

Editorial

Our front cover reproduces an illustration by John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's poem *The Walrus and the Carpenter* which originally appeared in the first edition of *Alice through the Looking Glass* in 1871. A late inscription by JCP quoting the poem, which he loved and could recite from memory, is referenced in News & Notes.

Reports and reviews of our Conference held in Street in August appear in several places.

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Honorary life membership of the Powys Society awarded to our President Timothy Hyman and associate editor of the *Powys Journal* Charles Lock. We also announce the appointment of Kevin Taylor to the role of literary agent of the JCP estate in succession to Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson.

There are reports of other meetings and events: Pat Quigley's lecture at the Corwen museum in June; a visit to Shirley in Derbyshire in October to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of JCP and the annual meeting of the Dandelion Fellowship and celebration of Llewelyn's birthday at the Sailor's Return in Chaldon Herring. This year, however, the annual walk to Chydyok and the memorial stone in honour of Llewelyn was curtailed due to the intense heatwave.

We review the broadcast on BBC Radio Three in September of a discussion programme on JCP's life and work.

Kate Kavanagh discusses links between Blake and JCP. We meet Samuel Beckett reading TFP but not getting on very well with him. Kim Wheatley reports on JCP's residence in Chicago in December 1913 and the controversy he stirred up amongst Chicago's public authorities following the publication of his poem, *The Avenue*, in the *Chicago Examiner*.

ON OTHER PAGES

Conference Notes	2	William Blake and JCP	27
My Conference	6	TFP, JCP and Samuel Beckett	28
DVDs	10	Controversy in Chicago	30
AGM	11	About Tickner Edwardes	33
New Members	16	JCP at home in Burpham	35
Honorary Life Members	16	News & Notes	37
New literary agent for JCP estate	16	A letter from Christopher Kent	42
Patrick Quigley: A lecture in Corwen	17	Deleted Scenes, poems	
The Dandelion Fellowship annual meeting	19	by Geoffrey Winch	44
JCP at the BBC 29 September	22	Review of Carole Coates's poems	46
Meeting in Shirley 8 October	24	A Glastonbury Cricket Match	47

We encounter JCP's friend, Tickner Edwardes, writer on country life, bee-keeper and vicar of Burpham where we also catch sight of JCP at home observing with Mr Edwardes the annual gathering of sheep outside Bankside described in *Autobiography*.

Details of a project to make new digital files of the Society's audio cassette tapes of readings of the works of the Powys brothers freely available on the website for the first time appear alongside a letter from Christopher Kent, the original producer of the audio tapes who was also a close friend and colleague of Oliver and Christopher Wilkinson.

Geoffrey Winch presents poems inspired by the publication of the deleted scenes from *Wolf Solent* and also reviews a new collection of poetry by Carole Coates (author of *John Cowper Powys In Search of a Landscape*, Macmillan, 1982). Gavin Ewart's poetical parody of JCP, *A Glastonbury Cricket Match*, appears at the end of the Newsletter.

Chris Thomas

Kate Kavanagh

Conference Note

Forty-two is a good number for a group, not too many to recognise, enough for differences and agreements.

It was in some ways an unusual meeting, the tone set by Katie Powys and her confiding, heartfelt poems that clearly strike a chord for many readers. The overflowing bookstall was a focus, with a lavish extension of the library of Kenneth Hopkins brought by Kevin Taylor, and essential sales work from Robin Hickey

A welcome return to the familiar hotel. For an older, if not the oldest, member there, there were inevitably unseen presences. Dear friends Jacqueline and Susan, Stephen Marks (visited regularly for newsletter editing), Oliver and Chris Wilkinson (plays and readings), David Gervais (quietly learned), Glen (ever calmng) ...

Other twentieth-century faces still good to see were President Tim, Richard Graves (on great reading form), and now especially Louise (an honorary Powys family member, as Isobel Marks said, through her friendships with Gerard Casey and Mary, Lucy Penny and the Kenyan Powyses). Anna, her ever-helpful co-organiser. Charles Lock, a well of knowledge and cheerful with it. Peter Tait (NZ), Patrick Quigley (Dublin), Marcella (France), Janice (USA) and of course Chris Thomas, Newsletter collaborator, editor and super-researcher. Into the twenty-first century with Kevin Taylor and Paul Cheshire, miracles of energy. Others not present but there in spirit – Peter Foss, Cicely Hill. And many more, kind and considerate.

The conferences, of thirty years or so, merge pleasantly into each other, for one in the pleasantly marginal position of the Newsletter.

Many thanks to everyone for the friendship and interest of this admirable Society.



*Kevin Taylor and
Morine Krissdóttir*



*Kate Kavanagh,
Louise de Bruin and
Lizzie Bryant*



*Richard Perceval
Graves, Charles
Lock, Louise de
Bruin and Carole
Coates*

Chris Thomas
Conference Note

It was with great pleasure that we returned to the Wessex in Street for this year's conference after an absence of two years. The hotel, pleasantly situated close to Insula Avalonia, the Tor and Wirral Hill, serves us well. Some members however were disturbed by the noise of traffic on the road outside the hotel at night and the sound of the ceiling fan in the lecture room was intrusive. But we did not let such things spoil our enjoyment of proceedings!

All the lectures were thrilling and instructive opening potentially new paths to understanding and deepening our appreciation of JCP's works. In the dining room and at the bar the atmosphere was congenial and buzzed with excited conversations. At dinner I found myself somehow engaged in a conversation about physics and space travel!

At the reception our Chair, Paul Cheshire, welcomed everyone to the event and introduced Charles Lock who gave an address reminding us of the significance of this year's event, asked us to charge our glasses and raised a toast to JCP on the occasion of his 150th birthday. Charles announced that he wished to donate several items to the Powys Society collection and said that these things had been gifted to him by Gerard Casey. He showed us the original framed pencil drawing by Marian Powys of 'the man who never was', 'Peter Grey', as featured in Newsletter 106, July 2022. Charles held up a small postcard from 'Jessica' (possible JCP's agent and manager Jessica Colbert) with a message on the verso 'Here's success to Rodmoor!' and on the other side a picture of the cabin on the edge of Lake Otsego near Cooperstown in up-state New York where JCP began to write *Rodmoor* in 1916, on which someone has written across the roof 'RODMOOR'. Charles also presented the Society with two books once owned by JCP: Bagster's edition of the *Greek New Testament*, inscribed with JCP's signature, probably used when he was an undergraduate at Corpus Christi, and Spurrell's *Welsh-English Dictionary* in which JCP has inscribed a quotation from the *Red Book of Hergest* but which he probably took from *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* by Sir John Rhys – *Ar yr echwyd ethyw gwal, O vraw marchawc ysgualt: A vyd vyth uryen aral? On the Echwyd evil has fallen/From the dread of a savage knight/Will there ever be another Urien?*

Louise gave us a privileged insight into the turbulent inner emotional life of Katie Powys, especially her passionate and obsessive response to the sad and tragic events in her life. Louise described how she had discovered Katie's diaries in 1986 after the death of Lucy Powys and how she had spent two years transcribing the contents of the diaries that cover the years from 1903 to 1963. Louise gave a very helpful and clear summation of Katie's life, including Katie's nervous breakdown in 1912. The introduction by Louise was followed by a wonderful reading of the diaries by Lizzie Bryant, who is a professional oral storyteller, and who helped to animate and bring to life Katie's life story.

On Saturday morning Michael Grenfell delivered a mind-stretching lecture on JCP and William Blake. Michael called his talk ‘an expansive gloss’. Michael’s approach to his subject was unusual – it was neither art historical nor was it, strictly speaking, literary. He preferred to concentrate on ideas. Michael pointed to the philosophical differences that separate the two writers as well as the interests they shared such as ideas found in hermeticism and the western mystical tradition. He compared Blake’s prophetic books to JCP’s novels. Michael’s main point of departure for his talk was his reading of JCP’s discussion of Blake in *Suspended Judgements*. Michael picked out key themes explored by JCP: the artist as free spirit, Blake’s anticipation of Nietzsche’s ideas, Christ as a pagan eros, Blake’s way of decoupling sexual love from a sense of sin. I thought of JCP’s comments on Blake in *The Pleasures of Literature* where he calls Blake a *happy prophet* and an *optimistic pagan*. Michael’s other point of departure was Gnosticism or gnosis and the quest for inner transformation and creative vision. Michael quoted from the Gnostic Gospels and found connections between JCP’s ideas about good and evil and Blake’s own system and mythology. He quoted from *The Complex Vision* as well as Blake’s epic *Milton*. Surprisingly Michael concluded his talk by quoting from Andre Breton’s introduction to the Second Surrealist Manifesto. He ended with the assertion that JCP and Blake differed in their commitment to imagination. JCP looks to the product of imagination, Blake looks to imagination itself. Unfortunately, Michael’s lecture could not be recorded on DVD for technical reasons but he will submit his talk in written form for next year’s *Powys Journal*. In the meanwhile Michael has posted the outline of his lecture on the literature pages of his website at www.michaelgrenfell.co.uk

Felix Taylor’s carefully researched lecture on JCP’s use of Welsh myth, the *Mabinogion*, his reading of scholarly sources and the formation of his romantic conception of Wales and the Welsh people led to a well-informed discussion with members. Colin Laker made very interesting comments from a historical angle. We hope to hear more from Colin, who is a historian, and has promised a paper for the *Powys Journal* in 2023. Colin has also agreed to give a lecture on JCP and Wales at our 2023 conference.

On Saturday afternoon a group of intrepid members made a journey in a fleet of cars from Street to Montacute where the family grave site in St. Catherine’s churchyard was visited before the group walked on in an oppressive heat-wave to St Michael’s Hill, Hedgecock Hill Woods and Ham Hill. Readings were given from *Wood and Stone* and Llewelyn’s essay on Hedgecock. I was defeated by the heat wave and retreated to the cooler conditions of the Phelips Arms. Other members made a visit to Montacute House and found a shady spot in the gardens.

Katie Powys and her poetry was the subject of an event on Saturday evening. Richard Graves gave a spirited and energetic performance reading from JCP’s letters to Katie and described the events of Katie’s life. He said that Katie *deserves to be remembered as a*

profound witness to the primacy of the imagination in any reckoning with the predicament of being human. Richard highlighted Katie's tenderness and her perceptive observations of the natural world. Richard was joined on the dais by members Chris Michaelides, Hilary Bedder and Robin Hickey who gave sensitive readings of poems from Katie's collection *Driftwood*. Chris read *The Valley, At Dusk* and *The Play of Lightning*; Hilary read *The Under-cliff, To T.F. Powys* and *Passed*; Robin read *The Seaman, Tempests of Ocean* and *The Ploughman's Spikenard*.

On Sunday morning Morine Krissdottir paid a tribute to absent friends and past colleagues including her neighbour Glen Nash who had accompanied her to the conference and who she said was an invaluable supporter and helper during the production of the Supplement to last year's *Powys Journal*. Morine had not visited a Powys Society conference for many years and said she was delighted to have been invited this year. Morine said it was JCP's friend in America Will Durant, writer and historian and popular author of *The Story of Philosophy, The Story of Civilization* and *Adventures in Genius* who called JCP 'a volcano'. This made me think of JCP's letter to Huw Menai in which he described himself "like a volcanic hill" passionate about lecturing but undeveloped as a writer: *twas in Wolf Solent that a real crater appeared on this other side of the hill such as could answer to the Crater of Lecturing on the first original side that quaked, rocked, & poured forth!* Morine gave a very insightful and helpful account of the problems the modern editor encounters in attempting to restore cuts to JCP's novels including *Wolf Solent, Maiden Castle* and *Porius*. Morine also discussed the problem JCP himself encountered when required to remove parts of his creations by his publishers. I was reminded that JCP said that he knew only a few days after posting the manuscript of *A Glastonbury Romance* to his publisher for typing that he was instantly going to have to make cuts.

Charles Lock gave a brilliant and illuminating lecture in which he praised the decision to publish the original six missing chapters of *Wolf Solent*. He said that the old *Wolf Solent* now looks somehow inadequate because in the restored missing chapters we now learn new things about Wolf's character and appreciate Gerda in new ways. Charles then gave a detailed account of the different editions, numbered chapters and volume numbers of the novel and how this was effected by the removal of the original proposed Chapters XIX to XXIV. Charles concluded by comparing the character of Wolf Solent with characters in novels by JCP's favoured writers Saul Bellow and James Purdy. In Bellow's first novel *Dangling Man* (1944), the protagonist, Joseph sits alone in his apartment and waits to be drafted; James Purdy's characters have often been described as weak and indecisive (like Wolf Solent). They are 'all dangling men', irresolute and vacillating, said Charles, reminding me of Wolf Solent's 'miserics of indecision'.



*Group in the
Borough,
Montacute*

Carole Coates

My Conference

It must be an unusual situation: to be both one of the oldest members of a society and also the newest. I remember Powys Society meetings in London in the late '60s and the Powys conference I attended in 1983 in Weymouth. It was interesting, then, to return as a new member so many years later. Someone asked me if the atmosphere and the people had changed. No. Although obviously individuals were different, they were the same sort of knowledgeable, creative, very well-read admirers of the Powys family. And in fact some of them were at the 1983 conference.

There was a variety of content in the sessions ranging from Michael Grenfell's well-documented talk on John Cowper Powys and Blake to Felix Taylor's careful exposition of Powys's reshaping of Welsh myth. Two sessions on Katie Powys were very welcome. It was stimulating to hear Louise de Bruin on her diaries and Richard Perceval Graves on her poems. The readers of both deserve praise. I've often wondered what it would have been like to be a sister in that 'one huge many-headed Powys' (Louis Wilkinson). Morine Krissdóttir's paper on 'Editing a Volcano' was absorbing as was Charles Lock's 'Thoughts on the Future of *Wolf Solent*'. Interesting how the vote on the missing chapters of the novel was about 50/50.

The heat of course was nobody's fault. Unfortunately, this resulted in the ceiling fans in the hall marring the acoustics. Otherwise, the hotel was suitable for the conference, which was, I thought, a great success.

Kim Wheatley

My Conference

I was very excited to attend my first Powys Society conference. The first Powys novel I read was *Wolf Solent*, when I was living in Chicago in 1990. Having grown up in Bath and having spent childhood holidays at Weymouth, I was mesmerized by JCP's evocation of the West Country. Since then, JCP has always loomed large in my reading life. My academic specialization is British Romanticism, and over the years, since I started teaching at William & Mary in Virginia, I've given occasional talks on JCP and Romantic poetry at Romanticism conferences in the US. Strange to say, some years ago I gave a lecture on JCP and Wordsworth to a (small) audience of law professors in Australia.

I joined the Powys Society in 2015 and had planned to attend the Powys Society conference in 2020; I had even booked flights (sigh). At least I was able to participate in Society discussions on Zoom in 2020-21. This meant that I was in the odd position of meeting fellow-Powysians for the first time online (apart from Paul Cheshire, whom I had encountered in 2016 at a Coleridge conference).

I arrived at the 2022 Powys Society conference at the end of a three-week trip to the UK during which I had attended the Coleridge conference in Kilve, Somerset, where I gave a talk on JCP's treatment of Coleridge. The following week, I had given a talk on JCP's *Autobiography* at a "New Romanticisms" conference at Edge Hill University in Ormskirk. I was amused by the contrast between the hearty meals in the hotel at Street and the scanty fare on offer at Edge Hill.

At the Friday evening reception, it was fun to encounter Society members materialized into their three-dimensional selves. That first evening, I very much enjoyed Louise de Bruin's choice of readings from Katie Powys's diaries. On the Saturday morning, Michael Grenfell's talk made me wonder if JCP became more or less Blakean over the course of his career. I have noticed several allusions to Blake in the novels. As a great admirer of *Porius*, I was interested by Felix Taylor's talk on JCP and Welsh mythology. As expected, audience members had plenty to contribute in the Q&A.

On the Saturday afternoon, I loved the walk near Montacute, which I had never visited before. Before setting off on the walk, we took a look at the grave of Charles Francis Powys, which also serves as a memorial to his talented offspring. We then trudged up St Michael's Hill and contemplated the lovely view from the top. The walk helped me better visualize the landscape of JCP's *Wood and Stone*. Our stroll through Hedgecock Hill Wood was pleasantly shady, and we emerged to see another fine view.

The evening provided more insight into Katie Powys. I was already familiar with JCP's letters to Katie; Richard Perceval Graves' dramatic readings from them brought his selections to life. I had enjoyed *The Blackthorn Winter*, but had never sought out Katie's poems, and was glad to be introduced to some of them by Chris Michaelides, Hilary Bedder, and Robin Hickey.

During the AGM on the Sunday morning, I admired how Paul Cheshire kept the proceedings on track with exemplary good humor. Morine Krissdóttir then gave a fascinating account of her editing of *Porius*, JCP's diaries, and the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*. There is evidently more work to be done on the complex compositional histories of JCP's novels.

Charles Lock's talk on the deleted chapters of *Wolf* was my favorite presentation of the conference. Charles first recounted the bibliographical history of *Wolf*, in order to claim that the impulse behind the removal of chapters was more aesthetic than practical. He then argued that the deleted chapters interfere with the unity of *Wolf*'s characterization. According to Charles, those chapters prefigure the portrayal of "anti-characters" in the later novels.

The conference ended all too soon. I wished I had had time to meet everyone in attendance, but I did have delightful chats with quite a few longstanding Powys enthusiasts, all of whom seemed welcoming to a first timer. I am looking forward to next year's conference.



*Reading
Llewelyn's essay
Hedgecock*

CONFERENCE DVDs

Talks from the 2022 Conference in Street are available on 2 DVDs, containing:

DISC ONE: *Wolf Solent* –the deleted chapters

Charles Lock: ‘Addition or Detraction?’ – Thoughts on the future of *Wolf Solent*’.

Introduced by Timothy Hyman – 45m.

Morine Krissdóttir: ‘Editing a Volcano’ followed by discussion.

Introduced by Kevin Taylor – 57m.

Also:

Felix Taylor: ‘John Cowper Powys and the reshaping of Welsh myth.

Introduced by Kevin Taylor – 31m.

DISC TWO: Katie Powys

Louise de Bruin and Lizzie Bryant: ‘The Diaries of Katie Powys’. – 49m.

Selected poems by Katie Powys read by Hilary Bedder, Robin Hickey and

Chris Michaelides, with letters from JCP to Katie read by

Richard Perceval Graves – 76m.

These two DVDs are available for **£6.00** from: **Raymond Cox**, 4 Lulworth Close, Halesowen, B63 2UJ e-mail: rymd.cox@gmail.com Tel: 01384 566383.

Please send a cheque to R.E. Cox, **not** The Powys Society

Please note that the air conditioning system in the room on the hot August weekend unfortunately provided some ambient background noise. However the speakers should be able to be heard. In addition there was some exterior light source close to the speakers which could not be eliminated and which affected the vision for two talks on Disc One.



*Julia Mathews
and Richard
Perceval Graves*

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting

The Wessex Hotel, Street, nr Glastonbury

August 14th, 2022

Present: Paul Cheshire (*Chair*), Chris Thomas (*Secretary*), Kevin Taylor (*editor, Powys Journal*), Marcel Bradbury, Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*), Marcella Henderson-Peal (*Hon committee member*), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor emerita*), Robin Hickey, Charles Lock (*associate editor, Powys Journal*) Anna Rosic, Dawn Collins and some 30 members of the Society.

Apologies for absence received from: David Goodway (*Vice-Chair*), Nicholas Birns (*Hon committee member*).

Paul Cheshire read a passage from: JCP's *Autobiography*, Chapter 10, America, about his first reading of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment: the only time I was badly seasick was when Llewelyn crossed over with me...Llewelyn kept murmuring in his misery the word ginger pop.*

Minutes of AGM 2021 as published in Newsletter 104 November 2021, and matters arising: No matters were raised and the minutes were approved

Nomination of Honorary Officers & Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2022-23

Secretary invited members to indicate if they approve the nomination of Honorary officers and members of the committee to serve for the period August 2022 to August 2023 as proposed in NL 106.

Members approved nominations.

Secretary said that the committee had also agreed nomination of two new Honorary life members of the Powys Society: **Timothy Hyman** and **Charles Lock**. Paul invited members to give their congratulations and thanks to Timothy and Charles for their long and dedicated service to the Society.

***Powys Journal* and e-books**

Powys Journal

Kevin noted that this year marks the 32nd year of publication of the *Powys Journal* and confirmed that Vol. XXXII had been despatched at the end of June to all members. However, he also said that some overseas members had not yet received their copy. This may be due to the enforcement of new import/export regulations imposed in some EU countries and slow delivery to other members located in the rest of the world. Kevin said the committee is now considering experimenting with a faster Premium delivery service in 2023 although we will have to pay a higher fee for this. Members from

overseas present at the conference said their copy had arrived safely and appreciated receiving the Journal early.

e-books

Kevin reported sales of e-books to date had generated revenue of **£6,482.30**

Profit from sales is: **£4,517.42**

Total royalties due to the JCP estate to date are: **£451.74** (including **£81.06** for 2022 not yet paid)

The unit sales for the titles available is: **1,250 copies**

For July 2022 **27 copies have been sold**

Average monthly sales since launch is **29.1 copies**

Bestselling title is *A Glastonbury Romance* with **468 copies** sold

Kevin noted that Kindle editions have successfully shown steady rate of sales and said that the committee is considering extending this project to include JCP's non-fiction but for the present there are rights issues preventing us doing this.

Janice Gregory suggested we might consider producing e-books by Llewelyn or TFP.

Chair's Report as published in Newsletter 106, July 2022

Powys Society Constitution

Paul reported that he had continued to liaise with the Charity Commission to finalise updates to our constitution agreed earlier in the year with Society members by postal communication and vote. Paul said that consent of Charity Commission is required before the updated Constitution may be posted on our website. Paul said he was glad to report that the Commission has given consent. The Commission sent a message of approval on 5 August 2022: *Changes to PS Constitution are acceptable...Thank you for updating your charity's governing document. Our records will be updated and the changes will be reflected on the public register within 24 hours.* Paul said the updated Constitution will now be posted on our website.

Acting Treasurer's Report & presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2021

Paul directed members to the annual accounts as published in Newsletter 106. Total income was £10, 498.14. Total expenditure was £10,704.04. there was a loss of £205.70. However this was offset by income generated from Gift Aid.

Paul said we have sufficient level of reserves and that the Powys Society is financially stable. Paul said he does not anticipate any immediate financial difficulty. However in order to comply with Charity Commission guidance Paul said it would be prudent to draw up a reserves policy to help make our financial affairs fully transparent and assist

future development of new projects and manage excess of expenditure over income. The reserves policy will be published alongside annual accounts using a template provided by the Charity Commission. Paul said he has drafted guidance on claiming expenses for committee members and payment of benefits to guest speakers.

Paul said in the near future he hopes to redesign website, with the assistance of a professional web site designer, and consider how we might attract more young students by offering bursaries and assist with payment of conference fees.

Kate Kavanagh said she felt it would be good to provide support for some members who need help with transport to conferences.

Colin Laker said he thought it would be a good idea if the committee could invest in microphones, projector and screen to augment talks by conference speakers. Kevin said the committee will consider how to improve technical facilities for speakers and members.

Hilary Bedder said she welcomed changes and upgrade to website.

Peter Tait said he thought it was very beneficial having lectures take place in a large room alongside the bookstall.

Paul confirmed he will continue in the role of Acting Treasurer but he is also combining this with other roles and did not think it correct for one individual to maintain a multiplicity of roles. He therefore repeated a call for volunteers to come forward to fill the role of Treasurer. The vacant role of Treasurer is currently advertised on the website.

Hon. Secretary's Report

Membership

Secretary reported that we currently have a total of **245** members registered which is an increase over a total of 237 members reported at last year's AGM.

We recorded 19 new members between August 2021 and August 2022, 2 members were reinstated, 8 members resigned or have let their membership lapse,

5 members were deceased (including long serving member Susan Rands whose obituary and tributes we published in NL 106), 5 members remain unpaid for this year – they will have to be removed later if they do not reply to reminders by end of August.

It is very encouraging to see so many new members world-wide joining the Society but sad to note deceased members and unrenewed members.

Bequest

£500.00 was received as a gift from the estate of deceased member Anthony Bennett who was a musicologist at Sheffield University. Anthony's widow has now joined the Society.

JCP 150th anniversary

We organised a meeting for 8 October in Shirley, Derbyshire with a visit to JCP's birthplace at the vicarage. The event was advertised on the website and in *NL* 106. For a report of the visit to Shirley please see a review in *NL* 107.

Anniversary of JCP's death

We are planning an event on Saturday 17 June 2023 to mark the anniversary of JCP's death on 17 June 1963 to take place probably in Weymouth including a visit to the place where, approximately, JCP's ashes were scattered on Chesil Beach.

Secretary said that this is also a timely reminder to read the account of the scattering of JCP's ashes recorded in Mary Casey's diary and revisit the many obituaries and tributes published in 1963.

Powys Society website and JSTOR

Website usage

Paul reported on usage of website according to Google Analytics showing we had 358 serious users from June 2022, 318 of whom were new users. Session lengths extended from 5-15 seconds to 30 minutes, 64 users spent 2-5 minutes per session, 56 users spent 1-2 minutes per session, 45 users spent between 30 seconds to 1 minute per session. 62 of the total number of users made more than one visit to the website. Paul's full report is available on the committee pages of the website.

JSTOR and Powys Journal

Regular annual income of £1,600.00 has been received from JSTOR.

Between 12 June and 12 August 2022 there were 436 Journal article views.

Paul noted some of the articles most frequently accessed by users including most popular which are: 'Architecture and Typology in Mark's Court' by Robert Beddow (15 requests), 'The Influence of the Arts and Crafts on Architecture' by A. R. Powys (13 requests) and 'John Cowper Powys and the Anti-Vivisection Movement' by Felix Taylor (12 requests).

There are 64 members who have registered with the Society to access digital version of the *Powys Journal* which is freely available from JSTOR via a link on our website for those who register.

Paul said full reports of website and PJ usage including details of all articles viewed and institutional use have been posted on committee pages of the website.

Social Media

Dawn said that she had not been able to make much progress with Facebook during the first part of the year. Facebook page continues to attract new messages and comments without posting new material. However, Dawn said she is now ready to take charge of things directly and has invited someone to help with posting new information and updating the page. Marcella said she might also be able to provide assistance. Dawn said she had been contacted by a new member willing to help. The Reading Powyses Facebook Group has been reactivated. The next Zoom meeting will take place on 11 October at 7pm GMT on the topic of *Homer and the Aether*. There will be later meetings on JCP's late fiction and after this Dawn said she would like to hold meetings on the subject of the female Powyses and make connections to other Societies dedicated to women writers through their reading groups such as the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society and the Dorothy Richardson Society

Date and Venue of conference 2023

Louise announced details of next year's conference in Llangollen at the Hand Hotel, 18-20 August 2023. Louise also said it is likely costs for next year will increase to about £250.00 per member.

AOB

Chris Uren asked if it would be possible to add e-mail addresses to the conference form with the list of the names of attendees. This was supported by other members who said they thought this would help everyone communicate more easily with each other. However, the committee noted restrictions to this due to data protection. however, the Secretary said that the committee will check the details and ascertain what is legally possible. Richard Graves said he thought perhaps members should be contacted and asked if they wish to 'opt-in' to the arrangement to enable their e-mail address to be published. The same principle would apply if we wish to incorporate e-mail addresses alongside postal addresses on the full membership list.

Paul thanked Anna and Louise for work on making arrangements for the conference and to all others for their contributions during the past year.

Paul reminded members they are invited to take away any books left on the bookstall and donate to bookshops and charity shops which will help extend awareness of the Powyses and also help draw down our excess stock.

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

New Members

We are pleased to welcome five new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 106, July 2022. Our new members are located in Cornwall, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Canada and Seville in Spain. After the report on new membership at the AGM, this brings the current total membership of the Society to **243**, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

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Honorary Life Members

At this year's AGM the Secretary announced that the committee has appointed two long serving members as Honorary life members of the Powys Society. They are our newly appointed President, **Timothy Hyman** and the past editor and current Associate editor of the *Powys Journal*, **Charles Lock**. The committee and membership congratulate Timothy and Charles on their achievement and wish them every success in the future.

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

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New Literary Agent for the John Cowper Powys Estate

Kevin Taylor is taking over from Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson this autumn as Literary Agent to the Estate of John Cowper Powys. Christopher's appointment as Agent was announced in NL 37 (July 1999). He took over from Gerald Pollinger, whose family had represented JCP (originally Gerald's father Laurence) since the 1930s. Christopher was responsible, working closely with the Literary Advisor to the Estate Morine Krissdóttir, for the successful Faber Finds and Overlook Duckworth publishing initiatives of the early-2000s.

Kevin is Editor of *The Powys Journal* and a member of the Powys Society Committee, and has nearly forty years' experience as a professional publisher. His appointment has the blessing of the Estate/copyright holders Amanda and William Powys. He plans to work closely with the Society in seeking out new publishing opportunities for the works of this great writer.

Patrick Quigley

Report of a talk on JCP & Phyllis Playter in Corwen at the Corwen Museum on 17 June 2022

After the 2019 Powys Society conference in Llangollen, a group stayed behind to follow the footsteps of John Cowper. On that early autumn afternoon, we attempted to recreate one of his daily walks in the Berwyns. (The Ridge Walk, Newsletter 98. See also photo of members on the summit of the Ridge on an earlier occasion with commentary on JCP's poem *The Ridge*, Newsletter 62, March 2007 and more discussion of *The Ridge* in Newsletter 63, March 2008. CT). At day's end we hoped to repeat the walk during the 2021 conference, little imagining how our world was about to be changed.

The walk reflected my hope we would see John Cowper recognized in Corwen, the place of his longest residence and source material for *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. The town and surroundings are the locus of the Powys magic – especially the solitary paths he followed in the mountains as he erected memorials and named ancient stones and trees after acquaintances and characters in his stories. The isolation and severe beauty of rock and forest inspired him to transform the barren mountain into a living book.

On the previous day Chris Thomas made a substantial donation from the Powys Society to the recently opened Corwen Museum (Amgueddfa) – (A Gift for Corwen, Newsletter 98). Based on the donations, the museum created a major display on John Cowper where I was to give a talk in March 2020. But the pandemic intervened and the talk was postponed until 17 June this year.

After two years of lockdown I expected North Wales to be changed, but the same wild mountains were covered with trees; the same rivers and gorges plunged into the earth. And Corwen retained some of the atmosphere from the 1930s when John Cowper and Phyllis arrived. The talk took place in the War Memorial Park on the hottest evening of the year thus far, partly accounting for the small, but enthusiastic audience. To stimulate their appetite, I brought along a selection of Powys books, Newsletters and Powys Society flyers.

For newcomers to Powys it was necessary to begin with an introduction to his life and work, but the emphasis was on his interaction with the town, his immersion in Welsh culture and love of the Dee Valley. His presence in Corwen created a small circle of writers that included Elaine Pew Morgan and John Redwood Anderson. John Cowper was deeply involved with Welsh language and culture as shown in his correspondence with Iorwerth Peate, first custodian of the Folk Museum of

Wales, but the complexity of spoken Welsh defeated him. An early highlight of his life in Corwen was induction into the Order of Bards at the Corwen Eisteddfod in 1936. It was a symbolic completion of a circle as I presented the Museum with John Cowper's Gorsedd badge, courtesy of the Powys Society and Amanda Powys.

Some of the audience viewed John Cowper as a remote figure who wrote difficult and hard-to-find books, but were fascinated to hear his descriptions of local characters and events in the diaries and letters. Memories can be fallible, but the diary entries retain the freshness of a contemporary record. The efforts of John and Phyllis and the "American ladies" in no. 8 to adapt to Welsh life have the fascination of characters in a vast novel - the kind he loved to read and write. Corwen Museum plans to continue research in this area, especially on the diaries in Aberystwyth. I hope that keeping his connection to the town alive will stimulate interest in the books as well.

The Corwen Amgueddfa volunteers look forward to meeting Powys Society members during the 2023 conference in Llangollen in the hope that co-operation between the locality and the Society will continue to grow and develop.

Activities at Corwen Museum can be followed on their website:
corwenmuseum.org.uk

They also have a very active Facebook page at Amgueddfa Corwen Museum - sometimes with JCP content.



Pat Quigley, Lindsay Watkins, Secretary Edeyrnion Heritage and Culture Society & Jim Ritchie, Chair of Edeyrnion Heritage and Culture Society

Neil Lee Atkin

The Friends of Llewelyn Powys: Dandelion Fellowship Annual Gathering

Regular readers of this *Newsletter* will doubtless note that this is the first time in the twenty seven years since its inauguration that the words ‘Birthday Walk’ have been omitted from the title of this annual feature – and the reason for this is very simple – this year there was no ‘Birthday Walk’....

Nevertheless, Llewelyn’s birthday was celebrated according to the terms of his Will – when no fewer than twelve of his ‘friends’ gathered at the Sailor’s Return in Chaldon Herring at 12 noon on August 13th and drank a toast to his memory.

As Chris Gostick pointed out: *When John Batten came across a copy of the Will in 1994 there was no mention of any walk, just a request that ‘£100 be deposited in trust and the annual interest paid to the landlord of the nearest public house (to Chydyok) so that on each successive occasion of his birthday his friends may drink to his memory’.*

Coincidentally this year marked the 10th anniversary of the only previous time that this annual birthday gathering had been rendered ‘walk-less’; in 2012 a violent storm which brought strong gales and torrential rain prevented anyone from venturing outside the pub and the walk was abandoned in favour of an afternoon in the bar.

This year in direct contrast, it was the fierce peak of an August heat-wave with energy sapping temperatures around 35 degrees which forced us to seek the relatively cool sanctuary of the Conference Room at the Sailor’s Return!

However, I’m getting ahead of myself: rewind to the previous day, Friday 12th – same time, same place, same intense heat.

Accompanied by American author & Powys Society member Laurie Bolanos from New Orleans, I had arrived at the Sailor’s Return, ostensibly to point her in the direction of Chydyok & Llewelyn’s Memorial Stone. Laurie, who was on a tour of the UK, was leaving the following morning & would thus miss the annual gathering and the scheduled birthday walk which but for a changed itinerary she had been intent on attending, so she had appealed via the Llewelyn Powys Facebook page for *anyone who could help & give me directions from my holiday cottage in Osmington* and I had responded.

Avoiding the intense heat by driving down from North Lincolnshire overnight, I arrived in Osmington in time for an early breakfast before transporting our transatlantic guest to the Sailor’s Return.

Disappointed at missing Llewelyn’s birthday, Laurie insisted on paying for a round of drinks for the toast to his memory & left a sum of money behind the bar for

the following day, & then acting as guide, I led the way across the village green to the Chydyok Road.

For a Septuagenarian from ‘oop North’ the heat was almost unbearable with the sun beating down remorselessly and reflecting blindingly from the white flint track, but for my companion from Louisiana it was just ‘pleasantly warm’ and we quickly agreed that she should go on ahead, and I’d see how far I could get....

I’d originally had no intention of walking, it was far too hot for me, but as Laurie rapidly disappeared from view on the steepening climb towards Chydyok, I staggered on ten paces at a time, stopping frequently to gasp for air in the stifling, oppressive heat, until eventually (and quite incredibly) I found myself standing atop Chalky Knapp, where a slight breeze off the sea was most welcome.

After resting for an hour at the place where Llewelyn always had a breather when walking home from the village, I started again for Chydyok just as Laurie appeared over Tumbledown on her way back from Llewelyn’s Stone, and we walked together back to the Sailor’s Return, both in dire need of rehydration, only to find that the pub had closed!



In the conference room Sailor's Return

Four hours later, accompanied by son Jason Lee & Louisa Bailey, along with author Steph Bradley & Ben Chadwick from Devon we met up for dinner at the Smuggler's Inn at Osmington Mills with Laurie & her two sisters before bidding them *Bon Voyage* for their onward journey the following day.

Fast forward to Saturday, August 13th which was the 138th anniversary of Llewelyn's birth, and the celebrations at the Sailor's Return. Jason, Louisa and I arrived in blazing heat on the stroke of noon only to find that Byron & Eirlys Ashton, this time with an entourage of offspring & grandchildren had beaten us to it once again. We were closely followed by Chris Gostick & Linda Goldsmith, before Dennis White and Rosemary Dickens arrived with Ben Chadwick & Steph Bradley close behind.

Finally we were all delighted to see John Sanders who, unable to drive owing to ill health and yet determined to accomplish his regular maintenance of Katie Powys's oak cross in the churchyard, had been kindly driven down from Wellingborough for the day by son Matthew.

Thus a dozen of us took shelter in the bar-room from the sweltering heat as Chris Gostick, who has been a mainstay of this annual event since its foundation 27 years ago sadly announced his 'retirement' from his role as Coordinator prior to welcoming everyone and proposing the traditional toast to Llewelyn's memory.

In a rousing speech Chris paid tribute to John Batten and to the many who had made this annual pilgrimage over the years, and in proposing the toast to 'absent friends' we remembered Janet Pollock (née Machen) and Richard Burleigh of blessed memory, and those long-time supporters who couldn't be with us; Bruce and Vikki Madge, Rob & Honor Timlin, Jed Redman (the Honey Man), and regulars, Paul & Pam Gillingham. Chris paid a special tribute to John Sanders who had lovingly maintained & repaired Katie Powys's oak cross in St Nicholas' Churchyard for over a quarter of a century.

I read a passage from the Introduction to Llewelyn's, *Book of Days* which ended quite appropriately:- *.....Most truly has it been said that money is to be found at the root of every evil tree. Nations no less than individuals are degraded, and their gift for a rational and innocent enjoyment of life ruined by acquisitive impulses and predatory aggressions, by straining after the baits of the world's pomp's and vanities. A prudent man or a prudent woman should never forget that their real capital is enclosed always within the periphery of their own skins.*

We adjourned to the relative cool of the Conference Room for lunch, once again accommodated and served in fine style by Tom Brachi and his staff, and discussed the prospects of walking up to Llewelyn's Stone. I related my experiences from the previous day, and the general consensus was that for the majority of us such a walk

was nigh on impossible in the heat of the day – not everyone agreed!

Rosemary & John were determined to make the attempt and Dennis agreed to drive them up as far as Chydyok. In the event they managed to conquer the walk over Tumbledown and got as far as the field gate which leads onto the coastal path above Bat's Head before the heat defeated them and they were forced to turn back. It was typical of John to then spend the afternoon in the churchyard working on the restoration of Katie's Cross!

Chris & Linda drove back to their hotel in Dorchester, Dennis & Rosemary headed back towards Salisbury, and Byron, Eirlys & family headed for the Powys Society Conference near Glastonbury. The five of us who remained continued the birthday party in the beer garden with a reading from Alyse Gregory's *The Cry of A Gull*, before exploring the Five Mary's, and finally we rounded off a memorable day with a celebratory evening dinner in Llewelyn's honour at the Sailor's Return.

* * *

Chris Thomas

JCP at the BBC 29 September 2022

On Thursday 29 September 2022 BBC Radio Three broadcast a programme in the Free Thinking series devoted to a discussion of JCP's life and work with Matthew Sweet, Margaret Drabble, John Gray, Iain Sinclair and Kevan Manwaring. Matthew Sweet is well known as a regular broadcaster. Margaret Drabble, John Gray and Iain Sinclair have all spoken at Powys Society conferences in the past but Kevan Manwaring was a new voice. He is a senior lecturer in creative writing at the Arts University of Bournemouth and a BBC New Generation thinker finalist. Kevan has a special interest in fantasy, eco-fiction, place writing, the Bardic tradition and JCP. Kevan will also deliver a lecture on JCP at the Dorset Museum in Dorchester on 17 November 2022.

This was a landmark programme which hopefully will help encourage and inspire new readers. You can listen to it again on BBC Sounds. Matthew Sweet led an insightful and articulate discussion in which the speakers engaged very well with each other. The last time JCP appeared as a subject on the BBC in a group based 'talking heads' programme was nearly 40 years ago, in a feature called *All or Nothing*, at the time of the publication of *The Brothers Powys* by Richard Perceval Graves in 1983. Other programmes in the past can be found listed in *JCP: A Record of Achievement* by Derek Langridge. JCP's achievement was recognised by James Hanley who discussed JCP's work in November 1953 on the BBC Welsh Home Service whilst Malcolm Elwin, H. P. Collins and George Steiner contributed to a major programme, *JCP: tribute to*

a great contemporary to mark his 90th birthday, broadcast on the BBC Welsh Home Service on 9 October 1962. More recently the letters between JCP and Frances Gregg, were dramatized in a play called *Jack and Frances*, produced by Michael Bakewell and broadcast on Radio Four in 1998; P.J. Kavanagh talked about *A Glastonbury Romance* on Radio Three in 1976; JCP was even selected as a subject on *Mastermind* in 1978, and the novelist Bernard Cornwell chose *AGR* as his favourite book on *Desert Island Discs* in 2004. Others have also devoted programmes to JCP such as Angus Wilson who discussed JCP in a series of lectures called *Evil in the English Novel* in 1964; A.N. Wilson who discussed JCP in *Open Book* in 2007 (which is still available on BBC Sounds), and the educationalist and Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, who discussed *Wolf Solent* with Sheena McDonald in *A Good Read* on Radio Four in 2001. Belinda Humfrey once told me she remembered being interviewed about JCP by the *Today* programme around the year 2000 when one of JCP's books topped the Waterstones best seller chart.

Matthew Sweet began by highlighting some of the central features of JCP's world which he described as paradoxical and profoundly strange. Iain Sinclair referred to JCP's rich, perverse world, his evocations of place and liminal spaces, declared his writing to be addictive, multi-dimensional and multiversal; John Gray noted how everything seems to be alive in his work, which is animistic and shamanistic and full of sensations, his work is Shakespearian in scope and cosmi-comic, he thought of himself as a medium and a thaumaturge; Margaret Drabble described JCP's world as intense, extravagant, hyperbolic, huge, his landscapes are wonderful and his plots enormous. The speakers discussed the details of JCP's biography, his literary subtexts, the frequent quotations from the bible – JCP was religious without belief – JCP's influence on other writers such as Iris Murdoch, A.N. Wilson, Henry Miller and Iain Sinclair and wondered why JCP's work, which was once very popular in the 1930s is now little known and suggested the problem lies in the length of his works. They discussed *Wolf Solent* in some detail but incorrectly said this was the only title by JCP currently in print ignoring the Faber titles and our own e-books. Other books by JCP were briefly mentioned especially *Autobiography* which the speakers agreed is, although unreliable, a great book to be compared favourably with Rousseau's *Confessions* showing JCP to be an open man interested in everything.

It was good the speakers referred to the existence of the Powys Society which they said was 'thriving' and that its members were all passionate advocates of JCP. The speakers also discussed the European connections and modernistic nature of JCP's writing – he is like an English Joyce or a Dorset Proust.

Chris Thomas

Celebrating JCP's 150th anniversary in Shirley

On Saturday 8 October 2022 a small group of Powys Society members met for a convivial lunch at the Saracen's Head public house in the village of Shirley, in South Derbyshire, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of John Cowper Powys in the old vicarage. We filled our glasses with prosecco and joyfully raised a toast to the memory of JCP and his work.

Before lunch we congregated, across the road in Church Lane, in the recently created community space of Charles Francis Powys's old church of St. Michael's, which can be dated to the 14th century. There is little here to record the presence of CFP except for his name in a list, attached to the wall at the back of the church, of the vicars of Shirley and their patrons. CFP's patron was the 10th Earl Ferrers, Sewallis Edward Shirley (1847-1912).

Our Chair, Paul Cheshire welcomed the group and delivered an introduction in which he described the local topography, oriented ourselves amidst the narrow lanes bordered by high hedges of this part of rural Derbyshire and went on to analyse some of the key scenes of JCP's childhood mentioned in Chapter One of *Autobiography*. We were joined by a new member, from nearby Thorpe, David Morgan, who told us about recent Hindu interest in Thorpe Cloud, and by a local historian John Fletcher who provided us with tea, coffee, milk, sugar and biscuits and helped answer our queries about the role and duties of parish priests in Shirley in the late nineteenth century. JCP himself mentions in *Autobiography* that his father's labours as a parish priest had been obliterated.

Kevin Taylor gave readings from selected passages from Chapter One of *Autobiography*. I elected to read from JCP's blank verse draft autobiography written in 1896 (published in Newsletter 27, April 1996 and Newsletter 100, July 2020) which gives an entirely different impression of his childhood in Shirley from that presented in *Autobiography* where he remembers this period as *shameful, destructive and grotesque* and recalls *a convulsed whirlpool of chaos*. The verse autobiography gives a much more relaxed and benign picture although the style is recognisably Powysian.

This led to a good open debate on Chapter One of *Autobiography* in which we discussed the Powys family connections with the Earls Ferrers of Shirley, JCP's self-mythologising, the development of the feminine side of his character, the absence of his mother, the delineation of the growth of a wavering human soul, his apparent cruelty and thoughtlessness (attempting to hang his brother Littleton and transferring tadpoles from ponds to a shallow puddle), the lineaments of his father whom he describes as



Marcel Bradbury, Paul Cheshire and Kevin Taylor at St Michael's Church Shirley

Neanderthal-like, Homeric, and an exiled wolf full of a *volcanic intensity of earth feeling* and who he memorably symbolises through the striking image of the soles of his father's boots. We discussed the self-selective nature of memory (he says he can remember little of his father's church), his secret anxieties associated with his fear of authority and being reprimanded for casting a branch into a lake, his internal struggles with himself, his unhappiness, but also his memories of *the ecstasy of the unbounded* and *the inscrutable ecstasy of the inanimate*, his anti-social attitudes and his memory of certain flowers and trees such as the *pirus japonica* that *clambered up the front of the house*, his father's favourite cuckoo flowers, and the scotch firs at the end of the driveway. We also discussed JCP's memory of the contrasting landscapes of Dovedale which he calls *wild and terrific* and Shirley which he describes as *undulating*.

Following lunch at the Saracen's Head we proceeded to walk up the lane where JCP had declared he was the Lord of Hosts to reach the vicarage where JCP was born. He describes the vicarage as *a square whitish yellow building* which he thought too large for the Powys family. Not much has changed. The house has been modernised and renovated but it is still substantially as JCP remembered. The present owners of the vicarage, Dave and Tanya Allsop, allowed us access to the garden where, amongst

the spinneys and shrubbery, standing on *the closely mown grass* (now cared for by two robotic lawn mowers), we listened to more readings from *Autobiography*, viewed the prospect of the beautiful pastoral countryside of Derbyshire surrounding us and looked for the place where CFP cut the laurel branch for young Johnny. Paul presented the housekeeper of the vicarage (the owners were not at home) with a specially inscribed copy of *Autobiography* to commemorate our visit.

I felt privileged to have been part of this very special event and pilgrimage to the *fons et origo* of JCP's creative existence, I felt privileged to have walked the same field paths used by JCP and to have stood in the very place where he first learned to *play the part of a Helper* and *pretend to be a Magician* with *the power of tapping some deep reservoir of magnetism*.

Many thanks are due to Paul Cheshire for efficiently and enthusiastically organising everything for us. Photos of the event have been posted on the Events page of our website.

For a description of an earlier visit to Shirley by the Society see the excellent article by Chris Gostick and Jollyon Smith in Newsletter 29, November 1996 and for a comprehensive account of the biographical background of JCP in Shirley see the article by Charles Lock, Derbyshire Born, Derbyshire Bred, in *Powys Journal*. Vol.1, 1991.



Toasting JCP's 150th anniversary at the Saracen's Head

Chris Thomas
TFP and Samuel Beckett

Further to the reference to TFP and Samuel Beckett at the end of the article *Darkness and TFP* by John Williams in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXII, 2022, p.34, readers may also wish to note some other references and citations connecting TFP and Beckett:

The letter from Beckett to Tom McGreevy, dated 8 November 1931, in which he mentions reading TFP's stories is reproduced in full in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, Vol. 1, 1929-1940, edited by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck, 2009, p.94. Beckett also mentions reading an essay on Dr Johnson by Llewelyn Powys, but was unimpressed, in a letter dated 26 April 1937.

James Knowlson in an article called 'Picking gooseberries...' in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. 18, 2008, discusses Beckett's letter about TFP in more detail.

In an article entitled T. F. Powys at Mappowder published in the *Powys Review* No.3, Summer 1978, Peter Riley notes: *The minimal bleakness of all these last tales is striking, and it is hardly surprising that the whole narrative process ran to ground. The constant process of ontological refinement ended by cancelling itself—Powys's successor, when the main course of his writing is separated from the wastage, is Samuel Beckett.*

Marius Buning (1930-2008), author of *TFP A Modern Allegorist*, 1986, was also a Beckett scholar and founder and co-editor of the periodical *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. Marius presented a paper at the Powys Society Conference in 1987 on 'T.F. Powys and Samuel Beckett as modern mystics'. He commented on TFP and Beckett's shared interest in mystical writings and especially the theology of the Via Negativa which he also discussed in an article entitled Theodore Powys via Meister Eckhart in *Powys Notes*, Fall 1989. See also Marius's article Mappowder Revisited: T.F. Powys's Reading in Retirement in *Powys Review* No.7, Winter 1980. Charles Lock concludes his obituary of Marius Buning in *Newsletter* 63, March 2008 with the words: *Through Marius's work we may hope that TFP and Samuel Beckett will always be companions, as they were for him, on the via negativa as it negotiates its devious path through their time and ours.*

In his memoir of TFP called Some Memories of TFP published in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*, edited by Belinda Humfrey, Louis Wilkinson said: *TFP was a born mystic with his own heterodox mysticism.* Wilkinson also recalled that whilst he was still an undergraduate he used to visit TFP on his farm in Sweffling where

they discussed the philosophy of Schopenhauer. The Powys Society Collection has TFP's personal copy of Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism*. Schopenhauer with his belief in life as a burden and task which we must fulfil significantly influenced both TFP and Beckett especially through their reading of Schopenhauer's essay *On the Sufferings of the World*. Beckett read Schopenhauer for aesthetic pleasure as well as his ideas. He read Schopenhauer as a poet and noted in a letter to Thomas McGreevy *I always knew he was one of the ones that mattered most to me*.

It is also worth recalling that TFP's publisher, Charles Prentice at Chatto & Windus, published two early prose works by Beckett – a critical study of Proust in 1931 (which ends with an allusion to *On the Sufferings of the World*) and a collection of stories *More Pricks than Kicks* in 1934. It was probably Charles Prentice who recommended Beckett read TFP's stories.

In addition to these references Morine Krissdóttir suggests in *Descents of Memory*, p.420, that JCP may have been influenced by Samuel Beckett: *a reading of Beckett's novel Murphy in 1958 may have faintly affected his last tales*.

* * *

Kate Kavanagh ***William Blake and JCP***

A few reflections from the wide and deeply researched talk given by Michael Grenfell at the 2022 Conference, which we look forward to revisiting in a future *Journal*.

William Blake (1757-1827); John Cowper Powys (1872-1962) lived through times of revolutions, wars and social change. They were two outsiders (not to say Pariahs), happy to be so.

If *Gnosis* (as defined by Wikipedia) means reaching knowledge of the nonhuman through personal experience, not through any system, then these two are brothers.

Beyond that simple definition of Gnosis lies a universe of names and interpretations, echoed by Blake in his long mystical poems that JCP, like many of us, sets aside in favour of the brilliantly simple lyrics and telling aphorisms. Blake invented a universe for himself, including writers and places that he knew, and his own version of Christianity.

For JCP, the universe is *at once determined by inexorable laws and liable to irrational surprises*. He explored human life as he knew it, with invented

elements. We don't forget the Victorian vicarage that he came from, or the liberated background for writers in the 20th century, which he takes part in at arm's length. His characters, and receivers of his philosophy, may have other-worldly visions, but live in this world, and mould it to suit themselves.

Both writers are, of course, conditioned by their own life-experience, but neither of them is a member of anyone else's system, let alone enslaved.

Reading either of them, things can be both true and not true, helpfully defining opposites, or enlarging complexities. This may be said of Blake's aphorisms and of JCP's most alive characters, or statements about himself (*I long to escape from humanity...*)

What difference can we analyse between a mind that sees everything in visible human (or angelic) form, as Blake does, and one whose mind can project and actually see a human image from within it (like JCP's Waterloo Face)? For JCP, is this world of trees and flowers, rocks and weather, of equal reality with the human? Blake works on a more cosmic scale, through the human figures in his illustrations. Externalise vs. internalise?

Which of these pronouncements by Blake would have struck a chord with JCP?

I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's.

I will not reason or compare: my business is to create.

Eternity is in love with the productions of Time.

How can one joy absorb another? are not different joys Holy, Eternal, Infinite? and each joy is a Love.

A man can only reject error by the advice of a friend or the immediate inspiration of God.

A Short bibliography

John Cowper Powys: *Confessions* (1916); *William Blake* (Little Blue Books, 1923; Village Press, 1974)

William Blake: *Jerusalem; Proverbs of Hell; Visions of the Daughters of Albion; The Last Judgment.*

Catherine Ward: *William Blake, New Man* (1960, Buenos Aires)

Kim Wheatley
Controversy in Chicago

I came upon some American newspaper articles from 1913 that included a poem by JCP which I don't think has been reprinted since. The articles give a glimpse of JCP's celebrity in the United States two years before he published his first novel. Apparently, the *Chicago Examiner* had asked JCP to offer his impressions of Chicago. JCP obliged with the following sonnet, which appeared on the front page of the *Examiner* on 15 December, 1913 (Vol. XI, No. 307):

THE AVENUE

As I See It From My Blackstone Window.

It is impossible that the same Earth
Which breeds the honeysuckle, trails the hedge
With bryony -- along the river's edge
Brings yellow-throated Iris flowers to birth,
Should spawn a thing of such Cyclopean girth
As this huge City! From the utmost ledge
Of the round World it drives an iron wedge
Into Eternity! Yet, Gods! What dearth
O' the exquisite, the delicate, the rare!
Not one white violet in Grant Park to see!
Not one rose-coloured labyrinthine shell
Cast up beside these waters! But what care?
Violets and shells have little use for me
When I stand staring – between Heaven and Hell!

The Blackstone Hotel, where JCP was staying at the time, is a luxury hotel on Michigan Avenue (the "Avenue" of the sonnet's title) in Chicago, overlooking Grant Park. The "waters" are those of Lake Michigan. A separate article on the same page (*GREAT U.S POEM TO BE BORN HERE*) quoted JCP: *I am convinced that if there is to be a great American poet he will be born in Chicago*. The following day, a substantial article by Richard Henry Little (1869-1946) appeared in the *Examiner* with the title, *Poet Powys' Wail of No Violets Stirs Chicagoans: City Beauty Planners*

Poet Powys in Sonnet Paints Impressions of Chicago for Examiner

English Bard,
Protege of
Carnegie,
Gives Idea of
"The Avenue"
From Window

Not One White
Violet in Grant
Park to See!
Not One Rose
Colored, Laby-
rinthine Shell

Huge City Is
Uncouth,
Chaotic, Too
Strong and
Gigantic, but
Still Lovable



John Cowper Powys.

THE AVENUE,

As I See It From My Blackstone Window.

IT is impossible that the same Earth
Which breeds the honeysuckle, trails the hedge
With bryony—along the river's edge
Brings yellow-throated Iris-flowers to birth,
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Not one rose-coloured labyrinthine shell
Cast up beside these waters! But what care?
Violets and shells have little use for me
When I stand staring—between Heaven and Hell!

—John Cowper Powys.

'GREAT U.S. POEM TO BE BORN HERE'

English Bard Says It Is in Chicago
That Ideas Typically Ameri-
can Are Found.

"Chicago uncouth," "Chicago chaotic," "Chicago gargantuan" and "Chicago lovable" was epitomized yesterday in a sonnet by John Cowper Powys, an English poet, now a visitor here.

Mr. Powys, a protege of Andrew Carnegie, was asked by the Examiner to render his impression of Chicago in his favorite medium. Seated at a window in his suite in the Blackstone Hotel, he crystallized his thoughts under the subject, "The Avenue."

The British litterateur and lecturer first came to America three years ago under the patronage of Andrew Carnegie to deliver a series of addresses at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. His home in Sussex is the rendezvous of poets, artists and musicians. The steel man first came to know him several years ago on a golf links near Glasgow. Since that time he has visited America three times, and after every visit, he declares, he grows more loath to return to his home. Mr. Powys will lecture at the Art Institute on "The Gospel of Art" to-morrow evening for the extension bureau of the University of Chicago.

"Of all American cities Chicago is the most remarkable," he said last night. "It is a great, rude, rough, impressionable laby, too strong and too gigantic. But these are only the faults of the growing child; some day Chicago will become a rounded, symmetrical creation. The energy which is now expressed in terms of dollars and cents will soon seek an outlet in poetry and art, and both will be the most perfect the world has ever known. I am convinced that it there is to be a great American poet he will be born in Chicago. It is here that ideas typically American find expression. The effete East is under the domination of decadent Europe; the Far West is provincial and Spanish."

Women, according to Mr. Powys, exercise a greater influence in Chicago than any place else in the world.

[Left] Article on JCP's poem *The Avenue* in *The Chicago Examiner* 15 December 1913 and
[Right] Article about JCP in *The Chicago Examiner*, 15 December 1913

Working for Higher Aims. This laboriously facetious article describes JCP as *the most promising young poet of England* and the protegee of Andrew Carnegie, the philanthropist. Its photograph of JCP is flanked with photos of John Barton Payne and Charles Wacker, who were leading efforts to beautify Chicago. Quotations from these luminaries pour scorn on the idea that “white violets” and “labyrinthine shells” could be found in Grant Park (especially in December). Little himself summarizes what he claims is the overall reaction to the poem from the citizens of Chicago: *Poets do not sleep at the Blackstone and scoff at Grant Park. Poets sleep in Grant Park and scoff at the Blackstone*.

This manufactured controversy had a brief afterlife. A short article of 16 December, 1913, “Poet Powys and Parks,” in the Davenport (Iowa) *Democrat and Leader* refers to this “rumpus” about Powys’s poem and the resulting free “advertising” for the poet (p. 6). And on 30 December, 1913, Little’s article was loosely paraphrased in an article headed *NO VIOLETS IN CHICAGO PARK, POET IS PEEVED: Nor Could John Cowper Powys Find Labyrinthine Shells; Wait Till He Sees the Stock Yards*. This piece appeared in the *Arizona Daily Star* of Tucson, which is over 1700 miles from Chicago, as if readers there would be interested in the “rumpus.” The “Stock Yards” refers to the Chicago meatpacking district.

Chris Thomas writes: JCP spent the Spring and Summer of 1913 in England but by November he was back in Chicago, staying at the Blackstone Hotel. He stayed there until the end of the year when he left on a tour of other cities. In February 1914 he embarked on a tour of Canada. The Blackstone Hotel had opened a few years earlier in 1910. Chicago was at this time enjoying a literary and artistic renaissance. JCP enjoyed the company of many different writers and artists that congregated in the city. To the author of the article in the *Chicago Examiner*, of 16 December, JCP seemed “a rising bard” and “the most promising young poet of England” which sounds odd since he hadn’t published a collection of poems since the 1890s and in 1913 other names in England were better known as published and celebrated poets such as Robert Bridges, Laurence Binyon, W. H. Davies, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, D. H. Lawrence, John Masefield and Siegfried Sassoon. In November JCP started giving lectures again at the Art Institute of Chicago and other venues.

More serious perhaps are the flagrant errors in reporting by the *Examiner* in the article on 15 December 1913 – JCP’s patronage by Andrew Carnegie has, as far as I am aware never before been cited, JCP did not of course arrive in America for the first time in 1910; I have never heard of JCP’s house in Burpham referred to as a

‘rendezvous’ of poets, artists and musicians and the prospect of Andrew Carnegie meeting JCP whilst playing golf sounds absurd!

JCP had, however, prior to 1913, already met Maurice Browne and his troupe of actors in Chicago at The Little Theatre in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue, near the Blackstone Hotel, and was now writing plays for them (although none of them were accepted by Browne). This was an exciting time for him but emotionally JCP was in a state of heightened inner turmoil. He felt intense nostalgia for England, he missed the presence of Llewelyn - “I so long to see you again” he wrote to Llewelyn from Chicago on 25 November and again on 8 December he wrote to Llewelyn: *I long so frightfully to be with you that it’s quite an obsession...I talk of you day and night.* He was also still deeply in love with Frances Gregg and wrote to her about his longing for her: *...I am in such nervous expectation for you...* (letter dated December 1913). JCP’s lament for the absence of white violets in Chicago can be read as symbolic of his troubled state of mind at this time.

Note: a reproduction of the original article with JCP’s poem *The Avenue* as published in the *Chicago Examiner* on 15 December 1913 appears alongside this note and the ‘mocking article’ which followed in the *Examiner* on 16 December 1913 can be found on the outside back cover of this Newsletter. (CT)

* * *

Charles Lock

A letter about JCP’s friend Tickner Edwardes

A shortened version of this letter was published in the *London Review of Books*, Vol. 44, no. 16 (18 August 2022).

According to Mike Jay (23 June), *the earliest known written account of hitchhiking was by a student named Charles Brown Jr., who in 1916 described his 800-mile journey from Fort Wayne, Indiana to New York City.* Here’s the occasion to draw attention to an earlier instance published by Methuen in 1910 under the title *Lift-Luck on Southern Roads*. Tickner Edwardes (1865-1944) undertook a “ramble” from Torquay to his home in Sussex with a casual reliance on assorted vehicles, mostly horse-drawn: *I had hardly hoped to escape altogether from the presence of motors, even when going by the least frequented ways. In fact, I had all but counted on an occasional motor-lift, if only as a variation in the scheme of travel.* One reason why this book may not enjoy the repute of writings by Edward Thomas or W.H. Hudson is that it depicts not a pastoral England now lost, but, almost contemporary with the account of devastations wrought by Mr Toad in *The*

Wind in the Willows (1907), English roads in the process of being made to carry other vehicles than those for which they were intended.

‘Lift’ as a noun for an assisted mode of transport is recorded by the *OED* from the early 18th century, as is the phrasal verb ‘to get a lift’. “Lift-luck” seems to be Edwardes’ coinage, entirely appropriate, especially to any who have stood for hours by the roadside and begun to feel a little down on their luck. The earliest instance of hitch-hiking in the *OED* is from 1923, ‘originally US’. Such were the conventions of ‘lift-luck’—the offer, rather than the thumbed request—that Edwardes had to invent a reason for asking the carrier to let him down from the cart at an arbitrary point on the road from Amesbury to Andover: *Three motors had scooped by [sic] in quick succession, and a fourth was churning up a few hundredweight of highway metal in the drab distance.... I fled down the narrow lane, nor stopped until I had left the motor-dust and all that bewailing aerial ironmongery far behind.* How long the journey took is not made clear, but the two hundred miles that Edwardes covered, much of it on foot, were assisted by rides offered on almost sixty vehicles. Unless an earlier account is known, Tickner Edwardes would be the first to appreciate the literary possibilities of the random company (and unintended itineraries) afforded by accepting a lift, whether we call it hitchhiking or lift-luck.

Tickner Edwardes was a friend of JCP’s throughout the years at Burpham, as he recalls in *Autobiography* (p. 361): *with Mr. Edwardes I continued to enjoy a pleasant literary friendship and never failed to admire the quiet gravity of his character.* On p. 319 we learn that, soon after the end of the First War, Edwardes took Holy Orders and was appointed vicar of Burpham. JCP’s wife and son continued to live in Burpham; we can assume that the friendship was sustained through JCP’s visits to his family. Yet, despite the extensive account of Tickner Edwardes in *Autobiography*—their friendship recollected some thirty years later—JCP seldom if ever refers to him elsewhere.



Portrait of Tickner Edwardes, 1904

Chris Thomas
JCP at home in Burpham

In 1902 JCP moved from Court House to the small village of Burpham two miles from Arundel close to the river Arun. He acquired a house, Bankside (later called Warre House), with the help of his brother-in law Harry Lyon. This move marked an important new stage in JCP's life during which his son was born, he seriously contemplated converting to Roman Catholicism, expanded his career as an extension lecturer, made his first visit to America, developed a great passion for boating on the river, became obsessed with Welsh literature and history and finally abandoned his unpublishable romance about his friends which he had started at Court House.

JCP gives a very vivid account in *Autobiography* of life in the village of Burpham. He was charmed by his new home with its ancient earth bank and enclosure; he liked the atmosphere of the place, referring to the *sunshine, voices of children, bleating of sheep, lowing of oxen, ringing of bells, stamping of horses, tinkling of anvils, sawing of timber and voices from the George and Dragon*. JCP's poem *The Garden* in the collection *Mandragora*, 1917, perhaps alludes to memories of Bankside "that garden of the West". JCP refers to a moat, tall reeds, swans, an inner garden, a, crumbling wall, and a parterre and gives a romantic evocation of his Sussex home:

Where the wet fields stretch away, away,
And travellers never come,
There is the land where my thoughts stray
And the house I call my home.

JCP describes in *Autobiography* the inhabitants and personalities of the village especially, as Charles Lock notes, a local naturalist and published author Tickner Edwardes (1865-1944) with whom he established a close friendship and who was later appointed Vicar of Burpham from 1927 to 1935: *I liked the tough wood texture of his bodily presence*. Tickner Edwardes was an expert on beekeeping and an author of books on country life such as *Sidelights of Nature*, 1896, *An Idler in the Wilds*, 1906, *Lore of the Honeybee*, 1906, and *The Beemaster of Warrilow*, 1907. Later he published many more books. He was also a novelist. He frequently contributed articles to popular periodicals, magazines and newspapers (JCP says he contributed nature sketches for the London periodicals) such as *The Idler*, (for which he wrote regular articles under the title *The Idler in Arcady*), the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Globe*, the *Athenaeum*, the *London Magazine* and the *Architectural Review*. JCP was clearly impressed by his writing and described him as *a man of meticulous*

nicety in his literary art. I recollect being confounded by the elaborate craftsmanship with which he laboured; pondering on words, taking words up, as it were, and laying them down, just as he did with the materials of his hives.

In many ways JCP's own descriptions of the landscape of the high downs, the shady woods and the fields of cornflowers and clover surrounding Burpham reflect the descriptions of the village by Tickner Edwardes who wrote about an idyllic natural environment and *the slothful, ancient beauty of the place* as well as *a pretty sleepy Sussex village on the river's brink smothered in green leaves*. JCP describes in *Autobiography* the *great event of the year* when flocks of sheep were brought down from the summit of the downs following an old shepherd path and passing in front of the George and Dragon inn and Bankside for the annual ritual of sheep-washing in the narrow estuary of the river: *Early in the morning a vast continuous stream of woolly sheep would pour down the lane past our house, filling the whole space between the walls, and make a peculiar sound unlike anything else*. Interestingly Tickner Edwardes also describes the same event in an article in *The Idler*, June 1907, called *Sheep-Washing in Sunny Sussex* as well as in his book *Neighbourhood: A Year's Life in and about an English Village* (1911) – the village is here called Windlecombe but is clearly based on Burpham. Tickner Edwardes describes the bustle and animation of the sheep-washing event just as JCP remembered it in *Autobiography*. Of particular interest in both these publications are photographs by Tickner Edwardes himself of sheep congregated on the lane opposite the George and Dragon and JCP's house and being led alongside the wall of Bankside. This corroborates JCP's assertion in *Autobiography* that Tickner Edwardes was always 'on the scene' at the annual sheep-washing event.



Sheep gathered outside the George Inn and Bankside, JCP's house in Burpham

News and Notes

From Michael Kowalewski:

A Dorset Walk

An illustrated article by Jon Woolcott describing a walk along the Dorset coast near East Chaldon and Chydyok passing the Smuggler's Inn, which also featured mention of the Powyses, was published in the *Guardian* Saturday section on 23 July. See A great Dorset coast walk to a great pub: the Sailor's Return | Dorset holidays | The Guardian.

From Robert Tilleard:

A signed and numbered new limited edition of *The Glory of Life* and *Now that the Gods are Dead* by Llewelyn Powys is available to order from <http://www.tilleard.co.uk/>

The book is printed on 190gsm St. Cuthbert's Mill Bockingford A5 watercolour inkjet paper and quarter bound in archival buckram. I have also produced a new handmade edition of *A Baker's Dozen* available to order from the website above.

From Kevin Taylor:

P. J. Harvey

I was interested in the note on P. J. Harvey in News & Notes in Newsletter 106. She has the 'look' of a young JCP female heroine - think Peg Frampton or Persephone Spear. Imagine my surprise when a bit of Googling revealed that the talented Dorset musician (and now poet)'s parents owned a stone quarry on Ham Hill: Ray & Eva Harvey of the Ham Hill Stone Supply Company Ltd.

From Paul Cheshire:

Felix Taylor

A new collection of essays published this month called *International Medievalisms: from Nationalism to Activism*, edited by Mary Boyle. Boydell & Brewer, includes a chapter on John Cowper Powys and Wales in *Maiden Castle* by Felix Taylor. Felix Taylor is the author of 'John Cowper Powys and the Anti-vivisection Movement' (*The Powys Journal* XXIX, 2019) and was speaker on JCP and Welsh Mythology at our 2022 conference.

Article by Robin Wood

An article by Robin Wood of the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador entitled A Quest for 'feminine consciousness' in JCP's *Porius* has been published in the *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, Vol. 9, issue 1, 2022. See our website for an abstract and more details. See also: <https://ijwwe.uwp.co.uk/article/id/3375/>

From Carole Coates:

Tears in the Fence

The Spring 2022 issue of this literary magazine includes an article about landscape poetry and *Birds of the Sherborne Missal* by Dorset poet Elisabeth Bletsoe with a substantial quotation from *Wolf Solent*. **Chris Thomas** adds: Since July 2015 *Tears in the Fence* has included articles that cite, quote or pay, in passing, a tribute to JCP. In the issue for September 2017 Ian Brinton wrote a review of Jeremy Hooker's collection *Ditch Vision* in which he congratulated the poet on his passionate understanding of the work of JCP. You can access extracts from all past issues of *Tears in the Fence* on-line at: <https://tearsinthefence.com>

From Chris Thomas:

The Powys Crest

In Newsletter 106 I provided the transcription of an inscription by JCP in a copy of the first UK edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* originally presented to his friend the writer Ron Hall and now in the possession of Adrian Leigh who says that on close inspection the image of the seal at the centre of the page *can be shown to reveal the clear imprint of an armorial device of a gauntlet and forearm grasping a mace or wand*. This is, fact, an impression of the Powys family crest adopted by the Lilford branch of the family and was illustrated in Newsletter 75, March 2012, p.3. JCP quotes a heraldic description of the crest in a letter to Louis Wilkinson dated 11 March 1957 in Newsletter 75, p.23: *Or, a lion's gamb in bend between two cross-crosslets fitchee (I don't know what that means) gules*.

JCP's Contemporaries

Kevin Taylor rightly notes in the editorial to the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXII, 2022, that two of JCP's contemporaries, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898) share the same birth year. At one stage JCP contemplated publishing an essay on Beardsley in *Suspended Judgments* but this never appeared. One of our members, Bob Mann, notes that JCP's contemporary, the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, was also born in 1872. The connection with JCP extends a little further for Vaughan Williams was also a contemporary of JCP at Cambridge studying at Trinity College from 1892 to 1895. His early composition (1901), a song, entitled *Linden Lea* was based on a poem in the Dorset dialect by William Barnes. Bertrand Russell, who visited JCP in Blaenau Ffestiniog, lived nearby at Plas Penrhyn in Penrhyndeudraeth in Merionethshire. Frederick Davies has a lovely anecdote about this visit in an article in the *Powys Review* No.19,1986: *I noticed [JCP] gazing at me intently. Suddenly*

he exclaimed, "I know who you remind me of, Frederick! A dear OLD Friend of mine. LORD RUSSELL." "God forbid!" I said. "Not Bertrand Russell?" Phyllis laughed and said, "Bertie came to visit him in the week. That's what's made him see the resemblance. And Jack's right, you know. You do resemble him." I decided not to protest. The artist Augustus John (1878-1961), another contemporary, sent JCP a copy of the reproduction of the portrait he had made of him. In a letter to Louis Wilkinson dated 27 December 1956 JCP recalled the occasion when the artist visited him: *I'll never forget how I was seized with pure Hero-Worship, a sort of ecstasy, and leapt up from my seat & kissed his forehead & it didn't bother or worry or perturb him any more than if I'd been Heracles saluting Zeus his Dad! He just made a sign for me to sit down where I was so that he could go on drawing me.* JCP repeated the story again in a letter to Louis dated 16/10/1957:

I adored the old man and in the middle of his drawing me I jumped up and kissed his forehead, which made me feel exactly as if I were kissing the forehead of Zeus! The back page of a recent issue of the TLS included a feature on famous people born in 1872 but failed to include any mention of JCP!

JCP and Lewis Carroll

Henry Smith sent me an image of an undated inscription by JCP which he found inside a copy of *Owen Glendower* once owned by J. H. Parry of Wembley. JCP's inscription quotes two verses from *The Walrus and the Carpenter* a poem recited by Tweedledee in Chapter IV of Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass* first published on 27 December 1871 by Macmillan, illustrated by John Tenniel with wood engravings by the Dalziel brothers. The two verses inscribed by JCP are:

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
'If this were only cleared away,'
They said, 'it *would* be grand!'

'If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose,' the Walrus said,
'That they could get it clear?'
'I doubt it,' said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

JCP could recite other poems by Lewis Carroll from memory. He especially loved *Jabberwocky* with its nonsense rhymes and queer invented words. He often told his correspondents that *Through the Looking Glass* was the first book he learned to read by himself when he was a child. In *Autobiography* he says that he first read *Through the Looking Glass* at Rothesay House in Dorchester when he was seven years old. He read the book with *intense, prolonged and spellbound absorption*. He also told Louis Wilkinson in a letter dated 21 February 1956 that Carroll's way of treating the inanimate had a profound influence on his manner of thinking. He told Henry Miller in a letter dated 3 April 1950 that Lewis Carroll influenced his own way of treating the inanimate.

Olwen Caradoc Evans

I came across another reference to Olwen Caradoc Evans (information originally supplied in N&N in Newsletter 104, November 2021, p.45): this is what he wrote in a letter to Louis Wilkinson dated 27 April 1958 published in NL76, July 2012, p.34:

*I have got a new correspondent and I like her very much & she is very attracted to Phyllis whom she finds an exciting and mysterious character which shows her intelligence. Her name is Olwen Caradoc Evans and she is a Mrs and also a very energetic lecturer. She has hired from the National Trust a wonderful old building to live in and she has lived there for 5 years already and gives teas and sells books and all sorts of things. Her house is called Tu Hwnt ir Bont *... She does so well what all Welsh people want to do, namely impress visitors without committing themselves to anything! I am quite longing for the next time this Olwen "drops in" ... I lecture her and she lectures me & between us we make a fine row.*

* 'which means "Towards the Bridge" and the bridge was built by Inigo Jones'.

From Louise de Bruin:

Wolf Solent in Dutch

The Dutch language publisher, Uitgeverij Pluim, based in Amsterdam, recently enquired about Dutch translation rights to *Wolf Solent*. Pluim is a small independent publisher (they started in 2018). They issue a rather odd variety of books, some of which have sold very well. *Wolf Solent* has come out in Dutch already twice: once in 1984 and once in 2002. It is now only available second-hand. This is only one of two titles by JCP translated into Dutch, the other one being *The Art of Growing Old*, which was brought out just after the war on special war paper. JCP is, in the Netherlands, as in some other countries, especially well-known and appreciated by other writers. There is one long splendid essay, difficult to translate (hence I have never had time

to translate it), by one of our currently neglected great writers called Simon Vestdijk (1898-1971) who was regularly nominated for the Nobel Prize but like JCP never got it. The website: Literair Nederland ran this summer a regular column called 'Hoping for a reissue/retranslation' written each time by a different person. In July this column was devoted to a hope of reissuing *Wolf Solent* which according to the writer is *a stupendous novel which should stay absolutely available for the literary reader*. See: powys | Zoekresultaten | Literair Nederland.

From Peter Foss:

A Glastonbury Cricket Match

Looking through some old newspaper cuttings I came across this:

Peter Porter had written a review of Gavin Ewart's book of poems *The New Ewart, Poems 1980-1982*, Hutchinson, 1982, published in the *Observer Sunday Review* (March 21 1982) and particularly mentioned one with these words: *Best of all is A Glastonbury Cricket Match, a lovely spoof of the style of J.C. Powys. Here is the bowler coming up to deliver: 'He became a wave in the Bristol Channel, a crystal in a Mendip stone wall, a black-striped perch in the Brue under Pomparles Bridge. On his right as he walked, dogsplurge burgeoned and ratsfoot spread its purple patches evenly over the outfield, awaking in him atavistic affiliations.*

Chris Thomas notes:

The New Ewart is dedicated to Peter Porter. *A Glastonbury Cricket Match* is the last item to appear in this collection. The whole parody, with its playful allusions to *A Glastonbury Romance* and JCP's characters Matt Dekker, Penny Pitches, and Will and Nell Zoyland, is reproduced at the end of this *Newsletter*.

Gavin Ewart (1916-1995) was a poet noted for his wit and humour. He started writing poetry at an early age and contributed to Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse* in 1933.

Peter Porter (1929-2010) was born in Australia but made his reputation as a poet and writer in Britain first publishing his work in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He was also a translator, essayist, critic, broadcaster and editor of numerous collections of poetry. In his review of Gavin Ewart's collection Peter Porter refers to Ewart's serious approach to parody: *parody is a living way of writing well* and mentions his *high spirits* which is evident in *A Glastonbury Cricket Match*.

A Glastonbury Cricket Match is not the only instance of a connection between Gavin Ewart and the Powyses for according to Martin Blyth in an article entitled Larkin, Llewelyn Powys, Love and Death, in *About Larkin, the Newsletter of the Philip Larkin Society*, No.9, April 2000, Larkin once told Gavin Ewart that *I make T. F. Powys seem like Marco Polo* because both had a preference for living a sedentary life. This article is also listed by Peter Foss in his *A Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys*, 2007.

A Letter from Christopher Kent

Chris Thomas writes: members may recall that in 1999 the Society issued a set of two audio cassette recordings of readings of selected works of the Powys brothers which featured the actor Freddie Jones, Oliver Wilkinson, Christopher Wilkinson and Christopher Kent. At a later date as the audio cassette format became largely redundant we transferred the tapes to a digital format with the aim of posting these on the website. However we were not at that stage able to clear copyright permission with some of the actors and the project was not taken any further. Recently our Chair, Paul Cheshire, agreed to look at this again and seek permission from representatives of the estate of the late Freddie Jones, Oliver and Chris Wilkinson as well as from Christopher Kent, who is still with us, and who produced the original audio tapes, to ask for permission to load the digital audio files on to our website. Christopher Kent, the estate of Oliver Wilkinson and the widow of Freddie Jones kindly agreed to the proposal. Paul has now made the digital files freely available on our website at <https://www.powys-society.org/Audiovisual.html>. We reproduce below Christopher Kent's very kind letter to Paul agreeing to these arrangements in which he explains how he became involved with the readings. He also generously provides information about his friendship with Oliver and Christopher Wilkinson and some of his current recording work.

Dear Paul

Thank you very much for getting in touch. It's so long ago that I have no recollection of what the contractual arrangements may have been but I'm sure they would have covered all future rights so you're very welcome to make the recordings more widely available.

It came about through my dear friend and colleague, the late Chris Wilkinson, with whom I worked many times on stage, screen and radio, and his father Oliver Marlow Wilkinson, who of course had close ties to the Powys family. Chris was very involved in Powys research and trying to make some sense of his father's mountain of correspondence and archive material. It used to throw up interesting texts and he invited me a couple of times to perform readings with him at Powys Society events. I recall we also put together a group of actor friends around the same time to give a rehearsed reading at the Powys Society conference of a lost play he'd discovered called *The Entermores** by one of the Powys brothers (John Cowper, I think?). We all stayed together in Oliver's tumbledown Cotswold house, which he shared with an irascible parrot called Peregrine. For some reason Peregrine took a particular dislike

to our actor friend Bob Barrett, the gentlest of men, who went on to play Dr Sascha Levy in *Holby City* for many years, and beat his wings against his cage viciously every time Bob spoke. He was lucky Peregrine wasn't allowed out because there was an original Man Ray photograph on the wall that Peregrine had taken lumps out of in a fit of pique apparently. I also recall around that time Chris telling us that Oliver's old Volvo had packed in so he'd rummaged around and found a letter from Oscar Wilde to his father Louis Marlow in the loft. The auction price at Sotheby's was enough to buy him a new car.

At the time I was one of the few actors in the country to have my own home recording studio and I think that's why I ended up recording the pieces for the cassette release. I remember recording it to the now forgotten (but then cutting-edge) format of DAT (digital audio tape) and sending it off by post. I can't recall how Freddie Jones's involvement came about but I think Oliver knew him. He was a wonderful actor and great character. I'm sure Chris would have managed the arrangements expertly and with great charm. I remember being fascinated by the richness of the writing. Oliver was a wonderful link to what seemed like a lost world and spoke very much as the brothers wrote.

Incidentally, if you are notifying members and feel able to do so, you might let them know that I have recently released a recording of Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, as set to music by Richard Strauss in 1897, with the pianist Gamal Khamis for SOMM Recordings. It's been getting some very nice reviews and is available on CD here:

<https://www.somm-recordings.com/recording/richard-strauss-narrator-piano/>
or streaming here: <https://listn.fm/enochardencastle/>

Thanks again for getting in touch and for reminding me of happy times and treasured friendships.

With very best wishes
Chris

**The Entermores*, a play by JCP, was performed in a reading by Oliver and Christopher Wilkinson and friends at the Powys Society conference in Cirencester on Sunday 28 August 1994. See also article by Glen Cavaliero on *The Entermores* in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. X, 2000.

Christopher Kent is a professional actor who has appeared in plays in repertory, and in the West End and has appeared in programmes on TV and radio. He is also a voice-over artist with skills in roles requiring accents and dialect. He owns his own voice over production company, CKUK Media. (CT)

Geoffrey Winch

Review: When the Swimming Pool Fell in the Sea by Carole Coates

(Shoestring Press, 2021, 73 pages, ISBN 978-1-912524-77-8 : £10)

At The Powys Society's Annual Conferences I've listened to many lectures and enjoyed the academically-flavoured discussions that have followed. As a non-academic these have proved beneficial, enabling me greater insight into, among other things, the sources that influenced JCP's creative genius. The same applies to the numbers of books I've read on the subject, including C.A. Coates' *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape* (Macmillan, 1982). But, having also in recent years occasionally come across poems by Carole Coates in contemporary poetry journals, I must confess I didn't make the connection – that only happened when I received her fifth full collection, *When the Swimming Pool Fell into the Sea*, to review. Then I recalled it was her in-depth analyses of Gerda and Christie that persuaded me I needed to re-read *Wolf Solent* with greater intent some two decades ago. In approaching her collection, therefore, I felt assured I'd be engaging with a poet whose work I'd appreciate.

This assurance was soon strengthened when, in the opening poem, she recalls a conversation with her husband, John, about Francis Bacon's inability to 'trap reality'. At one point John went wandering off and that particular moment was lost because *You're checking the quotation / I move because the sun is in my eyes // and one triumphant sparrow pecks at the seed // and I remember when you were so ill / so horribly ill the past leaned into us / an old reality trapped in your head*. Her isolating the 'sparrow moment' as a single-line stanza while utilizing it as a volta is, in my view, superb. With enthusiasm I read on to discover how expertly this poet controls word, line and stanza breaks, or chooses prose poetry, all of which dictate pace and rhythm, rendering each piece in such a way that I felt compelled to read it time and again.

The collection is in three parts, the first of which focuses on moments spent with John during the illness which culminated in his death. Included is 'Crazy Days', a sequence from an earlier pamphlet collection, and John's illness is identified in 'Crazy Days 8': *When your clever doctor friend told me / you might have Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease / those were the only words / that I could say: Creutzfeldt Jacob / until those jagged unkind syllables / became a place* – The effects of the disease are telling, e.g. in 'Crazy Days 2': *You were a six foot child looking for sweets / and able to reach all the high places / so I hid them low down among the saucepans. // Insatiable is*

the word some would use ...; and the consequences are also equally telling: After the diagnosis, after the medication, / after the cannulas that starred your arms, / after the hospital and all the drugs // you came back ... which presented new challenges when ... everyone said Isn't it great he's better? / and I said Yes but I don't like him now. // And I told you this too – husband, steroid monster ... ('Crazy Days 10'). 'I Can Tell You Now 4' recalls an incident when John, prone to small seizures, insisted on carrying his hot mug of coffee, but Oh, you said, how did that happen? // How could I be angry with you, poor baffled man? // But the mug rolling on the floor – / your favourite Shakespeare mug / with its tiny white faces of Hamlet and Lear / staring out, staring up, horrified and aghast / at their own intractable problems. Such imagery used in so profound a manner only occurs in contemporary poetry of the highest order.

Then the window cleaner said you'll be missing John / and he would miss him too but he didn't say that. ('The Window Cleaner and Life Everlasting'); after you died the silence came / which was seemly which was fitting ('Talking to John'), and stillness and silence are things that are real and this house with its stairs / and windows and empty rooms is not real a virtual house ('Mourning in Lockdown') are sufficient to convey the essence of the poems reflecting on the aftermath of John's death which form Part Two. There are too many specific gems to mention, so I'll select this as an example: *we shared a company of speech / silly phrases odd nouns made-up verbs / a language growing over fifty years / our own vernacular ... // ... a dead language now / not yet extinct with one speaker left*

Part Three offers a great diversity of subject matter, though there is still an echo of John's voice in the title poem: *... that time you said / Listen if a star called out / it would make that sound* In *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape* Carole Coates suggested he *hoarded his memories of 'beyond-sensation'* deep in his consciousness 'like a sunken ship, full of fathom-deep treasure'* which he could haul up when required, (*JCP's phraseology from Autobiography)*. I'd suggest that Carole Coates has her own fathom-deep treasury of memories on which to call, plus a natural way of determining that which inspires her to compose her most effective poetry. Titles such as *Who are all those interesting young widows* (asked Queen Victoria); *Let us now praise women who should be much more famous*; *'Vergeltungswaffe' Falling in Love with the AA Man* should be sufficient to indicate to potential readers (including Powysians) what they can look forward to. It is fitting, however, to conclude this review with specific reference to the

closing poem What we write on stones: ... / *I found this epitaph / If I forget you what would I remember // or might it have been could I can't quite ... / was it should even? ...*

Geoffrey Winch's most recent Powys-related poems are:-

‘Deleted Scenes’ – a set of six tanka distilled from lengthy descriptive scenes which occur in JCP’s *Wolf Solent: The Six Deleted Chapters* – particular scenes to which JCP made no reference when re-writing Chapter 19. (Published with a prefatory note in *Time Haiku* 56, August 2022 and in Powys Society Newsletter 107, November 2022.)

In this Silence inspired by the epigraph *To her the silence had been in itself a prayer, the deepest, the holiest, the most illuminating.*

(T. F. Powys: *Mister Tasker's Gods*)

(Published in *Acumen* 104, September 2022)

Geoffrey Winch ***Deleted Scenes***

On occasions my poetry is influenced by the writings of John Cowper Powys. However, whereas he was well known for constructing rather long and meandering sentences, brevity is what I usually aim to achieve. Therefore, it normally takes some time for me to distil a concept of his with a view to reshaping it into my own words.

Prior to the first publication of his novel *Wolf Solent* in May 1929, Simon and Schuster, his publishers, required him to delete chapters XIX-XXIV (now restored in the Supplement to *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXI, 2021).

This set of tanka was inspired by some of JCP’s descriptive scenes deleted from the original publication of *Wolf Solent* to which he didn’t refer when rewriting Chapter XIX in order to ‘bridge the gap’.

The six tanka should appear in two columns in chapter order.

Tanka evolved from the ancient Japanese form of waka (meaning ‘short song’). They are normally rendered in five brief lines with a total syllable count not exceeding 31. They are often be formed in two parts – an observation and a reaction to the observation. It is desirable in many cases to include a pivot or volta – usually the third line – which can be read as the last line of the first part and first line of the second part, thus altering the sense of that line.

in the midst
of this translucent valley
a leafless wood
floats
upon the haze
(Chapter XIX)

from the shadows
beyond the churchyard wall
the shadowy tower
rises above
a young man's grave
(Chapter XX)

on the table
laid for tea
a vase
of chrysanthemums
changes the atmosphere
(Chapter XXI)

these dark
and ragged clouds
being transformed
as the lowering sun
fringes them with gold
(Chapter XXII)

the fire's landscape
in the grate
islands towers bridges
never again will they be
so arranged
(Chapter XXIII)

umbrageous road
enchants as it wanders
losing itself
in the wavering gold
of distance
Chapter (XXIV)

First published: *Time Haiku* 56, August 2022 (Editor: Diana Webb)

Gavin Ewart ***A Glastonbury Cricket Match***

From *The New Ewart, Poems 1980-1982*, Hutchinson, 1982

Froty Frides was the next person in, the very last person to bat for the Wookey Hole cricket team. Froty Frides was a complete and perfect rhombus, with the look of a squeezed square. Nature had made her four feet high and not very much thicker, reckoned from back to front, than the big front door at the vicarage. In her pads and batting gloves this mammalian repository of local wisdom had indeed the appearance of a very wide deformed cricket bat herself.

As she approached the wicket her shrewd Quantock brain was occupied with intense rustic thoughts, concerning for the most part the Vicar and his lover, the beautiful

Nuttie Zetland. She was thinking, as she took guard: ‘He do masturbate she, and she do masturbate he. But ‘tis a girt mock to reason how none o’ these wold sinners do never masturbate *me!*’

So saying and thinking, with great female complacency, she settled down to await the next ball of the over. Meanwhile all the blades of grass on the cricket pitch were striving with a kind of communistic solidarity, to take a decisive part in the game. They were at one with the thirteen players exercising themselves there, and far more deeply engaged than the two umpires. As the ball struck them they did their very best to divert it towards the wicket, since all pitches do their utmost to assist the bowler.

Mad Lekker, as he walked slowly back before turning to bowl again, sniffed viciously as he passed Nuttie, who was the batswoman at the other end. His little bear’s eyes narrowed as they rested on her classic breasts.

Imaginative lust carried him forward, flooding into the remotest portion of his consciousness. He became a wave in the Bristol channel, a crystal in a Mendip stone wall, a black-striped perch in the Brue under Pomparles Bridge. On his right as he walked, dogsplurge burgeoned and the ratsfoot spread its purple patches evenly over the outfield, awaking in him atavistic

affiliations. On his left the vivid green of the cat’s crocus attracted his wandering gaze as he turned on his heel and hesitated, ‘alone and palely loitering’, before beginning his run-up to bowl. Only slightly distracted now by Nuttie Zetland’s perfect breasts, in their rough cheesecloth cricket shirt, he broke wind and began to gallop towards the crease. The dark earth beneath him seemed to him then, under its covering of grass, like a vast wild-maned horse, upon whose back he was being borne through space! A poignant smell of musk rose up from where his heavy white boots pressed against that huge living creature. From that fragment of white mystery there slid across land and water into the soul of Mad, as he approached and passed Nuttie’s earthy presence and released the leather sphere, the curt voice of the umpire, Lord M’s bastard: ‘No ball!’

J . C. Powys, Captain

Somerset Second XI, 1933