

Editorial

In my last editorial note I lamented the continued invisibility of three long-awaited Powys books: *Fables* by T. F. Powys, *A Study Of Llewelyn Powys* by Peter Foss and Catherine Lieutenant's translation of John Cowper Powys's *Rabelais*. Members will be pleased to learn that, with the exception of *Fables*, these important books are now available. *A Study of Llewelyn Powys* is reviewed by Alan Howe in this issue of the *Newsletter* and *Rabelais* is to be reviewed by Jacqueline Peltier in our November issue.

In addition, French editions of *Confessions of Two Brothers* (Granit), *After My Fashion* and *Rodmoor* (both Editions du Seuil) have recently appeared and these too we hope to review in the November *Newsletter*.

But where are the English books? The Powys Society continues to actively encourage re-publication of the major works, as well as carrying on its own programme of publication, which began last year with the first issue of *The Powys Journal* and Alan Howe's *Powys Checklist*. Three new publications will be issued at this year's conference (details of which are given later in this *Newsletter*) and the 1992 *Powys Journal*, at over 200 pages, promises to be of enormous interest.

This year's Annual Conference at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester will feature the usual delightful mixture of stimulating lectures and lively discussions, with the chance to meet old friends, make new ones and to buy that elusive Powys title you have been hunting for years. It is easy to take the conferences for granted, yet it seems to me remarkable that not only are they so good year after year, but that, year after year, they seem to improve, providing an ever wider range of activities. Bookings for this year's conference close on July 31st and members should contact Griffin Beale for further details.

Last year's Annual Book Sale was a tremendous success but, as ever, we are hoping to outdo it this year. Louise de Bruin and Frank Kibblewhite, the book sale organisers, have asked that all members attending the conference this year should make a special effort to bring along as many good quality books as possible, particularly those of Powys interest.

Facilities will also be made available to booksellers, who will be charged £20 for one day and £30 for two. Those wishing to take advantage of this opportunity must book space in advance by contacting Griffin Beale, whose address may be found at the front of the *Newsletter*.

One item of particular interest which will be on sale at the conference is the original edition of Eleanor Farjeon's monograph on *Elizabeth Myers*, published by Saint Albert's Press in 1957. This paper covered edition of 1,000 copies features a sonnet by Sara Jackson and a wood engraving by Edward Walters and is now hard to come by. Copies will be on sale at £5.40, but can also be ordered by post at the same price from: The Aylesford Press, 158 Moreton Road, Upton, Wirral, Cheshire L49 4NZ.

The activities and publications of the Society depend heavily upon members' subscriptions and it is obviously vital that these are paid promptly. Unfortunately, 101 of our members have not yet paid for 1992 and we would implore all members to check their records carefully to ensure that payment has been made. The use of Standing Orders and, where appropriate, Covenants, greatly eases these problems, both for members and the Society, and those wishing to take advantage of these facilities should contact the Treasurer, Stephen Powys Marks.

Those members who took part in the *Wolf Solent* walk around Sherborne which was organised by Tony Hallett almost two years ago will remember just how rewarding an experience it was. Tony has now agreed to organise another walk around Sherborne in the early Autumn, although the date has yet to be fixed. Members wishing to attend (and perhaps bring along their friends) should contact John Batten at Keeper's Cottage, Montacute, Somerset TA15 6XN (telephone 0935 824077) for further details.

Finally, the 1992 Powys Lecture in Montacute is to be given at 7 pm on Saturday October 10th in the Baptist School Room, Montacute. The speaker will be Stephen Powys Marks, who will discuss the life and work of A. R. Powys. Admission is free and all members and their friends are cordially invited to attend.

Paul Roberts

Election of Officers

Having served as Vice-Chairman of the Society since 1972, Timothy Hyman has asked to be replaced: I am happy to report, however, that he wishes to continue serving the Society on the Committee. Griffin Beale likewise wishes to relinquish the post of Secretary, which he has so ably filled, due to pressure of work; and he too is willing to remain on the Committee. Our warmest thanks are due to Griffin and to Tim for all that they have contributed to the Powys cause.

The following have agreed to stand for office in 1992-93:

<i>Chairman</i>	Moline Krissdottir	
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Paul Roberts	
<i>Secretary</i>	John Batten	
<i>Treasurer</i>	Stephen Powys Marks	
<i>Committee</i>	Griffin Beale	Peter Foss
	Louise de Bruin	Timothy Hyman
	Bev Craven	Frank Kibblewhite
	Michael Everest	

I shall be requesting nominations for these candidates at the Annual General Meeting at the Weekend Conference at Cirencester.

Glen Cavaliero

Treasurer's Report for 1991

The accounts for 1991 have been prepared in the same way as before, but with the addition of comparative figures for 1990. The accounts are printed on the next two pages, having been examined and approved by the Society's Auditor, Stephen Allen.

The accounts show that the Society's finances are extremely healthy, with record donations of over £1,170 and record income from publication sales; the net income of the latter was almost £1,750, of which a large part, £1,140, arose in the form of donations of books which were sold at the Conference auction or through the November newsletter. Taken together, these two sources, some £2,900, actually exceeded the subscription income for 1991 of £2,500. Other items, of which the largest was interest on our higher rate deposit account (paid gross), bring the total income to over £6,200.

Our expenditure was nearly £3,760, of which £1,500 was the cost of printing and distributing members' and complimentary copies of *The Powys Journal*; the *Journal* and three newsletters accounted for 59% of our total expenditure and for 89.2% of our subscription income (our target being not more than 90%). In addition, we published the *Powys Checklist* by Alan Howe, the cost of which, £338, was more than covered by net sales receipts of £355. The largest other single item of expenditure was a computer for our newsletter Editor, the cost, £617, being met from generous donations.

The excess of income over expenditure was £2,430, of which we have transferred unexpended donations to the former Wilson Knight fund, renamed as "The Wilson Knight benefactors' fund" in recognition of the generosity of our members in cash and books and of the donations from the collections of two former members, Norman Hopkin and Bill Degenhart, who died during the past year. The General fund and the Wilson Knight benefactors' fund together represent our worth at the end of 1991, some £5,635, compared with about £3,200 at the end of 1990. Our stock of books and journals, at cost of purchase or production, is valued at £1,630, so that our total cash resource at the end of 1991 was almost exactly £4,000, compared with £2,360 at the end of 1990.

We have already seen the benefit of sales of our own publications, with a net profit on the *Checklist* and an income of £123 from the sale of additional copies of *The Powys Journal* and of £131 from postcards (more than half their printing cost) in 1991. It is important to make good use of our cash: judicious publication is one of the ways of increasing our assets as well as doing good work.

Stephen Powys Marks

Paupers' Press

The yellow leaflet from Paupers' Press includes among its list of new titles Paul Roberts' *Becoming Mr. Nobody: the philosophy and poetry of John Cowper Powys*, containing two essays. The first, "Becoming Mr. Nobody", was first published in *The Powys Review* 16 (1985), and the second, "Imperishable Gestures", an introduction to the poetry of John Cowper Powys, has appeared only in French translation in *Plein Chant* 42-43 (1988); they have been put together in a book, available in paperback or limited-edition hardback.

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1991

<i>Income</i>	£	£	1990
subscriptions			
for 1991 ¹	2,503.84		
for 1990 paid in 1991	<u>326.00</u>	2,829.84	2068
donations ²			
for computer	633.00		
for <i>The Powys Journal</i> (£300 deducted from cost) —			
other	<u>239.62</u>	872.62	500
publication sales			
conference auction sale	516.50		
(excluding 'Books for Sale' (November Newsletter))	623.06		
postage)	14.60		
other	<u>927.04</u>		
gross income	2,081.20		
less cost of publications sold	<u>332.22</u>		
net income	<u>1,748.98</u>	1,748.98	612
conference			
fees	5,457.17		
expenses	<u>5,268.26</u>		
surplus (3.5%)	<u>188.91</u>	188.91	127
<i>Powys Review</i> , 1990 provision not required ³		65.60	—
transfer from Wilson Knight fund (1990)		—	600
interest (gross)		<u>500.45</u>	<u>477</u>
		£ 6,206.40	£ 4,384
<i>Expenditure</i>	£	£	1990
<i>The Powys Journal</i> I (1991), cost of 284 members' & complimentary copies ⁴	1,341.79		
cost of distribution	<u>158.21</u>	1,500.00	—
<i>Powys Review</i> (1990)		—	2,125
newsletters (3 in 1991) ⁵		732.92	1,055
<i>Powys Checklist</i> , complimentary copies, including copies to new members		21.00	—
display in Montacute gazebo		334.01	—
computer equipment ⁶		616.87	—
membership leaflets		61.00	—
letterheading (1990)		—	34
subscription to Alliance of Literary Societies		10.00	10
advertisement in <i>Powys Review</i>		40.00	40
books sent to Francis Feather		48.04	—
lecture hall and travel (1990)		—	51
officers' expenses		208.99	217
committee travel		83.30	130
padded envelopes (1000) for <i>The Powys Journal</i>		<u>119.85</u>	—
		3,775.98	3662
unallocated donations transferred to Wilson Knight benefactors' fund ²		1,395.31	—
excess of income over expenditure		<u>1,035.11</u>	<u>722</u>
		£ 6,206.40	£ 4,384

THE POWYS SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

I General fund	£	£	1990
funds at January 1st 1991		2,326.21	1,604
excess of income over expenditure		1,035.11	722
funds at December 31st 1991		<u>3,361.32</u>	<u>2,326</u>
represented by:			
stock of <i>Powys Review</i> and books			
at cost at January 1st 1991	844.00		269
add cost of purchases and publications,			
including <i>The Powys Journal</i> surplus			
to distribution ⁷	1,141.68		600
less cost of publications sold (£332.22)			
and complimentary <i>Checklist</i> (£21.00)	(353.22)		25
value of stock at December 31st 1991 ⁸	<u>1,632.46</u>	1,632.46	844
cash at bank at December 31st 1991 ⁹		1,901.89	3,943
Mappowder festival (1990)		—	50
advance payment to Royal Agricultural College			
for 1992 conference		<u>100.00</u>	—
		3,634.35	4,837
less creditors (1990, cheques not cleared)	55.03		338
provision for <i>Powys Review</i> (1990)	—		2,050
subscriptions received in advance	<u>218.00</u>		<u>123</u>
	<u>273.03</u>	273.03	2,511
		<u>£ 3,361.32</u>	<u>£ 2,326</u>
II The Wilson Knight benefactors' fund ¹⁰		£	1990
fund at January 1st 1991		877.74	1,325
interest (1990) ¹¹		—	126
transfer from General fund (1990, to General fund)		1,395.31	-600
fund at December 31st 1991		<u>£ 2,273.05</u>	<u>£ 878</u>
represented by cash in deposit account		<u>£ 2,273.05</u>	<u>£ 878</u>

NOTES

- 1 This figure is for 236 subscriptions paid, and includes subscriptions paid in advance in 1990 (£123.40).
- 2 Total donations: £872.62 (listed) + £300 (*Powys Journal*) + £516.50 (auction) + £623.06 ('Books for Sale') = £2,312.18, less sums spent £300 (*Powys Journal*) & £616.87 (computer) = £1395.31 unallocated.
- 3 £1,984.40 spent out of £2,050 provided in 1990 accounts.
- 4 Gross cost £2,110.79, less advert income £100 & donation £300 = net cost £1710.79, less cost of copies taken into stock at run-on cost £369 = £1341.79 net cost.
- 5 Total cost of £797.92, less fees for insertions.
- 6 Cost covered by donations for this purpose.
- 7 *Powys Review* 25 & 26, £180; *Powys Checklist*, £337.68; undistributed copies of *The Powys Journal*, £369; postcards, £235; *One Way of Love*, £20.
- 8 No value is attached to stock which has not involved cost.
- 9 Current account £59.61 + deposit account £4,115.33 = £4,174.94, less Benefactors' fund £2,273.05 = £1,901.89.
- 10 Formerly Wilson Knight fund.
- 11 Interest in 1991 has been retained in the General fund.

Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer

Ham Hill

St Michael's Hill, Hedgecock and Ham Hill form an undulating wooded ridge which protects the villages of Montacute and Stoke sub Hamdon from fierce winter gales blowing across Pillsdon Pen from Portland and West Bay. Situated as they are, within a short walk of Montacute vicarage, it is not surprising that all three have a place in Powys literature. Llewelyn devoted an essay to each and set the courting of Dittany in *Love and Death* in Stoke Woods, which run up to Ham Hill from Hedgecock. St Michael's Hill overlooking Montacute is soft, rounded and shrouded in mystery, while Ham Hill stands brazenly above Stoke, proudly bearing the scars of centuries of exploitation. In *Wood and Stone* these two landmarks are used by John to symbolise the opposing forces of power and sacrifice which are the themes of his first novel.

Both Llewelyn and John describe Ham Hill as resembling a crouched lion, but the power of this image was somewhat weakened when an obelisk commemorating Stoke's war dead was erected on the head of the "great dumb beast". Although only 425 feet high the hill rises almost sheer from the flood plain of the rivers Parrett and Yeo on the edge of the Somerset levels, thereby assuming a prominence out of all proportion to its elevation. The flattened summit was continuously occupied from Neolithic till Roman times and its slopes were protected by two and a half miles of bank and ditch fortifications.

As a young child Llewelyn must have seen Ham Hill almost in the hey-day of its quarrying industry which, earlier in Victoria's reign, had employed two hundred men. The great steam cranes featured in *Wood and Stone* as the focus of industrial unrest were certainly an essential part of the operation in 1897 and the landscape would have been further disfigured by sheds housing steam powered saws, great heaps of quarry waste and the horse-drawn tramways of the Ham Hill and Doulting Stone Co. They excavated a bed of shelly limestone some ninety feet in thickness and as golden brown as wet sea sand. Both brothers marvel at its beauty and versatility as building material "... stones of devotion and stones of despair", as fit for the fan tracery of Sherborne Abbey as for the floors of the infamous Ilchester Gaol. Vast quantities of stone were carted from the hill via Montacute and it is said that Charles Powys commissioned Bertie's drinking trough in the Borough out of concern for "... those Ham Hill horses with their tragic defeated heads". It is easy to imagine men and beasts pausing there to wash the limey golden dust from their throats.

Quarrying on the hill had almost ceased by the middle of this century and apart from a small-scale working on its southern edge the whole area has reverted to what can best be described as a moonscape with vegetation. The stark outlines of the mountains of rubble stone smoothed and softened by springy turf and the perilously deep pits and craggy faces clothed with rampant briars, blackthorn and ash.

Llewelyn and John make it clear that, even at the height of its commercial exploita-

tion, Ham Hill was traditionally a place for public assemblies and meetings. Each describes large crowds being addressed by political agitators. These gatherings centred on a shallow grassy depression, some twenty paces across, known from time immemorial as the Frying Pan. Although John maintains that "... no base culinary appellation, issue of Anglo-Saxon unimaginativeness, could conceal the formidable classic outline of its well known shape — the shape of the imperial coliseum", it still resembles a frying pan, and the aptness of the name is a tribute to local wit and observation. It is recorded that some 20,000 people thronged the area for the Whit Monday rallies in the eighteen-nineties. So far as I know, the public last gathered there, on summer Sunday evenings in the nineteen-seventies, to hear a local preacher who used its convenient shape and acoustic properties for his purposes.

The George Mitchell of Llewelyn's essay, although described as "... the man from the plough", was a stone mason by trade, but a powerful speaker and writer against the exploitation of farm workers by the local landowners, Lords Ilchester and Portman. He coined the phrase "skeleton at the plough", which he used as his campaign logo. Local clergy were often attacked by him for their supine allegiance to the landed gentry. At least a part of the staircase at the Baptist Church and the marble sanctuary step in the parish church were gifts from Mitchell. So perhaps those charges were not levelled against the Montacute clerics. He is buried in St Catherine's churchyard, a man worthy of further study and almost certainly, along with Joseph Arch, the inspiration for the Christian Candidate in *Wood and Stone*.

Stoke people will tell you that it has always been a "working village", thereby explaining its somewhat plain appearance and implying that Montacute was prettified and lived idly on the bounty of its great house. Llewelyn speaks of Stoke paddocks "... patched with drying amber-coloured skins of the gloving factories". In his youth the village boasted four such factories which sent out work to be finished in almost every local cottage. Despite the virtual demise of the industry in the area, Southcombe Bros. of Stoke still carry on a family business which, in the eighteen-sixties, produced 3,000 dozen pairs of gloves a week.

Since 1975 Ham Hill has been designated a Country Park and is popular with visitors and local families. It now has inordinately large car parks, viewpoints, way-marked footpaths, a barbecue area, toilets and a Ranger's office. *The Prince of Wales*, built to supply cider-drinking quarrymen and masons, has trebled in size, carpeted its floors and resorted to piped music. Such is the price of progress; but if you follow Llewelyn's advice you can escape from all these trappings of South Somerset's tourist trade. Leave the Frying Pan and what he calls "the popular end" and follow the footpath down the southern slope bordering on Witcombe. Soon you will find yourself amid apple orchards and meadows enjoying "... a wonderful prospect of rural peace", where Tinker's Bubble still gushes as exuberantly from its fathomless chasm beneath Norton Covert, as it did when the Powyses walked on Ham Hill.

John Batten

A. R. Powys and The London Mercury

In my paper on A. R. Powys, read to the Society in 1981 and printed in volume 10 of *The Powys Review* (1982) I referred on page 60 to his contributions to journals and magazines. Amongst them was *The London Mercury*, to which, I said, 'J. C. Squire introduced him in 1924 or 1925.' In the next volume, Dr Cedric Hentschel pointed out that A. R. P.'s contribution had begun earlier and gave a brief and tantalizing note on the range of material.

I have now (only now!) had an opportunity to spend a day at the Guildhall Library in London quickly going through a complete and easily accessible set of *The London Mercury*. The following factual information may be of interest while I consider the possibility of reprinting a selection of articles and reviews. My mother tells me that J. C. Squire, Jack Squire, living at Chiswick Mall, was a near neighbour of A. R. P., who had rented No. 13 Hammersmith Terrace in January 1920 (another neighbour in Hammersmith Terrace itself was A. P. Herbert).

The London Mercury was published monthly from November 1919 until April 1939, with a single run of numbers, 1 to 234, also paginated in six-monthly volumes, of which there were therefore thirty-nine. For most of its life Squire was its Editor. Its 'title and goodwill' were acquired in 1939 by the proprietors of *Life and Letters To-day*.

A. R. P.'s contributions were, with one exception, in a section normally headed 'Chronicles', his being under the subdivision 'Architecture', and almost invariably he filled three pages of each number to which he contributed. His first contribution was in No. 9 (July 1920), his last in No. 180 (October 1934); altogether, he appears in seventy-nine numbers, for a long period in eight or nine a year. During this time he reviewed, often very briefly, 148 books and wrote 88 pieces, ranging from a quarter page to three pages long. The one exception, mentioned above, and the longest piece, was entitled 'The Devil and Green Fields', a review-article of *England and the Octopus* by Clough Williams-Ellis, running to eight pages.

Twelve of the articles from *The London Mercury* were reprinted in the posthumous collection of A. R. P.'s papers, *From the Ground Up* (1937), and make up about half its bulk. The other articles were reprinted from *Church Assembly News*, *Architectural Design and Construction*, *The Architects' Journal*, and *Time and Tide*. There's quite a lot more work to be done!

In June 1936 *The London Mercury* published Llewelyn Powys's 'Threnody' on A. R. P., who had died on March 9th that year (Vol. xxxiv, No. 200, pages 141-146). This is the piece which is reprinted as 'Albert Reginald Powys' in *Somerset Essays* (1937) with some minor changes. The piece in *The London Mercury* is accompanied by a pencil or chalk drawing by Gertrude M. Powys dated 1902; the whereabouts of the original drawing is unknown.

Stephen Powys Marks

An Italian Jobber Skald

Jobber Skald was translated into Italian in 1962, two years before *Wolf Solent*. The presentation text, printed on a separate leaflet, was inside the copy I now own and which belonged to Kenneth Hopkins. It had been given to him by Phyllis Playter. I thought that members of the Powys Society might be interested and touched to read this little text and see how *Jobber Skald* was perceived by Italian sensibility.

Some statements will certainly seem a little curious to well-seasoned readers, though. The most striking is the insistence on the appurtenance of John Cowper Powys to "Cymru", going so far as locating the action on the Welsh coast! But we must keep in mind that with "every trace of the town of Weymouth eliminated", as Kenneth Hopkins remarks, it is probably difficult to discover the true name of Sea-Sands for a non-initiated reader. Still, one is a little troubled when thinking of the possibility of a ferry connecting Wales to the Continent!

The other element of surprise comes from the assumption made that psychoanalysis played a great part in John Cowper's evolution. This error may have resulted from a misapprehension of the constant self-analysis in *Autobiography*. But Glen Cavaliero, in a review entitled *Phénix et Serpent*, published in *Plein Chant*,¹ draws our attention to a certain number of elements which make the two men complementary and going in different directions, and their conceptions on "Primitivism" are therefore not the same at all.

To conclude, I would like to underline what, for me, is the most positive aspect of these lines. *Adamo Skald* is perceived as a sort of "opera" of the Cimmerian Land, crossed with voices and visions and destiny, where reality and surreality are fused, and we are given a romantic and accurate description of the beginning of this fascinating story: "... in un crepuscolo di gennaio, all'alta marea".

Adamo Skald (Jobber Skald)

Bompiani, Milano (1962), translated by Bruno Oddera

The Welsh novelist and essayist John Cowper Powys, who has now retired in a remote region of his native country, is still casting his patriarchal shadow over English literature. Son of a Protestant minister and artist by tradition (he is descended from the poet William Cowper and six of his eleven brothers and sisters were writers) he has himself related in his famous Autobiography the importance of psychoanalysis in his development. On the other hand, with his original and successful working out of the theories of Primitivism, he is considered the most legitimate heir to D. H. Lawrence.

J. C. Powys lived some twenty years in the United States. Henry Miller in his own Memories relates how he still feels the effect and influence of Powys's lectures. It was in the United States that he wrote Adamo Skald.

It is impossible to resist this story which begins in the twilight of a day in January, at

high tide. On the beach of a Welsh town, the clepsydra of time sets itself up at the side of a puppet show. Dramatic and bizarre events follow one another during a whole year through a series of characters, dominated by Sylvanus Cobbold, the persecuted prophet, victim of mystico-erotic visions, and by the vigorous and superb person of Adamo Skald, coastguard and demi-god of the sea.

Through the whole novel floats an aura of surreal folly which Powys keeps intermingling with the more common and everyday reality. Intertwined with the destinies of the characters are the themes of the Welsh writer's work. Obsessions with the desire to commit murder, with paternal superiority, with sexual dreams, with the mysterious relations which bind inanimate and animate. And the whole is crossed by visions and voices which give the book an irresistible dynamism and a prodigious amplitude, the amplitude and powerful respiration of the sea, symbol of total and panic destiny. A writer and a novel which will remain in literary history.

¹ The study on D. H. Lawrence and J. C. Powys was published in French in Benjamin Stassen's *Plein Chant*, in 1988. I have not been able to ascertain if it was ever published in English.

Jacqueline Peltier

“What Is Your Impression Of America?”

It seemed an unimportant question at first: when did John Cowper Powys first travel to America? With so much biographical and autobiographical material available and so many letters already in print, it ought to have been a question which could be answered easily. An hour among the books should make everything clear. Yet, curiously, this simple fact is nowhere to be found.

We know from *Autobiography* that Powys sailed from Liverpool aboard the Cunard liner *Ivernia* at some time during the Winter of 1904–1905 and, from his letters, that he was certainly back in England in May 1905, but the intervening period remains something of a mystery.

From the records of his early lectures published by Derek Langridge in *John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement*, we know that Powys had spent the Autumn of 1904 lecturing in the North of England. Perhaps he returned to Burpham in the meantime, but in December he was staying in Liverpool with his friend Tom Jones. Although he does not mention the date, Powys recalls the events of that day no fewer than five times in his *Autobiography* and vividly describes the sensation of hearing Sousa's ‘Stars and Stripes’ for the first time whilst drinking coffee with Jones in the Kardomah Café:

Aye! but how those exultant, reckless, cynical, devil-may-care strains delighted me. I derived from them a notion of the character of the American spirit which still seems to me, after all these years, no unworthy interpretation!

But when did all of this happen? Having limited the period to between December 1904 and, probably, February 1905, consulting the Cunard records was the obvious next step. These are largely held at the University of Liverpool but, as luck would have it, the passenger lists and captain's logs of the *Ivernia* for this period are stored at the Public Records Office at Kew. This was a problem, as it was not possible for me to consult these records personally. However, Subi Swift volunteered to undertake the task, but even she, having spent a day surrounded by vast crates of paper among which those we needed were stored, was forced to retreat — heroic but defeated.

The Central Library in Manchester has a complete run of the *New York Times* and it was to these that I turned next. Hidden in microscopic print at the bottom of enormous columns resembling ranks of uniform sky-scrapers, a tiny section appeared each day, recording the arrival and departure of ships. Cranking away at the micro-film reader, my eyes glazing over, wondering whether I *really* wanted to know when John Cowper Powys had first set foot on American soil, I at last found the answer to my question. The Cunard liner *Ivernia* had set sail from Liverpool on Saturday December 24th 1904 and had arrived in New York on Tuesday January 3rd 1905, the day after the official opening of the Times Building. You would have thought that, even after thirty years, John Cowper would have remembered spending Christmas at sea.

What the crossing had been like I still do not know. One day I shall have to delve into those crates at Kew myself. However, in the preceding month the weather in the Atlantic had been so bad that a number of ships had been delayed at sea for several days.

John Cowper recalls his arrival in New York by describing a sleigh ride across Central Park in the company of Frederick B. Miles, President of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching. It is interesting to note that Powys's description is closely mirrored in the following passage from the *New York Times* of Friday January 6th:

There was a continual jingle of sleigh bells in Central Park and in the upper section of the city yesterday afternoon on all streets where Commissioner Woodbury's men were considerate enough to let the snow lie. In Central Park there was a splendid pageant of single and double sleighs nearly all day, filled with red-cheeked and red-nosed men and women, wrapped in furs, who found the glide over the frozen ground and snow a pleasurable relief from the rattle of the carriage wheels or the chug of automobiles.

Two days later, however, some of the fun seems to have worn off and under the headline "Resurrecting Snow-Bound New York" the paper reports the heroic efforts of Commissioner Woodbury's men in removing two million cubic feet of snow from 186 miles of streets in just twelve hours! Where did they put it?

What happened whilst Powys was in America remains obscure. However, two letters have recently emerged which throw some light on his experiences there. The first of these, undated, is written by Powys to his mother and is, by a curious coincidence, the very letter which Mary Powys in turn quoted in her letter to Llewelyn which we

published in the last *Newsletter*. This is held in the library of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas in Austin. The second letter, dated February 12th 1905, is written to Littleton Powys and comes from the collection of Mr E. E. Bissell. We are deeply grateful to Mr Bissell for his kindness in making this letter available and to Mr Francis Powys for his permission to publish both letters, of which he is the copyright owner.

PR

c/o Charles D. Atkins Esq.
111 South Fifteenth St.
Philadelphia

My dearest Mother,

The people here are very kind to me. A dear old Quaker lady asked so prettily for Margaret's address in order that she might tell her how friendly they were to me that I was induced to give her yours as being perhaps more in harmony with Quaker ideas than dear Margaret. So you will perhaps hear from "Dean" Bond (Mrs. Bond) of Swathmore in a letter full of Thees and Thous.

The trains run through country & town with no difference between road or field and the railway-line. The engines are surprising-looking monsters with the machinery uncovered all wheels and rods – and of enormous height. Now & then a little square board like "Trespassers will be prosecuted" says "Beware of the Locomotive" but otherwise the thing rushes along unimpeded by any visible restrictions except the actual metal rails.

I have had some odd adventures I can tell you and have seen many extraordinary things.

The Peoples Institute lecture in New York was remarkable. Down in a crypt supported by pillars – like a catacomb – a large audience of Italians, Germans. Socialists, Anarchists, Democrats, Men gesticulating, asking wild questions, disputing with each other, shouting, cursing the corruption of the government and the exploiting of the poor by the rich – haranguing, howling like revolutionary incendiaries. I must say it is a thing to go through. I would not have missed it. "Tell me Professor!" one would yell "The Greeks and Jews – were they ever, if you go far back, the same race?" "Professor! another would cry – Is the Goddess Demeter and the Catholic Madonna the same person?" "I want to let you understand, Professor, another would shout – "that we have a perverted plutocracy and the poor are grossly wronged." "Slaves!" an Italian vociferated – the Greeks had slaves, you say? how then can you dare to call them a Democracy!"

But the strange thing about it all is that though they sound so fierce in public; when you meet them afterwards these people are the gentlest of men. Well – Griddle cakes and Maple Syrup (made out of Maple Sugar canes) is the thing they have for breakfast. Their

bread is like our cake – their water is like iced Appollinaris. They have apples for every meal and everybody, including the women, brandish tooth-picks like knives and forks.

I slept in Lafayette Hotel in New York and was alarmed by mysterious noises issuing from the “Radiator”: this thing began to roar like a hundred demons. Above it was a wheel and a notice – “Turn me altogether open or shut me altogether up”. I hesitatingly turned the thing once or twice both ways – and the roaring increased every time. It emitted steam and the room already resembled a Hot house. It became necessary to open the window. I found afterwards that this was the system of raising the atmosphere to the exact, suitable and adequate heat by the Fahreneit Barometer!

They do not clean your boots at home but always in the streets or in Boot Blacking Shops or in Barbers Shops. Darkies do it for five cents and arrange your tie, too. One big coloured fellow quite alarmed me by unexpectedly wanting to arrange my tie.

Well – dearest mother – goodbye for the present.

Love to all.

Your Jack

I have written to Emily & hope to see her soon.

American Society

for

Extension of University Teaching

111 South Fifteenth Street, Philadelphia.

Feb. 12th 1905

Dearest Littleton,

I am just writing to remind you, although I know it isn't necessary, of the existence of John Cowper Powys across the sea. I expect you are immensely absorbed in preparation for your move. Well, my old friend, you have as you are aware, my very sincerest blessing on the departure. I long to see you and your dear lady again. I had a very nice afternoon in New York with Emily. We found a pleasant underground “Ratskeller” or, Beer cellar run by Germans, where we were able to speak of old days in peace and you may be sure you were not forgotten. A little American boy showed me the other day a high clump of trees on a neighbouring hill where he said Eagles built their nests – but I won't vouch for this – I have not yet met an Eagle. The rivers here the Delaware and Susquehanna are magnificent expanses of water with high wooded cliffs – so also is the Hudson, above New York. When the thaw comes as periodically it does the trees get covered in the next frost with transparent icicles – each branch a wonder of clear crystal – like chandeliers of cut glass – through which the sun shines turning it all to a veritable fairyland. Last night I found myself stranded in the trolley-car track about ten miles from Baltimore – a man gave me a handful of matches – “strike and they'll stop”, he said

and disappeared over the hedge. When the Car arrived – an electric train at fine speed – I obeyed and made a small illumination against a telegraph post – certainly the car stopped – but they were not altogether free from expostulation – it appeared that lighting matches was the correct signal to stop the train – but I ought to have been on the left instead of on the right of the track – and this was a breach of the law. American women I like only a little better than at first but still a little better; they are like Olives: an acquired taste. The men are a queer race and swagger about, hustling and defying the police – who indeed are so corrupt here in Philadelphia the whole lot of them are being shifted from one district to another – They stare at me with a sort of braggadocio – as much as to say – “don’t bring any of your damned European notions out here” – But the Americans apart, I have found some nice Russians and one charming Jew – And the Chinese are an admirable race – In New York harbour you constantly see trains being transported on barges and barges that are like hotels. There is a Subway there they are mighty proud of where express trains run between the ordinary trains in the middle of the track with incredible speed – The people think of nothing but Railways and Telephones and they eat nothing, as I have told mother, but oysters and ice creams – They have thin faces and pinched lips and the most restless and nervous manner. They all say “What is your impression of America? What is your impression of America? What is your impression of America?” The thirty odd story houses don’t look so surprising as you might think – you get used to them – The mind I suppose can reconcile itself to anything – but the signs over the shops and the general look of the houses and streets is very foreign – much more so than I expected – more like France or Italy than England. The country houses have all of them “piazzas” or terraces which gives a Southern look to the landscape, already sufficiently strange in appearance – with great open plains where Indian corn, covered with snow lies stacked in little shocks, and wide-stretching woods full of little trees and large stones – and nothing that looks familiar except the cattle – The carriages that people drive are a very queer shape – but now “sleighs” are the thing, for all is frost and snow – and ice – Well, my old friend, I hope I shall survive – to see you and Mabel once more –

Farewell; your loving Jack.

Correction

In the article “Letters to Llewelyn from Home” in the last *Newsletter* (page 8, line 7), the first letter from Mary Cowper Powys to Llewelyn, quoting from J. C. Powys’s letter to her printed above, was given the wrong date: her letter was sent on January 26th 1905, not in 1908.

Review

A Study of Llewelyn Powys: His Literary Achievement and Personal Philosophy, by Peter John Foss.

The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter. 396pp. ISBN 0 7734 9700 5. £39.95.

The publication of this book marks a milestone in Powys studies because it gives us the first full-length critical examination of the writing of Llewelyn Powys. Of the three most widely acclaimed members of the Powys family, it is Llewelyn who has received the smallest amount of critical attention. At present there is a large and ever burgeoning body of analysis of the writing of John Cowper Powys; and while two studies might not be enough to do Theodore Powys anything approaching justice, a glance through the indexes of *The Powys Review* and *The Powys Journal* shows that a substantial body of analysis in the form of critical essays has gathered around Theodore's work. In the case of Llewelyn, whose work has been analysed in only a comparatively small number of studies, the main line of approach to his achievement has been biographical rather than critical; so far he is the only member of the Powys family to be made the subject of a full-dress individual biography.

It is no accident that biography and anecdote make up the greater part of what has been written about Llewelyn. Whatever the ostensible subject of Llewelyn's writing, its characteristic is that it expresses a view of the world which was formulated and expressed in personal terms. This is perhaps why his fiction seems the slightest part of his work; essays, travel, autobiography and philosophy all enabled him to make an apparently direct approach to his reader without the intercession of the medium of fiction. In view of this, it is appropriate that the first sustained examination of Llewelyn's writing should address questions which are at the heart of any reader's response to Llewelyn Powys; how do the events of his life, the image of him we find in his own writing and the writings of others, and his philosophy, all stand in relation to one another?

The book begins with an examination of the "public image" of Llewelyn that emerged from the writings of his friends and admirers, and then looks at how Llewelyn's literary persona developed and the way he used these images to re-assess his attitude to life. Peter Foss skilfully and lucidly identifies the many inter-connecting strands which made up the man, the writing, and the myth, without ever losing sight of the way that these elements conspired to make up one man's life and work. This holistic approach to literary interpretation is the perfect way to look at a writer like Llewelyn "... whose life", to quote from the introduction, "was given shape and meaning through the works he wrote, just as the works he wrote gave expression to the working-out of the meaning." This sense of connectedness sustains and illuminates the whole of this remarkable book, and gives us what must be our fullest picture of Llewelyn, not simply as a "pagan",

“atheist”, “philosopher”, “master of prose” or whatever, but as a complex, ever-evolving writer who carried his full share of the contradictions and ambiguities which make up a human personality.

In the second part of this study, Peter Foss focuses on the philosophy which Llewelyn developed throughout his lifetime. Because the approach is one of unifying interpretation, he evaluates the philosophy not simply as a detached intellectual compartment of Llewelyn’s life, but as a set of ideas and insights which have to be considered against the background of the life and personality of their creator and, of course, his writing. The result is a full and convincing exploration of Llewelyn’s “poetic vision” which includes an extremely interesting consideration of the “mystical” dimension of his thought and writing.

In addition to the main text, this book has a number of other features to commend it. First and foremost, among the appendices is the most extensive bibliography of Llewelyn Powys’s writing to be published so far, which includes his contributions to periodicals and newspapers. There are also a number of elusive or previously unpublished prose pieces by Llewelyn, and an essay which John Cowper Powys wrote in 1943 for Malcolm Elwin entitled “My Brother Llewelyn”. There is also a gathering of nearly thirty illustrations, some of which have not been printed before.

The overall tone of this study is, to use a phrase from the last page of the text, one of “inclusiveness, wholeness and balance”, characterised by exploration rather than straightforward dissection. The reader finishes this book with an enriched understanding of Llewelyn Powys, and with the sensation of having read something which is as much a product of creative processes as a work of conventional criticism. Even if this book had been one in a long line of critical works on Llewelyn, it would be an achievement of the greatest importance; the fact that it is the first full-length study can make it only the more remarkable.

Alan Howe

*Opposite: Wood-engraving by Robert Gibbings
frontispiece illustration to
The Glory of Life, by Llewelyn Powys
(Golden Cockerel Press, 1934)
reproduced four-fifths original size*



“Notes on the Journey to Weymouth”, by Llewelyn Powys

PENRILL



The drawings reproduced on the back of the *Newsletter* and above and below are five out of a set of seven punning pen sketches, with the title as shown above, from a juvenile sketch-book of Llewelyn Powys. The sketches include many which appear to have been copied from or inspired by illustrations and vignettes in books. I imagine these could be identified to give an indication of young reading in the Montacute schoolroom. They include scenes from *Alice*, a small group of thirteenth-century Canterbury Pilgrims and their nineteenth-century fashionable counterparts, and a particularly fierce and fiery dragon from which a small boy (? Llewelyn) is hiding behind an arm-chair!

SPM

MAIDEN NEUTON



The Society's Publications for 1992

Our publication programme is well advanced and more active than ever, with the second volume of *The Powys Journal* and three other items which will all be ready in time for the Society's Conference at the end of August. Last year, as our accounts printed elsewhere in the *Newsletter* show, we made a lot of money from donations and book sales, so we are actively seeking suitable publications: these are not just money spent, but capital invested which we expect to bring a big return, as well as providing us with valuable stock and helping us to fulfil one of the Society's functions. If you have any practical ideas for publication, please get in touch with us.

The *Journal* will be a bumper issue of more than 230 pages, packed full of goodies, but to keep up the suspense I won't tell you much about the contents, except to say that there are articles concerned with, or containing the writings of, Philippa (Katie) Powys, Alyse Gregory, Phyllis Playter and W. E. Powys as well as the big three, and there will be several photographs not previously published.

Last year, the typesetting was done by a small printing firm near me. This year the *Journal* is being set and composed entirely on my Macintosh computer, but the same format has been followed, the same typeface used, and you should not see any difference from last year, unless you are very observant and can spot minor and subtle improvements in the layout which can only be gained by having complete control of the process. When the Editors and I are satisfied with the work, it all goes onto one small disk, which is then handed to the commercial printer, who has nothing to do but print! The computer and PageMaker layout programme are really like magic.

The *Journal* will be distributed at the Conference and then to members who haven't attended, but it will not be sent to anyone who has not paid the subscription for 1992. So, if you have a reminder slip for your subscription and want to receive the *Journal* promptly, please pay up.

The other three items are booklets matching the format of Alan Howe's *Powys Checklist* which was published at the last A. G. M. and has been such a success. There is an index to *The Powys Review*, a reprint of A. R. Powys's *The English House*, and a gathering of the poems of Philippa Powys. The last item will contain all her poems which have previously been printed (*Driftwood*, three smaller pamphlets, and some other items) together with eight unpublished poems; it will be particularly opportune since we will be having a talk on Philippa Powys at the Conference, and it will be a most attractive item.

The English House was first published in 1929 in Benn's Sixpenny Library; it is difficult to come by and usually in poor condition. There are promising outlets for this little work through two societies which have a combined membership of 6,000. One of these is the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, of which A. R. Powys was Secretary from 1911 till his death in 1936; they have waived their usual charge of £350

for inserting leaflets in their quarterly newsletter! The other is the Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings whose annual *Transactions* I edit. *Driftwood and other poems* and *The English House* will have reproductions of portraits of the authors by their eldest sister Gertrude M. Powys.

Finally, there is the *Index to The Powys Review* volumes 1 to 26, which are those which have been issued to members of the Society for the years 1977–1990. This has been compiled by myself during a period of convalescence from an operation early in the year: so *some* good can come out of almost anything! It was a considerable revelation to study carefully the contents of the *Review's* 2,181 pages, comprising an important corpus of record and scholarship.

These booklets have also been prepared on my computer; two of them will be printed direct from the printed sheets which emerge from my laser printer, as was the *Checklist*. The poems of Philippa Powys will be given a better quality of paper and card, with the text prepared from my disk on the printing firm's imagesetter. All three booklets will, like the *Journal*, be ready for the conference, so we shall have a fine display!

I have used a variety of typefaces. The *Index*, like the *Journal*, has been set in Garamond, while *The English House* is in Baskerville, the typeface of the original edition; both are classic, elegant book faces. For *Driftwood and other poems* I have bought a set of Gill Sans, which is, to my eye, the most distinguished of the sans-serif faces, far superior to Helvetica which has, unfortunately, collared the computer market; it seemed particularly appropriate for Philippa's poetry with which it is an exact contemporary. This *Newsletter* is set in Times, the other most commonly used face.

We have arranged to have ISBN numbers for our publications. The allocation of numbers with International Standard Book Numbering is an internationally agreed system of giving unique numbers to publications in most of the world which enables them to be recorded and ordered with greater ease and efficiency in this computerised age, and also puts them automatically into important reference lists, thus increasing the potential sales. ISBNs contain a country reference, publisher reference and book number, and a check digit which instantly spots errors; for example, volume II of *The Powys Journal* has been given the number 1 874559 02 3. These ISBN numbers are provided by the appropriate national body, and we are able to allocate the numbers ourselves from the list supplied: we have a hundred numbers, which should keep us going for a while! We can allocate numbers to earlier publications, so we shall start off with *The Powys Journal* volume I and the *Powys Checklist*, followed up by the current batch of four more titles.

Of course we are keen to sell our new books, but please do not send any money or orders yet for them. Those who attend the Conference will have the privilege of seeing them first, and order forms will go out when the *Journal* is issued after the Conference and with the next *Newsletter* in November. The list of publications on the inside cover will then be completely revised with the addition of these new books.

Stephen Powys Marks