Editorial

In 1987 I delivered a short talk to the Society during its annual conference which I called 'Tracking Down J.C.P.'. I ended the talk with a plea for some sort of permanent Powys collection in Britain which would function as both an academic resource and a centre for public education about the Powys family. It had always seemed something worth saying, but even as I said them the words sounded hollow to my ears. How, after all, could such a thing ever be achieved? Little did I think then that within ten years the foundation of just such a collection would be established through the generosity of Mr Bissell and Mr Feather and through the work of the officers of the Society.

Even had I been able to envisage a collection, I could certainly not have dreamt that anything as marvellous as the Literary Gallery at the Dorset County Museum, in which the Powys family will play so prominent a part, could ever come about.

Well now it has. Or, at least, it almost has. The effort which Richard de Peyer and his staff have put into the Literary Gallery is tremendous and they have amazed everyone by their success in finding funding. But we too must do our part, and I would urge every member of the Society to contribute as much as they can possibly afford to the fund which the Society has established, details of which can be found elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.

I would also like to remind members that we are still looking for volunteers to form local groups and for any stray references to the Powys family which you may have come across. Details of both of these projects appeared in *Newsletter* No. 26.

The result of the ballot on the changes to the Society's constitution was

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ON OTHER PAGES

overwhelmingly in favour, though unfortunately on a very small vote. Your Committee had hoped to bring in the changes for this year's elections, but we had to have further discussions in order to work out practical and workable procedures which we felt were satisfactory to implement the changes. So the new arrangements will be in operation for the first time for elections in 1997.

Our best wishes go to Janina Nordius, who presents her doctoral dissertation on John Cowper Powys at Stockholm University on May 15th.

Finally, we would like to congratulate Isobel Powys Marks on reaching her ninetieth birthday on March 25th this year. Intrepid as ever, she celebrated her achievement by taking a one-hour balloon trip on a beautiful evening to see Bath and the surrounding countryside from a great height.

Paul Roberts

A Literary Gallery in Dorchester

During the last three years the Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society which administers the County Museum has given much thought to how access to and appreciation of the Museum's literary collections might be best assured. The Society has now commenced an ambitious project which I hope will be welcomed by all who read this letter.

The Society proposes to bring together the major literary collections in its care, including the Hardy collection, the fine collection of manuscript poems and other writings by William Barnes, the extensive archive of letters and manuscripts from Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland and our recent deposits of manuscripts, books and memorabilia from The Powys Society into a single new gallery which will embrace all of the Dorset writers for which we have collections and set them in a series of linked displays which I hope will prove far more than the sum of its several parts. The displays will attempt to tell the story of writing in Dorset from the eighth century until the present day and to examine the different functions and techniques of writing during that long period. Planning has already reached the stage of detailed gallery design, the storyline and the selection of many objects for display and, through the generosity of a number of major grant funds, we have been able to complete the first £300,000 worth of expenditure in converting a prime area of gallery space on the first floor of the Museum.

The second stage of our endeavour will be to fit this gallery space with a permanent exhibition completed to a high standard of design. The theme will progress from the limited aspirations but quite beautiful and original realisation of Dorset's medieval writers, culminating in the genius of Walter Raleigh, Lord

of Sherborne Castle, and will lead thence to eighteenth-century writers, topographers and naturalists intent on the codification of Dorset for its better understanding and report. Here William Barnes finds an august beginning as antiquarian and universal man, recreating the Anglo-Saxon and Dorset dialect of the nineteenth century. These displays are a re-awakening of Dorset's roots bringing alive its traditions and its people, dissecting its past and its topography in a way which is new and fresh and characteristic of the Enlightenment. The galleries focus out from a central core which examines early traditions of popular culture: the ritual and the robust Mummers Plays, the dances and processions of Dorset's Ooser, the rough music of the processing Skimmington, the punishment of the cuckold and the cuckolder. So here at the beginning of the gallery the subliminal birth of the dramatic tradition finds its place against a background of landscape and history seen by the medieval church, rediscovered by the eighteenth century and ultimately described in its most innate and vivid forms by Hardy in the nineteenth century.

Such a description may seem portentous for an exhibition gallery but in our preparations for display we felt it worthwhile to find a logic which will take us one step further than simple admiration of linguistic genius; to find a rationale and an explanation for a mind-set which is familiar but different from our own. The important final section of the gallery describes the work of Sylvia Townsend Warner and of the Powys Brothers and has associations which are more personal to us. They relate to movements and issues which still exist and whose advocates and followers can remind us still of the work of these later writers. The landscapes of John Cowper Powys's novels *Maiden Castle* and *Weymouth Sands* dominate the room leading towards doors into the Museum's established gallery on the archaeology of Maiden Castle. Elizabeth Muntz's fine bust of Theodore Powys and the plaster model for her reclining mother figure 'Erda' will help the visitor recognise the powerful complementary magic existing between members of the Chaldon circle.

The gallery will display some of the wealth of rare books and other material in the Feather and Bissell collections (such as the bound manuscript of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, the first letter Theodore Powys ever wrote to Sylvia Townsend Warner, family personalia, paintings and photographs). This will be of interest to admirers of the Powys family, to book collectors – and also to those visitors who have perhaps previously known little about these underrated writers.

The new gallery as a whole intends to use spoken poetry, multi-media presentations and film carefully, reticently but vividly, to tell the story in a way that all will understand and appreciate.

The collections are rich and certainly the DNH&AS has been substantially helped with grants from public sources already. Although most of the task is funded a gap remains and your help is needed to close it.

As the gallery is finished the Museum's own plans continue and a second stage

of our improvements will involve the substantial enhancement of our library and the extension of facilities for study notably into the fine private libraries and collections of papers amassed by Mr Feather and Mr Bissell and deposited with the Museum on long loan from The Powys Society. Already the County Library with whom we have only the most tenuous formal connections is considering their own deposit of Powys and other Dorset writers books to further enhance the facilities available and consolidate our position as the premier literary centre in the West Country. The Powys collection so far, although securely housed by the Museum and in good order due to the industry of your Chairman and voluntary assistants here at the Museum, will benefit in due course from accommodation in secure but browseable shelves with the important manuscript material housed in purpose-designed archive accommodation. Although this second stage will take some years to complete the initial improvement of library shelving and reading accommodation will be of prompt value to Powys scholars and, funds permitting, should be completed during 1997. Members of The Powys Society visiting in the future will find a most carefully and attractively specified library planned adjacent to the writers' gallery described above. I hope very much that you will feel able to give generously and please remember that for every £1 you can find we can find £6 more from grant sources which will multiply the effect of your generosity.

Richard de Peyer, Curator, Dorset County Museum

The Literary Gallery and The Powys Society

John Cowper Powys considered his writings – novels and all – as 'propaganda' for his 'philosophy of life'. Perhaps that could be said of all writers. But it was particularly true not only of John Cowper, but of his brothers Llewelyn and Theodore, and his sister, Katie – although each had a distinct and different life-illusion.

The Powyses will never become fashionable, as another Dorset writer – Thomas Hardy – has become popular. Hardy too, was a propagandist for his vision of life, but a much more efficient and effective one. It is a conundrum that the Powyses *believed* in their life-illusions and wanted their readers to believe in them but that the life-illusions are peculiarly private ones and not easily accessible to the ordinary reader. The Powyses as writers have been missed – and people do not know what they are missing.

The Powys Society has as its primary function the public recognition of these extraordinary authors. It has done much; now we have an opportunity to do much more. As the letter above from Richard de Peyer, Curator of the Dorset

County Museum, indicates, the Museum is creating a Gallery of Dorset Writers. A literary gallery is sufficiently unusual, but this one gives every indication of being magnificent. Our Society has worked closely with the Museum to ensure that the Powyses will be well represented in this new gallery. The design plans are to use manuscripts, rare books, memorabilia and information drawn from our own splendid Feather–Bissell collections and should ensure that the thousands who will walk through this gallery in the next years will not miss the Powyses.

The Curator has worked tremendously hard to find money for this enormous project but more is needed to complete it. Other Societies have made generous contributions through their membership. Our Society cannot respond on the same scale but the Committee has now set up a fund and asks our members to contribute whatever they can. Please send a cheque payable to The Powys Society and address it to Stephen Powys Marks, Treasurer, Hamilton's, Kilmersdon, near Bath, Somerset, BA3 5TE; these payments will be earmarked for the Gallery.

Morine Krissdóttir, Chairman

Llewelyn's Stone

A report from the Committee

When the Committee of the Society met recently 'The issue of Llewelyn's Stone' was an item on their agenda. Introducing it the Chairman commented that the position of the stone had long been a topic of informal discussion among members and had now been raised by Neil Lee in the *Newsletter* (No. 26, p.21).

There was a lengthy discussion which ranged over many aspects of the situation but was eventually dominated by the fundamental question of whether it would, in any case, be proper for the Society to take action in the matter. The Committee was unanimous in reaching the following conclusion: 'The object of the Society (as laid down under its charitable status) is to promote public education and the public recognition of the writings, thought and contribution to the arts of the Powys family, particularly of John Cowper, Theodore and Llewelyn, and also including the other members of the family and their close associates. The question of Llewelyn Powys's burial place falls outside this remit and is entirely a matter for the surviving members of his family.' A rider was added: The Committee considers that it would not be appropriate for any member of the Society, as a member of the Society, to take any action in this context unless it had been initiated by the family.

John Batten, Hon. Secretary

The Powys Conference

Uppingham School, Uppingham, Rutland
August 23rd – August 25th, 1996

There will be some stimulating changes this year: the Conference will be shorter (and therefore cheaper) in the hope of attracting more members to it and the location is a new one.

The conference will be held at Uppingham, which – for the information of those of us who seldom venture further north than Oxford or further south than Manchester – is about 20 miles from Leicester. Uppingham is an ancient small market town in Rutland – 'a gem of its kind'. It has had a market and a church since the thirteenth century, and Uppingham School, where the Conference is being held, has been an integral part of the town for 400 years. Close by are Rockingham Castle, Burley House and Rutland Water.

The Conference will begin as usual with a small reception and the first lecture on the evening of Friday August 23rd, and end after lunch on Sunday August 25th. Although shorter, we have a very full list of speakers and diverse topics.

John Hodgson	*Chance Groupings: an Anatomy of Ecstasy*
Peter Judd	*Letters from Philippa (Katie) Powys to an American Friend, 1938–1954.*
Tim Hyman	*The Quest for a Pictorial Equivalent*
Paul Roberts	*In Search of Arnold Shaw*
Harold Fawkner	*The Manifestation of Affectivity in the Works of J.C.P.*
Peter Burman	*A. R. Powys: Architect and Conservation Statesman*
Henning Ahrens	*"A New World, Risen, Stubborn With Beauty, Out of the Heart's Need": Taliessin's Song*

Although the Conference officially ends after lunch on the Sunday, if enough interest is shown we may be able to arrange an optional tour of Uppingham or a visit to the vicarage at Shirley.

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 June 12th, to John Batten, Secretary.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are due on January 1st each year as follows: UK members £13.50, overseas members £16, and student members £6. About half the members pay by standing order; of the rest, quite a number have still not sent their cheques. Please check **your** payment **now** and let the Treasurer have any unpaid subscriptions as soon as possible.

Reviews

Les Plaisiers De La Littérature, translated by Gérard Joulié.
Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1995.
Laminated paperback, 448pp. FF180. ISBN 2 8251 0 578 3.

This is the third John Cowper Powys book published in French-speaking Switzerland.

Physically, it appears as a 15.5 x 22.5 cm Spartan book, with a black and white laminated cover showing an early profile photograph of the author in a yellow frame, under a yellow title.

The translation, by Gérard Joulié, is dedicated 'To my friends of the late *Revizor*, V.D., J.L.K. and J.S.'

Taking no more liberties with the original text than are necessary for its clear comprehension and readability, Mr Joulié's translation is fluent – often elegant – in French and accurate in sense. What more can one ask from translations? Bearing in mind the author's dislike for such appendages, his translator's footnotes are few and sober, usefully guiding the average reader through the undergrowth of Powysian hints. Reading *The Pleasures* with the original beside the translation, I could not but admire how, in some passages, he dealt with the most typical of Powys-translating difficulties: these long-winded sentences, often pure music, so alien to French logic.

Once only, in his unobtrusive notes does Mr Joulié allow himself a personal comment. In the chapter on Greek Tragedy, at the moment when JCP mentions Walter Pater's *Greek Studies* and Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy out of Music*, he remarks that JCP does not seem to have known 'the admirable book by Paul de Saint-Victor, dedicated to Greek tragedy which enchanted the adolescent years of Paul Claudel'. Unaware of it myself to date, I look forward to reading it as soon as possible, but I wonder how it is that neither JCP nor Mr Joulié seem to have remembered Victor Hugo's startling and visionary lines on Aeschylus (in his *William Shakespeare*). As blood calls for blood, books call for books ...

'Reading Powys', says Mr Joulié in his two-page Preface, 'is like inhaling the very smell of the sea, a strong air laden with salt and the salubriousness of the wide wind. That is due to Powys's huge spaces, to this notion of limitless expanses, to the impression of sailing, of surge, spindrift and scenic railway which the least of his sentences communicates, and to the magic lyricism with which, like Walt Whitman, he transfigures everything, including the ghastly.'

Just for the sake of quibbling over details, let us ask why, at the end of the same Greek Tragedy chapter, the verse 'With hollow shriek the steep of Delpho's leaving' has been replaced by a line of dots. And how proud I am to call Mr Joulié's attention to a small historical mistake he has made. In his concern for clarity and a good balance of speech, he translates 'this grave and happily-married young man' as 'this man much younger than he, of similar intellectual

quality, and apparently happily-married' (Montaigne, p.227), while La Boëtie was three years older than Montaigne. This, not uncommon, mistaken belief comes, I am sure, from the fact that La Boëtie died young (33) and Montaigne lived long enough (59) to be remembered as a grey-haired, disease-afflicted man. Also, from the fact that La Boëtie was no more than eighteen when he wrote his subversive masterpiece *Contr'Un. Discours de la servitude volontaire*, which only Marat managed to equal, and that Montaigne was well advanced in years when he dared to publish it with a profusion of legitimate qualifications. This and a few others are minor flaws which should be easily corrected when and if this book is reprinted – a likely prospect in view of its quality.

The 'few others' I refer to are mainly technical. Now that the orthographical aristocracy of typographers has been swept away by the computer-age analphabetical flood, practically no book is exempt from misprints (in French, we call them 'shells'). This one is no exception, but anyone who has ventured into the publishing jungle knows what an ordeal it is to strive for a faultless book and would deem it unfair to blame the translator or the publisher, rather than the decline of the West. That is how the *Essays of Elia* have become *Essays* by Elia (Montaigne, p.222), the 'courteous Mantuan soul', 'that courteous soul of Mantovan' (Dante, p.196), and Sinon the Greek, some chap named Simon (*id.* p.191). Strictly speaking, a reprint would be very much improved by the addition of page headings and an index. Tracing up passages or reading at random in a book like this, with its twenty-two chapters on different subjects, may be very tiresome and an index seems almost indispensable, with so many names and places and titles involved. The fact is that, save for academic publications, French books almost never care to offer indexes. I do not know why. It is much to be lamented.

My personal ideal of a Spartan book is the Village Press John Cowper Powyses of the seventies, and my favourite among those remains *The Pleasures of Literature*. If dear Jeff Kwintner managed to provide index and headings (and head letters!) in a 670 page, 12 x 18 cm, £2.95 book, I am certain Mr Dimitrievicz can manage too, if politely asked.

L'Art Du Bonheur, translated by Marie-Odile Masek.
Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1995.
Paperback, 176 pages. FF100. ISBN 2 8251 0 579 1.

Before *The Pleasures*, L'Age d'Homme had published two other works by John Cowper Powys : *The Meaning of Culture* (*Le sens de la culture*) and *The Art of Happiness*, both translated by Ms Marie-Odile Masek. *L'Art du bonheur* is a 1995 reprint of the 1984 original issue. It is a pale blue linen-finished paperback, with black title and Voltaire-like seated silhouette of the author, in a white rectangle. The inside cover flaps advertise two other authors in the same collection (the 'Anglo-Saxon Domain', directed by Gérard Joulié). One is Umberto Saba,

introduced by Elsa Morante, and the other is ... G.K. Chesterton, with no less than thirteen titles. I am not quite sure that JCP would have relished the latter's proximity but since he never dared to have his one and only undithyrambic analysis published, it would be unfair to blame the editor's choice.

I have not noticed any significant difference, in Ms Masek's work, as compared to the 1984 issue which was reviewed in its time. Let us praise L'Age d'Homme for their reprinting policy.

Someone told me on the telephone that another book by John Cowper Powys was in preparation for this year, but could not give me the title. Great expectations, then.

Catherine Lieutenant

François-Xavier Jaujard

F.-X. Jaujard died in Paris on 5th March, 1996, at the age of 49. Our loss is great for, in France, he was John Cowper Powys's most dedicated publisher and a very subtle translator of his work. At fifteen he had read Proust and at twenty he translated the poetry of Synge. Apart from making the French familiar with the works of Edith Wharton, Henry James, Thomas Hardy, Kathleen Raine, David Gascoyne and others, he published in 1973 a magnificent volume on J. C. Powys, which encompasses the different facets of his work and is still a model today. That same year he and Diane de Margerie translated *Ducdame* (*Givre et Sang*) and he published *Confessions de Deux Frères* in 1992.

Jacqueline Peltier

Mary Barham Johnson

We regret that we have to announce the death also of Mary Barham Johnson. She celebrated her hundredth birthday last year at the end of August, just after the Society's Annual Conference. We shall obtain an obituary for the next *Newsletter*. In the meantime, we should remember that she was an avid family historian whose extensive researches have already benefited the Society and will continue to do so, to a large extent from the perspective of the family of Mary Cowper Johnson, the wife of the Revd Charles Francis Powys.

Hermit of 'The House in the Pasture.'

[*The following essay was first published in the popular magazine* John O' London's Weekly *shortly after the death of T. F. Powys in 1953.*]

It was August, 1914, and we were bathing at Ringstead Bay in Dorset. In those days the coast was being watched for spies and, seeing us, an officer and two soldiers came running down to the beach. They shouted and the officer waved his revolver. My father was pulled from the water at the bayonet's point and marched to the guardroom, stark naked as he was, with water dripping from his beard. (All men with beards were spies!) One soldier carried his clothes, the other walked behind pointing a bayonet.

'What a fine game!' we children thought and laughed and played on the beach until he presently returned. On the way home we imitated the soldiers and that seemed to annoy him mightily; we could not understand why.

Though I would have it otherwise, that remains my first memory of T. F. Powys. It would be more proper to think of him writing at his desk or pacing the garden paths deep in thought; but no, that ridiculous memory persists.

As a background to most of my early childhood stand the tall chalk cliffs of Dorset with the blue Channel at their feet. I call to mind even now in my nightmares those steep cliffside paths up which my father would carry me, where later we would drag up the sacks of driftwood. Here peregrine falcons and ravens swept over our heads; gulls would shriek and dive as we climbed for their eggs.

Once, as we sat above the archway known as the Durdle Door, a shoal of whitebait leapt on to the beach pursued by mackerel that jumped and flashed in the sun.

'Robinson Crusoe would bring those fish out of the water in no time,' said my father, and soon he was on the beach, bowing to an astonished lady, asking if she could lend him a hairpin or two. She gave them to him quickly and with a look of extreme terror. (A lunatic had lately escaped from the County Asylum.)

He bent the pins into hooks and fastened them to our bootlaces, impaling a whitebait on each. Soon he was hauling out mackerel after mackerel, we children following his example. Even the lady joined in.

Theodore, who had a magic way with children, was born in 1876 at Shirley in Derbyshire where his father, the Rev. C.F. Powys, was rector. Later the family moved to Dorchester in Dorset, where Theodore attended the Grammar School, occupying the very seat that Thomas Hardy, the great Wessex novelist, who afterwards became his friend, had used many years before. Hardy had carved his name on the desk and Theodore was caught carefully cutting his own beneath it.

Schooldays over, he turned to farming but found that the world of business was not for him; for here was a man so honest that he always came off worst in a bargain. Market day was his purgatory; his bank manager the high priest of the

devil. Soon he decided to retire from the world and find some quiet village where he could live in peace and become a writer.

He went back to Dorset, settling at East Chaldon, where a cottage was for sale, and here in this tiny village a mile from the sea behind the great cliff of White Nose he found his journey's end. Here he married a girl with jet-black hair whom he saw every day crossing the green in front of his cottage; here his two children were born.

In this village he lived for thirty-six years, first in the thatched cottage and later in the red brick house surrounded by its half-acre garden, where all his writing was done. The name of the house was 'Beth Car' – 'The house in the pasture' – and its architect none other than Thomas Hardy.

My father's favourite recreation was walking on the bare downs in wind or sun or rain. Especially he loved the sun and hated to turn his back to it. Alone or on his walks with one of his brothers, either in Dorset or in the beautiful Somerset village of Montacute to which his father had moved from Dorchester, he found the characters and the places that later became the people and the world of his books, and during those walks the ideas for many of his stories came to him.

For many years he worked without any sort of recognition, filling his cupboards with manuscripts, until, when finally he was discovered, his books were published in quick succession. He had no need to write them then. They were all ready, wanting only the opening of a drawer or cupboard to produce a ready-made novel or a heap of short stories.

Always he wrote slowly, no more than a page a day, copying and re-copying in longhand. Many of his novels, including the best-known, *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, began as short stories and many of the episodes like that in the hauntingly beautiful *House with the Echo* happened to himself.

His characters are all real people, unless they be God or the Devil. His sly humour is the humour of the simple people who live in the age-old hills; humour that does not date or fade.

All his life he had wished to escape from the bustle and noise of everyday existence and at first escape was easy, but later the crowds sought him out. People came and went, some merely curious, others who were to become his friends.

Soon the little village a mile from the sea, behind the tall chalk cliffs, became a colony of artists and writers. Here Stephen Tomlin worked and here Betty Muntz the Canadian sculptress set up her studio. At East Chaldon, David Garnett wrote much of his novel, *The Sailor's Return*, taking the name from the inn at which he was staying, and there Liam O'Flaherty did some of his early writing.

Many stories are told of Theodore's mildly eccentric behaviour and some of them are certainly true.

He was a shy man, terrified of any stranger and would walk miles out of his way to avoid meeting another lonely figure crossing the bare downs.

Many a visitor at his house must have just missed him as he hurriedly escaped

from them with a great clatter, knocking over a small table or a vase in his flight, his grey woollen shawl pulled over his head; or having seen his white hair through the window, would have wondered how he had disappeared. (He had climbed out through another window.)

Theodore was famous for his ignorance of current affairs and of well-known personalities of the time.

When Lawrence of Arabia and a friend first came to see him Theodore behaved with the utmost courtesy; but as soon as they had gone he turned to his wife, rubbing his hands together in great glee.

'I managed that nicely' he said, 'they were too late.'

'Too late?' she queried.

'Weren't they the tax inspectors?' said Theodore. He had been having trouble with the authorities over the tax on Armorial Bearings and the Crests had been removed from all the family silver just before this visit. Not long afterwards the Government removed the tax itself.

His brother Llewelyn once saw him walking alone on the downs. It was May time and the gorse was in full bloom. Llewelyn hid himself behind a veritable burning bush and as Theodore passed Llewelyn's voice – a still small voice it seemed – spoke in his ear: 'Theodore ... Theodore ...' 'Yes, God?' Theodore replied, looking up startled from his meditations.

When a famous artist called to see him, Theodore treated him with extreme politeness under the impression that he was the new village policeman. 'But would the policeman wear a beard?' someone asked. 'Disguise,' whispered Theodore mysteriously.

In 1940 bombs fell on East Chaldon and Theodore, then seriously ill after a stroke, was moved to Mappowder in North Dorset. There he lived in a house that was once the village school. But his writing days were over. 'I am out of business,' he said, 'retired. I have no book to sell; nothing for anyone. I am extremely content writing nothing.'

Deeply religious in his unorthodox way, Theodore did not go to church on Sunday. He went on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, ringing the church bell and sitting in his pew for Compline. An old man, he had found what he sought so long, in men's hearts, on the bare hills or by the sea waves. He was at peace with life and also with death.

'If,' he said but lately to a friend, as they were returning from a walk, 'I am not at home when next you visit us, look for me in there,' and he pointed to the churchyard with his stick.

Francis Powys

An Apology to T. F Powys

I am grateful to Francis Feather, for – by gently protesting at my apparently unjust criticism of T. F. Powys's 'early novels', which he obviously took to mean published ones, and which, in fact, I dearly love and admire – he brought home to me the dreadful error-by-omission which I have committed in my article 'Publishing T. F. Powys' in the July *Newsletter*. When making those critical comments I was thinking specifically of the still earlier **unpublished** novels – *The Bondage of Fear*, *Like Will to Like*, *Amos Lear*, *Georgina a Lady*, etc. – and should have said so, keeping in mind that not all readers will be aware of the existence of these works and therefore of their early place in the complete *oeuvre*.

Line 1 of paragraph 4 on page 15 should read, 'Through time I obtained photocopies of the manuscripts of the **unpublished** early novels,' and the end of line 7 of the same paragraph should read, 'Yet among his early **unpublished** works ...'

Elaine Mencher

Buying Waterloo?

Shortly before leaving the 1990 Powys conference at Cirencester I overheard two members talking about the fact that JCP's last home, 1 Waterloo in Blaenau Ffestiniog (formerly in the county of Merioneth or Merionethshire – Meirionnydd in Welsh – and now in the new county and old kingdom of Gwynedd in Wales), was on the market.

I had been to Blaenau Ffestiniog once (BF as I shall call it henceforward), on the trip which many members made from the Powys conference in Bangor some years earlier, and had incorporated it in my mental map, in my personal mythology to use a more Powysian term, not only because of JCP's time there in the cottage which of course we all saw from the outside whilst we were there and because of BF's sheer physical presence, the town perched among the slate workings and surrounded by even higher mountains than those on which it stands, but also because it was the terminus of the Ffestiniog Railway in which I had conceived the beginnings of an interest in 1959 whilst at a Scout camp near Minffordd towards the other end of the line, though then the railway had been recovered only as far as Tan-y-Bwlch, and BF was the mythical destination of aspiration, distant then in space and time. BF was thus a doubly (or trebly) special place to me.

I was due to stay for a short time with my father, then living in a village outside Marlborough (itself not so far from Cirencester), before returning to London,

and after my arrival there the plan began to germinate in my mind that he and I might drive to BF and investigate the feasibility of my acquiring the cottage. (I do not drive, so his involvement would be critical, at least for an immediate response, which is what I envisaged: I was not in the mood for delay.) I planned a route during the night and put the idea to my father the next morning. Fortunately, he was quite enthusiastic: it was after all a change for him, then living in quiet retirement in his late seventies; in fact, the journey was quite hair-raising in places, especially in the Welsh mountains: I had not realised the extent to which he was entering the degeneration of his faculties and abilities which would lead eventually to his death some four years later.

We arrived in BF in the early evening and looked around the town, seeing only the exterior of 1 Waterloo as it was too late to seek access. The most noticeable thing perhaps was the fact that the adjoining 2 Waterloo had clearly been much worked on and expanded, leaving 1 Waterloo looking small and somewhat forlorn and abandoned beside it.

After a night in the hotel we went to the estate agents and got, together with the key, details of 1 Waterloo thus:

[*Madeley Evans' letterhead and other details not reproduced*]

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1 WATERLOO COTTAGES

Directions From our office in Blaenau Ffestiniog turn left along Church Street and continue into the High Street. Just before entering Manod turn left immediately after passing the Don Restaurant and the property will be found on your left hand side just before the small bridge.

Situation Waterloo Cottages are located alongside a small brook in the popular residential area of Manod. There are local shops within easy walking distance and the comprehensive vacilities [*sic*] of the town centre are a few minutes drive away. The area is surrounded by the Snowdonia National Park which offers a superb range of leisure pursuits.

Description The property comprises a two storeyed semi detached house constructed of stone under a slated roof. It is in need of some modernisation and improvement and is realistically priced to take this into account.

The cottage has historical associations with John Cowper Powys the author and poet who lived in it for the last few years of his life. A slate plaque to this effect is mounted on the front elevation.

Accommodation The accommodation with approximate room dimensions is as follows:-

Living Room 14′9″ x 12′1″ with exposed beamed ceiling and stairs to first floor

Kitchen 8′9″ x 7′3″ with stainless steel sink unit having two cupboards under fitted shelving and door to rear yard

FIRST FLOOR

Landing with airing cupboard housing lagged hot water cylinder

Bedroom 12′10″ x 8′7″ with open fireplace and night storage heater

Bathroom with suite and panelled bath pedestal hand basin and WC

OUTSIDE small rear yard

Services Mains water electricity and drainage

Tenure Freehold with vacant possession on completion

Community Charge £222.25

Viewing Strictly by appointment through the agents

The cottage was bare except for some odds and ends left around. I remember a small shelf across one of the left-hand corners of the living room (1 Waterloo being to the left of 2 Waterloo as viewed from the front) and some post left on the doormat. The impression was (perhaps I was told it by someone) that a group of transient young people had lived there for a while, as if in a legal squat. The kitchen at the back was really depressing: very small, with a messy-looking metal sink and elderly cupboards. You could imagine the misery of working there with chapped hands in the cold water. Outside was a tiny yard with some odd arrangement of walls separating the space into two areas, as I recall. Perhaps these were intended for coal and wood or something of the sort – unfortunately I do not remember the exact details of the formation, only that it seemed odd and awkward. The space was small because it was cut out of the mountain at the bottom of which the cottage sits and which begins rising noticeably even within the short distance between the front and back of the building. Upstairs the

smallish bathroom was not too squalid, though the fittings had clearly seen better days. I think there was some sort of crack in the lavatory bowl, though there was no sign of flooding or anything of that sort. I recall that the fittings were pink. This room and the landing with its prominent fitted boiler took up almost as much space, I think, as the front-facing bedroom from the window of which JCP must often have looked out and below which he is shown reclining in many photographs.

In this room, which might be thought of as the spiritual heart of the cottage for a Powysian, as in the rest of the cottage, I have to report that I had no feeling of a presence. It may be that it was because I was with my father, who would have had no sympathy with such an idea nor with the sensibilities of JCP himself, but I do not think so. In any case, although I was then in the unusual position of being able to contemplate such a move, the absence of any numinous presence together with the cramped and generally run-down feel of the place soon led me to abandon any thought of trying to live there, despite the obvious apparent attraction of living where JCP had lived. In fact, I had a look with my father at other properties in the area and found one I liked at Tan-y-Grisiau just as time was running out. Various complications ensued and, in the end, I took another turning in my life and never went to live in the area after all, though I hope I may perhaps do so some day.

I understand that the cottage has since been bought, and has no doubt been renovated to modern standards (and perhaps even enlarged, if that is possible), so that it will resemble even less what it was when JCP and Phyllis Playter lived there. I trust that the new owner has at least left the plaque intact. As far as I know, there is no obligation to do so.

Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

The kitchen garden at Montacute Vicarage, with the dark doorway of the Mabelulu at the back on the left. The 'noble three' (see back cover and page 20) are depicted in the left half of the picture, with Herbert Rogers the gardener by his barrow. Sketch by Gertrude M. Powys in 'The Caddisworm' in the 1890s.

Our So Happy Childhood

[*The photocopied typescript of this previously unpublished memoir by Marian Powys is among the Powys papers in the collection of Stephen Powys Marks. It is undated (although it appears to have been written in the early 1940s) and untitled and has been typed on airmail paper which appears to have slipped towards the end of the final page, making it difficult to unravel the words. However, we believe that the version given here is correct.*]

The first thing I remember of Llewelyn was when I was three and we were moving from Dorchester to Montacute. We had been staying with our grandmother at Brunswick Terrace at Weymouth and were driving along by the esplanade to go to the station. I was on the right of our Mother and Lulu in her arms. But Lulu was crying; I remember looking round at him and thinking how can he cry now, just when everything is so exciting, but poor baby he was no doubt bothered in his inside as so often later in his life.

Then in two cribs, one each side of Emily our Nurse at the night nursery at Montacute and being bathed in the long-shaped tin bath in the evening which was at the end of the bed. How the nurses used to laugh at Lulu for only washing his knees. I remember them showing me his little white knees so soft and clean. Then we used to go along in a funny old perambulator that creaked sitting side by side. At Dorchester it was in that conveyance that Barnes the Dorset poet must have met us when he patted our heads; our nurse used to tell us it was my head but Lulu in one of his writings says it was his, so it was probably both our curly heads, brown and gold. Llewelyn did always have the most shining golden hair of anyone I ever knew. It was not soft but stiff like golden threads used in church embroidery.

Then we would play together in the nursery when Bertie first went down to do lessons with the governess in the schoolroom, but he would get away and come up to us as soon as he could. We would make a boat of two of the wooden chairs, sitting one each end with the legs of the chairs upwards and somehow joined inextricably together. Then we would rock this way and that and it was really like being at sea.

There was a favorite game called 'Johnny coming home from school', for which we turned the whole table on its side in order in some way to make the scene more real. This game seems now to have great significance as our brother John's coming into our lives was the most important thing that ever happened to us as he was afterwards to influence both our lives so very deeply. Llewelyn's philosophy was always, I believe, founded on John's and so certainly is mine. It was John who helped first one of us and then the other to freedom economically and spiritually. And it was John who saw so early and brought out Llewelyn's love of poetry.

I remember when it got to be our turn to go down to the schoolroom there was

always a great reciting of poetry and Lulu's favourite was one out of the Golden Treasury

'Up the airy mountain,
Down the rocky glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men.
Wee folk, good folk ...'

[from 'The Fairies' by William Allingham]

He would stand up in his sailor suit and with his curly yellow head looked like an elf himself.

Then out of doors, walking with the governess, Miss Beals, who helped us all so much, we would have our hoops for horses and I would be Amyas Leigh and all for Queen Elizabeth and Llewelyn would be the Irish Sir Ludar and strong for Queen Mary of Scots. When Bertie was home I would read aloud to them both, even when I was quite a little girl, books and books and books, anytime we were not playing in the garden or doing lessons. In the evening our Mother was always reading aloud to different relays of children, and last of all to our Father. We came after the 'little ones' had gone to bed.

At Christmas we would give presents together. Later when they came home from school Bertie and Lulu and I would go down to the End Room and plan them all, making a list, a long list it was of all the Powys family. 'Something really good' we used always to say for each one. Our highest flight was rightly for our sister Gertrude to whom we gave a whole set of Dickens. I still feel proud when I remember the look of all those books, from the Mabelulu to Gertrude. We did tease Llewelyn when he put a present on the Christmas tree 'For Lulu from Lulu'.

At Christmas there would often be the 'Valentia tea,' the feast of the Valentian Army, invented by Jack. We used all to dress up in costume and every one had to make a speech and sing a song, in the schoolroom which was far away from the rest of the house on the further side of the kitchen and the stonepaved scullery, so that no one was bothered by the noise and we could do whatever we liked. All through our childhood we had the greatest possible freedom and very little interference from our Father and Mother.

I have the elaborate program painted and written by Llewelyn of what may have been the last of the Valentian Teas. It is dated DECEMBER 29 1909 and has a Huntsman with a red coat and three hounds all in color at the top and the names of those present all painted below in large lettering and at the back a Latin drinking song 'Nunc potemus, Nunc libamus' etc. 20 lines in all.

How we would wait, Lulu and me, and long for the day of Bertie coming home from school. At last he would be with us again and we would all three go down to the Mabelulu.

The Mabelulu was made out of an old 'lean-to' shed built by Theodore against the Ham Hill stone wall made for the protection of the kitchen garden on which

the Espalier fruit was trained. The wall was about 8 feet to 10 high and 2½ feet wide so that we could easily walk upon it and the sand stone was soft so that we could carve the head of our ancestor upon it inside our castle. The Mabelulu was on the east side of the wall and the land which was our garden lay between the wall and the Terrace Walk which was sheltered by a thick hedge of bushes with a high holly tree. On the north side was a railing dividing our land from the field in which was Quarantine Apple, a tiny bright red and yellow apple with shiny surface and pungent flavor, and further back the well-beloved Walnut tree on which we would always climb. On the south side of the Mabelulu was the Pear Garden with a large pear tree and a very good July Apple tree. Then came the path and the Laurel hedge between us and the tennis court.

In my American garden I have also a July Apple tree that Llewelyn and I carried up the steep hill in 1922 when I moved into our present house under the Pinetree. Lulu planted this tree on the River side of the house and it later changed from a dwarf to a full-sized apple tree. The fruit has not such a good taste as the Montacute one and the apples are imperfect so that the big Blue Jays and the grey squirrels eat them all up however much I may clap my hands to frighten them away.

When we first took possession of the Mabelulu there were two or three deep holes in the garden, dug down to the clay by Theodore till he got to water. There was also a CLUB of Theodore's, a terrifying club made of nails hammered into a heavy stick perhaps 12 inches around at the head. This made us think of Giant Grumble about whom our Father used to tell us stories when he visited us in the nursery at tea-time when we were smaller children. He would stand very tall and broad and make up ever such tales about Giant Grumble as we ate our bread and butter and Lulu put his bread into his tea calling it SOP. He always did love sop.

We soon filled up those grave-like holes in the Mabelulu garden and made a fire place of stones in the open in front of our doorway and we planned our garden and every year we would move our boundary and encroach a little on the Pear Garden. Then we went to the carpenter Mr Drayton and bought 'deal', a soft Pine wood, and gradually rebuilt the house, putting new tar paper on the roof. Later we made a kitchen on the south side, hardly high enough to stand up in but good for putting frying pans and garden tools away. Then one holidays we made the Bow Window with a 'cosy corner' on the east side. I made curtains of red cotton material with a little white dot which we bought at Miss Sparks shop in Bishopton on the way to the Church and we made padded cushions so that it was very luxurious, though it did have a funny damp smell. Bertie was learning carpentering at Sherborne and one holidays he brought home the most marvellous table of white wood about thirty inches square and thirty eight high with a useful shelf underneath. Later he brought home the inlaid chess table with Tulip wood from America and many other pretty coloured woods set in, about which Llewelyn has written so movingly. That was too grand for the Mabelulu and was

put in the Drawing room up in the house. He also made a large square work box for me which I have beside me now.

Our Mother who never cared much for things that other people valued gave us a Petit Point picture of an old man with a peaked cap sitting smoking his pipe. On the back in faded writing are the words 'My grandmother worked this when she was [*gap in text*] old'. It appears to be 17th century and is none the better for the dampness of the Mabelulu. I always thought I would give it to Lulu when I died. He would have liked it better than any other thing.

Then we made the most mysterious and frightening hole, much like Theodore's old ones, right under the boards in the centre of our floor. In this hole we all three would hide if any body came. It was a squash, but we did it many times.

Certain Pots and Jars from Miss Sparkes were very dear to us and the old lady taught how to keep the teapot clean.

Our great treat was a 'Day Down' which we were allowed to have occasionally provided we had prayers as they did before breakfast up at the house. Bertie would arrange to do this, reading the Bible almost in our Father's voice.

Sometimes we would play a game called 'threehanded Whist' with cards, but Bertie suddenly got the feeling that our parents would not like this play and so it began to feel wicked and Bertie decreed that it should be given up. Lulu and I did not seem to feel it as so serious a matter.

I remember very well the visit of Mr Drury our Father's Corpus friend who was 7 feet high and wrote in the Mabelulu book 'Oh Marian Oh Marian, you're not eclipsed in parian' giving me my first compliment, though none of us knew what parian was, but Mr Drury said it was some kind of marble out of which were made very beautiful statues. It was hard to get him into the Mabelulu at all.

Mrs Thomas Hardy gave me one too. 'How pretty you are' she said, and I was enchanted. Lulu and I had peeped through the hedge watching them come up the station road with John and we were so proud that they came down to the Mabelulu. he wrote only the words 'A Wayfarer' in the Book. We were disappointed, but our brother John explained to us that they were words of deep significance.

At the end of our little festivities we would always sing The Song of the Ancestor, which according to the rules should be sung discordantly, to the tune of God Save The King.

'Cheers for the noble three,
Cheers for the mighty Three,
Cheers for the Three.
Strong in Fraternity,
Clothed in sweet Liberty
And crowned with Charity,
Cheers for the Three!

May their forefather's Ghost
Scare all the knavish host
Of those that bore them most,
Cheers for the Three!'
or something of the kind.

Then at the end of our long 'Day Down' we would go up and play tennis with Gertrude, Girls against Boys, or we would get Katie and Willie and Lucy and play Jabewock: going in a long line reciting 'Beware of the Jabewock' from the Acacia on the 'Top Lawn' over the flower beds, down by Willie's Wood, all along the darkening Terrace walk by the Orchard and up past the Mabelulu to the Kitchen Garden, past the House and back to the great Acacia tree, if we were not caught by the Jabewock who would be hiding and lying in wait for us somewhere along the way.

The Mabelulu was so happy a time for us all three that we never lost the feeling of it – we can sink back into it at any time. Lulu says how when he could not sleep in his illness he would lie happy thinking of it. Bertie in one letter to me in America says surely it will come back again to us one day.

In an old letter of mine to Bertie in the Mabelulu time my description of what I had done in the garden and around the place is just what I do now in my own home. The Mabelulu was the foundation stone of all our three lives. My ways with my son have always been as if he were Bertie or Lulu and I believe that is why we have been so happy together. Our Mother wrote in the book of the Mabelulu, as I roughly remember it:

'Oft have I thought the spot was damp
And might hurt the three so dear,
But Love is warm and conquers damp
And triumphs over fear.
True happiness to gain
Have learned these children three
For fair their home
And fair their mighty mansion.'

The rest is forgotten but Alyse is holding the Book for me after the war.

I never remember our getting angry with one another, even though Bertie later developed many angry moods. There was a time in the End Room when his collarbone got broken fighting with Lulu but who knows how much that was in play. And all three have always been, because of our so happy childhood, easily in touch with children, perhaps more natural with children than with our contemporaries.

May [Marian Powys]

Publications in hand for the Society

Work goes on apace in preparation of the sixth volume of *The Powys Journal*, under the editorship of Dr Peter Foss, and we are quite determined that we will not miss the Conference this year. Its issue is always one of the highlights of the meeting; it is also a great saving of expense in posting.

One other publication is a certainty. A new edition of the *Powys Checklist and Readers' Guide*, first published in 1991, is almost ready to go to press after a great deal of gathering of new material, correction of some errors, and the addition of two more writers to the guide, namely Alyse Gregory and Elizabeth Myers. A leaflet will go out with the next *Newsletter*.

With this *Newsletter* you will find a small leaflet advertising our latest venture: an audio cassette of **Ghosts on the Roof**, a recording of the readings at the Conference last summer from the 1939 Diary of John Cowper Powys.

Several other works are under consideration, but it is too early yet to make any announcement.

Letters

Letter from Elaine and Barrie Mencher

Dr Williams, in his on the whole encouraging review of *Mock's Curse* (*The Powys Journal*, Volume V), takes us mildly to task for following our author's use of commas to signify 'pauses for thought' [*sic*]: e.g. '... though under Mrs Titman's care, that confusion, lasted but a little time'.

But our object in following Powys's use of commas in this way is precisely to reproduce his speaking voice (as it were), to register a pause and a stress in a passage which might otherwise be read with greater evenness than its author intended.

As we note in our Afterword, Dr Chapman points out that the punctuation found in the original Jane Austen publications 'often resembles the looser "rhythmical" pointing found in books of the seventeenth century.' It is typical, for instance, of those original Jane Austen texts to omit – just as T. F. Powys so often does in his manuscripts – the introductory comma which we nowadays use, together with a concluding one, to mark a modifying or qualifying phrase or clause: 'The politeness which she had been brought up to practise as a duty, made it impossible for her to escape...' (*Mansfield Park*, O.U.P., ed. Chapman, page 91)

Seventeenth-century punctuation marks 'pauses for thought' thus: 'Much of their goodnesse, hath the same period, which some physicians of Italy have observed to be in the biting of their Tarentola, that it affects no longer, than the

flie lives.' (John Donne, Letter to Sir [Henry Goodyer?], *c.*1604, *John Donne, Dean of St Paul's, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. Hayward, The Nonesuch Press, 1949).

But Dr Williams tells us that 'Powys was in the common habit of allowing his pencil or pen to rest upon the page in mid sentence while reflecting upon how to proceed.' We are intrigued to know how Dr Williams became privy to this surprising information, and how he would then judge (if indeed he is right) which commas – for they are commas, not just marks – were intended to be commas and which were not. However, since we have used manuscripts which Powys deliberately wrote out, as fair copies, for his typist, there would hardly be occasion for him to sit about reflecting, with pencil or pen resting upon the page.

Now that The Powys Society is in possession of the E. E. Bissell and Francis Feather Collections, Dr Williams will have the inestimable advantage of being able to compare Powys's manuscripts, and to note for himself the lack of punctuation in the author's early hurried versions (versions meant only for his own use) compared with the careful punctuation which he employed in later versions of the same work intended for publication. And if Dr Williams cares to go to Texas, he will be able to build up a complete picture of Powys's progress, for example, through a single story or novel.

As for Powys's 'random' [*sic*] use of the upper case, how about these? 'There is, probably, not a famous Picture or Statue in all Italy, but could be easily buried under a mountain of printed paper devoted to dissertations on it.' Or: 'If they have ever a fanciful and idle air, perhaps the reader will suppose them written in the shade of a Sunny Day...' Or: 'So still and quiet, that either you don't see them in the darkened shop, or mistake them – as I did one ghostly man in bottle-green, one day, with a hat like a stopper – for Horse Medicine.' All are quotations from our Chapman & Hall edition of Dickens's *Pictures from Italy*. And the last quotation, though printed as a sentence, has no subject until the reader supplies it himself.

Finally, those interested in these matters might like to reflect on the following extract from a letter addressed to T. F. Powys by Charles Prentice, on 2nd August 1931: 'I have ventured to mark in pencil a few queries, almost all of Dora Choules's punctuation, for she seems sometimes not to have followed your usage.'

As Dr Williams says, these are minor matters, but as 'copy editors' [*sic*] we feel bound to defend our policy.

Elaine and Barrie Mencher

Book News

The following catalogues containing books by and about members of the Powys family have been received. In each case, the bookseller would appreciate a stamped, addressed envelope.

1 *Riderless Horse Books*. Old Wool Shop, High Street, Yoxford, Suffolk IP17 3EP. Catalogue No. 9.
2 *Rare and Racy Books*. 164–166 Devonshire Street, Sheffield S3 7SG.
3 *Richard Williams (Bookdealer)*. 15 High Street, Dragonby, Scunthorpe, South Humberside, DN15 OBE.
4 *Steven Ferdinando*. The Old Vicarage, Queen Camel, near Yeovil, Somerset. List No. 22.

*****

Members of the Society will be interested to learn of a new biography of Arthur Machen by Mark Valentine, which has recently been published by Seren Books, First Floor, 2 Wyndham Street, Bridgend CF31 1EF. Copies are available in both hardback and paperback at £12.95 and £6.95 respectively.

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The prominent German-language Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published a very long and laudatory review of the new German translation of *A Glastonbury Romance* on Sunday March 2nd 1996 under the title 'Auf den schwarzen Wassern Avalons' (On the dark waters of Avalon); also listed is the 1992 German translation of the *Autobiography*.

The translation of *A Glastonbury Romance* was also reviewed at length in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* early in the year and in *Die Zeit* for March 8th 1996, the latter newspaper also listing the German literary review *Akzente* volume 5 of 1995. This number of *Akzente* is largely devoted to studies on J. C. Powys, including articles by Society members Elmar Schenkel, Finn Riedel, and Henning Ahrens.

Glastonbury Romance costs DM 78 and *Akzente* DM 11.50 (these two published by Carl Hanser Verlag, München), and *Autobiographie* DM 98 (publisher, P.-Kirchheim Verlag, München).

*****

The current issue of the journal *English* (Volume 45, No. 81, Spring 1996) contains a long essay by David Gervais entitled 'T. F. Powys: Invention and Myth'. Many members found Dr Gervais' recent contribution to the *Newsletter* extremely stimulating and will be pleased to learn that he is shortly to be taking up a Visiting Fellowship at Emamanuel College, Cambridge.

PORIUS
A Partial Glossary of Proper Names

Although the prose of John Cowper's Powys's Porius isn't purposely 'difficult', in the modernist manner, Powys introduces such a multitude of unusual proper names that it is often hard for the reader to keep track of Who's Who and What's What. The perplexed can get some guidance from Powys's prefatory list of 'The Characters of the Novel', but hardly enough; for example, place names are excluded from the list, as are the names of personages who aren't 'characters' (such as Porius's ancestor Cunedda and the continental Christian bishop Sidonius).

I hope that the following glossary, although incomplete and doubtless in some respects inaccurate, may nonetheless prove helpful. It is a work in progress, and I will be grateful if readers more knowledgeable than I will point out my errors and omissions.

My address is 104 Cherokee Circle, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514, U.S.A.

Robert B. Kunkel

Afagddu	An old retainer of the princes of the Gaer.
Agenor	Greek slave; m. Gaethwas; father of Gwrnach and grandfather of Rhun.
Alarch the Fair	Deceased sister of Einion and Brochvael; m. Gwynach; mother of Rhun and foster-mother of Porius.
Amreu ap Ganion	Steward of the Modrybedd.
Annwyn	A mysterious kingdom, referred to in the *Mabinogion*, at once the land of death and of the renewal of life.
Apollinaris Sidonius	*See* Sidonius.
Ardudwy	Area in Wales, near Harlech, ruled by the princes of the Gaer.
Arglwydd/Arglwyddes	'Lord'/'Lady'.
Arthur	The Emperor (Amherawdr) of Britain (the 'King Arthur' of medieval legend).
Arwystli	Mountain (east of Aberystwyth) in district ruled by Einion.
Atlantis	The lost island 'utopia' described in Plato's *Critias*. According to legend the Druidic religion was first brought to Britain by refugees from Atlantis.
Aulus	Roman ex-centurion and servant to Porius Manlius; father of Nesta.
Avanc	Extinct (?) reptilian monster, dwelling in Lake Tegid.
Avanc's Cave	Home of Cadawg ab Idris.
Baldulf	Saxon pirate chieftain.
Beli Mawr	Ancestral god of the forest people. *See* also Bran Bendegeit.
Bendigeit Bran	(Also 'Bendigeitvran'). *See* Bran Bendigeit.
Bishop of Arverne	*See* Sidonius.

Bleiddyn	('Young Wolf') Name of image of wolf cub belonging to y Bychan (in Chap. 31.)
Blodeuwedd	('Flower form') In the *Mabinogion*, Blodeuwedd is created from flowers by Math and Gwydion. When she betrays her husband Lleu for her lover Gronwy, Gwydion punishes her by changing her into an owl.
Boethius	Roman philosopher, *c.*475–524 A.D.; in the novel, a friend of Brochvael.
Bontdu	A Welsh town near Dolgellau.
Bran	('Crow' or 'raven') Epithet of heroes.
Bran Bendegeit	('Bran the Blessed') A euphemized Brythonic god, worshipped by Yssylt; grandson of Beli Mawr; king of Britain; fought the Gwyddylaid in Ireland, where he was decapitated. His decapitated head lived on in London.
Brochvael ap Iddawc	Brother of Einion; m. Kymeinvold; father of Morfydd and Morvran; uncle of Porius.
Brother John	Aged Pelagian hermit-monk, mentor of Porius. *See* Pelagius.
Brythons	(= Britons) A Celtic people who inhabited much of pre-Roman and Roman Britain. By the 5th Century most upper-class Brythons living in the area ruled by the Roman Empire were Christians and Roman citizens.
y Bychan	('The Little One') (i) *See* Iscovan. (ii) Name of magic child (Chap. 31).
Cadawg ab Idris	'The Disinherited'; son of Gortheveyr Bendigeit; lover of Tonwen.
Cader Idris	('Chair of Idris') A mountain on the coast of (what is now) Wales, south-west of Corwen. ('Idris' may have been the name of a legendary giant.). *See* Cewri.
Caer	In place names, 'fort': Caerwynt/Caergwynt/Caer-Gwynt is the locus of Arthur's court; Caer Dathyl was the home of Math, Lord of Gwynedd (in the *Mabinogion*).
Caerleon/Caer-Lleon	Roman legionary fortress near Newport in South Wales.
Canna ferch Glam	Servant of Brochvael; Morfydd's old nurse; m. Gwrgi.
Caswellen Llawhir	('Caswellen with the long hand') A grandson of Cunedda, and Einion's cousin; ruler of Deganwy. Historically, he completed the expulsion of the Irish (Gwyddylaid) from what is now Wales.
Cave of the Dog	Cave where Rhun has a shrine to Mithras.
Ceridwen	An earth goddess (the Welsh Demeter) who had a cauldron containing an endless supply of food. Worshipped by the Forest People, Cadawg and Yssylt.
Cewri	('Giants') Aboriginal race of giants lingering in the mountains of Eryri (Snowdon) and Cader Idris. See Rhitta Gawr, the Gawr, and Creiddylad.
Cheldric/Childric	Saxon pirate chieftain.
Colgrim	Saxon pirate chieftain.
Coranians	Extinct (mythical?) tribe of fierce invaders from the Continent.

Corwen	('White Circle' or 'White Choir') Town on the River Dyfrdwy by Mynydd-y-Gaer, formerly known as Llan-Mithras and as 'Ford of Mithras'.
Creiddylad	(= Cordelia) (i) Cewri wife of Edeyrn; mother of Iddawc. (ii) The Gawres.
Cretinloy of Gaul	Chronicler associated with Galahaut.
Cronos	In Greek mythology, the sickle-bearing ruler of the Titans who devoured his children – except Zeus, who overthrew Cronos and imprisoned him in Tartarus (q.v.). Represented as having a lion's head and a snake coiled around his body. According to one tradition, Cronos (Roman Saturn) ruled over a golden ('Saturnian') age. In the novel, Cronos is the god of time, and is identified with Merlin.
Cunedda	(= Kenneth) Historically, a Romanized Brython who defeated pagan Gwyddyl (Gaelic) invaders from Ireland and founded the Brythonic kingdoms of North Wales. Father of Edeyrn. Einion and Porius are hereditary princes by virtue of their descent from Cunedda.
Cymry	The common people of Britain, as distinguished from their Romanized rulers and the English (Saxons). Still the national name of the Welsh.
Cynan ap Clydno	Courtier and patron of Taliessin.
Deganwy	Cunedda's capital on the Conwy estuary in North Wales, ruled by princes descended from his eldest son.
Derwydd	('Druid') In the novel, usually refers to Gogfran, the last living Druid of the Forest People.
Deva	Roman name for what is now Chester.
Dinas Bran	('Fort of the crow') Ancient hill fort, near Llangollen.
Dion Dionides	Greek merchant sea-captain.
Divine River	*See* Dyfrdwy.
Drom	Servant of the Derwydd, and later of Brochvael; half-brother of Morgant.
Drudwyn	Rhun's dog.
Dyfed	Area in south-west Wales (recently county name).
Dyfnal Moelmud	Legendary pre-Gwyddyl-Ffichti king of Britain.
Dyfrdwy	('Divine Water') Sacred river flowing through Edeyrnion (the River Dee).
Edeyrn	(i) son of Cunedda; m. Creiddylad; father of Iddawc, and grandfather of Einion. (ii) = Edeyrnion, since the time of Edeyrn the hereditary province of the princes of the Gaer (*see* Einion).
Eigr Mallt	Myrddin Wyllt's cow.
Einion ap Iddawc	The reigning Prince of Edeyrnion; son of Iddawc, grandson of Edeyrn and great-grandson of Cunedda; father of Porius. (JCP's list of 'Character of the Novel' identifies Einion as Cunedda's great-great-grandson, but this seems to me an error.)

Erddud	Second of the Three Aunties, long infatuated with Brochvael. *See* Modrybedd.
Erim ap Uchtryd	The Silentiary, adviser to the Modrybedd.
Eryri	Mount Snowdon. *See* Cewri.
Euronwy	Wife of Einion and mother of Porius; cousin of Arthur; daughter of Porius Manlius.
Ffichti/Ffichtiaid	(= Picts, 'painted ones') Non-Romanized Celts surviving in the north and west of Britain.
Fflam	Page to Gwendydd.
Forest People	Primitive, matriarchal inhabitants of (what is now) Wales, whose pre-Brythonic ancestors were Iberians from North Africa. The surviving Forest People cleave to their Druidic religion.
Gaer	(i) = Mynydd-y-Gaer. (ii) the people of the Gaer, i.e., the tribe of Einion and Porius.
Galahaut	(= Galahad) Prince of Far Isles of Surluse (possibly the Scilly Isles).
The Gawr	('Giant') A giant of the Cewri.
The Gawres	The Gawr's daughter Creiddylad.
Giant's Cave	*See* Ogof-y-Gawr.
Glam	Canna's mother.
Gog and Magog	Sons of Lot-el-Azziz.
Gogfran	*See* Derwydd.
Gorthevyr Bendigeit	('Gorthevyr the Blessed') Son of Gortheyrn Gorthenau; father of Cadawg. Sought to expel Saxons; betrayed and poisoned by Ronwen.
Gortheyrn Gorthenau	(= Vortigern) Brythonic king who recruited Saxon mercenaries under Hengyst to fight the Ffichti (Picts) and the Gwyddyl (Scots, i.e., at this period, Irish), thereby laying the groundwork for the eventual 'Anglo-Saxon' conquest of Britain, temporarily thwarted by Arthur.
Gosgordd	Brythonic chieftain's bodyguard of 300 warriors.
Gronwy	In the *Mabinogion*, Blodeuwedd's lover.
y Grug	('The Mound') *See* Little Mound.
Gunhorst	Sibylla's Saxon lover.
Gunta	Daughter of Sibylla and Gunhorst.
Gwendydd	Sister of Myrddin Wyllt.
Gwrgi ap Cyngar	Servant of Brochvael; m. Canna.
Gwri Wallt Euryn	= Pryderi.
Gwrnach	Father of Rhun; m. Alarch; son of Agenor and Gaethwas.
Gwyddyl/Gwyddylaid	(= Goidel) Gaelic Celts of Irish origin correctly but confusingly identified by JCP as 'Scots'.
Gwyddyl-Ffichti	Tribe of mixed Scots and Picts living in (what is now) Wales.
The Gwyddyles	Kymeinvoll, Brochvael's wife.
Gwydion ap Don	In the *Mabinogion*, the magician who kills Pryderi and creates Blodeuwedd.

Gwynedd	Region of north-west Wales (recently a county name).
Gwythyr	The Gaer Messenger; m. Nesta ferch Aulis.
Hengyst	(Or Hengist or Hengest) Leader of Saxon mercenaries invited *c.*430 A.D. by Vortigern (Gortheyrn) to help fight Ffichti and Gwyddyl; father of Ronwen.
The Henog	Sylvanus Is-Coed, a Silurian chronicler from Dyfed, employed by Arthur.
The House of Stone	*See* Ty Cerrig.
Huw Gadarn	Mythical first Brython.
Iddawc ap Edeyrn	'The Apostate'; grandson of Cunedda; m. Indeg. Father of Einion, Brochvael and Alarch the Fair.
Indeg	A princess of the Forest People and elder sister of the Modrybedd; m. Iddawc; Einion's mother.
Iscovan ap Serigi	Hero of Forest People. = 'y Bychan' and 'the Little One'. *See* Little Mound.
Kessar	= Caesar (Iwl = Julius; Gloyw = Claudius).
Kymeinvoll Gwyddyles	Deceased wife of Brochvael, once lover of Einion.
Lela	Wife of Amreu.
Little Mound	Prehistoric earthwork, burial place of Iscovan and home of Gogfran Derwydd.
Llan-Mithras	('Church/shrine of Mithras') *See* Corwen and Mithras.
Llew ap Greidawl	Brother of Gogfran Derwydd.
Lludd ap Beli	Legendary destroyer of the Coranians, from whose name 'London' was thought to have been derived.
Llychlvaid	Norseman.
Lot-el-Azziz	A Jewish doctor.
Mabinogion	A medieval collection of Welsh folk tales.
Mabsant ap Kaw	Youthful noble horseman of Arthur.
Mari Llyd	Merlin's mare.
Medrawd	(= Modred) Arthur's nephew.
Meirion	Area ruled by Einion, on Welsh coast.
Minnawc Gorsant	Christian priest of the Gaer.
Mithras	God, originally Persian, whose worship was widespread in the Roman empire, especially among the legionnaires. Rhun is a worshipper of Mithras.
Modrybedd	('Aunts') Einion's 'Three Aunties', princesses of the Forest People; individually, Yssylt, Erddud and Tonwen.
Moel y Fammau	('Mountain of the Mothers') A ridge in Edeyrnion, visible from Mynydd-y-Gaer.
Mona	Ancient name of Anglesey (Welsh 'Ynys Môn'), island off coast of North Wales. An ancient centre of Druidic worship, first attacked by the Romans in A.D. 60 and conquered in A.D. 79.
Morfydd ferch Brochvael	Porius's cousin and later, wife; daughter of Brochvael.
Morgant	Servant to Derwydd and Llew; half-brother of Drom.

Morvan ap Brochvael	Brochvael's son and Morfydd's brother, murdered by fanatical Brythonic Christians incited by Minnawc Gorsant.
Mountain of the Mothers	*See* Moel y Fammau.
Mynydd-y-Gaer	('Mountain of the fort') Einion's fortress, built by Rhitta Gawr, who is buried in it. ? = Caer Drewyn n. of river near Corwen.
Myrddin Wyllt	('Merlin the Wild') Arthur's counsellor, identified with Cronos and Gwydion ap Don.
Mur-y-Castell	('Castle wall') In the *Mabinogion*, the locus of the court of Lleu and Blodeuwedd.
Neb ap Digon	Boy page in Arthur's service.
Nesta ferch Aulis	Aulis's daughter; m. Gwythyr.
Nineue ferch Avallach	(= Tennyson's Vivien) Enchantress beloved by Myrddin Wyllt.
Oceanus	In Greek mythology, name of river issuing from the underworld and encircling the earth, and of its Titan god. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus visits the shore of Oceanus and there calls up the spirits of the dead.
Ogof-y-Gawr	('Giant's Cave') House of the Modrybedd.
Ordovices	Tribe living in North Wales before the arrival of the Romans; one of the names of the Forest People.
Owen-Pen-Uchel	Horse breeder and trainer of hunting dogs.
Path of the Dead	Avenue through the forest between Mynydd-y-Gaer and the Mound of the dead.
Pelagius	British monk declared a heretic by the Western Church A.D. 416; mentor of Brother John. Pelagius and his followers denied original sin, rejected infant baptism, and affirmed the natural goodness of man.
Pen Beirdd	*See* Taliessin.
Peredur	Arthurian knight.
Porius	The hero of the novel. Prince of Edeyrnion, son of Einion and Euronwy.
Porius Manlius	Roman patrician; Euronwy's father; a Christian.
Pryderi	Hero-god of South Wales; son of Pwyll and Rhiannon; King of Dyfed. Killed by Gwydion ap Don.
Rhelemon	Mother of Gogfran Derwydd, also known as El-lylles (the she-devil).
Rhiannon	Mother of Pryderi.
Rhitta Gawr	Last king of the Cewri; buried at Mynydd-y-Gaer.
Rhun ap Gwrnach	Son of Gwrnach and Alarch the Fair; cousin and foster-brother of Porius.
Ronwen	Saxon, daughter of Hengyst and second wife of Vortigern. Poisoned her step-son Gorthevyr.
Saint Julian's	(i) Name of Christian Church being built in Corwen by Minnawc Gorsant. (ii) Name of Fountain (small lake) near Mynydd-y-Gaer and north-west of Corwen, by which Brother John lives.

Sais/Saesnes	Englishman/woman, i.e. Saxon in the period of the novel.
Serigi	Gwyddyl-Ffichti chieftain slain by Cunedda; father of Iscovan.
Sibylla	Gwyddyl-Ffichti woman, mother or Gunta, formerly mistress of Einion.
Sidonius	Apollinaris Sidonius Modestus (*c.*430–484 A.D.); Roman patrician, Bishop of Arverne (Auvergne); man of letters and correspondent of Brochvael.
The Silentiary	*See* Erim.
Silures	People of Iberian origin in South Wales.
Stilicho	Roman general executed 408 A.D. In the novel, it is Stilicho who authorizes Cunedda to take control of North Wales.
Sylvanus ap Bleheris	The Henog, also known as Sylvanus-Is-Coed.
Taliessin	The Poet, spoken of as 'Pen Beirdd, Ynys Prydein' or Head Bard of the Isle of Britain.
Tartarus	In Greek mythology, an underworld below Hades, where Cronos and the Titans were imprisoned after being deposed by Zeus.
Lake Tegid	(Lake Bala) On the Dyfrdwy above Corwen.
Tegvan	Page to Gwendydd.
Teleri	('Little ghost') Half-witted girl coming under Medrawd's influence.
Three Aunties	*See* Modrybedd.
Timaeus	Platonic dialogue containing Plato's account of the creation of the universe.
Tonwen	Youngest of the Three Aunties, lover of Cadawg. *See* Modrybedd.
Ty Cerrig	('The House of Stone') Residence of Brochvael and Morfydd.
Uriconium	Former Roman camp (on site of Wroxeter), childhood home of Euronwy.
Uthyr Pendragon	King Arthur's father, and Euronwy's great-uncle.
Venedotians	Latin name of the forest people of Edeyrnion and Ardudwy.
Vreichvras Llaw-goch	Progenitor of Gwyddyl-Ffichti.
Ynys Prydein	The Isle of Britain.
Yssylt	Eldest of the Three Aunties. *See* Modrybedd.
Zora	Wife of Lot-el-Azziz.

Some notes on Welsh in names in Porius

1 Many words undergo mutation of the initial letter after certain other words:
caer (fort) – **gaer** **cawr** (giant) – **gawr** **merch** (daughter) – **ferch**
mam (mother), pl. **mamau** – Moel y **Famau** (**Fammau** in *Porius*)
blodau (flowers) + **gwedd** (appearance, form) = **Blodeuwedd** (with loss of 'g')
2 Several words form feminine with termination **-es** (cf. English -ess):
arglwyddes, gawres, Gwyddyles, Saesnes (cf. Sais)
3 **ap/ab** = 'son of' **ferch** (from **merch**) = 'daughter of'
4 Plurals are often significantly different from the singular: **cawr** (giant) – **cewri**

SPM

A Draft Autobiography

The National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth holds, in its Powys Collection, a fascinating piece by John Cowper Powys (NLW MSS 21930E) entitled *A Blank Verse Autobiography*. Clearly inspired by Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, this 33-page manuscript is dedicated to Littleton Charles Powys and addressed to John Cowper's brother-in-law Thomas Henry Lyon. Although undated, it seems to belong to the period immediately before Powys's marriage to Margaret Lyon in 1896, a time when John Cowper wrote many poems dedicated to his Cambridge friend.

The manuscript falls into three parts: a first draft, heavily corrected, of the first 171 lines; a second draft, only lightly amended of these same lines (from which the first 55 lines have been deleted with a single vertical and one horizontal stroke) and a further 478 heavily corrected but unredrafted lines. Therefore, including the deleted introductory section, without which the rest makes little sense, we are left with an incomplete poem of 649 lines covering the first nine years of Powys's life, from his earliest memories of Shirley, Derbyshire, to the second year of his life in Dorchester, where the family moved in 1879.

Considered as poetry, *A Blank Verse Autobiography* has, perhaps, little to offer beyond the occasional bright passage. Powys had a great facility for blank verse and was steeped in the language of his literary predecessors, factors which enabled him to produce such material by the yard, often, to judge from the handwriting, at high speed. Biographically, however, the poem is of great interest, although one must never forget to whom it was addressed. Powys's relationship with Harry Lyon deserves investigation and *A Blank Verse Autobiography*, read in conjunction with the other poems of this period, reveals not only their closeness but also a need on Powys's part both to impress his friend and, simultaneously, to assert his independence. Lyon is addressed as a hero, as 'Harry of the flame-burnt lips,' and as the 'fierce friend' whose 'bravery' had stimulated Powys's own courage and given him a 'sacred freedom'. Yet Powys feels his new-found freedom and strength

> ... must from thee be kept
> Inviolate, all the more lest that wild thing
> Of bitter poisons and rich maddening wines,
> Thy parched and fevered heart that still remains
> A desert and a palm tree and a well,
> Should vex my scarce-won, treasured, solitude.
> A desert is thy soul where on the sands
> The great sun glares all day and evermore
> The bitter-smiling Sphinx glares at the sun.
> Thy soul a palm-tree is beneath whose shade
> A nightingale sings gently, but its trunk

Writhes in the close coils of a monstrous snake.
Thy soul is like a well whose waters still
Are of sweet taste but he who looks therein,
His foot may slip and he be seen no more!

What significance should we give to Powys's decision to delete the word 'heart' from these lines, a word which had survived into the second draft, and to substitute it with 'soul'? To understand all that is happening here we must await the results of Susan Rands' research into the relationship between Powys and Lyon.

Having introduced and dedicated his poem, Powys now recalls his infancy in Derbyshire, which he seems to regard, in apparent contradiction to his *Autobiography*, as an idyllic period, but one from which certain troubling images emerge which were to recur throughout his work: a lake, a withered bough, an iron bar.

Of early childhood I remember less
Than is the lot of many. Certain forms,
People and creatures stand,however,there
In the far background of my brain, distinct
Yet unconnected. Such are fallen trees,
Several together – lying on their side –
Huge trunks; and wearing in their overthrow
An almost human impotence of death.
Such are clear water-spaces in deep woods,
Smooth lustrous levels broken by no wind
Where the tall rushes,clustered near the bank,
Shelter wild water-fowl that with shrill screams
At the approach of human foot rise up
And sail away into the smiling clouds.
Beside this lake I seem to see strange plants
Under the roots of old broad-spreading trees,
Sinister orchids, spotted like the skins
Of poisonous snakes, nightshade and hellebore
And, strewn among them on the damp brown mould,
Bright coloured fungi of a hundred shapes
Wondrous to see! Like fairy goblets some,
And some like tables set for fairy feasts.
I can remember how one summer's day
Looking upon the whiteness of that flood
Unruffled in the sunshine,I picked up
With eager hands a long, dry, withered bough
And threw it in the water. The dark thing
Lay like a strange defacement on the mere,
Sombre, forbidding; and it seemed to me

That the bright water shuddered visibly.
Vainly I stretched my arms and strove once more
To draw it back. Far, far beyond my reach
The black thing floated – a disfigurement
And foul intruder on the placid flood.
Long in my thoughts I could not leave the place
And in my dreams for many nights I saw
That smooth white lake and that black withered bough.
Another vision as I search the past
Rises before me. Lo! Methinks I stand
In some great garden – rhododendron shrubs,
Each a huge blaze of colour, hem me round
And I have lost my friends and, struck with fear,
Run headlong through the bushes, pushing back
The great flower-bunches with their weight of dew
From my hot cheeks, wetting my neck and hair.
Sudden an iron railing bars my way.
This obstacle surmounted (on my sense
Even as I write the wild delight returns)
The smell of hay was carried – whether blown
From new-cut meadow or from piled-up stack
Long-standing or from neighbouring cattle-shed
I cannot tell, but with the scent of hay
I saw a group of dark-eyed children. Young
They were, some girls, some boys, but all of them
It seemed to me had waving hair that danced
As they danced, hand in hand and foot to foot.
And ever since, from that time unto this
The scent of hay brings those young children back.

The incident of Powys throwing the branch into the lake had taken place during a picnic at Osmaston Park and he was to recall in *Autobiography* that it was the origin of many of his fears, fears then manifested in the form of the local policeman, for 'One of the grown-up persons of our small picnic party uttered ... the senseless remark that Johnny had better look out. The police would have him for throwing things into the pretty lake!'[1]

Powys's childhood years in Dorchester are described in *Autobiography* as 'certainly [the] most happy of my whole life'.[2] Just as Shirley is portrayed in this poem as being closer to Eden than the picture given in *Autobiography*, so Dorchester appears here as a much gloomier place, one from which he could not wait to escape. Had Powys's memory of Dorchester mellowed in the more than thirty years between the composition of his autobiographical poem and the writing of *Autobiography*, or is there some more complex reason for his apparently

contradictory portrayal of the place and its influence on him, something connected with the impression he wished to give Harry Lyon? Such things stand for discussion but, as the following lines show, Powys as a man in his twenties did not recall the Dorchester years as the happiest of his life.

So seven summers passed.
But with the eighth there came a change. Our home
Was moved from those high Midland solitudes
To a fair country city in the South.
Here, amid growing boyhood's noisier claims,
'Mid rougher sports and louder pleasures, 'mid
The pains and joys of learning's first ascents,
The nearer presence of humanity,
Not always gentle, slowly by degrees
Stole the first glory from the Universe.
Yet,in despite of many influences
Harmful and all unlovely, in despite
Of cold Religion's dullest interdicts,
The youthful spirit stirred and from itself
Drew out imaginary worlds, bright realms
Of fairy beauty where no feet profane
Might ever tread, no dull cold insolence
Of age or custom enter, no grey rites
Of impious piety make black and drear
The divine temple of the Universe.
Most sure the very throne of Commonplace
Was in that town. Dull, narrow, sordid lives
Lived its fat burghers ...
Taking a refuge inward from the life
(Call it not life!) of those dull Wessex folk
I peopled the wild fields and Roman mounds,
Peopled the great corn-reaches, the slow streams,
Peopled the dusty roads, the pasture tracks,
Peopled the very streets of the dull town,
The very church and its detested pews
With fairy beings, a celestial train!
Each flower, each tree I met with, was to me
A mansion for a spirit. The deep air
Was thick with them; they haunted me all day
And sat upon my pillow in my dreams.
Oft did I hold my brothers with strange tales
Of wild invented beings, evil some
And prone to evil, to be warded off

With charms and incantations, which I knew
And I alone: others benignant things
Apt to perform all ministries of good.
The games that mostly children love for me
Had little charm, the world of living things
I cared for little, less than when they shone
With an unearthly light in earlier days.
For then each creature was a thing new found,
A miracle that had no past or present
Perhaps no likeness in the whole wide world,
But now the weight of dull humanity
Had pressed so heavy on me it appeared
As though these dogs and cats, horses and cows,
That people loved and lived with, were like them,
Tedious and sordid.

What happiness there was to be found in Dorchester came from the time spent walking and exploring with Littleton, to whom the poem is dedicated.

But happy days I had. My brother, he,
Whom thou, O friend, lov'st hardly less than I,
In boyish passion hunted field and grove
Garden and railway-bank and stunted wood,
Ran desperate up and down the Roman camps
For that light-winged gorgeous summer brood
The ah! too short-lived butterflies he caught.
Red Admirals, Peacocks, Clouded Yellows, Whites
Of every species and those Roman camps,
That Roman amphitheatre supplied
Instead of rusty arms and trophies old,
Chalk Blues and Azure Blues and Coppers bright
And sometimes, flitting high above our heads,
In agonized excitement we pursued
The gorgeous Painted Lady.

Weymouth, of course, had always been a special, a magical place, one which offered respite and healing.

Here we had come from that more northern home
In earliest infancy – and all the place,
The harbour and the cliffs and the broad sands,
Were dear to us both for themselves and all
The indefined memories that entwine
Round early youth. On one side of the bay
A dark and bleak peninsula stretched out,
A mass of solid rock and on this beat

The huge waves coming from the Atlantic sea;
A wall of shingle on the further side
Baffled the wave: a beach more giant-like
Has never by the angry sea been flung
To thwart his own revenges. Here the stones
Made round and smooth by the in-flowing tide
Took wondrous tints and colours. People said
That rich cornelians, agate-stones and jet
Might on this beach be found. At least I know
I have held many pebbles to the light
But only on that beach have the sun's beams
Shown through the solid texture of the stone.
Between the town and this majestic beach
An ancient castle stood whose empty walls,
The haunt of screaming sea gulls, fixed their gaze
Across the bay to where in shelter found
Under that rocky, dark peninsula
The great ships gathered safe from stormy seas.
Beneath this castle's foot the sands were smooth
And when the salt tide left the shore, long lines
Of blackening seaweed mixed with broken shells
And all the strange sea-tangle of the deep,
Old spars and ropes and corks and stranded fish,
Offered to children's eyes a constant feast,
To children's hands an unexhausted treasure.
Many the strange and lovely denizens
Of the wild sea have I collected there....
Well did we love when morning smote the waves
With dazzling paths of splendour to push out
Our light-oared boat and rowing till the land
With all its men and houses seemed a thing
Left far behind us, lost from memory,
Uncared for, undesired, and we alone,
Alone with the green waves and the blue sky
Drank in deep draughts of freedom and of joy ...

The poem as we have it ends with a declaration of intent, a declaration by one just down from Cambridge which the old man of Blaenau Ffestiniog might not have repudiated.

Not in the gains by active knowledge won,
Not in the strident growth of mental power,
Not in the strengthening of our human wills,
The bettering of our natures or the strife

In action's whirlwind betwixt man and man,
Far less in piling up of virtuous deeds,
Far less in contemplative subtleties
Of the abstract reason is our true life found.
'Tis in the broadening of life's hidden base,
The deepening of those unconscious springs
From which our being issues, those far flames
Of silent intuition by the light
Of which we read the ever changing face
Of everlasting Nature, bound to her,
Bound to the Earth from which we sprung by bonds
Of strongest love, a deep affinity
Betwixt the movements of her life and ours.
So must the trees upon whose foreheads rest
The winds when they are weary, so the hills
That catch the floating clouds, so the swift brooks,
The gloomy forests and the lonely moors
Communicate to us their life and joy.
And for myself, in calm sincerity,
This may I say, that of all other paths
Whereby I've sought the happy realm where peace
Weds passion in large moments of full life,
No other way hath proved effectual
Than this of nature with her woods and hills.
And yet the deepest pleasures seem to start
Unbidden – from dim, far-off shores they come,
Memories and recollections, wandering airs
Blown on stray winds from flowers we have forgotten,
Waftings from groves unrecognisable,
Glimpses and intuitions showing us
Visions of sealed-up things and powers that come
And go uncalled for, neither of the mind
Nor of the senses wholly, but built up
From gossamer-fibres, those thin threads,
Those linked associations of past joy,
Vague, indefined and bodiless, but of strength
To make the blood rush to a strong man's cheek,
To make the tears start to a strong man's eye.
Unfixed and carried on unruly winds
Are life's great moments. Sometimes as I pass
A single roadside tree, a bank of grass
O'er grown with ivy,a moss-covered gate,

A broken branch lying across the road,
An iron railing over which the smooth
Level expanses of some Park appear
Dotted with bracken, a sequestered pond
Waving with reeds, a bed of cottage flowers,
The sound of rooks, the flickering of the lights
First seen at evening from a public road
Entering a village, even a swarm of gnats
Murmuring and dancing on a summer's noon,
A flock of sheep met in a dusty lane,
The mud-stained wheels of some great wagon drawn
By tinkling horses through the cart-ruts deep,
As I pass these sometimes, there comes to me,
I known not whence, strange motions of keen joy
So that for very pleasure I could shout
Like any shepherd-boy that down the hill
Pursues his dogs. Such visitations
Sometimes call up with vague uncertain power
Scenes, places, people that appear like dreams
Far-off beheld. And must we say with him,
The mighty bard of Nature that such dreams
Of former times attest our present joys,
Of stern necessity less beautiful,
Less happy, less divine, than in those days
When childhood wore Heaven's own peculiar grace?
Or rather shall we say that such vague dreams
Are the best product of experience,
Can only come when after toil and storm,
Childhood's sweet pleasures put so far away
Win deeper meanings, win and take to them
Significance beyond their former worth?
Or rather, shall we say that what on Earth
Is precious, valuable beyond the sway
Of rescued passion and mere animal joy
Grows, strengthens, deepens, broadens to the end
And the old man whose mortal senses fade
Has this – that by his longer life on earth
The threads of delicate affinity
Between his mind, his body and the mind
And bodily forms of Nature are drawn close,
Are made at once more complex and more near,
So when he comes to die what in him holds

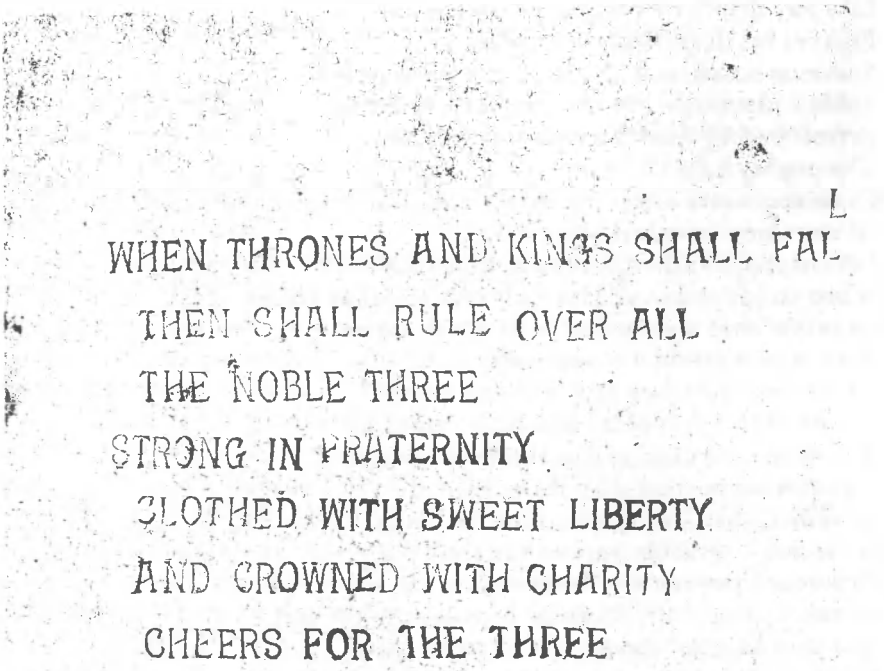
Of Nature and the natural elements
Sinks back, dissolves and with no shock or pain
Blends with the wholesome dust from which it rose?

My transcription of *A Blank Verse Autobiography*, together with a photocopy of the manuscript will be lodged with the Powys Society collection at the Dorset County Museum where, in due course, it will be available for more detailed study. Meanwhile, this note is intended merely to draw attention to a further small fraction of the wealth of material which, even now, remains to be explored.

Paul Roberts

Notes

1 *Autobiography* (London: Macdonald and Co., 1967),12.
2 *ibid,* 56.



'The Song of the Mabelulu', verse 3 (verses 1 & 2 on the back cover), printed with a John Bull kit on two pages of grey writing paper. (See pages 20–21.)