evalyn Westacott, known to JCP through her involvement with the National Anti-Vivisection Society.

When the discussion turned to general impressions of *The Brazen Head*, **Rowan Bright** said that the book reminded him of T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Dawn drew attention to the powerful description of Peter Peregrinus (Bacon's antagonist, an aspiring Antichrist): 'The chief peculiarity of Master Peter's mouth was its absence of lips. It was simply a slit in smooth white marbly stone' (p. 226). This novel invites visualisation, as in the etchings and sculptures by Patricia V. Dawson that were inspired by *The Brazen Head*, one of which depicts the sex scene between Peter and the temptress Lilith on the phallus of the Cerne Giant. (Patricia Dawson's notes on her *Brazen Head* etchings and sculptures are in *Powys Review* 4 (1978-79).)

Our discussion addressed both the distinctiveness of *The Brazen Head* and the extent to which it revisits familiar territory, both figurative and geographical. In contrast with JCP's two Welsh historical novels, this book is set in an almost unrecognisable Wessex landscape of forests and swamps. Dawn pointed out that its four households – the Fortress of Roque, Cone Castle, Lost Towers and Bumset Priory -- are at the four points of the compass, recalling the preoccupation with north, south, east and west in *The Inmates*. **Chris Michaelides** suggested intriguingly that *The Brazen Head* serves as a 'prequel' to the four great Wessex novels: Peter Peregrinus's magnetic lodestone is a precursor to the pebble that Jobber Skald in *Weymouth Sands* carries around as a potential murder weapon. The novel can also be seen as the third



The Brazen Head – the ball of fire.
Illustration by Patricia Dawson

instalment of a medieval trilogy. Powys returns to his notion of ‘eidola,’ thoughts that take on a reality of their own. Chris T observed that the landscape of the novel is global as well as local, abounding with foreign place-names. Chris T also noted that the sympathetic treatment of the Jewish characters (Peleg and Ghosta) is interesting, given post-World War II anti-Semitism. The novel is set before the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290. Dod Pole, a rebellious elderly serf, represents the voice of the common man. Sir Mort Abyssum is the spokesman for JCP’s own theories of an ‘invisible Dimension’ and panpsychism (p. 165).

We also discussed the artistic strengths and weaknesses of the novel, and how it fits in with the rest of JCP’s oeuvre. Someone quoted Glen Cavaliero’s view that ‘*The Brazen Head* is stronger in its parts than as a whole’ (*JCP: Novelist* p. 143). According to **Kevin Taylor**, in this novel JCP retains the power of his imagination but loses the power to construct a plot. **Patrick Quigley** expressed disappointment with *The Brazen Head*, finding it muddled. Others, including Chris T and **Nicholas Birns**, defended JCP’s control over the narrative. **Paul Cheshire** found the novel more enjoyable and readable than *Atlantis*. It resembles Rabelais in its ludicrousness and extravagance. **Kate Kavanagh** said she appreciated the ‘human side’ of some of the characters (the Jewish lovers Peleg and Ghosta, Sir Mort, Bacon himself); she found the ecclesiastics (Bonaventura and Albertus Magnus) less compelling. Several participants commented on the book’s inconsistencies and anachronisms (references to Goethe and Shakespeare, for example, in addition to later historical events such as the death of Edward II, plus the use of modern place-names). Time is both stretched and contracted in this novel, and goes backwards as well as forwards. For Dawn, this book is above all about time and space. **Kim Wheatley** remarked on the novel’s major structural discrepancy: Peter Peregrinus appears in Chapter 15 but then is introduced in Chapter 19 as if he is a new character. Does the incompatibility reflect authorial carelessness or narratorial playfulness? The narrator (or ‘chronicler’ as he calls himself) is fussy, obtrusive and slippery, as analysed by Peter Christensen in the *Powys Journal* in 2002. Christensen surprisingly sees what he calls ‘frustrated narration’ as pessimistic rather than playful. Christensen also wrote a 1987-1988 *Powys Review* article on the treatment of history in the novel, contending that in this novel, ‘meaning resides in allegory rather than history’ (p. 34). Jonathan Goodwin’s 2013 *Powys Journal* article on *The Brazen Head* approaches it by contrast in terms of ‘character-spaces’ (p. 115) and ‘dream-logic’ (p. 119).

There was some discussion of the tension in the novel between science and magic, and its blurring of the line between human and nonhuman. The brazen head is activated through ‘the divine power of virginity’ (p.97), but as Krisdottir points out, Bacon is as much an ‘embryo scientist’ as a magician (*Magical Quest*,

p. 179). Insofar as Bacon creates a ‘being capable ... of escaping altogether from the control of its creator’ (p. 188) and Peregrinus aims to ‘create a new race of beings altogether’ (p. 243), the novel is a rewriting of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (which JCP had read). Peter Peregrinus comes across as a comic, Aleister Crowley-esque caricature; JCP identifies with him as a magician and master-manipulator whose phallic lodestone makes things happen, more so than Bacon’s strangely ineffectual invention. Quoting a key sentence, ‘The Head’s face, though it had been emptied by the deliberate intention of its creator, of all *human* expression, was in no way a blank face’ (p. 200), Nick claimed that *The Brazen Head* is JCP’s ‘closing meditation on what it means to be human.’ Kevin pointed out that Powys’s treatment of Bacon’s invention anticipates present-day anxieties about artificial intelligence, explored for example in Kazuo Ishiguro’s recent novel *Klara and the Sun*.



*The visionary head of Friar Roger Bacon
by William Blake*

Other aspects of *The Brazen Head* were touched on in passing. Dawn brought up the importance of colour in the novel, and Chris T explained its alchemical significance. Kim commented on the colour grey, which in other JCP novels represents the meeting-point of the material and the mystical; in this novel, grey has a more sinister connotation associated with the confining ‘chastity of grey idealism’ (p. 117). Chris T wondered why Cavaliero described this book as ‘the most Peacockian of the novels’ (*JCP: Novelist* p. 141), since it bears little resemblance to the novels of Thomas Love Peacock. The ending of the book is surreal. Paul found a shift into a different register in this novel. There is a sense that JCP is embracing the beginning of what he called his ‘second childhood.’ *The Brazen Head* is a bridge to the later fantasies.

Note from Kim: while a long-standing Powys enthusiast (currently doing research on JCP and Romanticism), I have yet to attend any in-person Powys Society events. I have valued the opportunity to encounter other members of the Society this past year via Zoom, and was glad to hear that the Reading Powyses Group will continue to meet online.

Kate Kavanagh

Review

Up and Out: a mystery tale *was first published by Macdonald in 1957, with The Mountains of the Moon: a lunar love-story. Reprinted by Village Press in 1974. New edition of Up and Out, 2020, by Michael Walmer.*

To Be or Not to Be

The world having blown itself up with hydrogen bombs, and survivors deciding to follow it, Gor Goginog (of Blaenau) and his lovely partner Rhitha, whose researches into vivisection have made them decide that Cruelty rules the world, find themselves on a field of grass, a morsel marooned in space. They are joined by a multi-limbed vivisection survivor and his beautiful wife.

Still convinced that suicide is essential, and having disembowelled Time (a giant slug) and avoided Eternity (an evil-smelling cloud that conveniently consumes the corpse of Time and then itself), and with stars also having opted for non-existence, their grass island floats in the remaining cleansed space, in twilight (Welsh *Diddym*). From here they observe Mathonwy (a china ornament), the star Aldebaran (coloured lights), Kwangtse with his dangling head, the Buddha, Greek gods in a cloud, and finally God himself (Jehovah) and his coeval pal Satan (whom he addresses as ‘my dear Devil’). Long speeches from Jehovah describe his weariness with humanity and thoughts on possible replacements. A new, vegetarian, creation, without free will, is his preferred solution, but a lot of hard creation-work might only result in boredom ...

The four earthlings are invited to the discussion. Gor (a master performer) delivers a speech suggesting non-corporeal existence, a plan which is adopted. But things go further and they all, including God and Satan, cease to exist -- not before God smiles, and Gor concludes that his weapon against Satan is *humour*. Gor’s final moments are to complete his account of events with his favorite quotations: *soles occidere* (Catullus) and *alla ka empes* (Homer), for the unlikely audience who are his greatest and only wish

Up and Out is the first of the Fantasies produced by JCP in his 80s, the last decade of his life. It bears many affinities with *Morwyn* 20 years earlier. It was described by Glen as ‘the most aggressive and bad-tempered of these narratives’, serving JCP as ‘a battering-ram into a new fictional universe’. True, this tale is shorter on the playfulness in some of the others: of living furniture, or the witty puppet-show of historical curiosities (Achilles’s heel, etc), or the enormous casts of jokily-named characters and ludicrous (as well as some unpleasant) events. But as in them all, as in the dreams they resemble, preposterous events often have entertaining realistic

details – Gor surprising himself as a man of action, grumpy Satan and ultra-polite Jehovah, the scrap of Mother Earth with a mind of its (her) own.

All the Fantasies contain no-holds-barred tirades, on the cult of cruelty by vivisectors, or the crafty deceptions by purveyors of old-fashioned church-going (smelling of mouldy hassocks).

You get the impression that JCP started writing his instalments without always reading what went before, so it's impossible to guess what comes next: you sit back and wait to be surprised (as perhaps he also did). He's also inclined to 'and then the most amazing thing happened...' without always getting to describe what it was. He continues to talk about the human world when we know from the start that it has ceased to exist. He insists on its cruelties, perhaps not thinking it necessary to mention its joys. Details from his own life – the Blaenau scenery, Shakespeare's engagement with the Welsh, the ailanthus tree in Patchin Place where it all begins – make a nice contrast with the Ultimate. His genial God, you feel, would be quite capable of re-inventing himself. There is an element of *Alice*... Could there be a last line: *and lo! it was all a dream ?*

*

Peter Foss

Review: William E Powys: Letters to my sisters 1914-1957

This is an immense hardback book of 361 pages printed in large format on heavy glossy paper under the above title. Unfortunately there is no other information about it – no title page, no date, no editor, no publication details. The contents were originally compiled by Mrs Rose Dyer, daughter of W.E. Powys, with material collected together over many years before her death in 2017. It was prepared for print by her daughter-in-law, Nicky Dyer, who is married to Michael, the oldest grandson of William Ernest Powys, who was the tenth child of the Reverend C.F. Powys, vicar of Montacute, and of course, as we know, brother to John Cowper, T.F. and Llewelyn Powys. He lived a long, eventful life, mostly as a farmer in Kenya and died in 1978 aged 90.

The book is packed with a fascinating compendium of records mostly comprising his letters to his sisters Lucy, Katie, Gertrude, and many of their letters to him. Included also are numerous photographs (many never seen before), extracts from his diaries, extracts from Katie's journals and John Cowper's diaries, and some interlinking material. There are also miscellaneous records such as 'Notes on the History of Kisima Sheep from 1924 to 1972' which may be of great interest to African settler historians. And then at the back is an appendix of WEP's poems written during the Great War (and throughout many of his paintings pictured in colour).

For members of the family (for whom it was mainly compiled) it is a fascinating and important record; for those beyond the family it is difficult to navigate. There

is an urgent need for editing – not so much correction of script (though that is also needed – e.g. ‘night-revels’ recte: ‘Knight-Revels’, a Stoke-sub-Hamdon family, on page 70), but more especially explanatory passages, sub-headings, dates and location of photographs (‘CWAP AT NN’ as caption for photo on p.118 is useless) – and a title page!

The family tree at the front is crucially informative because it gives a full listing of the recent descendants of the family, but then we turn a page and see a photograph of a young boy captioned as ‘William Ernest Powys’ when it is clearly a photograph of Llewelyn Powys as a schoolboy at Sherborne, which was first published in my book *A Study of Llewelyn Powys* (1991), page 375 (it was sent to me by Lucy, the youngest daughter of C.F. Powys c. 1982). What a shame, for what is in many ways a wonderfully rich and interesting compilation.

*

Kate Kavanagh

Zoom 17 June 2021

Powys to ‘Sea Eagle’

Ten of us (Kevin Taylor (co-ordinator), Tim Hyman, now our President, Paul Cheshire, Ray Crozier, Louise de Bruin, Janice Gregory, Marcella Henderson-Peal, Kate Kavanagh, Pat Quigley, Chris Thomas) met in our supernatural squares, to discuss the Letters of JCP to ‘Sea Eagle’, his 12-years-younger sister Katie/Philippa.

The Sea Eagle letters run for 50 years from 1911 to 1961 (Both died in 1963).

Katie’s letters are not known, but all agreed they would make interesting additions.

According to Louise Katie was always in love, and JCP makes much, in his play-acting mode, of her romantic feelings for Phyllis. He is aware of her tendency to depression: the letters are lively, full of amusing incidents. He thinks of things that will please her: when he’s in California saying he has seen many places mentioned by Katie’s beloved Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass* was Katie’s bible, her second mentor *Thus Spake Zarathustra*).

Katie, like the other Powys sisters, had only governess-education and often made grammatical mistakes; but her brother (and Phyllis whose judgment they both respected) thought that apart from obvious corrections, her simple style should be left to make its own effect.

His lavish praise of her work is not excessive, according to Louise, who finds her sympathy with nature unequalled, despite somewhat simple plot-lines, in *Blackthorn Winter* above all (one of Frank Kibblewhite’s excellent reprints).

JCP elected Katie as a kindred spirit, the closest of all their eleven siblings, and

much in his letters analyses the likenesses and unlikenesses between them all, along with things they two would share: recommendations of books and descriptions of his walks, head-tapping rites and his family of walking sticks. At the same time (Tim reminded us) Katie's intensely emotional character, and past history of breakdown, made her brother ever careful to be protective and encouraging – if not propitiating, possibly to the point of patronising, letting her feel she has power over him.

JCP had women friends like Dorothy Richardson or Alyse Gregory, or his middle-aged sisters, whom he treats as equals, but with young ones, including other sisters (even describing Phyllis), his attitude to women can be (for KK) uncomfortable, calling them 'little' or 'child' (the Lewis Carroll syndrome) and admitting erotic feelings for them. As for his professed 'incestuous' love for their sister Nelly, this is likely to have been a lot milder than it sounds (according to L de B who knew the family history well), but given today's 'climate', PC finds it worrying. The diaries of the 1930s (which are like letters to Phyllis) have much the same tone as these letters, and their descriptions of physical delight can be thought of as casting light on this area.

KK finds JCP's generalisations about female/male psychology also often too sweeping. JG read Alyse's perceptive description of JCP. She always felt that for him, especially with 'the boys', women were on a lower level.

PC said he had a favourite letter (dated 17 December 1925), and wondered why JCP didn't adopt this kind of informal style in his novels. Not much in the letters can't be found elsewhere – none the worse for that. PQ especially enjoyed the descriptions of walks; CT the cairns and stones at the top of the mountain, memorials for his family. PC referred to JCP's preference for walking in silence with people he felt close to, but not with strangers; CT to his difficulties in finding places to walk in California. Among other topics were JCP's obsessive preference for even numbers (JG) – as in Whitman's 'Square Deific' which he often quoted.

TH was surprised to learn that JCP disliked Donne and had never read Tolstoy. His love of Wordsworth (at his best) clearly shows (KT). CT enjoys his shifts of subject from Strindberg to cauliflowers. He lectured on Wagner about whom he knew nothing.

Once again, we miss Katie's letters to which he refers. The last line from JCP is 'I was very pleased that you said what you did of *Wolf Solent*' -- she had probably read the new 1961 reprint with JCP's new preface. But we would like to know what it was she said!

Altogether these letters make a lively record of JCP's long life, from his lecturing days in horrible American towns with smuts falling like black snow, to happy walks in woods, streams and hills from Phudd and Corwen, to ninth-decade memory loss and ritual repetition of happy scenes from the past.

Chris Thomas

If I could see the puppets dallying
Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 2 [1]

The correspondence between Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939) and Louis Wilkinson (1881-1966)

A selection of some of Llewelyn's letters to Louis Wilkinson have appeared in *Welsh Ambassadors (Powys Lives and Letters, 1936)* and *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys (1943)*, selected and edited by Louis Wilkinson. However, these few examples represent only a fragment of their complete correspondence. A substantial collection of 160 original holograph letters (dated 1908-1939) are located at the University of California Los Angeles Charles E Young Research Library and a smaller collection of 65 letters (dated 1906-1939) can be found in the Powys Society collection at Exeter University. There are also letters which can be found located in other sources and private collections.

For many years Anthony Head (editor of *Powys to Sea Eagle, JCP's letters to Philippa Powys, 1996* and *The Diary of JCP for 1929, 1998*, both from Cecil Woolf), had been working closely with Christopher Wilkinson (grandson of Louis) in collating, transcribing, editing, arranging, dating and annotating all these letters, plus many others amounting in total to about 500 letters, with a view to eventual publication in a single volume.



Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939) c.1908 and Louis Wilkinson (1881-1966) c.1920
Image courtesy of *The Brothers Powys* by Richard Graves (1983)

During their long collaboration until Christopher's untimely death in early 2018, Christopher was able to contribute about 260 additional letters from his personal archive inherited from his father Oliver Wilkinson. Christopher had also prepared explanatory notes to the letters as well as an index. Anthony says this is still very much an ongoing project which he hopes to complete in the next few years. He plans to add biographical notes, a general introduction, as well as short introductions to the four divisions of the book which will all help to provide wider context for the correspondence and clarification of various references to people. Anthony and Christopher also collected photographs to insert in the book that will make this a very attractive volume, a permanent record of a significant literary friendship and a fine tribute to Christopher's legacy.

Members may recall Christopher's talk at our 1998 conference in Kingston Maurward, entitled *These Honeysuckle Rogues: the Friendship of Llewelyn Powys and Louis Wilkinson*. This was followed later on the same day by a performance entitled *In Our Free Way: Readings from the Correspondence of Llewelyn Powys and Louis Wilkinson* which he had devised with Christopher Kent and Oliver Wilkinson. At our annual conference in 1997 Christopher also directed readings of extracts from the works of Llewelyn, Louis Wilkinson and others called *The Powys Clowns*.

According to Alyse Gregory, Louis was Llewelyn's *oldest and dearest friend* [2]. They first met when Llewelyn went up to Cambridge in 1903 where Louis was already at St. John's College. They quickly became close friends. Before Llewelyn, Louis had met Theodore Powys when he was a pupil at the school, Eaton House, which Louis's parents ran in Aldeburgh. JCP had also been introduced to Louis in 1901 and dubbed him "the Archangel", impressed by his physical appearance and sceptical attitude to religious belief. There were also family connections, for Llewelyn's and Louis's mothers had been friends in their girlhood. Llewelyn referred to Louis's early influence on his younger self, mentioning his friend's *emancipated spirit [which] has done so much to free my mind of cant* [3]. Louis, in return in *Seven Friends*, said: *Llewelyn's influence upon me was one of the strongest and most lasting that I have known...his influence was almost wholly that of his personality... For some while everyone but Llewelyn seemed to me irrelevant and dull* [4]. JCP, in *Autobiography*, distinguished the relationship between Louis and other members of the Powys family including himself, and noted that *With Llewelyn, however, [Louis] was most at ease* [5].

The letters I have read between Llewelyn and Louis certainly seem to bear this out. They are lively, energetic and full of interesting details about people, family, events, quarrels and arguments. Llewelyn's letter to Louis dated 28 May 1916 in which he criticises Louis's 1916 novel *The Buffoon*, which includes a caricature portrait of JCP as Jack Welsh, is a good example of how two close friends could hold very different opinions: *Words of mine, says Llewelyn, cannot express how poorly I think of it: it is utterly unworthy of you – a thoroughly insipid and commonplace production*. Llewelyn was not alone in his negative view of Louis's book – both Marian and JCP himself, who despite reviewing the novel favourably for a San Francisco newspaper, were distressed -- and John had to sit *under a tree to earth his hatred* [6] of the novel. JCP's conflicted response to Louis's novel is

recorded in *Autobiography*: [Louis] expressed most beautifully his mixed feelings towards me in that admirable story, *The Buffoon*, and from this book the discerning reader can see how genuinely fond of me he was but at the same time – aye! how hurt and irritated! [7] (Louis later heavily criticised Llewelyn’s book *Impassioned Clay* in a letter to him dated 4 December 1930 quoted by Richard Graves in *The Brothers Powys*, p.236)

Occasionally there are salacious comments in the letters yet the overall impression is comic and inoffensive – these indecencies might just be assigned to high spirits. This would appear to be just what JCP meant when he referred to the relationship between Llewelyn and Louis: *many a time have I listened to one irrepressible laughing fit after another, as if from a couple of Prep-boys, while these two healthy minded lovers of Helios Hyperion were together* [8].

Below (as a ‘foretaste’), we publish Llewelyn’s 1916 letter to Louis about his novel *The Buffoon* and Louis’s letter to Llewelyn, dated 28 October 1939, written shortly before Llewelyn’s death on 2 December 1939.

Notes to the letters are by the editors of the correspondence.

The letters are reproduced here with the permission of Margaret Wilkinson.

I would like to express my gratitude to Anthony Head for providing details of his work with Christopher Wilkinson on establishing the complete collection of letters between Llewelyn and Louis Wilkinson.

Notes

1. Louis Wilkinson’s first novel was *The Puppets’ Dallying*, published by Greening & Co in 1905.
2. *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, selected and edited by Louis Wilkinson, 1943, p.25
3. *Earth Memories*, Redcliffe Press, 1984, p.136
4. *Seven Friends*, Mandrake Press, 1992, p.91 & p.93
5. *Autobiography*, Macdonald, 1967, p.267
6. Quoted in *The Love Letters of JCP and Frances Gregg*, edited by Oliver Wilkinson, Vol. 1. p.204n
7. *Autobiography*, p.268
8. *Autobiography*, p.267

To: Louis Wilkinson

(c/o Fred Ranney, Brownsville, West Windsor, Vermont, USA) (1)

[From Gilgil, B.E.A.]

May 28th 1916

My dear Louis, *The Buffoon* (2) has arrived. Words of mine cannot express how poorly I think of it: it is utterly unworthy of you – a thoroughly insipid and commonplace production.

I cannot conceive how you managed to write it and still less how you beguiled Mr. Knopf to publish it. God! it’s a rotten book!

You seem to have taken laborious pains to keep your admirable personality out of its pages – you present to the world a book written by a mean and clever journalist with his eye upon the man of the world. You avoid being laughed at but at what sacrifice. Once or twice as through

the garb of conventionality a bone-flattened nose – a wisp of impossible coloured hair – a belly-belt does appear but seldom – very seldom, too seldom. Edward looking to see if the carriage door was securely fastened before his farewell salutation to his mother – Edward envisaging many of the water closet frequenters of the previous year dead and buried – here and there on occasions like this I do get a thin suggestion of yourself. Otherwise the most sympathetic critic could hardly acclaim the book for its style – on my soul it has *no style*. The *style* of a clever modern writer – afraid of giving himself away – the grammar and spelling without doubt is in order. I certainly think the Puppets Dallying is more likely to catch the ear of later generations than these pages – God, but it's sorry stuff. You must not be guilty of a lapse like this again – you will certainly go far to let the circle down if this is the kind of writing you are capable of producing.

I cannot conceive how you could possibly 'kid' yourself into thinking anything else of it. Where is L.U.W. the Archangel, that splendid flamboyant figure who has been the delight of us all for so many years – is this tedious long winded labouring book his characteristic writing? I cannot believe this to be so. The smart set story was ever so much better. (3) I have hidden the book. I would not dare to let Cole look at it – it has seldom been my fate in literature to toil through anything so colourless. I think of your letters so admirable, so Rabelaisian and naive, and corrupt, so full of a thousand shades and side issues, and then read the 'Buffoon' – It's a ridiculous and miserable book, it has no more style than an ordinary bookstall production – and lacks even the sensationalism of those tales. It reminds me of a fantastic letter you once sent me, a letter you had written to Jack beginning 'Punctilious – no not quite that' – and then going on for several pages with I know not what long winded, lack lustre nonsense.

Look here – consider this book, this book which is to appeal to the really *discerning reader*. It has absolutely no story – with its scenes in Liverpool and South Peppering – a man falls out of passing carriage – a girl faints in Hyde Park – you wonder why the devil the book was written – for its psychological insight you will say, but how is it revealing in this sphere. The selfishness of maternal love, well everyone knows about that – the love of sensationalism and affectation in certain natures – why that surely is not a very profound discovery –

The characters too! That bounder Edward with his discreet philistinism – Welsh! One cannot feel much enthusiasm for him though one is thankful enough to come across some of his ancient quips now and again – all of them remembered and served up again with amazing accuracy.

Things said in a tiny room at Grantham served up again how many years later (4) There is nothing good about reproducing the commonplace and this is what this book does – from the hot kidney scene and the 'I must wash *me* face' scene right up till that dreadful Norah dinner.

There is nothing free and generous and exciting all through the 428 pages. You are conscious of a writer with his eye upon God knows what kind of reader endeavouring with much mental travail to display psychological insight – Jee wiss! its a work – and I hope no one will take it out of my bookshelf and bring it over to me – By Jove its mediocre – you must never let us see anything like this again – It were better that your genius still remained unforced.

I think of all the characters by far the most pleasing is little brother Lulu – he at least is not vulgar – all the rest are cheap and vulgar. Tryon perhaps is as good as any of them – it is a little interesting when you describe his facial singularities and wonder how he shaves without cutting himself. God but how tiresome the conversation is, how laborious – and how unspeakable the lecture and Aleister Crowley (5) or was it Ezra Pound and his clientele – Eunice what a bitch – and those side characters, those Swinburnes of the novel, everyone knows what they say and think and you drag ‘em in as if they were remarkable in some way.

When you describe the harlot at the feet of this fantastic lecturer – I get the idea that you could have given the book some good body – the girl clinging to vast worsted stocking as to the cross! the vast worsted stocking feet of another Count of Sade! But you don’t do it – you simply describe the commonplace – and scrupulously avoid anything that has the shadow of imagination upon it.

These people are all of them awful and if this is what you mean by the ritual of good writing more strength to your elbow.

‘In memory of old Tarding days’ that was a good touch – that was the best thing in the book...

My health still the same – still precarious – however by the time this letter reaches you I shall have completed a year’s work on the farm. I should like to see a slightly better expression of your genius – Well I must wait: I suppose your little wife thinks the book a masterpiece. ‘Heigh ho! King Charles’ Wain is above the new chimney’(6)

Notes

1) Note in L.U.W.’s writing at head of letter: ‘This should put May in a good humour for a week.’

2) *The Buffoon*. Part-written by Frances, the book contained satirical portraits of most of the Powys circle, including an unflattering caricature of John as ‘Jack Welsh’. Other acquaintances lampooned included Harry Lyon as ‘Reggie Tryers’, Hilda Doolittle as ‘Eunice Dunwiddie’ and Ezra Pound as ‘Raoul Root’. The buffoon of the title – ‘Edward Raynes’ – was a side of Louis himself. Reviewing the book for *The Bulletin* in San Francisco in September 1919, John Cowper neatly sidestepped any potential offence in the caricature of himself by drawing enthusiastic attention to it. ‘But *The Buffoon* is at its raciest and naughtiest and consequently at its best, in the chapters where Jack Welsh enters. What a man! Louis Wilkinson may well congratulate himself upon this superb specimen of imaginative creation. Jack Welsh takes his place in a chamber of queer fishes that contains some world famous names. He isn’t amongst these heroes... But he is there, in that same spacious chamber, the chamber of the whimsical philosophers who turn life into a precious joke...’

3) *The Phantom Baby* by Louis Wilkinson, is a story about a brother and sister who have just moved to the seaside. Aghast at the number of unwanted visitors who come calling at their door, they decide to pretend that the sister has just given birth to an illegitimate baby. The plan goes badly wrong when the local stiff-backed doctor suppresses his initial disapproval and turns up at the door to congratulate her on her ‘bravery’. Luckily his later discovery of the deception sends him packing once again.

The Smart Set – A Magazine of Cleverness, was a New York literary magazine edited by George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken. Mencken told Louis that his first contribution, sent from Siena, had got priority attention because of the many foreign stamps on the package. Two of Louis’s stories were adapted from plays he had written (*The Sort of Man You Shouldn’t Marry* – retitled *The Tester*

of *Thrills* – and *Chrissy's Way*), the second adaptation done with Frances's help. Another Louis contribution was *Kangarooledo*. These are few and far between: Louis did not consider himself a short story writer.

4) Early in the summer of 1905, Louis, Llewelyn, John Cowper and Bernie O'Neill were invited by Albert Powys to spend a weekend near Grantham, where he was restoring a church. It was at this meeting that John suggested to Louis the idea of lecturing in America for the Philadelphia Society. Louis said the visit determined the future course of his life.

5) Louis had known Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) since 1908 and was a friend till his death, but made clear in *Seven Friends* (The Richards Press, London, 1953) that he was not a 'disciple'. They shared a deep-seated impatience with sexual hypocrisy. Louis was Crowley's literary executor, presided at his funeral in 1947, and edited Crowley's *The Law is For All* which was published with further editing work of Hymenaeus Beta by New Falcon Publications in 1996. Louis was also at this time contributing short pieces to *The International* which Crowley was editing in New York.

6) *Henry IV, Pt. I, Act II, Scene 1*

An Inn Yard, Rochester; enter a Carrier with a lanthorn in his hand

First Carrier: Heigh-ho! An't be not four by the day I'll be hanged. Charles' Wain is over the new chimney and yet our horse not packed...

To Llewelyn Powys

28th October 1939

My dearest Lulu, How long letters take to you & from you! ...

I doubt if Moseley (1) will come here. He is ever reluctant to take any step. I wonder what exactly was in his odd mind when he said that you Powyses rose from the soil? I will ask him. He would certainly pay generous scot & lot if he were here – he is a free giver. I, as you know, have a wary vein in such matters. But I hope I show no parsimony in the contribution of 2½ guineas a week here – this is ½ guinea more than Joan asks her boarders when it is not the summer Season. Also I furnish all wine & beer. Just before the War Budget I took thought for the morrow (this is a somewhat L.C.P. phrase) and ordered two dozen bottles of Burgundy to be sent here from London – and some sherry. I am glad to see that such wines as Bergundy are not much increased in price since the Budget – though sherry (which I favour much less) is 1/- a bottle more. I can live through the winter on profit from American securities & the dollar draft that I bought for use in America some months ago. *Wall Street* has always put money into my pocket. Deirdre's entire education has been paid for by those who bought when I sold, and sold when I bought. What may happen to money now God knows – but, if anything remains safe, I think it will be to buy 'sound' American shares when they are well below average level and sell them when the tide rises – as it always has. It is the tendency to exaggeration & nervousness – panic of despair & ecstasy – in the American character that gives this chance for profit. Always there is this alternation between excessive fright and excessive hope – so that when there is a 'slump', the decline is unwarrantably sharp, & when there is a 'boom', the uplifting is no less unwarrantable. – But now it is permitted only to *sell* American shares – so I have no 'operations' in prospect. I would not in any case buy, as prices now are high. I have enough for well over the winter: but shall have then to 'take up capital' if the war continues and if lectures are still suspended. I hope your affairs will go favourably. I am glad to hear of your money from 'Love and Death'.

This life in the country suits me well. Even so lately as last Wednesday I bathed – but the wind has been colder these last few days, though the sun is still often shining – and these moonlit nights have been wonderful. There is no church in this village, and that gives me a sense of relief – even more relief, perhaps, that there is no clergyman.

Trumper came to tea last Tuesday – Again we spoke of you – and of those Cambridge days. I like him.

I have now finished writing (and have typed it) an enormously long chapter – the most difficult & important – on the Battle of Minden – the scene of Sackville’s disgrace. The letters & the Court Martial Evidence, and the Pamphlets, the Lampoons – are all of great interest to me. What a mean fellow ‘the great Pitt’ was! ‘Very ministerial’ Sackville calls Pitt. Christ – we have *just the same* vicious meanness, the same dishonesty & cautious fear & stupidity – No change, no change! I do not like the Government we have now: I wish we could change many of these ministers – most of all, Chamberlain. They fight with their hands too tightly closed upon their own financial security as they without wisdom see it. Their rents & revenues are foremost in their minds. I fear very much what may come of their rooted hostility to Russia. In America people are already thinking that ‘there is something *phoney* about this war’. And in America the general wish is as strong as our is, to destroy ‘Hitlerism’...

I was about to see Howe, but my flight with Deirdre to Cornwall prevented. But I gathered from what he said on the telephone that he was not likely to show very much practical interest in the Sackville book. – I am now reading Huxley’s last novel ‘After Many a Summer’: it is lewd & entertaining – often I laugh aloud (2). But much of it would not suit you. Of its kind, though, it is of the highest excellence.

Write soon to me again, dearest Lulu. I think often of you & I hope for *good news*. My love to Alyse & to Lisely – I hope all is well – Joan sends you her love – Louis I believe they don’t allow photographs of buildings, which may have been why that postcard of this house never reached you. Your letters are not opened so far by the Censor. Are mine?

The ‘mousetrap’ in that photograph is a camera case...

Notes

1. CT notes: According to an annotation by the editors to a letter from Llewelyn to Louis dated February 7 1915 “Edwyn Moseley (1879-?) was one of the Oxford undergraduates, members of the Yellow Tulip Club, sent down with Louis for blasphemy. He appears in *Swan’s Milk* as ‘Denis Morley’. He read for the bar, but never practised. He had a private income, and made a considerable amount each year playing bridge.”

2. Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) had been in America since March 1937, and had been resident in Los Angeles since 1938. The central theme of *After Many a Summer* is time and immortality and the locale is Southern California.

Phyllis and John, September 1933

Monday September 11th 1933

The Fourth anniversary of our coming to this house! and J's mother's birthday. Mr Masters came to stay the night with us and mentioned today was his father's birthday as well. Edgar Lee seemed rather sad -- the burden of carrying on the struggle with editors & publishing for an income lay heavy as he took it up again for another winter at the Hotel Chelsea – Ellen & Hilary far off in Kansas city. His talk of the extremely precarious state of all publishing houses in these bad times had a great tendency to make J think twice about issuing ultimatums to S. & S. at this juncture – and thrice about how lucky he was to have any money at all from his books and not to be lecturing! Is it Providence – or the revarise – Mr M's coming by chance on the eve of J's entrance into the Inner Sanctum for the first time -- as into an arena? Certainly it is clear it has played a part.

It turned cold today – the first turn toward frost – each one now a little colder until the final one where the plants turn black. Mrs Powell took away the white and the black kittens! It was hard to tie them and their Fate into a Bag from which they kept escaping. They were not frightened. They thought it was a game.

Cold. A cold North Wind - a clear blue sky, not a cloud! Hurried thro' all. Dora brought the milk & saw me give it to the Cats. The T.T. got up & as she didn't come till 2 and did[n't] sleep till 2.30 (my Fault!) she only had 6 and a half hours.

We have to have the Electric Heater today ... The T.T. did shiver so when she got up – shivered with cold. It is my Mother's Birthday today & the anniversary of our first coming to this house. ... At tea I upset the T.T. and made her cry by talking of what would happen if I were Dead. ... The T.T. has now got the idea that if we do go to Wales & close up & sell the house we would be wise to kill the Black with the help of Dr.Smith - as he killed Toby - so instantaneously ... I went to bed at 12 o'clock & the T.T. soon followed. It is brave of her to let me go for so long & her sickness impending. No Hurting.

Tuesday 12th September *All the morning as I talked to Old Masters about my affairs & his affairs the T.T. looking very white & thin & rather earnest & grave & pre-occupied kept going about packing my bag. I had such a feeling for her – O such a very deep feeling to her - the Emotion of a Stone as I watched her hurry thro' the parlour on this business of collecting my things. She gave me my old flask too – with whiskey in it.*

**

Thursday September 14th

It has rained all day. I woke to hear someone at the door. It was Mr Stein – who pointed out the Radowitz bull standing in the North garden and drove it out. When I was dressed I discovered to my dismay that it was after eleven – the post man long gone – and Mother’s letter and Edgar Lee’s cane not off! I was disgusted. I had barely finished a cup of coffee and some toast when Carl drove up to take me to dinner. What a muddle I made of everything. A lovely long letter from Mother telling of her home-coming – which I devoured. Pretty [?] was lying asleep on the couch and made no demonstration. No lights – no water – very hot – still she is happy – happy to be back again. I took the Black the round by the fir tree house and the Lutheran church – imagining how life would seem when we were installed with Hattie’s mother at the Platzer house. My spirits are always so lifted when I am on any of these hills – or the fir tree house road. It is clear my spirit demands some aspect that this house and place under the hill does not fulfill. I felt so aware of this I felt reconciled for a while to going to Wales again.

What & what have I done in all this day – what have I ever done ! The rain is falling very hard now at 12. It seems very lonely all this rainy day and evening. But who minds that? What you do mind alas – is – not the feeling of loneliness which is like a fog or mist and not unpleasant – but the stark inescapable awareness of yourself – or rather of [all your shortcomings and miserable vacuities – an encumberer of the earth – undimmed by events or the presence of others– and overpowering you like bad air.

Finished Mansfield Park – and wrote a few lines on the Tragic – as if I had done it for [D’s Spectator. I think they were poor and [?frozen? brazen.

O I do pray the T.T. is all right. Mr. Schuster was very keen for me to write another of those philosophical Brochures - that are not greatly in favour with the T.T!

**

Friday, September 15th

Sick in the night. Left a note for Albert to tell him to telephone Mrs Steitz I could not come to dinner and to send off E.L.M.’s cane. Dora came and fed the cats. Mrs Krick came, and late in the evening Mrs Steitz – both very concerned. I shall never forget Mrs Krick’s presence, her eyes not like a Mother’s -- not like a Doctor’s – far [] from that – but like Nature’s Herself – when you think of her as All-Healing All bearing – not kind nor unkind. She sat so still – I even dozed while she was there. She did not fuss – she did not talk – she did not communicate – she just stayed. Perfect! Perfect! She is the one who knows best what sickness is of anyone I have ever met – what is it she could have been! I suppose a Florence Nightingale.

It was rainy and neither warm nor cold. The animals all got on very well. I propped the door open with the footstool and the Black went in and out – and barked. He must have felt very abandoned. It made not the slightest difference to me being alone in this house.

Saturday, September 16

I got up and made malted milk and drank ice water. Earlier I came and lay on the couch downstairs and drank iced ginger ale. Mrs Krick came with a poached egg and toast and was here when J. came. I got up and had another cup of tea with him. It was lovely having it over – and nothing to spoil the pleasure of his return. He brought exciting books. *Si le grain ne meurt* of Gide Mr Sacks told us about – Maxim Gorki's Memoires Litteraires – and a stupid, stupid essay on Dickens by Zweig – also Landor's Imaginary Conversations and Holiday House from Marian's. He seemed to have dealt [coldly and drastically with S.& S. in his interview. And only on a glass of milk as they consumed their luncheon – and without allowing himself a cigarette [even – since it was after twelve. He looks so much stronger and younger with his hair short again. He took Olwen. He did all. The rolls from Charlotte's reminded me of Mother's and my days in New York. The Black was elated to see him.

Yesterday it rained "sans cesse" and the day before yesterday too! It rained sans cesse the whole of my visit for two days and two nights. I keep wondering what it is like in Man's own house where the T.T. is. Then took Olwen to Swartz to be re-strung. It did seem so queer leaving her there. I pray she will be all right. I paid 85 cents. Marian as she waited by the door said that my voice giving instructions sounded like a Priest Intoning - for the shop was spacious and empty – Marian walked with me to 50th Street and we parted at Radio City. The T.T. The T.T. thinks the solid square so massively foundationed is the noblest & finest of all the tall buildings. I was impressed by it too; but I doubt if I did it justice ... There were fields flooded all the way as the train drew towards Hillsdale & Albert told me at once that our river had swept our bridge on to the Left Bank, but there it is held by wire. Found the T.T. just getting over her sickness and Mrs.Krick with her. I kissed her hand in sweet gratitude. Had a happy tea & a happy evening.

Sunday, September 17

J. brought back Weymouth Sands with him and has begun cutting it again with Mr Schuster's notes. He drew lines in ink through the paragraph describing how Cassie [I-r used folded pieces of paper to keep the mirror straight in front of which the Jobber combed his hair – and how the Jobber had pictures of ships

everywhere but it was characteristic of a certain vein of obstinate optimism in his nature there was not a single one of a wreck. I was very vehement in protest at this – the folded paper in the mirror having made a deep impression on me – and made me marvel at what odd fragments of Reality J. has picked up in his strange passage alone and across this earth. Miss Clough will have to type this page again. J. was very much upset at his apparent inability to tell the good from the bad – the best from the worst. I do not feel I know usually – but I was curiously and inexorably certain that this should go back in – even if it did have to be typed again. He found one place in the MSS where Mr Fadiman had corrected Portland Bill neatly and accurately to Portland Hill – and this gave me profound satisfaction !

Up at 8. ... The T.T. was so very very nice to me. ... We had a happy breakfast & read a perfectly lovely letter from Lucy about Mary coming down at night from her bedroom to see her new pony by candlelight ... The T.T. tells me of her walks & how she was inspired by different views; & how unsatisfactory to her longing for Romance the views from Phudd Bottom are with the chickens in front – This puts me to think more than ever of Wales. She went to lunch twice up at the Steitz & enjoyed it very much — & indeed begins to see in it a Solution for many things. She took the Black by Lutheran Church one day and another day by the post - she longed for a Bench up there by the Post. She gave me my belated ENEMA - & I had to have a second one for I felt discomfort. The Sun is out now and she is out in it! She is going carefully over everything in her Garden ... We went on dealing with letters and accounts and cheques till 12 o'clock in bed at 12.10. & the T.T. and! as I say the T.T. also.

Monday , September 18

It rained and rained – Everything is flooded – Mrs Powell was turned back on the road by a bridge washed out and had to go round by Chatham and [Spencer Town. She cleaned the attic and thus J. could not retire there – and later when she got to the living room he worked most uncomfortably upstairs on a straight chair with all the Mss spread out around him. I fear this will start up his side again.

A long letter from Mother – full of the agitation and insoluble problems of her life – and Aunt Harriet's and mine – all at different points of the compass. Mrs Powell has to buy coal now and some sort of stove. She thinks she can use the old Miller one in the barn. But my heart sank at the realization that her precarious existence precludes my ceasing to avail myself of her services – if we do move to the Platzer house to save expenses – unless she can get some other work. I celebrated the new régime of going to Mrs S. for dinner every day by starting off with J for his walk.

We sat at the waterfall a long time. The Asters were beautiful. They are one of the loveliest of flowers. I have never been as aware of them in all my life as I am this year. On the way back on the willows path I saw a rainbow – It was vivid – every part of the arch – and the end seemed to rest on the very place J. and I had been sitting. It looked really Miraculous.

... Talked to Albert & Dora while the T.T. in her attic came to the conclusion that Dora did not like her altogether on the grounds of her not being the sort of strong moral character that Dora admires and emulates. The T.T. had a mood of mischief & Puckish thoughts as she entertained the idea of Dora's old age as the old age of a Miser "since she is free of other vi ces". Had a happy breakfast. I had the most lovely Devonshire Cream I've ever tasted ...

The T.T. has now gone to her meal at the Steitz. There are black clouds overhead [-]I hope she will not be caught in the rain. Worked at my cutting of Weymouth ... Have made one cut about the Jobber's Mirror which has to be put back again the T.T. insists! At 4.45 the T.T. & I started for our walk together. We took Black on leash to Grotto above which we sat down (with "the Old" sitting by our side) on the rocks & surveyed the water rushing in full volume & those two Fir Trees which the T.T. loves. She says the children's swing on one of them is like a swing on an Angel's wing – sacriligious! Then the Black and I went up the Gulley to Newt Pond - admiring the Michaelmas Daisies or Asters which are specially beautiful this year. Saw the noblest Rainbow I can recall ever. So did the T.T. from the Flat Lot as she returned by the Iron Bridge. She was thrilled. She felt strong and happy. The meal at the Steitz will Save the T.T. Miss Clough came and we did enjoy her presence!

Tuesday September 19

Gladys and Arthur brought Lady Katherine Phipps – the Marchioness of Normandy's daughter – who does some sort of social work in Montreal – to Tea. It was very harmonious, she was nice – shy and quiet – and always so extremely unassuming – quaint American phrase – what she really did of course was that particular feat of the English Lady and gentleman – to assume the unassuming. She had written a charming poem on partridge berries "my true love brings to me!" J. started conversation about the earliest memories people had. She remembered sitting in a Pram in the garden – and seeing the leaves fall on a certain gate – and behind it a glasshouse dim and mysterious but her parents said the glasshouse had been torn down at this time and she couldn't have seen it. This gave me a feeling of life in beautiful old English Mansfield Parks – not so much that in books as that I had with my doll house – which was by far the happiest species of illusion I ever enjoyed.

Mrs Steitz brother and family have arrived from Detroit. They are an unusually sweet natured family – a darling little boy – a kind of “standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet” young daughter – the apple of the parents’ eyes like all American Maidenhood.

I like coming by the gravel quarry – which is now full of water – green and amber and slate coloured and rumpling in the wind. There is an old rusty-battered wreck of a motor car long exposed to wind and rain on the edge that looks like a Palaquin in a poem by Wallace Stevens.

Took Black to Prometheus Stone. Came back via the Chicken Field because our Bridge is still down. And there was the T.T. coming to meet me across our orchard - with an open book – Axel’s Castle – about Villiers de L’Isle Adam in her hand. She spoke of the fatal effect of these French Books (Huysman etc., etc.,) when she was young in bringing on her”Unhappiness” in fact a mental state that was really Deranged – with the sense of Futility & Despair, proud & wilful & hopeless. We have thought and wondered about this question of the Winter – whether to go to the Platzter Place or not. They have bought it definitely. And the T.T. likes the lady and the children very much. But what of the Cats? The Black will be all right. But they have a big Sandy Cat of their own... .. Wrote a letter to Lulu. This letter pleased the T.T. so well that she actually copied it for her old age into her Diary Notes. Then the T.T. prepared tea for our Visitors and picked some lovely bunches of flowers for our vases – Asters from the Cement Bed and Purple Petunias from the top garden. Then they came — and aye! but we did like “Lady Kate”. The T.T. said she was a “Tudor” Holbein type. ... We had a very happy Tea-party.

Wednesday, September 20

This taking my dinner now at the Steitz has changed my whole life – more it has slipped some sort of screen in my consciousness – that has caused every casual glimpse I have caught of the landscape and the day and the roan horse of the Steins pasturing in the meadow I walk past – I share that quality about it it used to have when I was “young and green” Now this is an astonishing thing – that cooking - and perhaps too the absence of the results of cooking could annihilate my psychic étendue – like the fumes from a lead smelter chimney blight the vegetation.

No one could ever believe – what I know to be evident over this in myself.

Every day it rains – usually in the afternoon – however bright the sun is in the morning. The grandmother spoke of a pig they brought up once on a bottle – as a

“cosset”. I had the most beautiful bouquet I have ever had – picked for Lady Katherine’s coming to tea – pinkish white dahlias – purple petunias – white cornos – and the pink and crimson Poulsen roses. If I had had paints I would have stopped everything to paint it. I could not bear to think it would perish without its having been -- however inadequately – recorded in some way. Water colours seem not too impossible a means to approach flowers. They have all but texture – if you have the skill.

... The T.T. came back from her meal at the Steitzes with such a great feeling for the charm & sweetness of nature of the Platzer family. She thinks of asking them to come here to discuss the question of our staying with them this winter! The problem is the Cats. They have a big cat of a sandy hue that the T.T. admires greatly. But what of the old Mees? What of Sintram. Secretly in her heart the T.T. does not at all like the Mees. She prefers Sintram. I have one of my old-fashioned purely conservative adherences to the Old Self-Willed Lady! Miss Clough came with Paul who we had not seen for long. The T.T. gave her the Incompetents to read and she will read Pride & Prejudice. Paul actually carried off The Brothers Karamazov. Will he like it? He turns out to be an impassioned reader! Who knew that?

Thursday, September 21

I sat up late and the day began terribly late and all went awry – I had barely got half the breakfast dishes washed when Carl came for the laundry and to convey me to dinner. I particularly enjoyed a dish of sauerkraut prepared by “Cousin Anne” as Mrs Platzer calls the grandmother. I learned finally the German name for chives Schnittlauch – or something like that. That nice Mrs Green came in the afternoon and brought us some English Violet plants and some primroses.

Annie Besant has died! It has made me think of [?] father. How strange that I cannot apparently – ever maintain the ritual I thought of wanting to do – to think of [father in a certain way – every morning before I get up – and every night before I went to sleep. It shows that anyone unaccustomed to any ritual – simply cannot achieve – even the most lay ones. J’s life on the other hand is all ritual – even as he takes the garbage up the hill every morning and beats on the metal lid as if it were a gong in a Shinto Temple.

Olwen – came back! Safe under our roof again! And very lithe and resilient in arm and limb But alas her left thumb is broken off. J. said they told him a Schwartz to note that this was broken when they received it -- so it must have happened in the bag. I should have wrapped her up better.

The T.T. was so late last night with her letter to her Mother. ... Met Dora and her sister bringing the milk... I told them to feed the two cats with this new milk they brought & the T.T. from the Attic heard the dead silence while they did so & I

doubt if she was entirely pleased to think of these two young women at large by themselves in her kitchen! ... I have begun an article on Columbia County to make money!

Friday, September 22

I planted Mrs Green's Violets and primroses and got embroiled in all sorts of weed pulling and transplanting as a consequence and worked till almost dark. But I dressed for tea – I dress every night now – as one of the perquisites of my new leisure in this régime of not having to cook dinner. The Platzer family arrived as the omelette was in the pan and the toast in the oven. There is a hitch in their plans about buying the Wohn house. They are worried. They are having a difficult time. How I hope it will turn out all right for them – and for hundreds and thousands of their like in the same case at this time. But Roosevelt has done something that I can at last appreciate. The N.R.A. is beyond me. I cannot follow it – but to appropriate millions to buy up surplus food products and [?cotton and then turn it over to the Relief Bureaus is the kind of salient unequivocal action of a Woman that never seems to be able to occur in politics and governments. I would go to remarkable lengths of effort or sacrifice to do my part in such an act – remarkable for me who seem so incapable of self-discipline. I would like to be able to share in it like the Nazis who go without one meal a month to go toward the hungry and unemployed. It seems so characteristic of America that only the Many & [?clever and Employers seem to have anything to do toward anything. A letter from Mrs Dreiser saying Michael's son is born with both Club feet! What a thing! O I am so sorry!

We went up to bed together last night and I did so intensely enjoy my little Ballad-Girl – Aye! but the luck the luck, the luck that I have! Aye! she was so sweet! And this morn I held her again with incredible delight and I cannot tell you how transported I was – as if I held her for the very first time! And woke her up and after a good long night she stayed awake so I had to hurry up I can assure you ... she said “I can give you twenty-five minutes” I found her reading Edmund Wilson in Axel's Castle upon Gertrude Stein -- I like it when she snatches a moment to read her book as she is waiting for the man! ... At six I started first saying good-bye to the T.T. who in her green velvet skirt & brown jacket was planting violets in the Top Garden. ... Had a happy tea; and a timely visit from those charming people the Platzers! They brought “Jack” their great Sandy Cat. It put its arms round Miss Platzer's neck in fear of us and a strange room & the Black. Then it hid its head in her bosom this big cat like a frightened child. ... Went to bed at eleven but the T.T. stayed up till two writing to her mother. O deary I!

*

[23rd Sept] *Talked to the T.T. and Mr.Shaver at our kitchen door. She looked so nice in her familiar grey suit & he in his blue overalls. These two persons do suit each other perfectly! I love to see it. ... Had a happy breakfast and the T.T. said that she was wholly converted to Roosevelt because he was going to buy all the farm surplus & give it to the unemployed. Cotton, wheat, corn, all! What a wonderful thing. The very thing that a child would think of doing & no one has ever done before. No Government has ever given the surplus of production to those who need it most. This shows the good of a Dictat[ojr - like Goering of Prussia suppressing Vivisection in Germany! No one speaks of this owing to the conspiracy of the bloody Scientists to hush up their doings! Surely the Nobler Gods are not dead yet – no not quite dead yet! ... Read my Article to the T.T. She liked it and suggested improvements. She is so good at this! Mr. Shaver has separated the Almond Bush from the Spiraea that was killing it.*

Saturday, September 24

Mr Shaver came this morning and finished moving all the irises. Gladys came as we were finishing breakfast bearing our mail and a large box from Sears Roebuck or rather I think Lady Katherine actually bore the Sears Roebuck [?cap. I was so [s-ed by trying to stop the Black stop barking asking them in – and summoning my wits to order a loaf of bread and cigarettes from Capelli’s – that I only saluted Lady K after some moments had elapsed – and this omission rattled me even more. However they came in on their way back – and I drove up with them to lunch at the Steitz. Someway the atmosphere of Lady Katherine in this encounter seemed painful or rather depressing for some reason. I can’t tell why – perhaps because J. said “this [Simian ?? world” was my favorite book and made me pass it round and Lady K smiled as she handed it back to me and said these pictures I have never liked were “amusing”. I felt like such an American – with a kind of journalistic background – like the tone of Dorothy de P’s “what has become of Don Marquis these days – at Alyse’s tea in Patchin Place. I took back with me a large brown paper bag of cakes Hattie had baked for me – in accordance with our old regime of a weekly baking which I had taken for granted would no longer be continued since I went every day to dinner. I walked home ill at ease [&] write this [since added support of my existence – of the Cakes – as if the whole world baked – brewed – delved and span and dug –_that I might walk along there swinging my arms and only by all these efforts of others able to live at all. Mr Shaver then attacked the [spirea and the flowering almond and separated them and planted about 10 separate plants in different places from these. When I said – you’ll come over later on and cover up everything” a long pause ensued – and then he reluctantly agreed. “Nothing happened”. He does not like to be committed to anything ahead.

Friday, September 29

Gladys came for me – early as everyone always does – but I had finished the dishes – We went to the house on Miss McNeill’s place – which housed Mr Sacks and Mr [?Wibble – to try and recover my cape and my Viennese raincoat. It was shut. There were curtains on their windows and tomatoes on the sill – so there is a faint faint chance still someone may return for week ends – and restore my old cape worn under so many varied circumstances of my life – and whose loss now seems almost like a fragment of my past having been lost to me.

The lunch with Gladys was painful. It is no use. I glanced about the house and recalled the impressions in [revising the various aspects of it had made on me on the first visit we paid them – and it was the same today. I did not feel nervous - or ill at ease – but I was always entering on topics that aroused furious challenging contradictions and exceptions on Gladys’s part – and afraid of getting angry – and [?surprised by the mere occasion for anger suddenly emerging over nothing personal to her – over the vaguest generalizations about England and America – or [?”Halter” medicine – only aware of an obstinate determination not to argue. I would glance at the book case with a glazed eye – and relapse into silence. Would that [l’estringue?? J was so struck by used by Dr Frink be the [p y ? I suppose if I could assume or master the right tone of voice under such circumstances – “Ah Well! ... Have it your own way! “ would work. But is this only valuable at a serious crisis?

Up at 6.25 down at 6.45 did all as quick as I could and called the T.T. at 8.10. Had a particularly nice “Lesson” today and we had breakfast 9.10 very good. ... This day has been totally ruined for the T.T. by having to go to lunch up at the Big House just as my days used to be ruined at Montacute when I had to go to dine at Montacute House. Arthur was in New York. Aye, the little T.T. She is sophisticated in a manner that Henry James would understand better than -- most! She helped me with my B A T H when she returned. – This afternoon the Mees caught a live bird & the T.T. took it from Sintram and let it go & it flew away. The T.T. tonight has been doing up parcels – her red dress for Goldie & her Sweater from Sara for her mother. She is wonderful at doing up parcels – she is also good at foresight over the things – not to eat, but to use, that make things nice. She got me out of some attic hiding place my warm under-wear - Mr.Ort’s vest for instance. I am beginning reading to her the Autobiography of Gide. I actually do rather like this book!

[Saturday 30th] Awoke at 5. Pump-shipped - listened to the Crows – said Prayers [-] took hold of the. T.T, with left arm under her like I do. ... Called the T.T. at 8.15 & took the Old to the Trap Bank by our restored Bridge ... It struck the T.T.

as odd when I announced to her that before today I had never seen an absolutely cloudless sky - “No cloud obscures the brightness of the Sky” as the Poet says... But it is true. For when the sky is clear I always search about on all the horizons for a speck of cloud or mist or vapour – & today I can find None. Not a single one!

An earlier instalment, from January 1932, is in *NL* 99, p.29.

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Chris Thomas

JCP's Swan fountain pen

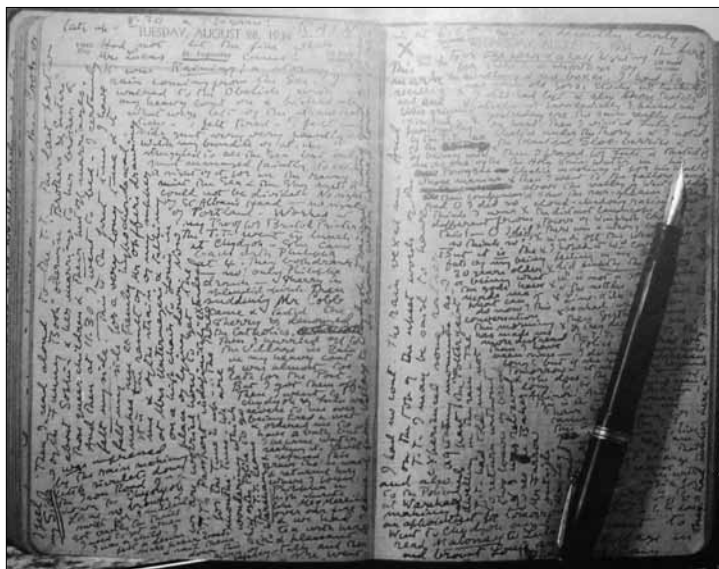
The front cover of *The Dorset Year, the diary of John Cowper Powys June 1934-July 1935* (Powys Press, 1998) is illustrated with an image of JCP's 'Swan' fountain pen resting on the open pages of his diary. The same image appears in the introduction at the top on *page x* alongside an advertisement for Swan fountain pens available for purchase from Henry Ling at 23 High East Street in Dorchester and is accompanied by an annotation that declares *JCP always used a Swan fountain pen*. The editors imply that JCP used this pen to write his diary in 1934/1935. JCP also used his father's quill pen to begin writing *Weymouth Sands* and even when using a fountain pen he always dipped the nib in ink as testified by the quotation below.

The fountain pen photographed for *The Dorset Year* is now catalogued in the Powys Archive at the Dorset Museum in Dorchester. However it is possible that this pen does not date from the 1930s but may in fact be another pen that JCP acquired later on in 1950 in Wales. We know about this because he recorded the purchase of a new Swan pen in an inscription on the front free endpaper in his personal copy of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* adapted by H W and J G Fowler



JCP's Swan fountain pen as currently displayed in the Dorset Museum, Dorchester

from *The Oxford Dictionary* (1911). He wrote: ‘*This pen bought at Ruthin on Feb 27 1950 is called a Swan and it cost 55 shillings! My pen is a very good pen...*’ (This dictionary is currently in the possession of Amanda Powys). The purchase of the fountain pen is corroborated by a letter JCP sent to his sister Katie dated 8 March 1950: ‘*I have just had to go with Phyllis to Ruthin to buy a new gold nib pen for I use fountain pens (55 medium) purely and entirely, solely and only for the sake of their Gold nibs, means Nibs, for I dip them in the ink pot in the ordinary way. **This new one is a Swan and it cost just 55/- shillings!** But you can see from this my hand how serenely and easily it flows along just touching the ice like the proper side of a skate & gliding on!’*



Images of JCP's Swan Fountain Pen from The Dorset Year

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 JCP always used a Swan fountain pen.

