

## Editorial

In this issue of the *Newsletter* we are very pleased to publish news of the long-awaited return next year of our annual conference to be held again in person at the Wessex Hotel in Street, 12-14 August 2022. Tennyson's island valley of *Avilion... deep meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns* awaits us. Glastonbury and its environs exert a familiar magnetism and magic too powerful for anyone to resist, as JCP said. Our conference preview sets out preliminary arrangements.

The major contribution in this *Newsletter* is the space we have devoted to *Wolf Solent* and especially the deleted chapters of JCP's novel published complete for the first time in the Supplement to this year's *Powys Journal*. Readers offer their responses to this project.

There is a report of another lively zoom discussion of *The Brazen Head* held in August, this time focusing on the last chapter. We welcome new members and have news of a new book about Chesil beach by Judith Stinton. We have a report of the completion of the project to incorporate the Powys Society Collection in Exeter University's Archives catalogue; we have notes on Enid Starkie, the Oxford scholar and devotee of French literature, admired by JCP and also a close friend of Alyse Gregory; we glimpse Katie Powys portrayed in a painting by Will Powys in her old age, hard at work in her garden in Buckland Newton; Rachel Hassall (archivist at Sherborne School) describes inscriptions in a book of poems by William Barnes.

Theodora Powys Scutt, a strong and colourful strand in the Powys tapestry, will be well remembered, by those who knew and by those who read her. See pages 10-16.

CT, KK

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## Two Corrections

Re: *Newsletter* 103, March 2021:

On pages 9 & 12: the date year of the death of Herbert Williams should read **2020**.

On page 34: the photograph of Llewelyn Powys should read **1905**. Peter Foss adds *it was one of the studio snaps taken of members of the Club of the Honest Cods at Cambridge that year (I have a complete set)*.

CT

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### ***Theodora Gay Scutt, 4 August 1932-11 October 2021***

*from Anne Powys, grand-daughter of TFP*

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of Theodora Scutt, on the 11th of October, 2021, at Abbey Haven Care Centre, Boyle, Ireland. She passed peacefully at midday while sitting reading *Ivanhoe*.

*See tributes in this newsletter.*

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### **Saturday 27 November 2021**

A discussion meeting on **the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent***, led by Kevin Taylor, will be held **online by ZOOM at 15:00 GMT** (Max 1.5 HOURS to 16:30).

If any member wishes to join the Zoom discussion, please e-mail Kevin Taylor at [ksjer.taylor@btinternet.com](mailto:ksjer.taylor@btinternet.com). Kevin will be hosting the meeting and will send you joining details in due course. All are welcome.

For more details of this event please visit the Upcoming events page of our web site at: The Powys Society — Upcoming Events ([powys-society.org](http://powys-society.org))

The 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 (July 2021), and distributed free to all members of the Society. This is now also available on JSTOR.

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### **The Powys Society Annual General Meeting**

***held by video link on Sunday 15 August 2021***

***at 15.00 BST***

**Present – members of the Powys Society committee:** David Goodway (*Vice-Chair*); Paul Cheshire (*Incoming Chair, Acting Treasurer, web editor and JSTOR manager*); Chris Thomas (*Secretary*); Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*); Marcella Henderson-Peal (*Hon committee member and official representative of Powys Society in France*); Kevin Taylor (*ex-officio, editor Powys Journal*); Marcel

Bradbury; Robin Hickey (*Outgoing Treasurer*) was present for the latter part of the meeting.

**Present – members of the Powys Society:** Catherine Bayliss, Jeff Bursey, Raymond Cox, Chris Gostick, Richard Graves, Janice Gregory, Sonia Lewis, David Stimpson, Anthony Swindell, Peter Tait, Ben Thomson, Kim Wheatley, Geoffrey Winch.

**Apologies** received from Timothy Hyman (*Outgoing Chair*), Dawn Collins (*Social Media manager*), Nicholas Birns (*Official representative of Powys Society in North America*), Charles Lock (*ex-officio, associate editor Powys Journal*), and Anna Rosic (*co-opted committee member and Conference organiser*).

**Kevin Taylor** welcomed members, explained Timothy had been hospitalised and was unable to attend, introduced the AGM, outlined Zoom protocols, and acted as moderator throughout the meeting.

In the absence of the Outgoing Chair Kevin invited **Paul Cheshire** to present a reading. Paul read a passage from *A Glastonbury Romance*, Chapter 30, The Flood, beginning “*Above the mounting flood rose still the broken tower arch...*” and ending “*...and the end is not yet.*”

### **Minutes of AGM 2020**

The minutes of the 2020 AGM as published in *Newsletter* 101 November 2020 were approved.

### **Announcement of appointment of *President of the Powys Society***

Secretary made a formal announcement of the appointment by the committee of **Timothy Hyman** as President of the Powys Society. Secretary said the committee had made this appointment in view of Timothy’s long-term commitment and championing of JCP’s works. Secretary said that Timothy has an association with the Powys Society in a variety of roles since its early days and can go back to the JCP centenary conference in 1972 where he performed the valuable service of transcribing the proceedings which appeared in the *Powys Review* No.1. Timothy has contributed articles to our official publications showing sensitivity, insights, literary awareness and wide knowledge of the Powyses. All of this the committee agreed made Timothy a natural candidate for the Presidency. Secretary said he wished to pay a personal tribute to Timothy saying he had worked with him since 2008. In all that time he has been a source of support and encouragement and the relationship between Chair and Secretary roles was made easy by sharing interests in art and literature. Secretary said he hoped Timothy would make a speedy recovery from illness. Secretary said he looked forward to working with Timothy again in his new role as President of the Society.

## **Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2021-2022**

Secretary explained that the extra mailout to members on 30 April 2021 was specifically to provide notice of posts due to fall vacant within the 15 May time limit. Constitution Rule 4.6: notes notification must be made 3 calendar months before the AGM, which had not been provided in the March NL. This mailing was to give members the chance to propose nominations which they have to do by 15 June (within 2 calendar months).

Secretary invited members to approve nominations as published in *Newsletter* No 103, July 2021. Nominations were approved.

## **Outgoing Chair's Report as published in *Newsletter* 103, July 2021**

Kevin Taylor invited Paul Cheshire, incoming Chair, to manage the rest of the AGM. Paul read to members the Outgoing Chair's annual report as published in *Newsletter* 103 and paid a tribute to Timothy. Paul said Timothy was a daunting figure to follow and thanked him for all his work in the past, praised his commitment to widening awareness of the achievements of the Powyses and the Society and said how much he admired his other work as a writer on the history of art especially his book on Sieneese painting.

## **Hon. Treasurer's Report and presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2020**

In the absence of Robin Hickey at this point in the meeting, Kevin Taylor referred members to the Treasurer's Report published in *Newsletter* 103 and noted the accounts for the year ending 31 December 2020 were in a healthy state. The accounts had been audited by independent accountants, Hills and Burgess, and approved on 18 February 2021. The Society earned an excess of income over expenditure of £6,673.69 with income amounting to £14,113.42 and expenditure amounting to £7,439.73. Increasing number of members have made use of PayPal facility on the website. E-book sales have helped increase income. Total book sales earned £4,884.54, Gift Aid income for 2019 and 2020 combined amounted to £1,420.07. At the end of December our four bank accounts held £17,325.66 which includes Glen's legacy of £2.5K. However there was an increase in costs incurred by printing and postage of *Newsletters* and the annual *Powys Journal* which cost £5,575.94.

## **Collection Liaison Manager's Report**

Secretary explained that Michael Kowalewski had resigned from appointment as Collection Liaison Officer and member of the committee. Secretary said that the committee had agreed to make the role of Collection Liaison Officer redundant since

the collection is now under professional archival care at Exeter University and does not require oversight and supervision by the Society.

Secretary said he would continue to act as first point of contact with the Collection when necessary. Members of the committee plan to visit the Collection in the near future to review progress of the incorporation of the Collection inventory with the University's archives catalogue. Secretary encouraged members to make use of the archives catalogue and visit the Collection.

## **Hon. Secretary's Report**

### **Membership**

Secretary reported that 24 new members have joined the Society since this time last year, 5 members had been reinstated, 14 members were removed who had either resigned or whose membership had lapsed, a few members had still not paid their membership for 2021. Total membership is currently 237. Membership trend is up despite losses. There is continuing strong interest in the Powyses from readers in the USA. Outside USA most distant members are located in Bosnia, Indonesia, and Australia.

### **Purchase of books**

The back catalogue of Powys books published by Cecil Woolf has been acquired from Cecil's widow Jean Moorcroft Wilson and are held in storage by Dawn Collins.

### **Social Media**

Secretary thanked Dawn Collins for managing and organising successful social media activity.

### **Meetings**

Secretary said that we expect to be able to return to holding in person discussion and committee meetings next year.

### **JSTOR**

Secretary thanked Paul Cheshire for facilitating access to digital version of the *Powys Journal* on the JSTOR platform via our website. The offer to access JSTOR content should encourage some new members

### **Powys Journal Supplement 2021**

Secretary congratulated Kevin Taylor, Morine Krissdóttir and Jerry Bird on production of this year's Journal and the Supplement which has been very well received. Secretary extended thanks to Adrian Gattenhof and Peter Brittain for their generous support.

**Jeff Bursey** suggested awareness of the Supplement especially could be raised by inserting a review in TLS, LRB and Goodreads. Jeff said he had already reviewed a number of other books by the Powyses on the website for Goodreads and recommended readers consider membership of the Powys Society.

**Sonia Lewis** enquired about the future of Glen Cavaliero's archive of papers and collection of Powys books. Sonia said she is currently looking after Glen's books. Secretary explained that books will be transferred to Corpus Christi College Cambridge in due course and arrangements are under way to deposit Glen's papers at Exeter University later this year as soon as covid-19 restrictions allow.

### **Powys Journal, e-Books and digitisation project**

Kevin thanked Morine Krissdóttir for all her hard work and dedication producing the Supplement to this year's *Powys Journal* which was published in July.

Kevin said that sales of e-books continue to perform well. As of 21 July 2021 we have sold 963 units. *A Glastonbury Romance* is the most popular item selling 353 copies followed by *Wolf Solent* at 185 copies, *Porius* at 160 copies, *Owen Glendower* at 102 copies and *Weymouth Sands* at 92 copies.

Digitised copies of the complete series of *Powys Review* are now available on the Powys Society website. Kevin thanked Paul Cheshire for help posting the *Review* on the website.

### **Development of Powys Society website and JSTOR**

Paul Cheshire said that the website now makes available online all past Powys related print periodicals. Over the past year complete runs of *The Powys Society Newsletter*, and *The Powys Review* (thanks to Kevin Taylor who organised the professional scanning and proofed the resulting text) have been added to the website, along with two early North American Powys periodicals.

As reported in the July Newsletter 103, Paul said he plans 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 the website will need to be updated and restyled.

### **PayPal and Website Sales**

Online sales from the website bookshop continue to go well, and sales of the Cecil Woolf Publishers Powys books have given a spike to our sales figures, thanks to the hard work of Dawn Collins. An increasing proportion of our income is now received online. This year there have been more transaction through PayPal than through our Barclays bank accounts, and the majority of new members now join online. In the 2020 calendar year £2,000 out of a total £5,248 subscription income came via PayPal.

## **Google Analytics: Use of Website**

According to Google Analytics we have had over 5,000 different users in the past twelve months: UK: 40% (2020: 26%), USA 26% (2020: 58%), Rest of World 34% (2020: 16%): 112 countries (62 in 2020) none exceeding 4.5%.

## ***The Powys Journal* on JSTOR**

Over the last 12 months, 450 articles have been viewed online or downloaded. The total number of views for all articles was 3,869. We have 40 members registered as JSTOR users. This is an opportunity to remind members that they are warmly invited to apply through the *Powys Journal* home page to receive a username and password.

We received £1,479 from JSTOR for our annual license fee. Out of this we shall be paying back \$300 (c. £250) a year to allow our members access. (This fee was waived in 2020: a concession granted to all JSTOR publishers during the covid pandemic).

## **Social Media**

Paul Cheshire said that as a member of the Facebook Reading Group he found this medium to be a very welcome added dimension to Powysian discussions. **Louise de Bruin** agreed and said she enjoyed joining in discussions. Paul thanked Dawn for managing social media activity and arranging on-line discussions of JCP's novels. **Kim Wheatley** reminded members that the next meeting of the Facebook Reading Group would be on the topic of *Up and Out* and would take place on 21 September.

## **Date and Venue of conference 2022**

The conference in 2022 will be **in person** and take place at the Wessex Hotel, Street, near Glastonbury, 12-14 August. Secretary said that he would contact speakers originally invited to the 2020 conference and find out if they are still available.

## **AOB**

Paul Cheshire proposed that **Adrian Gattenhof** and **Peter Brittain** in Australia should be offered honorary life membership of the Powys Society for subsidising production of the *Wolf Solent* Supplement and they should be invited to attend next year's conference as honoured guests. Members approved the proposal. Paul Cheshire closed the meeting by thanking the several members of the committee for their work during the year and especially thanked Morine Krissdóttir for her editing of the *Wolf Solent* Supplement and considered how that might be celebrated at next year's conference.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

## *Powys Society Conference 2022*

### *Preview*

We are very pleased to announce that arrangements are now in place to hold our 2022 conference at Street, in person. The conference will be held at the Wessex Hotel, Street, near Glastonbury, on 12-14 August 2022. The reception and welcome by the Chair on Friday night will include a toast to JCP at 150 by **Charles Lock** (anticipating 8th October 2022).

Confirmed speakers include **Louise de Bruin**, on Katie Powys; **Michael Grenfell** (Professor Emeritus Southampton University) on JCP and William Blake; and **Felix Taylor** on JCP and the *Mabinogion*. (Felix Taylor recently gained his DPhil at Oxford with a dissertation that included chapters on JCP).

The AGM will take place following breakfast on Sunday, after which we will mark the publication of the supplement to the 2021 *Powys Journal*, the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*, with a talk by **Morine Krissdóttir** about her role as editor in the publication of these chapters, followed by a panel discussion with members. Our benefactors in Australia, **Adrian Gattenhof** and **Peter Brittain** (see pp 23-27) are expected to participate. The conference will conclude with a talk by **Charles Lock** (associate editor of the *Powys Journal*) on the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*.

On our free Saturday afternoon we would like to propose an organised walk in **Montacute**, to St. Michael's Hill with its imposing circular Tower surrounded by ash, oak and beech trees, proceeding to Hedgecock Hill woods and Ham Hill, where our suggested route joins the Leland Trail and from where there are panoramic views of the Somerset Moors, Exmoor and the Mendips. Alternatively, conference goers may wish to spend the afternoon on a leisurely walk around Montacute visiting places evoked by Llewelyn in his essays and by JCP in his first novel *Wood and Stone*. On Saturday evening we are planning a reading of selected poems and other writings by **Katie Powys**.

The book room will be open as usual (with more books from recent donations and legacies).

Please note that some details of the programme may change as we are still at an early stage of planning the conference. Full details including the final programme, information about speakers, lectures and how to reserve a conference place will appear in the March 2022 *Newsletter*. Please check our website for updated information..

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**



## **New Members**

We are pleased to welcome eight new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 103, July 2021. New members are located in Minehead, London, Netherlands, Australia, Lancaster, Milton Keynes and Clitheroe, Lancs. One member in Denmark has been reinstated. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **242**, 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**

## **Honorary Life Membership**

The committee is delighted to announce that we have conferred honorary life membership of the Powys Society on our two benefactors in Australia, Adrian Gattenhof and Peter Brittain, who very generously subsidised the production of the Supplement to *Powys Journal* Vol. XXXI, 2021, and facilitated the publication of the six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*. We are uniquely indebted to Adrian and Peter for their encouragement and support. Adrian and Peter explain how they became interested in JCP in an article on pages 23-7.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

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**Chris Thomas**

*The Powys Society Collection*  
*Exeter University*

The Powys Society is indebted to Christine Fauch, Head of Heritage Collections and Caroline Walter, Project Archivist, at Exeter University, who have completed the project to establish a catalogue of all the items in the Powys Society collection previously located at Dorset Museum and originally inventorised by Morine Krissdóttir. This is a major achievement, undertaken to a high professional standard by Christine and Caroline. The Society is very grateful for the commitment and hard work over the last few years by all concerned that has made this project possible.

This means the catalogue of the Collection has now been integrated into Exeter University's main Archives catalogue. You can search the catalogue for individual items using a **simple word search** or **Advanced Search function** as well as see a description of the whole Collection at: **libraries-archive.ex.ac.uk**.

Further guidance and advice on how to search the catalogue is also available on the home page of the Archives catalogue: See <https://libguides.exeter.ac.uk/archives/searching-our-catalogues>

This link also provides an overview of more of the literary collections at Exeter University, including the Powys family, at <https://libguides.exeter.ac.uk/archives/south-west-writers>

Thanks to the generosity of the JCP estate which allows members of the Society access to items from the Collection without payment of a fee or requirement of permission, especially where these items are intended for use in the Society's publications, items may be requested by e-mail which will be sent in the form of a pdf to users.

In-person visits to the Special Collections in the Old Library for the purpose of consulting items are also welcome but access times are currently limited under covid restrictions. Appointments to visit the Collection must be made at least 48 hours in advance. Prior to booking a slot in the reading room please see:

**[https://visiting Heritage Collections - Archives and Special Collections - LibGuides at University of Exeter.](https://visiting-heritage-collections-exeter.ac.uk)**

For more information about Special collections please:

email: [libspc@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:libspc@exeter.ac.uk), or telephone: 01392 722097

Address: Special Collections, Research Commons, Old Library, Prince of Wales Road, Devon EX4 4SB

All the links and addresses mentioned above can also be accessed on the Links and Collection page of the Society's website under Exeter University Library at: **The Powys Society — Collection and Archive ([powys-society.org](http://powys-society.org)).**

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**Pat Quigley**

*Theodora Gay Scutt*

On Friday 15 October, a small group of friends and neighbours of Theodora Gay Scutt gathered for her cremation at the Lakelands Funeral Home in County Cavan. As the hearse arrived the crisp evening sun was turning autumn leaves to gold. A simple funeral service was conducted by the Revd Tanya Woods who referred to Theodora's love of animals and reading. Catherine Mattimoe from the Abbey Haven Care Centre & Nursing Home, Theodora's helper and companion for the past 8 years, spoke movingly about their friendship and trips from the Home. She had her own mini-library in a corner of the foyer.

A family connection was provided by Peter Potocki, son of Theodora's uncle Cedric Potocki, who delivered condolences from her sister, Anne Powys. On his own behalf he thanked the neighbours who supported Theodora at a critical time. Later, in the hallway, the mourners engaged in the immemorial country custom of swapping anecdotes about Theodora and her dogs, her horse and her Jersey Cow. During her years in Ireland, she was well-known for her affinity with the natural world – a Powysian trait she carried from childhood. Neighbours spoke of her friendliness and remarked on her forthright comments and precise use of language – qualities imbibed from an early introduction to literature by her adoptive father, TF Powys.

I first met Theodora in 2013 when she was resident in Abbey Haven. She was then 81 with a long life behind her as dairy-maid and herdsman in Dorset, wife to Bernard Scutt and the author of two memoirs. I did not imagine that one day I would help to carry her coffin. She was initially wary, opening the conversation with the remark: 'I only recognize visitors with four legs.'

Illness sometimes caused her to be confused over the present, but she could reminisce at length about life with the Powys family, her friendship with Louis Wilkinson and a troubled relationship with her larger-than-life biological father, Geoffrey Potocki, self-styled King of Poland. Some people may have disagreed with her sharp judgements, but her comments were often witty and generous.

At Abbey Haven she was well cared for, but longed for the freedom of her home. She declared: 'When I get out of here, I'll buy a horse and ride around the hills.'

Over the past two years Covid restrictions made visiting very difficult, but I was able to see her twice in 2021. On the second occasion in late September, we had to speak through an open window. She was less emphatic than usual about going home as if she sensed a change coming. We talked about the time she discovered the identity of her natural father and mother. It came as a shock, but she did not blame TF Powys for the deception: 'Daddy would never tell a lie. He would keep quiet if there was no other option.'

The news of her death came suddenly. According to the nurse she 'closed her eyes and slipped away'. A copy of *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott lay beside her on the bed. I like to think she has gone home at last and her spirit is free to gallop across the countryside.

Theodora's passing marks the end of an invaluable link with the past. She wanted to depart with the minimum fuss and the funeral service closed with a rendering of *Abide with Me* as the curtains softly closed across the varnished coffin. Theodora had left us but her long and remarkable life will be remembered.

*Theodora ('Susie') walking with her beloved adoptive father, T.F.Powys  
at Mappowder, Dorset, in 1940s*

I liked to go out with Daddy; this was when he'd tell me the Georgie Wormie stories and stories of his own younger days which were even better, because true.

He liked to go to a positive objective, and he had a ritual. In Evil Wood Lane there still stands close to the road a young oak. Daddy loved oaks; and he loved this oak, and he could reach it. Having got so far, just under threequarters of a mile, he would stop, and tap the oak three times with his (hazel) walking stick. He'd look up at it for a second or two, he couldn't raise his head for long, but he'd give it a quick friendly up-and-down glance, and then he'd turn away and walk slowly home. Once I asked why he tapped the tree: 'To let it know that I was there, my dear. It's friendly towards me and I like to greet it.'

There were one or two other trees which he greeted in the same manner, all oaks standing within reach. The beech half-way up Town Knapp, which was the terminus of his shortest walk, was out of reach, but he'd touch his hat to her. Likewise when we walked down to the tiny little tributary of the Lydden which (in memory of the even tinier tributary of the Frome at Chaldon) we called the Oxus, he would throw a pebble into the deepest pool at hand.

'Why, Daddy?'

'Well, my dear, it's best to let Them know that we were here.'

[*Theodora Scutt: Cuckoo in the Powys Nest: a memoir (p.75)*]

*from Anne Powys*

Many thanks for the stories.....delightful....I used to be taken for walks by T.F.P when I was small and be shown fairy rings and places where fairies and other little people lived, told the names of the wild flowers and butterflies, all quite wonderful. Holidays in Mappowder were bliss to me when I was a child.

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**Judith Stinton**  
***Remembering Theodora***

I first met Theodora shortly after I moved to Dorset in 1989. She wrote to me about my book on Chaldon Herring and in reply I invited her over from Buckland Newton. She arrived in a rickety old car with hay bales in the back along with a collection of water containers. Apparently she was suspicious about her local water, and collected her own supply from a small lake at Knights in the Bottom, in a green nowhere above the village of Hooke.

She did not believe in seat belts either (or riding hats or British Summer Time) and each old car was annually replaced shortly before it was due for an MOT.

The guardian of the lake was an old man named Fred who lived in a caravan with a black cockerel for company. He was out when we arrived – gone to Dorchester market to buy Florentine biscuits. Unabashed, Theodora filled her plastic containers and we bumped back to Maiden Newton.

She told me about her dislocated childhood in Chaldon and Mappowder with her adoptive parent Theodore Powys – who she called ‘Daddy’ and who could do no wrong – and his wife Violet. Poor Violet was much maligned, probably as a result of the later, poisonous influence of ‘Father’, Count Potocki of Montalk, her birth parent. Theodora either liked or disliked people; there was no middle ground. Her dislikes included one or two members of the Powys Society and her uncle John Cowper Powys who she thought patronised her. The discovery of the truth about her birth cast a shadow over her life. She would sometimes refer to herself rather bitterly as a ‘bastard’.

Yet in many ways she was blithely unconcerned about what people thought of her. And her marriage seemed to bring contentment. I never met Bernard, but when I visited their house at Henley outside Buckland Newton I saw evidence of his handiwork. When the front window frames rotted, he bought second-hand metal replacements which did not fit and left a gap along one side. And a calor gas pipe had been extended dangerously into the centre of the living-room. There was no lighting upstairs, so it was fortunate that Bernard did not decide to become an electrician. None of this bothered Theodora in the slightest.

After Bernard’s death Theodora moved to Ireland. The sale of the Henley house was chaotically complicated, and the prospective buyer – always referred to as ‘the Indian’ – proved unreliable. Exchange of contracts took a rather long time.

The house outside Ballinamore, County Leitrim, was in IRA territory and consequently low-priced. It faced on to a peat bog, with a hill behind the back garden, where Theodora kept a cow. She also kept hens. Lunch would be a beautifully cooked egg, perhaps a bantam’s or a duck’s. She didn’t eat very much, her small income was spent on her animals, mostly whippets, including the gentlemanly Mac and brindled Maida.

My daughter and I stayed with her there in 1997. By a strange coincidence, a couple from Cattistock (the next village to Maiden Newton) were running a ranch-style stable above Ballynamore (an area where the kidnapped racehorse Shergar is said to be buried). They had their granddaughter Kate with them, a pupil at the same junior school as Anna.

All five of us went for a night out in the town. Small though it was, there



*Theodora*

was no shortage of pubs and we must have gone to most of them, apart from the ones frequented by the IRA. Kate's grandfather Mel was determined to get Theodora drunk. As she seldom drank, this should have been easy. However, she knocked back whiskey (with the air of someone taking medicine) and remained stone cold sober.

The next morning, fresh as a daisy, Theodora took Anna and I to a bungalow along the lane where whippets were bred. There were whippet cages in the garden and photographs of them in the lounge where we watched videos of whippet-racing.

I only ever saw her once more after we left, when she came on a visit to Dorset. We corresponded: her letters were long, spontaneous and frequent. Her voice could clearly be heard in them. She was warm, funny and brave – and like her adoptive father, seldom did anyone any harm.

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Kate Kavanagh

*Theodora*

I only knew Theodora slightly, and from Susan and Tordis who knew her better, but felt she was well known from her *Cuckoo* and the other pieces she wrote on the Powys family, mostly in *Newsletters*. We often stayed in Ireland from 1980s on, frequently in the next county (Westmeath) and I several times visited her in nearby County Leitrim. Her local town Ballinamore was near the border, and I was asked in a shop if I was Theodora's sister – English voices being relatively unusual. Her little not over-tidied farm however could well pass for Irish, like others we knew mostly lived in by writers. She introduced me to one or two quiet horses in a stable, but I am frightened of boistrous dogs so she kindly shut her half-dozen in their part of the house, where they observed us from a window. I remember her dark living room with books in the background, and a harp proudly displayed. We were nearly the same age (she about two years older), always a bond. This was of course before

the fall that led to her moving to the care home in Boyle, County Roscommon. (She could be described as accident-prone, driving usually with a dog in the car. A nasty crash came while she was staying with Tordis and Stephen.) Later, we called in at Boyle on the way to the west, and latterly Pat Quigley kindly took me with them – last time in August 2019.

A strong personality who knew what she wanted, and liked, or didn't want, or like. No concessions in her writing to those who saw things differently. The one she liked most was Theodore Powys, and what she did not like, however inevitable, was being stuck without her animals in the Abbey Haven, a perfectly nice care home. 'I don't want to die here' and 'when can I get out' were regularly repeated ('Tomorrow' was the carer's answer to the second). This kind of game tends to happen in old age, and perhaps turns into an actual game. I felt she was still all (or mostly) there, but had given up the idea of being taken seriously, and in the end just tired of the game.

She had cultivated a confiding, informal, ironical style in her writings that were much like letters. The reading of letters from her at the 2009 conference, by the Robinsons, with whom she used to stay on her trips over, was memorable. As was she.



*Theodora with Catherine Mattimoe, administrator at the Abbey Haven Care Centre*

**Chris Thomas**

*Some writings by and about Theodora Scutt*

***Powys Society Newsletter***

**No 22, July 1994**

On Katie Powys

**No 28, July 1996**

On Violet Powys

**No 38, November 1999**

Letter to the Newsletter editor on dogs

**No.42, April 2001**

Review by Morine Krissdóttir of *Cuckoo in the*

*Powys Nest: A Memoir* by Theodora

**No.44, November 2001**

An author's reply to the above review

**No.48, March 2003**

Award of Honorary Life Membership

**No.52, July 2004**

Uncle Littleton

**No.54, April 2005**

On Marian Powys Grey

**No 55, July 2005**

Letter to the Newsletter editor, re Gerald Pollinger and the Powys Estate

**No.56, November 2005**

On Aspects of T F Powys by Larry Mitchell

**No.68, November 2009**

At the 2009 conference a selected reading from Theodora's letters, with commentary,  
by Ian and Hilary Robinson

***Powys Journal***

**Vol.XI 2001**

Review by Susan Rands of *Cuckoo in the Powys Nest*

***Powys Review***

**No.9, 1981/1982**

On TFP, Part One

**No.10, Spring 1982**

On TFP, Part Two

***A Memoir***

*Cuckoo in the Powys Nest* by Theodora Gay Scutt, Brynmill Press, 2000



## Jason Lee Atkin

### *Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk 13 August 2021*

Despite the traumas and tragedies of the Covid pandemic which has plagued society for the past year and a half and has caused the cancellation of so many annual events, the Llewelyn Birthday Walk, incorporating the annual gathering of the Dandelion Fellowship, met for the 26th consecutive year on August 13th 2021 at East Chaldon in Dorset.

In what was described as 'perfect walking weather' a happy band of eight pilgrims gathered at the Sailor's Return at noon and were warmly welcomed by landlord, Tom Brachi & his staff.

Byron & Eirlys Ashton had been the first to arrive in their familiar green campervan and they were returning from the churchyard after paying their respects at the graveside of Katie Powys as Louisa and I arrived on the stroke of noon.

We were soon joined by Paul & Pam Gillingham from their cottage in the village, and Rosemary Dickens & Dennis White, who had driven down from Salisbury, and once again I experienced that exquisite pleasure of meeting up with old friends and the joyful anticipation of sharing a special day with them in this familiar and greatly hallowed place. I carried with me the blessings and best wishes of my father who had planned to be with us, but sadly was forced to stay behind owing to a family illness, and



*Llewelyn Powys birthday walk, outside The Sailor's Return*



*Members of the Powys Society, Llewelyn Powys birthday walk, August 2021*

also via my father, apologies from Chris Gostick & Linda Goldsmith, Ben Chadwick & Steph Bradley, and from John Sanders, who is recovering from illness and was also unable to travel. We raised a glass (or two) in memory of Llewelyn, and drank a toast to absent friends, and though our numbers were low, our spirits were high as we set off on our annual pilgrimage to Llewelyn's Memorial Stone high on Chaldon Down.

Dennis drove Rosemary and Pam up as far as Chydyok, whilst the five remaining walkers who couldn't resist the annual challenge posed by Chalky Knapp strode boldly and determinedly up the long and winding flint-strewn track from the village. Undaunted by the ever steepening climb, we finally crested the hill and were immediately rewarded with our first glimpse of the familiar tall chimneys of Chydyok in the distance. Prodigious walker though he was, even Llewelyn was wont to pause for breath at Chalky Knapp, and we did the same, drinking in the exhilarating view as the track plunged down and across the wide green expanse of what was known to the Powys's as Dead Horse Valley, to climb steeply upwards again beyond Chydyok towards the sea. We found Dennis, Pam & Rosemary waiting for us at the gate of Llewelyn & Alyse's former home and continued together, climbing ever higher as we negotiated the overgrown path up and over Tumbledown to the old Gypsy Track. The spectacular view eastward along the chalk cliffs of the coastline beyond Dagger's Gate

and all the way to St.Aldhelm's Head from our vantage point above Bat's Head was simply breath-taking and ample reward after the long climb.

We turned in the opposite direction and headed west towards Portland, and after safely negotiating our way through a herd of cows the Obelisk Field came into view, and then just beyond the boundary fence at the south-west corner, and partially obscured from view by the encroaching patch of nettles was the large rectangular block of Portland Stone which marks the last resting place of Llewelyn Powys's mortal remains.

Rosemary, Eirlys and Pam had collected a posy of wildflowers, and these were placed on the Stone beside me as I read a passage (p108/109) chosen by my father from the Thinker's Library edition of Llewelyn's 'The Pathetic Fallacy', which concludes:

*Virtue is intelligence, is generosity, tempered by discipline. Below all ethical considerations and scientific study there lies a liberating understanding of wide charity such as was taught by Jesus. This 'heathen' unmoral charity has been forgotten by Christians who lay stress upon their domesticated conventions. Virtue is the habitual exercise of reason detached from self-interest. The purpose of life is happiness, a happiness which can be fulfilled by a free appreciation of the natural poetry of existence.*

We lingered awhile in the sunshine, intoxicated by an atmosphere redolent with the spirit of Powys, and with those whose footsteps during the passage of over seven decades we had followed on this day to this much venerated place.

The breeze strengthened as we made our way back along the old Gypsy Track, pausing again at the gate above Bat's Head to take one last look & imprint on our minds the magnificent views all around us, whilst the girls perched rather precariously on the gate and posed for a photograph which, I think, epitomises the joy of this auspicious day.

As we walked back over Tumbledown, Rosemary took photographs of butterflies and wildflowers for her sketching diary, and then she and Dennis departed from Chydyok to drive to the village, leaving the remainder of us to once again conquer the daunting challenge of Chalky Knapp – which as those of us who are regular 'walkers' are fully away, is steeper on the way back!

Back in the village, Paul & Pam once again generously invited us to their cottage for a most welcome cuppa, and as in previous years, graciously plied us with cakes and biscuits in the pleasant afternoon sunshine.

We eventually said our goodbyes after pledging to do it all again next year on Llewelyn's birthday, Saturday August 13th.

\* Note. Notwithstanding these uncertain & unprecedented times, the Powys Society conference is scheduled to take place next year on 12-14 August 2022, at Street, near Glastonbury, and the date coincides with our annual gathering at East Chaldon on Saturday 13 August. We would like to invite and extend a warm welcome to any who would like to join us. All are welcome.

## Kim Wheatley

### *Zoom discussion of Chapter 22 of The Brazen Head, 14th August 2021*

Led by **Kevin Taylor**, seventeen members of the Powys Society met on Zoom to discuss the final chapter of *The Brazen Head*, 'The Oracle.' (Page numbers below refer to the 1978 Picador edition.) The session built on the discussion in May 2021 of the novel as a whole by the Reading Powys group (summarised in the July *Newsletter*). **Kevin** began by observing that this 'busy' novel culminates in a sustained crowd scene comparable to 'The Horse-Fair' chapter in *Wolf Solent* and 'The Pageant' in *A Glastonbury Romance*. This last chapter of *The Brazen Head* includes two marriages and six deaths, four of which are murders. This big set piece with its dramatic finale is also reminiscent of 'The Flood' in *AGR*. The other novels tend to have quieter endings. Addressing the significance of the conflagration at the end of the book, **Paul Cheshire** cited G. Wilson Knight's view that the 'Christian-theological and ... scientific' side of the novel is 'vanquished' by a 'sexual Antichrist [Peter Peregrinus] of Welsh affinities and occult powers' (*Saturnian Quest* p. 106). **Paul** disagreed with that interpretation, finding the novel more open-ended. **Robert Caserio** noted that the Brazen Head's enigmatic utterance, 'Time was ... Time is ... And time will—,' broken off when the Head is destroyed on the last page (p. 348), departs from the wording of JCP's probable source, Robert Greene's play *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, in which the brass head says 'Time is,' 'Time was,' and 'Time is past.' **Robert Caserio** asked whether the Brazen Head's words constitute the oracle of the chapter title or whether the whole chapter or the whole book is supposed to be an oracle. **Kim Wheatley** suggested that the Brazen Head's bald statement somewhat undercuts JCP's concern with the 'magic power' of 'Time' (p. 271), earlier in this novel and in previous works, especially *Porius*. In the final chapter, Roger Bacon is too 'tired' to figure out 'revolutions in Time and Space' (p. 331). **Paul** modified Kim's observation, pointing out the positive connotation of sleep for JCP: Bacon, like Geard in *AGR*, derives power from sleep.

Moving on to another striking moment in the chapter, **Chris Thomas** drew attention to the image of 'a fiery rod being thrust into a man's anus' (p. 346), comparing it to Sam Dekker's feeling of having his bowels pierced by a spear when encountering the Grail in Chapter 28 of *AGR*. **Charles Lock** and **Robert** connected the image with the death of Edward II, proleptically invoked in Chapter 19 of *The Brazen Head* when Peter Peregrinus uses his lodestone to curse Lord Edward's heir (pp. 281-82). **Dawn Collins** linked the image to Sylvanus Cobbold's 'Caputanus' speech in Chapter 11 of *Weymouth Sands*.

Discussion then turned to the question of the book's genre. **Pat Quigley** wondered if Roger Bacon was an unsuitable subject for a historical romance. **Kevin** and **Paul**

said they found Bacon a complex figure, blurring the thematic opposition between magic and science. **Kevin** admired JCP's playful use of other traditions and the book's shifts between genres, its blend of history and fantasy. **Paul** noted the influence of Sir Walter Scott's novels on JCP's historical fiction. **Kim** drew parallels with *Ivanhoe*, another historical romance. Kim also commented on 'The Oracle's' Gothic elements: the atmospheric thunder, Lil-Umbra's 'premonition of catastrophe' (p. 343), and the destruction of Lost Towers. **Robert** remarked on JCP's self-reflexive treatment of Peter Peregrinus as a novelist figure, orchestrating the action.

Some participants in our previous discussion had been bothered by the novel's anachronisms, including the use of modern place names. **Charles** argued that anachronism cannot exist at the level of language. JCP playfully reflects on the inevitable discrepancy between the historical period being depicted and the novelist's diction in the scene when Bacon prays to God 'not in Latin, far less in Hebrew, but in the Wessex dialect of his native Ilchester' – a Wessex dialect that has yet to exist. Bacon uses the phrase '*ab extrinsico* ('outside our whole system of things') as a 'little private joke between God and himself' (p. 222) – a joke that also applies to the reader 'outside' the text. (A related point: JCP named Sir Mort's sons John and Tilton after himself and Littleton.) Charles noted the reference to Bacon's servant Miles coming from 'the old Roman town of Durnovaria, a town which the people of Wessex had already begun to call Dorchester' (p. 223) – 'already' meaning in the year in which the novel is set, 1272. Charles said that the first record of the name Dorchester is from 1273 (presumably it was used in speech some time before that). JCP is not doddering when he writes *The Brazen Head!* Charles's comments led to remarks about the novel's West Country setting. **Paul** brought up **Chris Michaelides's** prior insight that *The Brazen Head* can be seen as a 'prequel' to JCP's other Wessex novels. The novel's topography is vague, but Peter Peregrinus stays on Egdon Heath, and there are connections with Lodmoor, which features in *Wood and Stone* and *Weymouth Sands*. **Chris T** remarked on the way the novel invokes a wider world with its references to the Khan of Karakorum.

Next, we discussed the nature of the Brazen Head itself, which, as **Chris T** pointed out, is described as 'alive and yet not alive' (p. 337). **Charles** ingeniously connected Powys's depiction of the Brazen Head as a mute oracle, having something to say yet withholding it, to our communication by Zoom (and lack of communication when muted). The phenomenon of heads on a screen detached from flesh and blood people replicates the Head's smudging of the line between human and non-human. JCP anticipates the essence of our disenchanting, mediated relationship to the world in modernity. He also prefigures the development of artificial intelligence (Alan Turing died in 1954 while JCP was writing *The Brazen Head*). **Kevin** referred us to Jeanette Winterson's new book *12 Bytes* for reflections on this topic. *The Brazen Head's*

concern with parthenogenesis relates to artificial intelligence as well. **Paul** connected these observations to the way Wolf Solent asks of Olwen's dolls, 'If we can slip out of reality, why can't they slip into it?' **Marcella Henderson-Peal** informed us that JCP's wife Margaret wrote a book called *Human Dolls*, mentioned in a letter from JCP to his son.

Marcella also connected Spardo's centaur-like horse to the theme of the non-human shading into the human. **Kevin** brought up some pop culture analogies: an album cover featuring the disembodied heads of the rock band Queen; the Talking Heads; the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' ('I am an antichrist'). **Robert** connected the Brazen Head to the literary topos of the severed head, as in Keats's poem 'Isabella; or the Pot of Basil,' quoted in *Wolf Solent*. (Iris Murdoch's 1961 novel *The Severed Head* pre-dates her interest in JCP.) **Kevin** observed that there are two beheadings in 'The Oracle': one of the victims, the former bailiff Heber Sygerius, *wants* to die that way. **Chris T** objected that the Brazen Head is not actually severed in that, unlike the shockingly decapitated head of TFP's son Dickie, it has no body. However, **Paul** pointed out that, like Peregrinus's lodestone, the Brazen Head changes its shape, morphing from a phallic herm to a large bust. Characters other than Bacon have profound one-on-one experiences involving the Brazen Head, but it remains mysterious.

We then returned to the question of the artistic merit of *The Brazen Head*. **Pat Quigley** said he had been disappointed by the book the first time around, but upon re-reading, he appreciated some of the language of the final chapter, for example the line about the 'enormous dark feather ... fallen from the Empyrean' (p. 323). **Kevin** re-emphasised his view that *The Brazen Head* is a tour-de-force without method or plot: JCP's 'imaginative ability outlives his ability to construct a plot.' **Chris T** wondered about JCP's creative process: how self-conscious was it? **Charles** defended JCP as an artist: he was not tired, and he knew what he was doing. Charles commented on the impression that the book gives that chapters may be out of order (specifically Chapter 19 in which Peregrinus is introduced after previously appearing), seeing this as an instance of the non-consequentiality of Modernist fiction. **Kevin** quoted Jean-Luc Godard's notion that a film should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but 'not necessarily in that order.' **Paul** wondered what JCP's publisher Eric Harvey made of *The Brazen Head*'s inconsistencies: why not correct them? **Chris T** pointed out that there are inconsistencies in *Wolf Solent*. **Chris T** then quoted a letter from JCP to G. Wilson Knight dated 16 November 1954 in which JCP says that at school he "'did a bunk" into *chemistry* where I told myself stories of being a sort of Dorsetshire Faust and that's why very likely I've turned to Roger Bacon and am now trying to compose a Metaphysical-Magician's tale ... about the last years of the nephew of Ivanhoe's *Cour-de-Lion*! Poor old Henry III ... Roger B. was ruined ...

for taking this King's side in the civil war against the Simon de Montfort – the side I wd certainly have taken for I hate Simon de Montfort & all those Bloody Barons!' **Kevin** suggested that we take JCP's hatred of the baronial system with a pinch of salt: we have already discussed that JCP is not persuasive as a social critic, not just in this book (which features the rebellious serf Dod Pole) but also in *Wood and Stone* and *AGR*. JCP was suspicious of political organisations. **Paul** defended the depiction of Red Robinson in *AGR*, distinguishing between JCP's political opinions and the representation of them in his novels. Robin Wood's 2019 *Powys Journal* article 'A Radical in the United States' explores JCP's political views.

Concluding our discussion, **Chris T** brought up Phyllis Playter's role as 'the woman behind the man.' How much did she contribute to JCP's novels? There is some evidence in his diaries. Phyllis apparently helped shape *The Brazen Head*. Phyllis was also a writer on her own behalf. **Marcella** pointed out that in a September 1931 diary entry, JCP says that Phyllis had started writing a book of her own. In 1923, Phyllis worked briefly in France as a translator, and at a later date, she started writing a play. **Louise** noted that a poem by Phyllis has been published ('On the Departure of Powys for England' appeared in *The Powys Journal* in 1995).

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### **Adrian Gattenhof and Peter Brittain**

#### *Confessions of two Powysian 'Inmates'*

**From Adrian:** It was not the face on the Waterloo steps. Not that face '*against whom Providence had grown as malignant as a mad dog,*' the face of a man blighted with despair, perhaps following service in the horrors of the First World War, as Dr Morine Krissdóttir infers (*Descents*). Not that face, although Powys's graphic passage has resonated with me since I first read it at the age of nineteen.

It was the face of a lovely young woman, one of my fellow students in first year university, bright with the enthusiasm of youthful discovery, who came up to me after an English Literature tutorial and invited me to read a passage in the book she held. It was her fresh young face that introduced me to John Cowper Powys. I read and was mesmerised, entranced, infected for life. Receptors in my soul were ready, waiting for writing just like this. It was the long passage in the chapter 'Yellow Bracken' where Wolf walks by the Lunt in a landscape made magical by an imagination alive to what lies latent all around us. The imagination reaches out and a healing, intoxicating power seems to respond from nature (*pace*' the pathetic fallacy) '*That incredible patch of blue seemed something into which he could plunge his hands and draw them forth again, filled like overflowing cups with the very ichor of happiness.*' (Penguin 1961, page 151) From my early teens I have taken long walks and experienced



*Adrian Gattenhof, Australian benefactor*

ecstasies that seemed to pour in from nature. Wolf was like a guide ahead on a parallel path.

These signature images, the one of suffering, the other of transcendence in immersion are core to my reading and relish of Powys. These, together with the idea that through the creative imagination we can transform the world; or rather, transform ourselves and how we experience the world, through our particular mythologies. On the train to Dorset, Wolf imagines himself as ‘a

*prehistoric giant who, with an effortless ease, ran along by the side of the train... and easily rivalled in natural-born speed, the noisy mechanism of all those pistons and cog-wheels.’* (pp. 16-17) His mythology is protean, adaptable to a wide range of aggravating and threatening circumstances. It enables him to cope and (at least partially) bridge the abyss between self and other.

Although he loses his mythology, his healing imagination achieves its apotheosis in that extraordinary passage at the end where Wolf, even while he knows he is being cuckolded (ironic given his relationship with Christie) walks through the field of buttercups and: *‘What he longed to do was to plunge his own hands into this Saturnian gold, and to pour it out, over Mr Urquhart, over Mattie....over all the nameless desolations... All...all...all would reveal some unspeakable beauty, if only this Saturnian gold were sprinkled upon them!’* (p. 632) Here, I think, Powys touches on that same magical transcendence Yeats describes in ‘Vacillation,’ where he writes; *‘And twenty minutes more or less / It seemed, so great my happiness / That I was blessed and could bless.’* Wolf has learnt to ‘endure or escape,’ as we all must; and to bless. He can enjoy a cup of tea, without the spoiling taste of demons. Events he cannot control have lost their power to humiliate. The ordinary can resume its ordinary place and be relished. Powys seems close to suggesting the creative imagination is the epigenetic power of the soul able to transform ourselves and, if ourselves, then the world. In my lifetime brutalities once generally accepted – misogyny, vivisection and war just a few – are now widely repudiated. Not to forget that as his magicians make clear, suffering is as intrinsic to life as its unknown ‘first cause’.

By his own admission, Powys can be long-winded and his dialogue sometimes clumsy. Yet his insights into character and relationships and his capacity to catch



elusive, telling details on the fringes of perception, are exquisite. He explores ‘the human condition’ with rich insights and in ways I have not met elsewhere. His evocations of place and nature are of the highest order.

After reading *Wolf Solent* I bought every work of JCP’s then available – many of the novels, the *Autobiography* and philosophy. I also sought out TFP’s and Llewelyn’s works. Keen to have a break from Australia, in January 1973 I travelled to Europe on a beautiful Italian ship, the Galileo Galilei. We docked in Naples and from there I travelled by train to Oostende, thence by sea-sick ferry to Folkestone. After some weeks in London I walked up the Waterloo steps and in early March, 1973 boarded the train to Sherborne. Yes, I was a shameless fan – and still am. My ‘gap’ year became near three. I settled in Dorchester and worked at several jobs, including as a nursing assistant at Herrison Hospital at Charminster. It was later re-developed into very comfortable apartments and I twice visited Morine at her home there, most recently with Peter in 2016.

Looking back over my Dorset years and subsequent visits I’m surprised to note the extent of my enthusiasm. I cycled around Dorset and Somerset visiting numerous Powys sites. On warm days I would cycle out with friends to a bridge over the Frome near Hardy’s cottage where we played ‘Pooh sticks.’ And in the glorious hot summer of 1973 we went skinny-dipping there. Alas, neither of the young nurses in our little group was a blackbird singer – though one became my first wife. I learned that JCP’s sister, Lucy Amelia, lived in Mappowder and cycled out there – along lanes generously lubricated with cow dung (unwise in a downhill panic to apply the front brake!) – and was made very welcome. Graciously she indulged my enthusiasm and commented kindly on a ‘poem’ I had written about Dorset. She introduced me to her daughter Mary and TFP’s son Francis. I often wondered if they were puzzled by this young Antipodean. I still have two letters she wrote me after my return to Australia. In 1974 I attended a meeting of the Society in London and recall meeting Glen Cavaliero. Then in 1980 I stood with my wife Gayle outside 1 Waterloo, Blaenau Ffestiniog, hesitating to knock. Luckily Gayle had no reticence and we were welcomed by Phyllis Playter. She was happy to talk about JCP and how I wish I had known then just how substantial even crucial to his achievement had been her support and contribution. In many ways she was co-author. She made us a nice cup of tea I’m sure Powys would have enjoyed.

Visiting Dorset in 2008 with Gayle I met Morine and bought a copy of the restored *Maiden Castle*. Reading that and later *Porius* in the restored edition she edited, I realised how much superb material had been lost by abbreviation. In 2016 Morine told Peter and me that *Wolf Solent* – and many of the great novels – had been cut substantially. *Wolf Solent* was our inauguration into the world of JCP and holds a special place in our personal canons.

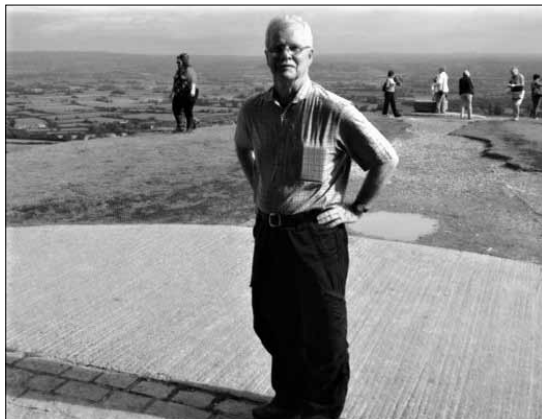
**From Peter:** I reside in Sydney, Australia, and was introduced to JCP when Adrian gave me a copy of *Wolf Solent* (in 1970 for my twenty-first birthday) with an exhortation that it was essential reading. I read it at the time and have re-read it at regular intervals over the next 50 years, each time gaining a greater appreciation of the novel, in particular in terms of JCP's exploration of personal mythology and life illusions. However, rather than focussing on these aspects of this novel and the other Wessex novels, I would like to focus on elements of the physical environment which provide the settings for the novels and the sense of history which permeates the events that take place in them.

Having been born in the post-war years, I grew up in an Australian society which was overwhelmingly British: the Royal Tour of 1954 was at that time the biggest event of Australia's short European history, and God Save The Queen was our national anthem until 1984 (except for the brief period 1974-1976). The ambition of most young Australians was to visit 'the mother country'. In my case it was not until the mid-1980s and late 1990s that I had the chance to spend several weeks in England. Staying with family members in Hinchley Wood in Surrey, I would take the train up to Waterloo Station and while walking down to the pedestrian bridge over the Thames, I would be conscious that I was a face on the Waterloo steps. At that time I had an uncle and aunt living near Poole, and so naturally my first forays out of London were to Dorset. Thus began a practice which has continued on my subsequent more extensive trips to England, to explore and experience Dorset and Somerset with my destinations in many cases pre-determined by the places and settings of JCP's novels.

In the footsteps of *Wolf Solent* I visited Sherborne viewing 'the ruins of the great Elizabethan's castle' together with the new castle, and went to the Abbey and the surrounding school buildings half expecting to meet Powys Major and Powys Minor; *Maiden Castle* demanded the walk from South Street along the Weymouth Road (recalling the grisly fate of Mary Channing) and then up Maiden Castle Road to the neolithic hill-fort. My first such walk was on a late summer's evening when the air was filled with the aroma of freshly cut hay, a truly magical experience. *A Glastonbury Romance* not only invokes the Arthurian legends but also that defining historical event of the dissolution of the monasteries; in ascending the Tor and passing under St Michael's Tower one not only recalls the barbarous fate of Richard Whiting the last abbot of the Abbey, but one also makes the juxtaposition with the gruesome murder of Tom Barter and the demise of Finn Toller in the novel. For me *Weymouth Sands* is always associated with a promenade along the esplanade at Weymouth looking out for Brunswick Terrace and noting the Jubilee Clock and the George the Third statue, and again half expecting to see a Punch

and Judy show on the sands of the beach. Finally, *Wood and Stone* took me to Montacute and to amble from Montacute House to St Catherine's Church. Perusing the historical list of rectors, I noted the name of Charles Francis Powys and envisioned him delivering a sermon from the pulpit at the following Sunday service.

In *Wolf Solent* when Squire Urquhart explains to Wolf his concept of the history he wants him to write, he states: '*What I want to do is to isolate the particular*



*Peter Brittain, Australian benefactor*

*portion of the earth's surface called 'Dorset'; as if it were possible to decipher there a palimpsest of successive strata, one inscribed below another, of human impression.'* (Jonathan Cape 1929 p.41). These great Wessex novels have their own personal strata (Wolf's return to Ramsgard evokes the memory of his father and that whole previous life; and when Dud Noman returns to Dorchester the spectre of his deceased wife is ever present) and as noted above the historical events associated with these places are further strata which never totally disappear and form the continuum of time which is such a powerful element in JCP's writing. For me, these are just some of the themes which will continue to draw me back to JCP's novels and to include Wessex in my future travels to England.

**From Adrian and Peter:** Having been made aware of the six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent* when we met with Morine in 2016, over the next few years we came to the view that considering the significance of *Wolf Solent* in introducing us to the world of Powys, it would be ideal if an unabridged edition of the novel could be published. Finally, in April 2020, we wrote to Morine raising this issue and seeking her insight into how the matter might be progressed. Initially she suggested that we might be able to obtain a copy of the typescript of the six chapters from the National Library of Wales for our own reading. Fortunately, Morine also forwarded our emails to Kevin Taylor, who confirmed Morine's opinion that publication of an unabridged edition was not a realistic option, and instead proposed publication of the six chapters as a supplement to the annual Powys Journal. With Kevin's professional editorship and Morine's assiduous preparation of the text, the project was brought to fruition most expeditiously. We are delighted with the outcome and pleased that members of the Society can share our enjoyment of this great novel.

## Michael Kowalewski

### *Unkindest Cut: A Review of the six deleted chapters of Wolf Solent*

The unique power of Powys' writing lies in its combination of intense inner reflection connected to the incidents of the story line and leading to endless fresh philosophical reflection without collapsing into any one orthodox message, and all of this entwined and embraced by a sensitivity to nature and the natural phenomena in all the myriad aspects. This is Powys' 'mythology' which is both the content and method of his style. To accomplish this requires space and time. He creates 'hieroglyphs' which open up into his cosmic vision marrying feeling, character, occasion and setting based on a metaphoric imagination. Powys does not write for the modern attention span but sticks to the leisurely rhythms of 19th-century writing. So being told he must condense and edit his semi-autobiographical masterpiece *Wolf Solent* must have been as painful as yielding a pound of flesh. The story of this is well told by Morine Krissdóttir in her excellent introduction to *The Six Deleted Chapters of Wolf Solent*. These are chapters XIX to XXIV which are replaced in the published work by chapter 19 entitled Wine. The condensation is well done, many significant passages of the deleted chapters are included in the published version. But the loss of detail, space, character analysis and a different plot line of Gerda's disfigurement is profound — 'a monstrous cantle out'. To read the deleted chapters thanks to the efforts of the Editor, Kevin Taylor and the Supplement Editor, Morine Krissdóttir, is to be drawn again almost like the first time we encountered *Wolf Solent*. To be awed once more by the power, the vision, the sheer story-telling ability and the collection of extraordinary characters that Powys the magician conjures up out of the Dorset air.

What is particularly noticeable in the excised chapters was the extent of sexual desire — of every variety — homo, hetero, incestuous, adulterous, casual and passionate which is not so evident in the published book. In particular what is the weakest part of the book, the relationship with Gerda gets more treatment and its dynamic is made more credible by giving a physical dimension — her disfigurement — to the tearing apart of their marriage. But so many other characters are more fully developed - Wolf himself, Christie Malakite, the Otters, Squire Urquhart that we are given a much more satisfying picture of the human inscape in which Wolf dwells.

I particularly enjoyed the opening of chapter XIX on Melbury Bubb — a stone's throw from me. The comprehensive conversation with Christie is full of deep reflection and maps the curious erotic currents of both protagonists' feelings and the surrounding ambience in classic Powys fashion. It foregrounds well the published scene of their encounter in 'Mr Malakite in Weymouth' which ends in humiliating failure whose seeds are sown on Melbury Bubb. There are numerous other scenes which amplify the Powysian vision and which are crying out for inclusion.

The question arises whether future editions should incorporate the deleted chapters. It would be editorially very difficult but perhaps the missing text should be provided as an appendix to all future editions of *Wolf Solent* where it could enhance the pleasure of the text. Certainly for this Powys reader it was a revelation and renewal.

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### **Reader's reviews of the six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent***

*from John Hodgson:*

Out in the parallel realities of the multiverse, there are plenty of *Wolf Solents* with alternative outcomes, and how fascinating to read one that takes a different course to the novel we know.

It is wonderful to explore the newly extended landscape of this most habitable and geographical of novels, and for this alone these chapters are a delight. But it was surely a happy idea to cut them. What do they add to the novel? Mainly, more of Wolf's anguished and inept attempts to negotiate the conflicting claims of the women in his life, and his employment as Squire Urquhart's secretary. The novel becomes arrested in a kind of ghastly stasis, and Wolf's endless scruples and neurotic self-consciousness become painful to read, especially in his relations with Gerda, who emerges even more strongly as an intelligent, plain-spoken woman, perceptive in her grasp of personal relations, in contrast to her paranoid husband. As Wolf's mind teeters on the brink of collapse, he picks through 'the limbo of the world's rubbish-heaps,' and this life fills with meaningless detritus as no one physical object becomes more important than any other.

The relationship between Gerda and Bob Weevil is made more explicit, and the sinister auras surrounding Mr Malakite and Squire Urquhart are spelt out more literally, which only weakens these characters' suggestive mystery.

Gerda's physical disfigurement is awkwardly related, and it is entirely in line with Powys's delicate rather than 'diseased' conscience that he eventually backed away from subjecting his character to such a violent accident. The only loss is to a deeper engagement with the question of the relationship between beauty, love, and desire. Desire is so often 'impersonal' in Powys, entirely separate from love, and great beauty is as likely to inhibit personal relationships. How is it possible to live ensconced in Preston Lane with Helen of Troy? At the beginning of the novel, Wolf broods on his father's affair with the strikingly ugly Selena Gault. His mother reflects, thinking of Darnley Otter and Mattie Smith, 'What's the good of a man being good, if he can't make a plain face happy?'

Powys describes this book as 'self-vivisection' and his dissection of Wolf is pitiless and appalling. The reader may treasure all the more Wolf's moments of mystical elation, such at the end of Chapter XXI, when lying awake in bed before dawn he sees in an out-of-the-body experience all the people in his life as 'luminously beautiful,' or the 'touches, glimpses, intimations – flowing in from the marginal life of nature' which

heal his spirit even as the conflicted loyalties between his wife and Christie reach a crisis. If these ecstasies have no connection with whatever else is going on in Wolf's life, it is because they are not earned rewards but gratuitous blessings.

'The disfigurement of Gerda' was described long ago in Ben Jones' article in *Powys Review* 2, but here is the entire text, edited with dedication and love by Kevin Taylor, Morine Krissdóttir and their team.

*from Paul Cheshire:*

I re-read the original *Wolf Solent* in preparation and then devoured those six missing chapters as soon as they appeared. They add another dimension to the novel and balance it out in so many ways: Wolf is shown in depression, feeling defeated by his sense of his own limitations, and Gerda is given more agency and personality. I particularly enjoyed her playful teasing, calling him 'Wolfikins' (*PJ XXXI Supp.*, p. 92) and a 'mormon' (pp. 72 & 235). It is essential to see Gerda and Wolf reaching a kind of trade-off over their respective attachments for Christie Malakite and Bob Weevil. All these seem to me to be *necessary* to the novel: they fill an imbalance in the Wolf – Gerda relationship that, viewed in the light of the missing chapters, was a flaw in the novel as originally published.

Out of many wonderful scenes the depressing so-called festivities at 37 Preston Lane as Wolf and Gerda host his mother for Christmas lunch can serve as an example: the familiar Christmas paraphernalia of crackers, wishbone and party hats that only serve to deepen the gloom; the detritus, left for clearing up after Wolf's mother has gone, that leads to Wolf's mental gallery of forlorn objects: dribbling gobs of spittle, nail-parings, 'the hair-clippings from a Tooting Draper's beard wrapped up in a French Comic Paper and dropped in a public urinal at Eastbourne' (*Supp.*, p. 68). In JCP's skilful condensation for Chapter XIX, 'Wine', the 'wishing-bone' is retained as a bookmark for Gerda, and leads on to the same litany of 'what humanity *sets itself to forget*' (*Wolf Solent*, Penguin, p. 448), but it is only in the strained gaiety of a Christmas lunch, fraught with tensions between the married couple and the difficult mother-in-law, that such bleak moments achieve full power.

It seems clear from the information Morine Krissdóttir provides in her excellent introduction (*Supp.*, p.22) that Schuster objected to the way Wolf turns from 'straight-forward pagan & stoic' into an 'irresolute weakling' in the middle chapters, and it is this that he wanted condensed. But this is a novel about regeneration, about the breaking down of old patterns, without which the birth of a new self cannot happen. The confusion and breakdown in these middle chapters is an essential part of this process: we need to see Wolf finding his split between Gerda and Christie problematic and confusing. It would be tempting to describe Wolf's dark moments as the necessary ordeal on the path to rebirth, only Wolf's progress has, by the end of the novel, led him away from such grandiose terms. Wolf emerges chastened from his ordeal and boils

everything down to ‘endure or escape’ (*Wolf Solent*, p.633): ‘Who was he to make pompous moral scenes?’ (p.634) he wonders, while dealing with the knowledge that inside his house, opposite a malodorous pigsty, the ever-flirtatious Gerda is sitting on Lord Carfax’s lap and bird-whistling for the libidinous Lord’s delectation.

**from Stephen Carroll:**

*Wolf Solent* is a much subtler book than its predecessors, grey rather than black and white. Indeed, on a second reading forty years ago I found there were many dark connections I had missed. I’m sure that if the deleted chapters had been included this would not have been the case.

Having been a lover of Hardy since I discovered him as a schoolboy, there was no competition for first place in my affections until I stumbled on the work of John Cowper Powys, and in particular, *Wolf Solent*. Its background is much the same as Hardy’s, but its protagonist does not think like one of Hardy’s heroes –unlike Wolf Solent, Diggory Venn, who also wants to take the side of good in the battle between good and evil, doesn’t question his motives, feel guilty about his urges, or suffer from self-doubt. But in *Wolf Solent* we share the thought processes and uncertainties of a modern man.

We are told that The first publisher of *Wolf Solent* insisted on the deletion of a sizeable chunk of ms from the centre of the book because the reader didn’t want to know more about ‘an irresolute weakling’. But we do. As with *Hamlet* (perhaps another ‘dreary self-pitying fool’), the self-doubt and indecisiveness of its hero is an essential part of the book.

In a novel where shading and suggestion are fundamental and where the hero measures out his life not in coffee spoons, but in cups of tea, the deleted chapters are a welcome addition.

**from Jerry Bird:**

I first read *Wolf Solent* as a teenager, probably because it was the only one of JCP’s novels in the Penguin Classics range. Previously I had read *The Brazen Head*. By comparison this seemed more subtle and ethereal; I was particularly struck by the beauty of the writing, though I was unimpressed with the storyline, and some of the characterisation, particularly where the relationship between the eponymous anti-hero and Gerda was concerned.

The six missing chapters go some way towards resolving these issues. Gerda emerges as a far more three-dimensional character. Her accident and disfigurement came as a surprise to me, as I had not read Ben Jones’ article in the 1977 *Powys Review*. The author seems to hint that while Wolf declares his love for her enthusiastically, Gerda sees through his clumsy gestures, knowing that their relationship cannot be the same thereafter, and in chapter XX Wolf characteristically fetishises her injury, vowing to himself to ‘hold “for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health,” by this disfigured one at his side’.

Wolf’s mother, too, emerges as a much stronger character than hitherto, and her son is easily cowed by her. Here yet another illicit relationship (for there are many)

is hinted at when Wolf strongly disapproves of her fondness for her employer, Mr Manley, whom he describes jealously as a ‘monster’, a ‘brute’ and a ‘bully’. Manley disappears from the story after he appears to spend the night with her, thereby setting off another of Wolf’s neurotic episodes, in which he gets drunk in the Three Peewits and intends, but fails, to make a nocturnal visit to Christie Malakite. Convoluted relationships, involving diverse sexualities, run through these pages like the veins in a ripe Dorset Blue Vinny cheese.

As an antidote to the many long passages of Wolf’s introspective, and occasionally scatological musings, there is great beauty in some of the writing, particularly when the author describes the landscape of south Somerset and the Blackmore Vale. The passage in chapter XIX in which Wolf takes Christie for a picnic at Melbury Bub, hoping (vainly, as it turns out) for a rapprochement, is particularly stunning. I would even say that Powys sometimes outdoes Hardy in this respect and this is a fine example. Jason Otter’s poem in chapter XX, ‘The Owl and Silence’, is also very evocative, and must surely be regarded as one of JCP’s best.

The missing chapters, while I tend towards agreeing with Schuster’s opinion of Wolf’s character as a ‘dreary self-pitying fool’, do make up for some of the failings of the novel as originally published, and we must be grateful to Kevin Taylor for undertaking the mammoth task of editing and transcribing the manuscripts.

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*A select bibliography of writings about Wolf Solent*  
compiled by Chris Thomas

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**No.93, March 2018**

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*John Cowper Powys, Novelist*, Glen Cavaliero, 1973, pp.44-60

*The Demon Within*, John Brebner, 1973, pp.58-87

*John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest*, Morine Krissdottir, 1980, pp.64-79

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Louis Wilkinson

*from Welsh Ambassadors, ch.3, p.48*

Darling Jack, I can't bear *Wolf Solent*. I find it repulsive— an abomination to the Lord of Life. But it must be a stronger affirmation of whatever superlative disease yours is than any other affirmation you've given, because it moves me to stronger resentment. God in heaven, if lust meant to me what it means to you, I should be forever abstinent. The idea of *your* lust makes me sick and drooping. How horrible, how abominable, how revolting, that way Solent has of seeing that Lesbian glance —how priestlike a way ! How he shags it all into ' sin' or ' evil' ! He frigs everything into worm-like tatters, nothing is left alone, everything is made to stink of the confessional. The very rays of the golden sun are made to filter themselves out into a thin stream of church mucus.

And what sophisticated poppycock, all this ' philosophizing ' about ' reality.' Of course any object is strained through the consciousness perceiving it, but the object remains itself. The whole business is sheer lunacy. This cursed b of a Solent must needs be forever forcing everything to fit the coils of his misbegotten brain and fumbling 'feeling.' The ' Universe,' of which we hear so much, has to be turned into his own private fancy-tickler. The slow-worm can't be allowed to be a slow-worm, it has to be a sort of God-cursing elemental. Everything has to be whipped up and exclaimed about all the time. Exclamation marks ! Exclamation marks ! ! !

But of course it is what you contain, it is not you that forces from me these vicious snarls and gibes. We know how wrong Lulu is when he talks about my ‘ profound hatred ‘ of you. At the bidding of my ancestors I utter these unseemly war-cries, I don’t love you the less as I utter them. But neither you nor I will ever convince Lulu that you are not hurt and disgusted and outraged, and I love his devotion.

### **Note by Chris Thomas**

In *Welsh Ambassadors* Louis Wilkinson, writing under his pen-name, Louis Marlow, openly declared his opposition to many of JCP’s ideas and especially to JCP’s novel *Wolf Solent*. He says that he feels the same way about most of JCP’s other books. Already in *Blasphemy and Religion* (1916) Wilkinson had spoken out against JCP’s *Wood and Stone*, and in *Swan’s Milk* (1933) he had written about JCP’s *intolerable intellectual and spiritual pretensions*. This is a criticism that partly mirrors Llewelyn’s point of view who once said of JCP he was *spiritually insincere*. Wilkinson however goes much further and readily confesses to vehement feelings of *antipathy and antagonism* towards JCP (whilst also admiring his genius). Louis Wilkinson reproduces the above letter to JCP as an example of his negative feelings. It still strikes the reader as shocking. Indeed it seems remarkable that their companionship survived for so many years. Louis admits that his love for JCP remained undiminished. The letter is undated but was probably composed when the book first appeared.

By contrast Louis Wilkinson also admits in *Welsh Ambassadors* that JCP’s attitude to his own novels is entirely different: *he keeps calm, he uses both judgment and kindness* [p.49]. He quotes an undated letter from JCP in which he comments on Louis’s autobiographical novel *Swan’s Milk* which features members of the Powys family under their own names and includes a satirical portrait of JCP. JCP refers positively to Louis’s *satiric penetration and momentous eloquence* [p.50]. Llewelyn however declared he (JCP) was *hurt* by Louis Wilkinson’s novel and thought the representation of JCP was malicious. But JCP declared *I simply cannot understand Llewelyn regarding anything you say about me as ‘malicious’ ...he is really mistaken* [pp.50-51]. In what could also be a direct response to Louis’s criticism of *Wolf Solent* JCP generously acknowledges their temperamental differences: *you make it so extraordinarily clear...how your character, & all its code, aesthetic, moral, even, & everything else is irritated by my peculiarities* [p.51]. In response Wilkinson also emphasises the difference that exists between them and writes: *...how detached, calm and impersonal is this critical tone of [JCP], how different from my tone when I speak about his work* [p.54].

## **Writers on Wolf**

*(a few brief tasters or reminders from older books)*

John Cowper Powys: introduction (1960) to the Macdonald 1961 edition.

*What might be called the purpose and essence and inmost being of this book is the necessity of opposites. Life and Death, Good and Evil, Matter and Spirit, Body and Soul, Reality and Appearance have to be joined together, have to be forced into one another, have to be proved dependent upon each other, while all solid entities have to dissolve, if they are to outlast their momentary appearance, into atmosphere.*

*And all this applies to the difference between our own ego, the self within us, the being of which we are all so vividly aware, as something under the bones and ribs and cells and vessels of our physical body with which it is so closely associated. Here we do approach the whole mysterious essence of human life upon earth, the mystery of consciousness.*

*To be conscious; to be unconscious: yes! the difference between these is the difference between life and death for the person, the particular individual with whom, whether it be ourself or somebody else, we are especially concerned. But [...] what about sleep? ..... we are totally unconscious and yet we are certainly fully alive.*

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Richard Heron Ward: *The Powys Brothers* (Bodley Head, 1935)

*The beauty of the writing is perhaps more apparent in this than in any other of Mr Powys's novels. It is intensely individual, intensely expressive, assured, sweeping, yet never affected or heavy.... the somewhat sombre, emphatic and powerful style of the prose is never obscure or verbose. ... the very fact that its rhythm is never absent saves it ...*

*The prose has some strangely old-fashioned quality, too, a kind of staid deliberateness that consorts oddly, when once one comes to examine it, with its flowing freedom, yet this staid, mature and aristocratic sobriety and this lucid and sweeping freedom are so skilfully intermingled that they never appear separately, and once more the effect of the writing is that of a well-woven, rich, adaptable and yet graceful whole.*

*The inexplicable, the undecidable torment him ... but beyond all this Wolf Solent remains, a young man of some sensitivity, of some brutality, lovable, dislikeable, humorous, moody, gay, a human being with his every aspect exposed to the reader's understanding, a creature of good and evil in which the good and the evil so inextricably overlap that they appear indistinguishable. [pp 42-43]*

G Wilson Knight: *The Saturnian Quest* (Methuen, 1964)

*Whereas Ducdame continually described the interaction of scene and mind, Wolf Solent, is, as a whole, written as from that very interaction. We experience throughout from the hero's subjective centre; earth and its vegetations are by him inwardly apprehended, their soul- sap touched, almost as from their own subjective centre; sometimes the mind itself creates its own nature, sometimes external nature becomes less an aggregate of objects than a suffusing and vaporous presence. Human thoughts and instincts are imagistically equated with animal-life or other natural manifestations and human events appear almost to form themselves like steaming vapour rising from the soil. The soul is regarded less as a hard core to the personality than as an enveloping lake or cloud. And yet there is no loss of solidity; we are in an earth world and a world of thick vegetation; but that earth world's solidity is itself mysterious. The solid and the atmospheric are in strange identity. [p.30]*

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H.P.Collins: *John Cowper Powys, old earth-man* (Barrie & Rockliff, 1966)

*Though not the most passionate or poetical of John Cowper's novels Wolf Solent ['lone wolf?'] has a strong claim to be the best. Not only because it is the most coherent structurally, the least multi-centered of the riper works, but because it comes the nearest to its author's aim....*

*Wolf Solent, firmly centered in one who is the most psychologically convincing of all John Cowper's anti-heroes, provokes no disbelief but carries the reader on steadily to an end apparently inevitable even as it is enigmatic... supreme in its toleration and non-engagement: of all novels it is the least didactic and has the least design on any possible reader. [p.65-66]*

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Kenneth Hopkins: *The Powys Brothers* (Dent, 1967)

*Wolf Solent is a completely satisfying book, without major fault, without any obvious shortcomings; it achieves exactly what its author intended.... As a study in contrasting temperaments it can teach some of the professedly psychological novelists a great deal ... John Cowper possessed, and here displayed to perfection, the ability to make every character, even the lesser ones, round and solid, so that all the people in this novel are real ... [p.134]*

*How is one to define a classic? – no doubt in a dozen ways; it is certain, at all events, that no book can be a classic that is not worth reading more than once. ... Wolf Solent ... is better at a second reading, better again at a third; it is a book in which the reader may continually be finding new beauties, new subtleties and new insights. [p.137]*

Glen Cavaliero: John Cowper Powys, Novelist (Clarendon Press, 1973)

*His novels are informed by a serious attempt to come to terms with both the inner and outer aspects of experience: central to them all is an assertion of the power of the imagination to strengthen the individual consciousness, and even to transform the relation of that consciousness to its environment. Powys's central concern might be summed up as the truth of fiction.*

*Powys's imagination moved in the timeless world of boyhood, making out of it, however, a place in which to explore the abiding nature of the child within the adult. [p. viii]*

*... in Wolf Solent we have a nineteenth-century medium stretched almost beyond its capacity to contain a twentieth-century subject-matter. Nevertheless the book is a notable contribution to the literature of introspection. [p. 49]*

*There is very little retrospective action, very little analysis of conscious motive, very little dramatic interaction. It is always the present moment that concerns him, the flowering at one and then another particular instant of this or that especial complex of physical-psychoic being. [p. 58]*

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John A. Brebner: *The Demon Within* (Macdonald and Jane's, 1973)

*...Powys's achievement in Wolf Solent lies in his ability to bring the problems and crises of modern life within the compass of individual, non-specialist, experience; in other words, he assesses the value of an ordinary man's life in a meaningful way. Wolf Solent points inward to the reality of the mind... the world of everyday experience renews itself in the participating consciousness which perceives it... Nature, people and machines are kaleidoscoped together and made personally meaningful by a willed, imaginative act of acceptance. This highly individual, essentially human effort is presented as our one way of coping and growing with the manifold data of modern life. There can be no other solution. [pp 86-7]*

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Morine Krissdóttir: *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest* (Macdonald, 1980)  
(a study of systems of alchemy and legends reflected in JCP's 'mythology' – her later writing on *Porius* continues this theme)

MK links JCP to Blake, Mircea Eliade and other writers on the occult, and traces the events of the novel in terms of the myth of the hero and the evolution (and destruction) of Wolf's surface mask hiding his 'mental device'... of 'sinking into his soul.' The challenging face of misery on the Waterloo steps, Urquhart in league with evil, Gerda representing the heathen natural world, the ambiguous poet Jason, all seem to lead to death; he is saved by the sympathy and spiritual wisdom of Christie, but driven to realise that both evil and good spring from his own mind.. *And one must wonder if Wolf doesn't escape even this vision...* His final talisman, *Endure or*



*escape* blends with his dream of the Waterloo-steps man in the guise of Jesus Christ, to whom he whispers 'It's all right. You needn't suffer. I let you off. *You are allowed to forget*'.

MK continues: *It is possible that Wolf has learned only that 'to escape from oneself altogether' works even better than escaping 'into one's own soul'... Nonetheless, something of great importance has happened to the Powys-hero. He is alive, and the shell of consciousness has been broken. He is ready for the next step of the obscure quest.*

Quoting *The Origins of the Grail Legend* (by Arthur Brown, 1966), 'simultaneously with the ego's experience of its death, a revivifying self appears in the form of a god. The hero myth is fulfilled only when the ego identifies with this god', MK ends with a look forward: *The Greeks called the god Dionysus; the Welsh called him Merlin Ambrosius; Powys called him Geard.* [pp 78-9]

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C.A.Coates: *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape* (Macmillan 1982).

CAC includes helpful comparisons with Jeffries and Virginia Woolf.

*The scale of importance in Wolf Solent is so finely managed that the reader is hardly aware of it. Because Wolf's mind sorts through experience with the reader, only those experiences remain which really work upon his consciousness and imagination. ... It is this subtle presentation of the actual movements of the consciousness (not just the workings of the mind) which is Powys's original and exciting achievement.*

*There are, from the beginning, faint traces of disparity between his pluralist pyrrhonism, his insistence that 'nothing is real except thoughts in conscious minds' and his conviction that he is taking part 'in some occult cosmic struggle'. They are inextricably bound together in Wolf, but philosophically they are opposed. This is the point where Wolf's view of things is vulnerable.*

*There is a delightful sense of recognition for the reader in the passage describing Wolf's reverie before sleep... Powys presents an ordinary situation with refreshing and minute fidelity... [pp 54-5, 60]*

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*John Cowper Powys's Wolf Solent: Critical Studies*, edited by Belinda Humfrey (University of Wales Press, 1990)

This contains 13 essays on different themes, some reprinted from *The Powys Review*. (Notable among them is John Hodgson's 'A Victim of Self-Vivisection'). BH reviews the history of *Wolf Solent*, including its variants in manuscript and its progress as told in letters to Llewelyn and to Phyllis, and the contemporary reviews on its publication. She singles out its comic and poetic elements '*What a humorous fiasco his whole life down here in Dorset had been!*' was the 'thought' of Wolf as he listed his failures in the last chapter of the novel. *The word 'humorous' suggests a mild and sympathetic laughter at*

his own drama, lacking even the self-distaste in his earlier satirical reduction of himself to 'Mr Thin Soup or Mr Weak Beer'. Elsewhere we find him adjusting his impression of himself so that he is acceptably 'humorous' not 'ridiculous'.... 'A comic King Lear! That's what I am!

Is the novel comic? Is Wolf comic? ... The comic view of the suffering Blacksod schoolmaster has a liberating effect on what could otherwise be a claustrophobic reading of his intense and prolonged self-examination. It is liberating per se, but also because the comic view is involved with the poetry of the book. The poetry exists in part because of the bookishness of the book and of its solitary main character. Wolf sees himself as a character in a book; he interprets his experience through books, mainly poetry books. Poetic fiction comically misleads him and part-comically redeems him. ... Is Wolf comic because he sees himself as potentially tragic? [pp 20, 22]

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H.W. Fawkner: *John Cowper Powys and the Soul* (The Powys Society, 2010)

This study of JCP follows his *The Ecstatic World of John Cowper Powys* (Associated University Presses, Inc., 1986).

In his Foreword, Fawkner describes his approach as *phenomenological* ... a method designed to protect analysis from the mistake of surrendering soul-issues to the soulless methods of natural sciences.... We can in fact only discover things of absolute certainty in a text by looking at the text itself. [p. 14]

For HWF, The controlling factor in Wolf's mind is the unhappy face on the steps of Waterloo Station. ... the woeful tramp's 'inert despair' actualizes itself for Solent as an imprint possessing an intriguing priority over everything else in the universe. [p. 83].

Faulkner's takes a critical view of Wolf every day staging a parade of himself for his own appreciative eyes... ...not altogether beyond the pales of sacramental vanity. ... He rejects ... all categories of sensation and ... sensuality save the one he has himself developed in order to stay clear of just about everything that most people mean by mythology, sensation, and sensuality. He seeks reflectance, and extravagations, the systematic shattering of the proper. His stated thoughts often suggest their opposite... Solent is a practical as well as a theoretical self-deceiver.

By the inconclusive end, 'mythology-Wolf' has turned into 'Waterloo-Wolf'. Solent has become an infidel. But the protagonist's loss of confidence in the loveliness of his soul is not a loss of faith in loveliness. It is a loss, rather, of faith in constructed loveliness. ... No one is claiming that regeneration leads to a sense of personal unworthiness. What is being declared is not that light is darkness or that darkness precedes light, but that there are elect events in which darkness is a first showing of light itself. [p. 158]

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Chris Woodhead's collection *What Matters Most* (University of Buckingham, 2017) contains his lecture on *Wolf Solent* given at the Powys Society conference in 2002, reviewed by KK in PJ XIII and NL93

**Kate Kavanagh**  
*Out of the Ordinary*

*Wolf Solent* has lent itself to a very large number of wide-ranging commentaries, subtle and learned. Interpretations can of course be fastened on any fiction, from Dante to *Peter Rabbit* – tracing influence from classical myths, from folklore, alchemy, gender, other writers – but with this book Wolf's own involvement with these doubles the possibilities. How might he strike an 'ordinary' reader, taking him as a real character in the world of an 'ordinary' novel?

It was the Graham Sutherland 'Entrance to a Lane' that drew me in, on the Penguin Classics 1976 edition with 1960 introduction by JCP himself. I took a realistic view. The background was interesting – long skirts, long hair, incessant smoking, aeroplanes, but dusty roads and few cars. Early 1900s? perhaps when JCP was the age of his hero.

Wolf's affinities with nature, plants and weather, his simple pleasures, can be well shared and understood by a reader: the difference being his ability to put them into words, in his running commentary on their quick-changing stream: not just as events but as how the events struck him. His 'philosophy' of the dualistic nature of the world seemed plausible, as did his sense of evil emanating from Urquhart and Malakite in the unfamiliar social world he has entered. (On the other hand, Carfax as *deus ex machina* seemed not totally convincing.)

But on first reading, Wolf did seem a bit feeble or at least innocent and unworldly. He was 36! Had he really never met a kindred spirit or been physically in love? Both the women who come into his life are half his age (though Christie seems in some ways more experienced). His mother came strongly alive, and it was possible to imagine how she would have dominated his life exclusively for twenty years. And the Otter family set him believably in a 'real' world.

Wolf's (or the author's) swift thoughts weren't always easy to follow, although his presence always felt real. The role of Redfern was never entirely clear to this reader, nor Urquhart's obsession with his corpse. There are worse sins than disrespect to the dead? (though corruption of a person, driving them to despair, is a contender). We might have been told a little more about what variety of shocking immoral activities Wolf was having to describe in Urquhart's book, as compared to the awful (French?) one with its evil fascination – presumably of cruelty, like most such.

The change at the book's end was also mysterious. No more fantasies, *Forget* (endure? surely not interchangeable) *and enjoy* – but surely he can't have become 'ordinary' – or be forcing himself to accept his situation, almost as a Christian duty? Are we being given licence to imagine his future? (The likely 'real-life' developments, of family life with Gerda, or/and writing, are never suggested.) Was he doomed to a compromise double life, of lonely identification with nature, resisting its changes and mechanization, as against domestic kindness over washing up, well-brewed tea, a cosy bed and an unrewarding job – putting up with Gerda's flirtations, with occasional glimpses of higher things on visits to

Christie in Weymouth? Could be worse. But if the two women changed?

This simple-minded reader missed a lot, and ought not to have speculated. But a return to Wolf years later – his grandmother, as it were – found him more accessible, as well as more interesting. In many ways he *is* childlike, and you long for him to be happy. But he detects goodness when he finds it, and he knows how to love, so his chances are good.... and the gold of the buttercup field – and the grey snail – will see him through.

KK

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### *News & Notes*

#### **Chesil Beach**

Recently published: *Chesil Beach: a peopled solitude*, by Judith Stinton is available to order from Harlequin Press at 21 Cattistock Road, Maiden Newton, Dorset DT2 OAG, tel: 01300 320778, or e-mail [harlequinpress.net](mailto:harlequinpress.net). 264 pages, illustrated. Price £12.00.

A review will follow.

#### ***from Marcella Henderson Peal:***

##### **L'Atelier du roman**

Later this year a French quarterly literary review, *L'Atelier du roman*, plans to publish a special issue devoted to JCP.

#### ***from Chris Thomas:***

##### **A Visit to University of Exeter's Heritage Collections**

On Monday 4 October, Hon Secretary Chris Thomas, Chair Paul Cheshire, and Editor of *The Powys Journal* Kevin Taylor, visited Exeter University to deposit Glen Cavaliero's personal archive of papers, correspondence and other documents. We were welcomed by Christine Fauch, Head of Heritage Collections, and Caroline Walter, Project Archivist. The archive has been bequeathed to the Society by Glen's executor Dr Paul Hartle, past senior tutor in English at St. Catharine's College in Cambridge. The Society has donated Glen's archive to Exeter University as an outright gift. We also viewed the integration of the inventories of the Powys Society Collection to the university's Archives catalogue system, and visited the Powys Society Collection. Collection items can now be requested from the on-line catalogue. This is now the best way of finding material in the Collection. Christine Fauch told us: *We very much encourage members to come and use the collections – we are a friendly and welcoming team and are always happy to help and advise on collections where we can.* See the note about the completed catalogue of the Collection elsewhere in this *Newsletter* [pages 9-10] and the News, Links and Collection pages on our website.

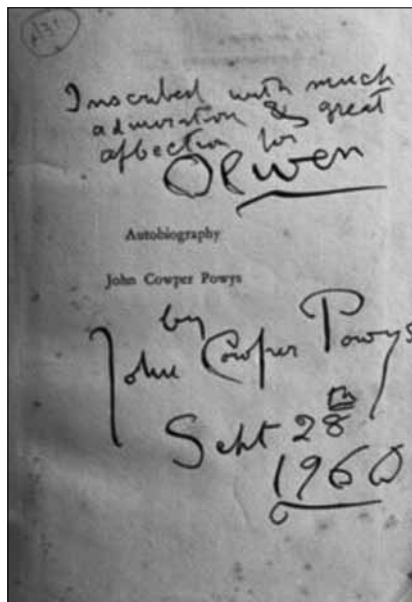
##### ***Up and Out and Olaf Stapledon***

During a wide ranging and lively discussion of JCP's 1957 novel *Up and Out* at the Facebook Reading Group led by Dawn Collins in September, I mentioned the possibility that JCP may have been influenced by Olaf Stapledon's novel *Star Maker*

which was first published in 1937 and like *Up and Out* features a cosmic quest and journey in which the protagonist travels from earth into deep space. We know in fact JCP was very familiar with Stapledon's cosmological novels for he told Louis Wilkinson in a letter dated 23 November 1940: *the T.T. read me a passage from the Star-Maker which is one of her favorite Books — & I am thrilled by it too —* JCP may have had Stapledon's book in mind when he described *Up and Out* as a *sort of Mythical Skit on the Space-adventure Tales of today's fashion* (letter to Louis Wilkinson, 8 February 1956). Stapledon shared JCP's fears of vivisection and cruelty to animals and reviewed *Morwyn* in the *London Mercury* in November 1937.

### JCP and Olwen Caradoc Evans

A few months ago one of our members told me he owned copies of *Autobiography* and *The Art of Growing Old* inscribed by JCP and dedicated to 'Olwen'. The inscription in *Autobiography* reads: *'Inscribed with much admiration & great affection for Olwen'* and is dated September 28th 1960. Putting aside the impossibility this is a dedication to Phyllis's (and JCP's) doll, also called Olwen, often mentioned in JCP's diaries, we may well enquire, *who is Olwen?* The most likely candidate is Olwen Caradoc Evans (1918-1998) who was a qualified specialist nurse, Secretary of the Welsh Board of the Royal College of Nursing, cordon bleu cook, and restaurant owner. Later in life Olwen was well known as a collector and dealer in early maps of Wales, old topographic prints and sea charts. She was much admired for her hand-coloured maps, as well as for her in depth knowledge of the art of cartography, and for her experiments with the Cotswold Collotype process of the reproduction of maps. Olwen corresponded with JCP and lived near Conwy at Penmaenmawr on the north Wales coast. There are five letters and a postcard to Olwen from JCP, dated 1958 to 1960, which have been deposited at NLW. Olwen's personal and family papers as well as her collection of marine charts have also been deposited at NLW. The English writer Ronald Blythe called her *'map finder extraordinary'*. Olwen had a great love of Wales. Welsh history and Welsh folklore which must have appealed to JCP. Her obituary calls her *'a remarkable woman and a great ambassador for Wales.'* She also corresponded with the Welsh poet and editor of the periodical *Wales*, Keidrich Rhys. Olwen was the author of *Maps of Wales and Welsh Cartographers* (1964) and *Marine Plans and Charts of Wales* (1969).



Inscription to 'Olwen' in JCP's *Autobiography*

*from Richard Simonds (NY):*

### **Goodreads**

Generally disliking social media, the only place I go now is ‘Goodreads’, where I have been going for many years and writing reviews. It seems the Powyses are poorly represented in reviews there, and as I waded through my Powys reading I’ve been putting up reviews. There wasn’t even a book entry for Llewelyn’s *The Cradle of God* so I created one. Here is a link to my Goodreads homepage with reviews of Powys books: <https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/47322383-richard-s>.

It’s a good way to popularize the Powyses (and their friends and critics). I’ve had several of my followers interested as a result of my postings (I try to get them all to join the Powys Society). My *Glastonbury Romance* review has 18 likes. See my review at: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/1775129284>

It would be nice to have a diversity of views about these books. CT notes links to Goodreads and reviews of books by the Powyses by Richard Simonds and Jeff Bursey have been added to the **Links page** on our web site and we have also posted an item on the **News page**.

*from Stephen Carroll:*

### **Dum and Dummy**

I’ve just re-joined the Powys Society after a gap of over 20 years and this morning I received a pack of items (for which many thanks) including the Newsletter 98 in which the use of ‘Dum’ and ‘Dummy’ is queried in *Weymouth Sands*. During lockdown I decided to read the only Hardy novel I hadn’t read before – *The Well Beloved* – much of which is set on the Isle of Portland and in which Hardy uses a number of dialect words which may have been specific to Portland. I was struck by the use of the word ‘Dummy’ used in an exchange between the hero and a girl friend (on page 61 of my old Macmillan’s Pocket library edition - ‘Dummy!’ he said playfully...) and also by the name of a manor house on the island known as ‘Sylvania Lodge’ where some of the action takes place (shades of Sylvanus Cobbold and Peninsular Lodge, perhaps). Maybe ‘Dummy’ is Portland dialect, and perhaps JCP had been reading *The Well Beloved* at the time he wrote *Weymouth Sands*? Even if Hardy’s hero had been simply tidying up ‘damn me!’ JCP may perhaps have ‘absorbed’ the word.

**Chris Thomas** adds: an article by Stephen Carroll called ‘How I Was Discovered by JCP’ appeared in NL30, April 1997, pp.14-15, and his article ‘A Burpham Miscellany’ was published in *Powys Review* 24, 1989. The discussion of JCP’s use of the word ‘dummy’ in NL98, November 2019, page 32, arose when Jacqueline Peltier asked for information about the derivation and meaning of this

word whilst attempting to find a suitable equivalent for her French translation of *Weymouth Sands*. Editors of the Newsletter invited members to contribute ideas about the meaning of the word. In *Weymouth Sands* JCP describes a scene in which a youth reads *The Well-Beloved: The unhappy man by his side was now squeezing him unmercifully against a youth with a neat straw hat on who was reading Hardy's The Well-Beloved* (from the chapter entitled 'Punch and Judy').

*from Susan Rands:*

### **Dud No-man in Burpham**

Below is a quotation from a letter by Stephen Carroll to Peter Birtles dated 7 July 1983. How did I come by it? I can't remember but its date is when I took over as Treasurer from Peter Birtles at the request of Belinda Humfrey:

'Burpham is not far from where I live. I often walk across the Downs to it. In the village there are two stones let into walls, one is an old building and one in the churchyard, both bearing the initials 'D.N.' The war memorial (The Great War) inside the church bears the (not unusual) inscription 'Greater love hath no man'. I can't help feeling that JCP may have used 'No man' as a name for himself not only in the obvious Dud, but elsewhere in a more correct fashion e.g in *A Glastonbury Romance* 'No man has seen the Grail' and 'If I'm a worm and no man let me enjoy life as a worm.'

Sources of quotes: 'No man has seen Our Lady of the Turrets', from the chapter 'The Flood', (*AGR*, Bodley Head, 1934, p.1174.) The second quote is from the chapter 'The River' (*AGR*, Bodley Head, 1934 p. 66 .)

'No man' was surely just a more formal synonym for 'no one' in older texts (cf Donne's 'No man is an island...' or 'No man has seen God and lived'. (KK)

### **Somerset 100 Years Ago**

In 1993 Alan Sutton published a handsome 'coffee table' book *Somerset of One Hundred Years Ago* by Robert Dunning, county historian and editor of the *Victoria County History*. It contains over 100 fascinating photographs, mostly by half page. Accompanying them are descriptive quotations from local publications such as *The Castle Cary Visitor* and *The Church Rambler* and from well known writers, Kilvert, Richard Jefferies and of special interest to us, Llewelyn Powys. Accompanying an excellent photo of Montacute station is Llewelyn's description of Montacute Hill (from *A Baker's Dozen*, 1941, p. 39-41.) With a picture of a florist's shop in Frome is Llewelyn's description of Miss Sparks's shop and with Bertie's sculpture surrounded by a group of local workmen in Montacute Square is Llewelyn's description of the interior of Montacute House and of Mrs Phelps the mother of Clare, so admired by both John and Llewelyn: see *Somerset and Dorset Essays*, 1937, pp..81-82.

## Susan Rands

### *Notes on Enid Starkie*

In a letter to Louis Wilkinson of 17/5/48 JCP tells him how *Alyse's friend Doctor Enid Starkie of Oxford obtained for me, wondrous cheap, too 4 huge quartos!* [1] – the huge Littré dictionary. When JCP's *Rabelais* was published later the same year John again pays tribute in the preface to Enid Starkie: *I owe to one woman, Dr Enid Starkie, not only the immense advantage of having in my possession the four folio volumes of Littré's monumental Dictionnaire de la Langue Française...but also being made acquainted with that rare and choice book by W.F. Smith, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1918 and entitled Rabelais in his Writings* [2].

**Enid Starkie**, 1887-1970, was an Oxford don, a Fellow of Somerville College, and notable in a much wider sphere for classic biographies of Baudelaire (1933/1957), and Rimbaud (1938/1947) [3] I was at Somerville in Oxford 1948-1951 and I remember her well: a smallish woman, her hair usually a shade of orange and always I think wearing red and blue garments with a sailor hat of similar colour as she speeded about on her tricycle. Some Somervillians studied French with her and as far as I remember greatly admired her. She was an original and striking figure.

Alyse got to know her when she wrote to her on 29 August 1940 to congratulate her on her biography of Rimbaud. They were ever after copious correspondents, Alyse becoming a sort of epistolary mother confessor to Enid. They only actually met four times, one of them when Enid stayed two nights with Alyse at Chydyok [4]. Besides being a scholar and acclaimed biographer Enid had ambitions to be a novelist. A memoir of her early life, *A Lady's Child*, was published in 1941 and was widely noticed. It was, according to Starkie's biographer, Joanna Richardson, *by far the best written of Enid's books; and in certain passages it showed subtle understanding and a natural style which she was not again to attain....she remained her own favourite subject. She was passionately self absorbed.* [5] She wrote a novel which she showed to two literary friends before sending it to Alyse in June 1942. Alyse found it *deeply moving* [6] and offered to send it to another friend. It had already been rejected by Faber and Macmillan when Alyse advised her to *try Constable after Gollancz – then Harrap...then John Lane...Have you a carbon copy I could send to America...*[7] Alyse sent the novel to Louis Wilkinson who replied: *'That egotistic weakling of a half man and that half developed masochistic fool! To me they are both deeply unpleasant and I recoil in disgust and contempt...from the thought of all those continual physical symptoms of frustration that must have gone on, for both of them week after week, month after month – how repulsive!....of course it was Archie – what a name but how it suits him who was chiefly, indeed entirely to blame for this. But the girl is of the breed that is sure to get fixed on the first man she meets who is sure to be able to make her unhappy; she wouldn't take to any other kind of man, partly out of masochism, partly out of love of dramatisation, partly out of false sentiment, and the need for self pity, and partly out of weak egotism.* [8]



Readers of Louis Wilkinson's *Welsh Ambassadors* will remember that he damned *Wolf Solent* in somewhat similar terms [9] (see pages 36-7) Alyse evidently showed Enid Louis's opinion for she warns her not to take it too seriously.

The Starkie novel sounds intriguing. Arguably *Wolf Solent* could be described in similar old fashioned, blinkered and chauvinistic terms. But times have moved on and it is JCP's perceptions that are modern, and Louis's that have been left behind. Enid's papers are in the Bodleian Library and perhaps a mss of this novel is among them, also any evidence that Enid ever read JCP, or that there was correspondence between them.

JCP continued to admire Enid Starkie to the end of his life. He wrote to Louis on 22 May 1958: *I admire Enid Starkie most of all the literary ladies of our country – more even than Dame Edith Sitwell whom I regard as the most inspired and intellectual of her family.*[10] *A Lady's Child*, according to her biographer, had shown what she could achieve when her heart and intellect worked together; when she set her remarkable memory to summon back and reconstruct her part. But she did not live to write the two volumes of autobiography she had planned.



*Enid Starkie, portrait by Norman Parkinson, 1951*

## Notes

1. *JCP, Letters to Louis Wilkinson*, Village Press, 1974, p.246
2. *Rabelais*, JCP, Village Press, p.21
3. *Enid Starkie*, Joanna Richardson, John Murray, 1973, p.125.
4. *ibid*, pp. 137-140
5. *ibid*, p.135
6. *ibid*, p.141
7. *ibid*, p.143
8. *ibid*, p.143
9. *Welsh Ambassadors*, Louis Marlow, Rota, 1971, p.48;
10. *Powys Society Newsletter* 76, July 2012

**Chris Thomas**

### *Some further notes on Enid Starkie*

Enid Starkie was revered in France as a writer and critic. In 1948 she was created Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. She was the author of a brief sympathetic study of her friend *André Gide* (1953), whom she supported for an honorary degree, Doctor of Letters, which was conferred on him in Oxford in 1947. She was also the author of a biography of the bohemian poet and novelist *Petrus Borel, the Lycanthrope – his life and times* (1954), *Flaubert: The Making of the*

*Master* (1967), *Flaubert: The Master* (1971) and a study of the influence of France on English literature 1851-1939, called *From Gautier to Eliot* (1960). See also my article, 'JCP and Flaubert', *Newsletter* 102, March 2021, p.26, note 7.

\*

In 1961 *Time* magazine reported on the election of the new Professor of Poetry at Oxford University: *Making the election a battle was the idea of a tempestuous female kingmaker: Enid Starkie, Fellow of Somerville College, a brilliant Rimbaud scholar who pub-crawls about Oxford in bright red slacks and beret while smoking cigars.*

*Time*, 24 February 1961

On their website the National Portrait Gallery reproduces two images of Enid Starkie – a pastel portrait by Peter Wardle (1966) and a photograph by Norman Parkinson (1951). The accompanying short profile notes that Enid Starkie was *famed for her unconventional clothes.*

In 2016 the TLS reported: *Sixty years ago in the summer of 1956 Jean Cocteau received an Honorary Doctorate from Oxford University, thanks to the influence of Enid Starkie. After delivering an address at the Taylorian he was received with applause, which Maurice Bowra assured him, was greater than that drawn by Gide.*

*TLS*, 22 July 2016

Enid Starkie held a teaching position in English and French and was writer in residence at Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia, USA, 1958-59. She bequeathed her personal library (some 5000 volumes) to Hollins College.

The Bodleian Library catalogue in Oxford describes Enid Starkie as one of Somerville's *most flamboyant characters.*

In his obituary of Enid Starkie her fellow scholar of Flaubert, Francis Steegmuller, commented: *Connoisseurs of biography and lovers of literature in general appreciated her sympathetic treatment of her subjects but sometimes found the artistry of her books diluted by overabundant paraphrase and academic explanation. Yet no one ever belittled her knowledge of her field or questioned her passion for it; and passion also infused her touching autobiography, A Lady's Child, in which she recounts her repressive Dublin childhood and her entry into French studies against her family's will. At Oxford...she was noted for vivacity, picturesque eccentricity and the breadth of her literary sympathies... Her comment on the Sartre volumes (L'Idiot de la famille, Gustave Flaubert de 1821-1857, Editions Gallimard), would have been decidedly worth having; for this, and for much else, she will be missed. Few biographers have spent their own last months so fruitfully exploring a great life.*

*New York Times*, 28 November 1971

*Chris Thomas*

### **Katie Powys in her Garden**

The painting of Katie Powys (1886-1963) in the garden of her house, Restfield, in the village of Buckland Newton, Dorset, illustrated here, was painted by Will Powys. According to the inscription on the back of the frame the painting was presented to Katie by Will in December 1961 (perhaps it was a Christmas gift) and was based on a pencil sketch he had made in 1957 which must have been shortly after Katie had moved to Buckland Newton in the same year. JCP wrote to Katie on 27 August 1957, whilst she was staying briefly with Lucy in Mappowder: *may you be lucky, lucky, lucky, lucky and all my gods my heathen gods protect you at Restfield*. Some years earlier JCP expressed his deep feelings of empathy with Katie in a letter to Louis Wilkinson dated May 22nd 1940: *I feel just as you do about Katie. I can write to her and talk to her more naturally and freely than any other woman I know except Phyllis*.

Katie in her old age suffered from arthritis and heart trouble and was frequently visited by Alyse Gregory from Devon and Lucy from Mappowder who both looked after her. She continued to garden although JCP, worried about her poor health and



*Katie Powys in her garden by Will Powys*

bad back, wrote to her and advised her *not to work hard in any garden*. Alyse Gregory, who was very close to Katie, wrote a moving tribute to Katie in an article, A Famous Family, published in the *London Magazine* in 1958 and reprinted in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*, edited by Belinda Humfrey, 1980. Alyse's memoir includes a fine portrait of Katie in her old age: *Her body, now bent with the torrent of the years, is worn as a thorn tree clinging to a shelving bank on a sea cliff is worn by opposing winds. A country woman born and bred and a poet of rare imagination, she has never been able to abide conventional society...As I have watched her... digging potatoes – she is an accomplished gardener – or searching for driftwood at the sea's margin...I have wondered who has ever really known her heart where so many turbulent battles have raged...*

Theodora Scutt, in her memoir of Katie (*Newsletter* 22, July 1994) recorded Katie's passion for gardening and described how she worked very hard in the vegetable garden at Chydyok:

*She was an excellent gardener, except that she had some small contempt for flowers...Before it came to its present state of fertility Katie must have dug it many times and fed it many putt-loads of manure. I don't think there was anything she couldn't grow and she had a fruit-cage too, for the soft fruits, which Gertrude would bottle or make jams and jellies from. Quite apart from the satisfaction it gave Katie, the garden must have saved them pounds. They really needed to buy very little, and as they were not rich at all, this was a great blessing.*

Louise de Bruin provides more information about Katie's home Restfield after her death: *the cottage was torn down after being sold by John and Amanda Powys and there is now another house in its place. Will helped Katie to buy the cottage, so she left it to him in her Will. He then gave it after her death to Francis and Sally who left it to John their son.*

Another correspondent told me that the new house that replaced Katie's cottage retains the name of Restfield and said: *in 1992 an extension was built which doubles its frontage and increases hugely the footprint of the house; but I am pleased to report that the dimensions and extent of the original building are still plainly discernible.*

The back of the frame of the painting provides a brief insight into Katie's life at Restfield noting *Mr Chant leaning on the gate*. Louise de Bruin says: *As far as I remember Mr Chant was one of her neighbours*. Perhaps this is the same person mentioned by JCP in a letter to Katie dated 27 July 1959: *I love to hear of that old-age Pensioner who works in your Garden & is such a humorous old chap.*

The painting of Restfield by Will is currently in the ownership of Amanda Powys. I am grateful to Amanda for sharing a photograph of the painting.

Katie died on 11 January 1963 and is buried in East Chaldon churchyard where a wooden cross marks the spot (see *Newsletter* 40, July 2000 and *Newsletter* 80, November 2013).

## Rachel Hassall

### *An inscribed copy of William Barnes' Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*

The inscription inside a copy of William Barnes' *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* reveals a web of connections between former owners of the volume and the Powys family (see image of the inscriptions below, courtesy of Amanda Powys, who holds the original book.)

William Barnes' *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, published in 1844, was the first in a series of collections of Barnes' poems written in the Dorset dialect. By the time the Powys family moved to Dorchester in 1879, Barnes had given up his school and accepted the living of Winterborne Came, where the Rev. C.F. Powys would occasionally assist him with his parish duties and where Mrs Powys took at least two of her children to receive his blessing.

The inscriptions inside this 1893 edition of *Poems of Rural Life* reveal that it was given as a Christmas present in 1897 by John R.P. Goodden to F.B. Westcott, and that after Westcott's death it was given to H.R. King, and subsequently to Littleton C. Powys, who noted in July 1945 that as a small boy he had received the blessing of William Barnes and that he had known well Colonel Goodden, F.B. Westcott, and H.R. King.

The man who first made a gift of the volume was Colonel John Robert Phelps Goodden (1845-1929) of Compton House. Colonel Goodden was Lord of the Manor of Over and Nether Compton and served as a Governor of Sherborne School from 1881 to 1929. He was the nephew of Charles Culliford Goodden (1817-1885) who was Vicar of Montacute from 1843 until his death in 1885, when Colonel Goodden's second cousin, William Robert Phelps (1846-1919), 'the last squire of Montacute', offered the living to the Rev. C.F. Powys. When Colonel Goodden died in February 1929, the Rev. H.R. King noted in his diary 'Goodden died yesterday aged 83. A good specimen of his class, he was.' An obituary in *The Times* noted that he was 'a good cricketer and oarsman, a keen rider to hounds, a first-class whip, and a fine actor with a singularly attractive, richly modulated voice. A good classical scholar, his appreciation of literature and his early memorizing of Shakespeare brought solace to his latter years when seized with partial blindness.' The Rev King officiated at the memorial service held for Colonel Goodden in Sherborne Abbey where Littleton Powys was amongst the many mourners.

The first recipient of the volume was the Rev. Frederick Brooke Westcott (1857-1918) who by Christmas 1897 had been Headmaster of Sherborne School for three years. The Rev. Westcott was a Scholar and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and son of the Bishop of Durham. It was Westcott's predecessor at Sherborne, the Rev. E.M. Young, who had invited William Barnes to attend the School's end of year Commemoration Day in June 1880 and who, after Barnes' death in 1886, suggested that he should be honoured

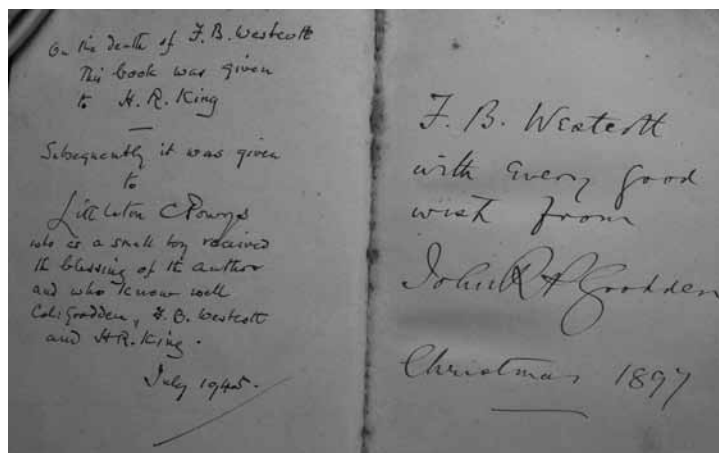
at Dorchester by a statue ‘representing the Poet as he lived and moved amongst us, with knee breeches, cloak, and staff’. Unfortunately, the Rev. Young’s time at Sherborne ended under a shadow when, following a libel case brought against him by an assistant master, pupil numbers dropped forcing the closure of John Cowper and Littleton’s boarding house in Westbury, Sherborne.

Fortunately, under the healing influence of the Rev. Westcott, the School began to slowly recover and Colonel Goodden must have been grateful to Westcott for having saved the School from near disaster. After leaving Sherborne, Westcott served as Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King Edward VII and as Archdeacon of Norwich, and after his death in 1918 his body was conveyed on a gun carriage to Norwich Cathedral for his funeral. At Sherborne School the Westcott memorial window in the School chapel features him in his role as St Aldhelm in the 1905 Sherborne Pageant, in which William Powys, the Rev. H.R. King, and Colonel Goodden also all took part.

From Littleton’s inscription in the volume, we know that after Westcott’s death in 1918 it was given to the Rev. Henry Robinson King (1855-1935). On the day of Westcott’s funeral in Norwich, the Rev. King conducted a service in the School chapel. He wrote that evening in his diary ‘I gave the Laudatio and did not quaver, as I feared.’

In 1908, the Rev. King began to memorise and recite poetry, initially to his family and later to audiences. By the time of his death, 27 years later, he had memorised over 10,000 lines, including Vergil’s ‘Aeneid’, Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost’, Browning’s ‘My Last Duchess’, T.E. Brown’s ‘Betsy Lee’, and dialect poems by Barnes. King may have been inspired to recite poetry after attending recitations given of William Barnes’ poems by the Yeovil-born novelist, Walter Raymond (1852-1931).

In a review by Littleton Powys of a new edition published in 1949 of William Barnes’ *Poems Grave and Gay*, we learn that when he was a pupil at Sherborne School he



*Inscriptions in Poems of Rural Life by William Barnes*

attended one of Walter Raymond's recitals of Barnes' poems. This recital took place in the Big School Room on 14 April 1890 and may also have been attended by John Cowper who did not leave the School until the following year. An account of the evening was published in *The Shirburnian* (June 1890):

Before commencing his recitations Mr Raymond expatiated briefly upon the merits and beauty of Barnes' Poems, which, as he justly observed, are not nearly so well-known as they deserve to be. Many people imagine his Rural Poems to be only comic, but Mr Raymond at once showed the fallacy of this by reciting such touching and powerful poems as 'The Spring', 'The Woodlands,' 'Praise o' Do'set,' and several others. Although very few of the audience could understand all that was said, undivided attention was given to the Reciter right through the programme performed, which, if it had any fault, might perhaps have been longer. 'The girt woak tree that's in the dell,' which Mr Raymond considers one of the finest of Barnes' Poems, ending as it does with a grand burst of national enthusiasm, was much appreciated by the audience, as was also 'Praise o' Do'set.'

In his review of *Poems Grave and Gay* in), Littleton reveals his own connection with the poet:

I have heard of Barnes' poems as long as I can remember; for when we lived in Dorchester in the 80s, he was our neighbour, and my mother had a great admiration of him and his works. Later, when I was in the School, Walter Raymond, by far the best interpreter of his poetry, visited Sherborne and gave a recitation of his poems in the Big School Room. I was very excited about this because of our connection with the poet and was thrilled with the recitation and with the humour and pathos of the poems so admirably presented by the reciter: and from that day onward I have loved and studied these rural poems. In those days every cultured home in the neighbourhood possessed copies of Barnes' poems, and through hearing them read or recited many, who did not possess the book, were familiar with them. *The Shirburnian* (June 1949).

How the volume came to be in Francis Powys's collection is not known. Perhaps Littleton gave it to Francis in 1950 when he left Quarry House in Sherborne and could take only 350 of his collection of 1,250 books to his new home in Glastonbury, although those he took with him included 'my natural history books, my poets, the books that Elizabeth had given me'.

Amanda Powys tells me that Francis Powys inherited books from John Cowper and Phyllis Playter, and also that Littleton supported The Powys Bookshop which Francis ran in Hastings.

William Barnes

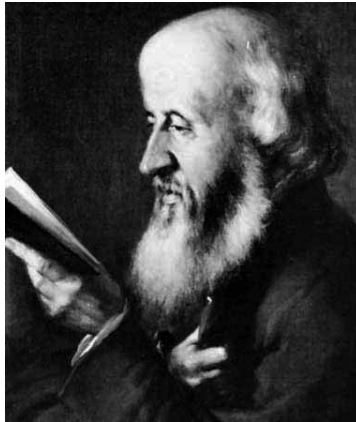
### The Fall

The length o' days ageän do shrink  
An' flowers be thin in meäd, among  
The eegrass a-sheenèn bright, along  
Brook upon brook, an' brink by brink.

Noo starlèns do rise in vlock on wing—  
Noo goocoo in nest-green leaves do sound—  
Noo swallows be now a-wheelèn round—  
Dip after dip, an' swing by swing.

The wheat that did leätely rustle thick  
Is now up in mows that still be new,  
An' yollow bevore the sky o' blue—  
Tip after tip, an' rick by rick.

While now I can walk a dusty mile  
I'll teäke me a day, while days be clear,  
To vind a vew friends that still be dear,  
Feäce after feäce, an' smile by smile.



*William Barnes*