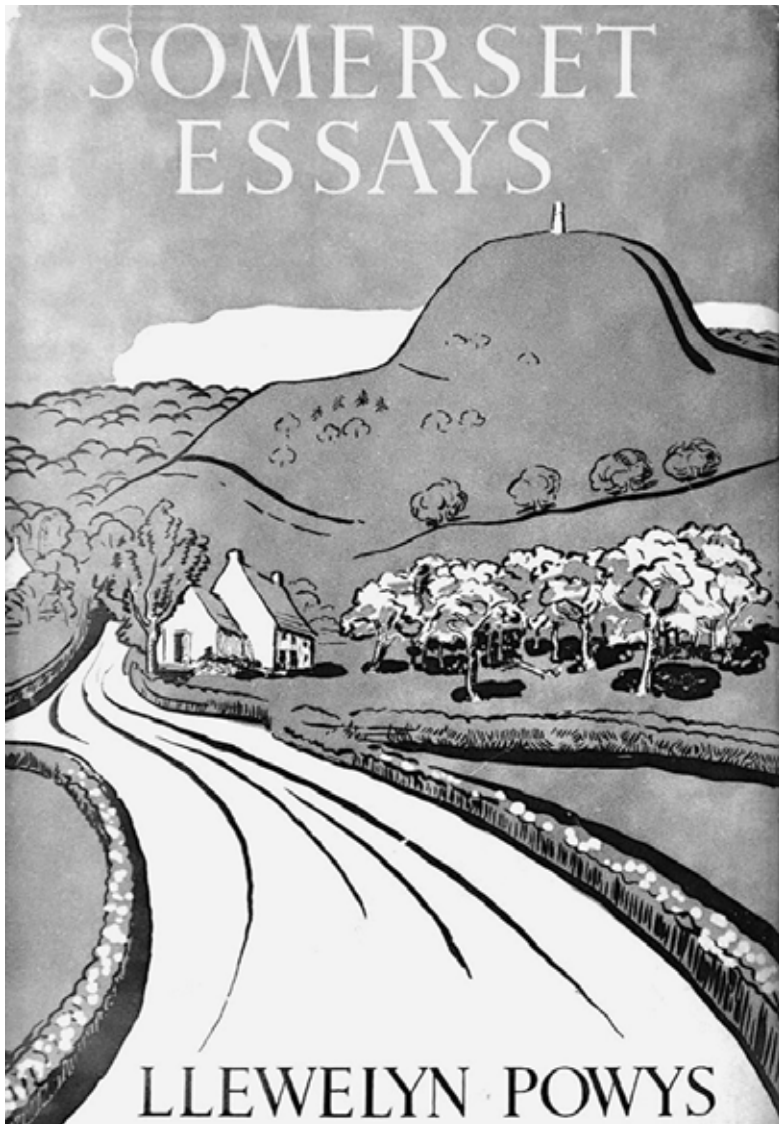


The Powys Society



Newsletter No. 111

March 2024



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The Editors (while reserving the right to select and edit) welcome suggestions and contributions from all members. Please send contributions to both editors.

Letters of general concern to the Society will be shared with the Committee as a whole, who will act as advisers. Will anyone writing to the Editors and Committee

and not wishing for publication, please make this clear.

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FRONT COVER: Dust jacket of Llewelyn's Somerset Essays. See JCP's intro to Somerset Essays inside

BACK COVER: Illustration by George Charlton for the first edition of TFP's Mr Weston's Good Wine

– see notice of study day 19 October 2024 inside

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Editorial

We preview our 50th conference and look forward to returning to Street and Glastonbury. To reserve your place at the conference please complete the booking form included with this Newsletter.

Our front cover reproduces Gertrude's design for the dust jacket of the first edition of Llewelyn's *Somerset Essays* (1937). *Somerset Essays* features in Charles Lock's conference lecture. We also include in this Newsletter Llewelyn's preface to *Somerset Essays* and JCP's introduction to Llewelyn's *Somerset and Dorset Essays* (1957).

The Glastonbury theme continues with news of our Spring Study Day on 20 April in Ely on Chapter XI of *A Glastonbury Romance*, led by Dawn Collins. Our Autumn Study Day will be held on Saturday 19 October, also in Ely, on the topic of TFP's novel *Mr Weston's Good Wine* and will be led by Marcel Bradbury.

There are moving tributes to long serving member, Frank Kibblewhite, who, very sadly, died on 16 December 2023.

We publish two letters from members who give personal feedback on their response to reading the works of the Powyses. Other members may wish to send the editors of the Newsletter their own personal feedback.

We review two separate discussion meetings on the topic of *Porius* held last year by Zoom and in person in London, at Pushkin House.

We report on the sale of the Mappowder Powys Collection in December 2023 and examine two significant items in the collection associated with JCP.

Anthony Head looks at the relationship between JCP and S. T. Coleridge. Connections are uncovered between Marian Powys and the American abstract painter Jackson Pollock. Connections are also proposed between JCP and the famous art collector and connoisseur Bernard Berenson.

There are reproductions of two newly discovered photographs of the 'rich bearded uncle', Littleton Albert Powys. Geoffrey Winch, inspired by reports of JCP's lecture

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on Oscar Wilde introduces his poem on the theme of transubstantiation. Peter Britain describes his copy of *Atlantis* with an inscription by JCP for Kenneth Hopkins.

Contemporary Shakespeare scholar, Jonathan Bate, remembers studying English at Cambridge University under the guidance of his tutor and our late President, Glen Cavaliero.

To supplement Rachel Hassall's article about Powys's wills and bequests published in NL 110, Peter Foss transcribes the last words of Llewelyn on his deathbed preserved in notes made by Alyse Gregory.

Chris Thomas

Two Meetings

Saturday 20 April 2024

A meeting to discuss Chapter XI, Consummation, of JCP's novel *A Glastonbury Romance*, led by **Dawn Collins**.

Venue: The Old Fire Engine House, 25 St Mary's Street, Ely.

11.00 to 16.00 (with break for lunch).

All are welcome. The event is free with the exception of lunch which is optional and may be taken in the restaurant at the venue. A contribution towards the cost of refreshments is voluntary.



Avalon and the river Brue.

JCP began writing his Glastonbury book on 20 April 1930. By 30 October 1930 he had reached Chapter XI. He wrote in his diary: *"It is at Whitelake Cottage I am now describing a momentous day in the lives of Sam and Nell."* In this beautiful and atmospheric chapter of *AGR*, JCP explores the passionate relationship between Sam Dekker and Nell Zoyland. John Brebner notes that Chapter XI is *"an amazing combination of sensitivity and honesty in its handling of the lovers' relationship."* However, Sam's state of mind is conflicted – he physically desires Nell yet he also longs to be a saint: *"I will be a lover and a saint! his heart cried."* The chapter also includes rapturous descriptions of the connection between JCP's characters and the landscape surrounding them: *"He was conscious of a vague feeling of fertility in the damp spring air and of the hidden stirrings of vegetable juices in roots and stalks as his feet sank in the soft turf of the river bank"*. JCP goes on to describe how Sam identifies with the vital presence of elemental things: *"He became a wave in the Bristol Channel, a bracken frond in the Quantock hills, a crystal in a Mendip stone wall, a black striped perch in the Brue under Pomparles bridge...an identical magnetism poured through the man's flesh and blood and shivered through the vegetable fibres of the tree."*

Saturday 19 October 2024

A meeting to discuss T. F. Powys's allegorical novel *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, led by Marcel Bradbury.

Venue: The Old Fire Engine House, 25 St Mary's Street, Ely.
11.00 to 16.00 (with break for lunch).

All are welcome. The event is free with the exception of lunch which is optional and may be taken in the restaurant at the venue. A contribution towards the cost of refreshments is voluntary.

Mr Weston's Good Wine was

written between January 1924 and the autumn of 1925 and first published by Chatto & Windus in 1927 with illustrations by George Charlton.



*Frontispiece by George Charlton of the first edition of
Mr Weston's Good Wine.*

Harry Coombes, in his book about TFP, published in 1960, notes: “*Mr Weston's Good Wine*, though tragic in its recognition of evil, of man's blindness, weakness, and failures, of their common fate in death, is tragic also in the profound sympathy...with which Powys observes and comments on the human scene...It is Powys's masterpiece because it is his fullest and most perfect artistic utterance....*Mr Weston's Good Wine* is among the finest of those ‘novels as dramatic poems’ which hold more of the English body and spirit, more essential Englishness than any other genre since Jacobean times.”

If members wish to attend either or both meetings, **please notify Hon. Secretary by 31 March 2024.**

Chris Thomas

In Memoriam Frank Kibblewhite 14 September 1951-16 December 2023

Frank Kibblewhite, publisher, bookseller and enthusiastic Powysian, died in Yeovil hospital on Saturday 16 December 2023. He will be remembered with fondness by many members of the Society. Frank died of a large tumour on his lung. Frank's sister, Heather Vidgen, told me his breathing had lately become progressively worse but “*the end was peaceful*”. Frank was a loyal and long-standing member of the Powys Society. He did a great deal to publicise the work of the Powyses and recommended various initiatives which he wrote about in a special report produced in 1990. Frank was determined to encourage non-academic and regional members to get together and participate in Society events. In the 1980s he planned informal discussion meetings – now a permanent fixture in the Society calendar. In 1992/1993 Frank served on the

Powys Society committee. He gave a lecture on Gertrude Powys at the 1995 conference at Kingston Maurward. For many years he managed the Society's website. In 1992 and 1993 he helped to organise major exhibitions in Dorchester about the Powyses. He also published an attractive collection of books, by and about members of the Powys family, produced to a very high standard, under the imprint of his adventurous Sundial Press which he developed in collaboration with his colleague Tony Head. The Sundial Press published two novels by Alyse Gregory, *Hester Craddock* and *She Shall Have Music*, two novels by Gamel Woolsey, *Patterns on the Sand* and *Wheels on Gravel* and three novels by Philippa Powys, *The Blackthorn Winter*, *The Tragedy of Budvale* and *Sorrel Barn* as well as two volumes of essays by Llewelyn Powys: *Still Blue Water*, and *Wessex Essays* and two works by TFP: *Unclay* and *Kindness in a Corner*. He also published *Powysland* by Tim Blanchard, *The Joy of It* by Littleton Powys, and most recently he produced Ray Crozier's *Patchin Place*. Frank also published many other forgotten and out of print titles by neglected twentieth century writers.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Tributes

I am sorry to learn of Frank's death. It was not unexpected but nevertheless is a shock. I regret that, I never had the opportunity to meet him in person. It was a privilege to be published by the Sundial Press, with its record of bringing out work by the Powyses and their 'circle'.

Ray Crozier

I became acquainted with Frank at Powys Society conferences and was immediately impressed by the quality of the books he produced, especially the elegant hardback of *Sorrell Barn & The Tragedy of Budvale* by Philippa Powys. He was a courageous and dedicated man to set up and run an independent publishing company in today's intensely competitive and restrictive environment. Powys Society readers are especially beholden to him for the out-of-print books he republished, notably the female writers of the "Powys circle" who tend to be overlooked. The Sundial Press was also an outlet for writings by Powys Society members like Peter Tait and Ray Crozier. He was the latest, perhaps the last, of the gallant band of independent publishers - Kenneth Hopkins' Warren House Press and Jeff Kwintner's Village Press, who have immensely strengthened the cultural memory of the Powys family.



Frank's favourite photograph.

Pat Quigley (Committee member)

Frank was always an energetic and very positive member of the Society and did so much to further its aims as well as being a friendly, kind and gentle presence at conferences. He will be much missed by all who knew him in that context as well as for his wonderful work in publishing such remarkable and worthwhile books. A fine man, gone too soon.

Paul Roberts (Past Chair of Powys Society)

Life as a small publisher is fraught with pressures and risks. Lots of work and very often little in the way of rewards, especially when you're committed to literary interests rather than chasing what's most likely to deliver an income. Frank was one of those increasingly rare people who were willing to make the sacrifices required; for the Powys family writers he loved in particular. In my dealings with him, Frank was always generous and kind. An English gent, always interested and interesting.

Tim Blanchard

I first met Frank when he asked if I would write an introduction for a new edition of Littleton's first volume of autobiography, *'The Joy of It'* that he was publishing. In our subsequent discussions I mentioned a novel I had written on Florence Hardy which he read and decided to publish before encouraging me to write a further book on Hardy's first wife, Emma. Frank was a perfectionist and took great pride in the books he produced, and especially when publishing books related to the Powys family and revisiting other notable writers who were no longer in print. At times complicated, and eccentric, he was also generous and passionate about his craft and an unflagging champion of the Powys family. We owe a great debt to Frank's efforts in promoting his writings through his work on the website and through Sundial. Rest in Peace.

Peter Tait

News of the death of Frank Kibblewhite last December came as a shock to me, as it must have done to many others. I had been unaware that he had not been well for a while, and the death only a month earlier of his long-time partner John must have been a very heavy blow for him.

I first met Frank, if I recall correctly, in 1993 at the Powys Conference at Kingston Maurward and we quickly became friends and regular correspondents, meeting up on my annual return trips from Japan where I was working, sometimes in Mappowder at Gerard Casey's cottage or Louise de Bruin's, and latterly more often in Sherborne or another part of Dorset. It was during one such trip, in 2005, when we had met for lunch at Stourhead, that we discussed the idea of setting up a small publishing venture dedicated to reissuing neglected works of literature, initially with a focus on the Powyses and their circle. Shortly afterwards, with an equal contribution of capital, we established The Sundial Press as partners, seeing our first volumes – *The Blackthorn Winter* and *Hester Craddock* – into print early in 2007. Over the course of the next six years, despite numerous obstacles and disadvantages, we published nearly 20 more titles, mainly Powys-related but also some in the Sundial Supernatural series we had started.

Inevitably, though, what with bank charges, printing costs, and retail outlets demanding 35-45% of the cover prices, our margins were thin and whatever profits we made were rapidly swallowed up by our outgoings. By late 2013 our initial capital was

nearly gone, and as neither of us felt we were in a position to pour any more into an obviously unprofitable and time-consuming venture, for all the pleasure it had brought us, we came to the decision to close it down. But Frank must soon have had second thoughts, and with the determination that had made him successful as a book dealer and a book-shop owner in Sidmouth earlier in his career, he continued to produce and plan for several more titles – until, I suspect, Covid took an additional toll on the business.

This was a period during which we were out of contact, but it was my hope that we would pick up again on my recent retirement to the UK. That opportunity has now, alas, passed. But the many days I spent with Frank, the conversations we had in discovering our often-similar tastes in literature and music, both classical and modern, the humour we shared, the benefit I had of his great breadth of knowledge and his modestly casual way of imparting it – all will compensate and long remain affectionately in my memory.

Anthony Head

Letters from Members

From Paul Wiener, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

11 November 2023

Chris, Hello again.

I feel very oddly privileged to be a member of the Powys Society... how esoteric the Society is - and how British. It gives me a good feeling to belong to a group like this. At least, to imagine I belong. I remember going to a Krishnamurti Society meeting long ago when I lived in London and engaging in discussions. Loved it. Americans just don't do stuff like this, especially about non-mainstream writers. We have loads of academic journals about writers, but societies? It's odd for me because it's both so like and so unlike the general drift of my self-regarding life, my unreliable introversion. Though I engaged with the world, same as JCP did, maybe with less enthusiasm, I don't remember the names of rock outcroppings. Somehow he even had a son.

I'm 81, Jewish (non-religious), was born in Brooklyn, NY, was a librarian at Stony Brook University (on Long Island, NY) for 32 years, am married (43 years), have two kids, am a compulsive reader of anything, love and know well all genres of music, love nature, film, live (retired) in a famous university town (Ann Arbor), love the Lake District (and its writers), have been a writer since childhood, and consider thinking to be a way of exercising.

I don't know a single soul personally who shares my love of JCP. I wonder how many other Americans are members of the Society, and I also wonder from what walks of life members come from, to have developed such a devoted interest in JCP, someone far out of the mainstream. Are they/we all extraordinary people? I assume nearly all members are lifetime readers of serious writing, that many are writers of some sort themselves, and that many hopelessly believe that the literary world is almost the only one that's real...

I discovered Powys, I forget why or how (probably influenced by an article or review) when I was about 46, and was immediately taken with him. I read *Wolf Solent* and soon followed with the *Autobiography*, one of the great books of the 20th century. No college syllabus has ever included it, as far as I know. (Maybe in Wales it has happened?) Except for a few dozen essays of his in other books, those are the only two books I've read of JCP.

I may not read more, but that in no way diminishes my interest in or love for him. I find his fiction often difficult, too fanciful, too-self-indulgent; I'm not a big lover of fantasy fiction or of characters who can exist only in the author's imagination. But none of that, matters. I suspect many JCP lovers have mixed feelings about his fiction, anyway. We sometimes love JCP even more than we love his fiction, or even his writing. Everyone is unique. But he was one of the great writers who represented the world's uniqueness verbally in extremely positive and forceful way.

I love JCP basically for three reasons: 1. His immersive, compulsive, almost obsessive love of nature; he owns nature, or tries to. 2. His love of language and literature for their own sake, and as portals to and emblems of the divine, the unknown, the unconscious; and 3. His worship of himself and his own imagination, which always seems in an enhanced state, stoned, some might say, at least when he puts it in written form. I'm often obsessed with myself too, and with my words, and feel few other people are as interesting as I am, or as aware. I like to spend time with myself more than most people do. My wife likes to be with herself too, but she doesn't think about it. She's a doer more than a thinker.

These three things (nature/word/self), among others, describe what I probably most value in myself, what keep me going. JCP's intensity, above all, his dedication to himself, to writing, to his own imagination and to literature as a calling are what most attract me. I can see how it becomes addictive to people who need the authority of language. The Society and Powys' other readers prove how far-reaching his power was and is. And it wasn't only JCP that had them; two of his brothers were important voices too. They all had forces more powerful than the writing of many popular and canonized authors, who often do little more than describe only the lineaments of reality, the merely recognizable qualities of people, the acceptable moralities.

Most of the people who appear in your newsletters seem much more devoted to and knowledgeable about JCP, and have read him more fully than I have. I can't imagine what a gathering of them is like. Probably a lot of fun. If I'd known of him while he was still alive, I'm sure I would have tried to write him (I've corresponded with many well-known writers). But, I suppose I would say the same of Lawrence or Zola or Chekhov or Wordsworth.

(W. H. Auden did in fact live in Ann Arbor for a while, but sadly, long before I was here).

I'd welcome hearing from anyone who also finds it comfortably strange and exciting to be involved with JCP and the Society. Or from those who think it's the most natural thing in the world.

Dear Chris

I was fascinated by the reviews of *AGR* [in NL 110, November 2023]. Peter [Brittain] and I discussed them with relish. They remind us that JCP's ambitions - in conception, character and plot do sometimes fall short in the actualisation. Yet he opens fields of literary exploration not found at such a high level in any other writer I know. When, at around age 19 or 20, I read that opening paragraph of *AGR*, my response was a spine-tingling WOW! It still is. It's almost as if JCP, with a metaphysical literary insight, anticipated the recent scientific conception of quantum entanglement at a distance. Yet I can also see how many would dismiss it as laughable. A reader has to appreciate many such paradoxes with JCP - and it's almost invariably worth the patience and suspension of disbelief.

My favourite JCP novel is the restored *Maiden Castle*. The "Scummy Pond" chapter is, to my mind, his finest realisation of his many superb insights into the dynamics of male - female relations. I hope a future newsletter or journal would include reviews of both the original novel and the restored version.

Note by Chris Thomas

Adrian Gattenhof and Peter Britain both live in Australia and are benefactors who enabled us to produce the Supplement to *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXI, 2021, with the restored six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*.

The revised edition of *Maiden Castle*, edited by Ian Hughes (1990), was reviewed by Paul Roberts in *Powys Society Newsletter*, July 1990 and by Glen Cavaliero in the *Powys Review*, No.25, 1990. Contemporary reviews of *Maiden Castle* were published in the USA in 1936 in the *New York Times*, and the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and in the UK in 1937 in the *TLS*. We hope to publish these contemporary reviews in a future issue of the Newsletter.

For reference other helpful articles by Ian Hughes about *Maiden Castle* were published in the *Powys Review*, No.12, 1982/1983, and No.15, 1984/1985.

Harald Fawkner's book *JCP and the Elements*, 2015, about *Maiden Castle* can be obtained direct from the Society's website.

The Powys Society Conference 2024 The Wessex Hotel, Street Friday 16 August to Sunday 18 August 'Never or Always'

On Wednesday 8th October 1930 JCP celebrated his 58th birthday in the middle of writing *A Glastonbury Romance*. Later that day JCP wrote in his diary: "*What peace, what happiness. Now I have opened my present from the T.T. which is Wilhelm Meister the greatest of all philosophical novels except those of Dostoevsky...I open it again*"

and I read the words of Natalie Never or Always and I think this should be found...as the title of Glastonbury..." JCP's American publisher rejected this idea for a title. But Goethe's words of course live on at the very end of *A Glastonbury Romance* when, invoking the name of Cybele, JCP concludes his romance: "*Thus she abides; her Towers forever rising, forever vanishing. Never or Always.*" Goethe's epigram seems to reflect JCP's own philosophy of life for he was capable of holding together many contradictory, and disparate ideas as in, for instance, his description of Llewelyn's writing style: "*It is sometimes continuous. It is sometimes broken, but it always has a golden thread to lead us safely through life.*"

For this our 50th conference we return to the Wessex Hotel in Street situated close to the locations of *A Glastonbury Romance* and places mentioned by Llewelyn in his regional essays about the West Country. Our speakers will explore a variety of themes evoking Goethe's epigram such as literary influence, critical neglect, reception and reputation, regionalism, geography, topography, atmosphere, interiors, the idea of 'home', thresholds, history, archives, and cultural memory.

On Friday night **Charles Lock** will examine Llewelyn's status as a regional writer focusing especially on his essays about people and places in Somerset and Dorset. We are delighted to welcome back to a Powys Society conference **Florence Marie** who lectures in English studies at the University of Pau in south west France and who delivered a talk on *Weymouth Sands* at our 2007 conference. Florence will give a lecture on the interior spaces, rooms and thresholds of JCP's Wessex novels. **Goulven le Brech** will present a lecture on the Powys archives at Imec in Caen and will describe the collections of French Powysians such as Michel Gresset, Kenneth White and Jacqueline Peltier. **Marcella Henderson-Peal** will give an informal talk about JCP's translators and publishers in France with reference to source material at Imec. On Sunday morning **Patrick Quigley** will examine JCP's connections with the works of Sir Walter Scott.

On our **free Saturday afternoon** conference goers will have the opportunity to visit some of the places mentioned by Llewelyn in his essays such as Montacute, the Powys family home from 1885 to 1918 or Stalbridge where the Powys grandfather L. C. Powys was rector from 1838 to 1867. Visitors may wish to go on to Marnhull, Hardy's Marlott in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which is situated nearby at the foot of the Blackmore Vale. On **Saturday evening** we will show a drama/documentary film about JCP made by Herbert Williams for HTV in 1994 called *The Great Powys*.

On Sunday, after the AGM, we invite members to discuss subjects raised in the lectures and offer their farewell to each other.

During the conference the **book room** will be open as usual at selected times.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Draft Programme

Friday 16 August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception and Chair's welcome (**Paul Cheshire**)
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Charles Lock**: 'Llewelyn Powys as a neglected regional writer'

Saturday 17 August

- 8.00 Breakfast
- 9.30 **Florence Marie**: 'Houses and Huts; Interiors and Thresholds in J.C. Powys's four Wessex Novels'
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.15 **Goulven le Brech** and **Marcella Henderson-Peal**: 'The Powys archive at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (Imec) in Caen, France'
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon free**: optional visit to places associated with Llewelyn's *Somerset* and *Dorset Essays* such as Montacute, Stalbridge or Marnhull, travelling through Hardy's 'Vale of the Little Dairies' past the hedges, woodland and small fields of Blackmore Vale. Transport by shared cars.
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.30 A screening of *The Great Powys*, a drama/documentary film about JCP made for HTV in 1994, written by Herbert Williams and directed by Peter Edwards. The film features Freddie Jones as JCP and Suzanne Bertish as Phyllis. Duration 50 minutes. Members may wish to read a review of the film by Christopher Wilkinson published in *Powys Society Newsletter* 24, April 1995, pp.17-19.

Sunday 18 August

- 08.00-9.30 Breakfast
 - 9.30 **Patrick Quigley**: 'Inexhaustible Vitality: Sir Walter Scott & John Cowper Powys'
 - 10.45 Coffee
 - 11.00 AGM
 - 12.00 Open forum with members: discussion of subjects raised during the conference and farewell messages
 - 13.00 Lunch
 - 15.00 Departure
-

Conference Speakers

Charles Lock has been Professor of English Literature at the University of Copenhagen since 1996. Among his recent publications are 'Thinking on Location: an essay in the vulnerability of the subject' in *Journal of History and Theory*, 'The *Codex Argenteus*: some English aspects and enigmas' (with the late Magnús Sandal) in *Studies in Gothic* (Oxford University Press), a survey of coastal defences in literature before 1914, and the entry on Nevill Coghill in *The Chaucer Encyclopedia*. Charles was editor of the *Powys Journal* from 2011 to 2020 and now serves as associate editor. He presented

a lecture at our conference in Street in 2018 which was published in the *Powys Journal* in Vol. XXIX (2019) under the title, ‘Diversions and Digressions: What happens in the reading of *A Glastonbury Romance*’. Charles contributed an obituary of our late President Glen Cavaliero in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXX (2020). He most recently lectured at our conference in 2022 on the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*. Charles writes about his lecture at this year’s conference: “Insofar as Llewelyn Powys has received any attention at all over recent decades, it has seldom been to his advantage. His treatment of Alyse Gregory and of Gamel Woolsey was never considered admirable; it has now been assessed in the light of the women concerned. His writings on African themes are, if noticed, subject to postcolonial dismissal. His ideological writings are more strident than analytical, and were long ago superseded by others more radical and more engaging. That leaves his writings on the West Country, gathered in *Dorset Essays* and *Somerset Essays*, and those on Davos posthumously published as *Swiss Essays*. On these, Llewelyn’s reputation as a writer may now depend.”

Florence Marie is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Pau et les Pays de l’Adour (E2S UPPA). She is a member of ALTER. She defended her thesis on J.C. Powys in 2003 and since then she has published articles on his first eight novels and on other modernist writers (with special interest in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*). She is the editor of a volume of *Rives* entitled *Le fou-cet autre, mon frère* (L’Harmattan, 2012), one of the contributors to *Féminisme et prostitution dans l’Angleterre du XIX^e siècle: la croisade de Josephine Butler* (ed. by Frédéric Regard, ENS Éditions, 2014) and the co-editor of *L’incarnation artistique: mises en scènes littéraires* (L’Harmattan, 2021) and of a forthcoming volume on May Sinclair (2024). Florence writes: “The usual tendency, and rightly so, is to focus on J.C. Powys’s landscapes and to analyse his characters’ relationships to them. However, his characters are also people who live in houses or modest lodgings, and the idea of home, as defined by Enoch Quirm in *Maiden Castle*, “*We call a place a ‘home’ where people live whose play doesn’t suit the rest*” and its concrete reality are present in the four Wessex novels under study. This does not necessarily mean that J. C. Powys was influenced by his nineteenth-century predecessors - although he was - since Victoria Rosner has offered an interesting assessment of the role of the domestic sphere in modernist literature (*Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*, 2005). So I want to explore the ambivalence that seems to lie at the heart of Powys’s heroes’ relationship to the interiors they inhabit – caught as they seem to be between a desire to shed all their possessions and the pleasure they take in old-fashioned, well-furnished rooms. This ambivalence may in part stem from a gendered distinction, namely the ability that some of Powys’s female characters seem to have to create an “atmosphere”, a gift that Dorothy Richardson said was one of the prerogatives of women. No wonder, then, that the domestic sphere can in some cases become the very place over which men and women argue. I will also consider the way in which the houses chosen by the Powysian heroes, though lairs to which they like to return, are linked to the notion of the threshold, and what this might suggest and mean.”

Goulven le Brech is Deputy Director of the collections of Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (Imec). He is a specialist in the French philosopher Jules Lequier (1814-1862). He is co-author of the book *John Cowper Powys, a philosophy of life*, with Pierrick Hamelin (2012). His last book, *Little Blue Books* (2023), is about the life and publishing house of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, one of John Cowper and Llewelyn's editors. Goulven writes about his joint presentation with Marcella: "The aim of our talk is to situate the reception of John Cowper Powys's work within the realm of French publishing companies, through the collections of the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (Imec). Imec, based in Caen, Normandy, holds numerous archives of authors, publishers and organisations linked to publishing, as well as a large collection of printed matter, including a substantial number of well-known and little-known literary magazines. A cross-sectional search of Imec's collections provides a wealth of information on translations of his works, the distribution of his texts in French journals and how Powys and his philosophy and outlook on life have been the subject of research in France. It also explains how the works of Llewelyn and Theodore Francis Powys have been translated and disseminated in France, in the tradition of John Cowper Powys. Marcella did a lot of research at Imec in 2012 and came upon various JCP-related correspondence between publishers and translators. It would seem that the bulk of the Powys brothers collections or mentions are to be found at Imec rather than at Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris."

Marcella Henderson-Peal serves on the Powys Society committee. She is the official representative of the Powys Society in France. Marcella has contributed articles on JCP to *la lettre powysienne*, the *Powys Society Newsletter* and the *Powys Journal*. She gave a lecture on JCP and France: his reception and reputation in the 1930s and later decades, at our conference in 2014. She has examined JCP's relationships with his French translators especially Marie Canavaggia published in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXV, 2015. Marcella has also made an in-depth study of the correspondence between French philosopher Jean Wahl, published in collaboration with Charles Lock, in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXIV, 2014. She led tributes to her close friend and fellow JCP enthusiast, Jacqueline Peltier, at our 2019 conference. Marcella provided an introduction to the French translation of JCP's *Suspended Judgements* published by Jacqueline Peltier. She often organises social events and meetings with Powysians in Paris. Marcella's presentation at this year's conference will include anecdotes she has uncovered about JCP's French translators and publishers especially translations in France of *Owen Glendower*, *Weymouth Sands* and *A Glastonbury Romance*.

Patrick Quigley is a retired public servant, the author of a novel, *Borderland*, and a 'trilogy' of historical studies on Polish-Irish connections: *The Polish Irishman: Life and Times of Count Casimir Markievicz* (2012), *Sisters Against the Empire: Countess Markievicz & Eva Gore-Booth* (2016), and *Stasko: Ireland, Poland & the Legacy of Countess Markievicz* (2022). He is currently condensing the books into a single volume for translation into Polish. His most recent publication is an essay on "Ireland

in Chassis: National Identity and Religion in the 21st Century” in the collection, *Understanding Ireland*, (Catholic University of Lublin, 2023.) Patrick joined the Powys Society committee in August 2023 as a Trustee.

Patrick says: “My talk will draw on the insights of Powys scholars (Glen Cavaliero, William Keith and Richard Maxwell) as well as contemporary studies on cultural memory, notably Prof Ann Rigney’s *The Afterlives of Walter Scott*, which traces how Scott’s reputation has been changed and sustained for over two centuries – an approach that offers possibilities for promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Powys family. Critics have highlighted convergences between Scott and Powys in their stress on the influence of landscape over the individual and the romantic appeal of the lost cause. In *Owen Glendower* he emulates and surpasses the grandeur, spaciousness and reverence for life of his Scottish inspirer. Powys returned to his childhood for inspiration in his historical romance *Porius* where the Scottish mage, Michael Scott, and scenes from *Last Minstrel* are transformed and reimagined. Powys claimed that Scott was the most formative influence on his literary work, but apart from some early lectures and references in *Autobiography* he wrote little about him. During childhood days in Montacute when his mother recited Scott’s epic poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the Scottish writer became imbued with an aura combining magical power with the spell of story-telling. Scott became part of the furniture of his mind - a resource and an example. Powys admired the “inexhaustible vitality” and serenity of Scott and followed his methods in his own sprawling novels/tales/romances. Scott’s fame approached its apogee during the Victorian era and began to decline, as his disciple wryly noted. Powys’ interest in Scott sharpened with his move to Wales in 1935; the latter’s relationship with Scotland became a template for his attempt to reconnect with his sense of Welsh identity. He drew on Scott’s *Quentin Durward*, *Ivanhoe* and other romances in the composition of *Owen Glendower*. However, Powys surpassed Scott’s depiction of the stolid Durward with his portrayal of the more complex Rhisiart.”

Committee Nominations 2024-2025

In accordance with rule 4.6 of the Powys Society constitution the following statement has been prepared by the Secretary giving details of vacancies and the names of Trustees willing to serve on the committee for a further period when their current term of office expires at the AGM in August 2024.

All paid up members, including honorary members, are entitled to submit nominations to the committee. Nominations must include the name of the Proposer and the Seconder (who must also be a paid up member or honorary member). Nominations should be submitted in writing or by e-mail including a statement confirming the agreement of the nominee. If more than one nomination is submitted for any vacant position a postal ballot will be required.

Nominations should be sent to the Hon Secretary by e-mail to chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk or by post to Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London, W11 2AG. Nominations must be received by 1 June 2024.

Honorary Officers

Current Honorary Officers of the Powys Society committee are:

Chair and Acting Treasurer Paul Cheshire

Vice Chair David Goodway

Secretary Chris Thomas

The one-year term of these officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 18 August 2024 and therefore nominations are sought for each position. We are especially seeking nominations for the role of Treasurer.

NB: Paul Cheshire, David Goodway and Chris Thomas have indicated their willingness to serve on the committee in their current roles for a further year.

Members of the Committee

Current members of the committee are Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor emerita*), and Dawn Collins (*Social Media manager*) whose three-year term of service expires in August; Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*) who has one year left to run of her three year term of service; Marcel Bradbury and Pat Quigley who have two years left to run of their three year term of service. Anna Rosic continues to serve as a co-opted member. Marcella Henderson-Peal and Nicholas Birns serve as honorary members. Kevin Taylor (*editor Powys Journal*) and Charles Lock (*associate editor Powys Journal*) serve as *ex-officio* members.

Nominations are sought for 2 vacant positions for membership of the committee.

NB: Kate Kavanagh and Dawn Collins have indicated their willingness to serve for a further period of 3 years.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

AGM

This gives notice that the AGM of the Powys Society will be held at 11.00 AM on Sunday 18 August 2024 at the Wessex Hotel in Street. All paid up members of the Powys Society are eligible to participate in the AGM whether or not they are attending the annual conference.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

New Members

We are pleased to welcome four new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 110, November 2023. Our new members are located in Stamford, Passadena, Carmarthen and Wrexham. This brings the current total membership of the Society to 251, 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

Chris Thomas
Porius discussion meeting Saturday 21 October 2023

On Saturday 21 October 2023 a small group of members met at Pushkin House in Bloomsbury, central London, to examine *Porius*, Chapter 31, The Little One, and Chapter 32, Blodeuwedd. We were warmly greeted by an official from Pushkin House who directed us to our meeting room on the lower ground floor. Refreshments were provided.

The text for discussion was the 2007 Overlook edition of *Porius*. Page numbers below refer to this edition.

Because our group was very small, consisting of our President **Timothy Hyman**, past Chair **John Hodgson** and Hon. Secretary, **Chris Thomas**, we had an opportunity to initially catch up on other informal matters and offer condolences to Tim on the recent loss of his wife Judith.

Chapters 31 and 32 provide clear examples of JCP's commitment in *Porius* to exploring what he called "**marvels and wonders**" and expressing his own attitude to life – "in defiance", he said in a letter to Norman Denny in 1949 "of this narrowing down in these days of all the unknown things in the world to the dogmatic positivism advocated by Professor Ayres [*sic*] in Oxford." The passages in these chapters devoted to a description of the perplexing little boy or "magic child" (p.673) and the transformation of Blodeuwedd contain some of JCP's most evocative and imaginative writing. We recalled JCP himself considered *Porius* as a whole his *magnum opus* and his best piece of writing. We were impressed by the way Chapters 31 and 32 show how JCP poured all his learning and knowledge of mythology, religion and esoteric lore into *Porius*.

We had also chosen Chapters 31 and 32 for discussion because of their **significance for the new restored edition of *Porius*** produced by Morine Krissdóttir. Chapter 31, the Little One, was not included in the original Macdonald edition and Chapter 32, Blodeuwedd, was originally cut by nearly a half in the first Macdonald edition. We noted that JCP explained to Malcolm Elwin in a letter dated 29 December 1950 that shortening his text in this way was not in fact a difficult task. This part of the book he said was redundant and not essential to the development of the story. What he seems to have meant is that the linear narrative of *Porius* does not depend on the events in chapters 31 or 32 or the chapter about the burial of Porius Manlius which he also cut from the Macdonald edition yet their importance lies in their expression of a certain attitude to life. JCP appears to have deliberately left the mysteries of these chapters to what he called "dark suggestion" and something that is "never really explained." (letter to Elwin, 29 December 1950).

Despite JCP's personal affirmation of marvels and wonders both chapters 31 and 32 are full of **realistic details**. We discussed for instance the beginning of Chapter 31 with its reference to: "the repulsive subhuman chaos of the deserted yet by no means empty imperial camp" (p.664) followed by a reference to Cretinloy's realistic account of the imperial camp (p.665). These descriptions perhaps owe something to the military events in *Owen Glendower*. The reference to the imperial camp must, we thought,

be a reference to the Roman town and encampment of Uriconium (p.694) where JCP imagines Porius Manlius had held an important post. Porius's hallucination or vision of dead bodies (p.676) seems to suggest a premonition of the Battle of Camlan and the final fate of Arthur.

We also noted JCP's facility with **psychological realism** in for instance his description of the Henog's self-discipline (pp.700-701) - that he had trained himself to hold his stronger emotions in control (p.702).

It hardly seems surprising that Chapters 31 and 32 also include examples of JCP's **elementalism** and focus on **inanimate things** or **small physical details** such as the smell of the Henog's cloak (p.669) or the transformation of Blodeuwedd (pp.688-689).

JCP uses **visual imagery and symbolism** to good effect – when Porius encounters the magic child he falls into a state of altered consciousness and feels he is being dragged along an 'eel bridge' that leads to Annwn, the realm of the dead (p.676). The description suggests similar use of this kind of imagery in *A Glastonbury Romance*. Reference to a daddy long legs sprawling across “a patch of broad leafed lakeside grass” (p.666), Morfydd's necklace of snail shells (pp.646, 647, 654 and 658), burning torches (pp. 683, 687, 702, 711), thoughts “like a cloud of midges” (p.675), consciousness “like a mouse surrounded by cats” (p.710), the owl beating against the brim of Teleri's grave like a “monstrous moth” (p.711), moonlit scenes (p.684,685, 689, 695 etc), the moon daisy eyes of Blodeuwedd (p.689) and the owl's feather Morfydd places between a couple of quartzlike stones (p.711) all help to enrich the text. The owl's feather suggests the heron's feather Christie uses to mark her place in Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* in *Wolf Solent*. Porius's encounter with the red headed child clutching the image of a wolf cub (p.672), the owl flapping its wings as Myrddin Wyllt draws it under his cloak (p.687) and the metamorphosis of Blodeuwedd (p.688-689) are supremely strong visual images.

We agreed that **the character of the Henog**, the official court chronicler and as JCP insists an entirely unhistoric character, is a self-portrait of JCP in his role as a writer: The Henog is described in Powysian epithets as a “*conjurer with words*” (p.701), “*an adept in the difficult art of word hunting and the still more difficult art of god hunting*” (p.705). he is “*a prose Homer of Ynys Prydein*” (p.673) he is an “*adept in artless artful storytelling*” (p.665), he has a “*simple, direct unvarying direct devotion to his art*” (p.669), he has “*an insanely intense and incorruptible concentration on the mystery of words*” (p.697). JCP also refers to the Henog's professional utensils (p.668), the tools of his trade and his writing materials, his tablets, brushes and pens (p.668) which all suggest JCP's own description of himself. He wrote in his diary on 24 December 1939: “*I climb to the top of Mynydd Y Gaer to finish my Owen there, carrying pen, ink and paper.*” There is however a mystery at the centre of the description of the Henog who is alluded to occasionally as Sylvanus Is Coed ap Bleheris, the Henog of Dyfed (p.684). His name takes us back to *A Glastonbury Romance* and the author of the original Grail romances but the allusion is not expanded for the reader. JCP delineates the Henog in contrast to Cretinloy, the chronicler of Surluse who is tedious and blustering (p.662, p.665). The Henog also expresses the essential philosophy of JCP: “*there was no such*

thing as a “One God” or a “One Absolute Being” life was an everlasting succession of many worlds and of innumerable creative and destructive gods and demigods.” (p.705)

Other characters are left undeveloped and only briefly mentioned such as Amreu, the Iberian steward of the Three Aunties (p.690) and Paun Bach, the dwarf called Erb or the Little Peacock (p.700).

Alchemy. We did not attempt a full-scale response to Morine’s thesis about alchemical symbolism in *Porius* although I did bring along some books on alchemy for reference such as books by Stanislaus Klossowski de Rola and Johannes Fabrichus as well as Silberer’s *Hidden Symbolism of Alchemy* – a book which had inspired Jung. We did not think it likely that JCP had delved deeply into Jung’s alchemical texts but would have been well aware of his ideas.

We mentioned some alchemical references in *Porius* as well as references to alchemy in his other books which suggest JCP had an appreciation of alchemical philosophy and symbolism. The red headed child in the cave sitting on a chest is of course very suggestive indicating perhaps the rubedo stage in alchemy. Who exactly is this magic child, we asked, where does he come from, why does he speak in the third person, what power does he exert over Porius? Morine refers to the child as an alchemical homunculus. JCP doesn’t state this outright though he does infer a connection and refers to alchemical lore about the manufacture of a tiny figure: “*Was the little creature, he wondered, created by the Derwydd out of seaweed and fungus and white bog moss.*” (p.673). Silberer, who JCP may have read, notes that the homunculus was created by alchemists out of rotting material. Earlier in *Porius* JCP refers to alchemy in phrases such as “*an aura of occult alchemy*” (p.246) and “*the Derwydd’s curative alchemy*” (p.249). JCP alludes to the Druid’s brother as the progenitor of the child in the cave – here is another of JCP’s unexplained mysteries and dark secrets. JCP’s reference to the homunculus is cited in his other works such as *Mortal Strife*, *The Pleasures of Literature*, in a letter to Llewelyn and of course he would have been very familiar with Goethe’s *Faust* in which in Part Two the homunculus plays a leading role. It is just as likely that JCP derived inspiration for the magic child from classical mythology – Morine mentions sources in Hermes, the Cabiri, Telesphorus, and the dactyls. But the *Mabinogion* would be his most immediate source especially as JCP clearly drew inspiration from the story of Llew Llaw Gyffes and the wolves in the *Mabinogion*. With all this mythological material to hand its no wonder JCP seems to have felt his book was a vision of what “Reality really was” in AD 499! (letter to Denny 7 December 1949). That was why JCP also often said he felt at home in the Dark Ages when myth and magic could be embraced without question.

Kim Wheatley
Reading Powyses Zoom discussion of Porius

On 14th November 2023, nine members of the Reading Powyses Facebook Group from both sides of the Atlantic met on Zoom for a discussion of *Porius*, a follow up to our discussion in March 2023. The participants were **Catherine Bayliss, Paul Cheshire, Dawn Collins, Chris Michaelides, Ben Thomson, Patrick Quigley, Tim Waters, Kim Wheatley**, and **Mick Wood**. (Page numbers below refer to the 2007 Overlook edition.)

Kim and Paul had proposed two specific discussion topics before the meeting: (1) the question of at what point (in Chapters 15 and 33) the narrator, Porius, and Myrddin Wyllt himself affirm the magic powers of Myrddin Wyllt and his identity as Cronos; and (2) the fluctuating sympathies generated (in Chapters 19 and 24) for the Henog and Taliesin. Dawn had also suggested that we think about the Henog as meta-fictional and Taliesin as a channel for JCP's own poetic voice. It was rewarding to focus on particular passages from the novel. As before, W. J. Keith's 'Companion' to *Porius* proved helpful.

Kim began the discussion with some remarks about how the novel's treatment of the supernatural creates a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Before *Porius* was published, JCP had an exchange of letters with Norman Denny, a reader for a prospective publisher, who wanted him to omit certain supernatural aspects of the novel – the Cewri in particular – but JCP refused to remove them. Denny didn't ask him to remove Myrddin Wyllt, perhaps because Merlin is an accepted figure in literary history. Their exchange of letters was published by Michael Ballin in "'A Certain Combination of Realism and Magic": Notes on the Publishing History of *Porius*', in *Powys Notes* 7.2 (1992): 11-37. Jerome McGann discusses the letters in *The Scholar's Art* (University of Chicago Press, 2006) and claims that the death of the Cewri can be seen as 'an allegory of the threat that writing and imagination bring to the reality of the marvelous' (p. 189). Margaret Drabble, in the BBC radio programme last year about JCP, said that that by the time one arrives at the scene involving the Cewri, one is ready to believe in them – as if the 'willing suspension of disbelief' is bound up with the arduous experience of reading *Porius*. As far as Myrddin Wyllt is concerned, in a letter to Merlin Wolcott, Powys claimed that Myrddin Wyllt 'imagines himself a re-incarnation or perhaps even an extremely aged survival of the old heathen god Cronos or Kronos or Saturn' (quoted by Constance Harsh in 'Letters from John Cowper Powys to Merlin Wolcott at Colgate University', *Powys Notes* 10.2 (1996): 36). But in the novel itself, he goes further than that, implying that Myrddin Wyllt really is Cronos. Paul has contextualised this identification in 'Powys' Cronos: Punishment, Rebellion and the Golden Age', in *The Powys Journal* 23 (2023): 79-99.

Early on in the novel, Myrddin Wyllt says he's not a magician. But he has power over animals and he claims he moved the stones for Stonehenge from Wales. In Chapter 15, his young follower Neb ap Digon appears certain that his 'Master' is Cronos (p. 260). By contrast, Myrddin Wyllt thinks 'the whole thing, all my half-memories ... may be

pure imagination’ (p. 260). And the narrator also refuses to make a definitive statement on the subject at this stage in the novel. As if on his way to accepting the truth, Myrddin Wyllt has a vision of his castration of his father Uranus, and he wonders, ‘why did a thing like that come back to him if it were all imagination?’ (p. 268). Kim pointed to a passage in which Myrddin Wyllt continues to question his divine origins, wondering if some Greek equivalent of the Henog in the past had ‘imagined it so strongly about him that it had forced him to imagine it about himself?’ (p. 268). This line speaks to the power of storytelling. We also discussed the passage in which Myrddin Wyllt decides not to destroy the image of Cronos in the Cave of Mithras, saying, ‘Whether I was Cronos or not I never took arms against anything but the tyranny of heaven’ (p. 261). Later, at the end of Chapter 15, Myrddin Wyllt listens to the earth who is also the earth mother Gaia, and says, ‘The enormous earth has spoken’ – as if that is a confirmation of his identity as Cronos (p. 288). Yet at the beginning of Chapter 33, Porius is still wondering whether Myrddin Wyllt ‘*might* be ... some sort of supernatural being’ (p. 712). It may be that Porius’s magical transplantation from the summit of Snowdon to Harlech confirms the authentically divine identity of Myrddin Wyllt.

We then turned to the question of JCP’s attitude to the Henog and Taliesin, lingering over the deathbed scene of Brother John in Chapter 24, in which Taliesin’s poem (pp. 489-92) is set against the Henog’s *Mabinogion*-like fairy tale (pp. 497-98). Felix Taylor, in ‘God Discoverers: John Cowper Powys, the *Mabinogion* and the Reshaping of Welsh Myth’, in *The Powys Journal* XXXIII (2023): 100-118, has written on how JCP invents the Henog as the originator of the *Mabinogion*, giving voice to the aboriginal Welsh. Mick observed that the Henog blurs the distinction between history and mythology, inviting readers to question any and all narratives. Paul commented on the Henog’s mysterious tale about an ‘Annwn of Illusion and Enchantment’ (p. 498). Porius has earlier distrusted the Henog but listens ‘spellbound’ to the tale (p. 497), which teases the reader with the possibility of an allegorical significance. The tale raises the question of whether one can ever be satisfied, which applies to Porius in that at this stage in the romance, he seems to be breaking through to a new stage in his development after the death of the Cewri. The Henog conjures up a ‘Caer Sidi of Illusion’ as well as an Annwn of Illusion, and his tale confounds true and false, breaking off without a conclusion and not inspiring any ‘outward response’ – although the Henog doesn’t care (pp. 498-99). The Henog’s ability to compose spontaneously and entangle his audience in his ‘vision’ would seem to be sanctioned by JCP, even as JCP unsettles the authority of both Taliesin and the Henog by contrasting their compositions with the ‘flesh-and-blood contact’ of the newlyweds Gwythyr and Nesta (pp. 500-501). Powys often dramatizes how things are forgotten or ignored, even as his narratives pay attention to them.

As for Taliesin, a note on p. 20 connects his poetry with that of Walt Whitman. His first poem, in Chapter 19 (pp. 377-79), resembles Whitman’s ‘Song of Myself’. Henning Ahrens, in ‘Into the Bone-World: Taliessin’s Song in John Cowper Powys’s novel *Porius*’, *The Powys Journal* 7 (1997): 157-169, has written on how Taliesin’s poems express JCP’s own philosophy. The first poem dismisses judgmental morality,

but it is not clear if the young bard is actually communicating that message: after he finishes the poem, his soul sinks into the ‘non-sentence’ of a straw of wheat (p. 379). In the poem in Chapter 24, the ‘ash tree’s grey stare’ (p. 490) recalls the grey ash tree in Myrddin Wyllt’s vision in Chapter 15 (p. 268), linking the material and the mystical. Mick commented that Taliesin’s sensation-based stance – and his cooking skills – connect him with the materialism of JCP’s early philosophical book *The Complex Vision* (1920). Pat drew connections between *Porius* and James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* (which JCP wrote about in *Obstinate Cymric* (1947)) and the world-building techniques of Sir Walter Scott. In closing, Dawn wondered why JCP is not mentioned in Alexandra Harris’s *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (2010). Mick pointed out that Modernism tends to be associated with urban settings. Others suggested that the sheer volume of JCP’s writings is an obstacle to his inclusion in the canon.

We agreed to meet again in February or March 2024 to continue examining specific passages from *Porius*, an inexhaustible subject for discussion.

Chris Thomas

Sale of the Mappowder Powys Family Collection

Items selected from the Mappowder Powys Family Collection were sold at auction by Dominic Winter on Thursday 14 December 2023. The sale included 15 lots consisting of books once owned by members of the Powys family, some gifted to and inscribed by Katie, ARP and JCP, a collection of family letters, ephemera, early manuscript fragments, juvenilia, galley proofs, typescripts, memorabilia, and family photographs as well as graphic material, such as sketches, pencil drawings, and etchings, as well as watercolours and oil paintings by Gertrude. Louise de Bruin has retained some collection items including four family albums that once belonged to the Powys grandmother, the Powys mother, Katie and Marian. The National Library of Wales was successful in acquiring the archive of some 700 photographs as well as several other Lots including the Mary Casey archive and a collection of family letters. It is good to know that these items have all gone to a good home and an established archive in the UK. Some of the books in the collection were acquired by private bookdealers and have subsequently been resold on-line. For reference the original auction catalogue can still be consulted on the Powys Society website.

Whilst sorting and cataloguing items to be included in the sale, Peter Foss highlighted two items which he thought would be of special interest to readers of the Newsletter. Peter explained to me: “*To give an idea of the significance and richness of Louise’s collection, which contains thousands of items, is almost impossible, but here are two things which I have chosen – one a book and another a photograph, which touch upon the background story of the Powyses, and the biography of JCP in particular.*”

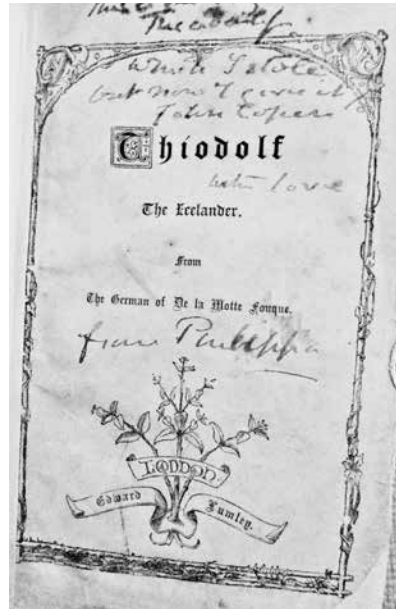
Images of these two items are published in this Newsletter.

Theodoric the Iclander

Peter notes that “*In Autobiography, p.125, JCP recalls the influence on him as a young boy, of a book called Theodoric the Iclander. [CT adds, JCP says it was “my favourite volume of all...I can clearly remember the indescribable transport this fantastical tale excited in me...”]* Peter notes that “*the book receives mention in letters and conversations throughout his life (see esp. Letters to Llewelyn, Letters to Sea Eagle, and a reference in Newsletter 24, 1995,*” [CT see also *letters to Wilson Knight, Glyn Hughes and to Frances Gregg.*] Peter comments “*I don’t think the spelling has ever been got right, though variants have been tried. Anyway, the actual book (Thiodolf the Iclander) is in Louise’s collection, since it seems to have been taken by their cousin Philippa Knight, who rebound it, and returned it in later life to John (as the inscription shows). This translation is undated but may be of the 1840s.*”

This is of course the very book that JCP mentions, under the title *Theodoric the Iclander*, on several occasions in *Wolf Solent* (see pages 430-431 and p.437 in the 1961 Macdonald edition) and which Gerda thinks is the nicest book she’s ever read.

Die Fahrten Thiodolfs des Islaenders, ein Ritterroman, by De La Motte Fouque (who was the author also of the famous fairy tale *Undine*) was first published by F. Haas in 1815, in Vienna. An English translation appeared in 1845, under the title *Thiodolf the Iclander*, published by Wiley and Putnam (translator not credited). Other editions appeared in 1862, published by James Miller in NY and in 1863 published by Willis P Hazard. The book was also published by Edward Lumley in 1874 and by Routledge in 1877. I possess an edition illustrated by Edward Corbault, engraved by the Dalziel brothers, published by Edward Lumley in 1874 and inscribed for me by our past Chairman, John Hodgson.



Title page of Thiodolf the Iclander

JCP’s friend Robert Bright

Peter has also selected for publication a photograph of JCP outside the home of his friend, the Philadelphia attorney Robert Southall Bright (1872-1943) who JCP had met on his earliest visits to America beginning in 1905, when he delivered lectures under the auspices of the ASEUT based in Philadelphia.

Peter notes: “*My second item is a photograph, just one of over 700 loose photographs in Louise’s collection. It has nothing to show what it is, but research and deduction convinces me that this is a photograph taken just before WWI at Mount Airy, the home of Robert Bright and his family, in Germantown, Philadelphia. It shows JCP, Mrs Bright*



*JCP with the family of Robert Bright at Mount Airy,
Philadelphia Mappowder Powys Collection.*

and their daughter at the gate. I don't believe there is any other picture of the Brights' home that we know of. I think JCP always said that Robert Bright was the first friend he made in America when he first travelled there." [CT adds In *Autobiography*, p.363, JCP refers to Robert Bright as his **oldest American friend of all**. Elsewhere he mentions meeting Bright when he gave a lecture at a meeting of the anti-vivisection society in Germantown in 1913. This photograph was included in the

Mappowder sale and listed in Peter's private catalogue: "*A clapboard house in woods in America, (7023 Germantown Avenue, Mount Airy?) [JCP and Robert Bright's wife at gate. The name of the house was possibly Tà-Wè-Pà.]*"

Robert Bright was a lawyer and businessman who was also prominent in Progressive Party politics. He graduated with an A.B from the College of William and Mary in 1891. He was appointed an apprentice to a Philadelphia law firm until he was admitted to the bar in 1894. In 1895 he married Caroline de Beelen but remarried in 1934 after the death of Caroline. From 1894 to 1926 Bright established his own law firm in Philadelphia. He published historical works, such as: *Pocahontas and Other Colonial Dames of Virginia* (1906); *The Hamlet of American Politics* (1908); *Liberty's Greatest paper* (1910); and *Nathaniel Bacon and His Rebellion*.

Robert Bright's family papers can be consulted at the University of Delaware.

For details of Robert Bright's life see: *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone. vol.9. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963.

JCP's memories of Robert Bright

"In my first American visits I always used to stay with my most hospitable American friend, Mr Robert S. Bright, the eloquent Philadelphian lawyer. Mr Bright is a Virginian and a strong Jeffersonian; so that I imbibed from him, at a very early date, a pretty shrewd notion of how far America had seceded from her original democracy."

From *Autobiography*, p.512

"...Do you remember Mr Bright's son's suspicions when you and Lulu were together in that old fashioned house of theirs on Germantown Avenue? God! I can see Mrs Bright's sitting room so clearly & Mr Bright asleep on the sofa."

From a letter to Louis Wilkinson, dated March 12th 1944



Wayne Junction station
today.

“Aye! how well I came to know every single step of that beautiful, mellow, historic Germantown Avenue! I used often to walk all the way up to Mount Airy, where Mr Bright’s house is, from Wayne Junction Railway station...”

From *Autobiography*, p.544

“...I imagine myself now wandering slowly up Germantown Avenue, with the intention of visiting my friend Robert Bright...”

From *Autobiography*, p.548

Anthony Head *JCP & Coleridge*

The fascinating article by Kim Wheatley in last year’s *Powys Journal* (Vol. XXXIII) on John Cowper Powys and Samuel Taylor Coleridge recalled to my mind a conversation I had with Glen Cavaliero several years ago on one of my visits to him in Cambridge. We had been discussing Powys’s writings on other literary figures, and I had noted the oddity that the only thing he ever wrote, or published, about *female* authors – with the exception of his short book on Dorothy Richardson, a personal friend – was his essay on Emily Bronte that first appeared in *Suspended Judgments* in 1916. Another oddity, I opined, given the amount he had written on the major Romantic figures – Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Blake, even Lamb – was his almost complete avoidance of writing about Coleridge.

I had just been reading again Richard Holmes’ magisterial two-volume biography of Coleridge (*Coleridge: Early Visions*, 1989 & *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, 1998) and had been struck anew by several intriguing resemblances in the lives and characters of Coleridge and Powys, and had wondered how aware JCP had been of them and whether he had been deterred by them in some way. I remember Glen becoming very interested in this topic and, on my departure, encouraging me to follow it up. Beyond noting down a few, possibly trivial, similarities, I never did – and just as well, since anything I may have produced would have fallen far short of Kim’s detailed and edifying article.

But if JCP’s lectures and imaginative interpretations of Coleridge were based essentially on the *Biographia Literaria*, and later on John Livingston Lowes’ *The Road to Xanadu* (only published in 1927), as could be inferred from Kim’s article, there is much he could not have known about the poet’s life, and some of these similarities are not without interest.

For those who find significance in such things, JCP and STC were both Librans, born in October exactly 100 years apart. They both had vicarage upbringings, and occupied extreme positions in large families, “Jack” the eldest of 11 children, “Sam” the youngest of 10. When they were 20, Powys and Coleridge each lost a beloved

sister – Nelly and Nancy – and continued to refer to these tragedies in their letters and journals throughout their lives. (Coleridge was equally marked by the early death of his father when he was only nine, as Powys was, or often claimed to be, by the loss of his mother in later years.)

In their childhoods they both also had a particular experience that came to hold a significance above most others: for Coleridge, his running away from home after a fight with his brother Frank and sleeping under a bush, causing his mother great distress and the residents of Ottery to spend the night searching for him; for Powys, no less dramatically, the early practice of “sadism” in pouring boiling water on beetles and killing worms with a knife. They both often referred to these specific incidents in their later assessments of their own psychology. From an early age, too, both Coleridge and Powys became voracious readers, but showed an equally capacious appetite for food – indeed, both actively claimed to be *greedy*, their similarly broad, full mouths perhaps being indicative of this.

Their experiences of public-school life were equally similar in significant ways. They both hated school sports and games, and were regarded as loners, or somewhat aloof, and they both accordingly began to reveal a gift for eloquence to help them out of trouble, thereby gaining a kind of popularity or reputation for eccentricity. They both went to Cambridge and were unsettled there, relieving their feelings of loneliness by long walks – a prelude to Coleridge’s many “tours” throughout his life, and Powys’s almost daily ambulatory excursions, whether in city or countryside.

They also shared a nonchalance in attire. Contemporaries often noted Coleridge’s “negligent dress” and it seemed he sometimes liked to affect the appearance of a tramp. On Powys’s seeming incompetence in this respect, Louis Wilkinson throws an amusing light in a letter to Llewelyn after attending John’s lecture on Oscar Wilde in London in 1906: “Why, in Christ’s name, will he wear such detestable clothes? It would not have mattered had he appeared in rags, or in the wildest & most extravagant attire – but to get himself up like a third-rate shopwalker going to a wedding – with that *tie* – the tie was an outrage ... Jack is a bloody fool to put such things on, because it appeals to nobody ... It did not look as if he *disregarded* dress – that would have been all right – it looked as though he tried to dress, and could not succeed for want of taste.” What Louis would have said had he attended a later lecture John gave at which one lady drew his attention to his unbuttoned flies can easily be guessed at, but that occasion did at least prompt John’s memorable retort, “Madam, I wear them like that.”

In marriage, too, their lives showed unfortunate resemblances. There was nothing unusual in their marrying early in their twenties, Coleridge to Sara Fricker and Powys to Margaret Lyon, though John was far less certain about the undertaking. But in time both came to feel they were going against their natural grain, and both later fell into relationships in some ways more passionate – Coleridge with Sara Hutchinson (“Asra”) and Powys with Frances Gregg, and later of course with Phyllis Playter. They both had to rely at times on the financial generosity of a brother or a friend to support their increasingly distant wives and offspring, while equally displaying occasionally reckless generosity of their own with money when they had it. And both, whatever

regrets they came to have about their marriages, remained loyal in their own way as “Protector and Friend” of their spouses, ensuring when they were financially able that they did not fall into indigence or disrepute.

And then there was ill health. Coleridge suffered from numerous ailments at one time or another, while Powys endured the ill effects of stomach ulcers for most of his life. But they both had severe problems with their bowels, constipation in Coleridge’s case being often the result of excessive opium usage, and necessitating one near-fatal series of twelve enemas during his time on shipboard in the Mediterranean. JCP, of course, came to rely on enemas every day of his life.

Our understanding of Coleridge has been hugely enriched by Holmes’ biography, but whether having greater knowledge of this phenomenal being’s life would have made Powys (“the last Romantic”, as Malcolm Elwin called him) feel he was a kindred spirit with whom he would wish to engage more fully or would only have strengthened his desire to keep him “at arm’s length” is something we will never know. I like to think the former, but perhaps JCP would have felt that one self-reflective and self-dramatising genius was more than enough to deal with.

Chris Thomas

A note on Littleton Albert Powys (1840-1879)

Rachel Hassall, the archivist at Sherborne School, sent me news of pages she has added to the Old Shirburnian Society website (<https://oldshirburnian.org.uk>) with photographs and other information about the life and career of Littleton Albert Powys, the elder brother of C. F. Powys whose sons JCP, T.F. Powys and Llewelyn all wrote about



*Littleton Albert Powys,
mid to late 1870s*

Private collection Gary Hynard

their uncle – see for instance, JCP’s *Autobiography*, p.11; references in Llewelyn’s essay *Stalbridge Rectory in Dorset Essays*, and TFP’s essay ‘How we remember’ in Newsletter 45, April 2002. In his article ‘My Rich Bearded Uncle from India’, in *PSN* No.45, Stephen Powys Marks helpfully clarifies some of the anachronisms in T.F. Powys’s essay. LAP’s bearded face which JCP confessed he delighted in pounding “to test the courage of this officer of the Queen” is seen to great advantage in the accompanying photographs in this Newsletter originally reproduced on the Old Shirburnian Society website. Another photograph of LAP in the Old Shirburnian XI in 1871 (not published here), when he returned to England on leave from military duties, shows him sporting a full beard, can also be found on the Old Shirburnian Society website.

Rachel informed me that these photographs had been given to Sherborne School (where LAP was a pupil from 1855 to 1857) by Gary Hynard from his private collection. Gary has kindly permitted the Society to

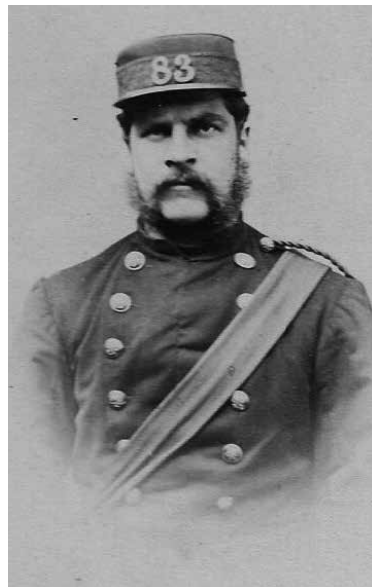
reproduce two photographs of LAP from his private collection. One of these photographs shows LAP in military uniform. After leaving Sherborne school LAP joined the army in 1858 as an ensign in the 83rd Regiment of Foot. He was later promoted to the rank of lieutenant, then to captain in the 59th Regiment of Foot and finally to Major. He served in the second Afghan War in Kandahar. Rachel also forwarded a note from Gary about the origin and provenance of these interesting photographs.

“The photographs all come from a photograph album that I recently acquired. It belonged to a George Edward Sheward Cartwright, a Captain in the 83rd Regiment of Foot who served with the regiment between 1866-1877. It seems that he liked to collect photographs of his fellow officers, because the album contains over 180 photographs, almost half are 83rd regiment officers plus some other regiments that he came into contact with. The album also includes a photograph of Lord Palmerston, an early picture of a jockey who won the Derby three times in the 1870’s, and what appears to be an unpublished photograph of a Victoria Cross winner, Edric Frederick Gifford 3rd Baron Gifford VC, a few years before he won his medal in West Africa.”

Rachel told me that Gary is researching the individuals in the album and has discovered that Littleton Albert Powys was responsible for setting up and running the cholera hospital in Kandahar, which was probably where he contracted the disease.

These photographs of LAP usefully complement the images of LAP and the facts about his military career in NL 45. This issue also includes a pencil sketch, dated 29 September 1880, of LAP’s grave at Kandahar. LAP died of cholera on August 6th 1879 and was buried the same day. There is a memorial plaque dedicated to LAP at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stalbridge, Dorset.

Amanda Powys owns a small collection of items belonging to LAP including an Indian table, as well as watercolour drawings and illustrations of trains and steam boats made in LAP’s early youth. Another photo of LAP from Amanda’s family collection is included here. Some of LAP’s drawings and sketches also appeared in Lot 686 of the Mappowder auction.



*Littleton Albert Powys, 1866
Private collection Gary Hynard*

Geoffrey Winch

Introduction to The Transubstantiation

I have been writing (and still am) a sequence of Oscar Wilde poems (about twelve in all) which I hope to get published soon - the sequence to be titled 'Encounters with Oscar'. I'll be including three or four other uncollected sequences from earlier times to make up the small volume.

I have, of course, always been fascinated by JCP's 'performance' of Oscar in Chicago, as recorded by Alexander Kaun, and inevitably a poem based around this was bound to be included in the sequence and hence 'The Transubstantiation'. Some other poems from the sequence are out for consideration with various editors, some are on hold for a bit of fine-tuning, one or two are already published and one 'Ric Sanders and the Selfish Giant' won first prize in a recent competition. I still have two or three to write from scratch - so it's a slowly evolving project.

The trigger to my Oscar Wilde project was Banksy's 'Create Escape' mural which appeared a couple of years ago on the wall of Reading Gaol - and there's been a controversy over its future use now it's no longer occupied. Reading was/is my home town and my first 'introduction' to Oscar was when I was still quite small and being told why the gaol was famous. The gaol is opposite the old Huntley and Palmers factory where many of my forebears worked and I was a pupil at George Palmer junior school! A bit of recent research led me to discover that Oscar was actually friends with one of the Palmer dynasty - Walter Palmer - and he'd visited the factory two or three years before he was jailed over the road . . . and so on and so on leading to various poems being added to the sequence.

Chris Thomas writes: Geoffrey's poem prompted me to think of another link between JCP and Wilde in the different but not unrelated context of the Christian doctrine of the 'real presence' and the mystery of the Eucharist. The Cambridge dictionary defines transubstantiation as: '*the belief, especially by Roman Catholics, that during Mass bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.*' Wilde and JCP, who were both fascinated by Catholicism, reflected on the ritual of the Eucharist and its symbolism. In his poem *Rome Unvisited* Wilde imagined the Pope elevating "*the mystic sacrifice/And shows a God to human eyes/Beneath the veil of bread and wine.*" In his diary for 17 August 1929 JCP describes how he watched his son celebrate Mass and received from him the Eucharist: "*Took the elements from my son...but what I thought of as the Graal was lifted & I tasted the wafer and wine in my mouth was Demeter, my mother & the T. T. – therein lies an image for a poet!*" '*Transubstantiating magic*' was also a phrase JCP liked to use in *Autobiography* to describe the transformational impact on him of the Weymouth coastline.

For JCP's comments on Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* and Alexander Kaun's review of JCP's lecture on JCP see articles in *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXII, 2022.

Geoffrey Winch
The Transubstantiation
(from '*Encounters with Oscar*')

The generation before: so enchanted
they'd been by Oscar as he'd expressed
his views on decorative arts: so, the new
audience as they gathered in Chicago

was eager to hear John Cowper express
his views about Oscar, and he'd brushed-
up on the plays in a purple leather-bound
volume he'd borrowed earlier in the day.

But the last thing that audience expected
to see was Oscar himself take to the stage
fifteen years after he'd passed away! It
could only have been John Cowper Powys

using his magical powers who decided
not to lecture at all, but inhabit instead
the flesh and the spirit of that Uranian
demi-god who'd so dramatically lived
his life to the full, and to perform a rite
so impassioned that worshippers believed
their eyes when it was *his* mannerisms
they recognised, and knew in their ears

it was *his* true voice delivering aphorisms
and asides: Oscar's genius was illuminating
their world once more until it began to fall
away with grief as the lights began to fade,

finally flickering-out to a shocking shrill
of requiem, then Oscar was gone though
his spirit lingered on . . .
while backstage

John Cowper resumed his flamboyant self
Returning with thanks the plays to the corpse-
girl whose purple volume it was, knowing
Oscar would have been *so* charmed by her . . .

Partly sourced from:

Kaun, Alexander: *My Friend, the Incurable Pro Domo Mia*,
(Chicago: The Little Review, Feb 1915)

Powys, John Cowper: *Letters to his brother; Llewelyn 1902-1926 Vol 1*
ed. M. Elwin (London: Village Press, 1975)

Powys, John Cowper: *Suspended Judgements* (New York: G Arnold Shaw, 1916)

News & Notes

From Michael Yelton:

A biography of T. H. Lyon

I am pleased to say that my book on Thomas Henry Lyon, J C Powys' brother in law, has been completed and published, after a number of years in genesis: *Thomas Henry Lyon, Architect and Aesthete – his Life and Work*, Sacristy Press, 2003, ISBN: 978-1-78959-325-9, £60. (CT adds - Also see *T. H. Lyon, architect of Middlecott* by Susan Rands, Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries, 1995, Part 1, 37:7; Part 2, 37:8; Part 3, 37:9 and *John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W. E. Lutyens*, Cecil Woolf, 2000.)

From Peter Foss:

Llewelyn and Glyn Griffiths

The tribute to Llewelyn by Glyn Griffiths in Newsletter 110, November 2023, was originally published in the *South Wales Evening Post*, 9 December 1939, under the title An Appreciation of Llewelyn Powys as noted in my *Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys*, p.255.

From Judy Robinson:

Letter from Littleton to Rowena Griffiths, NL 110, p. 24

I'm wondering if the year date of that letter is right, as my father's prolonged illness didn't occur until later in the 1940s, from 1946 to '48. So I'd have expected that letter date to be 1948 not 1940, which would fit with the fact my father had had surgery in April 1948 and would have been still recovering in June and planning to return to work. I don't actually think Dad had met Littleton face to face until May 1945 (though they may have had some earlier correspondence) when L. came to stay for 5 days while giving the two Swansea lectures, and got to know both my parents on a more intimate level, hence the affectionate tone of Littleton's letter to my mother.

From Mark Ellis-Jones:

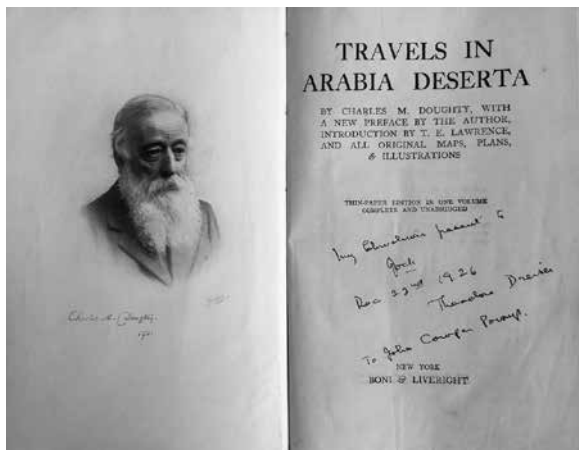
Sing As We Go: Britain Between the Wars

I have been aware of JCP for many years but never felt the need to read his work. I am presently interested in the history of the 1920s and 1930s. Simon Heffer's positive comments about JCP in his book, *Sing As We Go*, prompted me to start reading his work. What I've read seems to "chime" with me in many ways! [CT adds *Sing As We Go* is published by Cornerstone, 2023. The book includes several interesting references to JCP's comments on England in the 1930s. Simon Heffer pays a tribute to JCP on our website on the occasion of JCP's 150th anniversary in 2022.]

From Charles Lock:

JCP's copy of Charles Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*

I spotted on ABE in October 2023 a copy of *Arabia Deserta* by Charles Doughty presented to JCP by Theodore Dreiser in 1926 and later reinscribed by JCP to Malcolm Elwin in 1954. This affirms JCP's interest in Doughty more clearly than anything else I know, and records a good anecdote. The note by the bookseller, Christian White Rare Books of Ilkley, is worth preserving: "SUPERB ASSOCIATION COPY inscribed on the title page 'My Christmas present to Jack Dec 22nd 1926 Theodore Dreiser To John Cowper Powys.' On the half title Powys has inscribed the work a second time to pass the book on some thirty years later: 'For Malcolm [Elwin] from John 5th of November 1954 [cuneiform inscription] see Page 291. Would I could write on the rock behind our home or Two Rooms and one staircase at Blaenau Ffestiniog in the antique Teyma language. But know not what the sentence means!' Navy blue cloth, fading to gilt spine lettering. Map in rear pocket; blue endpapers: the one volume thin paper edition. Short tear along gutter at head of half title, otherwise very good. Laid in, an exuberant letter from Powys which presents 'The Volume of Arabia Deserta given to me by Dreiser. It is a possession because when Dreiser made a terrific hit with *An American Tragedy* he came to us when we were in my sister Marian's Garden in Palisades New York State and cried aloud Jack I may say I am affluent what wd you like of half of my kingdom and I answered like a shot. O I do so want Arabia Deserta.' The effusive double inscription fully conveys the warmth of the friendship between the British and American novelists that began in 1915 and flourished until Dreiser's death. Very Good." (Chris Thomas adds: The issue of *The Dial* for May 1927 included a review article by JCP of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* entitled *The Children of Adam*. JCP refers to *Arabia Deserta* in *A Glastonbury Romance* [that bookcase that contained the massive volumes of *Arabia Deserta*]. JCP also mentions *Arabia Deserta* in *In Defence of Sensuality*, and *The Meaning of Culture*.)



*Dedication by Theodore Dreiser to JCP
in Arabia Deserta*

John Cowper Powys. On the half title Powys has inscribed the work a second time to pass the book on some thirty years later: 'For Malcolm [Elwin] from John 5th of November 1954 [cuneiform inscription] see Page 291. Would I could write on the rock behind our home or Two Rooms and one staircase at Blaenau Ffestiniog in the antique Teyma language. But know not what the sentence means!' Navy blue cloth, fading to gilt spine lettering. Map in rear pocket; blue endpapers: the one volume thin paper edition. Short tear along gutter at head of half title, otherwise very good. Laid in, an exuberant letter from Powys which presents 'The Volume of Arabia Deserta given to me by Dreiser. It is a possession because when Dreiser made a terrific hit with *An American Tragedy* he came to us when we were in my sister Marian's Garden in Palisades New York State and cried aloud Jack I may say I am affluent what wd you like of half of my kingdom and I answered like a shot. O I do so want Arabia Deserta.' The effusive double inscription fully conveys the warmth of the friendship between the British and American novelists that began in 1915 and flourished until Dreiser's death. Very Good." (Chris Thomas adds: The issue of *The Dial* for May 1927 included a review article by JCP of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* entitled *The Children of Adam*. JCP refers to *Arabia Deserta* in *A Glastonbury Romance* [that bookcase that contained the massive volumes of *Arabia Deserta*]. JCP also mentions *Arabia Deserta* in *In Defence of Sensuality*, and *The Meaning of Culture*.)

From Chris Thomas:

A Powys collection in Davos

In December 2023 our Chair, Paul Cheshire, received an e-mail from Chris Caplazi who said that he has in his ownership a collection of some forty books inscribed by Llewelyn. Chris Caplazi explained he had inherited the books from his great aunt, Lise Gujer (1893-1967) who Llewelyn addresses in the inscriptions affectionately

as ‘Lisaly’. Llewelyn dedicated his book *Swiss Essays* ‘to Lisaly Gujer’. Lise had befriended Llewelyn at Clavadel sanatorium in 1911, nursed him after he suffered a serious haemorrhage after crossing the Furka Pass in 1912, and cared for him at her farmhouse during his last years there during 1937, 1938 and 1939. It looks as if Chris Caplazi has inherited a very fine collection of inscribed books that also contains a moving inscription by Alyse Gregory. A few of the dedications include generous quotations from Blake, Macbeth and the sixteenth century poet and playwright John Heywood. We plan to reproduce a few of these inscriptions alongside a short note about Llewelyn and Lise Gujer in a future Newsletter. With thanks to Peter Foss for supplying exhaustive information about Lise Gujer.

JCP and Epilepsy

Readers may recall a notice in NL 100, July 2020 referring to a forthcoming book by Professor Simon Shorvon about twentieth century epilepsy incorporating information concerning novelists who have experienced the condition and described its symptoms. The note cited articles about JCP and epilepsy previously published in the *Powys Review* by Robin Wood, Ernst Verbeek and Frederick Davies. We also included a long quotation by Professor Shorvon. Professor Shorvon’s book has now been published by Cambridge University Press and is entitled *The Idea of Epilepsy: A Medical and Social History of Epilepsy in the Modern Era (1860-2020)*. The book includes several references to JCP.

JCP’s Theosophical Lexicon

In NL 108, March 2023, I proposed some possible sources of JCP’s choice of title for his 1905 Cambridge lecture on The Religion of the Future inspired by his reading of theosophical texts. It was only later I noticed other theosophical references suggesting JCP’s close and continuing acquaintance with the theosophical movement. Consider this allusion in a letter to Malcolm Elwin dated 27 December 1950 (see *Powys Notes*, 7.2, Fall and Winter 1992, p.34) commenting on the writing of *Porius*: “what fascinates me is the - how the hell shall I put it? —the “psychic aura” —no— that sounds a bit too much like dear Annie Besant and even more like the formidable (if less dear to me!) Madame Blavatsky! No! not “psychic aura” for what I am struggling to express isn’t exactly “mystique” as they call it nowadays— it is much realler truer more material, more actual than that...” This and other references to “the soul’s orbicular aura” in *The Art of Growing Old*, or the aura “beyond thoughts” and “beyond words”, in the preface to *A Glastonbury Romance*, or, for instance, references to astral projection, the etheric plane, the astral body, the spiritual body and eidolons, indicate how JCP made frequent metaphorical use of theosophical words and phrases throughout his work in a way reminiscent of the poet Yeats. In the introduction to *A Vision* (1937) Yeats refers to his experiments with automatic writing with his wife. On 24 October 1917 Yeats recorded a message given to him by his communicators: “We have come to give you metaphors for poetry.” For JCP’s allusion to the imaginative power of certain theosophical and spiritualist ideas see *Neglected Powers*, by G. Wilson Knight (1971) and Bill Keith’s article JCP and Other Dimensions: the evidence from his fiction (*Powys Journal*, Vol. XIX, 2009).

Moss and Lichen

A new book called *Moss and Lichen* by Elizabeth Lawson is due to be published by Reaktion Books in April/May this year. The text includes an image of JCP (the photo that appears on the front cover of Newsletter 104, November 2021) accompanying a quotation about moss in *A Glastonbury Romance*.

Andrew Carnegie

In Newsletter No.109, July 2023 I provided a note about JCP and the American industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. Recently I located a newspaper report on Carnegie's visit to England in 1905 during which he was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Eastbourne on 15 May 1905 (*Sussex Express* 20 May 1905). The *Express* noted Carnegie's generous donations to the establishment of free libraries and other educational institutions in many towns in England. It seems therefore JCP and Carnegie could possibly have encountered each other at this time either in Eastbourne or another Sussex town or somewhere else in England where JCP was lecturing.

From Kim Wheatley:

'Parodying the Prelude'

My article, 'Parodying *The Prelude*: The *Autobiography* of John Cowper Powys,' was published in *Romanticism* 29.3 (2023): 281-292. The article is a shortened version of a chapter in my book, *John Cowper Powys and the Afterlife of Romanticism: Re-imagining William Wordsworth and John Keats*, which will be published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2025.

From Geoffrey Winch:

Burpham News

I read my *Burpham Scenes* (published in NL 109, July 2023) at the National Poetry Day event (5th October 2023) at Chichester Library. One of the principal writers taking part was Simon Brett with whom I had a brief conversation. He was pleased to hear the Powys Society is still thriving and would be glad to hear from any member who wished to contact him via his website: simonbrett.com. He also confirmed that 'Warre House' ('Bankside' in JCP's days), where he lives, was renamed 'Frith House' many years ago.

From Pat Quigley:

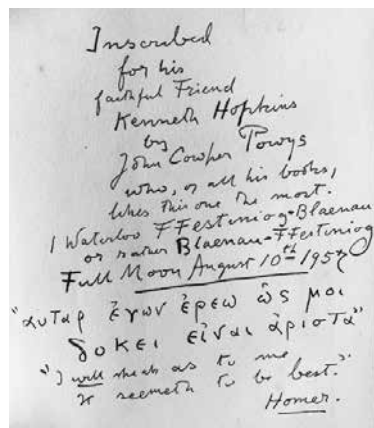
Midnight Rambles in New York

John Cowper Powys is mentioned as a "man of letters" who resided in Patchin Place, New York, in *Midnight Rambles* by David A Goodwin (Fordham University Press, NY, 2024) a micro-biography of two years in the life of the American author Howard Philips Lovecraft (1890 – 1937). In 1924 Lovecraft left his native Providence to live for two years in New York city. The bustle of the streets was anathema to him and he sought places where he could absorb the atmosphere of the past. His rambles brought him to Patchin Place, then lacking the iron gate, where he was entranced by the alleyway of seven houses where John Cowper and Llewelyn lived in the 1920s. Lovecraft wrote to a friend of the antique-looking streetlamp which "cast alluring shadows of

archaic things half of the imagination.” He was also thrilled with the seclusion of a hidden courtyard in nearby Milligan Place. (The history of both enclaves built by Aaron Patchin can be traced in Ray Crozier’s Patchin Place, Sundial Press, 2022; see Newsletter 108 & Powys-Society.org). During two difficult years Lovecraft revisited the enclaves to refresh his bruised spirit. There is no indication he ever encountered the Powys brothers. In 1924 he was an obscure author of horror stories; he would be posthumously celebrated as a great American writer - the 20th Century successor to Edgar Allan Poe. [CT adds: there is another interesting connection between JCP and Lovecraft although this comes through their shared admiration for the stories of Arthur Machen. Lovecraft’s short story *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928) and his novella *The Dunwich Horror* (1929) were both directly influenced by Arthur Machen’s masterpiece of Gothic horror *The Great God Pan* (1894). Lovecraft refers to Machen in his *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1926) and praises *The Great God Pan*. JCP was acquainted with Arthur Machen through his connection with Machen’s niece Sylvia Townsend Warner who JCP met in East Chaldon (see *The Dorset Year*, p.166, p.169 and p.188). JCP also records in his diary for 20 February 1935 that Phyllis was reading Machen’s account of his childhood in Wales). JCP had certainly read Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (see *The Last Bookman* by Peter Ruber, 1968) as well as other works of supernatural fiction by Machen published in the 1890s. JCP’s *To The Great God Pan* is the first poem to appear in his collection, *Odes and Other Poems*, 1896, and may have been inspired by the title of Machen’s story.]

Peter Brittain **JCP, Kenneth Hopkins and *Atlantis***

The item in the July 2023 Newsletter relating to Kenneth Hopkins reminded me of an inscription by JCP in my copy of *Atlantis* (the 1954 MacDonald & Co first edition). I acquired the book in 1998 from Julian Nangle whom I had earlier met when he had a bookstore at 2 Cornhill, Dorchester. I think the inscription is of interest in that it shows JCP’s regard for Kenneth Hopkins, his erudition in relation to Homer and more particularly his personal preference regarding the novel. As the novel was published in 1954 and the inscription is dated 1957, one can surmise that it was Kenneth Hopkins’s personal copy which was inscribed on a visit to JCP at that time.



Atlantis inscribed by JCP for
Kenneth Hopkins

Chris Thomas adds: JCP’s inscription reads:

Inscribed for his faithful friend Kenneth Hopkins by John Cowper Powys who of all his books likes this one the most 1 Waterloo Ffestiniog-Blaenau or rather Blaenau-

Ffestiniog Full Moon August 10th 1957 “αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω ὅς μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἄριστα”
“I will speak as to me it seemeth to be best.” Homer [*The Iliad*, Book IX]. JCP usually referred to the book that he was currently writing or had just published as his *favourite* book. For another inscribed copy of *Atlantis* dedicated to Douglas Glass see NL 103, July 2021, pp.21-22.

Jonathan Bate *Remembering Glen Cavaliero*

In his book *Mad About Shakespeare from Classroom to Theatre to Emergency Room, Life Lessons from the Bard*, Harper Collins, 2022, Jonathan Bate, biographer (*Radical Wordsworth*, 2020), Shakespeare scholar (*Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, 1986), and practitioner of eco criticism (*The Song of the Earth*, 2000), recalls his years as a young student of English literature in the 1970s at St. Catherine’s College, Cambridge, where he was supervised by our late President, Glen Cavaliero, who gave lessons in Practical Criticism. In the extract below Jonathan Bate describes Glen’s inspiring teaching methods.

Chris Thomas

At the core of the Cambridge degree in English was the discipline of Practical Criticism, as pioneered in the 1920s by a tutor called I. A. Richards. Practical Criticism required the attentive line by line reading of a poem without prior knowledge of its authorship or historical context. We went for our ‘Prat Crit’ classes to a narrow house in a narrow lane called Portugal Place, where we would be welcomed by the smiling figure of Dr. Cavaliero, a poet himself, who would hand out dog-eared carbon-copy pages on which he had typed out that week’s poems or passages of prose. We squeezed into his front parlour where there was barely room to move between the grand piano, the guttering gas fire and the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. It was there that I encountered Jonson’s ‘On my First Son’:

Farewell thou child of my right hand, and joy;
My sin was too much hope of thee, lov’d boy,
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
O, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon scap’d world’s and flesh’s rage
And, if no other misery, yet age?
Rest in safe peace, and ask’d, say, ‘Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.’
For whose sake henceforth, all his vows be such,
As what he loves may never like too much.

Probing beneath the seemingly simple surface, Glen helped us to discover how the poem was packed with as much thought as emotion. He explained that ‘Benjamin’ in Hebrew means ‘son of the right hand’ and that the Greek word *poiesis* means ‘making’,

so that a child is a poem and a poem is a child. We explored the idea that children are only lent to their parents, who will be fined (exacted) by time or fate if they take them for granted. We argued over whether it might be a relief not to live the aches of old age. We worked out how the rhetoric of the poem built to the conclusion that if you lose someone you love with all your heart, then you may make yourself vow that you will hold some part of yourself back from all your future loves, because if you love them too much, you will only have to go through this grief again. And so we came to see in each line complexity and reality and struggle.

Glen was another of my teachers who was mad about literature. An only child, he was a compulsive reader from an early age. Like Forster, about whom he wrote an excellent book, he went to Tonbridge School. Shortly after he graduated from university, on a singular day that he would never forget, his father's business was declared bankrupt, and his mother dropped dead without any prior medical history. His response was to be ordained in the Church of England. But then he had a crisis of faith, closely related to his sexuality, so he took refuge in the kingdom of literature instead.

He taught me that every great literary work is a voyage of Illyria. You step ashore in a world that is and is not like your own. You turn your head to the sea and are opened to a distant horizon. Venturing in, you find solace, stimulations, surprise and companionship in moments of recognition and of unexpected revelation. The power of an author, Glen believed, in the spirit of Dr. Johnson, was to make new things familiar and familiar things new. The writer's way of doing that he told us, quoting Coleridge, was to choose the best words and to combine a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement. As painters have traditionally learnt their craft by imitating the Old Masters, so there was no better preparation for a life of writing than the close reading of passages in which these gifts were made manifest.

The epitaph and the elegy, poems in remembrance of the dead, he reminded us, are among the most ancient and enduring forms of writing. The last line of Jonson's poem in memory of his best piece of poetry is in fact a translation of the closing line of an epigram by the Roman poet Martial about a beautiful dead enslaved boy

Quidquid amas, cupias non placuisse nimis

Whatever you love, pray that it may not please you too much

Martial, dead for fifteen hundred years, gave Jonson the words to express his own feelings. So Jonson and Shakespeare can give us words when we need them.

Peter Foss

Llewelyn Powys: Last Words on His Deathbed

I was interested to read Rachel Hassall's piece in Newsletter 110, November 2023, on the wills and bequests of members of the Powys family, and (in the case of Llewelyn) very characteristic wishes. In the Introduction to the publication of *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys* (1943), Alyse Gregory listed some of the last wishes of her husband as he lay dying in the log chalet below the Clavadel sanatorium in December 1939.

She describes the scene on pages 36-40, quoting some of his whispered bequests and remarks at the very end of his life. In 1983 Rosemary Manning showed me the two pages of scribbled notes that Alyse made at the scene, and these I photocopied at the time. I thought it would be a poignant addendum to Rachel's article, so here I have transcribed them [with queries inserted] and include images of the pages themselves.

[*Words copied down on his deathbed by Alyse Gregory*]

Nan's necklace – pink shell from W. Indies to go to Deirdre

Katie – she has been so good to me

John

Gertrude

Willie

Gamel

I saw a perfect little goblin ringing a death knell
Pitiful little instruments to store my glasses [?]

... the sweet girls all to have some little token
Liza

That drawing for Lisaly

Gilfrid – the charm

Littleton Alfred – watch

Gerald – Gamel's seal

The other seal for me

Dr Häberlin – *Book of Days*

Don't let me be shocked by...[?]

My monkey tail – he laughs

I am a little disconsolate

May used to make it at the Mabelulu

I have a huge longing for annihilation

A follower of Epicurus should not be dragged
along

You have been sweet to me – I have loved you
best – if my ghost should return it would be to
you it would come

Nan's necklace - pink shell from W. Indies to
go to Deirdre

Katie - she has been so good to me

John
Gertrude
Willie
Gamel

I saw a perfect little goblin ringing a death knell
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*Llewelyn's last words noted by Alyse
Gregory, page 1. Photo by Peter Foss*

I saw a perfect little goblin ringing a death knell
Pitiful little instruments to store my glasses [?]
... the sweet girls all to have some little token

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I have a huge longing for annihilation

A follower of Epicurus should not be dragged
along

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best - if my ghost should return it would be to
you it would come

*Llewelyn's last words noted by Alyse
Gregory, page 2. Photo by Peter Foss*

I decide things in my feather cockhead and nothing happens
Darling, then later, 'You've been so sweet to me, we'll all be dust soon'
Wear & tear
Virginia pippin apples at Montacute – Marian would know
These 3 sweet girls and that generous woman
Give Joan a book of L's at the room [?]
That was tall as the skies [?]

Crystal that Nellie found to be given to John
Secret cupboard – nursery ring of Gamel's
13 turquoises – give it back to her – don't let her be careless of it

After L? sent out, 'Of course I've been happiest with you than anyone else in the world'

Give guard back to Gertrude
Grandmother's

Taken at L's death bed

Chris Thomas

Marian Powys and Jackson Pollock

At last year's conference one of our members handed me a copy of the *New York Review of Books*, Summer 2023 issue. Inside I found a review, by Jed Perl, of the catalogue for *The Clamor of Ornament: Exchange, Power and Joy from the Fifteenth Century to the Present*, an exhibition of images, drawings and objects held at the Drawing Centre in New York from June 15 to September 18 2022. I was more than a little surprised to find a reference in the review to the admiration the American abstract artist, Jackson Pollock, expressed for Marian Powys and her lace collection. I am not sure if this relationship is very widely known although Peter Powys Grey refers to the connection in an article 'In these Delicate Constructions' in Newsletter 37, July 1999, p.5, remarking that Marian "was apt to cite Jackson Pollock as a source of inspiration for younger lace designers."

The reference in the *New York Review of Books* is worth quoting here:

"There is a wonderful passage about the unity of the ornamental impulse in the memoirs of the mid twentieth century New York gallery director John Bernard Myers, *Tracking the Marvellous: a life in the New York art world* (1983). Myers recalls that in the early days of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery where he exhibited artists including Helen Frankenthaler and Larry Rivers, he mounted a show of antique lace from the collection of a Mrs Grey. Among the most enthusiastic visitors was Jackson Pollock who: "came twice and took great pleasure in the notion of art anonyne; the rhythm of swirl and cross hatch, even the highly conventionalised images of French eighteenth century

lace, with its peacocks, pheasants, roses, waterfalls, grottoes, pagodas, ruins and costumed personages, delighted him.” Myers hardly needs to explain that for Pollock, the rhythms and convolutions of these ornamental achievements had some kinship with his own paintings, with their dripped painterly arabesques. As for Mrs Grey, the lace collector, she wasn’t surprised by Pollock’s response, for she was an admirer of his “*lovely skein pictures*.” What Pollock and the anonymous lace makers shared was a language.”

Ray Crozier ***Patchin Place***

My book, *Patchin Place: The Powyses and Literary New York*, is now available as an eBook from Amazon. A small number of copies of the paperback edition published by The Sundial Press are still available and can be obtained directly from the author while stocks last, at £14.50 plus postage. If you are interested, please contact Ray at ray.crozier@hotmail.com. The Sundial Press is no longer taking orders.

Since the paperback was published in 2022, the actual Patchin Place (all ten buildings as well as neighbouring 113 West 10th Street) has been purchased by a real estate investment firm for \$32 million. The estate has had few owners in its nearly 200 years history, so inevitably there are concerns about the implications of this purchase for its future. It has a degree of protection from legislation dating back to 1965 aimed at preserving buildings in the city of architectural, historical and cultural significance. Patchin Place is designated as a landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission as part of Greenwich Village Historic District, so any substantive changes to the buildings will be subject to a review process. The Village Preservation Society is keeping an anxious eye on developments (www.villagepreservation.org).

The exterior of the alley has scarcely changed since JCP, Phyllis Playter, Llewelyn, and Alyse Gregory lived there and, indeed, from its construction in the 1840s. When e. e. cummings and Marion Morehouse resided in 4, Patchin Place, they campaigned to preserve it in 1961. The little street is now so well-known that there is certain to be opposition to redevelopment. Who knows? Perhaps the Powys connection might be adduced one day as evidence of the little street’s cultural significance.

Chris Thomas ***Values and Sensations: JCP and Bernard Berenson***

Whilst re-reading *Rodmoor* in preparation for last year’s conference I came across an intriguing sentence, the implications of which I had not previously properly appreciated. JCP describes how Adrian Sorio looks at Nance Herrick: “*as if he were a connoisseur in a gallery observing the “values” of a famous picture.*” (Colgate University Press, 1973, p.31.) JCP might be making an allusion to one of his favourite writers, Walter Pater. JCP tells us in *Autobiography* that he used to give lectures on the subject of Pater’s “critical values”. He might therefore be referring here to Pater’s



Bernard Berenson studying the “values” of a painting

subjectivist and impressionistic method of criticism or to his aesthetic approach to art and life evidenced especially in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). The influence of Pater’s book on JCP may be easily discerned in his *Suspended Judgements, Essays on Books and Sensations* (1916).

I am inclined to think, however, that in the passage just quoted from *Rodmoor*, JCP is actually referring to Pater’s great American-Lithuanian disciple, the art historian, connoisseur, and expert in attribution and authentication of works of art, Bernard Berenson (1865-1959). Berenson himself was a passionate admirer of Pater’s writing. When, for instance, he was a student at Harvard between 1884-1887 Berenson vigorously championed Pater especially saturating himself, says Berenson’s biographer, Ernest Samuels, in Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* and later, in the 1890s, he carried a copy of this book with him when he explored places in northern Italy in search of Renaissance paintings. Pater’s doctrine of the value of personal, intensely felt, transitory physical sensations had great impact and influence on Berenson as well as JCP.

JCP seems to have read Berenson’s books throughout his life and greatly admired Berenson’s aesthetic sensibility as well as his insights and ideas about art. On 29 August 1949 JCP wrote to his friend Nicholas Ross: *I’ve just been reading in a Review of Berenson’s life of himself (I’ve adored in my time his profound insight into the subtlest Italian art) how he says it’s the touch of Italian soil, not only farms and vine-dressers and fig-raiders and harvesters, but the ancient stone soil, any blob of sun-dried mud*

or gravel or broken cement....enjoying nature as Art and Art as nature, as not even they've done it longer than not even the Greeks ever did for that alone in the world conveys the true renaissance age after age and for the whole world. JCP may have been reading a review by Charles Morgan in the *Spectator* (8 July 1949) of Berenson's *Sketch for a Self Portrait* (Pantheon, April 1949) or he might also have read a review of Berenson's book in the *Sunday Times*.

A key early work by Berenson for JCP would have been *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (1896). In his groundbreaking prefatory essay to the book with its index of painters and lists of 'authenticated' paintings, Berenson introduced the concept of tactile values, by which he meant the way some painters are able to convey in a convincing way the illusion of touch, action and movement in a work of art and which he also used to classify the status of an artist: "*the essential in the art of painting.... is to stimulate our consciousness of tactile values, so that the picture shall have at least as much power as the object represented, to appeal to our tactile imagination.*" Later, in 1897, he introduced the concept of "ideated sensations". Moreover, according to Berenson, artists who make a direct appeal to our senses, stimulate our feeling for tactile values and tactile imagination also communicate to the viewer a life-confirming and life-enhancing sense of vitality. These are principles that would surely appeal to JCP. In his *Sketch for a Self Portrait* Berenson refers to his early books: *Remember, you mapped out one book on ideated sensations, and another on life-enhancement.*

Berenson was a protégé of the wealthy art collector and connoisseur, Ned Warren, who lived in Lewes during the 1890s, whilst JCP was at Court House nearby. JCP visited Warren and borrowed books from his library ("*I discoursed to her [Phyllis] too then on the merits of Emile Faguet as the best of all Critics, recalling how I borrowed him at Lewes from the "Ned Warren" house in ancient days.*" – JCP diary 19 October 1932.) Perhaps the book on the history of early Italian painting that JCP describes, in *Autobiography* (p.228), which he read at the time he resided at Court House, could have been borrowed from Warren. He might indeed have actually been reading a copy of Berenson's *Florentine Painters*. I wonder as well whether, when, in *Wolf Solent*, JCP describes the painting, above the fireplace in Jason Otter's room, of a Holy Family by Filippino Lippi as "*morbidity sanctimonious*" (Penguin Modern Classics, 1964, p.40) he was recalling Berenson's description, in the introduction to *Florentine Painters*, of Filippino's work lacking tactile values and having a "*touch of consumptive delicacy*" (*Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, 1896, p.76.). It is quite possible that JCP had seen Filippino Lippi's painting of The Holy Family with St. John the Baptist and St. Margaret (c.1495) which Berenson had acquired for Warren and which hung in Warren's house in Lewes (now at the Cleveland Museum of Art). Berenson later included a chapter about the painting in his *Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 1902.

In developing his theory of art Berenson was especially inspired by the work of William James – another favourite author of JCP. Berenson read in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) the analysis put forward by James of the psychology of sensation, of ideated sensations, and tactile feelings. James would later favourably review Berenson's *Florentine Painters* in the periodical *Science* (4 April 1896). Berenson's

focus on the significance of sensation and his psycho-physiological response to art could well provide a context, background and source for JCP's personal life philosophy of sensations. In *Autobiography* JCP describes his dedication to his physical sensations on his walks around Cambridge when he was a student there: "*My thoughts were lost in my sensations; and my sensations were of a kind so difficult to describe that I could write a volume upon them and still not really have put them down. But the field-dung upon my boots, the ditch mud plastered thick, with little bits of dead grass in it, against the turned up ends of my trousers...the salty taste of half dried sweat upon my lips, the delicious swollenness of my fingers, the sullen, sweet weariness of my legs, the indescribable happiness of my calm, dazed, lulled, wind-drugged, air-drunk spirit, were all, after their kind,, a sort of thinking... Did I share at such times the sub-thoughts, or over thoughts, that the old earth herself has...*" These confessions of his early experiences JCP associates with his love of Keats and his frequent quotation: "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!" (Keats, letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817.) – see for instance *A Philosophy of Solitude*, *The Art of Happiness*, *Mortal Strife*, *In Spite Of*, and *Confessions of Two Brothers*.

JCP felt an affinity with Berenson's aesthetic enjoyment, and his excited and ecstatic response to the visual arts. In *Autobiography* JCP refers to the pleasure he derived from painting in his life: "*It is the only art outside literature, that will ever deeply appeal to me...*" If JCP went on to read Berenson's *Aesthetics and History* (1950) he might have applauded and empathised with Berenson's description of his engagement with art and his personal feeling of life enhancement: "*I can be uplifted, transported and enraptured. I can sing and dance within myself.*" JCP would also have been highly interested in Berenson's transcendent, life affirming, and profoundly shattering psychological experience when, in 1894, he was shown the collection of Oriental art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He wrote to his future wife about this experience in a letter: "*I was prostrate, I thought I should die, I never had such an art experience.*" For both Berenson and JCP sensation holds the key to life enjoyment and self-development.

For a discussion of JCP's philosophy of sensations and his engagement with anarchism see *A Cult of Sensations – JCP's life philosophy and anarchism*, by David Goodway, *Powys Journal*, 2004.

Llewelyn Powys

Author's Preface to Somerset Essays

In selecting the title, *Dorset Essays*, for my last book I did not intend necessarily to restrict myself to the one county. A friendly critic courteously excused my trespassings by the perhaps somewhat rash assertion that Somerset, Dorset, and Wiltshire represent a 'racial unity'. I must again seek the indulgence of my more exacting readers for this second collection, especially with regard to my own native county of Dorset, for I have less than ever troubled my head about boundary lines. It was never my purpose

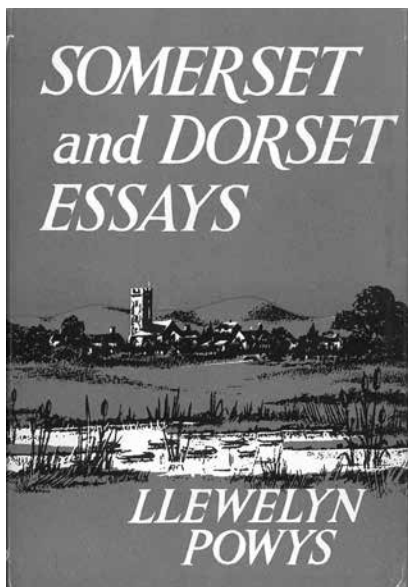
to produce formal handbooks of either of these two counties; rather it has been my endeavour through meditations upon the past, and through memories of my own life-experience, to catch at moods common to all reflective country bred people who feel themselves emotionally attached to cities, villages, roads, lanes and fields familiar to them since childhood.

John Cowper Powys

Foreword to Somerset and Dorset Essays by Llewelyn Powys

Without question Llewelyn was the best loved of all his brothers and sisters. And I think this selection from his essays will show any clairvoyant reader just why he was the best loved. It was because he combined in himself something of the best qualities in all of us. He had the seriousness of character and the industriousness and will-power of our brother Littleton. He had more than a touch of the strong originality of our brother Theodore. He had also something of the never shifting steadfastness of our brother A.R. Powys, the architect. And he undoubtedly had the same penetrating eye for far and near landscapes, for birds and animals and natives, as is possessed by our African sheep-farming brother William.

There was another and a most subtle cause of Llewelyn's popularity with all his



Dust jacket of Somerset and Dorset Essays

brothers and sisters, and that was his remoteness from those perilous extremes of spiritual-romantic-idealised love on the one hand and cerebral vicious lust on the other. His nature, though susceptible to every sort of human feeling in the sense of understanding it "from the ground up", was of a too compact and conscientiously masculine seriousness and solidity to put up with certain equivocal and wavering aberrations that are in their essence bi-sexual and have a neurotic vibration in them. His mind was too much like the mind of Shakespeare and Charles Lamb to feel any leaning to these ambiguous proclivities.

What we get from Llewelyn's essays, especially when he is concerned with Dorset or Somerset, is nothing less than the real, true, actual history of our native land, a vivid revelation in rough outline after rough outline of the way we British here take life. John Richard Green may revolt from the old-fashioned stories about nobles and

their wives, and kings and their concubines, and may endeavour to make us follow the great social movements and political changes from century to century; but Llewelyn goes much deeper than that. What he makes us realise is the self-created toughness

and obstinate humorous endurance of the men and women of this individualistic island as we “carry on” through season by season, month by month, through day by day, through hour by hour, in our goings forth and comings in; how we set ourselves to enjoy ourselves, at our meals, in our beds, and all our daily labours by land and sea; and he shows how this resolution to enjoy ourselves begins with us in our cradles and ends with us only in our graves. There is a constant undercurrent in Llewelyn’s essays that is like the sound of wings in the air, of waves in the water, of fires on the hearth, of bonfires in the garden, of bells in the belfries, of trumpets in the barracks, and behind it all there is a rhythm that gives something of the homely comfort of that unparalleled passage in the “Book of Common Prayer” about pardon and peace. What he writes is not only the story of Nancy Cooper and of the River Yeo, and of St. Ealdhelm’s and of Montacute House, and of the Fossil Forest and of Bat’s Head. It is the story of man’s destiny upon earth. It is a fabulous tale. It is a fairy tale. But yet it is the tale of real, actual, dawn-to-night existence, the blood draining monotony and inescapable repetition of day following day, with only sleep deeper than life, and only dreams madder than Hell to keep us from that ennui that is sick of everything and from that weariness that is worse than death.

The most obvious peculiarity of Llewelyn’s style of writing is a peculiarity that we find in almost all of our best and most memorable old writers who were neither novelists nor metaphysicians. I mean their obstinate and incorrigible tendency to express their ideas and describe their scenes in the actual phrases, and often in the very sentences of still earlier writers whose old-world method of putting things has fed their taste and consecrated their intonations as if they were chanting before an altar. Thus the whole literature of our island has become an immemorial palimpsest, richer, sweeter, more suggestive, more significant than it could possibly have been if each individual writer had prided himself on showing off his own confounded caprices rather than on being naturally and instinctively himself.

Llewelyn’s style is like the style of our thoughts when a long day-dream has come upon us, suddenly, wonderfully, by a hearth, in a terrace walk, on a balustrade, on a bit of sea coast with which we have been familiar from our childhood. It is sometimes continuous. It is sometimes broken, but it always has a golden thread to lead us safely through life; so that we shall neither be devoured by the Minotaur on the one hand or turned into a pillar of salt on the other.

Note by Chris Thomas

Somerset and Dorset Essays was first published by Macdonald & Co in 1957 with a dust wrapper designed by Mudge-Marriott.

Dorset Essays was first published in 1935 by the Bodley Head with forty photographic illustrations by Wyndham Goodden and dust wrapper designed by Gertrude Powys showing a silhouette of the white horse of Osmington. A hybrid edition of *Dorset Essays* was later issued by the Redcliffe Press in 1983 with selected essays from the first book and others from *Somerset Essays*, without mentioning *Somerset Essays*

at all. This hybrid edition included new photographs by Ann Clarke replacing images by Wyndham Goodden. (Peter Foss has full bibliographical information in his *Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys*).

Somerset Essays was first published in 1937 by the Bodley Head with photographic illustrations by Wyndham Goodden and dust wrapper designed by Gertrude Powys (reproduced on the front cover of this Newsletter). According to Peter Foss in his *Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys*, p.82, several of the photographs in *Somerset Essays* were by Rivers Pollock who also took the photos in Llewelyn's *Swiss Essays*. JCP wrote to Llewelyn on 26 November 1937 and said "*I too am full of pleasure in Somerset Essays. I prefer it to Dorset Essays – I liked so very particularly the one on St. Aldhelm... What a lovely sweet innocent yet sturdy strength! You do convey this so well and the one on old Bertie is perfectly lovely. Yes and the Photos are so good and so well chosen and Gertrude's cover and all.*"

For more information about Wyndham Goodden and how he assisted Llewelyn with his research see "Llewelyn Powys The Essayist at Work: Letters to H. G. Tavender", compiled with an introduction by Peter J. Foss, the *Powys Journal*, Vol. X, 2000, pp.42-59. A copy of Llewelyn's novel *Apples Be Ripe* in the Powys collection at Exeter University is inscribed *To Wyndham Goodden my beloved and honoured collaborator with The Dorset Essays November, 1934 Llewelyn Powys*. Dr Wyndham Charles Goodden (1854-1939), surgeon, was the son of the Rev. Charles Culliford Goodden (1817-1885) who was vicar of Montacute from 1845-1885. Wyndham Goodden died at Weyside Cottage, Upwey, Fleet in Dorset. He is buried in the family vault under the chancel arch of Holy Trinity Church, Fleet. *Dorset Essays* is dedicated to Wyndham's father as well as Llewelyn's father, Charles Francis Powys, who succeeded Charles Culliford Goodden as vicar of Montacute.

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