

Editorial

The Powys Society Newsletter may not be the most avant-garde of publications, but in a sense each issue is an experiment. Not only do we constantly try to improve the technical quality of the publication, but also to widen its scope to reflect more fully the interests of our members. This can only be done successfully, however, if we know what members want. Ours is a democratic society and the ideas and opinions of all members are valued equally. Therefore, if you feel that the *Newsletter* could be improved or that it does not cater for your interests, let us know. On the other hand, you may be satisfied with the present format. Whatever your opinion, it is important that we hear from you, even if only to reassure ourselves that the *Newsletter* is being read.

Members attending the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition will be pleased to see *Weymouth Sands: John Cowper Powys Introduces Me To A Circle Of His Admirers*, a "mock sublime" painting by our Vice President Timothy Hyman. The exhibition is on show until August and will be followed by a one-man show of Timothy's work in the Autumn.

Morine Krissdottir, our Chairman, contributes Committee News to this issue, and members are reminded that copies of the minutes of all Committee meetings are available from our Secretary, Griffin Beale.

Meanwhile, we have what promises to be a remarkable conference to look forward to and we hope that as many members as possible will attend.

Paul Roberts

Committee News

Some members have asked for more news about the meetings of the Committee: how often they are held and what they discuss. Space permitting, the *Newsletter* hopes to carry a regular column on Committee and sub-committee meetings. But first, for new members (and some old) a brief background.

What is the Committee ? The Committee is a group of members elected annually at the A.G.M. . It consists of the officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer) and seven other members of the Society. The President of the Society is entitled to attend meetings but not to vote.

What Are The Duties of the Committee ? According to the Society's Constitution, the responsibilities of the Committee are as follows: a) conducting the management, policy and financial affairs of the Society b) promoting the object of

the Society by such means as the Committee considers appropriate c) publicizing the work of the Society d) obtaining new members e) arranging and conducting the Annual General Meeting and the Annual Weekend Conference and reporting on the Society's affairs for the preceding calendar year f) ensuring that an appropriate audit is carried out annually g) presenting a full financial report to the A.G.M. h) determining the annual subscription i) preparing by-laws that may be desirable for the conduct of the Society's affairs and j) receiving bequests and donations.

How Often Does It Meet ? The Constitution requires the Committee to meet not less than twice a year. Under the present Chairman, the Committee has been meeting three and sometimes four times a year. This is because the Society's business has become more time-consuming as it becomes bigger and as it tries ever harder to achieve by whatever means it can the public recognition of the Powyses and their circle. Because of the distances many of the members have to travel to attend, as much business as possible is packed into each meeting.

How is the Committee Elected ? According to the Constitution, a Committee of Nominations, chaired by the President, Glen Cavaliero, has the duty to prepare for the A.G.M. a slate of candidates to fill vacancies on the Committee for each year. The Officers are each elected for a term of one year and are eligible for re-election. The Constitution allows the Committee to co-opt additional members of the Committee if necessary.

How Does One Become a Committee Member? The only (!) qualifications are a desire to participate fully in meetings and to attend *regularly*, to be prepared to work for the Society on sub-committees as necessary and according to skills, to help actively with such projects as publicity, advertising, fund-raising, publishing and conference planning. It is time-consuming but rewarding. If you think you would like to be on the Committee or know of a member you think would be an asset to the Committee, write to the Committee of Nominations, c/o Dr. Glen Cavaliero, 29 Portugal Place, Cambridge, CB5 8AF, telling a little about yourself and what you think you might be able to contribute. The following nominations have so far been received: Margaret Eaton, Michael Everest, Peter Foss, Belinda Humfrey, Frank Kibblewhite, Susan Rands and Paul Roberts. Further nominations will be gratefully received at the above address.

Morine Krissdottir

Secretary's Report

On The Committee Meeting Held at Liddon House on May 26th 1990

The main topic of discussion, debate and voting concerned the Society's need for a publication programme. After a lengthy discussion the Committee voted unanimously to appoint an Editorial Committee which will be subject to the direction of the Committee; the Editorial Committee will be responsible for the development and administration of the publication programme; the Editorial Committee will submit a detailed report to the Committee for its approval by the November 1990 Committee meeting, such report including recommendations concerning types of publications, materials suitable for publication, editing responsibilities, methods of financing and any other necessary recommendations for the effective implementation of a publication programme for the Society. The following members were appointed to the Editorial Committee: Louise de Bruin, Peter Foss, Alan Howe, Timothy Hyman, Morine Krissdottir and Stephen Powys Marks.

Stephen Powys Marks earlier reported to the Committee on his recent correspondence with Belinda Humfrey and the fact that Belinda had confirmed that she would produce two issues of *The Powys Review* during 1990 at the usual price of £8.10, such *Reviews* to be issued by Belinda most likely in June and November 1990.

Griffin Beale

John Cowper Powys, Journalist

A Talk by Paul Roberts given at Liddon House on May 26th 1990

John Cowper Powys's journalism, the essays and reviews which he contributed to newspapers and magazines, makes up a vast and largely unexplored area of his writing. Just how substantial, in terms of both its quantity and its importance, this journalism is, was explained by Paul Roberts in a talk given at the London meeting of *The Powys Society* on May 26th.

Although John Cowper Powys is generally known as an occasional contributor of essays and poems to magazines, Paul Roberts demonstrated that Powys had what amounted to a distinct career as a freelance writer for newspapers and journals which ran parallel with his work as a touring lecturer in America.

During the course of his talk, Paul Roberts explained that in addition to the pieces documented by Powys's two bibliographers, there is a further body of work known only through allusions in letters and other sources. For example, an announcement in *The Dial* refers to a series of essays on Russian novelists in *The*

East Side Weekly in 1920, which are as yet untraced.

In his research, Paul Roberts has made a number of fascinating discoveries, including Powys's own lengthy review of Louis Wilkinson's *The Buffoon*, a novel in which John Cowper Powys appears as Jack Welsh. In his review Powys, without mentioning that he is the original of Jack Welsh, describes him as "an engaging piece of dilapidated whimsicality" but regrets that Welsh is only "a figment of a pleasant writer's fecund brain." Such discoveries as this, from the *San Francisco Bulletin*, can only provoke speculation as to how much more of John Cowper Powys's journalism is presently lying undiscovered in the files of newspapers and periodicals all over America, a legacy of his travels "through all the states of the United States except two".

What makes the journalism significant is that, as Paul Roberts remarked, time and again "Powys reveals the foundations of his own art, those beliefs, attitudes and practices which were to result in the uncompromising triumphs of *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Porius*."

Paul Roberts' fascinating talk threw considerable light on what is a neglected area of Powys studies, and one looks forward to the volume of uncollected essays which he is currently preparing for the press.

Alan Howe

In The Steps of Wolf Solent

The small handful of enthusiasts who gathered for the *Wolf Solent* walks on May 20th and June 3rd enjoyed fine weather and genial companionship amid glorious Powysian landscapes. Exploring Sherborne, Yeovil and Bradford Abbas in the context of their fictional settings - i.e. Ramsgard, Backsod and King's Barton - provided numerous, including some unexpected, insights into the novel. Those who attended wish to extend a vote of thanks to Tony Hallett whose meticulous research and careful preparation ensured an enriching experience. It is hoped that a similar walk around Montacute will take place in the near future and that a few more kindred spirits will feel inclined to join the party. They will not be disappointed.

Frank Kibblewhite

Conference Book Sale

As in previous years, the *Cirencester Conference* will feature a book sale. This event provides delegates with the excellent opportunity of acquiring some elusive (and not so elusive) titles at a very modest price. It is also an all-important

extra source of revenue for the Society. Would all members who have books to dispose of bring as many as they wish to donate to this fund-raising event - and remember, they do not necessarily have to be books by or about the Powyses. Finally, in addition to the second hand book sale, this year's *Conference* will have a stand devoted to the sale of new books. Anyone involved in a private press or a small publishers who wishes to exhibit, please contact either of the two organisers. For further enquiries and information, contact:

Louise de Bruin; 601 Mappowder, Dorset DT10 2EH (tel 0258 817825) or
Frank Kibblewhite: Walnut Tree Cottage, Mappowder, Dorset (tel 0258
817449)

Powysian Echoes In Mappowder 1990

An Afternoon of Music, with Readings from the Works of the Powyses
Presented by

Robert Carrington and the Dunstable Doysters
with

Louise de Bruin, Gerard Casey, Frank Kibblewhite, Angela Pitt and Martin
Pollock

Saturday August 4th at 2.00pm in Mappowder Church.
Admission £2.50

All proceeds donated to The Powys Society and Mappowder Church

The Powyses and "The New Age": A Note

In his 1967 study *"The New Age" Under Orage* W. Martin informs us in a passing reference that, between 1911 and 1915, Orage had published contributions by both John Cowper and Llewelyn Powys in his magazine. A search of the relevant volumes reveals that three pieces were published by Llewelyn Powys. The first of these, indeed Llewelyn's first publication of any kind, appeared on April 10th 1913 and was the essay entitled *Death*, in which he vividly imagines the death of his brother John. The text here is identical to that published in the 1923 American edition of *Ebony and Ivory*, but contains a number of minor differences to the English edition of the same year. Further textual differences appear in the *Penguin Books* edition of

1939, which also gives the date of the essay's first publication incorrectly as 1911. There are, therefore, three extant texts of this essay.

The next piece to appear by Llewelyn was *From Montacute To Gilgil*, which was published on January 21st 1915, and this was followed on July 8th of the same year by *Africa*. Both of these pieces were later to be incorporated into Llewelyn's contribution to *Confessions of Two Brothers* (1916). Once again, there are several minor textual differences between the magazine and book publications, which reflect further revision and polishing by their author. Like the *Manas Press* the editors of *The New Age* seem to have found some difficulty with the name of their new contributor, for he appears variously as Llewelyn Powis and Llewellyn Powys.

John Cowper Powys appears to have made only one contribution to the magazine but, unlike those of Llewelyn, this has never been republished. The issue of April 10th 1913 contained not only Llewelyn's essay, but also a poem by John Cowper, entitled *The Litany Of The Damned*. This precedes his earliest recorded periodical publication by almost two years and is, therefore, of some importance. A reference to the poem appears in *Letters To His Brother Llewelyn* (Volume One: 1975), on pages 116-117, where John Cowper writes: "I do pray that that 'Litany' you sent is not too impossible. I seem to hear the sly and malicious comments of Ezra Pound upon it...." Here there is an omission in the published text of the letter and it is possible that an inspection of the manuscript may reveal further comments upon the poem.

Readers may judge for themselves whether Pound's anticipated criticisms would have been justified, for we are pleased to publish this previously undiscovered poem in this issue of the *Newsletter* and our thanks are due to Gerald Pollinger and Francis Powys for their permission to do so.

Paul Roberts

The Litany Of The Damned

Mother of all things forlorn,
Withered leaves and blighted corn,
Seaweed flung upon the shore,
Broken shells that gleam no more,
Hope burnt low, like faded fire,
Loveless, dead-in-life Desire...
Mother of all things forlorn,
Pity us that we were born !

Drift of vessels sunk at sea,
Flotsam of the deep are we,
Battered wrecks that rot and bleach
On the debris-shingled beach,
Riff-raff, rubble, refuse hurled
On the dust heap of the world ...
Mother of all things forlorn,
Pity us that we were born !

By the blood that's turned to slime
In the poison tracks of time,
By the skull that nods and grins
Over unrepented sins,
By the lust we cannot tame
By the name we dare not name
Mother of all things forlorn
Pity us that we were born !

By the womb of her we've curst,
By the heart we've wounded worst,
By the breast we've spurned and drained,
By the honour we have stained,
By the husks, the chaff, the dung,
By the mill-stone round us hung,
Mother of all things forlorn,
Pity us that we were born!

J.C. Powys.

Publications

Members will be delighted to learn that a new collection of poems by Gerard Casey, *Echoes*, has been published by Rigby and Lewis, in a signed limited edition of 250 copies, with a dustwrapper designed by Timothy Hyman. These are available from the publisher (20 Springfield Road, Southgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 8AD, England) at £20

New Greetings Notelets : To follow the earlier publication of greetings cards, there will soon be available correspondence notelets, also with sketches by Gertrude Mary Powys. These will come in packs of six sheets folded to postcard size in three designs, supplied with envelopes. The sketches, which are shown on the rear cover of this *Newsletter* reduced, are taken from illustrations for *A Baker's Dozen* by Llewelyn Powys, published in 1941, and show Montacute Hill and the Dorset cliffs near Lulworth and Weymouth. The notelets will first be on sale at the Powys Society's conference at the end of August, where members will, of course, be able to save the postage.

The cost will be £1 per pack of six, plus 35 pence for postage for any number of packs. They are being published by Stephen Powys Marks, from whom they will be available at Hamilton's, Kilmersdon, near Bath, Somerset; cheques should be made out to him personally.

The earlier greetings cards and other publications are still available as follows, also from Stephen Powys Marks and at the conference:

Homeward Journey 1918, a letter, by A R Powys (£2, postage 35 pence);

Verses on the sad occasion of the Death of Tippoo Tib, by J C Powys (50 pence, £1 for three, including postage).

Also in preparation is the printing of the reading of family letters 'In Honour of Isobel' at the conference at Exeter two years ago. Further news of this will be given at the coming conference at Cirencester.

Papers On Language and Literature: the special Kenneth Hopkins edition of this journal will be available in late August at a cost of \$7, from the editor: Professor Alvin Sullivan, *Papers On Language and Literature*, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois 62026-1434 U.S.A

Subscriptions and Covenants

At last, the Inland Revenue has given its approval to our asking for **covenants** for subscriptions. Unfortunately, it has taken a long time and has come too late this year for all those who have helpfully responded to our requests in the last two *Newsletters* to sign **standing orders**, but now is the opportunity to give us an extra bit in future on top of the subscription: *three subscriptions paid under covenant bring in the equivalent of a fourth at current rates of tax*. If, therefore, you have already signed a standing order, please just send the covenant on the enclosed form; this will apply to subsequent payments. If you **still** owe your subscription, then you could use the standing order on the same sheet. Please, also, read the notes, to make sure that you do the right thing. The whole form should be sent to our General Secretary, who keeps membership records.

Stephen Powys Marks

Obituaries

Sadly, we have once again to mark the passing of valued members of *The Powys Society*. Bill Lander, one of our founding members, died in 1988 and Jack Rushby, the friend with whom he attended many of the Society's conferences, has sent us a copy of the following obituary notice:

Bill Lander : 1900-1988

If you had seen a small seemingly undemourished little man, wearing polished pit boots, walking the local highways and byways, you could be forgiven for dismissing him as a little eccentric.

You would have been mistaken. This little tough ex-miner, born in the D H Lawrence country in some poverty, with little formal education was somewhat of a literary genius. He brought up a large family on a shoe-string, but they say they always had a "good table".

Bill read extensively - Homer, Euclid in translation, Shakespeare etc. But above all he knew, loved and understood D H Lawrence. His greatest passion however were the Cowper Powys Brothers and their works. He belonged to the Powys Society and until recently attended most of their conferences, and he kept up an extensive correspondence with its members. Some visited him to discuss, and for his considered wisdom. It was illuminating to hear the man speak on Powys, D H Lawrence, Byron. He had walked every inch of their territory, and could talk on all their works.

Under this unpretentious exterior there was a magnificent intellect, and had Bill been able to have been educated in the academic sense he would have made an invaluable contribution to literature.

Farewell, little fighter. You walked your beloved valleys in your mind to the

last, may you continue to do so in God's garden.

Reader's Tribute

Margaret Newton, who died on May 17th 1990, had only recently joined the Society, but her connection with the Powyses, and especially John Cowper, extended over many years. As a child of five Margaret Edwards, as she then was, moved to Montacute, where her parents had taken over Miss Sparkes' village shop, which Llewelyn Powys describes so vividly in *A Baker's Dozen*. On Sunday mornings she would be sent to church alone and she recalled that hearing the Reverend Powys pronounce his blessing as "the Peas of God" would stir thoughts of her Sunday dinner. She was also the great-neice of Ellen Childs, who was so important a member of the Powys household.

At the age of seventeen Margaret moved to Bromley in Kent and became the apprentice of Gordon Chase, the photographer. Later she married Harry Moon (who died in 1943) and it was as Margaret Moon of Montacute that John Cowper Powys often addressed her in his letters from 1937 to 1961.

In 1949 Margaret moved to Canada, where she married Tom Newton, a member of The Arab League and friend of T E Lawrence.

Mrs Newton was a kind and generous admirer of both John Cowper and Llewelyn Powys and it is hoped that members will one day be able to share their letters to one whom they so obviously also admired.

Paul Roberts

Reviews

Maiden Castle, edited with an introduction by Ian Hughes. University of Wales Press. pp xvi 484. Hardback. ISBN 0708310613. £ 35.

Sensualism and Mythology: The Wessex Novels of John Cowper Powys by Jeremy Robinson. Crescent Moon Publishing. pp 49. Paperback. ISBN 1 871846 70 6. £7 (including postage).

Literary Dorset by Rodney Legg. Dorset Publishing Company. pp 225. Hardback. ISBN 0 948699 09 4. £9.95

One of the unique difficulties which any reader or critic of John Cowper Powys has to face is that hardly any of his most important novels have come to us as they were written. *Porius* (which is currently being restored by Wilbur Albrecht) is perhaps the most famous example, but even *A Glastonbury Romance* has remained incomplete since its first edition. However, as Ian Hughes points out, there is a major difference between *Maiden Castle* and the other novels, in that Powys had no control over the cuts which were made by an incompetent editor for Simon and Schuster. Consequently the novel has generally been regarded as something of a failure, in the words of H.P. Collins, "a falling off from its predecessors". Central to the criticisms have been the lack of action, the rather thin portrayal of minor

characters and the inconsistencies which have given the appearance of narrative confusion and indecision. The great strengths of the novel, the portrayals of Dud No-man, Wizzie Ravelston and Urien Quirm and, to quote H.P. Collins again, "the deep awareness of race-memory and life's continuity" have, however, never been in doubt.

Now that Ian Hughes and *The University of Wales Press* have at last brought us the unabridged text, the novel's reputation and its importance in the development of Powys's work must be completely reassessed. All of the strengths abide, but many of the weaknesses are seen to have been imposed upon the book by its first editor. In many ways, although Dud No-man is still at its centre, the very focus of the book, which is now one-fifth longer, has altered. We tend sometimes to fall into the trap of believing that 'The Powys Hero' is a self-portrait of the author and that the world of the book is mediated only through his consciousness. Yet this new edition makes it abundantly clear that Powys viewed his characters 'objectively' and the result is a far more satisfying novel. Dud and John Cowper share some characteristics, but an author writing from Dud's point of view would certainly never have been able to reveal, with precise control of his effects, how frequently Dud gets things wrong!

Whatever the critics may make of *Maiden Castle* in future, they will at least be judging the work as Powys intended it and for that we cannot praise too highly the magnificent scholarship of Ian Hughes, which lies so discreetly behind this volume, as well as the initiative of his publishers. The book itself is extremely well designed, as befits so important a contribution to Powys studies, and will now be an essential part of any Powys collection. Naturally, all of this comes at a cost and even for so attractive a book £35 seems excessive. We can only hope that a paperback edition will eventually appear.

The main problem with Jeremy Robinson's *Sensualism and Mythology* is that the book is far too short. Even for the finest of critics, it would be an impossible task to discuss five of Powys's major novels in a mere 45 pages and the brevity of Jeremy Robinson's text forces a destructive compression upon the book, which both confuses his purpose and hampers his style. For whom is the book written? It lacks sufficient detail to serve as an introduction to the novels for the general reader and provides few new critical insights for the academic specialist. All sense of Jeremy Robinson's personal voice has been squeezed out and we are left with sentences such as "POWYS'S archaic/mythic Welsh/Taoist life-philosophy is modulated by many Western scholastic/religious idiosyncracies" [sic]. Compare this to the work of H.P. Collins or Glen Cavaliero in the same field, who demonstrate that elegance and erudition can happily co-exist. Only once does a personal voice emerge, in his discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance*, when the author claims, "In *Glastonbury* POWYS waffles, rambles, side-tracks and drifts like some decrepid [sic] Victorian machine on its last legsthe novel flops along, structureless, formless, a beached whale unable to regain the sea of mysticality, howling to itself as it fades away into

incoherence." Again, brevity forces the author to rely on assertion rather than argument and seems also to have scrambled the metaphors.

Readers may also find the production of the book, duplicated typewritten A4 sheets, unattractive and the habit of printing the names of authors in capital letters like flags on a cultural golf course, annoying. At one point I thought I had discovered a new member of the family, "HOMER POWYS" (page 2). Nevertheless, Jeremy Robinson is clearly a serious student of Powys's work and in time the present book may be superseded by a longer and more satisfying study.

Rodney Legg's book *Literary Dorset* is a delight for anyone interested in literature, Dorset or simply those quirky or illuminating anecdotes of the famous and obscure in which this book abounds. Hardy and Barnes are, naturally, much in evidence, but the book also includes a great swathe of figures from the earliest days of our literature to the present time, emphasising just how important a part in the intellectual life of the nation this 'rustic' county has played.

The book is arranged alphabetically by place names, each with its associated authors, and the entries are written in an energetic and individual style which lightens a wealth of knowledge. The Powys family and their circle are represented and it is clear that the author holds Llewelyn in particular esteem. Eyebrows may be raised at the assertion that John Cowper had "a more hedonistic philosophy than that of his author brothers, with masturbation at its summit", and at the prominence given to the lesbianism of Sylvia Townsend Warner, as if that were the most significant feature of her work. I particularly missed any mention of Kenneth Hopkins in connection with Bourmemouth, surely a more deserving 'literary' figure than Max Bygraves! Yet these are relatively small complaints to make of a book which will bring so much well-informed pleasure to its readers.

Paul Roberts

*[Benjamin Stassen's review of **Tempting The Gods** by Professor Ernst Verbeek has been held over until our next issue, which is due for publication in December.]*

Powys Society Accounts

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1989 [1]

Income	£	Expenditure	£
subscriptions [2]	206.50	Powys Review 24 - advance	150.00
donations	42.34	- provision [5]	800.00
sales of <i>Powys Review</i>	90.00	newsletter	531.00
book sale at Conference	220.90	officers' expenses	90.97
profit from sales by		committee travel	23.00
Stephen Powys Marks [3]	245.45	cost of overdraft	6.56
Conference account [4]	65.08		
Mappowder festival -			
share of proceeds	50.00		
interest	87.88		
	1008.15		
excess of exp. over income	593.38		
	<u>£1601.53</u>		<u>£1601.53</u>

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

I <i>General fund</i>	£	£
funds at September 1st 1989		2197.68
excess of expenditure over income		(593.38)
funds at December 31st 1989		<u>£1604.30</u>
represented by		
stock of Powys books at cost [6]	269.00	
bank accounts at December 31st 1989		
deposit	2269.75	
current	218.04	
advance payment to Royal Agricultural		
College for 1990 Conference	50.00	
	2806.79	2806.79
less		
cheques not yet presented	146.97	
provision for <i>Powys Review</i> 24 [5]	800.00	
subscriptions received in advance [7]	119.02	
sums previously received for TFP		
broadsheet (see previous accounts)	136.50	
	1202.49	1202.49
		<u>£1604.30</u>
II <i>Wilson Knight fund</i>		
fund at December 31st 1989		<u>£1352.06</u>
represented by Halifax Building Society account, including		
apportioned interest, at December 31st 1989		<u>£1352.06</u>

NOTES

- [1] The short period is necessary to bring the accounts to the calendar year which corresponds with the period of membership and is required by the constitution.
- [2] This includes a small sum remaining in the Society's account at Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria; this has now been closed.
- [3] This relates to sales during 1987-89 of items published for the Society by Stephen Powys Marks.
- [4] A separate account has been maintained during the previous three years; this has now been closed.
- [5] *Powys Review* 24 was due for issue before the end of 1989; provision is therefore made here to reflect the Society's true position.
- [6] This relates to the purchase of stock of Village Press books for re-sale to members.
- [7] As well as subscriptions paid in advance, this includes the whole of the subscriptions from members joining after August 1989 which entitles them to membership to the end of 1990.

Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer