Editorial

Many members of the Society expressed great interest in Jeff Meddle's article in the November 1994 issue of the *Newsletter* in which he recorded Mrs Lily Brooks' memories of her life in service with John Cowper and Margaret Powys at Burpham. Sadly, shortly after the *Newsletter* was published, news arrived that Mrs Brooks had died peacefully in her sleep during the night of Tuesday 8 November 1994. Despite their loss, Mrs Brooks' family have maintained their newly forged links with the Society and we hope to be able to publish a second article by Jeff Meddle, together with some previously unpublished photographs, in the July edition.

We also announced in November that the Society intended to publish the complete correspondence of John Cowper Powys and Henry Miller, in association with the Alyscamps Press. Unfortunately, for contractual reasons, we have been forced to abandon this project. However, this has meant that we have been able to direct our resources elsewhere and, among other projects, we have devoted funds to the restoration of a number of paintings by Gertrude Powys, which will appear in the exhibition at this year's conference.

There are times when we, as a Society, seem to be working alone in a largely unresponsive world. Yet, recently, there have been distinct signs of an awakening of interest in the Powys family. Herbert Williams' film (reviewed in this issue) was widely applauded, Llewelyn Powys was mentioned (albeit inaccurately) in a review on the front page of the *Sunday Times* books section on 12 March and the Carcanet Press and the Oxford University Press have both brought out important books which we review in this issue. In addition, in its regular 'I Wish I'd Written ...' column *The Guardian* of 17 February carried a piece about *Wolf Solent* by John Gray, author of *Beyond The New Right* and *Isaiah Berlin*. Perhaps most remarkably, certainly most unexpectedly, BBC Radio 2 is to broadcast a programme devoted to John Cowper Powys as part of a new series on Sunday afternoons, although further details are not available as we go to press.

The Society itself has, if anything, been more active than ever. Members will find details not only of the 1995 Annual Conference in this issue of the *Newsletter*, but also of a Montacute weekend, a proposed Llewelyn Powys celebration at The Sailor's Return, and some very exciting news about the Swansea Year of Literature Festival.

Following the success of his film, Herbert Williams has also been commissioned to write a critical biography of John Cowper Powys by Seren Books, as part of their Borderlines series. Herbert would be pleased to hear from anyone who may have relevant information, and can be contacted at: 20 Amesbury Road, Penylan, Cardiff, CF2 5DW.

The officers and committee members of the Society work tirelessly to promote awareness and appreciation of the Powys family and, although it is too early to give details yet (for much remains at an early stage of planning), members should scan the media in the coming months for evidence of our work and of what we can only hope is the beginning of a new period of appreciation for the whole Powys family.

Paul Roberts

The 1995 Powys Society Conference

Dorset College of Agriculture, Kingston Maurward
August 19th–22nd 1995

The conference this year is entitled *Telling Lives: The Art of Biography*. One of the best of modern biographers, Richard Holmes, has written: 'This process [of biography] has two main elements, or closely entwined strands. The first is the gathering of factual materials, the assembling in chronological order of a man's "journey" through the world. ... The second is the creation of a fictional or imaginary relationship between the biographer and his subject. ... There is between them a ceaseless discussion, a reviewing and questioning of motives and actions and consequences ...'.

Lives are telling; sometimes they tell lies. This conference will attempt to explore some of the problems inherent both in biography and autobiography. Whether it is a standard biography, a film, selections from a diary, or letters, the art is a difficult one. Speakers will include Frank Kibblewhite on Gertrude, Charles Lock on John Cowper, John Williams on God (and Theodore), Sven Erik Täckmark on his 'life with John Cowper Powys', Michael Ballin on the *Autobiography*. On a lighter note, but pursuing the same theme, there will be a viewing of the recent film *The Great Powys*, a reading by Oliver Wilkinson from JCP's 1939 Diary, and a celebratory evening of Sylvia Townsend Warner. A highlight of the conference will be the opening of an exhibition of Gertrude Powys's paintings and drawings at the Dorset County Museum.

Members who have been at Kingston Maurward will know the charms of the grounds, its excellent food and good accommodation. There are an inexhaustible number of Powys places to explore nearby on the free afternoon. Altogether it should be another stimulating and companionable gathering.

It would be helpful if those members who are interested in attending the conference would fill out the enclosed form. We do not need a definite decision or money until July. However, to save postal costs, we will send further details only to those members who express an interest in attending by returning the form by 12 June 1995.

Morine Krissdóttir

UK Year of Literature Festival

The UK Year of Literature Festival is set to recognise the importance of John Cowper Powys with a day dedicated to his works and his influence on modern writers. The event takes place at Swansea on Saturday **24 June 1995** and is open to Powys Society members and the general public. It follows the publication of Morine Krissdóttir's selection from the diaries of John Cowper Powys 1929–1939, entitled *Petrushka and the Dancer*.

The programme for the day is:

10.30	Arrival and coffee
11.00	Introduction by **John Bayley**
11.30	**Iris Murdoch**: 'How a modern novelist learns from JCP'
12.30–1.30	Lunch
1.30	**Morine Krissdóttir**: 'JCP: from America to Wales', with readings from *Petrushka and the Dancer* by Richard Perceval Graves
2.30	Video of '**The Great Powys**' as seen on HTV
3.30	Tea
4.00	**Roy Fisher**: reading from his own works and talking about the influence of JCP on a modern poet
5.00 (approx.)	Departure

Two accompanying exhibitions are planned. The first is a mix of etchings and sculptures which spring from reading JCP, by Powys Society member **Patricia Dawson**. The second is a display about the Powys family based on a selection from the Dorset County Museum exhibition of 1993, 'Writers in a landscape: the Powys brothers in Dorset' mounted by Bev Craven and Sarah Linden. There will also be a **Powys book shop** for the day with all the latest publications available.

The John Cowper Powys Day is part of the year-long national festival based in Swansea. Other literary events will also take place throughout the weekend, so members may wish to extend their visit.

Tickets, which include coffee, lunch and tea, are £25 each. The organisers can also offer reduced-rate local accommodation if required. Enquiries to:

UK Year of Literature Festival, Somerset Place, Swansea SA1 1SE,
telephone 01792 480211.

Advance Notice: Cheltenham Festival, October

The Cheltenham Festival, which takes place in October, is to host a performance of 'Frances and Jack' by Oliver Wilkinson, Micheline Patton and Christopher Wilkinson. This is the reading from letters between JCP and Frances Gregg, first performed at the Powys Society conference in Cirencester in 1992.

Mary Cowper Johnson

Almost all our impressions of the 'Powys Mother' are gained through the eyes and the writings of her children; for them, she is inevitably the mother figure. My purpose in this contribution is to let you get a glimpse, through two of her own letters, of the young woman who became engaged to the Revd C. F. Powys in June 1871 and married him on October 4th that year.

Mary Barham Johnson (now in her hundredth year) is the family historian of the Johnsons and Donnes. She gave us an article, 'The Powys Mother', in *The Powys Review* vol 8 (1981); since then, in 1985, she completed her *magnum opus* entitled *Letters and Diaries of the Norfolk families of Donne and Johnson, 1766–1917*. This comprises 754 pages of manuscript which have been photocopied and bound up in three volumes, with rather a limited circulation. The text consists of innumerable extracts from the letters of the two intertwined families, with linking text by Mary B. J. and references to various diaries. She refers to having consulted some 1,800 letters, including those I now have: what hoarders they were! Her work is extremely valuable for my exploration of the mother's side of the Powys ancestry.

I have now begun seriously to look at my collection of letters and a few other papers which came to me on the death of Lucy Amelia Penny, the youngest of the eleven children of Charles Francis and Mary Cowper Powys, in 1986. These papers consist of perhaps a couple of hundred letters to or from Mary Cowper Johnson (i.e. before her marriage) or Mary Cowper Powys (after her marriage) and to and from her father, the Revd William Cowper Johnson (1813–1893) and her mother, Marianne (née Patteson, 1812–1894), including letters from the 1830s onwards. There are also a handful of pocket diaries and a very small number of letters from the 1780s and 1790s, from Mary Cowper Johnson's great-grandfather William Tasker to his daughters. The collection also contains several mementos of C. F. Powys's elder brother, Littleton Albert Powys, who died in India in 1879; these had been kept by their mother, Amelia, and have come down to me with the Johnson letters.

Mary Cowper Johnson (born on December 11th 1849, died 1914) was one of a family of six sisters and an elder brother, William Cowper Johnson (1844–1916), named like his father, but always called Cowper. When Cowper came down from Cambridge in 1868 he was engaged as a tutor and grand-tour companion for a rich young man before he tried for Cambridge, Philip Hope. They set off late in August 1868, and Cowper was not back home again till February 1870; during his absence there was an extensive correspondence between him and his parents and sisters. He travelled through Germany to the Baltic, St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Constantinople, Alexandria, the Red Sea, and finally India, where the young men spent a large part of 1869 visiting many places; the possibility of going on to China, Japan or Australia was discussed but got no further, and

Palestine, which would have been *de rigueur*, was given a miss because things were, it seems, not going so well between the two men.

In a letter to Mary from Bombay dated January 12th 1869 (apparently the only one of his to survive), he describes bullock carts for personal transport, enlivened with a sketch, the impending train journey to Calcutta, a visit to the caves (i.e. the rock-cut temples) at Karli near Bombay, the varied clothes worn by the dignitaries at the Convocation of Bombay University, dinner with the Governor whose band played throughout the meal, and his loan of a steamboat to visit other caves, attendance at divine service at the Cathedral, where Cowper described the punkahs ('It was very pleasant to hear a regular good cathedral service again with our old Trinity chants. ... The organ was good and the parson not being able to intone didn't try which was a blessing.'), getting bitten by mosquitoes (he sent one he had just killed in his letter: it is still in a little paper packet pinned to the original letter!), a Portuguese servant who 'is a sharp fellow, and has good character. I suppose he wont let anyone cheat us except himself', and yet more!

Here is Mary's next letter to him in its entirety; in the same envelope there is also a letter from his mother. Yaxham was their father's parish. (I have introduced paragraph breaks, but not attempted to amend the punctuation.)

April 1. 1869
Yaxham Rectory

My Dear Cowper

It is a long time since I have written to you; perhaps you dont know that I have been staying in London from Christmas until Easter at Curzon Street; I was so happy there. Uncle [Henry Vaughan Johnson] very kindly gave me some drawing lessons. Mr Pileau was my Master, I used to go to him once a week, he lives in Woburn Square, and I used to get into a cab and go to him. I did enjoy it so much, he paints most beautifully, pictures for the Royal Academy. I went 7 times, I tried to learn as much as ever I could, and he is a capital master tall and big with a great beard and moustache, and has travelled a great deal in Egypt India, his sketches on the Nile were very beautiful, I hope you will bring some nice things back with you, for now as I know more about painting, it will be such a treat to compare and see what you have done; but it is very very difficult.

I used to go 3 times a week with Aunt to the Royal Institution to attend the course of lectures that were going on, Hamilton* and Mr Curry used to join us, they were such very interesting lectures, especially the Saturday ones by Professor Oddling who is such an entertaining and charming lecturer, only he used to make explosions very often and I could not help jumping which made Hamilton think me very stupid.

I think Mama wrote and told you about dear Alice,* poor dear Aunt Anna we do feel for her so intensely as Alice was her constant companion,

and she used to watch her so closely, that the great blank is very terribly felt by her, but you dont know how good Emily* is to her, but it has been a very sad time for them all, she does miss darling Alice's gentle sweet face dreadfully. So many letters that we have written to you have brought some sad news. I know you will think of them at Welborne and feel for them. Emily thought of you, and how you would feel for them. To add to their trouble poor Henry's* examination came just the week Alice died, so that when he failed again, one can't be surprised when he was so troubled, and so full of the sorrow, but it is a fresh trial. It is undecided what will be done, but most likely he will try again.

I used often to see the Donnes when I was in London I used to spend the Sundays that Aunt and Uncle spent as Puttenham, with them, and we went often to St Andrews where I thought of you, for I have heard you say how you enjoyed the music there and, it is something too delicious, I never felt so perfectly happy as when I was listening to it, and the crowds of people, it was all so new and strange.

Nothing opens your eyes more than going to London, you see and hear so much that is new; Aunt was very sensible as you know she always is and did not mind my going alone in a cab, you would have been amused to have seen me going independently in a cab to my drawing master by Russell Square and to Weymouth Street etc, I got at last to know my way about although at first the streets puzzled me very much.

I dont think I have ever thanked you for the long delightful letter you wrote to me from Calcutta, inclosing the mosquito Blanche was exceedingly entertained when I read it to her, she was rather indignant at the allusion to the wasp. You are so odd about the out of the way extraordinary people that the new faces you see remind you of, but it is such a capital way of giving us an idea of the person, so please always give it to us however vague; and it is very funny how one person constantly reminds you of another; one day I went with Mr Donne to Mr Haweis Church in Westmorland Street, and a young man preached a very good sermon; Mr Donne called him a "strikingly picturesque young man" it was odd, (or rather one might have expected it) but he strongly reminded me and Mr Donne of you; I dont fancy you would be flattered, for his tallness and thinness were something too dreadful, I saw one of the Miss Hopes one day, Miss Audrey, she called at Curzon St with Mrs H. Campbell, they all are very sad, Lady Mildred especially she can't bear to have any of them out of her sight. How does poor Philip bear the sad news of his sister's death? Mrs H. Campbell used to ask me often about you when we had last heard etc. It has been so cold so bitterly cold this spring. I quite long

* Hamilton (father of Mary B. J.), Alice (died of TB), Emily (future wife of Cowper) and Henry: children of Mary's uncle John Barham Johnson and Anna (née Morse).

sometimes to join you in India what would you say if you came across me in the Himalaya making most glorious pictures, for I feel a longing to sketch, and yet when I try I feel a horrible dispair, it is fearfully difficult. Mr Pileau was very encouraging he said if I practised a good deal I might one day do something, I long to see what you have done, you must bring something home for me to help me I shall reckon upon you as my second master.

I can't tell you how entertained I was at Curzon Street to hear of the different politics Every one you know are Whigs or Radicals Mr Gladstone and Mr Bright are the heros, Aunt went to the House of Commons the great night when Mr Gladstone made his great speech on the Irish Church, she came home delighted, whereas Papa reading the speech was very angry I went one day to the House of Commons with Mr Hardcastle, (a friend of Uncles whom we used to see at Cromer) and Aunt Cecie, we sat in the ladies gallery where one feels very much like a bird caged in, it was very amusing seeing the members giving in their petitions, although the subject they were debating about was rather uninteresting being County Courts.

I got very very fond of Bertie° & Huie° & baby° they are such very dear children Bertie is so fond of being read to he delights in poetry; he goes to school every day now, he was very much excited about the boat race and was so disappointed when Oxford won, there seems to have been a division in his school Geordie Brooke being for Oxford, Bertie coming in with bright blue ribbons says, Oh! baby is all for Cambridge, & so are Huie & I

Uncle Henry and Aunt brought me home & I have been staying here a week, they have been so kind to me I love them all very much. Miss Campbell also I got quite fond of.

Your fernery is looking nicely I think at least to my London eyes it did, it has not been kept hot enough in the winter for the gold fern and tricolor, they have died down, but Papa says they will come up again in the summer, you see we have only now as gardeners Old Wagg and little George Eke. I do so long for the fernery to keep well until you see it again. I read some nice books, "The Realities of Irish Life", and Carlyle French Revolution, they ought not to be mentioned side by side being so different, Carlyles was the most wonderful written book I ever read. My hands are so cold I can not write. The Milletts are better now I was so glad to see them again. Your letters are such a delight to us.

With much love I remain Yr loving Mary

° Bertie, Huie, baby: children of Mary's uncle Henry Vaughan Johnson and Hon. Cecilia (née Campbell).

I think this is a remarkably vivacious, urbane, humorous, well-read and articulate letter, not the letter of the 'stupid and ignorant' girl she thinks herself in the next; she was less than twenty. It is written in language and idiom which are entirely familiar today, whereas her parents' letters are noticeably different from today's epistolary style. The second letter, two years and a bit later, is addressed to her future husband from the country home of her uncle Henry Vaughan Johnson; it certainly could *not* have been written today! She was still not 22 when she married, and bore her eleven children between the ages of 22 and 41.

Esher
June 20 [1871]

My dear Mr Powys

My Father has forwarded me your letter. I am so surprised that you should care at all for me, if you can trust me and really think that I will be a good wife to you, I will say "yes". But do remember that I am ignorant and stupid, & you are so good, I do not feel worthy of you I love you and respect you and I will try and make you happy and your Father and Mother also, but I feel so very very unworthy of your esteem.

I am going home tomorrow I want to see my Father and Mother they have written to me to give their consent. I long to be at home, Esher is a lovely place I have been very happy here. I have prayed to God to direct me and He has I wish I could do something to deserve this goodness,

Believe me
Y^rs^ affect^ly^.
Mary Cowper Johnson

I have already in previous newsletters quoted from or transcribed some of MCP's letters to Llewelyn and A. R. Powys, but when I have explored the earlier letters thoroughly I hope to produce a more telling selection of an earlier period. The names of several of her sisters may be familiar: 'Aunt Kate' (Catherine Cowper Johnson (1842–1924), married her cousin William Mowbray Donne); 'Aunt Dora' (Maria Theodora Johnson, 1845–1924); 'Aunt Etta' (Henrietta Cowper Johnson, 1856–1934); the other sisters were Eleanor Gertrude (with whom Mary was very close) who died of TB (1847–1864) and Annie Elizabeth (1854–1921) who married the Revd Cecil Blyth. Only Mary, Annie and Cowper had children. I would very much like to hear of references by the Powys brothers and sisters to their uncle Cowper and aunt Emily, who had six sons; one of these was Father Hamilton Cowper Johnson (1877–1961) about whom Peter Powys Grey spoke with such sympathy at the Society's 1992 Conference (see *The Powys Journal* iii).

Stephen Powys Marks

The Three Professors

A recent addition to my Powys collection is an unremarkable looking copy of the 1949 edition of John Cowper Powys's *Autobiography*. However, written on both sides of the rear endpaper and on the rear paste-down endpaper in a small, neat hand is a description of a visit to JCP which took place on Friday 26 April 1950. On this occasion the front free endpaper was inscribed by John Cowper for the visitor and original owner of the book. Also loosely laid into the book is a corrected proof copy of the address given when the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred on JCP by the University of Wales at Swansea on 21 July 1962, one of only two academic honours received by Powys.[1] The address is reproduced at the end of this article, and the inscription on the back cover.

The visitor, Cecil Price, was a lecturer at Aberystwyth University at the time of his visit to JCP at Corwen. Price was accompanied by two professors on the afternoon of 26 April 1950. The first was Professor Sigurour Nordal (1886–1974), the Icelandic scholar and leading authority on classical Icelandic literature. The second was Professor Gwyn Jones, the scholar, novelist and short story writer born at Blackwood, Gwent in 1907. Jones was also the translator (with Thomas Jones) of the *Mabinogion*, which had been published in 1948. Gwyn Jones also translated a number of volumes of the Icelandic Sagas. He had also been editor of *The Welsh Review*. Gwyn Jones had met Powys on previous occasions and JCP had been a contributor to an early issue of *The Welsh Review*.[2] From 1964 to his retirement in 1975 Jones held the Chair of English at University College, Cardiff. Cecil Price wrote an essay reviewing the life and work of Gwyn Jones in the Writers of Wales series, published in 1976.

Here is Price's account of the visit:

> The house in which JCP lives in Cae Coed, Corwen, is semi-detached and placed in a quiet corner overlooking the Dee and the roads to Bala and Ruthin. The rent is twelve shillings a week.
>
> John Cowper Powys was waiting for us in the hall and was full of excitement at meeting Nordal. 'Hurrah!' he cried and he kissed Nordal on the forehead three times. He conducted the two professors (he called them something nearer 'perfessor') into the drawing room, sat them in armchairs and got me on the bed by his side. He asked if I were a professor but I disclaimed this, saying I was a lecturer and the charioteer of the party.[3] He referred to this two hours later, when he came to sign the book. In appearance he is tall (about 6ft – just a little bent at the shoulders) with deep sunk eyes, red rimmed. His head is covered with short white curls and his nose is beaked. He wore old putty coloured corduroys and a tweed jacket. His hands were covered with the buff patches of old age. The portrait on the dust cover is not a bit like him. The frontispiece is good but misses the animation that lights up his face when he is talking; it makes

him look too severe – should have an expression of exultation, whether fierce or joyful. Gwyn said Augustus John ought to paint him.[4]

He gets up early every morning and goes for a walk on the mountains behind the house, before breakfast; then has his usual diet of milk & dry bread. His ulcers trouble him whenever he gets excited or meets people (same thing!) so he does not now go to Corwen & has refused all lectures.

His voice was strong, of middle pitch, and excitable. When Gwyn and Nordal said anything that met with his approval, he clapped his hands and cried, 'Hurrah! Well done!' or 'Isn't that interesting!' And he seemed to exult at everything that was going on. Conversation turned to Iceland & he said that when he was a child his favourite book was 'Theodore the Icelander'[5] by La Motte Fouqué,[6] which has always had a strong influence on him. Nordal asked permission to take snuff and this roused JCP to great excitement. He rushed out and called Phyllis to see the Icelandic professor taking snuff. Nordal reacted to this with gusto, tapped the snuff on to his left wrist and sniffed it saying, 'Now I will take snuff as my ancestors did 200 years ago.' He handed round his snuff box – a curious piece of ivory shaped like a small bottle and bearing a peasant design on the front. Phyllis then showed a hammer made from Alaskan walrus.

Phyllis proved to be fairly tall, sallow with dark eyes that seemed melancholy (tho' perhaps that effect was given by her accent). She comes from Kansas City and would rather live in New York than anywhere else. She regarded JCP's excitement with serenity. She said they had known many writers when living in the States, particularly Theodore Dreiser and Edgar Lee Masters. Gwyn asked how she liked Vachel Lindsay's poetry and she brought out a biography of V.L. by Masters. Said Lindsay received some encouragement in U.S.A. but it was very fitful & his end was very sad.[7] She seemed more interested in poetry than JCP, expressed delight in Dylan Thomas.[8] JCP said he was afraid of the young poets because he was afraid of what they were going to do next.

He took this opportunity to show us a little book sent him by an American to be autographed. It proved to be JCP's first publication: 'Culture and the War', 1914.[9] He was then 42, quite late in beginning.

When we laughed at something he said, he commented (pouring out the words in a rapturous kind of way), 'Ah, you see how I draw out everybody. It is the feminine side of me. I am more woman than man. I am half-woman and half-man. I draw everyone out. I can't help it.' Then he pointed to his goddess, Athene, on a postcard on the mantlepiece.

Gwyn asked him if he was still looking for information about the 5th century figure he had enquired about when Gwyn had seen him last. 'No, I have completed the novel and it is in the hands of the publishers but I

had to cut it by a third. It was 135,000 words but the Bodley Head said it was too long. I cut it down to 99,999 which seemed to me a good number.[10] I thought once of changing my publishers and having it in full but when a writer is as old as I am, he is wise to stay with his publishers, submit to their wishes.'

Gwyn asked what it was called & he answered 'Porius'. I thought it would be a good name. People could ask 'Have you read *Porius*?' It would be easy to say. 'I have placed [it] in a period about which there is no written history so that the critics can't catch me out. I have brought in Taliesin as a scullery boy.'

Nordal said he had read all JCP's works in Iceland. 'Hurrah!' cries JCP, leaping about & clapping his hands. 'My dear friend, that is true fame and glory.' He went on to ask Nordal what he knew about Laplanders, since Phyllis had read a book about them & had been delighted with them.

He also said that he admired Gwyn's *Richard Savage*[11] & other work; thought highly of Huw Menai but found him an intolerable chairman since he talked away most of the speaker's time.

John's account of the visit is recorded in an unpublished letter to his brother Littleton written that same evening:

... O & directly after HER & old Bob-Dog's departure there arrived for a very long tea-party 3 Men! & what 3 men ???? Well! you guess ere you turn the page! Two Professors & I couldn't help think how C.F.P. whose longer than the uncut Porius tale of Giant Grumble & Fairy Sprightly was one of my early inspirations perhaps the earliest! always made a Professor his Bête Noir!! & here were Two of Them!! and the 3rd man a LECTURER!!! & he the lecturer was the Driver & his was the car what brought they to our door!

1. Prof. Gwyn Jones Ed. of The Welsh Review now no more.
2. Prof. Nordal of Iceland
3. Cyril Price The Lecturer at Aberystwyth University

And do you know what Book I discussed with Prof Nordal? Guess again! 'Theodolph' or is it Theodoric (do you recall Which?) 'The Icelander' by La Motte Fouqué a Frenchy who wrote in German & also wrote Undine and Sintram who is NOW greatly honoured in Iceland where in the northern part the sun never sets for a whole week!!

Seven years later JCP recalled the visit of the three professors in a letter to G. R. Wilson Knight, although Gwyn Jones is mistakenly referred to as Glyn Jones.[12] Clearly, the visit made a lasting impression on JCP and one can only hope that it did not inflame the Powysian ulcers during the evening and night of 26 April 1950.

Griffin Beale

Notes

[1] The first academic honour was the Plaque of the Free Academy of Arts, Hamburg, presented in 1958 by the Academy's Secretary, Rolf Italiaander. See also Derek Langridge's *John Cowper Powys, A Record of Achievement* published by the Library Association (1966), p. 201, item 492, and p. 217, item 545, for further details.

[2] *The Welsh Review* was published each month between February and November 1939. Publication was suspended during much of the war but the *Review* was revived as a quarterly from March 1944 and continued until December 1948. JCP's essay 'Welsh Culture' first appeared in the June 1939 issue (Vol.1, No.5, 255–262), a fact not noted by Langridge or Thomas. This essay was republished in *Obstinate Cymric: Essays 1935–47*, (The Druid Press Limited, July 1947) as 'Welsh Culture – Inclusive or Exclusive?'

[3] Price subsequently became a professor.

[4] Augustus John drew JCP in November 1955. See *Letters To Louis Wilkinson 1935–1956*, particularly the letter dated 8 December 1955 which reveals that Augustus John was also subjected to much forehead kissing! See also the letter dated 27 December 1955.

[5] There is a reference to this book on page 125 of the *Autobiography*.

[6] Friedrich Karl Fouqué, Baron de la Motte, born Brandenburg 1777 (of Huguenot descent), died Berlin 1843. Published a series of romances based on Norse legend. Works included *Undine* (1811) and *Sintram* (1815).

[7] Vachel (Nicholas) Lindsay born in Springfield, Illinois in 1879. The early success of his verse did not last and while suffering from extreme depression Lindsay returned to Springfield and committed suicide in 1931.

[8] Dylan Thomas occasionally corresponded (and drank) with Gwyn Jones. See *Dylan Thomas – The Collected Letters*, edited by Paul Ferris (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1985)

[9] JCP's first publication had been *Odes and Other Poems* (William Rider & Son Ltd., 1896) followed by *Poems* (1899) by the same publisher. *The War and Culture* was published by Arnold Shaw in New york on JCP's birthday in 1914. The book was issued in England by Rider as *The Menace of German Culture* in February 1915.

[10] Surely a gross under-estimate. Even in its reduced form the 1951 edition of *Porius* must have run to something approaching 300,000 words.

[11] A novel by Gwyn Jones, published in 1935.

[12] Only a small slip, but Glyn Jones (born 1905) was the poet, short story writer and novelist. See *Powys to Knight*, edited by Robert Blackmore and published by Cecil Woolf in 1983, letter 28, page 75, dated 23 May 1957.

The Address

Professor C. J. L. Price, M.A., Ph.D. (in the absence of Professor Gwyn Jones, M.A.) presenting MR. JOHN COWPER POWYS for admission to the degree of *Doctor in Litteris, honoris causa*.

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR:

JOHN Cowper Powys, patriarch of the literatures of these Islands, was born at Shirley in Derbyshire in October 1872. His ninety years of life have been shared between England, America and Wales, and it is in this last, at Corwen first and now at Blaenau Ffestiniog, that he has lived as our Welsh-speaking fellow-countryman for a quarter of a century. Welsh blood runs deep and dark in his

veins, and of his ancestral connection with the land of Powys he describes himself as being at once superstitiously credulous and exultantly proud. His eagle head and leonine frame are part of the North Wales landscape, as his writings are part of the literary landscape of Europe and America.

His charted territory within the world of letters is a wide one: poet, critic, essayist, philosopher, novelist are some of the rôles in which he has displayed his genius. He has written on the Meaning of Culture and in Defence of Sensuality, on the Art of Happiness and the Art of Growing Old. As a critic he has been drawn to the greatest authors of the greatest literatures: to Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare and Goethe; and to these he would certainly wish to add three names which possess for him a special attraction and significance: Dostoievsky, Rabelais and the Mabinogion. Further, he has realised his ambition to write a 'shelf-full of romances', among them *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, and *Owen Glendower*. And he has written his wonderful *Autobiography*.

He belongs to no school and follows no fashion, and his highly individual achievement has defied imitation. He stands alone in his grandeur, like a majestic, deep-fissured mountain. Or in the Grecian fabulist's mighty phrase, he is 'One ... but a Lion'. So it is with much pride and a deep sense of privilege that today I recommend to you, Sir, John Cowper Powys, humanist, sceptic, man of letters, Cambro-Briton, as one we delight to welcome into the ranks of the University's graduates.

pó-iss or pówiss

The BBC should be congratulated on their directions for speaking the name 'Powys'. The *BBC Pronouncing Dictionary of British Names* (second edition, 1983, reprinted in paperback, Oxford University Press, 1990) gives the two forms of pronunciation, 'pó-iss' and 'pówiss'. It says:

> *The first is appropriate for the family name of Lilford; also for A. R. ~, church architect, John Cowper ~, poet and author, Llewelyn ~, author, Theodore Francis ~, author, and E. ~ Mathers, author and scholar.*

The second pronunciation is the Welsh way, as in the name of the county, but the ancestors of this Powys family and the related Lilfords have not lived in Wales for several hundred years, apart from JCP who made his home there for the last thirty years of his long life. Please remember that it is 'pó-iss' for this family.

SPM

From Weymouth Sands to White Nose

From Weymouth, White Nose (or White Nothe, as it is called on my Ordnance Survey map) is clearly seen on a fine day. Indeed, Magnus Muir, the Latin teacher in *Weymouth Sands*, could see lights in the White Nose cottages in the deepening twilight!

Having the decided advantage of good weather, I decided to walk to White Nose (some 500 feet above sea level) via the cliff path. Leaving Weymouth with its 'wet and dry sands', I walked past Brunswick Terrace, with a nod to Penn House, then past Greenhill, eventually reaching the concrete sea wall, with Lodmoor to one side and the pebble beach and the sea to the other. I thought of Richard Gaul and Perdita Wane taking the very same walk and seeing 'the whole expanse of that shining bay, buttressed, on the east, by the most remarkable stretch of cliffs, the most varied in geological formation, the most monumental in the grandeur of its curves, that can be found anywhere round the whole coast of England. This noble line of cliffs, beginning to mount up, as Perdita's eyes followed it now, behind the black-and-white building familiarly spoken of as 'the Coast-Guards', stretched away in a south-easterly direction, past the majestic promontory of the White Nose, till it ended with St. Alban's Head.'[1]

Lodmoor has been much built on since John Cowper was a boy, but there is enough of it left in its wild state to remember it as it used to be, a vast unspoilt wilderness of bushes and brambles and grasses. To quote *Autobiography*: 'I remember how my father loved to take us both, our weariness of the way forgotten ... past Lodmoor Hut, past the coastguard cottages, to the little beach where Preston brook ran, and I suppose still runs, into the sea.'[2]

In *Weymouth Sands* Lodmoor Hut is described as 'a very singular little hovel. A hovel it was, a poor enough shelter from the sea-storms, but it presented to an eye accustomed to the West Country that peculiar sense of the past which a turn-pike cottage, however forlorn and ramshackle, is wont to convey. The melancholy little erection, with its white-washed walls and its black-tarred roof, over-topped by tall bill-boards bearing weather-stained advertisements, was surrounded on the Lodmoor side by its own private enclosure. At this date this enclosure contained a small vegetable garden and a good-sized strip of grass; enough grass in fact to help considerably in the nourishment of a solitary brown-and-white cow, who even in the winter when the weather was not too stormy grazed peacefully there untroubled by either the screams of the gulls from the shore or the cries of the wildfowl from the marshes. The inhabitants of Lodmoor Hut at this time were two in number, a woman of thirty who went by the name of Gipsy May, and a half-witted orphan-boy called Larry Zed whom the woman had befriended.'[3]

One leaves Gipsy May and Larry Zed with regret, but I have lingered some while reminiscing about Lodmoor and its past, and it is time to get on with the

walk.

Climb over the road by Furzy Cliff, follow a track, and there in a field lie the Jordan Hill Romano-Celtic temple remains. This was first excavated in 1843, and some coins found here indicate that the temple was used in the 4th century A.D.

Llewelyn Powys had his outdoor shelter near here (later to be conveyed for use at Chydyok) and to quote from *Dorset Essays*, 'There used to be a ruined cottage on the top of Jordan Hill and during the year immediately following the Great War I was allowed, through the courtesy of Mr. Angus Scutt, to sleep in its overgrown garden. There was a deep well in this deserted walled-in plot with an ash-tree growing by it, an ash-tree as bowed by gales from the south-west as a Sherborne almshouse woman in her red cloak is bowed by age.'[4]

Remembering John Constable's *Weymouth Bay*, and thinking of Llewelyn roughing it in his shelter, I walked down into Bowleaze Cove, across the pebble beach and over the cliff towards Redcliffe Bay. Steadily walking, looking back at Weymouth and Hardy's 'Isle of Slingers' (Portland), I finally reached Osmington Mills for a rest on the pebble beach and a sandwich, with tea from my thermos flask.

The Powyses used to come to Osmington Mills, and Llewelyn wrote to John Cowper: 'ate lobster at the tavern with the sun pouring down our faces.'[5]

Thinking of Llewelyn eating lobster as I munched my bread and cheese, I finished the tepid flask of tea and set off toward Ringstead. Past Bran Point the wide expanse of Ringstead Bay appears with White Nose jutting out into the sea. A magnificent sight! I thought of William Pye's fine watercolour of Ringstead and Holworth, used as a frontispiece in *Memorials of Old Dorset* (Bemrose, 1907), in which is written: 'The hamlet of Holworth overlooking Weymouth Bay and Portland Roads, has been well described as resting in a most lonely and lovely valley by the sea, an earthly paradise, which those who have discovered cherish and dream about. It is far away from the haunts of men and remote ... where one may walk along the undulating downs that skirt the Channel, held in place by parapets of cliff that break down straight into the sea; where one may walk mile after mile on natural lawn and not meet a soul.'[6]

Thomas Hardy knew Holworth well and has written about the area in *Wessex Tales* in the story 'The Distracted Preacher'. Walking through Ringstead, the climb soon begins, and the little wooden church of Holworth is reached, with its graveyard overlooking the sea.

Hereabouts, the pathway becomes muddy as one goes through the wood and past Holworth House, reaching 'Burning Cliff', famous in Victorian times for its smouldering bituminous shale. Still the long climb continues over another field and yet another stile, until at last one sees the White Nose coast-guard cottages where, in May 1925, Llewelyn Powys and Alyse Gregory made their home. Let Llewelyn Powys's words speak out for the home he loved so well:

The White Nose is so tall that it is no uncommon thing to stand in full

sunshine and look down upon clouds lying, fold upon fold, as far as Portland Bill, as though a bed were preparing for a cloud-gathering god. In stormy weather, when the purple shadows are scudding across the Bay, it is the best place in the world from which to see a rainbow, a widespread arch with one ethereal end resting upon the crested waves, and the other upon the vexed grass of the downs, a triumphant heavenly arch with colours as dazzling as the feathers of birds in the Caribbean islands, as bright as scales of fish in Caribbean seas, and compelling even the most sorrow-laden to lift up their hearts in gratitude for the rich guerdon of the visible world.[7]

Near here too, at Down Barn (also known as Rat's Barn), John Cowper Powys lived for a short time in 1934, moving on to Dorchester later before going to live in Corwen in North Wales in 1935.

Thus, for a time in the Thirties – with Theodore Powys at Beth Car in East Chaldon – the three Powys brothers lived within walking distance of each other.

Reaching the White Nose summit, the view across the bay is impossible to describe. The phrase 'outstanding natural beauty' comes to mind, but one can only gaze in wonder at the timeless chalk cliffs, Bat's Head, Swyre Head, St Alban's Head, stretching away into infinity. ... Below, on a calm sea, a speed-boat rushes by.

Is it too fanciful to imagine that it is *The Cormorant*, with the sturdy Jobber Skald at the helm, 'carved in a darker, rougher stone than his native oolite',[8] making his way to Lulworth, there to collect fish, before making the return journey to Weymouth Sands?

Frank Warren

Notes

1 *Weymouth Sands*, 'Lodmoor', 160–61.
2 *Autobiography*, 'Weymouth and Dorchester', 49.
3 *Weymouth Sands*, 'Lodmoor', 132–3.
4 *Dorset Essays*, 'Jordan Hill', 47.
5 *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, edited by Louis Wilkinson, 124.
6 *Memorials of Old Dorset*, edited by Thomas Perkins, M.A. and Herbert Pentin, M.A. (Bemrose, 1907), 109.
7 *Dorset Essays*, 'The White Nose', 4–5.
8 *Weymouth Sands*, 'Punch and Judy', 483.

The Great Powys
A film by Herbert Williams

MUSIC. TITLE. Over the crest of a hill an old man (JCP – Freddie Jones). Flat cap, scarf, overcoat, stick. Big smile. He looks about him: dry stone wall, slates, distant hills. He throws out his arms in sheer joy. CUT to memorial plaque outside 1 Waterloo, Blaenau Ffestiniog. 'John Cowper Powys, author and poet, lived here ...' Camera pans to window reflecting JCP, a street lamp, a mountain. We hear voices. CUT to an old black-and-white photo of the house. CUT to JCP on the *chaise longue* by the window, propped up by pillows, writing. He hears the voices too. We recognise them as voices of the present talking about him. He is confused. The last line is crystal clear: 'Marian and John had a very close relationship.' JCP turns sharply to listen over his shoulder. 'Who are you? ... Are you from other worlds? ... Other planets? ... What do you want of old Jack Powys, eh? My *brain*?!' Phyllis Playter (Suzanne Bertish) arrives back from the shops and reassures him. 'You've been working too hard ... Pop next door to the Robertses. ...' She turns back to the kitchen. JCP to camera: 'I may talk to you. And I may not. But if I do, I'll tell you *everything*!'

This ambitious fifty minute film from Lluniau Lliw Cyf for HTV, written by Herbert Williams, directed by Peter Edwards, gets off to a bold start. Using an interlocking patchwork of interviews, period photographs, dramatised excerpts from the novels, quotes and reconstructions from the *Autobiography* and letters, a many-layered picture of JCP is built up that links events in his life to his works and to his developing philosophy. Even if the central conceit – the voices he hears in his head – occasionally drifts into melodrama (his interrogation by a disembodied prosecutor is particularly strained), it is a daring device that allows Powys to address us directly, bringing him into unusual focus and banging him back to life. By establishing the old JCP on the Welsh hills as the fulcrum, the film teases our notion of time by swinging from the author's 'present' (at Blaenau) to his 'past' (childhood of young JCP and scenes from the novels) to his 'future' (readers and commentators from our 'present' – most of them members of The Powys Society, all on splendid form). This somehow places the writer in a contemporary setting that is both humorous and illuminating.

It is a rich – sometimes over-rich – mixture, full of clever cross-references: voice-overs from one time period cover film from another, words from the *Autobiography* blend seamlessly with the words of a fictional character, themes from the mouth of the author are taken up by his later admirers, as if in an uncanny conversation across the years. It is all very skilfully done, with different sound qualities that allow us to distinguish between the different sources. Occasionally, as in an overcrowded museum, we are in danger of being overwhelmed. And just occasionally the baton is dropped. For instance, the shot of JCP as a young boy (Ben Kenefick) supposedly staring out at the sun reflected on

the sea at Weymouth, but from a window clearly reflecting trees in a house already established as Montacute. But, on the whole, the result is clear and assured. The research has been thorough, the dressing meticulous, the results highly detailed: my mouth dropped open, for instance, at the splendid illustration of a crimson-tongued eagle with an open beak carrying in its talons a lamb – a starting-point for JCP's discussion of sadism in the *Autobiography* – that exactly matches the description in the book.

A lot depends on Freddie Jones. A brilliant and uninhibited actor, he is in fine form both as the writer and as his characters, particularly good as Powys the lecturer (on Dickens), with large gestures, heavy impassioned emphases and a startling vitality. His own very distinctive face is of course very different to Powys's. While this allows us to distance ourselves from some preconceptions, members of the Society, familiar with the photographs, may find this strangely distracting. Sometimes he lowers his voice to a mellifluous actorish bass (the Great Powys becoming Powys the Grand) that sounds too self-appreciative, not as alive to the moment, not as self-mocking as I presume JCP to have been. But by any standards his performance is a vigorous *tour-de-force*.

The problem is that he is over-used. There is justification for this: even in the programme itself Glen Cavaliero talks of JCP '*becoming* the characters he portrays in the novels'. And there are benefits to be gained from seeing the writer acting out his own fictional creations. But by the time we have seen him spun like a TV impersonator through a series of different roles, costumes and hair-dos – Wolf Solent suited in a train, Dud No-man pyjamaed in bed, Will Zoyland shirtsleeved in his garden, Porius in Roman tunic on a hill – entertaining though these cameos are – there is something slightly ludicrous in his penultimate appearance as Owen Glendower in purple cloak and a shoulder-length wig – like one of the Three Wise Men strayed in from a village-green pageant. I recalled Frances Gregg's taunt that Powys was like a child who could only dramatise himself under a thousand guises – 'Once there was a great magician and his name was Jack, and there was a fairy and his name was Jack, too, and God was Jack, and the Devil was Jack, and again St Paul ...'

The extract from *Owen Glendower* is, in any case, too short to make its mark. There are many other scenes where the film takes more time and more care to create a particular effect – Will Zoyland from *A Glastonbury Romance* proposing to share his wife with his wife's lover, to the wife, the lover and the lover's bemused father, the Vicar of Glastonbury; John Geard, from the same book, naked in a mist-swirled pool, miraculously excising the cancer from Tittie Petherton. Both these scenes (inevitably shortened and adapted), to name just two, are excellent and show what exciting filmic material is here.

The Great Powys sometimes seems to be trying to say too much in too short a time. But while it will work best as an introduction of the writer to a wider audience, there is nevertheless much of great interest to those who already know

him. My own favourites from this colourful scrapbook of excerpts and impressions would include JCP (Jones) reciting 'The Epiphany of the Mad' flat on his back on a slate wall as wide as a road and as old as the Romans; Trefor Edwards' story of Powys pacing his room with a piece of stone pressed to his forehead ('Trefor! Do this! And concentrate on Troy and Greece!'); and Simone Snow as the young Catrin Puw Davies staring in surprise at the pattern of crossed twigs that Powys has left ritualistically on the side of the road. ('I remember kicking some of them as I went by and my mother getting very excited and saying, 'Put them back exactly as you found them. Otherwise Mr Powys is going to think it's some dreadful portent and that the end of the world is going to come.') There are many more where these came from.

The camera-work (Dave Brice and Dave Crute) is never less than superlative.

Chris Wilkinson

Copies of the programme (plus extra un-shown footage bringing the total running time to ninety minutes) can be ordered from Lluniau Lliw Cyf. Please see the information sheet distributed with this issue of the Newsletter.

Littleton Powys: A lecture by Oliver Holt

The Annual Montacute Lecture: November 19th 1994

John Batten called Oliver Holt's talk 'elegant and beautiful' and indeed it was. Here was a man who had known Littleton over many years, as a schoolboy and as a man, and his wholehearted devotion and admiration shone through his measured tones and clear enunciation, seeming to echo the voice of the man who had so greatly influenced him.

'Rejoice! Rejoice!' was always Littleton's motto. Such was the verdict of his old pupil, Louise MacNeice. He was, indeed, a wonderfully happy man and we seemed to hear the voice of Llewelyn as Oliver said to us. 'He was a lover of life. To be born into the world, a world so full of radiant and manifold beauties was regarded as an immeasurable privilege, and his whole life was an unbroken act of praise.'

To be bored, to Littleton, was a heinous sin, to be ranked almost with the two he rated as most evil: cruelty and mockery.

His second wife, Elizabeth Myers, said, 'Littleton never failed to tell you something interesting about life and the world. Every conversation with him extends the horizon of your mind.'

'I think,' Oliver said, that, of all the Powys brothers, 'Littleton could be described as the most splendid looking. Hardly short of six feet tall, he was erect, broad-shouldered, admirably proportioned.' He might have been a soldier

instead of a schoolmaster. 'His hair was white, making an exciting contrast with his highly coloured complexion and vivid blue eyes, set deeply beneath rugged brows in true Powysian fashion. The whole head was strongly sculptured.'

What was he like as a schoolmaster? He could seem fierce. The majesty of his presence inspired awe in his young pupils. Disobedience, rudeness, incurred his keenest displeasure, but he could be easily and often moved to delight. His voice was a lash, bold and resolute; it could roll up and down like the waves of the sea; it had cavernous echoes, like the tones of Moses or Elijah. He always spoke the purest English, clearly articulated; no fumbled or muddled syntax. 'I never heard him use a coarse or unseemly word', Oliver said, 'The worst of his expletives was 'Confound!' 'His reading to the boys left lasting memories. 'The characters as he interpreted them', Oliver told us, 'stride across my memory.' On the last morning of the term, while some of the boys were waiting to go home, he used to delight them by reading the poems of William Barnes, in dialect. 'We were enthralled', Oliver told us, 'by the transmutation of our headmaster into a rustic seer.'

What were his religious beliefs? 'He certainly did not reject the great Christian truths,' we were told, 'and was punctilious in setting them before us, but it was the word of God manifested in nature to which his deepest convictions responded. To be aware of the riches of God's earth, to praise their Maker, I feel was the be-all and end-all of him.'

A zest for life was his enduring characteristic, and he kept it to the end, even when deaf and crippled by arthritis. Louis MacNeice visited him in his old age and wrote:

> The sun shone through his lips and bloomed in his steps when first at the age of ten I watched the wild flowers run into his fingers and all Dorset burst into birdsong round his head' and now, 'half immersed in lameness, deafness, blindness the heart that still can greet me greets me full, the voice strong as a gong as ever and the laugh as deeply ingrained and warm. Rejoice, rejoice was always his motto. On two sticks he repeats it, still confirms his choice, to love the world he lives in.

What an incomparable epitaph for a man who embodied in himself so much of the great characters of the Powys family.

We are grateful to Oliver for his presentation – which only he could have given us – of a man who was not only his friend but his life-long inspiration.

Elizabeth Lawrence

Jon Stallworthy has produced a fine portrait of Littleton Powys in his recently published biography of Louis MacNeice. PR

Remembering Llewelyn

The last will and testament of Llewelyn Powys was dated 31 October 1933. It is well known that in it he made very specific stipulations about his burial, expressing 'a deep wish' that his executors should make every possible effort to have him buried in his garden at Chydyok, or on the open downs. He wanted no coffin and his body was to be laid on its side with arms and legs flexed. In the event of his death abroad, he wished to be cremated and his ashes brought back to the Chydyok garden. There is no reference to a memorial stone or inscription, but there is, among the bequests, one which, had it been attended to, would have perpetuated his memory in a fashion that may appeal to some of his admirers. It runs as follows:

> It is also my wish that the sum of £100 be invested in trust, and the yearly interest paid to the nearest public house to Chydyok, with the provision that on 13th August each year, the interest be spent in free drinks for anybody who enters the tavern after seven o'clock in the evening.

August 13th was, of course, Llewelyn's birthday and this year will mark the hundred and eleventh anniversary of the event.

It seems likely that, in the circumstances of his death abroad shortly after the outbreak of war, money was not invested as he had wished and I can find no evidence that free drinks on Llewelyn Powys have ever been offered in The Sailor's Return. Although the gesture would be somewhat belated, I wonder whether there are members who feel, as I do, that we should observe the spirit of the bequest by meeting in Chydyok to drink to Llewelyn's memory. This year 13 August falls on a Sunday and it would be practical to arrange a gathering at The Sailor's Return, perhaps preceded by a walk to the stone.

I would like to hear from anyone interested in participating in what could become an annual event, and to have their views on the form it might take. Details of any arrangements made will appear in the July *Newsletter*.

John Batten

Montacute Club Day

Albert Charles Rogers was born in Montacute in 1894 and lived there for the greater part of his ninety-one years. He was educated in the village school and left at fourteen to become a garden boy at Montacute House. His uncle was 'Rogers', the gardener at Montacute Vicarage and Charlie Rogers' memories of the Powys family were published in The Powys Review *13. It is interesting to compare this account of Club Day with that*

given by A. R. Powys in The English Parish Church*: he writes there as an observer, Charlie Rogers was an enthusiastic participant.*

We are grateful to Mr Ken Rogers for permission to publish this essay.

John Batten

In village life, in the early days of this century, one of the best loved days of the year, especially so, I believe, in our village, was the annual Club Day, the club concerned being the men's sick club – a Provident Society of mutual help when illness came. Remember there was no National Health Service in those days, and by this means many people were kept out of the workhouse and with some small weekly sum to buy food or pay rent.

This Gala day, then, was an event which took place on the Monday following the second Sunday after Whit Sunday, usually in June. The Rev. C. F. Powys (who was the father of the celebrated large family of writers, who all became famous in their sphere) was the vicar of the parish, and a non-member. He took great interest.

The club would meet at the school at about 9 a.m. to answer the roll call. Every man in his best suit – in most cases his only one – and carrying a club pole, a tall black staff with the brass club insignia polished and shining at the top. All the stewards (committee men) wore wide blue sashes draped over one shoulder, adding a splash of colour and importance.

When the procession fell in, ready to march away, they were headed by a celebrated character named Job Dunstone, with a long grey beard, who carried the great sweeping Union Jack on a stout pole, and a brave man he had to be on a breezy day. The depth of colour of his beard depended on whether he had swept a soot-filled chimney earlier that morning.

And now, to complete my picture, the thing that caused most excitement to us boys – the arrival of Kingsbury Band to fill the street with its strident and sometimes discordant martial music, making the most of the big drum – and what a noise they could make! The Band Master's name was Sharpe, and over many years he seemed to be an ever-present. He had a nose that over-shadowed his other features, and even his fine physique – it was like the beak of a great eagle and after descending in an enormous curve seemed to hook around the lip of the silver cornet that he played with great gusto. It was a source of much amusing comment with us.

To continue with my story – the band 'struck up', and the parade marched to the vicarage to meet the vicar – all smiles – who then headed the procession behind the band and Joby with the flag, with Mr Baldon, the schoolmaster and secretary, looking really very important, with a red face, to the church for a short service. I daresay many could not read and didn't know the *Venite* from the *Te Deum* and had not seen the inside of the church since the last Club Day – providing there had been no wedding or funeral to attend. And here let me add

that on the previous Sunday Evensong the vicar and the organist (Mr Baldon) always selected a hymn to be sung which said 'We expect a bright tomorrow', 'All will be well', and we choir-boys used the full extent of our lungs echoing that sentiment.

The service over (and I wonder how many actually got involved in it?) the ranks were re-formed and the procession wended its way around to the farms. The Abbey Farm was always visited – here buckets of cider were brought out and bread and cheese dispensed, and home-made lemonade. Meanwhile the bandsmen, after refreshing themselves, would play some lively jigs and we would dance on the Green. Compliments exchanged between the farmer's family and the Club officials, the marchers then proceeded with an ever-growing following of visitors, relations and children, and sight-seers from all around the nearby parishes, through the village to Woodhouse Farm, which was reached by way of a steep, hilly lane – which, aided by the cider already consumed at several stops, on a hot June day, brought the perspiration streaming from many red faces. It also took toll of the band, who had to rest before starting any more marches and jigs. Great was the merriment and rustic wit and fun, and before the visiting and compliments were over, some were obliged to have an outdoor nap on a sunny bank, or go home to bed, drunk.

Then, at two o'clock, followed the dinner in the School, attended by the local dignitaries including the doctor and vicar – and complimentary speeches were made.

Everybody slept after that, and later, led by the band, marched to 'Dimonds Field' for the evening's dancing until dusk, with a great crowd in attendance.

Now I'll go back to the Sunday afternoon when the lads would put their ears to the hard metalled road to try and catch some vibration from the great traction engine that we hoped would be coming along some few miles away – pulling the 'Shows' as we called them, the vans, with their roundabouts, swings and 'all the fun of the fair', and we would speculate as to whether it would be 'Townsends' – or who else?

Never were these Amusement Caterers ever allowed to move into the village before 'church were out' in the evening. And then a good congregation of people would gather in the Borough to see the scramble for 'Stands' amongst the showmen and stallholders, and to watch the traction engine manoeuvre the mechanical vans into their positions for erecting, and to see the heavy sledge hammers being swung, used to drive great pins into the stoney surfaces to support the swings and canvasses. Always there would be altercations between them – but never a fight. I remember most Mrs Townsend and her son Dick who carried on after her reign – a big, hearty chunk of a man – with his engine's smuts on his face and neck, open-shirted, and with his hands stuck in the pockets of his greasy fustian trousers – standing surveying the scene and his movable possessions in great satisfaction. He did not come many times, I think.

The excitement over, we went home to bed, but not always to sleep, for we thought of 'tomorrow', and how many pennies we had to spend and what we would buy. The Borough would be a fairyland in the morning. Both sides of the road would be lined with stalls where old familiar regular traders would set out their rocks, 'clumpers', gingerbreads, liquorice sticks, comforts and almonds, fairy cakes etc. etc. John and Alfie Andrews, Mr and Mrs Verrier – to mention a few names that come to mind. Then the toy stalls – at which I always bought a bright tin whistle – with a great assortment of cheap toys. All did good business throughout the day. In the early afternoon the ornate steam organ would churn out its popular choruses and melodies with a great clash of cymbals and drums, and the roundabouts would turn and lure our pennies from our pockets.

In the evening a great concourse of people would block the roads and laugh and jostle and shout – the stalls lit with naptha flares – whilst the 'Phelips Arms' would overflow with revellers and drunks.

In those days metal tubes were sold filled with water – just like our tooth-paste tubes of today, with a cap on the top – with these we would chase the girls, squirting the cold water down those muslin or cotton blouses – back or front, in great glee – what fun we had (and they generally came back for more). They were known as 'teasers', but were later prohibited after complaints from irate Mums and Dads.

Two outstanding memories – one of the news of the relief of Mafeking in the Boer War, arriving just as the band came in the morning – and the other of a devastating late frost which cut all the potato plants black and low on another such June morning – and a wag singing 'Vrost cut the tiddies down' as the band played The Keel Row.

Many a romance started on a day such as this, with all the lads and lasses meeting from other parishes, and many incidents that were to be life-long memories to the villagers.

It was said of Kingsbury Band that they only knew the music of two marches – and that before they marched off the Bandmaster would say,'Now, me lads, which shall it be? Thic or tother?'

At the end of the day, the menfolk and visitors would besiege the stalls to buy 'clumpers and gingerbread' to take home to absent wives and mothers – a good old country custom – but also perhaps to soften the lash of a ready tongue.

Yes! Happy memories of days long ago.

Charles Rogers

Letters to the Editor

from Cecil Woolf

You have kindly invited me on several occasions to respond to hostile or nit-picking criticisms in the *Newsletter*, but I have not felt it worthwhile in the past to 'apologise or explain'. Review after review has appeared with dismissive remarks about our publishing John Cowper's letters, correspondent by correspondent, volume by volume. But what is it that these critics want? A complete edition of all 30,000 existing letters at a three- or four-figure cover price? Good grief, this is the real world, in which some members of The Powys Society find it hard to afford the price of what we are doing!

All this began ten years ago when Gerald Pollinger offered us the first two volumes of letters – *Powys to Knight* and *Powys to Eric the Red* – and in a rather less than ideal world it has seemed to us sensible to adopt a pragmatic approach and carry on publishing the correspondence, volume by volume. Had our sales lived up to our original expectations, it would not have been necessary to increase prices. But that is not what I am writing to you about.

My grievance, and I believe we have grounds for being aggrieved, concerns the spiteful review which rubbished the first volume of your edition of JCP's *Uncollected Essays*. In a personal letter, your reviewer, Mr Orend, wrote to me, 'I'm sorry to say you may be disappointed with certain aspects of the review in which I raise a kind of vaguely philosophical debate about what should be the priorities in publishing Powys. It is part of an attempt to have people realise that keeping the majority of major work unavailable for years in affordable editions can be deadly to the eventual cause. I have for many years been an admirer of your books and nothing should be dearer than the fact you are taking chances on books many would not publish. ... For myself I envy your Powys list', etc. etc.

Reviewing can often be a frustrating occupation. Space, time, editors contrive to make it difficult for reviewers to say what they want. In this case, however, your reviewer appears to have been given plenty of space (seven pages) and, as editor both of the *Newsletter* and the book under review, you have clearly given him *carte blanche* to say what he pleased. In the event, he has adopted a uniformly negative attitude to the greater part of John Cowper's essays and to our production of the book. Happily for us, we subsequently received high tributes from distinguished members of the Society who have paid the full published price not only for your volume but for *Jack and Frances* and *Powys to Glyn Hughes*. Not a few of them have expressed the view that Karl Orend failed to do justice to *Elusive America*.

I think Mr Orend makes some valid points in places, though these are really to do with the quality of JCP's writing. One or two of the pieces are certainly of marginal interest. But I don't see how Mr Orend therefore concludes that the volume is of 'limited scholarly value and very little commercial value.' There is

surely a scholarly value even in recognising the mediocrity of some of Powys's writing, if that is what one believes it to be. Doubtless, too, there was a Powys–Dreiser–Masters 'mutual appreciation society', but such things are hardly unusual in the literary world at any time. Anyone comparing a list of Booker Prize judges with Booker Prize winners over the last twenty years will see a handful of names recurring with interesting frequency. Some other comments strike me as rather silly, such as the notion that the book is destined 'for dusty shelves and piles of remainders'. (Incidentally, in thirty-five years of independent book publishing, we have remaindered only *one* book.) Remaindering is sometimes the fate of many a great work of literature – as admirers of JCP know only too well – and is never a reason for not reading it. When Mr Orend has been publishing good books for three-and-a-half decades, as I have, he may perhaps realise that if publishers allowed themselves to be unduly influenced by such a fear many works of quality would never see the light of day.

Perhaps Karl Orend's most venomous statement is that the book is 'extremely shabbily produced', which is an astonishing assertion, to say the least, and totally without foundation. The thirty-five copies of the book at the August Powys Conference, of which Mr Orend's review copy was one, were in unlaminated jackets, for the simple reason that these were advance copies prepared specially for the event. It seems regrettable that the fact the jacket on his copy was unlaminated should have clouded his judgement. In fact, *Elusive America* was designed by the same highly respected book designer, typeset by the same specialist typesetters, printed by the same printers on a good quality book paper and bound by the very same binders we have used for our previous Powys books and for *Jack and Frances* and *Powys to Glyn Hughes*.

May I close by quoting from your own letter, Paul, on first seeing the three new Powys books: 'What a triumph! These three books that you have brought out together really are an amazing achievement. I was thrilled, of course, by my own *Elusive America*, but the *Jack and Frances* letters are wonderful and a very important contribution to the Powys works. The *Glyn Hughes* book is very much worth having. Congratulations!'

Such appreciation makes all of us here feel that it really is worthwhile continuing to publish John Cowper Powys – and not just publishing him but doing him full justice in terms of production and, as far as possible, sales. What is often forgotten by newcomers to the scene is that publishers like ourselves continue to store unsold books for many years at very considerable expense.

It is no part of a publisher's or editor's role to forestall or dictate criticism, but it would be gratifying if future reviewers of JCP would concentrate on the books themselves rather than 'raising vague philosophical debates', niggling about jackets and regurgitating what previous reviewers have said.

I like to think that the true Powys enthusiast is someone who, like you or me, would want to read whatever John Cowper wrote simply because he wrote it,

irrespective of the intrinsic merits of the piece. The sort of person likely to be put off reading the book by a review like Karl Orend's would not be of that ilk.

Could it be that Mr Orend's hostile review was the result, at least in part, of our success in outbidding him for the publication rights of the Powys–Dorothy Richardson correspondence?

Cecil Woolf

from Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

I don't know whether there is anywhere that references to the Powyses are kept, some sort of cardboard file or computer database. I've just come across three such references within a day, not of overwhelming interest, but it seems a pity that such information should blow to the wind. Some of it is no doubt known to other members, but I'm thinking of some more definite co-ordinated place where this information can be collected.

Anyway, now to the references I've just come across:

1 H. V. Morton: *I Saw Two Englands: His last glimpse of pre-war England and his first impressions of England at war* (1942, re-issued with modern – and a few war-time – photographs accompanying the original text, Methuen, 1989).

> Chapter Three: 'I arrive at Canterbury'
>
> Chesterton might have written a good story about a bus-load of trippers from Ramsgate who came to Canterbury only to find themselves involved in a miracle. Perhaps T. F. Powys could do it even better. And I have the suspicion that an average band of Canterbury pilgrims were much the same a few centuries ago as those today who wander vaguely about the city on a day trip. Could you replace their curiosity with faith, or at least hope, I think you would have a similar crowd of people.

2 Daniel Farson: *Henry: An Appreciation of Henry Williamson* (Michael Joseph, 1982), 236.

> He [Williamson] held his views rigidly, but he was far from a narrow man. His taste in books ranged from his beloved Jefferies, Francis Thompson and John Cowper Powys, to the prose of Shelley, the great works of Trollope and the modern American writers Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald. He gained vast pleasure from music ...

3 Jack Barbera and William McBrien: *Stevie: A Biography of Stevie Smith* (Heinemann, 1985).

> [page 130] A few months earlier this magazine [*Life & Letters To-day*] printed Stevie's review of Llewelyn Powys's *Love and Death*, which she followed with two more reviews in that journal in 1940.
>
> [page 154] The heroine bears the name Celia, which Stevie gave to her autobiographical protagonist in *The Holiday*, and Uncle Heber also appears in both tales. There is a Cas, too – not Casmilus, though, but Casivalaunus, 'an old spelling for this shadowy British king', according to

Sally Chilver, who calls him a figure from the realms of John Cowper Powys.

[pages 204–6] Another book Stevie read that summer or perhaps autumn [1956] was Littleton Powys's autobiography, *Still The Joy Of It*. Stevie had long admired the writing of Llewelyn and John Cowper Powys, and had written enthusiastic reviews of their books. John Cowper Powys, in turn, found Stevie's reviews of his work penetrating and wrote to tell her so in the early 1950s, and to praise *The Holiday* (in which he is praised), as well as the poems and drawings in *Harold's Leap*. When *Not Waving But Drowning* finally was published, it contained a four line 'Homage to John Cowper Powys' which, however heartfelt, is not one of the poems in which Stevie's strengths as a writer are manifest. Ironically, the writing of Littleton Powys, which Stevie did not admire, inspired such a poem.

In *Still The Joy Of It* Littleton Powys told, in part, of meeting Elizabeth Meyers [*sic*] in the early 'forties when he was a 'lonely widower of sixty-nine' and she ' a little-known writer aged thirty'. They soon married in Hampstead and, according to Littleton, their marriage was 'like one prolonged honeymoon' until Elizabeth's death from tuberculosis three and a half years later. Contributing to her happiness during her last years was the success of her first novel, *A Well Full Of Leaves*, published about a month before her marriage and 'received everywhere with acclamation'. One of the approving reviews, in fact, was written by Stevie who called the book 'bravely unusual'. But writing to John Hayward, Stevie questioned the latter part of the novel, and sent up a passage in which Elizabeth Meyers describes blood 'quietly' streaming into the handkerchief of her tubercular protagonist.

Given her admiration for the Powys family, and her familiarity with Elizabeth Meyers' first novel, Stevie must have read Littleton Powys's autobiography with some interest. Certainly she was fascinated by a sentence in which he described the night of his wedding. 'Our wedding night coincided with the most spirited German air raid that had been experienced in London for a long time; and the confusion was increased by a very large fleet of our own bombers passing over London on their way to Germany at the same time.' This account became part of Stevie's poem 'I Remember'. Perhaps only she would have introduced it during poetry readings as ' a happy love poem'. In this spirit, in a letter written to Sally Chilver on 20 November 1956, she enclosed the poem along with two other newly written ones to show, she said, that if she could not manage *à deux* love, she could at least 'have a boss shot at a general feeling of warmth & affection'. ... When Derek Parker presented a radio programme about Stevie Smith several years later, he included a recording

of her reading 'I Remember'. Writing to thank him for the programme, Stevie confessed that the poem is almost a transcript from Littleton Powys's description of his bridal night: 'I altered the setting of the words slightly and brought in some rhyme, but what fascinated me about L.P.'s passage was the way the *utter* banality and really dotty pomposity of the language lent such horror to the events he was describing. ...' Of course, Stevie had made up the conversation at the end of her poem in order to point up the dottiness, and she slightly exaggerated the difference in age between the bride and groom for effect. 'I hope the shade of poor L.P. did not turn a pale sort of green colour at the sound of that very nervy applause', she told Parker.

Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

Conversation of Theodore's sisters and brethren on Theodore

by Theodore F. P.

The following manuscript, dated 'East Chaldon, June 30 1909' and headed as shown above, was recently discovered in a copy of Black Bryony *formerly belonging to Faith Powys. Readers will find it interesting to compare the current text with 'Theodore Examined by the Brethren', written in the same year and published as an appendix to* Recollections of the Powys Brothers, *edited by Belinda Humfrey and published by Peter Owen in 1980. The manuscript, which was clearly written in considerable haste and is unrevised, is here transcribed without editorial corrections. Full names of the brothers and sisters included are, however, given, since the original identifies all except Lucy only by their initials.*

Although clearly imaginary, this lively and fascinating piece gives a vivid impression of just how such a conversation might have been conducted – at least as it seemed to Theodore Powys.

PR

J[ohn]: How Excellent! we are all here.
W[illie]: Lulu, move back you ass — Back takes up the whole room.
Ll[ewelyn]: Littleton have you a cigarette?
L[ittleton]: A hundred in my suitcase, they are next my flask.
Ll[ewelyn]: Willie just get them will you, D—— mind how you tread you ar'nt at plough.
J[ohn]: Lets close in more, we are all here. (shakes Littleton's hand)
L[ittleton]: We have not been together for years.
G[ertrude]: Theodore's not here.

J[ohn]: Ho! Ho! we did not think of him.

W[illie]: There would be no room for him.

B[ertie]: Or I would have to turn out of my chair.

J[ohn]: He is cheerful and happy at Chaldon, quite out of the way of sin.

L[ittleton]: I like to think of Old Bob at ... Chaldon.

J[ohn]: Lets speak more of him, we all know him and we all like to think of him at Chaldon.

K[atie]: I wish he were here.

M[arion]: Jack what is your real opinion about Theodore, his writings and his religion.

J[ohn]: What I think about him is this: Theodore is a protestant, Theodore is a protestant. This Babes godmother of his, seems to have brought him that way, he makes his escape from life by the religious back door, the light he says he follows is mystic to him. It is really only the same light that moved Baxter, Knox & Fox; you see every man tries to break a path and escape away from the shadow, if he is clever he obtains power, is a great lecturer, forgets, drowns himself in excitment. But these lonely ones force a way backwards, not forwards, mind you backwards.

L[ittleton]: Think of the time Theodore has at Chaldon, he tries to write, he does no harm, I like to think of him there, I dont think he had the chance to learn better, Mabel and I often think of him at East Chaldon & think of him with much pleasure being there.

B[ertie]: Shut up Willie, dont shove your great foot into the fire. How the deuce can I feel warm.

Ll[ewelyn]: Old Bob gets so fierce when you speak of his writings, they are rot, what does he want to get fierce about, and there is always a row about the kids, & you have to help. Shut up Bertie !!!!

M[arion]: I want to hear more what Jack says about Theodore; Lucy just go to my room, under a letter from Maurice, you know the one, you will find a notice about my lecture on lace making, bring it down and my little shawl.

Ll[ewelyn]: Dear Old girl do you mind climbing under the table, I dont want to move.

J[ohn]: Well! Well! Well! Theodore is sincere, he believes in a low level like Charlie Blake I might almost say he follows Christ, I know he says the same things as the Clerk, He could never enjoy sin, so he has gone the other way, he is original only when he curses and reviles, I wish he did it more.

L[ittleton]: Lets shut up now; tell me about Margaret, Jack & the garden.

K[atie]: Go on Jack about Bob. I have something to say. I think you are quite wrong, I think Theodore is nearer the soul than you all, I feel my soul more when I am near him.

W[illie]: Katie go out at once and tell Montacute to mind the rat trap in the stable.

J[ohn]: What does my dear sister Lucy think about all this.

Lucy: I feel I dont know enough, I cant understand these things. I like to hear you all talk. Willie! O Willie! dont pinch my leg so hard.

B[ertie]: Theodore has his own line, he follows it, he does touch Truth, and a great Truth, though never can it be a popular one.

J[ohn]: Bertie you are right, we are really the learners, he the master, ignorant, unlettered though he is, he touches what is beyond all, let us sit at his feet; we know, we know the emptyness of our lives, we know it, and he has touched a fullness, in the dark way he has seen a path, a distant light, he brings it nearer to him each day, and strange though it may be, I feel it as well, though my own path does not hide it. Theodore may be common, ignorant, rough, proud, but if he has in any way touched the true heaven he is greater than we.

A Voice: And the least of all these is greater than he.

L[ittleton]: I am going on Ham Hill, come on kiddie. Old Bob, I will drink his health, he is a dear old chap, I must see the old fellow soon. Come on Will, Lulu shove on your boots.

J[ohn]: Another cigarette Littleton. Thanks old friend; I must go on with my book, I hope to get some money. Well, dear Mother! has Lucy eaten all the sugar, I wont have any cocoa, only a glass of milk.

Lucy: Katie I want you in the garden.

G[ertrude] M[arion]: I am going to dress.

B[ertie] Ll[ewelyn] W[illie]: Shut up, do the the D— D—.

J[ohn]: Ask Father for some foolscap.

L[ittleton]: Come on, Come on — *Exit.*

Walking Powys

Last year's Weymouth Walk was an enjoyable event and many of those who took part commented upon the impact of the readings *in situ*. In addition to that, there was, of course, the sea, the sand, the sunshine and the relationship between the book and the place which is unique in John Cowper's novels. That is not to suggest that many other Powys places do not lend themselves to exploration through readings and I hope that the Society will exploit some of the possibilities in the future.

It is now four years since two walks were offered in the Montacute area. They were well attended by Wessex members, but there were no arrangements offered for accommodating those from further afield. We are therefore offering

a Montacute weekend on 1–2 July, with bed and breakfast accommodation available in the area for those who require it.

The walks will not be strenuous and will take in Montacute, East Stoke, Ham Hill and Pitt Pond, with readings from *Wood and Stone*, the *Autobiography*, *Skin for Skin*, *Love and Death*, *The English Parish Church*, *The Joy Of It* and *Somerset Essays*. It is hoped that members of the party will contribute selected readings. If you are willing to read, please indicate on the enclose reply slip.

Montacute is a more or less unspoilt and picturesque village boasting a fine National Trust house and surrounded by typically lush Somerset countryside. The sun doesn't always shine, but it will that weekend. If you are interested in taking part (family and friends welcome) please complete and return the enclosed form.

John Batten

Reviews

John Cowper Powys: *Petrushka and the Dancer: The Diaries of John Cowper Powys 1929—1939*, edited by Morine Krissdóttir.
Manchester: The Carcanet Press, 1995. ISBN 1 85754 096 4. 345 pp. £25.

John Cowper Powys is a major figure in world literature, yet he has failed to achieve the wide recognition his genius deserves. Why should this be? One of the problems lies in establishing the definitive canon by which he should be judged. In order for an author to become known and admired beyond a coterie of specialist readers his name has to become associated with a specific body of work, to the extent that the name immediately brings to mind a series of titles, no matter that there may be a number of lesser known minor works. In short, if we wish to have Powys recognized, we must first get him read; and in order to do that it is useless to rhapsodise on his greatness, gesturing towards a shelf of sixty titles and hinting at the beauties of the hundred or so more that could be published. The audience will melt away in confusion. What is required is what, in another

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***JCP and Phyllis on the front cover**: see Diary entry for 5 November 1939*:

Betty arrived with those wonderful pictures of Petrushka like Paracelsus calling up a ghostly T.T. his Undine. What a triumph for the T.T. to have done this under the Oak in the road & for our Betty to have taken these Photos. ... Far far the best Picture of the Man with his Bessarabian Captive ever taken! Twas only that Dead-Girl Mask, the Ghost-Girl, Undine-Spirit, the 'White Lady of Avinal' Mask, that persuaded my Abject, my Choice, my Immortal Sprite to consent to be photographed at all.

context, might be called a 'marketing stategy', not in the sense that such a phrase usually suggests, simply in order to increase the profits of publishers (though that is important too), but in order that a writer whom we believe to be of unique importance should be allowed an opportunity to spread his 'propaganda' among a wider audience.

If the phrase 'marketing strategy' sounds hideously unPowysian we should, perhaps, look back more closely at Powys's own career. He had no doubt, either as lecturer or as author, of the importance of attracting an audience and of tailoring his materials, if necessary, to suit the demands of a publisher. As Robin Patterson demonstrated in an earlier issue of the *Newsletter*, Powys himself was an adept and enthusiastic advertiser of the works he admired and he does not seem to have felt that they were demeaned in the process. Are Lawrence and Joyce less important writers because their works appear in every branch of W. H. Smith? Anyone who believes that their critical and popular acclaim has arisen spontaneously by virtue of the quality of their writing is surely naïve. A work such as *Sons and Lovers* doesn't sell millions of copies in paperback, or appear on film and audio tape simply because a few sage enthusiasts have passed on the word of its greatness. Shrewd management is what has allowed Lawrence to do his work.

With an author such as Powys, however, whose output is both vast and various, the difficulties are increased. Where do we direct the attention of potential readers? Here I must confess my own dilemma. As someone whose spare time over the past twenty years has been almost entirely devoted to John Cowper Powys, my own inclination is to want *everything* in print. Only by reading everything, I tell myself, can we hope to understand this infinitely complex man. Yet, frankly, the more I study his published and unpublished works, the less I believe that he can ever be 'encompassed', the less I believe that we can truly know anyone, genius or not. Perhaps that is one of Powys's lessons – though, at the same time, he would have encouraged us to go on with the quest. The truth is, I just want more Powys and it is the inexhaustible fascination of his life and work that has led me to argue, in the *Newsletter* and elsewhere, for complete texts and for the publication of every recoverable text. The vital thing, I have claimed again and again, is to make the texts available, the rest will take care of itself. *Petrushka and the Dancer* has forced me to question this view.

Assuming, and it is a huge assumption, that it were possible to persuade a publisher to issue the complete diaries of John Cowper Powys, how accessible, even then, would they be, even to devoted readers? Publication itself would take years and the cost of the thirty or so large volumes would be prohibitive to all but the wealthiest Powysian. From a scholarely point of view we might argue that such an edition would be desirable: desirable, but not essential, since the original manuscripts are available for study to those who need them. Would such an edition do anything to attract readers to the major works, or even allow the status

of the diaries themselves as major works to become clear? There are, after all, what one enthusiastic Powysian reluctantly referred to as 'the boring bits'. What must surely clinch the argument is the revelation in the present volume that both John Cowper and Phyllis Playter themselves intended to publish a 'selection' from the diaries.

However, once we admit the possibility of a selected editon, we enter a further realm of difficulty, for the value and credibility of any selection depends upon the skill and integrity of the editor. Every omission, every editorial decision, is an act of interpretation and inevitably alters the text as it will appear to, and in turn be interpreted by, the reader. The editing of another writer's work can become an act of appropriation or of impersonation. An editor can select material in such a way as to prove his or her own points in language they could not otherwise produce. Alternatively, they might impose themselves so firmly between author and audience by the intrusive use of rafts of explanatory notes and other editorial matter as virtually to claim a priority in the mind of the reader, whose attention they would not have attracted alone. In the present case, an editor determined to uphold the 'bunch of nutters' view of the Powys family could do so by selecting appropriate passages and leaving out others. It would also be possible to produce a volume quite as large as this devoted entirely to 'One Man and his Dog', with special reference to bowel disorders in both. The question must therefore be asked, how 'honestly' has the present book been edited?

The most textually reliable of the various parts of the diary to have been published to date is that for 1930, edited by Frederick Davies (London: Greymitre Press, 1987). If we take as a random example the entries for September 1930 and compare the texts in both editions, we find that although they have been reduced from some fifteen pages to slightly less than three, nothing essential has been omitted. We lose some of John Cowper's accounts of the minutiae of their daily lives and one or two panics with mischievous heifers, but such things are represented elsewhere and in proportion to their importance in the 'story'.

I use the word 'story' advisedly, for Dr Krissdóttir has exploited the limits imposed upon her by her publisher (a single volume of managable size, without footnotes) creatively and, rather than attempt to give us 'a bit of everything', has taken the opportunity to reveal what was always the essential focus of the diaries – the story of *Petrushka and the Dancer*, the often terrifyingly fraught but intensely creative relationship between John Cowper Powys and Phyllis Playter. It is a process similar to that by which John Cowper created his novels and the resulting volume must now stand beside them in importance.

Indeed, in the main body of the text, Dr Krissdóttir has worked in so masterly a way as to become almost invisible, appearing only in succinct headnotes at the beginning of each year and occasional explanatory bridging passages. Yet the tact and elegance of the editorial voice should not be allowed to obscure her achievement. As someone who has frequently worked with Powys's manuscripts,

I can appreciate the vast labour involved in merely *transcribing* the text (of which the published version represents a tenth), added to which is the equally difficult task of making a selection which not only avoids distortion but, more importantly, reveals the essential material in a coherent narrative form. At a simple, human level, one cannot help feeling that John Cowper would have been pleased and (more demandingly?) Phyllis Playter would have approved.

In a long and valuable introduction Dr Krissdóttir establishes the biographical and literary context within which the diaries were written in such a way that readers new to Powys will be able to make sense of what follows and not feel excluded by a lack of 'specialist' knowledge. Indeed, one of the triumphs of *Petrushka and the Dancer* as a piece of editorial work is that it can be read and enjoyed without reference to any other book, although I suspect that it will inevitably lead readers on to the major works whose period of composition it covers.

However, Dr Krissdóttir goes further than merely setting the scene and uses her introduction as an opportunity to explore a number of issues which even the most expert Powysian will find illuminating, issues such as the importance of the act of naming and the creative use to which Powys put his physical suffering.

There have been a number of 'false dawns' in the effort to introduce John Cowper Powys to a wider audience, but at present there does seem to be an awakening of interest, with Herbert Williams' television film, the programme devoted to John Cowper on Radio 2 and the Powys Day at the Swansea Year of Literature festival. *Petrushka and the Dancer* comes opportunely onto the scene and will, no doubt, do much to further and enhance current interest. We must take pride in the fact that many of the current initiatives have arisen directly or indirectly from The Powys Society and it is fitting that the editor of this splendid and important book should be our Chairman.

Paul Roberts

Patrick Wright: *The Village That Died For England*

London: Jonathan Cape, 1995. ISBN 0 224 03886 9. 436 pp. £17.99.

One misty morning in 1954 a librarian from Richmond found himself creeping across a shell-shocked down, nervously watching the red flag alert while searching for a very specific landmark. A novelist was writing a book set in thirteenth-century Wessex and, always scrupulous about geographical details, had asked his friend to verify the exact position of a particular tumulus. The librarian was Gilbert Turner, the writer was John Cowper Powys, the novel *The Brazen Head*, the no-man's land the tank-firing range above Lulworth Cove, Dorset. Gilbert told me this story in 1979. By then I understood a little the vein of *obliviousness* in John Cowper that would lead him to make such a dangerous request, but I had not yet experienced the spell cast by that part of the coast. Turner, who shared

Powys's love of the Dorset downs, had gone without question, as if he assumed that some ancient goddess still lurking in that place would protect him from being blown up.

Patrick Wright's latest book, *The Village that Died for England*, ostensibly is the story of the valley and the village of Tyneham, evacuated December 1943 on the order of Churchill's War Cabinet to make way for the military. But the book is much more than the story of the collision between armoured tanks and the countryside of an unspoiled part of England: Wright is exploring the English ambivalence to their landscape and past. The map in the front of the book cleverly and clearly states the case: in light small print the ancient well-loved demotics – Marley Bottom, Hambury Tout, Durdle Door, Bat's Head, White Nose; in heavy large lettering – Bovington Camp, Bindon Range, East Holme Danger Area, Tyneham. He is also postulating that Tyneham obliterated has been 'reborn as a perfect English village of the mind' where traditional English virtues cannot be touched by the 'destructive trends of modern life.' As a symbol he finds this both 'alluring and repulsive at once.'

Wright is not going to make friends with this book: it is as potentially explosive as the gunnery ranges themselves. Few places, people, or institutions escape his ironic gaze as it moves with sometimes bewildering rapidity from butterflies to blue plastic sheeting; from earnest members of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society on a botany expedition to urban trippers eating crisps in the café by the Lulworth car-park; from the organic gardening movement of Rolf Gardiner to the political activism of Rodney Legg; from the great land-owner Herbert Weld sitting on the lawn in an elegant chair watching his castle burning down to the writer Llewelyn Powys lying mother-naked on Bat's Head cliff in a storm with the sea swirling round the Blind Cow below.

The construction of the book is complicated, perhaps at times unnecessarily so, switching from one point of view to another, even as the story gathers more and more strands: conflicting politics, classes, ideologies. But as Wright says, 'the cult of Tyneham is like history itself – full of different potentialities.'

It begins with the story of the Weld Estate at Lulworth, making the point that turfing out helpless tenants did not begin at Tyneham with the Royal Armoured Military Corps. Between 1785 and 1795 approximately half of the existing village of East Lulworth was levelled by Thomas Weld so that he could extend his park and create a pleasant view. As he outlines the history of the Weld family, Wright develops a manoeuvre that he uses effectively throughout the book: what begins as a relatively simple account develops ramifying consequences. In this case Wright connects the hostility of the tenants made homeless to the resentment of Weld's farm tenants suffering in a period of agricultural depression; picks up the way the rancour was complicated by religious hostilities [the Welds are Catholic]; and links the gradual widening of class antagonism to the '30s political movements in rural Dorset. Those with long memories had little sympathy for Herbert

Weld's opposition to the War Office's continuing expansion after World War II as it began to lap closer his estate. Nor did they give much support to the various councils and institutions – which were dominated by the rural aristocracy – in their resistance to the expansion of Bovington Camp and the annexation of almost 1000 acres around Lulworth Cove. Beauty spots do not feed hungry tenant farmers or town traders; gunnery schools do.

East of Lulworth is the Tyneham valley and village that belonged to well-established members of the Dorset gentry for 500 years. The Bond family's paternalism is treated, perhaps deservedly, with greater sympathy than Wright extends to the Welds. The story of the take-over of Tyneham by the military is outrageous; the Bond response funny, sad, touching in turns – Wright knows all the techniques. He portrays William Bond as a benevolent dictator, violently opposed to modern devices either for himself or his villagers. There is the story of Bond being so outraged by the GPO installing a public telephone kiosk in the village in 1929, and moreover mistakenly installing it in full view *and* by the pond, that he went home and had a stroke. Ralph Bond, who succeeded, saw through the evacuation of the village and the valley. Dispossessed of his home, as were his tenants, he went gently into the night, giving a lecture to the DNH&A in 1943 on the length and shape of the ears of the Dorset bat.

There were of course other defenders of that beautiful landscape. From the aristocracy Wright goes to the writers, scientists, aesthetes who mourned the sacrifice to mass tourism and the military of what the novelist Mary Butts called a 'green transparent world'; a revelatory world 'made of turf hills, patched with small trees and stones and hammered by the sea'. A world of lost childhood.

There is a long section on H. J. Massingham, well-known in the '30s as the chronicler of England's dying countryside. He could see few survivors of a 'mechanized civilization' in which the individual was 'drowned' in a centrally directed 'mass-mind,' but he considered Llewelyn Powys one of those whose 'primeval intensity of mind and sense' was still attuned to the landscape. Wright then gives a mainly sympathetic account of Llewelyn Powys's philosophy and personality. The old problem of 'individual freedom' which is almost inevitably achieved only at the expense of someone else's joy and freedom, is only lightly touched upon in connection with 'Lulu', but the conundrum pervades the entire book.

Chapter 11 switches abruptly and effectively from Massingham's vision of ancient man – sun-loving, free, in tune with the natural world – to an account of property speculation in the 1980s in East Chaldon and thence to a discussion of Valentine Acland's anti-idyllic articles about these very cottages in the 1930s – damp, fireless, overcrowded, buggy hovels which housed Weld tenants – and Theodore Powys's own dark vision of village life. But Wright is about to introduce a new set of conflicting perspectives: the growth of communism and fascism in the '30s in Dorset. Chapters 11 to 14 are among the most interesting and

revealing in the whole book. He contrasts the communistic philosophies and activities of Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Acland with those of two other Dorset land-owners: Rolf Gardiner and Captain George Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers. Wright says that 'for a time [Acland and Warner] were the centre of communism in Dorset.' Uninterested in the Guild-Socialism of Massingham and the freedom of individual man, they believed that the only thing that would give English labourers a decent living was a Marxist government. In total opposition to mechanistic state-oriented Marxism was Rolf Gardiner whose estate lay on the southern edge of Cranborne Chase. Gardiner founded the Springhead Ring, a group which set out to 'rebuild a hill-and-vale economy along modern organic lines'. Unfortunately, Gardiner's admiration for the music, farming techniques and the youth movement of Germany branded him as a Nazi sympathizer. In a long and carefully balanced chapter, Wright discusses Gardiner's ideas and differentiates them from those of Pitt-Rivers, an avowed fascist. Pitt-Rivers is treated much less sympathetically than Gardiner, but Wright is concerned always to suggest the 'different potentialities' of history that make it so difficult to assign labels. The political movements in Dorset in the '30s are intertwined with questions of land reform, the plight of farm workers, the prevailing pro-English, anti-'alien' sentiments – and the right of a government to expropriate an ancient landscape for the purposes of military practise with another war looming.

The post-war story of Tyneham occupies the last sections of Wright's book, and, if possible, the story becomes even more complicated. In 1956 Lilian Bond, sister of Ralph Bond, wrote *Tyneham: A Lost Heritage*. Wright calls it a 'threnody to an idealized world gone down' and then proceeds to describe with glancing irony all the people who undertook to make Tyneham into 'the valley of lost English causes'. The fate of Tyneham is sentimentalized by the editor of *This England* into an elegiac lost England where no motorways, industrialized cities or immigrants existed; temporarily converted into a film set by a Scottish director who wanted to score political points against Thatcher's Britain; transformed by the Tory historian Sir Arthur Bryant into 'one of those no-man's lands' which 'with the march of human progress have become ... a permanent part of our landscape'; revamped by Rodney Legg and the Tyneham Action Group into an environmentalist's dream campaign.

There is a bewildering variety of people introduced in this book, ranging from architects, journalists, ecologists, to politicians, parish councillors and land-owners – all with their own vision of a revivified Dorset. Literary critics have tended to consider the Powyses as somewhat eccentric writers; here they are among the saner and more conventional of the dwellers and defenders of those chalk downs.

Occasionally the story descends delightfully into farce, particularly when Rodney Legg, like Cuchulain attempting to restrain the ungovernable sea, struggles to keep some order in his motley battalion of mainly middle-aged

women. Wright can be devastating: he describes 'a pillar of West Lulworth's political establishment' whose voice 'both high-pitched and stentorian, was a formidable instrument of social control with which she had been obliged to impose civility on many howling mobs in her time. ... She used it to pursue words, rather as a rogue dog might force sheep towards a tiny gap in a hedge, and then clip the end off them just as they thought they had squeezed through unscathed.'

Patrick Wright is a social critic with a sombre thesis and he argues his case with intelligence and sensitivity. An ancient landscape is forfeited to greed and self-interest. The blame can be assigned to no one and to everyone. Ultimately it is easier to re-create in the mind a world of glinting summer sunlight than to face the knowledge of a blighted, winter-ridden reality; the double-natured implications of a paradise lost. A Powysian scholar must listen carefully to what Wright is saying, when he writes 'extinction has granted this remote English village a strange numinosity, alluring and repulsive at once.' John Cowper came to a not dissimilar conclusion in *The Brazen Head*. A company of men going through the darkness of the thirteenth-century Dorset forest suddenly hears 'a wild husky voice singing a ditty which clearly was ... a howl of defiance to everything they had been accustomed from infancy to venerate':

Where leaf do fall—there let leaf rest—
Where no Grail be there be no quest—
Be'ee good, be'ee bad, be'ee damned, be'ee blest—
Be'ee North, be'ee South, be'ee East, be'ee West
The whole of Existence is naught but a jest—

And the response of the company to this ditty, Powys seems to be saying in this late novel, is the necessary response of the human being: 'Every single one of them pretended ... that he had heard nothing.' As did Gilbert Turner that misty day when he ignored the artillery and searched for an ancient, non-existent landmark.

Morine Krissdóttir

The Supernatural and English Fiction, by Glen Cavaliero
Oxford University Press, 1995. ISBN 0 19 212607 5. 273pp. £18.99.

To judge from the space they occupy in bookshops, tales of 'horror and the supernatural' remain as popular today as ever they were, their lurid covers, emblazoned with glaring red eyes usually surrounded by hideous excrescences, bearing witness to the survival of ancient fears in a world from which we like to imagine we have banished all that is not safely material. An historical survey of these tales with which we need to terrify ourselves would, no doubt, be of enormous interest, but such is not the purpose of *The Supernatural and English Fiction*, which sets itself the task of examining 'the impact of metaphysical themes and subject-matter on naturalistic fiction'. Such fiction succeeds to the extent

that it convinces us of its 'reality'. The more the fictiveness of a work vanishes, the louder we applaud the genius of its author as a creator of fiction. But what is the nature of the 'reality' we seek to find reflected in our fiction? English novelists are, as Dr Cavaliero demonstrates throughout this study, 'haunted by the presence of mystery and strangeness' and so, of course, are English readers, which perhaps explains why so much of contemporary literary theory, essentially materialistic as it is, seems somehow unsatisfyingly alien. A 'close attention to received appearances being an insufficient measure of what human life affords', we find many of our great naturalistic novelists venturing into the borderland of mystery which encompasses the mechanics of daily life and which allow that life the possibility of meaning, for 'the experience of mystery is not something departmentalized or eccentric: it is an essential part of the awareness of being alive'.

Dr Cavaliero considers that those authors who have explored this extra-material realm have approached it from three distinct perspectives or traditions: the preternatural, the paranormal and the supernatural. The preternatural tradition, the source of many popular horror stories, deals with 'physical manifestations not attributable to the known laws of cause and effect' and portrays 'the supernatural as being not above nature but contrary to it'. Based in superstition, such tales are essentially entertainments 'justified by the underlying scepticism of their readers'.

The second approach, which portrays the experience of mystery as the paranormal, has its roots in the hermetic tradition, and regards such experiences as 'lying outside the range of ordinary knowledge not as a matter of kind but as a matter of degree'. Mystery becomes a problem capable of rational explanation.

It is, however, the third approach with which Dr Cavaliero is concerned, that which 'treats material and spiritual experiences as aspects or dimensions of each other', a sacramental approach which 'does not exploit the experience of mystery or seek to explain it'. The 'reality' we find most satisfying in English fiction is one in which there is a reciprocity between the natural and the supernatural, thus defined.

Having established the territory to be explored, Dr Cavaliero develops an historical survey from Ann Radcliffe to Peter Ackroyd which reflects a wealth of close and illuminating reading at which most of us will only be able to stand in awe.

However, what will concern us most here is the chapter devoted to John Cowper Powys. Powys is, Dr Cavaliero claims, 'the supreme master of indigenous imaginative supernaturalism' and reveals a 'psychic sensitivity unmatched since Hardy'. Although there is considerable discussion of *Ducdame*, *Wolf Solent*, *Maiden Castle* and *Owen Glendower*, the focus of the chapter is, fittingly, *A Glastonbury Romance*, in which Powys 'is deliberately undermining the expectations as to any rationally determined materialistic plausibility'.

The arguments here concerning Powys's exploration of our perception of the

animate and the inanimate, the irrational and the super-rational, and with the experience of these as aspects of a 'multiverse' in which all absolutes are relative, will not be unfamiliar to those of us who have enjoyed the experience of reading Dr Cavaliero's earlier studies of Powys, or of hearing him lecture. What is important for those already convinced of Powys's genius is that *The Supernatural and English Fiction* provides a context in which he may be understood and discussed, placing him convincingly in a tradition which includes many of our major earlier and contemporary writers. Such a context has previously been lacking, many critics having dealt with the complexities of Powys's work in isolation. This has allowed those who know less of his work than they would have us believe to dismiss it as eccentric and peripheral. After Dr Cavaliero's important and fascinating study they will no longer be able to offer the same excuse. By integrating into his world-view both the realm of mystery and the realm of matter, Powys provides a far more convincing 'measure of what human life affords' than many novelists.

One final word about the style of the book. As a teacher of teenage pupils, I have sometimes fallen into the ludicrously optimistic belief that the reading of good writing will enable the reader to write well. A ludicrous belief, since half an hour reading the work of most literary critics and theorists disproves it, their craggy and dislocated language bringing on the sensation that one is trying to read muesli. It is as if writing coherently and elegantly has become somehow intellectually suspect. Reading Glen Cavaliero's work is a different experience altogether. He writes with enormous skill, expressing often difficult and complex ideas with the elegance and balance of a poet and the intellectual rigour of a fine scholar.

Paul Roberts

Little Blue Books: the broader picture

I did quite well on the internal evidence in my article 'Powys in Little Blue Books' in *Newsletter* 23: I think nothing was significantly wrong, but of course there is a great deal more to the story. Robin Patterson, a Canadian member of the Society who has himself contributed to the *Newsletter*, sent me a very appreciative letter, a long article on the Little Blue Books, and other material; I am most grateful to him. The fifty-page article by Johnson and Tanselle[1] is extremely comprehensive and, for my purpose of exploring Powys, answers a number of further points. I thought it would be worth setting out the bare bones of the earlier history of the series, which had almost settled down by the time that JCP and then Llewelyn

were included, and some more general information. Most of what follows is taken from this article or one of Haldeman-Julius's own books.

According to the writers of the article, the series consisted principally of original hack writing and reprinted literature, but it did contain some first editions of works by such authors as Upton Sinclair, Bertrand Russell and John Cowper Powys. The series played an important role in the mania for self-improvement which swept the American public in the twenties, and cannot be ignored in any study of mass culture of that period. There are recurring difficulties, for example in dealers' catalogues and in bibliographies, because of the different versions, titles, and substitutions (as I indicated in my study of just twelve titles). The only satisfactory solution, according to Johnson and Tanselle, would be a thoroughgoing descriptive bibiography of the entire series; the article offers an outline of some of the basic problems, such as the lack of any single comprehensive collection, and some tentative solutions.

In 1887 Julius A. Wayland moved to Girard, Kansas, with his socialist paper, *Appeal to Reason*. Its phenomenal success and influence meant that Girard came to have printing plant capable of handling a weekly of huge circulation. The Appeal to Reason Company issued other publications, including a series of socialist writings, twelve 'Appeal Classics' published in early 1917 as 64-page pamphlets; these were the predecessors of Haldeman-Julius's pocket series.

In 1913, after Wayland's death, Louis Kopelin from the New York *Call* was hired as managing editor, and in October 1913 he brought in a fellow-writer on the *Call*, Emanuel Julius. In June 1916 Julius married Anna Marcet Haldeman, of a prominent and wealthy Girard family, and changed his name to Haldeman–Julius. In January 1919 Kopelin and Haldeman-Julius purchased the *Appeal* and its printing plant, and in February the series of pocket classics was born with *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*; these (later Nos. 2 and 1 respectively) were announced on February 22nd and March 1st 1919; by May 24th there were thirteen titles, 52 by the end of February 1920, 140 by the end of October, about 200 by March 1921, and 239 by the end of 1921.

Until July 1921 the books were called 'Appeal's Pocket Series', then till early 1922 'People's Pocket Series', then 'Appeal Pocket Series'. Then the series took on the names I have referred to in my article: in April 1922, 'Ten Cent Pocket Series; in September 1923, 'Five Cent Pocket Series'; in October–November 1923, 'Pocket Series'; and in late November 1923, the familiar name, 'Little Blue Books'.[2] During the rapid changes of name in 1923 there are not neat numerical change points, as works were often published out of order. Late in 1922 the publisher's name was officially changed from Appeal Publishing Company to Haldeman-Julius Company. Johnson and Tanselle refer to the inconsistencies between series names on title-page and cover as one of the bibliographical problems, as observed by me. The series reached the 700s in 1924, 900s in 1924, 1,100s in 1926, and 1,260 by the end of 1927.

Much information about the series is found in Haldeman-Julius's own two books *The First Hundred Million* (1928) and *My Second 25 Years* (1949). At the former date Haldeman-Julius declared that the series had reached its top number of 1260, but in fact the series had well over 1,300 numbers by the end of 1928, rising to the early 1,700s in 1931 and the 1,800s in the early 1940s. At the time of writing the article (1970) there were 1,914 titles. By 1949 300,000,000 booklets had been distributed. Typical printings were 10,000 to 30,000 copies.

On pages 101–2 of *My Second 25 Years* are details of the books by JCP and Llewelyn. JCP's 'eight Little Blue Books' sold a total of 994,000 copies, and Llewelyn's 55,000;[3] three, Nos. 112, 414 and 435 had been included in various High School sets, accounting for their exceptionally large quantities. Many of the names are given in unfamiliar forms.[4]

Stephen Powys Marks

NOTES

[1] 'The Haldeman-Julius "Little Blue Books" as a Bibliographical Problem', by Richard Colles Johnson and G. Thomas Tanselle, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 64, 1st Quarter 1970, 29–78.

[2] These changes are set out in a table in the article. Other tables show a chronological chart of numbers issued from 1919 to 1932, the series names originally attached to books issued in late 1923, and numbers re-allocated to a different work; there is also a selective author index to the whole series. I would be happy to lend the article.

[3] In fact, there are ten JCP titles, Nos. 449 and 452 being omitted (*Essays on Rousseau, Balzac, Victor Hugo*, and *Essays on Emily Bronte and Henry James*); these numbers were allocated to other works.

[4] The full list as printed by Haldeman-Julius (1949) is as follows:

JCP 112 *Secret of Self-Development* (January 12 1927), 330,000
414 *Art of Being Happy* (September 5 1923), 138,000
435 *Digest of 100 Best Classics* (July 11 1923), 368,000
448 *Estmates of Great Original Geniuses* (October 9 1923), 30,000
450 *Calls to Imaginative Conflict* (October 9 1923), 30,000
451 *Masters of Erotic Love* (October 16 1923), 20,000
453 *A Sailor (Joseph Conrad) and a Homosexual (Oscar Wilde)* (October 9 1923), 35,000
1264 *Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant* (May 31 1928), 42,500

LlP 534 *Mystic Materialism* (February 4 1924), 35,000
702 *A Book of Intellectual Rowdies* (March 10 1925), 20,000

An Interview with Alyse Gregory

I have composed the following 'interview' with Llewelyn Powys's widow, Alyse Gregory, from letters written by her to Jack Rushby, a long-standing member of The Powys Society.

Jack first wrote to Miss Gregory early in 1965, and her final letter of reply is dated 22 November 1966, just a few weeks prior to her death.

In this letter Miss Gregory answered a series of questions which Jack had posed her in previous correspondence, and her answers prove to be quite illuminating, especially to those of us who came onto the Powysian scene too late to have known this remarkable woman.

Although the facts of her life have been well-documented in Powysian literature and a vivid portrait of her appears in *The Cry of a Gull*, this interview by letter gives a valuable insight into her views and opinions.

What were her conclusions at the end of her life? What were her views and impressions, tempered by time, as she looked back into a sometimes distant past dominated by vivid memories of the Powys family?

We owe a debt of gratitude to Liverpudlian Jack Rushby, the 'Grand Old Man of Gateacre', a friend of the Caseys and of Lucy Amelia Penny, for permission to use this valuable letter.

Interviewer: Miss Gregory, I would like to record your views for posterity and, with your permission, I would like to ask you a few specific questions.
Alyse Gregory: I will try to answer your questions, or some of them – as many as I can, but it is a great mistake to suppose because one lives to old age that one has any great store of wisdom! I think folly and wisdom go along side by side, sometimes one in the lead, sometimes the other. In age it is a chance which is foremost.
I: May I ask to what you owe your longevity?
AG: My parents and their parents I fear! Perhaps something to cunning, since I haven't broken any limbs by tripping up and falling down so far, and have managed to keep out of hospitals, and more or less free of doctors and medicines. Perhaps luck – or ill-luck whichever way you put it – has something to do with it. I don't regard it as a matter of pride.
I: On the subject of doctors and medicines, and from your own experience of nursing your late husband, what advice could you give to someone like me suffering from a stomach ulcer?
AG: I'm sorry to hear of your stomach ulcer – a most difficult trouble to combat. I think it is largely a matter of finding the right diet and not deviating from it! I kept track with my husband over a long period of time of everything he ate to see if the ulcer might be caused by some special food. I found that any fat was bad for him. I'm sure you must have been told by the doctor what course to follow ...no,

I'm not sure. I think you have to be your own doctor to a large extent in such matters.

I: As a point of interest, what is your favourite food?

AG: Oh dear! My favourite food, well I have been a vegetarian for thirty years or more and have in recent years had to live on a very careful diet. If I could have the perfect meal I would begin with caviare – which I haven't tasted often in my life – go on to trout fresh brought in from the river and grilled, creamed chicken, asparagus, salad with french dressing, and at the end an Italian ice called 'Spumone', coffee, a liqueur. As it is I live on a diet of eggs, steamed carrots, baked potatoes and brown bread – this is important.

I: You have seen many changes during your long life, for example the advent of radio, and now television. It seems that the modern world is far noisier and I have read that noise is one of your pet hates. Do you have a television set, Miss Gregory?

AG: Yes, I have a television set, but turn it on only for special programmes, usually very late in the evening. I sympathise with anyone who hates noise. Yes, I once wrote an article on the subject, enumerating the kinds of noise that I disliked most, also naming many of the great writers who were dependent on quiet. Schopenhauer used to complain of the snapping of whips in the city streets, Proust wrote in a cork-lined room; Carlyle had to have a special sound-proof room made for him. What would they do in these days of radio and television? I am sure they would none of them have written their masterpieces.

I: You attributed your longevity to diet, genetics, good luck and personal health care. Are you also one who rises at the crack of dawn and goes for ennervating walks?

AG: No indeed! I do not get up at five in the morning and go for a walk, and I did not do this all my life – only during my husband's long illness. But we both used to rise early on our travels and go for a walk before breakfast.

I: Do you smoke?

AG: No.

I: Do you still write?

AG: Rarely, but I have done some reviewing for American publications.

I: What about correspondence?

AG: It is impossible for me to keep up with my correspondence in these later days. If I do not answer a letter at once it might not get answered for a long time! My correspondence gets quickly out of hand and the necessities do not always correspond with the desire.

I: Staying on the subject of writing, who are your favourite authors?

AG: In my youth I was much influenced by Emerson, Whitman, Carlyle, Dostoievsky. There were so many. Perhaps the author in my latter years that I return to most often is Marcel Proust. Recently I have been re-reading some of Hardy – *Far From The Madding Crowd* – that is one I can recommend to you if you

haven't read it. Montaigne is another favourite, but I read more or less voraciously and from all quarters and all countries, ancient and contemporaneous.
I: If I asked you to advise me on books I might read, what would you recommend?
AG: Alas – how can I advise you on what to read when I am not sure of what you would care for? Have you read *Walden* by Thoreau? Neither my husband nor JCP really appreciated Thoreau, largely I think because they had not really read him. Have you read much of Hardy? – if not I am sure he would be one you would enjoy – *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, or *Return of the Native*.
I: And what of modern literature?
AG: Of books written today, if you can get it from your library, I think Malcolm X would give you some insight into the plight of the negro today, something which should be brought home to everybody, it is the great issue of our time and it is exciting to have lived in an era when it is almost, as it were, a turning point in history.
I: Turning inevitably to Powys literature, may I ask your views on John Cowper Powys?
AG: My views on JCP? You might as well ask me my views on the universe – they are so many and diverse. I have expressed something of what I felt in an article that appeared some years ago in a magazine now out of print. The usual adjectives do not fit him, he was unique.
I: What do you think was his best book?
AG: Impossible also to say. I go back continually to his *Pleasures of Literature*. His *Autobiography* is, I think, unique – I expect you have read this? each must choose for himself. It is a country you enter. I also like very much his little book on solitude.
I: What about Theodore?
AG: I think TFP appeals to a very special reader. As a matter of fact his country people are often very true to life! I have usually found that each brother has a different following.
I: And what do you think was Llewelyn's best book?
AG: Difficult to say. *Black Laughter* was his most popular. I put *Cradle of God* high. I like the leading essay in *Damnable Opinions* (on Africa) – and in *Swiss Essays* the one entitled 'The Aebi Wood'. I don't know whether you can get *Skin For Skin* from the library. His readers are apt to fall into factions.
I: Turning our attention to the present, what do you enjoy most in life?
AG: Looking out of the window – this seldom palls. I have a view of the Devonshire hills, with the infinite heavens above where nothing is ever the same – clouds forming and re-forming, sometimes dazzling white, sometimes stormy; rooks flying to their rookery; trees changing with the seasons. Perhaps next – music. I have a very good record player. Music has always been my first love. Books, my daily diet without which I would soon give up the ghost! I am now confined entirely to my house except for occasional strolls in the garden. I have

left out companionship because I live a very solitary life now, but companionship from friends, those who share our tastes and excitements, I give almost the highest marks to.

I: Finally, Miss Gregory, what advice about a philosophy in life would you give?

AG: Advice and a philosophy in life! I hardly dare to venture there – but I would say be true to yourself, don't mind appearing a fool, be open to life from all directions – get into other people's minds, which means jumping out of your own altogether. Wonder and curiosity should remain paramount. Speak out when possible against injustice or cruelty. I say when possible for there may be occasions when it will accomplish nothing and only turn people against you. Tolerance, restraint, trying to see the other person's point of view even when you consider him wrong, good humour, consideration for others – meet rudeness with indifference. If things go wrong wipe the slate clean and begin again. Every day dawns afresh. Perhaps I am a poor one to give advice. My husband was a lover of life on all terms, I lean more to the melancholy side. A study of the stars can be a lifelong interest. One of my husband's favourite quotations was 'good hope lies at the bottom' – that can stand one in good stead. I think ardour is the key to all – knowledge for understanding rather than for learning – adventures come to the adventurous. Good luck – the pursuit is everything – the best of all treasures in the world is a good wife!

I: Thank you Miss Gregory. Is there anything you would wish to add?

AG: Yes, as a post-script. I belong to the Euthanasia Society and I think old people who wish to die should be assisted in doing so. It would bring liberation to thousands now being kept alive against their will, often suffering from incurable ailments. I never can understand any arguments against it yet they have been trying to get a bill through Parliament for years.

Neil Lee

Book News

Eurospan University Press Group of 3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU, are distributing a paperback edition of John Cowper Powys's novel *Maiden Castle*. The book, published by Colgate University Press at £17.95 (ISBN 0 912568 18 6) reprints the much shortened Macdonald edition of 1966, not the restored text, edited by Ian Hughes and published by the University of Wales Press in 1990. Eurospan also distribute a paperback edition of *Autobiography* and a hardback edition of *Rodmoor*, although we have not seen copies of these.

The Brynmill Press of Pockthorpe Cottage, Denton, near Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0AS, is soon to publish *Mock's Curse*, a collection of nineteen new stories by T. F. Powys. They also intend to publish a novella, *The Sixpenny Strumpet*, in the

near future. Further details are available from the publisher.

Anglistentag 1993 Eichstätt, Proceedings Volume XV, published in 1994 by Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, included an essay by Professor Elmar Schenkel entitled 'From Powys To Pooh: Some Versions of Taoism in British and American Literature', which was both amusing and illuminating.

Steven Ferdinando of The Old Vicarage, Queen Camel, near Yeovil, Somerset, has recently issued his Powys List Number 21, containing a large number of items by the Powys family and their circle.

In the November 1994 issue of the *Newsletter* we gave details of the English bank account of the Powys Society of North America. Although based on a leaflet issued by the PSNA, the account number was incorrect and this has caused difficulties for some members wishing to pay subscriptions. These should be paid into the account of The Powys Society of North America, National Westminster Bank, 10 Bene't Street, Cambridge, CB2 3PU, account number 59859741.

Paul Roberts

Another writing Powys

On the 12th December, 1867, the good ship Harkaway dropped her anchor in Colombo roads; and I felt heartily glad to find myself back again in the East, after five years of home service. Of course, on first landing, we had no time for sport, but on the 1st January I received an order to take a draft of 35 men down to Galle, to reinforce the company there. There was nothing but snipe to be shot on the road down, but on arrival there, Skinkwin, with whom I was staying, proposed a three days' trip into the Wellaway jungles, as the head man of that place had promised to get up a beat. So we started, a party of four—Skinkwin, Wilson, Taylor and myself; and having sent on the kit, left Galle about four in the afternoon. ... we arrived at the village about 10 p.m. Next day we beat the jungle, but it was no good; the head man had not got half enough beaters, and everything broke back. In the afternoon we shot the paddy-fields for snipe ... . Wilson had been firing awfully wild, and had missed 13 shots one after another; when a lot of natives came along ... right in front of us. I called to them "bhaito", but being Cingalese, they did not understand Hindustani, and walked on. Up got a snipe, at which I blazed, and hit a native as well. Wilson had also fired, so I sang out, "You have done it this time!" He ran up to the man, who was rolling on the ground, and bellowing as if he was killed, and gave him two rupees. Of course, the chap got well at once. Some men came with news of an elephant, which was a rogue, ... but I had to return to Colombo next day, so could not stop and make his acquaintance.

So starts *Heavy Charges and Big Game*, the 56-page account of the hunting exploits of 1868–72 in Ceylon and India of Littleton Albert Powys, the elder brother of C. F. Powys. Littleton Albert was serving in the army in India at the same time as his brother's future brother-in-law, William Cowper Johnson, was travelling in India (see p. 4). I am gathering information on him and hope to have something to put into print soon. Any references to this uncle of the eleven Montacute brothers and sisters would be welcome. **Stephen Powys Marks**