

The Powys Society



Newsletter No. 112
July 2024



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The *Newsletter* is published three times a year: in March, July and November.

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,
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FRONT COVER: St. Andrew's church, Winterborne Tomson—see article inside. Photo by Anna Rosic.
BACK COVER: The Flat Iron building, Winter scene, New York, 1905. See article – The Coming Race
inside. Photo: Library of Congress.

Editorial

The leading item in this issue is a tribute by poet Jeremy Hooker to fellow writer and Powysian Kim Taplin, author of *The English Path* (1979). In this book Kim explores the symbolic role landmarks and pathways play in the works of JCP, Llewelyn and TFP. Kim Taplin died just before Easter this year. We also sadly have to report the death on 8 May of long-standing member Rosemary Dickens.

Powys forebears, family members, and other relatives come into focus in NL 112: Morine Krissdóttir reviews a biography of JCP's brother-in-law Harry Lyon, which as Morine points out, relies heavily on the published research of Susan Rands especially for details of the relationship between Lyon and JCP. We look at the memorials to A. R. Powys (Bertie), at the church of St. Andrew's, Winterborne Tomson, and quote from his obituaries. John Sanders calls for volunteers to help look after Katie Powys's oak cross in East Chaldon churchyard. We include news from Powys family historian, Timothy Powys-Lybbe, who has definitively traced the descent of the Powys line, beginning in the eighteenth century, from lawyer, judge, and politician, Sir Thomas Powys (1648-1719), to a modern living relative. Celebrated American travel writer Lawrence Millman writes about his serendipitous meeting, in 1981, with JCP's nephew, Peter Powys Grey, on the remote island of Criehaven (also known as Ragged Island) off the coast of Maine. We identify the new destination of some of Gertrude's paintings, as well as her water colour sketches and graphic material by other members of the Powys family which have been purchased by one of our members at the Mappowder sale.

A project has been commenced to identify all the university and public debates in which JCP participated. Members are invited to help fill in the gaps in our present knowledge. To illustrate JCP's role as a 'deadly debater' we reprint Margery Currey's

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review of JCP's debate with Maurice Browne in 1915, at the Chicago Little Theatre, on War (originally published by Margaret Anderson in the *Little Review*).

A discussion of JCP's first visit to America at the beginning of 1905 precedes newspaper articles first published in the *Sussex Express* about JCP's two lectures, delivered in Lewes in May 1905, soon after his return to England from America, in which he describes his impressions of American life and literature, inspired by Edward Bulwer Lytton's prophetic 1871 novel, *The Coming Race*. These two articles provide an appropriate introduction to the beginning of JCP's career as a lecturer in America and complement his much later and more widely known accounts of living and working in America. These early reports have never before been reprinted or cited in a Powysian context.

Chris Thomas

Jeremy Hooker
A Tribute to Kim Taplin (1943-2024)

[*Kim Taplin was a poet and keen supporter of the work of JCP, Llewelyn and TFP. She wrote about the Powyses with poetical insight in her early study The English Path (1979, reprinted 1999). Kim sadly died just before Easter this year. CT*]

Kim Taplin was my good friend for many years. I think we first met at a conference of the Powys Society sometime in the early '70s and our interest in John Cowper Powys and his brothers was the original link between us. Soon we were sharing our



Kim Taplin rowing on the River Avon near Stratford.

devotion to writers about nature and rural life in the English tradition, such as John Clare and Thomas Hardy, and, especially, Richard Jefferies. Over the years, Kim herself contributed notably to this tradition with her essays, and books such as *The English Path* and *Tongues in Trees*. These were lucid prose works by a woman who was essentially a poet. She published one major collection, *By the Harbour Wall*, with Enitharmon Press, several pamphlets,

and an experimental novel. I urged her to publish a selected poems, but her lack of contacts and her natural reticence held her back. In consequence, she has yet to be widely recognized as a vital poet of our time, a nature poet with an acute sense of all living things. She was also a feminist with a keen political sense, as evidenced by *Muniments*, her long poem based on the nuclear sites in Britain. Kim also wrote anguished, but vitally observant, personal poems, such as ‘This Year, next Year’, occasioned by the breakdown of her marriage. I would discuss this poem with creative writing students as a fine example of the personal ‘voice’, grounded in the particularities of time and place.

Kim was a great walker, and wrote about her walks in two entertaining books: *Days Off in Oxfordshire* and *Walking Aloud*, subtitled ‘Rambles in the Cherwell Valley’. I shared walks with her in the New Forest and Oxfordshire, when I benefited from her keen observation of the world around us, and we talked about everything – our lives, our children, books, politics, religion, the ecological crisis. Kim had an essentially religious disposition. She was a practising Christian when we first met. Later, she was more sceptical, but always a person with compassion for a suffering world, and reverence for nature and humanity. Kim was a troubled soul, which is to say she was fully alive in our time, and painfully aware of what in her poem *Lapwings*, for instance, she called ‘man-made unmaking’. Her delight in nature was ecstatic – in the true sense of the word, it took her out of herself. In almost her last email to me she spoke of having seen a Clouded Yellow. Her happiness at seeing the rare butterfly denoted more than a natural observation; it expressed her essential being.

Member and non-member tributes to Kim Taplin

Very sorry indeed to hear about Kim Taplin. Her work was very important to me in the 1980s.

Nicholas Birns

I greatly admire Kim’s book *Tongues In Trees*. One of my favourites.

Tony Hallett

I first met Kim Taplin at a Powys Conference in I think 1982, so she must have been a member then. I’ve long had her book *The English Path* on my shelves, a wonderful study touching on all the things we so value in such an interesting and scholarly way. It’s a shame we didn’t see more of her over the years.

Peter Foss

What a pity we often discover people like Kim only after they are dead. I will look out for her poems.

Pat Quigley

Tributes to Rosemary Dickens 1943-2024

Rosemary Dickens was a long-standing member of the Powys Society. Sadly, Rosemary passed away, in a hospice near Salisbury, on Wednesday 8 May having been ill for some time. Following the tributes below we have reproduced a few of Rosemary's lively and vivid sketches of fellow Powysians as a testimonial to her memory and devotion to the Society. For another sketch by Rosemary of the gathering of the Dandelion Fellowship on the occasion of Llewelyn's birthday at the Sailor's Return also see the front cover of Newsletter 74, November 2011. Examples of Rosemary's art can be found on her website at: <https://cargocollective.com/rosemarydickens>.

Chris Thomas

From Chris Gostick:

Rosemary Dickens was one of those lovely unobtrusive people who if you were lucky enough to know them seem always to have been part of your life. Rosemary was born in 1943 and trained at Salisbury College of Art in the late 1950's and early 1960's, specialising in creative design, embroidery and painting. Later in the 1960s she needed a serious spinal operation, from which she recovered well, but which left her quite badly disabled, although she never let this interfere with her lifestyle. She was particularly interested in the wildlife, landscape and archaeology in Wiltshire and Dorset, and very early on became a regular attender at the annual Llewelyn Birthday walks. She was usually accompanied by her young friend, Dennis White, to drive her up to Chydyok to avoid the stiff climb up Chalky Knapp to the stone. In 2006 I was fortunate enough to attend *The Dragon Trail*, a wonderful exhibition of her work on the wildlife and archaeology of Wessex, held at the Salisbury Museum, and she later sent me a set of slides as permanent reminder of the exhibition. After the 20th anniversary of the Llewelyn walk in 2015 I became a less frequent attender myself, but we still kept in regular contact, so I was saddened by her illness over the past year or so. Even so she remained incredibly active and cheerful, and at Christmas I was astonished to receive a lovely copy of her 2021/22 *Sketchbook of Lime Kiln Down*, a small nature reserve near Salisbury, threatened by a housing development. This shows her still at the very height of her artistic powers, despite her increasingly severe ill health. Shortly after Christmas she entered a hospice near Salisbury, where she appears to have received exemplary care, and a very peaceful death. She will be greatly missed and long-remembered by all who were fortunate enough to know her, but her work will undoubtedly live on for very many years to come.

From Neil Lee-Atkin:

Finding the appropriate words to express my feelings following Rosemary's passing is probably a task beyond my limited capabilities, for she was a dearly loved and loyal

friend of some thirty years who shared my passion for the natural world and nurtured a deep and abiding reverence for life. Rosemary was kindness personified, and was also a good friend to my wife Ann; to lose both in the short space of just four months feels, at this sad time, to be the most bitter of blows.

I have good memories of her beautiful artwork, her books, and especially the heavy bronze ankh she had made by a specialist Bronze-Age smith in celebration of my 60th birthday and presented it to me at Llewelyn's Stone all those years ago! I also have every reason to be grateful for her encouragement and support of my writing, not least for the kindness, good nature and generous free spirit which epitomised her character and was largely responsible for helping to finance the production of my little book about Llewelyn. She was modest and unassuming too, declining any mention or dedication.

There are a number of colour illustrations in the book, "*Dandelions, Ground-Ivy & Yarrow, Celebrating Twenty Years of the Llewelyn Birthday Walk*" and Rosemary is featured in most of them - simply because she was an ever-present who, despite her increasing mobility problems, and with special dispensation for Dennis White to drive her as far as Chydyok, always managed to complete her annual pilgrimage to Llewelyn's Stone, a tribute to the desire, tenacity and courage which this remarkable lady displayed to the end.

Rosemary's daughter, Mel, John Sanders and Pat Quigley have helped to exchange news of Rosemary's decease. All these connections highlight and demonstrate the special bond of friendship generated between members of the Powys Society, and speak volumes for the esteem in which Rosemary was held by those who had the good fortune to know her.

From Pat Quigley:

I didn't realize Rosemary was a talented artist when I met her at a Powys Society conference some years ago and we discussed the Powys family and poetry. She stopped attending conferences because her back problems made sitting through talks too painful to endure. We only reconnected in recent years after meeting again at a Dandelion Day walk for Llewelyn. We exchanged emails and Christmas cards. It was always a delight to receive her cards – beautiful nature scenes rendered in her unique style. Her love of the natural world and sensitivity to mythical layers embedded in landscape imbued her work with the spirit we associate with all the Powys family. She was very prolific and created beautiful annual journals richly illustrated with images of the natural world. I wish I had known her better and for a longer period, but her art will live on.



Chris Gostick, John Sanders and Neil Lee-Atkin at the Sailor's Return, East Chaldon, 13 August 2022.



Neil Lee-Atkin reading from the introduction to Llewelyn's Book of Days (1937) at the Sailor's Return, East Chaldon, 13 August 2022.



Rosemary Dickens, John Sanders and Denis White on Chaldon Down, 13 August 2022. Rosemary has written on the sketch: "Extreme heat. Too hot to continue to Llewelyn's stone."

Rosemary Dickens
Sketches: Dandelion Fellowship Annual Gathering
Sunday 13 August 2022

The spirited and lifelike pencil sketches reproduced on p.6, the originals are hand coloured, were made by Rosemary Dickens during the Friends of Llewelyn Powys and Dandelion Fellowship Annual Gathering on Sunday 13 August 2022 in an extreme heat-wave. The weather conditions meant that for some members the last leg of the journey to Llewelyn's memorial stone had to be curtailed. For a description of the event see the report by Neil Lee-Atkin in NL 107, November 2022, pp.19-22.

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 drawings by George Charlton. 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."

***Please notify Secretary as soon as possible
if you wish to attend this meeting***

Chris Thomas
Report: Study Day Chapter 11, A Glastonbury Romance
20 April 2024

On a bright, sunny, but cold morning (Saturday 20 April) a group of nine members and two non-members met in the comfortable surroundings of the upstairs sitting room at the Old Fire Engine House - Restaurant and Gallery, in Ely, where, fortified by cups of tea and coffee, we discussed *A Glastonbury Romance*, Chapter 11, Consummation. This venue always seems to generate animated debate encompassing a wide range of views whatever the subject selected for study. One of our members declared afterwards that the meeting was “*a big treat for me seeing old friends! Best social event in my life.*” As I walked to the venue beside the river Ouse, I felt that Spring already seemed to be happening in Ely. I thought of Sam Dekker amidst the Avalonian landscape outside Whitelake Cottage: “*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...*”

Our discussion was led very competently by Dawn Collins who also gave excellent readings of two important passages in Chapter 11 (Nell preparing the house for tea with Sam and Sam’s seduction of Nell). We entered Chapter 11 via a brief reference to the Stonehenge chapter. JCP himself visited Stonehenge on 2 August 1929 and prayed to the stones.



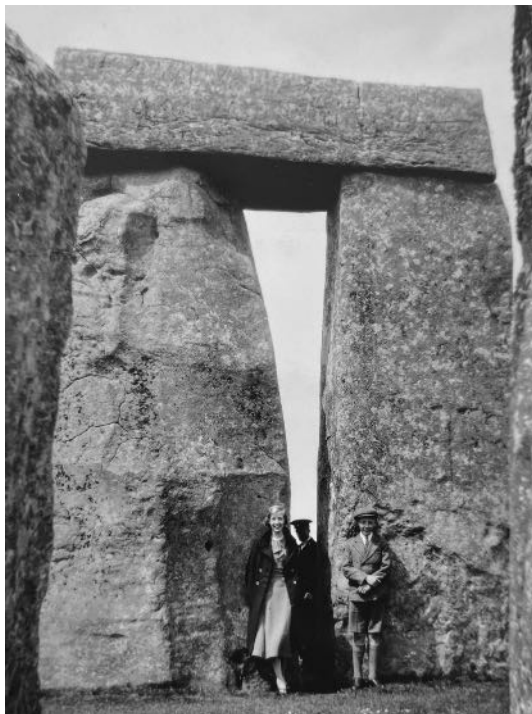
*Members and guests discussing Chapter 11 of AGR. From L to R: Kate Kavanagh,
Bruno Kavanagh, Rachael Richardson, Marcel Bradbury, Chris Thomas,
Dawn Collins and Ben Thomson. Photo: Paul Cheshire.*

Dawn invited us to consider the year that *AGR* was first published in UK, 1933, and think about the period of the novel – “*Time: The present*”, asserts JCP, under the list of principal characters, but which present did he mean we wondered? JCP provides other clues describing Cordelia Geard: “*a girl of the second decade of the twentieth century...*” Dawn led us back to the Stonehenge chapter and in particular she pointed to JCP’s description of the enormous monoliths and trilithons: “*these huge blocks of immemorial stone...*” Dawn showed us a photo of her mother and her mother’s brother standing beside one of the trilithons at Stonehenge on a visit to the site made by her mother around 1933. (See photo reproduced here.) Dawn pointed to a striking coincidence: in the photo you can see a guard observing the visitors. In *AGR* John Crow notes: “*Someone told me in France that [Stonehenge] was guarded after sunset by soldiers.*”

Dawn said that the subject of Chapter 11, JCP’s description of the relationship between Nell Zoyland and Sam Dekker, reads like a woman’s magazine love story. All the power of the chapter lies in its descriptive passages – either of the internal thought processes of JCP’s characters or of nature (especially the description of Sam wandering beside Whitelake stream). Dialogue is superficial.

Dawn noted that significantly the title of this chapter lacks either the definite or indefinite article which underlines JCP’s subject - the nature of love experienced differently by a man and a woman – not everyone at the meeting was however convinced by JCP’s reflections on love. Sam and Nell are archetypes and *AGR* is itself a book of consummations, non-consummations, “*intoxicated eroticism*” and differing sexualities – heterosexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, sadism, and the “*worm snake of the sexual nerve.*”

We noted the way JCP evokes the natural affinity between Sam and Nell - **Kate Kavanagh** suggested Sam and Nell seem to swap identities; JCP describes how Sam and Nell mingle and merge their identities: “*Sam was essentially a slow moving, slow witted timid animal*” and “*a natural simple man*”. Nell is “*a natural simple girl.*” Sam’s *sluggish* nature is captured at the beginning of the chapter in his “*abstracted*



Stonehenge trilithon. Dawn’s mother with her mother’s brother. Family photo, c.1933.

trance.” We enjoyed greatly JCP’s description of Sam and Nell’s consummated love for each other, their “*delirious ecstasy*”, their “*sublime and absolute ecstasy*” and “*the blind subcurrent that sweeps the two together*”. Sam loves Nell with “*a deep passive animal intensity*.” Together they reach a “*supreme rapture*” and discover in each other their alter ego. Beside them JCP contrasts the relationship between John and Mary Crow which appears neurotic, sad, and sterile. In Chapter 2 John and Mary make love “*like vicious children due to the fact they are not in the faintest degree tempted to the usual gestures of excessive human passion*.” But later in the novel Sam’s renunciation of natural sex pleasure and his puritanical stress on sexual restraint seems to John Crow, when he is married, to be “*a monstrous outrage on life*.” Sam’s conversion so soon after Chapter 11 and his later attempt to live the life of a saint contrasts with his original feelings for Nell and the “*impetuous craving of his tingling senses*.” We appreciated the scene when Sam’s desire for Nell reaches an apotheosis - he snatches Nell’s cigarette from her, blows out the lighted candles, pulls Nell across the room and tears off her blue dressing gown. We noted that blue is a significant colour throughout the novel. JCP describes, convincingly, Nell’s sudden sense of fear. Nell’s preparation of tea with Sam suggests a note of practical and domestic realism – **John Hodgson** said Nell’s cigarette smoking reminded him of Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s especially Bette Davis in *Now Voyager* (1942).

We noted the cosmological context of Chapter 11 – all the scenes take place under the presence of the “young” moon, especially the “*indescribable transport*” of Sam and Nell which occurs specifically during “*the night of the New Moon*”. The chapter ends with a eulogy to the influence of the “*shapeless moon*” and “*interstellar spaces*”. We also noted JCP’s literary references such as allusions to Pater, Poe, Cervantes and *Don Quixote*. **John Hodgson** referred to JCP’s familiar habit of ‘composting’ or ‘layering’ literary allusions and suggested references to Keats and Tennyson. We noticed that similes and metaphors dominate JCP’s prose style often creating striking visual images as when Sam kisses Nell and her head “*dropped forward like a flower whose stem has been broken*.” Words are “*like the sound of the ripples of the river of fate*.”

At mid-day we temporarily paused our discussion whilst we moved downstairs for lunch in the dining room. In the afternoon, re-energised, we resumed our discussion - Dawn gave a second reading from Chapter 11.

This was a highly enjoyable meeting, full of stimulating conversation.

Now we are looking forward to returning to the Old Fire Engine House later in the year for a discussion of *Mr Weston’s Good Wine* which will be led by Marcel Bradbury. See the notice in this issue inviting members to participate in the meeting on 19 October.

Thanks are due to **Sonia Lewis** for making arrangements at the venue and to **Dawn Collins** for leading our discussion and allowing us to reproduce her family photo.

Dawn Collins

henge of books. sepia of family

taunting me a slum
of books nine deep
litter the table surface.
the closest megalith JCP
journals. articles
obscure thoughts
A Glastonbury Romance
my talk

in my hand photographs of my mother
with her brother
Stonehenge 1933 - approximately.
sepia'd monochrome
I read fictional John Crow
his impoverished painful walk
from Norfolk to Somerset.
one March.
past this same sacred place. his mystic
becoming amongst the stones

i study again the childish
face of my mother. glib
tourist. visitor. wonder where
i am from; outer space. a circle.
under a stone. the significance of
cosmic entanglement and arriving
at now.
the improbability of those
megaliths so close. I notice

between two sentinel stones a guard peering
the face of authority. checking for crime.
for imaginative thoughts in real time.
interstices of war between life and burial.

Committee Nominations 2024-2025

The following **Honorary Officers** have been nominated and have agreed to serve for another one-year period from 2024 to 2025:

	Nomination	Proposer	Seconder
Chair	Paul Cheshire	John Hodgson	Sonia Lewis
Vice-Chair	David Goodway	Peter Lazare	Kim Wheatley
Acting Treasurer	Paul Cheshire	Joe Sentance	Ray Cox
Secretary	Chris Thomas	Tony Head	Ray Crozier

For **membership of the committee** the following members have been nominated and have agreed to serve for another three-year period from 2024 to 2027:

Nomination	Proposer	Seconder
Dawn Collins	Pat Quigley	Chris Michaelides
Kate Kavanagh	Neil Lee-Atkin	Louise de Bruin

If these nominations are approved by members at the AGM, the committee, from August 2024, will consist of those above as well as Louise de Bruin, who has one year left to run of her three-year term of service, and Marcel Bradbury and Pat Quigley, who have two years left to run of their three-year term of service. Anna Rosic (*conference organiser*) continues to serve as co-opted member; Marcella Henderson-Peal and Nicholas Birns serve as honorary committee members; Kevin Taylor (*e-books and editor of the Powys Journal*) and Charles Lock (*associate editor of the Powys Journal*) serve as ex-officio members of the committee.

Chris Thomas,
Hon. Secretary

Chair's Annual Report 2023-2024

As seems now to be an annual occurrence, I write this with Powys enthusiasm re-boosted by a Powys day at the Old Fire Engine House at Ely, where **Dawn Collins** led a stimulating discussion of Chapter 11, 'Consummation' from *A Glastonbury Romance* (See report in this issue.) The way discussion opens up so easily and spreads into the group is a constant feature of our meetings, and prompts thoughts about the optimum size for group discussion; while not necessarily having the same people attending, the group ends up around twelve which seems the perfect size for getting a range of contributions, in a receptive and congenial atmosphere. Returning to London on the train with two ex-chairs of the society and Chris Thomas, whom it is no exaggeration

to call the fire engine of the Society, we all shared the feeling that the Society was in good health, and that Ely is the perfect venue.

This sense that an ideal size is not necessarily about maximising numbers seems true of the Society's membership which Chris reports in each successive newsletter. Over the past twelve months we have had nineteen new members and if the overall membership remains hovering around 250 due to death or resignation, the influx of new members represents a healthy homeostasis of generational renewal. Each newsletter gets positive feedback, allowing us to hear from members new and old and enjoy Chris's rich pickings from archival material.

Actual membership of the Society is only the tip of the Powysian iceberg: for every member of the society there will be many more non-joiners reading in solitude. A good measure of broader interest is the eBook sales of JCP's novels which have remained steady month to month since their first electronic publication spearheaded by **Kevin Taylor** and **Dawn Collins** in March 2019. Sales up to the end of January 2024 total 1710 units, averaging 28 units a month. As well as providing a useful income stream for the Society, they are a good signal that interest (in JCP at any rate) is steady. When **Kevin Taylor** took over the editing of *The Powys Journal*, he was concerned about getting enough material to fill it, and again it is a sign of the continuing health of Powys studies that he has reported an abundance of interesting articles to choose from.

Our August 2023 Conference at Llangollen was well attended and enjoyed by all. Most speakers made use of the PowerPoint facilities which are possible now we have our own projector and screen. Particular tribute is due to Raymond Cox who has been filming the conferences since 2005, offering DVDs, and providing an invaluable archive for future historians. Ray has announced he will stop filming after 2024, and we are looking at ways to carry on filming the conference using a smart phone video camera for potential uploading to YouTube and other social media.

Two further meetings (one at Pushkin House, London and one on Zoom) held in the last year discussed different chapters of *Porius*. The inspirational **Neil Lee Atkin** once again convened the annual Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk. Over the last year we were sorry to lose our long-standing publication designer **Jerry Bird**, and erstwhile webmaster **Frank Kibblewhite**, tributes to whom appear in Newsletters 109 and 111. It remains to thank the Committee for their invaluable work and to face the future with optimism.

Paul Cheshire

Powys Society Conference, 2024
The Wessex Hotel, Street, Nr Glastonbury
Friday 16 August to Sunday 18 August
“Never or Always”
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**: ‘Interiors, rooms and thresholds in J. C Powys’s 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 a visit to Montacute or a visit to Stalbridge (where the Powys grandfather, L. C. Powys, was rector in the mid nineteenth century), and, if time allows, a visit to Marnhull (Hardy’s Marlott in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*), travelling through the ‘Vale of the Little Dairies’ past the hedges, woodland and small fields of Blackmore (Blakemore) 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 and 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

For details of conference speakers and lectures please refer to NL 111, March 2024, p.10-13.

Annual General Meeting 2024

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held at 11.00am BST on Sunday 18 August 2024 at the Wessex hotel in Street, nr Glastonbury. All paid up members of the Powys Society are welcome to participate in the AGM.

Agenda

1. Minutes of AGM 2023 as published in Newsletter 110 November 2023, and matters arising
2. Nomination of Honorary Officers & Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2024-25
3. Chair's Report as published in Newsletter 112, July 2024
4. Acting Treasurer's Report & presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2023
5. Hon. Secretary's Report
6. Powys Journal and e-books
7. Powys Society website and JSTOR
8. Social media
9. Date and Venue of conference 2025
10. AOB

**Chris Thomas,
Hon. Secretary**

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Powys Society

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of examiner's statement

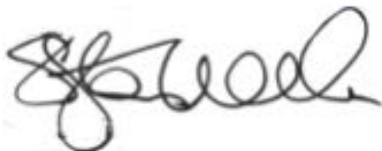
My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by

the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's qualified statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Stephen J Wilson

Upton Wilson Ltd
Chartered Certified Accountants
3 West Street
Leighton Buzzard
Beds LU7 1DA

24th January 2024

RESERVES POLICY

The Powys Society held bank balances of £16,255, which may be classed as reserves.

The Society regards this as a prudent float to allow the Society to survive drops in subscription income and other unforeseen events arising from the financial risk inherent in the cost of the annual conference. There are no immediate plans to use reserves for expenses that cannot be met by out of income.

The Powys Society
 Receipts and Payments Account
 Year Ended 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Subscriptions	5,742	5,268
Gift Aid	1,070	465
Conference	8,275	7,163
Bank Interest	163	13
JSTOR /Proquest	1,509	1,601
E-Book sales	1,547	1,434
Sales of printed books	466	681
Donations	428	578
	<u>19,200</u>	<u>17,203</u>
PAYMENTS		
Powys Journal	5,395	2,973
Newsletter	4,234	3,865
Conference	9,052	6,530
AV Equipment for conference	716	-
Book purchases and selling costs	12	63
E-Book royalties	157	170
Officers / Committee Exes	403	972
Room hire / event costs	814	297
Website expenses	601	466
Accountants	120	120
PayPal and bank charges	145	132
Alliance of Literary Societies	15	15
	<u>21,664</u>	<u>15,603</u>
NET (PAYMENTS) / RECEIPTS	<u>(2,464)</u>	<u>1,600</u>
Bank balances b/f	18,719	17,119
Bank balances c/f	<u>16,255</u>	<u>18,719</u>

Neil Lee-Atkin
Llewelyn Powys birthday walk
Tuesday 13 August 2024

The Llewelyn Birthday Walk & the annual gathering of the Dandelion Fellowship will take place on Tuesday August 13th 2024 which this year will also be a Memorial Walk to commemorate my wife and Paul Gillingham, both long time members of our little band of the Friends of Llewelyn Powys who have left us recently.

Unfortunately, the **The Sailor's Return** will not be open as planned on 13 August, so we have arranged with the manager of the **Red Lion, Winfrith**, to meet there at **12 noon** for lunch, the annual toast, and a reading from Llewelyn's *Book of Days*.

For those who only intend going on the walk and omitting the lunch gathering, we'll be setting off from the **Sailor's Return** in **East Chaldon car park** for the walk up to Llewelyn's Stone via Chydyok at **1.30pm**.

All are welcome.

For enquiries and information please contact Neil Lee-Atkin at reblee.tom@gmail.com



*Llewelyn's memorial stone on Chaldon Down:
inscription carved by Elizabeth Muntz,
THE LIVING THE LIVING HE SHALL PRAISE THEE.*

New Members

We are pleased to welcome 5 new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 111, March 2024. Our new members are located in Chorley, Chorlton, London, Maidenhead and France. This brings the current total membership of the Society to 253, 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

News and Notes

From Anthony Hentschel:

Sale of Powys Library

I have inherited from my father, Powys scholar, Cedric Hentschel (1913-2005), the contents of his Powys library. If any member would like to purchase the entire collection please contact me direct at anthonyhentschel@hotmail.com and I will provide you with details. Some titles are signed or inscribed by JCP. [Cedric Hentschel was Chair of the Powys Society 1982-1987. He edited JCP's letters to Sven-Eric Täckmark and *Powys on Keats, Volume One of John Keats: or Popular Paganism*, both published by Cecil Woolf. Obituaries and tributes to Cedric appeared in Newsletter 55, July 2005. CT]

From John Sanders:

Katie Powys's oak cross in East Chaldon churchyard

Janet Pollock asked me to repair Katie Powys's cross in the year 2000. The cross marks her resting place in East Chaldon churchyard. From that moment until now I have prevented the cross from rotting away. Unfortunately, due to ill health, I can no longer continue the work. I am wondering if there is anyone with basic carpentry skills that could take over the maintenance of the cross. It would be a shame if there was no marker on Katie's grave. Of course it doesn't have to be a Society member. If you know someone who lives close by that could help. My email address is john.sanders196@btinternet.com.

[For other references to Katie Powys's cross see Newsletter 40, July 2000, p.35, Newsletter 41, November 2000, p.10, and Newsletter 80, November 2013, p.23.]

From Louise de Bruin:

Wheels on Gravel

In the tribute to Frank, in NL 111: *Wheels on Gravel* is not a novel by Gamel Woolsey, but a collection of essays by Alyse Gregory.



*John Sanders at Katie's oak cross, St. Nicholas churchyard, East Chaldon, 13 August 2022.
Sketch by Rosemary Dickens.*



Katie Powys's cross after first repair. Photo by John Sanders.

From Chris Thomas:

Suspended Judgments and Thiodolf the Icelander

I noticed, too late before going to print, that in NL 111, on page 39, I had inadvertently inserted a redundant ‘e’ in the title of JCP’s 1916 book of essays. On page 21 the final ‘e’ of ‘Fouqué’ lacks an acute accent – my apologies for this oversight!

Another sale of a Powys Collection

Angela Olney writes to say she has a small collection of books by JCP as well as some copies of the Powys Review which she would like to offer to members. For more details, please contact Angela direct by e-mail at angela.olney@gmail.com.

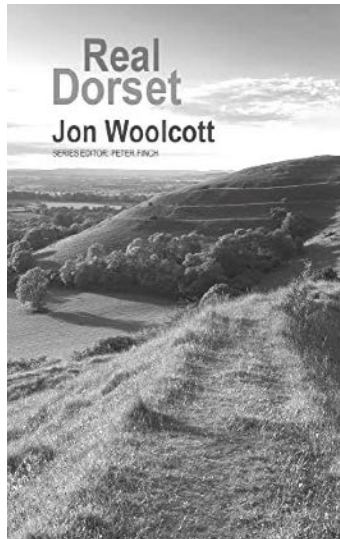
Arthur Machen and John Ireland

In a letter to his friend composer John Ireland, dated 15 September 1933, Arthur Machen refers to “*the pitiable obscenities of A Glastonbury Romance*”. (With thanks to Bob Mann for pointing me to this quote.) John Ireland (1897-1962) was a contemporary of JCP and a great admirer of Machen’s works. Ireland’s musical pieces such as *The Forgotten Rite*, *The Scarlet Ceremonies* and *Legend* reflect the pagan spirit and mysterious and unearthly atmosphere of Machen’s stories. Ireland also composed a symphonic rhapsody, *Mai-Dun* inspired by the Iron age hillfort of Maiden Castle. Ireland wrote in detail to Machen about a strange vision he had experienced on Harrow Hill in Sussex, near Chanctonbury Ring (see *The John Ireland Companion*, p.354).

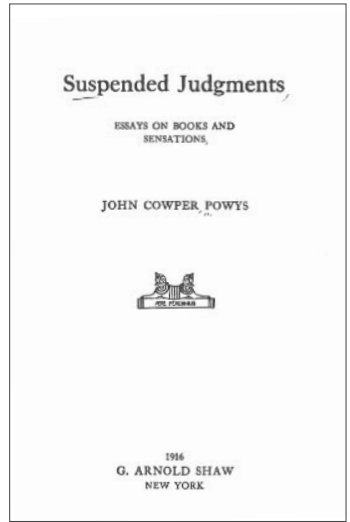
Chanctonbury Ring was a place which was also important for JCP (see JCP’s letter to Llewelyn from America in January 1920: “*Can this moon be the moon I have seen from Chanctonbury Ring?*”)

Real Dorset

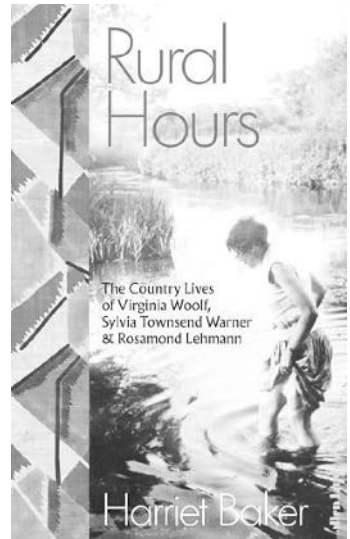
A new alternative guide to the county of Dorset called *Real Dorset* by local writer and resident, Jon Woolcott, was published in 2023 by Seren Books and



Front cover Real Dorset.



Suspended Judgments title page, first edition, 1916.

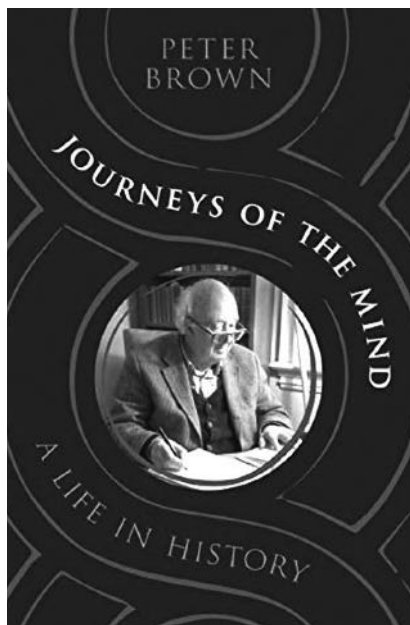


Front cover Rural Hours.

features a brief section about the Powys family connection with East Chaldon. The author writes “*Dorset is ripe for a sort of psychogeography.*” See book review in *Psychogeographic Review*, August 2023. Another writer with strong East Chaldon connections is of course Sylvia Townsend Warner who features in a new book by Harriet Baker published by Allen Lane entitled *Rural Hours, the Country Lives of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Rosamund Lehman*. See book reviews in *The Literary Review*, April, 2024 and the *TLS*, 26 April 2024. The *TLS* review refers to TFP as Sylvia Townsend Warner’s “*first real confidant for her writing work.*”

Peter Brown, late antiquity and *Porius*

In his pioneering book *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), historian Peter Brown popularised the subject of continuity, and change in late classical western civilisation. He refers to the role of figures such as the scholar and statesman Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (c.490 CE-c.585 CE) and the poet and diplomat Sidonius Apollinaris (430-c.481 CE). In his prefatory note about the historic background to *Porius* JCP also alludes to these ‘literary personalities’ and ‘extremely cultivated classical letter writers’. Both Peter Brown and JCP discuss the philosopher Boethius (480-524 CE) as well as the Gothic ruler and imperial *princeps* Theodoric (454-526 CE). I thought of these matters on reading a long review in the *New York Review of Books* (7 March 2024) of Peter Brown’s magnificent intellectual memoir *Journeys of the Mind: A Life in History* (Princeton University Press, 2023). No doubt Peter Brown’s theme of the significance of cultural transition, transformation and innovation in the era of late antiquity would have particularly interested JCP just as Peter Brown’s evocation of the spirit of an age might have delighted the author of *Porius* and his attempt to present the ‘Zeit-Geist’ of the ‘autumn of the year 499 AD.’ “*As the old gods were departing then so the old gods are departing now.*” Also, of great interest to readers of *Porius* is Peter Brown’s review, in the *NYRB* (6 Jun 2024) of Peter Heather’s *Christendom: The Triumph of a Religion*.



*Front cover of Journeys of the Mind
by Peter Brown.*

JCP and Ralph Waldo Emerson

Mr Emerson’s Revolution published in 2015 by Open Book is a multi-author volume, edited by Jean McClure Mudge, about American transcendentalist, poet, essayist, philosopher, and abolitionist Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). The book includes a section in which the author Beniammino Soressi traces Emerson’s influence on

European writers. He quotes from JCP's reference to Emerson found in *One Hundred Best Books* (1916), p.26, where JCP praises Emerson's *clear, chaste, remote and distinguished wisdom with its shrewd preacher's wit and country-bred humour*. The author also notes that JCP was one of the first critics in Europe to call attention to the now well-known Emerson-Nietzsche link (cited on p.345 of Mudge's book). Nietzsche admired Emerson's essays enormously and filled his works with his own enthusiastic marginalia commenting on the texts. Emerson, in fact, had a profound influence on the development of Nietzsche's ideas. In his book *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*, p.119, David Goodway discusses Emerson's influence on JCP and notes their shared emphasis on 'self-reliance'.

Powys Descents

Tim Powys-Lybbe is a family historian who for many years has been compiling charts and information about Powys family descents. He collaborated with Stephen Powys Marks to trace connections between what he calls the Powys "literary clan" and other branches of the family. See for instance Stephen's tribute to Tim in Newsletter 87, March 2016, p.52: "I want to acknowledge the immense body of careful and authoritative work done by Timothy Powys-Lybbe in sorting out many confusing assertions in published works. I would have been lost without his website, [[www. tim. ukpub. net](http://www.tim.ukpub.net), *Powys-Lybbe Ancestry – (now an old address)*], with more than 26,000 names." See also Stephen's bar chart of Powys-Lybbe links in Newsletter, 43, July 2001 and Powys Journal, Vol. XIII, 2003. Latterly, by the application of Y-DNA tests, he has now confirmed William Powys, the great grandson of T F Powys, and current owner of the JCP estate as a "cast iron" modern descendant of Sir Thomas Powys (1648-1719), lawyer, judge and Tory politician of Lilford. For more information about Tim's on-going Powysian genealogical studies please contact Tim at tim@powys.org or consult his new web site at tim@powys-lybbe.org.

John Burnside

John Burnside, died on 29 May 2024 after a short illness. An obituary appeared in the *Guardian* 31 May 2024. John Burnside was a poet, novelist, short story writer, winner of numerous awards for literature, and Professor of Creative Writing at St Andrews. He published an article in *The Guardian*, 2 February 2024, about the books in his life in which he included a note on "*the book that made me want to be a writer: A Glastonbury Romance, which I read in my early 20s. What beguiled me was its scope, the way it drew pagan magic from the land in a mix of history, myth and a contemporary narrative that nobody else, to my mind, had even attempted. Of course I knew, even then, it was inimitable, but imitation was never the point: what mattered was to find a way to be equally inimitable, or nearly so. Clearly, this is still a work in progress for me.*" John Burnside's own writing reflects his interest in nature, the environment and deep ecology. His latest collection was *Ruin, Sleep* which was published in April this year in which he explores aging, mortality and environmental destruction.

Jacqueline Peltier's library

Shortly after Jacqueline Peltier's death, her son, Jeff, made arrangements to deposit her library with BNU – the prestigious national university library of Strasbourg in France. I asked Marcella Henderson-Peal if she had any information about this and if she had read an article describing the donation by Aude Therstappen, Deputy Director of Services and Collections at BNU. The article can be found on the BNU blog 'Lieu de recherche' under the title *The library of Jacqueline Peltier, a specialist in John Cowper Powys, joins the Bnu*. See: website at <https://bnu.hypotheses.org/16674>. Marcella replied and said: "This collection at BNU in Strasbourg is totally new to me. I have asked Goulven and Pierrick Hamelin if they know about it. Goulven was there when Jean-Francois Jeff Peltier decided to give her collection of books to BNU and Goulven was in touch with Aude Therstappen at the time. It is wonderful that her collection of books is now in a nice big international university library." BNU holds a large collection of books and documents and provides access to digital periodicals and databases covering a wide range of fields in the humanities and social sciences. Jacqueline's library consists of some 160 volumes some of which are annotated by Jacqueline and consist of both books in English and French translation. The books will be added to the BNU on-line library catalogue in due course. BNU regards the acquisition of Jacqueline's library as a great asset to their collections. Nicholas Birns, in New York comments: "Max and Jacqueline were special people, it's great to think of their library in the right place." Other items from Jacqueline's Powys archive have now been deposited at Imec – the Imec archives will be the subject of lectures by both Goulven and Marcella at this year's conference.

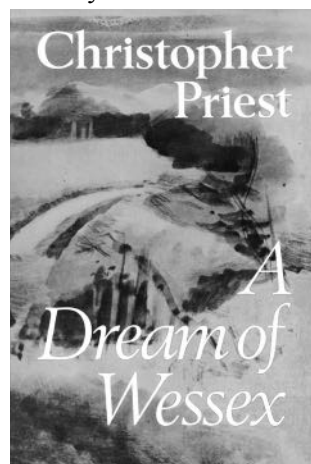
The Malice Dance of JCP

Simon Heffer's very positive article about *Wolf Solent* and *Autobiography*, called The Malice Dance of John Cowper Powys, appeared in the May 2024 issue of the *New Criterion*. See also the March issue of the Newsletter for information about Simon Heffer's book, *Sing as We Go* about Britain in the inter war years which includes references to JCP.

From Pat Quigley:

Christopher Priest (1943-2024)

I was saddened to read of the death of novelist and science fiction writer, Christopher Priest. He seemed to be enjoying a "blazing Indian Summer," to quote J. B. Priestley on JCP, with a crop of novels in the last few years. I felt the loss of a connection as I exchanged emails with him when buying some of his private press books a few years ago. In remembrance I watched *The Prestige* – a film based on his novel (1995) of the same title about two rival stage magicians & I'm now reading *A Dream*



Front cover of *A Dream of Wessex*, by Christopher Priest.

of Wessex (1977). It's set in Dorchester with a psychic research unit in the centre of Maiden Castle. There's an experiment to project participants into a future Wessex that has become an island and Dorchester a seaport. It gets weirder after that. He had a pedestrian prose style, but could disassemble what we know as reality like nobody else and reassemble it in a way that looks the same, but isn't. If that makes sense. He was unique.

Chris Thomas
Sundial Press Book Sale

Following the closure of the Sundial Press after the death of Frank Kibblewhite the Powys Society has generously been offered the proceeds from the disposal of Frank's Powys related books. These titles can now be obtained through our web site at [Powys Society -- Sundial Press Books \(powys-society.org\)](http://Powys Society -- Sundial Press Books (powys-society.org)). Please contact Tony Head for more information at: ajhead2811@gmail.com. With thanks to Tony Head for organising sales and to Paul Cheshire for posting details on our website. Tributes to Frank Kibblewhite were published in Newsletter 111, March 2024.

Ray Crozier
A lecture on Patchin Place and the Powyses

I gave a Zoom presentation to the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation on March 18, 2024. Titled, *Patchin Place: History and Literary Connections*, it was well-attended, with 130 people registered for the event. John Cowper Powys figured prominently in both parts of the presentation. In the historical overview, I drew upon his diaries and letters in addition to *The Owl*, *The Duck*, and – *Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe!* and *After My Fashion* to describe what his life was like in Greenwich Village and in Number 4 Patchin Place in particular.

It was a small, three-room apartment at the front of the building. The largest room has a bed, which served as a couch during the day, a bookcase, and a chair. The second room or alcove contained a dressing table. The smallest room was a storeroom and contained a tin bath. Baths were taken in the alcove behind a curtain and screen. There was a downstairs toilet or privy. A Mrs Bertelle cleaned the room for them. They took laundry to Mr Hoyt, who returned the clean items to the apartment. Cooking facilities were limited, and JCP and Phyllis Playter regularly took breakfast and other meals at Childs restaurant (part of a national dining chain) or the Brevoort hotel.

I had time to bring in Llewelyn and Alyse Gregory. I included a letter from JCP's niece Isobel Powys written in December 1927 from Number 3, where she describes her rooms and points out that Powyses are currently living in Numbers 3, 4 and 5.

Due to time constraints I concentrated in the second part of the presentation on JCP and E. E. Cummings (both neighbours in Number 4 for a while). I outlined JCP's life and exhausting itinerant lecturing career and the fact that he sent much of his earnings

to his wife and son in England. I said a little about *Wolf Solent* and how he now had an opportunity to write while he had the base in Patchin Place. It proved a sanctuary for him and Phyllis, despite its privations. James Sibley Watson, co-owner of *The Dial*, found the room in Number 4 for Cummings and he and his wife Hildegard Watson supported the poet financially and helped him to take over all but one of the rooms in the dwelling. Cummings lived in Patchin Place for forty years, from 1924 to 1964. I drew attention to the link between Watson and Alyse Gregory's editorial position at *The Dial*.

Many questions followed the 45-minute PowerPoint presentation and although none was specifically about JCP I was asked what drew me to Patchin Place in the first place, which allowed me to say more about his writing. One theme that emerged in the discussion was the discrepancy between Patchin Place as a currently desirable location and the poor-quality accommodation when JCP lived there. The Society organises a regular programme of talks, and mine was to be followed three days later by one on the activist Jane Jacobs.

Chris Thomas
The Mappowder Sale

In Newsletter No.111, March 2024, we reported on the sale at auction of the Mappowder Powys family collection. We have now been able to trace the destinations after the sale of some of the items. The auctioneer said that the book lots, which hadn't attracted interest at the sale from archive centres or individual collectors, were purchased by second hand book dealers whom it was thought might take a chance selling them online. Lot 672, for instance, consisting of JCP's books inscribed for Lucy from Katie, ARP and JCP, sold to a private bookdealer and were subsequently offered for sale on eBay. Some of these books have since been purchased by one of our members.

From Lot 673, Pat Quigley has made digital images of the presentation inscriptions on the front fly leaf inside copies of first editions of *Atlantis* and *Homer and the Aether* which are dedicated to Gerard and Mary Casey. The images are reproduced in this issue of the Newsletter. These two items were later offered for sale on eBay.

The inscription in Greek inside Gerard Casey's copy of *Atlantis* references JCP's move to Blaenau Ffestiniog and his naming the town after Νεφελοκοκκυγία, 'cloud cuckoo land', from the play *The Birds* by Aristophanes. The inscription in *Atlantis* is dated October 1954 and is contemporary with a letter from JCP to his friend C. Benson Roberts dated 20 October 1954 in which he describes Blaenau Ffestiniog: "... it's a real true cloud-cuckoo town! And I'll finish there a Translation of Aristophanes which I have begun." A few weeks later JCP again wrote to Benson Roberts: "I go on telling everybody I write to what a perfectly Aristophanic town this is! For it is indeed exactly without exaggeration like the Nephelocuccugygia the Cloud-Cuckoo town described in 'The Birds' of that Athenian Comedian!"

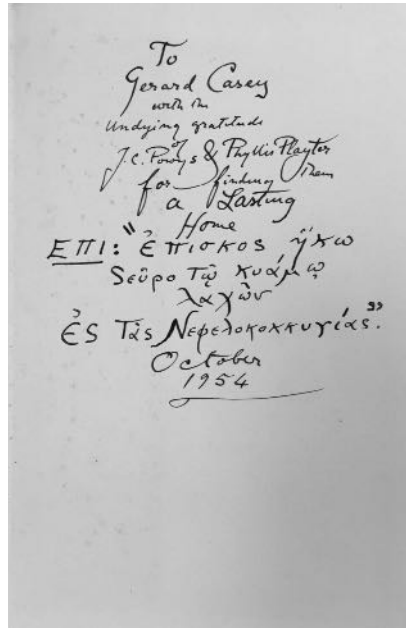
Homer and the Aether is inscribed for both Gerard and Mary Casey. The long inscription, in Greek is, appropriately, a quotation from the opening lines of the *Iliad* and reads:

“μήνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
 οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε’ ἔθηκε,
 πολλὰς δ’ ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
 ἠρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
 οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή”

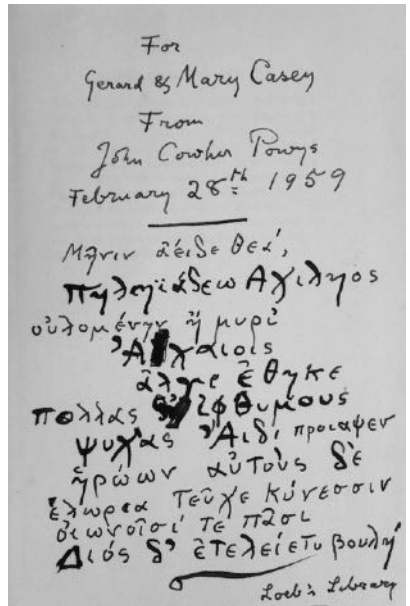
The English translation of this passage (not included in the inscription), in A. T. Murray’s version of the 1924 Loeb edition of Homer’s *Iliad* (JCP’s favourite translation), reads: “*The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus’ son, Achilles, that destructive wrath which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans, and sent forth to Hades many valiant souls of heroes, and made them themselves spoil for dogs and every bird; thus the plan of Zeus came to fulfilment*” JCP appends to the quote in Greek a reference to “Loeb’s Library”.

Another Society member purchased Lots 686 and 687 which consist of Gertrude’s water colours and oil paintings, many signed, titled and dated, as well as much of the remaining graphic material produced by Gertrude and other members of the Powys family including several sketch books, a painting of impala in the Kenyan bush by William Powys and one by Charles Francis of a jay (the provenance is detailed on the back and initialled by William.) Images of some of these items can now be found on the Reading Powyses Facebook Group.

Peter Foss says that he has kept photographs of some of the most significant graphic works such as Gertrude’s sketches of Court House and TFP’s farm at Sweffling. Peter has also made photocopies of all the loose photographs that were in Louise’s collection and which were acquired by NLW although the copies are not in a sufficiently good reproducible state. However, they do show for reference purposes what the photographs were. The numbers on them correspond to Peter’s own catalogue list.



Atlantis inscribed by JCP to Gerard Casey, October 1954.
 Photo by Pat Quigley.



Homer and the Aether inscribed by JCP to Gerard and Mary Casey.

Members may also be interested in an auction of ‘Printed Books, Maps, and Playing Cards, Charles Darwin and Natural History’ that was held at Dominic Winter on 7 March 2024 and included a book from **Lucy’s collection of algae**. Only one other copy of this book exists (at the Brooklyn Museum Library). The auctioneers kept back the item purposely to offer in this specialist sale. The catalogue entry for this item from the Mappowder Collection reads: **Lot 680. *Pressed Algae. Specimens of Algae, or Submersed Plants, Prepared by Eliza A. Jordan, Brooklyn L[ong] I[sland]*, 1848, pen & ink and watercolour with pressed algae decorations as title page, 28 leaves with mounted algae specimens (4 leaves with 2 specimens), a few with Latin names identified in pencil, pasted to rectos of a contemporary album, **ownership pencil signature of Amelia Powys** to front pastedown, original blind-embossed roan boards with gilt-decorated spine and title design to upper cover, heavily rubbed with some wear, upper cover detached, 4to. **Provenance: Lucy Amelia Penny (née Powys)**, sister of John Cowper Powys. This item sold at the auction for £560.00. The catalogue entry and an image of the title page can still be viewed on the auctioneer’s website.**

Paul Cheshire ***Baltazar Stork’s ‘Flambard’ portrait in Rodmoor***

Chris Thomas’s article in *NL* 111 about Bernard Berenson and art connoisseurship in *Rodmoor*, prompts me to revisit an enigmatic painting in *Rodmoor* — namely the Flambard portrait owned by Baltazar Stork, which Stork leaves in his will to Adrian Sorio’s son Baptiste, a person he has never met. I didn’t have space to pursue this painting in my forthcoming article, *Rodmoor: The Quest for What Lies Beyond Life* (*PJ*, XXXIV, 2024), but it intrigued me as an example of what has now been termed an Easter egg. That is, what the online dictionary Oxford Languages defines as, ‘an unexpected or undocumented feature in a piece of computer software or on a DVD, included as a joke or a bonus’.

The portrait is introduced thus:

‘The most remarkable picture in the room, attracting the attention at once of all who entered, was a dark, richly coloured, oval-shaped portrait—a portrait of a young man in a Venetian cloak, with a broad, smooth forehead, heavy-lidded penetrating eyes, and pouting disdainful mouth. This picture, said to have been painted under the influence of Giorgione by that incomparable artist’s best loved friend, passed for a portrait of Eugenio Flambard, the favourite secretary of the Republic’s most famous ambassador during his residence at the Papal Court’. (*Rodmoor*, 1916 ed., pp. 58-59).

Does this portrait actually exist? Or is it an imaginary portrait? The detail is precise but obscured by disavowals such as ‘said to’, ‘passed for’. Similarly, neither the ‘best loved friend’, the ‘favourite secretary’, nor the ‘most famous ambassador’ are named. Knowing nothing about Berenson, Walter Pater was my natural starting point when I first looked into this. Pater has a character named Sebastian Storck in *Imaginary Portraits* (London, 1894) who has been regarded by John Brebner (*The*

Demon Within, 1973) and later commentators as the original of Powys's Baltazar Stork. Might Powys be intending a tantalising allusion to the title of Pater's book as he presents what might be an *Imaginary Portrait*?

To investigate whether Baltazar's Flambard portrait is based on a real painting I followed Powys's clue that the artist was Giorgione's 'best loved friend' and turned to Walter Pater's article 'The School of Giorgione'. Pater's article is a response to Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *History of Painting in North Italy* (London: Murray, 1871), which Pater hails as authoritative, calling it the 'new Vasari' ('School of Giorgione', p. 532). Pater writes that Crowe and Cavalcaselle reject almost all previously accepted Giorgione attributions, recognising only one painting, *The Concert*, as his. Pater accepts this and argues for a 'school of Giorgione' that keeps 'the essential truth, the vraie vérité concerning him' (ibid. p. 538).

This gives some context to Powys's vague friend/follower of Giorgione attribution, but Pater does not identify any artist as Giorgione's 'best loved friend'. He writes rather of a woman Giorgione fell in love with. Yet the underlined passage from the quotation below can characterise how the portrait functions virtually as a character in Baltazar's room.

'Those spaces of more cunningly blent colour, obediently filling their places hitherto in a mere architectural scheme, Giorgione detaches from the wall; he frames them by the hands of some skilful carver, so that people may move them readily and take with them where they go, like a poem in manuscript, or a musical instrument, to be used at will for all subtle purposes of culture, stimulus or solace, coming like an animated presence, into one's cabinet, as we say, to enrich the air as with a personal aroma, and, like persons, live with us, for a day or a lifetime.'

Of all art like this, art which has played so large a part in men's culture since that time Giorgione is the initiator'. (p. 531, my underlining)

The descriptions of Giorgione in Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *History* did not provide any help in identifying any one artist who was Giorgione's 'best loved friend'. Googling the person identified by Powys as 'Eugenio Flambard, the favourite secretary of the Republic's most famous ambassador' only led me to snippets from *Rodmoor*. Hence, after reading Chris Thomas's excellent introduction to Bernard Berenson in NL 111, I wondered whether Berenson's art criticism might give further guidance, as clearly he was a formative influence on JCP's views on art and artists.

My hopes were raised by discovering that Berenson, in addition to his *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, also wrote *Venetian Painters of the Renaissance* (1894: 3rd ed. 1899). This work consists of a 70 page essay summarising the Venetian artists followed by a long indexed catalogue of their surviving works. Berenson's description of Titian as Giorgione's 'companion' (p. 39) and 'formed by Giorgione' (p. 140) could identify him as the 'best loved friend' 'under the influence of Giorgione' that Powys described, but there is no portrait of Eugenio Flambard listed in Berenson's catalogue of Titian's (or any other Venetian artist's) works. Berenson's description of

the innovation in easel painting of the period, intended for private domestic spaces, and the move towards private portraiture certainly shows how well Powys made this Flambard portrait fit its supposed background.

Although identification of the portrait remains elusive, a section of Berenson's essay titled 'Value of Minor Episodes in Art' captures brilliantly the way these apparently superfluous objects I have called Easter eggs enhance the work in which they are embedded. The passage deserves quoting in full.

'That feeling for reality which made the great painters look upon a picture as the representation of a cubic content of atmosphere enveloping all the objects depicted, made them also consider the fact that the given quantity of atmosphere is sure to contain other objects than those the artist wants for his purpose. He is free to leave them out, of course, but in so far as he does, so far is he from producing an effect of reality. The eye does not see everything, but all the eye would naturally see along with the principal objects, must be painted, or the picture will not look true to life. This incorporation of small episodes running parallel with the subject rather than forming part of it, is one of the chief characteristics of modern as distinguished from ancient art'. (pp. 56-57)

Berenson's insight is as applicable to literature as it is to art, and thus to Powys's craft as a novelist: the way Powys includes highly specific things and places not absolutely necessary to the events he is describing, that enhance what Berenson calls the 'sense of reality' of the scene Powys is setting. Nevertheless, although the term Easter egg is drawn from the less sophisticated environment of electronic media, it captures the idea of a riddle that begs to be explored. If your curiosity is hooked, you leave the work in which it's embedded, lured into a rabbit hole that you feel impelled to explore. I suspect such riddles (of which there are many in Powys's work) are deliberate productions of the mischievous Powys who, as Morine Krissdóttir describes in *Descents of Memory*, set insoluble labyrinths for his nephew Peter Powys Grey.

Editorial note by Chris Thomas: Paul's very helpful investigation into the elusive identity of the Flambard portrait in *Rodmoor* prompted me to think of a few more points about JCP and Berenson as well as the influence of Pater's writing and art criticism on JCP. Consider for instance Pater's unfinished romance *Gaston de Latour* (1896). Chapter 5 of Pater's work is entitled Suspended Judgment which no doubt inspired the title of JCP's book of essays *Suspended Judgments*, published in December 1916 a few months after the publication of *Rodmoor*. In *Autobiography* JCP admitted that it was through Pater that he first learnt to appreciate the paintings of Giorgione. It's unlikely however that JCP read Pater's essay The School of Giorgione in the *Fortnightly Review* but probably came across the article in a later edition of Pater's book *The Renaissance*. Bernard Berenson referred to the same essay in a letter to his friend and patron Isabella Stewart Gardner telling her it was full of "penetrative criticism" which presumably is exactly how JCP felt.

Paul also cites Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle's pioneering *New History of Painting in Italy* (London, 1864-1871, 5 vols). Berenson was greatly influenced by these authors, admiring especially their use of documents and first-hand knowledge to help identify works of art. He called them, in a letter to Isabella Stewart Gardner, "the Popes of Art". There is a definite hint as well in JCP's description of the Flambar portrait of the methodology of the great connoisseur and art critic, Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891), who Berenson called "the greatest connoisseur in the old masters that ever lived". Cavalcaselle collaborated with Morelli for a short period before they fell out over their different approaches to scientific connoisseurship. Berenson later met Cavalcaselle in Rome and discussed Morelli's methods. In his book *Florence 1900*, (Yale University Press, 2009), Bernd Roock notes that Berenson was "schooled in Morelli's method of distinguishing between the hands of the different masters on the strength of the way in which they painted ears or hands or feet...this enabled him to suggest and question attributions with a particularly discerning eye..." In this way, Morelli had a significant influence on the development of Berenson's own connoisseurship and historical approach to art. Berenson met Morelli in Milan in 1890.

Pater's influence on JCP's appreciation of Giorgione lasted for a long time. In America in 1932 Phyllis pinned to the wall of JCP's study at Phudd a reproduction of Giorgione's *Fête Champêtre* (Pastoral Concert).

Two other chief points about JCP and Berenson strike me – both had a deep love of the natural world. In his address on Berenson, published in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1960, Kenneth Clark referred to Berenson's views on art and his use of the term 'life enhancing' which he declares Berenson derived from Goethe. Not only Berenson but Pater and JCP were also deeply indebted to Goethe's idea that a work of art should be life communicating or life heightening. Both Pater and JCP valorised moments of intense sensation and intoxicating happiness. Goethe as we know directly influenced JCP in many different ways. He admired Goethe's 'oracular and occult wisdom' and declared we might all learn from Goethe how to become "an adept in the art of living in the Beautiful and True", "Im Ganzen, Guten Schönen resolute zu leben." (Goethe's words from his *Generalbeichte* are also quoted by Berenson in *Aesthetics and History*, and referenced, although misquoted, by Pater, in an essay on Winckelmann in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*.)

Chris Thomas ***The Deadly Debater***

We have learnt over the years much information about JCP's career as a lecturer especially his role as a university extension lecturer. Derek Langridge, Stuart Marriot and Janet Coles, Constance Harsh, Robin Patterson, Charles Lock, and Melvon Ankeny have all added enormously to our knowledge of JCP's activity as a lecturer by

evoking the spirit of his presentations, identifying subjects, as well as providing the locations and venues of his lectures and making good use of personal notes, and local newspapers and magazines which reported JCP's lectures in UK and USA. However far less is known about JCP's other career as a public debater. The best known of these events is probably his encounter with Bertrand Russell and the debate on Friday 13 December 1929 on the topic of *Is Modern Marriage a Failure?* (described in *Autobiography*, p.535 and recorded in Langridge) in which he defended marriage. JCP engaged in many more events like this throughout his life.

Knowledge of these events can only add to our appreciation of JCP's opinions on a wide range of subjects. JCP himself left a few tantalising clues about his role as a participant in public debates in his *Autobiography*: "*Clarence Darrow...expressed himself as willing to debate with me – he and I were both pretty deadly debaters – not so much for the interest of it, as out of his desire to give a friendly lift to my back sliding career – but neither of us felt any strong urge to the encounter...This business of debating bulked often quite large in my life.*" (p.535) "*It was Will Durant though with whom I really enjoyed debating...*" (p.535) JCP traced the origins of his ability as a public speaker to his years at Corpus Christi when he used to deliver "crazy monologues" and first began to develop a gift for "pierrot-like oratory". He took part in the Corpus Debating Society. (p.167) No doubt as well it was the "Druidic hypnotism of speech" which JCP confessed he summoned up in his lectures (p.462) which he also learned to summon up in his debates with others.

A partial list of JCP's public debates and symposia

I have included here as much information as I can presently find about JCP's public debates (the titles alone make for interesting reading though it is not always clear exactly what position JCP adopted in each debate!). I would welcome help from other readers and members who may be able to contribute more details about these events or add new ones giving titles, dates, identification of fellow debaters, venues, and so on. Please feel free to make any corrections to this current list and fill in the gaps. This is all very much work in progress.

As a member of the Corpus Christi Debating Society 1891-1894:

- a) **"That free education is based upon a false moral principle and threatens to be prejudiced to the best interests of the country".** Friday 4 March 1892, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, JCP opposed. The motion was carried by 16 votes to 5. (Refs: *Cambridge Review*, Thursday 10 March 1892.)
- b) J C Powys moved **"That this House views with satisfaction the growing power of the masses."** Saturday 21 January 1893, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. E H M Waller opposed. After a well sustained debate the motion was lost by 27 votes to 17. (Refs: *Cambridge Review*, Thursday 26 January 1893.)

- c) JCP moved “**That is the opinion of this House the payment of members of the House of Commons is desirable both on constitutional and social grounds.**” Saturday 12/11/1893, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Opposed by E H M Waller. The motion was lost by 36 votes to 7. (Refs: *Cambridge Review*, Thursday 17 November 1893.)

Other:

War, with Maurice Browne at the Little Theatre, Chicago (reviewed by Margery Currey, *The Little Review*, November 1915; referenced in *Women Building Chicago, 1790-1990, a biographical dictionary*, by Rima Lunin Schultz, p.206: “Powys extolled the glories of war; Browne declared against combat.”)

Nietzsche, 5 March 1915, Hudson Theatre, New York, with Cecil Chesterton (Refs: *Evening Post*, NY, 27 February 1915; *NYT Book Review*, 28 Feb 1915; *NYT* 5 March 1915, *The New York Sun* 6 March 1915).

Socialism, 18 February 1916, Witherspoon Hall, Philadelphia, with “Berry” (Refs: *Evening Ledger*, Philadelphia, 17 February 1916).

Socialism, 5 April 1916, Hutchinson Auditorium, Buffalo, with I. B. Stoughton Holborn, (Refs: *Buffalo Express* 6 April 1916).

Democracy, 8 April 1916, Hudson Theatre, New York, with Ian C Hannah, I. B. Stoughton Holborn and Robert Erskine Ely, (Refs: *NYT* 9 April 1916).

Panel discussion of Galsworthy’s play Justice, 10 April 1916, Candler Theatre, New York, with Judge Wadham, Thomas Mott Osborne, O. P. Heggie, Walter Richard Haton, Allen McCurdy (Chairman), (Refs: *NYT* 9 April 1916).

Reason vs Instinct as a Guide to Life, 10 October 1920, Park View Palace, Fifth Avenue and 110th Street, with Will Durant who spoke in support of Reason, JCP spoke in support of Instinct, (Refs: *New York Call* 6 October/1920, *New York Tribune* 10 October 1920).

Interpretation of History/Free Will vs Determinism, Sunday afternoon, [?]

December 1920, Park View Palace, New York, with Harry Waton, (Refs: *New York Enquirer Post*, 24 December 1920, *New York Call*, 25 December 1920).

Aristocracy vs Democracy, 30 January 1921, Park View Palace, New York, with Will Durant who spoke in support of democracy, JCP spoke in support of aristocracy, (Refs: *New York Call*, 30 January 1921).

The Interpretation of History, 1921, The Grill Room, Lorraine Hotel, with Harry Waton.

Has the Human Race Progressed? 29 October 1923, (1 November 1923?), Jewish Centre of Brooklyn, with Will Durant, (Refs: *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 30 October 1923, *New York Times* 1923).

The hope of civilization depends upon the continued growth of labour parties throughout the world, 18 January 1924, Carnegie Hall, New York, JCP (who disagreed with both parties) Introduced debate between Adele Schreiber and Helen Fraser, (Refs: *NYT*, 5 January 1924).

Women Writers, 1924, Plaza Hotel, New York, with Adelaide Mercer.

The Interpretation of Life, 19 September 1926, Labour Temple School, E 14th Street, New York, with Clarence Durant, and Vilhjalmar Stefanson, (Refs: *NYT*, 20 September 1926).

Science and Civilisation, 2 January 1928, Brooklyn Institute.

Symposium: The Thwarted World and the Life Hereafter, 9 November 1929, St Marks in the Bouverie, with Nicholas Roerich, Paul Richard, and Rector William Norman Guthrie, (Refs: *Diary*, 9 November 1929, *NYT*, 9 November 1929).

Is Modern Marriage a Failure? 13 December 1929, Mecca Temple, New York, with Bertrand Russell, (Refs: *Autobiography*, p.535, *Diary* 1929: 7 Nov, 11 Nov, 5 Dec, 9 Dec, 11 Dec, 13 Dec. Text of debate in *A Record of Achievement*, *NYT*, 16 December 1929 – review of news reel film of debate, *PS NL* – No.71, Nov 2010, “JCP on film” by Tony Head).

Is the world we live in rational? (Reality vs unreality debate), 2 March 1930, Cooper Union New York, with Dr Harry Waton, Dr G F Beck, Chairman, NB: Dr Beck lectured on JCP – see *Autobiography* p.613 and also see *diary* 17 March 1930, (Refs: *NYT* 2 March 1930). From JCP diary 2 March 1930: “The debate on reality or unreality, the rationality or unrationality of the world with **Dr. Harry Waton**, an ex-rabbi radical leader, a great talmudist and cabalist was perhaps to me the pleasantest, most congenial and most enjoyable debate I have ever had.”

Enslavement of Women’s Freedom, Event planned by JCP’s manager Lee Keedick but cancelled in September 1930. G. K. Chesterton was to speak against extending rights to women, JCP was to defend extending rights to women. Chesterton visited America 1930/1931, delivering lectures and addresses and participating in debates. (Refs: *Diary* 17 February 1930: “Had a wire from Keedick calling me to appear. He discussed a debate with Chesterton for March 13th on the new enslavement of women. I am to defend the new free woman of these days.” *Diary* 11 September 1930: “After tea we talked long and long of the Debate with Chesterton and of the Option and of Mr. Keedick. The T.T. spoke calmly and wisely of these matters.” *Diary* 12 September 1930: “Now I have just composed a letter to Mr. Keedick. On Saturday morning it will be posted agreeing to debate with Chesterton.” *Diary* 16 September 1930: “Telegram from Office: Debate put off — Hurrah!”).

Margery Currey
John Cowper Powys on War

[This review of the debate at the Little Theatre in Chicago between JCP and Maurice Browne on War appeared in the November 1915 issue of the *Little Review* pp.35-36. The debate is referenced in *Women Building Chicago, 1790-1990, a biographical dictionary*, by Rima Lunin Schultz, p.206: "Powys extolled the glories of war; Browne declared against combat." The review of the debate by Margery Currey (1877-1959) is reprinted below for its passionate endorsement and partisan defense of JCP. The review illustrates what can be learned from putting JCP's contribution to public debates in some sort of contemporary context. Margery Currey was a writer and feminist married to Floyd Dell, who was the editor of the *Friday Literary Review* (the supplement of the *Chicago Evening Post*) and associate editor of radical periodicals such as *The Masses* and *The Liberator*. CT]

It was a quite, quite dreadful jolt that shook the John Cowper Powys cult on the night of the debate between the master and Maurice Browne of the Little Theatre. The great one, appearing robed in black, through his Delphic, released, blinding vapor clouds of infallible utterance, was to devastate the suggestion that war is evil, avoidable, and should not be prepared for by military methods. Maurice Browne was to defend the suggestion.

Scarce half a moon before had the first murmuring of discontent arisen among the worshipers of the temple, when their idol, beautiful, mordant, flaming, strode forth in flapping black garments and proclaimed that in this great war of many nations "the gall and vitriol and wormwood and uncleanness of mankind are burned, purged from the purified flesh of humanity; that then humanity is transformed, until the passion of hate is hardly distinguishable from the passion of love."

The master himself was the glorious vulture of war. Looming there on the stage of the Little Theatre, black, huge, alone under a vast orange sky heavily streaked with black, a violet light from somewhere touching the crimson of his face—and beside him in that great lonely cosmos an iridescent emerald bowl upon a high ivory pedestal. That little, little iridescent bowl, the ivory, the vast peace of a universe, no coagulating clots hanging from the shreds of bodies torn and entangled in the barbed wire meshes of the trenches, no cries—only one huge black moving thing there.

"War a great evil and an unmitigated wrong? I cannot see it. A pacifist struggle for existence is only a meaner struggle. They are fools who think it advisable or possible to stamp out war; they are knaves if, thinking this possible or advisable, they still go on a pacifist crusade."

Followed then the picture of a well-managed nation during war, a regime of exalted socialism—the pooling of all moneys, the raising of the income tax, the rich paying for the needs of the poor; she who was once thought a bedraggled hussy of

London's east end now become a savior of her country, in her potential gift of a son to the recruiting office of her country; the high price now set on flesh and blood, even that of the most humble.

Well, all this heroic joy and thin-ice socialism—it was announced at the end of the evening that the week after the subject would be Walt Whitman. Thank heaven! Let his people listen to John Cowper Powys on Walt Whitman. Of these he should speak—of Walt Whitman, of Oscar Wilde, of Huysmans and Richepin and Milton and Ficke and Baudelaire and Goethe and Shakespeare. On these he speaks divinely. Peace and war indeed!

And the debate? There stood Maurice Browne in valiant opposition, really “the idealist and fanatic” as his opponent called him, not adding “the clear thinker,” the rejector of temptations to revel in obvious and facile romanticisms on the sweet decorum of dying for one's country, with all the talk of defending one's beloved from the hand of the ravager. There were even those who understood Mr. Browne when his bravery and his prophetic sight let him dare to say such things as “It is better to be killed than to kill. To refrain from a combat of violence when the victims might be your dearest ones is not to put a finger in the cogs of God's orderly universe. It is a question of looking the God that is within you in the face.” As for the merits of the debate, the matter of war and its avoidableness was not touched on in its practical aspects, except by one who presided over the meeting and in three intelligent moments discussed the economic and the proved sides of war. The Little Review is no tract, and we may pass that by as understood.

And after it all, out of an audience of two hundred and twenty—when they overflowed the Little Theatre they trooped to the Fine Arts Assembly Room—eighty-four stood up to announce their conviction that war is not evil, not avoidable, and should be prepared for by military methods, and some sixty others stood up to indicate their opposite conviction! The vote was on the merits of the question.

Lawrence Millman *Meeting Peter Powys Grey*

[Lawrence Millman is an acclaimed American travel writer whose work has been admired by Paul Theroux among others. He is a story teller and explorer as well as a mycologist and has visited regions as far apart as Alaska, Labrador, Greenland, the Arctic, Iceland, Sarawak, Micronesia, Indonesia, Ecuador and Borneo. Lawrence Millman has published 22 books and contributed articles to the *Smithsonian magazine*, *National Geographic*, the *Sunday Times* (London) and *Sports Illustrated*. He is the author of an article about JCP called An Irresistible



Lawrence Millman and Peter Powys Grey on the island of Criehaven, Maine, in 1981.

Long-Winded Bore, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, August 2000. His book *Lost in the Arctic*, 2002, includes a chapter about JCP entitled A Gigantic Mythopoeic Literary Volcano, a reprint of his earlier article about JCP in the *Atlantic*. At the Powys Society of North America conference in New York in May 2001 Lawrence Millman gave a lecture about his meeting with Phyllis Playter in Blaenau Ffestiniog. The lecture was reported by Nicholas Birns in NL 44, November 2001, p.10. For an obituary of Peter by Charles Lock please see *Powys Notes*, Fall '93/Winter '94; also see appreciations in Newsletter 17, November 1992, and Newsletter 37, July 1999; Morine Krissdóttir published The Notebooks of Peter Powys Grey in *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXIII, 2023. Marian's pencil sketch of Ernest Angell was published in Newsletter 106, July 2022 and *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXIII, 2023. CT]

Lawrence Millman writes:

Back in the year 1981, I felt the need to escape from civilization, so I went to a remote island called Matinicus off the coast of Maine. A local fisherman told me that I could get even farther from civilization if I went to the nearby island of Criehaven, also called Ragged Island. It had no school, no police, no general store. What a delight, I thought, so I asked the fisherman to take me there, and for a few dollars he did.

I was wandering around the eastern part of Criehaven when I happened to see a balding man on the porch of a small wooden cabin. He was puttering with flower pots, putting plants in some and removing plants from others. He greeted me, and we fell to chatting. When I told him that I was a writer, he invited me into his cabin for a cup of coffee.

My new companion was seated in an old rocking chair, and I was sitting in a wooden armchair right next to a bookshelf. Sipping my coffee, I happened to see a lengthy row of books by John Cowper Powys. Dare I say that I was surprised? For I wouldn't have expected to see even a copy of *A Glastonbury Romance* on a remote Maine island.

"Powys is one of my very favorite writers," I declared

"He was my uncle," my companion said, then introduced himself as Peter Powys Grey.

I was even more surprised, but perhaps I shouldn't have been, since a few years earlier I had paid a visit to Powys's partner Phyllis Playter in Blaenau Ffestiniog, Wales, and she told me that Powys had a nephew who lived somewhere in Maine as well as in New York City.

Peter went on to say that he was the illegitimate son of Powys's sister Marianne, a world-class lacemaker, and a New Yorker named Ernest Angell.

What should I do? she asked Powys, since having an illegitimate offspring in those days was frowned upon. He told her that the situation was neither black or white, but grey. Thus Peter acquired the surname of Grey.

“As a young kid, I figured I was John Cowper’s son, so I followed him around just as a kid would likely follow his dad around,” he said, then added with a grin, “How wrong I was!”

Later we went outside, and Peter showed me some of the flowers and shrubs that he’d planted on his multi-acre premises. At the time, I didn’t know he was a writer himself, albeit one who couldn’t get his work published. Nor did I know that he suffered from manic depression, for he seemed to be quite cheery during our relatively brief meeting.

A couple of years later I visited Criehaven again, and I stopped by Peter’s cabin. There were no flower pots on the porch, and when I looked inside, I saw mostly a mess, along with some piles of books. There was no sign of Peter himself. I later learned that he had committed suicide a few years earlier.

Chris Thomas

The memorials to A. R. Powys at St. Andrew’s church, Winterborne Tomson

Before his death in 1928 Thomas Hardy corresponded with A. R. Powys about the beautiful little Norman church at Winterborne Tomson which was in need of repair. Here is an extract from Thomas Hardy’s letter to A. R. Powys dated early December 1923 responding to an enquiry from Powys (see *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, Oxford University Press, Vol.7, 1987, p.226):

Dear Mr Powys:

In reply to your enquiry I may say that I know of Winterborne-Thompson [sic] Church, though I do not remember seeing it, and that it is a most interesting little building, having apparently been left (unless tampered with recently) just as it was when the parishioners went out of it 50 years ago after the last service.

Yours very truly T.H.

Some years later, in *Somerset Essays*, (1937), p.161, Llewelyn included in an essay about his brother a reference to the repair and conservation of Winterborne Tomson church that A.R. Powys had worked on between 1929 and 1932:

“A few summers ago I was present at the rededication ceremony of the little church of Winterborne Tomson, which...had been restored under the personal care of my brother Mr. A. R. Powys. I well remember observing my brother moving about amongst the officiating ceremony and assembled people, a man easily distinguished by the sincerity and vigour of his presence. He was evidently well pleased by the accomplishment of the task he had taken in hand.”

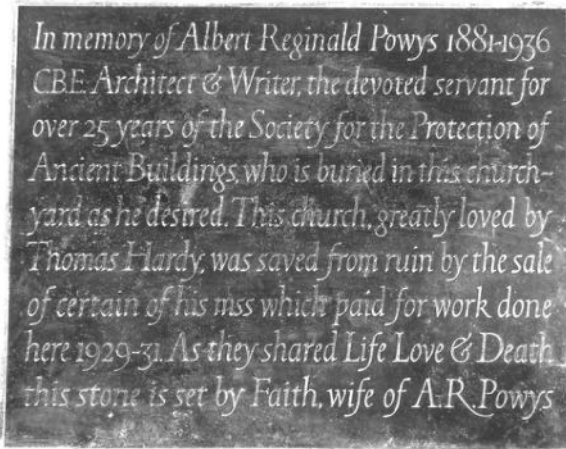
St. Andrew's church at Winterborne Tomson, (which is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust), is situated off the A31 at the end of a private lane. The location is not far from Sturminster Newton and Wimborne Minster, north east of Bere Regis. The church stands in its own space, adjacent to farm buildings but isolated and alone, surrounded by a low rough flint and stone wall pierced by a gate. The interior has lime wash walls, eighteenth century oak fittings, box pews, a fifteenth century font, a studded oak door, an apse and a vaulted roof. The origins of the church can be dated to the twelfth century. By the 1920s however the building had fallen into severe disrepair and disuse but was sensitively restored by the efforts of A. R. Powys with the support and encouragement of Thomas Hardy. Between 1929 and 1931 Powys, who was devoted to the church, worked on a project to halt the decline of the internal and external fabric of the church. The project was financed by the sale of some of Hardy's manuscripts which had been in the possession of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

A. R. Powys is buried with his wife Faith in the churchyard at Winterborne Tomson. In letters to Llewelyn and Alyse dated 15 March 1936 JCP described his complicated feelings at the sight of ARP's corpse and made references to Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia* and Homeric ways of dealing with the dead. On the day of his brother's funeral at Winterborne Tomson JCP followed Bertie's coffin, in a car, all the way to Dorset from Hindhead where ARP had died on 9 March 1936 at Stoneycrest Nursing Home. JCP wrote in his diary for Wednesday 11 March 1936: "*We drove on & on & on with Bertie's Coffin always going ahead till we came down from a hill upon Winchester...Took Bertie to [Winterborne Tompson] church & left him there.*"

In 2023 several members of the Powys Society visited the church and provided information and photographs of Winterbourne Tomson especially for the Newsletter. I am grateful to Julia Mathews and Anna Rosic for their contribution. Anna Rosic sent me photographs of the church building and the memorial plaque dedicated to A. R. Powys, commissioned by ARP's widow, Faith, in 1962, from the illustrator and carver Reynolds Stone. Julia says the memorial can be found inside the church "*half way down on the left as you face the altar.*" I also located on the internet the image of another memorial dedicated to A. R. Powys and newly inscribed to his wife, Faith, which, Julia told me, is located "*on the wall that goes around the edge of the churchyard*".

Transcription of the memorial to A. R. Powys on the interior wall of the church: "*In memory of Albert Reginald Powys 1881-1936 CBE Architect and Writer, the devoted servant for over 25 years of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings who is buried in this churchyard as he desired. This church, greatly loved by Thomas Hardy, was saved from ruin by the sale of certain of his mss, which paid for work done here 1929 – 1931. As they shared Life, Love and Death, this stone is set by Faith, wife of A. R. Powys.*"

Transcription of the memorial to A. R. Powys on the exterior wall surrounding the church:



Memorial plaque to A.R. Powys, St. Andrew's church, Winterborne Tomson. Photo, Benedante.blogspot.com.

there has fulfilled its works and days. It is a place such as Thomas Hardy loved, and it was the sale of a manuscript given by him that enabled the SPAB in 1930 to save this church from ruin. The Society's Secretary, A.R. Powys, had the work under his own sympathetic care, and has carried it out with just that unselfconscious simplicity which is fitting to the place; and it is here that by his special desire his body was laid to rest. This choice is his own true epitaph. The spirit of the place is his spirit.

Extract from a report of ARP's funeral published in the *Western Gazette*, 20 March 1936:

This was the small fragment of antiquity which Mr Powys chose to rescue. So far as he knew, it has no memories or associations. It was what they saw – a little old fragment lying by the roadside. Mr Powys chose it as his monument. As he found it, so he left it, all done that was necessary, as little as possible and no more, for the manuscript of time was written in many different hands, and they had no business to rewrite any of its sections. That was why to enter that church, austere and almost stark as it seemed, gave them a shock of surprise and then of pleasure. Work like this Mr Powys made peculiarly his own.

Extract from an obituary of A. R. Powys by F. W. Troup published in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of Architects* for 21 March 1936:

“This church was restored by A R Powys who is buried here 1939 also Faith 1897-1983”

Extract from ARP's obituary published by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in their annual report in 1936:

Remote from the rush of modern life, part of a quietly charming landscape to which a little Dorset river gives life, stands the tiny church of Winterborne Tomson, humble in fashion as in size, and expressive of the simple spirit in which generation after generation



Memorial to A.R. Powys and his wife Faith, St. Andrew's church, Winterborne Tomson. Photo, Benedante.blogspot.com.

A splendid and loveable man cut off in his prime, it will be long before his place can be filled as he filled it.

For a detailed account of the modern restoration of the church see the article in *Dorset Life* magazine, June 2013 by Steve White.

For other references to St. Andrew's and Winterborne Tomson see Newsletter 34, July 1998: A Winterborne Tomson Miscellany; Newsletter 38, obituary of ARP by F. W. Troup, with information about the Winterborne Tomson manuscripts; Newsletter 40, July 2000, back cover – watercolour sketch of St. Andrew's by Gertrude, and inside an account of the service of Thanksgiving for Isobel Powys Marks that was held at the church on 10 June 2000.

Chris Thomas
The Coming Race

JCP's early lectures on his first experience of visiting America in 1905

On 19 April 1905 JCP arrived back in England after his first visit to America where he had been invited by the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching based in Philadelphia [1]. In America he had given lectures in Trenton and Madison, New Jersey (“*My first American lecture was addressed to the Ladies Club of Madison,*” *Autobiography*, p.462), he gave lectures at the Cooper Union in New York (“*the site of my second lecture in this country*”, *Autobiography*, p.462), at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, in Waterbury Connecticut, and numerous other locations especially in Pennsylvania and New York. These lectures included his course on the History of Liberty which he had specifically developed for his American audiences. We may suppose that the concluding lecture of this course on the subject of the Republic of the Future (the subject of his second lecture in America, *Autobiography*, p.462) probably included elements of *the message from the gods* (*Autobiography*, p.461) that JCP passionately believed he was bringing from England to the benefit of America.

Although JCP provides a lot of facts in *Autobiography* and later essays about his experiences in America over nearly thirty years, there exists little documentation that we can reference which is contemporary with his first visit to America in 1905 which might help shed some light on this mostly undocumented period in his life. However, an undated letter, written at this time, from JCP to his mother as well as a letter from JCP to his brother Littleton, dated 12 February 1905, were published in Newsletter 16, July 1992 and contain helpful information. Very little else has survived. That is why the reports of JCP's two lectures delivered in Lewes on 1 and 8 May 1905 and published in a local newspaper, the *Sussex Express* on 6 and 13 May, about JCP's first impressions of America are significant. JCP's delivery of these lectures, we are assured by his reporter, was ‘very racy’ and made his audience smile. The reports are reprinted below.

JCP's descriptions in *Autobiography* of his arrival in New York in the middle of winter and his sleigh ride through Central Park are particularly vivid. In January and February, he must also have read newspaper reports of rebellion and revolution in Russia especially the events of Bloody Sunday on 22 January 1905 in St Petersburg. A memory of those violent events appears in *Lucifer* with the episode in Part 5 of the raising of the red flag. It is remarkable however that JCP says in *Autobiography* that the skyscrapers of New York made little impression on him ("*I can remember absolutely nothing of my first impression of the New York skyscrapers.*" *Autobiography*, p.461). Yet he must have, for instance, often passed by one of the most notable tall new buildings in New York, the Flat Iron Building, which would have seemed so unlike anything he had seen anywhere else in Europe. The Flat Iron building had only just opened a few years earlier in 1902 and was already a prominent landmark in the city. It is interesting to note therefore that the report of JCP's lecture in Lewes records that "*Mr. Powys said he could not imagine a greater contrast than there was between New York and Lewes.*"

We are indebted to Paul Roberts who has done valuable research into this early period of JCP's lecturing career in America identifying for instance the date of JCP's arrival in New York on Tuesday 3 January 1905 (see especially "What is your impression of America?" in Newsletter 16, July 1992 and introduction to *Evasive America*, 1994.)

JCP was very busy on his return from America preparing the lecture schedule for the next season of the Oxford University Extension delegacy, thinking about his long, epic poem *Lucifer* which he wrote in Norwich in the Summer of 1905 [2], and helping to organise his brother Bertie's wedding in May [3], He also found time to plan two lectures about his impressions of American and American literature. The lectures do not seem to have formed part of an official University Extension lecture programme but may have been privately commissioned by the American collector of classical antiquities, Ned Warren (1860-1928) who lived in Lewes and with whom JCP was acquainted (see *Bachelors of Art* by David Sox, 1991 and JCP's diary entry 19 October 1932 [4]). Warren was a Bostonian and would have been especially interested to learn about JCP's visit to America. This seems very possible especially as Susan Rands has suggested that Warren may also have been the motivating force behind JCP's



Cover of The Coming Race published by William Blackwood & Sons anonymously in May 1871.

course of lectures on the early Roman emperors delivered in Lewes in 1900 (see *John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W. E. Lutyens*, p.13.)

The title of the first Lewes lecture about America, *The Coming Race*, is almost certainly an allusion to a quotation provided by JCP himself who must have made a reference, in the lecture, to the popular novel *The Coming Race* by Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803-1873) whose books JCP tells us in *Autobiography* dazzled him at Sherborne [5]. Bulwer Lytton's novel was first published by William Blackwood & Sons, anonymously in Great Britain in May 1871 (republished later the same year under the title *Vril: the Power of the Coming Race*.) The novel is sometimes described as an example of early science fiction and is about the discovery of a race of advanced subterranean beings who threaten to take over the upper human world. *The Coming Race* is dedicated to the British orientalist, mythographer and pioneer of comparative philology Max Müller (1823-1900). (For JCP's connection with Max Müller see *Powys Journal*, vol. 29, 2019, 'JCP's Letter from Dresden to his brother Littleton dated 25 April 1909.' End note 5, p.130.)

The subject of the novel reflects JCP's major theme in his lecture - America represents the future of the modern world. In his lecture the reporter declares that JCP said that "*New York indicated the growth of the modern idea*", that he referred to "*this new yet wonderful race*" and that "*Americans were the race of the future.*" Bulwer Lytton gave to JCP his central metaphor. Just as JCP compared provincial Lewes with metropolitan New York so Bulwer Lytton refers to the decayed world of old Europe compared with modern New York.

JCP may have been inspired in these views by his reading of another book - *The Americanisation of the World* by W. T. Stead published in 1902. JCP had in fact written to Stead after leaving Cambridge for advice on his future career [6]. We might think as well of later variations on JCP's theme in Henry Luce's influential essay *The American Century* published in *Life Magazine* in the issue for 17 February 1941. When JCP also refers to "*the great task of settling the continent by America*" we might think of Thomas Mann's opinions on the role of America in the 1930s in *The Coming Victory of Democracy*, 1938: "*America is free of the poison that fills the air of Europe...the course of Western culture will shift to America.*" In light of these views JCP's comments on America and its republic appear even more apposite: "*This at least seems certain that the kind of liberty, the kind of democracy, represented by the American republic is destined to be the basis of the liberty, the democracy, the republic of the future.*" (*Syllabi of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, Academic Year 1904-1905*, *The History of Liberty*, a course of six lectures delivered by J.C. Powys). JCP could be directly reflecting Bulwer Lytton who in *The Coming Race* refers to "*the present grandeur and prospective pre-eminence of that glorious American republic in which Europe enviously seeks its model.*"

JCP's reflections on America follow in the tradition of other notable visitors to the continent in the nineteenth century who recorded their impressions – for instance: Dickens (*American Notes*, 1842), Wilde (*Impressions of America* 1883, delivered first

as a lecture and secondly in book form in 1906), Kipling (*American Notes*, 1899), Bram Stoker (*Personal Impressions of America*, lecture 28 December 1885 published in the *Daily News*, 29 December, and in book form as *A Glimpse of America* 1886) and Henry Irving (*Impressions of America*, 1884) describing his tour of 1884/1885. JCP's lectures also preceded later authors with their impressions of America such as G K Chesterton's *What I Saw in America* (1923).

Notes

1. The database of incoming passengers to UK and Ireland from America, 1878-1960, on the Ancestry website, incorrectly shows JCP's arrival in England on board the Haverford from Philadelphia. This transcription mistake was confirmed to me by researcher Tony Head who had already suspected an error had occurred. I personally visited the National Archives in Kew and examined the original passenger lists. The relevant documents had indeed been confused during the period of digitisation. I noted that JCP's name appears on the passenger manifest for the Oceanic and not for the Haverford. The Oceanic departed New York on 12 April 1905 and arrived in Liverpool on 19 April 1905.

2. Preface to *Lucifer*.

3. *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, 2018, pp.189-190.

4. For the life and collecting practice of E. P. Warren also see: *Biography of a Connoisseur* by E. H. Goddard and Osbert Burdett, 1941; *Outlaw Marriages* by Rodger Streitmatter, 2018; *Bachelors of a Different Sort* by John Potvin, 2021; *Men and Memories, the recollections of William Rothenstein*, Vol.2, 1932; *The Mount Vernon Street Warrens* by Martin Green, 1990

5. JCP also mentions reading Bulwer Lytton in letters to Louis Wilkinson dated 13 January 1947, 27 February 1956, and in a letter to Nicholas Ross dated 14 September 1955. Interestingly JCP declared in the letter to Louis dated 27 February 1956 that reading Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* "has greatly influenced my present writing."

6. *Autobiography*, p.195.

Chris Thomas

The following reports of JCP's two lectures on American life and American literature delivered in Lewes on 1st and 8th May 1905 were produced by an unnamed journalist for the *Sussex Express*:

"The Coming Race", delivered on Monday 1 May 1905 and reported in the Sussex Express on Saturday 6 May 1905, p.3, column 2.

Mr J.C. Powys the brilliant Oxford University Extension lecturer, has become quite an influence in Lewes. His lectures are the great intellectual treats of the year for the leisured and professional classes in the county town, the fact that they are always held in the afternoon preventing the ordinary workers attending. A few months ago Mr Powys paid a visit to the United States, and the impressions of such a keen observer could not be otherwise than deeply interesting. On Monday afternoon he

gave the first of two lectures on his visit to Yankee land in the Lesser Hall before a large and appreciative audience. The Rev. Dr. Belcher, who presided, mentioned he was in America last July, consequently it would be to him an extra pleasure to listen to Mr. Powys, who being a much younger man and a much younger traveller than himself, would give them a more vivid picture of life in the States. Mr. Powys had quite a new subject to deal with, and he quickly demonstrated his versatility, and while his observations were always in good taste, his style was very racy, and the faces of the audience frequently broadened into a smile. Mr. Powys said he could not imagine a greater contrast than there was between New York and Lewes. In the one place everything was new and in the other everything was old. New York indicated the growth of the modern idea, while Lewes was full of memories of the past. An Englishman unacquainted with the American people would be infuriated by many of the habits of this new yet wonderful race. Putting prejudice on one side, he thought they would feel that the Americans were the race of the future. They had the saving quality, which covered up a multitude of sins, and that was energy. Their energy was tremendous. Their object was to get on and make money, and they worked early and late to accomplish that end. Mr. Powys did not think that justice had been done to American architecture. The houses were something like the Georgian houses in Lewes, and they struck him as being very much in keeping with the country. In the country too, the houses and farm buildings, although often constructed of wood, were very pleasing in style. Describing the social life of America, the lecturer said the children ruled their parents and the women ruled the men. It was said that Germany was the land for men, England for dogs, and America for women, and it was certainly quite true in regard to the last named country. The women of America all seemed to be fashionable, alert, and witty; the women entertained the men and not the men the women as in European countries. The American man certainly had peculiarities, but his treatment of women was most chivalrous, and in that respect he deserved to rank among the best mannered men in the world. He could not agree that America was free, the great tyrant was public opinion, the people were terribly afraid of one another. Before he arrived he was prejudiced against Tammany but before his visit concluded he was almost prejudiced in favour of it.. Tammany took from the rich and gave to the poor. And there was this about it, the people could sweep it out at once if they wanted to. The lecturer waxed eloquent over the vast resources of the States, and predicted that when the Americans had completed the great task of settling the Continent they would devote more attention to literature and art, and less to material things. Dr. Belcher in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Powys, said he was profoundly interested in the lecture, but he entirely disagreed with many of the statements made by the lecturer. Nobody had written a history of American architecture simply because there was no American architecture. It was simply a copy of other styles. He did not think that mechanical skill made the Americans more civilised than other nations, and in many engineering works such as ship building we were far ahead of them. As to the American women, there were many points from which they might be viewed. One

view of them was that they were clothes horses on which to hang fine garments, another that their smartness or cleverness was merely arrogance or insolence. At present he did not consider that the Americans could take rank with the older nations of the world. Mr. Powys said those who expected he was going to reply to Dr. Belcher and create “an American scene” would be disappointed (laughter). His second lecture would deal with the literature and art of the country.

A lecture on American Literature, delivered on Monday 8 May 1905 and reported in the Sussex Express on Saturday 13 May 1905, p.3, column 1.

American children ought to be very happy and very bright. Mr. Powys, M.A., lecturing on American literature at the Lesser Hall on Monday afternoon, said there was an abundance of books for children, great attention being paid to this branch of literature. According to Mr. Powys, Walt Whitman and Henry James were the only real original writers typical of the country that the United States had produced. Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne and the other leading authors and poets had much in common with English writers but Walt Whitman and Henry James were distinctive. There was a great contrast between the two, but each gave a good idea of American life. With all its blunders, grossness and eccentricities, Whitman’s poetry was, said the lecturer, great poetry. It was the work of the most out and out optimist the world had ever seen, and his optimism was all the more striking because he had seen all the horrors of the battlefield and the unpleasant things of life. He saw the Divine Spirit in what others would call the refuse of life, and made the ugly appear beautiful even though the beauty were pathetic. In the pure and brilliant works of Henry James they got that strong sense of responsibility which was the backbone of the American people. Everything mattered. Mr. Powys’s opinion of the best American literature was that it was “fearfully good” – at times it seemed to want a little more of the demon in it (laughter). On the motion of the Rev. H. S. Anson, Rector of Streat, the large audience passed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Powys for his very interesting lecture.

Kate Kavanagh
JCP and Ronald Blythe

I found in Ronald Blythe’s introduction to the Bantam Classics edition (2004) of Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (p. 8) a quote from JCP’s *The Art of Growing Old*, 1944, p.205, Chapter XII, entitled Old Age and Death. (Note: Blythe’s introduction can also be found in his collection of essays: *From the Headlands* (Chatto & Windus, 1982), p.54. Ronald Blythe says:

What [Tolstoy] concentrates on is the plight of a man who has a coldly adequate language for dealing with another’s death but remains incoherent when it comes to his own. When death actually begins to happen, when one has to say, like Ivan Ilyich, that it’s not a question of ‘*a kidney, but of life...death. Yes, life was there and now it is going, going...*’ What then? What words? What useful clichés even?

What soothing talk about us all having to go sometime? That remarkable though neglected novelist John Cowper Powys once gave the bitter answer in these words.

“He it is *who—and make no mistake, my friend, the poor devil is yourself—who now, very now, visualises the inflamed condition of his prostate gland in the curves of the pattern on his lavatory floor. There is the appalling possibility that the ‘I’ upon whom this whole world of intimate impressions depends will soon have to face its absolute annihilation. The sun will rise as before, and the winds will blow as before. People will talk of the weather in the same tone. The postman will knock as he did just now and the letters will fall on the mat. But he won’t be there. He, our pivot and the centre of everything, will be nowhere at all.*”

Chris Thomas writes Ronald Blythe (1922-2023) was a nature and countryside writer (*England: The Four Seasons, Word from Wormingford, Borderland, The Circling Year*), editor (*Emma, Far From the Maddening Crowd and The Awkward Age*) and essayist (*Field Work*). Ronald Blythe is probably most famous for his book *Akenfield* (1969) about rural life in Suffolk. Blythe’s *The View in Winter*, 1979, also includes a quotation from JCP. He quotes JCP in *Borderland*, provided an introduction to TFP’s *Mr Weston’s Good Wine* for the 1984 Hogarth Press edition and included TFP’s story *Heal Thyself* in *My Favourite Village Stories*, 1979. Blythe also referenced TFP, JCP, TFP and Llewelyn in *A Writer’s Day Book*, 2006.

Morine Krisssdóttir

Review: *Thomas Henry Lyon, Architect and aesthete – his life and work* by Michael Yelton, Sacristy Press, hardback, 362 pages, **Date of Publication:** 15 December 2023, **ISBN:** 978-1-78959-325-9, Price £60.00

This new book about the architect, Thomas Henry Lyon, has several unusual features that immediately strike the reviewer. The first is that this hardback is a joy to behold: well bound, beautifully printed and with many colour photographs. The second is that it is a substantial scholarly volume of 362 pages but without an index. The third is that while a major part of this book is Yelton’s exhaustive analyses of what appears to be almost all of Lyon’s architectural output, it includes insets about Lyon’s ambivalent relationship with John Cowper Powys, much of which relies heavily on Susan Rands booklet, *John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W.E. Lutyens*.

The first thirty pages are devoted to outlining Thomas Henry’s family background. His father was “an entrepreneur and business man,” who made money in the tea trade and mining, as well as purchasing large tracts of land in Devon where he settled. Alfred Lyon had three wives and numerous children; Thomas Henry, known as Harry, was born in 1869. Harry was sent to a minor public school and then, just before his eighteenth birthday, was indentured to serve his articles with a Torquay firm of

architects. Yelton says, (the first of many, presumably ironic, comments): “it is now not clear exactly what he learned” and in 1890 Lyon went up as an undergraduate to Corpus Christi College Cambridge to read law. The author says he “participated fully in the social; and sporting life of the college,” although his academic record was “undistinguished.” It was at Corpus that he met three young men who played significant parts in his life: Edmund Pearce who was to become in due course Master of Corpus; Percy Wise, a “convinced Anglo-Catholic,” who became an influential churchman in Australia. The third young man to become a close friend was John Cowper Powys: “a Novelist of considerable distinction” and “one whose work inspires intensely strong devotion from some and indifference or criticism from others.”

Yelton refers fairly often to Powys’s *Autobiography*, although he points out “its many inaccuracies of detail,” and “his accustomed overblown prose.” In it, Powys says that Lyon was his “most intimate” friend at Corpus and that the young Harry Lyon’s “unequalled charms held [him] spellbound,” despite Powys’s awareness that “the difference between us was extraordinary.” Later, the relationship became “bruised.” It remains something of a mystery what the young John Cowper saw in Lyon and why later he allowed Lyon to have such a large, even deleterious, influence on his life. However, that issue is beyond the scope of this book.

The friendship of the three men later proved useful to Lyon: his first architectural commissions were in Australia where Wise had been given a living in Adelaide. Pearce’s influence as Master of Corpus facilitated Lyon’s architectural work at Cambridge. John Cowper’s friendship was perhaps the least useful to Lyon, except in so far as he married off one of his sisters, Margaret, to Powys. (Two of his other sisters were married to Wise and Pearce.)

Following his undergraduate years, Lyon obtained employment with W.D. Caroe. Caroe’s firm specialised in ecclesiastical architecture, especially the extensions and alterations to historic churches - a pattern that Lyon was to follow. He left Caroe in 1895 and set up his own architectural practice.

Between 1901 and 1911 much of his work was designing a series of twelve houses which were constructed on land that his father purchased as agricultural land in the 1860’s. The story that the plots were sold on the basis that Lyon was to design the houses, is possibly apocryphal.

In 1902, Percy Wise asked him to design a new church, the Church of St George in Adelaide, as well as much of its furniture - the statues, rood screens, reredos, etc., right down to the candle sticks. Yelton says it was probably after his second trip to Australia in 1905 that Lyon became a practising Anglo-Catholic.

In 1910 Lyon was asked to prepare plans for the rebuilding of Sidney Sussex College Chapel, Cambridge. As with other of Lyon’s commissions that he discusses, Yelton describes the project in detail enhanced with coloured photographs. The author comments that the rebuilding “was an attempt to establish within a Cambridge College a chapel which incorporated the ideas of the Anglo-Catholic movement.” He goes on

to say “It undoubtedly is among Lyon’s most attractive substantive pieces of work [and] It led to a large number of commissions in Cambridge.”

Lyon’s architectural work virtually ceased in 1914 but Yelton points out that “the end of the First World War brought with it incidental benefits.... Over the next few years virtually every church in the country marked those who died with a memorial” and Lyon designed a fair number of them.

After the war and until his retirement, Lyon was in Cambridge. In 1919 he was appointed the first Director of Design for what was then the School of Architecture, and based himself at his old College, Corpus. During that time his major project was to raise the roof of New Court, Corpus, in order to provide extra sets for the increasing number of undergraduates who flocked to Cambridge after the war. Yelton says he was increasingly treated as a house architect - asked to remove iron railings, supervise remedial work on rendering, refurbish the Combination Room, and (to the dismay of John Cowper) remove the ivy on the walls of the Old Court.

It is sometimes difficult to tell when or if Yelton writes with tongue in cheek, but here he points out that “although never a Fellow, he lived without charge in College, with dining rights and rooms free of charge – a privilege usually afforded only to Fellows.” It is perhaps not an accident that Edmund Pearce, his old Corpus friend, was Master of the College from 1914 to 1927.

His last important commission was to design the Church of St Augustine, Wembley Park which “turned out to be a disaster” – the church closed after 12 months because it was unsafe. Apparently, the building was too tall and heavy for its foundations, a rather elementary error. Yelton opines, “it is regrettable, but seems entirely clear that the fault lay principally with Lyon.”

In 1938 he retired to Middlecott, his old home in Devon, and died in 1953. In the last few pages of his book, Yelton addresses the question of Lyon’s will. He castigates the “leading biographer” of Powys for suggesting Lyon left a “considerable estate,” but goes on to admit: “Lyon had always given the impression to the outside world that he was better off than was actually the case.” Despite being his father’s heir, by the time he died, “essentially, Lyon was insolvent.”

If a comparison is to be made of Yelton’s book and Rand’s booklet, it is fair to say that Rand’s is more informative about Lyon’s personality and Yelton his architectural career, but whether deliberate or not, both their assessments are rather crushing. Rands calls Lyon “an outsider making good,” and Yelton sums up his architectural abilities thus: “Lyon’s main strength was in devising ingenious solutions in order to carry out limited schemes to fit in with what was already there. “

It is perhaps an appropriate comment on his life and achievements that in retirement “the most widespread memory and the one which impressed itself most on the neighbours was of seeing him endlessly weeding the drive at Middlecott with a little knife.”

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