

HAMPSTEAD MEETING

23rd November 2013 ~~ see page 2

Editorial

The November *Newsletter* always has a disconcerting time-lapse, with the Conference already distant and its resurrection in next year's journal still far away. This could be thought appropriate for a Society devoted to people born two or even four generations ago, hopping to and fro in past and present. Not much original Powys writing in *Newsletter* 80, but testimonials to the devotion inspired by Powyses in their readers, and excursions into peripheries with Arthur Ficke, old friend of JCP, and Werner Stein, designer of Powys book jackets. A footnote to the Purdy letters in the 2013 *Journal* is JCP's furious reaction to an unimaginative review of Purdy. Theodore copies an ancient prayer to the Mother Goddess (which sounds Hellenistic, actually medieval) onto the flyleaf of his *Fables*.

Thanks as ever to all contributors, and especially to Chris Thomas.

ON OTHER PAGES

Hampstead meeting, Nov. 2013	2	Llewelyn Birthday Walk	20
Obituary: Barrie Mencher	2	Patricia Dawson memorial	22
The Conference 2013	4	Katie's Cross	23
Glen Cavaliero	4	Tony Atmore: A Letter	23
Powys Pleasures and Enjoyment	4	Dedication II: J.C. and M.A. Powys	
Kate Saunders-Nash	7	to Littleton	26
Charles Lock	8	T. F. Powys: A Prayer	27
The <i>Fables</i>	9	Ficke, Powys and Friends	28
Robert Caserio	9	News and Notes	32
Conference DVDs	12	NY revisited	34
A G M	13	JCP on James Purdy, 'A Desperate Cry'35	
Powys Days, 2014	16	Neil Lee-Atkins: Reading Llewelyn	36
Dedication I: TFP to Herbert Marks	17	Dedication III: Llewelyn to Marian	43
A Visit to NLW Exhibition	18	Werner Stein	44

Meeting in Hampstead

2pm, Saturday 23rd November 2013
at The Friends' Meeting House, 120 Heath Street,
Hampstead, London NW3 1DR
(near Hampstead Underground station)

Our past Chairman John Hodgson will lead a discussion of JCP as Diarist.

What do JCP's diaries tell us about his family relationships, his friends and professional associations, his relationship with Phyllis Playter, his daily routine and habits, his walks and observation of the natural world, his knowledge of world events and contemporary politics? What do the diaries tell us about his reading, his ideas for new books, the development of his writing, and his ideas and philosophy of life? What do the diaries reveal about JCP's inner life or are they an act of concealment? Who is JCP writing for? These and many more questions will be explored, in a discussion with readings from the full text of JCP's diaries during the period he lived at Phudd Bottom in up-state New York, especially during the years 1932 to June 1934, as well as for the month of March 1940 when he was living in Corwen in North Wales. This will include new transcriptions of JCP's diaries recently produced by members of the Powys Society.

All are welcome. The event is free although a contribution towards costs of refreshments after the discussion would be very much appreciated. If you wish to attend this meeting please notify Hon. Secretary by e-mail, post or telephone (see inside cover).

Chris Thomas

Obituary

M. B. Mencher 1935–2013

Ian Robinson (of The Brynmill Press) writes:

M. B. (Barrie) Mencher died on Thursday 22nd August 2013 after a very long and grievous combination of illnesses.

Barrie Mencher was educated at Roundhay School, Leeds, and Downing College, Cambridge, reading English with F. R. Leavis as director of studies. After graduation he became a lecturer in English Literature at successive colleges of further education, where the genuineness of his thinking made a deep impression on a number of students; but by vocation he was a literary man, firstly a novelist and maker of short stories, then as a critic practising in the Leavis tradition.

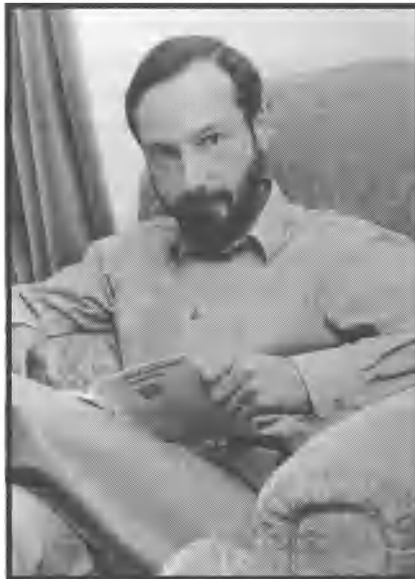
One of his stories appeared in the first issue of our magazine *The Human World* in 1970, and he was closely involved with Brynmill for the next forty years. Mencher was company secretary, effectively in charge, for some years from 1992 onwards when otherwise the company would have liquidated.

We published his first book, the novella *A Knot*, still in print, and *Betrothal*, the revised version of the *Knot* with another novella (at present unavailable). The recent collection *Jackdaw and other Stories* is published by Durrant Publishing and reviewed on our website <www.edgewaysbooks.com>, together with one of his most recent remarks on D. H. Lawrence and Leavis – his lifelong central critical preoccupations. He was a vigorous contributor to *The New Compass*. *George Borrow: the Dingle Chapters* was co-edited by Barrie Mencher and Richard Shephard. Together with his wife, Elaine, Mencher was also essential to the publication of our T. F. Powys series.

In later life, Barrie Mencher used his good tenor voice as cantor in Norwich synagogue, where he became President for three years. He is survived by his wife of more than fifty years, the distinguished pianist and editor of T. F. Powys, Elaine Mencher.

Powys Society members will recall Barrie's production of T. F. Powys's play 'The Sin Eater' at the 2006 Conference at Chichester – this was also the occasion of publication of T. F. Powys's Selected Early Works, invaluabley edited by Elaine Mencher. 'The Bell Is Ringing', Barrie's appreciation of TFP's The Market Bell published by Brynmill, is in Newsletter 47 (pages 43-6).

KK



The Conference

Llangollen, August 2013

The castle stones above the wall of trees, and the song of the Dee ... Pleasures of the Hand Hotel.

As a prologue, **Glen Cavaliero**'s talk on the first evening, 'Endurance and Enjoyment: the Pleasure of Powys' began with his own pleasures and joys in his early work on John Cowper Powys, with students starting to be interested (these included John Hodgson and Anthony Head), with many articles and reviews and the acceptance of his *John Cowper Powys, Novelist*, forty years ago. This had not always been an easy task, since JCP (like Sylvia Townsend Warner) resisted being 'inserted' into any academic curriculum.

Enjoyment and pleasure are by no means the same (*pace* the Oxford Concise English Dictionary which defines each by the other): the American *Enjoyment of Literature* was a better title than JCP's English-published *Pleasures ...* – a favorite book of Glen's. Enjoyment is active, pleasure a passive state. 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy' – 'pleasure' would scarcely do for this.

But there is holy and unholy pleasure, and *mood* is important when reading all the Powyses: in the wrong mood we could sympathise with those for whom JCP is a longwinded gasbag, Theodore coy and falsely naïve, Llewelyn a fulsome preacher in posh clothing. But in the right mood they draw us into enjoyment like Marvell in his 'Garden' – 'annihilating all that's made / to a green thought in a green shade'.

Glen's own Powys *pleasures* might include JCP's in *The Meaning of Culture*, with its message of the power of simple things. With Llewelyn it could be his description of a shining night in *Love and Death*; with Theodore Mr Dottery's perfect breakfast in *Kindness in a Corner ...*. *Enjoyment* brings something deeper. As for *enduring*: all the Powyses contended with the dark, and help us to live with it. Dr Johnson, wise as ever, said, 'The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life, or better to endure it': the three Powys brothers can surely be judged to meet that requirement.

Some of Glen's most pleasure-giving, and enjoyment-giving, passages follow.

Pleasures of Powys ...

To attain ['the Pleasure which there is in life itself'] one must be at once stoical and epicurean; stoical in one's power of hardening one's sensibility to 'the ills that flesh is heir to', and epicurean in one's power of lively response to the recurrent simplest recurrent sensation.

The coolness of sheets, the warmth of blankets, the look of the little blue flames dancing on the top of a fire of hard coal, the taste of bread, of milk, of honey, of wine or of oil, of well-baked potatoes, of earth-tasting turnips! The taste of the airs, dry or moist, that blow in through our open window, the look of the night sky, the sounds of

twilight or of dawn, the hoarse monotone of a distant pinewood or of pebble-fretted waves — all these things as one feels them, in the mortal pride of being able to feel them at all, are the materials, eternal and yet fleeting, of *the art of being a man alive upon the earth*.

[John Cowper Powys, *The Meaning of Culture*, 143-4]

At our feet the dewdrops were glistening, like to the island galaxies of the astral universe above our two heads. The moonshine on the wet meadow, the moonshine that was everywhere present in the airy levels of the night sky, was of so pellucid an essence that it penetrated to each morsel of matter that grew, crawled, or flew among those sequestered fields. It glinted upon the myriad herbs that had on them the coldness of the night. It tipped the moist horns of each voyaging snail with its pale sheen; and the furry coats and flickering leather wings of every bat were miraculously silvered, as these goblin beings, so shrill of voice, circled in quaint Barnaby measures above us. It almost seemed as if some colony of white bats had arrived from China intent upon making their homes on this undisturbed parcel of English ground; at night bestowing upon the abeyant pastures and walled-in cottage patches a hungry supervision, and in the daytime hanging in somnolent suspension, like balls of ermine, in the apple attics or unused cheese-lofts of William's Mill; where, in a demi-darkness, bitch spiders with eight legs and bulging unappeasable abdomens sat for hours awaiting with a patience, malicious and zealous, the significant shiverings of their dusty webs.

[Llewelyn Powys, *Love and Death*, 168-9]

To eat some crisp toast, with pure country butter — as naturally yellow as good butter should be — and an egg boiled the correct time, as set by Pope Innocent III — for exactly three minutes and a half and timed by a sure glass — and then a little more toast and butter with a spoonful of Oxford marmalade, always occupied a decent half-hour of Mr Dottery's morning. And he never failed to smile a little as he ate of the last dish — as a loyal Cambridge man should — and murmur into his cup: 'They think themselves scholars there, but they know that all they can really do well, under those green-muffled Cumnor hills, is to make a sweetmeat.'

[T. F. Powys, *Kindness in a Corner*, 2-3]

... and Enjoyment

There are hours in every man's day when the main current of his destiny, rising up from some hidden channel, becomes a recognizable and palpable element in his consciousness. Such hours, if a man's profoundest life is — so to speak — in harmony with the greatest gods, are hours of indescribable and tremulous happiness ...

As he [Hamish Traherne] crossed his garden in the early morning and entered the church, the warm sun and clear-cut shadows filled him with that sense of

indestructable joy to which one of the ancient thinkers has given the beautiful name of ... the Pleasure of the Ideal Now. From the eastern window, flooding the floor of the little chancel, there poured into the cool, sweet-smelling place a stream of quivering light. He had opened wide the doors under the tower and left them open and he heard, as he sank on his knees, the sharp clear twittering of swallows outside and the chatter of a flock of starlings. Through every pulse and fibre of his being, as he knelt, vibrated an unutterable current of happiness, of happiness so great that the words of his prayer melted and dissolved and all definite thought melted with them into that rare mood where prayer becomes ecstasy and ecstasy becomes eternal

[John Cowper Powys, *Rodmoor*, 118–19]

I have seen Blind Cow Rock at all hours of the day and in all seasons, until it has come to symbolise in my mind the obdurate reality of matter, of determined uncomplicated matter, against which the sensitive spray of life throughout the milleniums has dashed itself in vain. The faithful ewe turning her head to smell at the wagging tail of her lamb as it thrusts ruthlessly, repeatedly, for her sweet milk, is under the subjection of the Blind Cow. The lark is at the mercy if the same discipline, as it pours out its thrilling melody for the ears of its mate, couchant below in the grass, her light thighs daintily flexed and the dew of the morning still sparkling upon her dorsal feathers. Nor is the hungry mackerel free, as with a shimmer of its rainbow body it goes sharking after its prey through the curling sea troughs. Yet out of the obedience of the dutiful ewe, out of the poetry in the fragile, created head of the lark, out of the expert precision of the fish's flashing body, it is conceivable that there does rise a certain whisper of hope challenging to the sottish absolute domination of the Blind Cow.

[Llewelyn Powys, *Earth Memories*, 170–1]

It is the spring, and the apple-blossom is beautiful because He is there in it. To love Him is the only good thing in this world. It does not matter if He is true; He is beyond all Truth. All things have breath in Him; I feel Him in the earth. When I hammer at the rocks and break away fossils that have been there for millions of years, I am only going a little way into His love. When I look up in the night and see the light that has left a star thousands of years ago, I can only see a little way into His love. His love is a terrible love — terrible and deep, hard for a man to bear. I have lived in it, I know it. I hear people say, "Why did He come here to this little Planet; why did He not leave it out?" I answer, "He leaves nothing out; He cannot give anything better than His love; it is of more worth than immortality."

[T. F. Powys, *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, 46]

And one other walk, that I hope in my last hour to remember: it was in a cold February, and we walked far over the downs, over the white dead grass, dry and crisp in the wind; and we rested a little and ate in a place where a little mound rose above the hill. And we watched, in the valley beneath us, tiny children running to school beside a little blue trickle of water, and large gulls were washing and flapping their

wings in the water. The children called to them and waved their arms, and the gulls rose and spread like snowflakes over the valley, and the children ran on, holding each other's hands and singing.

[T.F.Powys, *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, 42–3]



Cecily Hill and Glen Cavaliero intently listening.

The Conference, 2013 (continued)

‘Placing John Cowper Powys’

(a brief view from Editor’s notes – we will hope to read these thought-filled talks in next year’s Journal)

After breakfast on Saturday, **Katherine Saunders Nash** (from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond VA, USA) spoke on ‘The Serpentine Narrator: John Cowper Powys’s Turn from Lecturer to Novelist’. John Hodgson, introducing, recalled Kate Nash’s thesis on Feminist Ethics, and wondered if there could be a connection with JCP’s self-diagnosed feminine elements ...

KSN recalled her early captivation by *A Glastonbury Romance* in her minuscule student’s room in Virginia – designed as quarters for slaves – and her unfashionable choice of Powys for her dissertation.

It was in *Wood and Stone* that she found comparisons with his lecturer’s voice as a ‘rapturous chameleon’, identifying with his subject, both projecting (‘serpentine’) *into* and being possessed by it, not performing one-way as a mesmerist, or as in a theatre performance, but as both recipient and operator on the passive lecture audience.

Moving on to include *Ducdame* and *Wolf Solent*, she analysed JCP’s often underestimated craft in managing multiple layers of point of view, both among characters and with the author’s shifting vantage points. *Ducdame* also presents several relations between persons asleep or dead (as when Rook’s mother confers with her husband) – an interaction not unlike lecturing on dead authors.

The novels are digressive by nature and often challenging, without a 'norm' the reader can recognise – shifting from credulous to sceptical, ludic and ironic. Most novelists avoid this. JCP's readers – often unacquainted with his private personality – need to work, to follow and participate with the chameleon – serpentine – narrator.

During discussion, **Robert Caserio** asked about the status of the supernatural in JCP; **Glen Cavaliero** drew attention to the beautiful scene in *Ducdame* between Rook and his son, a visitant from the future. **Tim Hyman** found the supernatural element in *Ducdame* patchy, but crucial in *A Glastonbury Romance*. **Sonia Lewis** found a world in between real and super-real. **Jacqueline Peltier** reminded of the difference from Proust, who has no place for the supernatural.



*Kate Saunders-Nash
giving her talk.*

The next morning talk, by **Charles Lock** (University of Copenhagen) was on 'Wolf Solent and World Literature' – i.e.

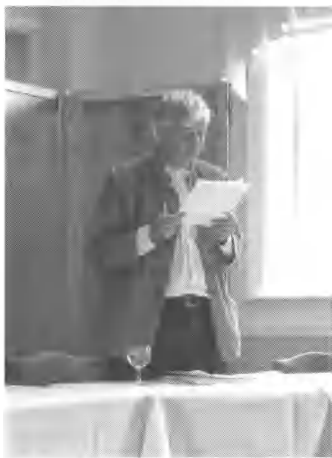
as he explained, Dostoevsky, James, and other contemporaries, including Dorothy Richardson and Nabokov – and came from his own lasting admiration, on repeated readings, for *Wolf*.

Aspects touched on included the topographical anomalies (John Cowper's own sketch maps bearing no strict relation to reality, and adding *-shire*, unusually, to Dorset and Somerset); also the differences from Hardy in – for example – the role of walking: in Hardy a necessity, with Powys also a leisure activity, similar to reading. Walkers by choice, in Powys, are sympathetic.

JCP's 'refracted discourses' (going off at a tangent, both straight and bent) were related to the scientist Rutherford's childhood observation of a stick in a pond (rather different from little John Cowper's stick-and-pond experiences). JCP created patterns of time and illusion (at 90 recalling being 50 recalling being 5). Like E. M. Forster, he may have regretted having to have a *story*. *Wolf*, as protagonist, is interested in himself and in himself with others, but is neither a detached observer nor an explainer. Like Hamlet, he has the main role but frustrates expectations. Inconsistencies conceal the 'plot'. Seeing it as a 'film in the head' distracts from the discipline of words on the page.

Comparisons were made with Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (showing, not explaining, confusion) and with Faulkner (sequences and different versions of events). *Ulysses*, with its carefully plausible synchronicity, becomes the pattern for modernistic novels. Readers are expected to work it out. *Wolf* is and is not traditional; with no narrative core, no certainty, nothing predictable beyond *Wolf*'s consciousness. It is interesting how *Wolf* does not appear to read books; walking (and thinking) takes the place of reading. Absence of peasants in the countryside means no distraction! *Wolf*'s mythology is all inward: this affects the rate of time (Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* elaborates this – both these novels begin with the hero on a train, like Dostoevsky's *Idiot*.)

Charles's special interest in the book is the character of Roger Monk, a shape-shifter appearing in different guises, from butler to labourer, appearing and disappearing as if a character in *Alice* (the first book JCP read). Monk is a non-native, from Derbyshire like JCP. Perhaps his alter ego? Mysterious figures, often men in raincoats, commonly appear in modern



*Timothy Hyman
introduces.*

novels – the insertion of the author in his book? **Monk** seems to have uncanny powers: he can see through trees; his cottage window reflects the figure of **Wolf** like a vision. Is **Monk** subverting **Wolf**? Or subverting the author? Are they ‘double-booked’ in the Multiverse?

In discussion, other contemporaries noted as sharing something with JCP were Iris Murdoch, Phyllis Paul, Robert Musil, and of course Mann (*Writers of Today*, edited by Val Baker in 1948, gives an idea of how Powys was viewed at this date). Sonia Lewis found similarities between **Monk** and **Urien** in *Maiden Castle*, Louise de Bruin with **Merlin** in *Porius*.

Saturday evening was devoted to T. F. Powys’s *Fables*. **Kate Kavanagh** (standing in for P. J. Kavanagh who was unable to be there) read ‘The Hat and the Post’, PJK’s choice, with his notes on it. In his view the *Fables* could be called (others disagreed) ‘Soliloquies of a Misanthrope’. Human conversation is worthless, hypocritical, self-deceiving, vainglorious,

competitive. There is no truth in it. But words are useful, so can be given to inanimate objects (a dishcloth, a clock, a wave) or occasionally to a bird or a worm. These use words objectively, not hypocritically.

‘The Hat and the Post’, one of the most ambiguous of the *Fables*, is the only one which takes on language itself. Its central character Mr Bonnet uses language (perhaps unconsciously) to patronise people, despising animals and inanimate things for being dumb. He is unexpectedly answered by the Post on which he has put his hat, turning it into an alternative version of himself. Unusually for speaking objects, Post is as vainglorious and boastful as a human. He silences Bonnet for good and all.

Like all TFP fables, it leaves the reader in suspense as to which side TFP is on, except that the now silenced Mr Bonnet rejoins the human race – instead of talking *at* the girl Lily he picks up her bundle of sticks and says nothing. The reader is left in the air.

John Hodgson then read a better-known Fable, ‘Mr Pim and the Holy Crumb’, with brilliant renderings of Mr Pim’s Dorset speech. No doubt we have to trust TFP in portraying the village folk as almost totally ignorant of the Christian religion (apart from swear words). Mr Pim’s desire not to be resurrected, disturbed by a trumpet in his cosy grave, chatting to his old friends, finds many supporters. The Crumb, in the person of God, disappointed at losing such company, is an endearing character. ‘*The Crumb smiled ...*’ Its disappearance into the jaws of the mouse is reminiscent on a small scale of Mr Weston’s disappearance in an exploding petrol tank.

Not everyone in the audience was familiar with these most Theodorian tales, all so different and unpredictable, both strongly partisan where humans are concerned, and un-moral (at least explicitly) as to their fates. The animals come in for more compassion; the inanimates seem impervious to destiny.

On Sunday morning Charles Lock introduced the final speaker, **Robert Caserio** (Pennsylvania State University, USA) who has published widely on the history and theory of the novel. His subject, ‘Powys amid English and American Autobiographies of the 1930s’ promised to

draw on the 'remarkable constellation' of autobiographical writing that included Churchill, Connolly, DuBois, Fitzgerald, Isherwood, MacNeice, Miller, and Wells, with a view to 'placing JCP' – or *displacing* him – among his fellow-travellers.

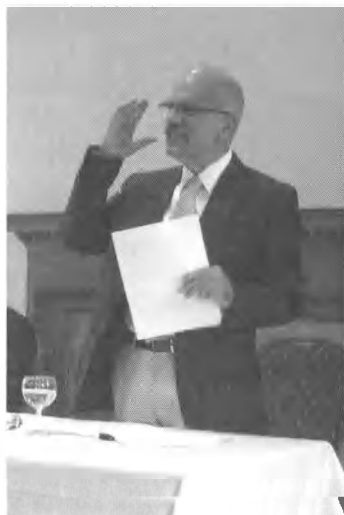
Reliance on Powys's *Autobiography*, as in Morine Krissdóttir's *Descents of Memory*, seeing it as a maze providing Freudian and other clues, has (as she admits) to allow for doubt. The biography traces these transformations of memory into healing fiction. But Powys disrupts sequences of events and blurs memories by repetition. He selects notable childhood incidents (like trying to hang Littleton) and calls on the divine gift of forgetting.

For Powys, the present is what counts, and his meditations, as a sixty-year-old, swamp straight storytelling and social comment. His chapters are significantly named from places, not chronology. Reading *Alice* as a child – the pleasure of reading – is just as important as actual events; fantasy and reality are equivalent. His omissions (mother, wife, love-life) and his ingrained lifelong detestation of 'society', open gaps in his life. *Autobiography* is agglutinative, only incidentally a narrative. The many Powys siblings are significant for purposes of comparison (his notion of the erotic in contrast to Llewelyn's); and he could mythologise himself in contrast to them (a lecturer like a vampire, sucking vitality from his hearers).

A contrasting autobiography is that of Conrad (1912) which has breaks in continuity occasioned by social and historical themes (his sea career, his first novel, the state of Poland). Dreiser's (1922, expanded 1931) is one of disenchantment, contrasting his early dreams with actuality. Maugham (1938), unlike JCP, proceeds step by step, tracing his own development as an artist and a morally free spirit. But Powys relates to the cosmos, not to society. RC compared and contrasted *The Education of Henry Adams* (1905 – 'the end of the individual'), Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, and Gertrude Stein (in 1937) investigating the nuisance of being 'I' – 'Going On Being' different from 'yourself'. The personal/ impersonal haunts all autobiography.

Powys mingles recalled impulses with allegorical helpers and personifications (Conscience, the Demons of viciousness). He acts as a 'Zany' (in the Venice/ Corvo incident, crossing 'reality' – the police – with fantasies of smearing the boy-girl Frances with honey). He likes non-sequiturs and the perverse (in art liking only eighteenth-century landscapes, for their suggestiveness, finding girls attractive only if not conventionally erotic). RC explored JCP in relation to biology, politics, and literary history: his 'vegetative' life, his attitudes to American society. Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* appeared in the same year as *Autobiography*, and shares much with it in its withdrawal and surrender ('better a victim than a warrior'). Miller's compulsive eros compares with JCP's 'viciousness'. Both are proud to be 'inhuman', free of creeds and principles. Both love whatever flows.

Other contrasts are with Wells and his solutions ('world citizens' ideology), or Christopher Isherwood's *Lions and Shadows* (another 'zany' persona, a social outsider, with more mystic elements). But Powys is *situated elsewhere*.

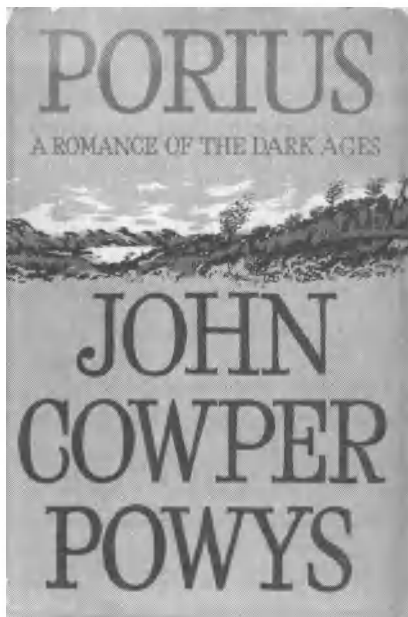


Robert Caserio
in action.

Discussion continued after the AGM. A question was raised on the ending of *Autobiography* ('the astronomical world is *not* all there is' – too upbeat for some – Caserio was happy with it). Comments ranged widely over the varieties of 'autobiographical fiction'. Stephen Reynolds coined the term *autobiografiction* to define his *A poor man's house* – a term often cited in Max Saunders' *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (2010).

Other connections: the role of Saturn in JCP's 'mythical resources'; the involvement with anarchism; similarities in Hawthorne (mesmerism, the prototype 'sylph', the title of *The Blithedale Romance*). Other contemporaries: the influential Floyd Dell; T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and *The Mint*; Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, Williamson's *Patriot's Progress* (there was a spate of semi-fictional WWI memoirs in 1927–34 — these are a different *genre*, as are success stories, and chronicles of the growth of a writer's mind: JCP is none of these). Dorothy Richardson takes introspection a stage further in her *Pilgrimage*; D. H. Lawrence insists on the integrity of the 'I', in his poetry, his travel-writing, and in *Kangaroo*. Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* is in some ways the antithesis of JCP, who admired but resisted Joyce. An interesting footnote: JCP's hero Jean-Jaques Rousseau spent time in Derbyshire.

KK



Dustjacket design by Werner Stein for Porius, published in 1951 (see p. 44).

DVDs of the Conference

Llangollen, August 2013

The 2013 Powys Society Conference is available on **3 DVDs** with a total time of 4 hours 22 minutes.

D I S C O N E

Charles Lock: 'Wolf Solent' and World Literature: Double Bookings and Refracted Discourse, Introduced by Glen Cavaliero. (64m)

Katherine Saunders Nash: 'Real and Implied Authors: John Cowper Powys and the Serpentine Novelists', Introduced by John Hodgson. (54m)

D I S C T W O

Glen Cavaliero: 'Endurance and Enjoyment: The Pleasures of Powys'. (42m)

Robert Caserio: 'Powys amid English and American Autobiographies of the 1930s'. (42m)

(NB. Apology: the first few minutes of this talk were lost because of a technical error. There were also some extraneous noises at times.)

D I S C T H R E E

T. F. Powys's *Fables*: readings of 'The Hat and the Post' (Kate Kavanagh) and 'Mr Pim and the Holy Crumb' (John Hodgson), followed by discussion with members. (58m)

The cost of the 3 DVDs is **£8** including postage to UK addresses.
Cheque or PO to **R. E. Cox**, please (**NOT** The Powys Society)

Please order from:

Raymond Cox, 4 Lulworth Close, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2UJ

For enquiries from overseas please e-mail for price:

<rymd.cox@gmail.com>

Regret DVDs of previous conferences are no longer available.

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting The Hand Hotel, Llangollen, 18th August 2013

Present: Glen Cavaliero (President), Timothy Hyman (Chairman), Chris Thomas (Secretary), Anna Pawelko (Treasurer), Stephen Powys Marks, Louise de Bruin, Charles Lock (*Powys Journal* Editor), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter* Editor), Shelagh Hancox, Jeff Kwintner and some 30 members.

Apologies were received from: Peter Foss (Vice-Chairman), Michael Kowalewski (Collection Manager), Trevor Davies.

President's thanks

The President, **Glen Cavaliero**, expressed his gratitude and thanks to the Conference organisers, Louise de Bruin and Anna Pawelko.

The Chairman repeated thanks to the Conference organisers for their hard work and constant efforts to ensure everything runs smoothly. Their attention to detail and ability to keep Conference activities on schedule is very much appreciated by everyone.

The Chairman expressed the Society's thanks to **Charles Lock**, Editor, and **Louise de Bruin**, publications manager, of the *Powys Journal*; and to **Kate Kavanagh**, Editor, and **Stephen Powys Marks**, production manager, for the *Newsletter*, for ably producing the *Journal* and three *Newsletters* to a very high professional standard, providing members with a wide range of reading material. Thanks were also expressed for work on typesetting of the *Journal* by **Jerry Bird**. This year's *Journal* was especially interesting with appearance of the previously unpublished correspondence between John Cowper Powys and the American writer James Purdy. Thanks were also due to our Webmaster **Frank Kibblewhite**, for maintaining and expanding the website on which many now rely for information about the Powys Society.

The Chairman thanked Raymond Cox for continuing to produce a filmed record of proceedings at Conference each year and making this available to members on DVDs. Ray's work is highly valued. A copy of each film is deposited in the Powys Society Collection for reference by others.

The Chairman also thanked **Shelagh Powys Hancox** and **Sonia Lewis** who had volunteered to manage the bookroom, a useful source of income and a valued traditional feature of our Conferences.

The Chairman reported on successful meetings held at Ely in April and Dorchester in June, both much enjoyed by members. The Chairman said he also looked forward to a third meeting, in London, in the autumn [**November 23rd**], organised by our past Chairman John Hodgson, on the subject of **JCP's diaries**.

The Chairman outlined plans for the future of the Powys Society Collection. The Committee is in the process of drafting a **new Collection Agreement** and making arrangements, in collaboration with the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, and the University of Exeter, to transfer the Collection from the Dorset County Museum to a new location in the Special Collections at the University of Exeter. The Chairman said that he felt the Society was breaking new ground with these arrangements, that discussions with the University of Exeter and the Director of the Dorset County Museum were very amicable and positive and he has great hopes for the future of the Collection in a scholarly environment, where it would be more widely used by a new generation of students and readers.

The Chairman's full report for **2012–2013** is published in *Newsletter* 79.

Minutes of 2012 AGM

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2012 published in the *Newsletter* 77 were approved.

Nomination of Honorary Officers and members of Committee 2013-2014

Nominations to The Powys Society Committee published in the *Newsletter* 79 were approved. The Hon. Officers and Committee members from August 2013 to August 2014 will therefore be the following:

Officers: **Timothy Hyman** (Chairman), **Peter Foss** (Vice-Chairman), **Chris Thomas** (Hon. Secretary), **Anna Pawelko** (Hon. Treasurer).

Committee members: **Louise de Bruin**, **Stephen Powys Marks**, **Michael Kowalewski** (Collection Manager), **Shelagh Powys Hancox**, **Trevor Davies**, **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter* Editor), and **Jeff Kwintner**. **Charles Lock** (Editor of *The Powys Journal*) serves as *ex-officio* member.

Report of the Hon. Treasurer

The Treasurer said that the Society's Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2012 had been independently inspected and approved. Full details of all expenditure, income and outgoings, for 2012 can be found in the *Newsletter* 79 on page 5. The Treasurer said that currently the balance of the Society's main account was £17,000.

Collection Manager's Report

The Collection Manager reported that he had not received any new requests for visits to the Collection to deposit new material or for the study of documents. He anticipated however there would be greater demands on the use of the contents of the Collection once it had been transferred to Exeter University.

Hon. Secretary's Report

Membership: The Secretary said that during the course of 2012-2013 seventeen new members had joined the Society, eight members had retired and withdrawn from the Society, and three members were deceased (Donald Fangmeyer, Patricia Dawson, and very recently David Hill); fourteen members were removed from the members' list for non-payment, producing current total membership of 256.

Renewal of Subscriptions: The Secretary said that we can make financial savings and reduce the costs of overheads such as postage if members who do not pay their subscription by standing order could renew their membership early in the year. This initiative will also help save time and other resources.

Website news: The Secretary reported that significant new additions have been made to the webliography and new useful links added. The Secretary reaffirmed his thanks to **Frank Kibblewhite** for continuing to manage the website and keep it up to date with information about events and publications. Most new members come to the Society via our website so it is very important that it is regularly refreshed and kept attractive to potential new Powysians.

National Library of Wales: The Secretary said that the Society was very sorry to hear about the fire at the National Library of Wales earlier in the year, but relieved to learn that items in the historic collection were undamaged and that books and manuscripts relating to the Powys family were all unaffected. The Society expressed thanks to **Geraint Phillips** at the National Library of Wales for his efforts organising the exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the death of JCP. The exhibition will remain open at the National Library of Wales until February 2014.

Powys Society Collection: The Secretary explained the progress the Committee has made to

secure long-term future of the Powys Society Collection in a new location following decisions made at last years AGM. The Committee, having explored a number of different options and alternative institutions and locations, agreed that Exeter University offered the most suitable and appropriate new repository to house the Collection. Meetings were held with the Directors of Exeter University Heritage Collections, and the Trustees of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society to explore the best way forward. The meetings were very amicable and the outcomes very positive. All parties agreed the Collection should be deposited on loan to Exeter University. All parties expressed willingness to explore how wider use may be made of items in the Collection in a new academic context and felt that there was now great potential for raising wider awareness of the Collection amongst teachers and students, as well as other readers. The Secretary said that the Committee is now negotiating with Exeter University and the Trustees of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society to help develop a new Powys Society Collection Agreement. When all issues have been resolved a strategy will be developed for removal of the Collection. Some artefacts, objects and photographs will remain at the Dorset County Museum and there will continue to be a public display of items selected from the Collection in the Writers' Gallery.

Date and Venue of 2014 Conference

Members approved the proposed venue at the Sherborne Hotel, Sherborne, and the date of the Conference as 15–17th August 2014.

A O B

Jacqueline Peltier proposed **W. J. (Bill) Keith** (Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Toronto) for **honorary life membership**. The proposal was seconded by **Charles Lock** and approved by members. Professor Keith has produced invaluable guides and commentaries to accompany books by JCP and on the Powyses in general. His latest book, *Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and the Powyses* was available for sale at the Conference.

Kate Kavanagh said that she welcomed contributions to the *Newsletter* from members on any Powys-related subject, including reviews of the growing number of on-line blogs, and encouraged members to submit new material at any time.

Charles Lock said that he welcomed submissions from members especially reviews of books but also information about unpublished original documents associated with the Powyses. The Editor of *The Powys Journal* also said that efforts to digitise the *Journal* were very important. Publishing *The Powys Journal* online will provide a valuable tool for researchers.

Jacqueline Peltier suggested it would be a good idea if someone could investigate if there were any on-line resources or databases that might indicate whether any PhD theses had been published, worldwide, in recent years on the subject of the works of the Powyses.

The Chairman, with the Secretary, appealed once more for **volunteers** to come forward and offer any skills or knowledge that might help the Committee carry forward the Society's various projects, and to support production of the Society's publications.

The **AGM** concluded with a reading by the Chairman of selections from JCP's unpublished diaries of the 1930s and 1940s.

Two Powys Days, 2014

Two Powys days are still in process of final arrangement, one in Norfolk for 26th April, the other in Dorchester, in July.

Brandon, Norfolk, Saturday 26th April 2014

A discussion of the Norfolk chapters of *A Glastonbury Romance*: 'The Will' and 'The River'. The meeting will be held in the function room of the **Brandon House Hotel**, which has pleasant views on to the garden, and is conveniently located just around the corner from Brandon railway station. Brandon is an old market town on the edge of Thetford Forest and Brandon Heath. Discussion will be followed by lunch and a visit to the village of **Northwold** situated a few miles to the north of Brandon. Northwold has strong Powys family associations – JCP's maternal grandfather, William Cowper Johnson (1813–1893), the model for Canon Crow in *A Glastonbury Romance*, was Rector of Northwold from 1880 to 1892, and JCP, Littleton and Theodore often spent their summer holidays at the Rectory. There are very evocative descriptions of Northwold in Littleton's *The Joy of It* and in JCP's *Autobiography*. In his diary, for 3rd to 9th August 1929, JCP also recorded a visit to his old childhood haunts in Northwold (helping to provide material for *A Glastonbury Romance*). Littleton called Northwold 'my boyhood's Earthly Paradise'.

Welcome and coffee at 10.30. Discussion starting at 11.00. Lunch served in the restaurant from 13.00 to 14.00. If you wish to stay overnight you may reserve b&b accommodation direct with the hotel.

Extensive background material and family trees will be found in 'Powys Family Connections in East Anglia', by Stephen Powys Marks (*The Powys Journal* XIII).

Dorchester (July, date to be confirmed)

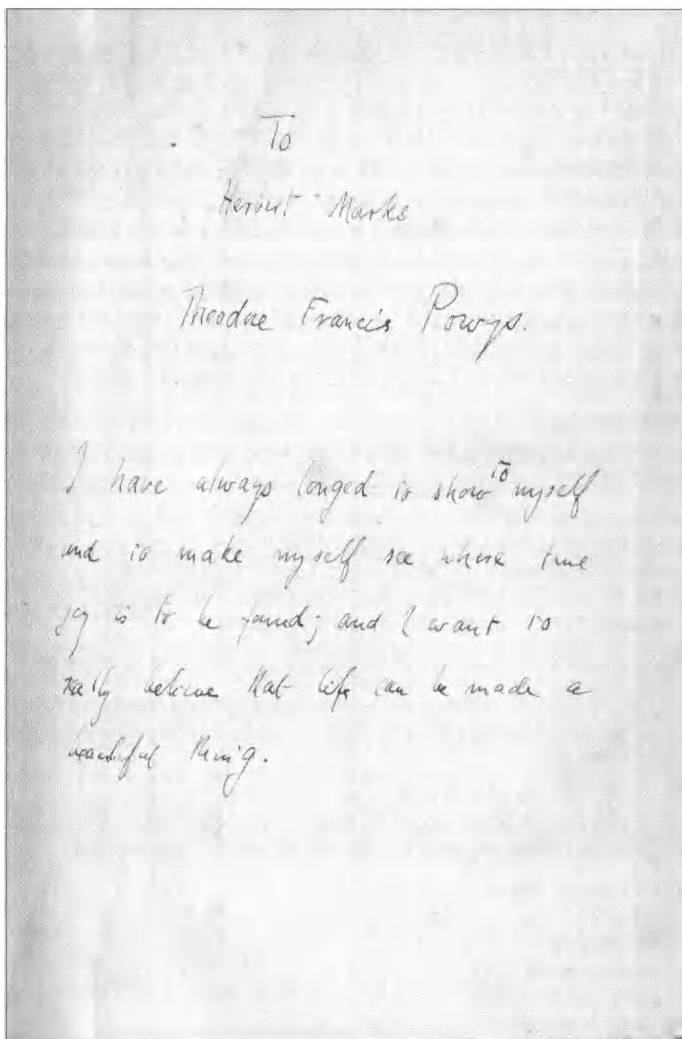
At the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, a talk on the life, career and writings of **John Meade Falkner** (1858–1932), followed by discussion. Meeting at 10.30 for 11.00 start; coffee and refreshments available. Lunch from 13.00 to 14.00 at a local restaurant.

The author, poet, businessman and teacher, John Meade Falkner, spent his childhood in Dorchester and Weymouth and was closely acquainted with many of the locations associated with the Powys family, such as the West Walks in Dorchester, and Chesil beach, Portland, and the village of Fleet near Weymouth. Falkner's most famous novel, *Moonfleet* (1898), is set around Chesil and Fleet. Falkner was a friend of Hardy and a keen collector of medieval books and manuscripts. After a long business career in the armaments industry he was appointed senior reader in palaeography at Durham University. In the afternoon, a visit to places associated with Falkner and the Powys family in **Weymouth, Chesil and Abbotsbury**.

The date for this meeting is to be confirmed, but will be on a Saturday in July 2014.

Both events are free although a charge will be made for lunch which is optional. We welcome contributions towards the cost of coffee and refreshments. **Everyone is welcome** to attend including non-members. Confirmation of these events, and more details, in the next (March) *Newsletter*. Meanwhile if you plan to attend, and for information, please contact the Hon. Secretary Chris Thomas by e-mail or by post or by telephone (see inside front cover.

CT



Inscription in a copy of the first English edition of Soliloquies of a Hermit (1918), page height 7.25 inches.

John Cowper Powys at the NLW in Aberystwyth

A visit, Monday 19th August 2013

Jacqueline Peltier reports:

A small but compact & fascinating exhibition on the first floor of the NLW, instigated by Dr Geraint Phillips, Manuscripts Curator, and by Ms Mari Elin Jones of the Library's exhibitions team, who wrote the captions for books and photographs. The exhibition will run until February 2014.

At the end of the Powys Conference at Llangollen, Marcella Henderson-Peal, Sylvie Vaudier and I decided to drive to Aberystwyth and visit the exhibition on John Cowper Powys held at the National Library of Wales. It was well worth a long visit. Dr Geraint Phillips was kind enough to be present for us on Monday morning. (My friends had arrived before me and already seen it.) He escorted me to the fairly small room which held the JCP memorabilia, and very tactfully left me by myself to enjoy the perusal of all the material assembled in the different show cases. It was a moving experience to be able to survey those documents and photographs which had been part of John Cowper Powys's life: his books, including some foreign editions, the letters, diaries, poems or manuscripts he wrote in the hand that we recognise at once. Understandably, many items dealt with Wales. I made a list of the main documents which attracted my attention, as I came to them one after the other.

‡ A selection of early letters

from his father 1915 (thanking JCP for his birthday letter)

from Llewelyn 1925

‡ Unpublished tales written by JCP:

'Llewelyn Meredith', c.1883, with some drawings by JCP

'The Knight of the Festoon', 1883, written in a small pocket-book

'Work without a name', c.1902-1903, in a black ledger with big pages.

The protagonist is called 'Owen Glendower' in one of the drafts.

‡ A passport photograph of a middle-aged JCP taken when he was in America.

‡ A sketch in pencil of JCP lecturing, c.1903, done (supposedly) by one of his students, Maria Vernie Pease, as she saw him: an inspired angel preaching, the sleeves of his gown floating in the air as though they were wings.

‡ A letter from Henry Miller to JCP, June 6, 1950:

'You were always lean & spare always bird-like — ready to "take off" at a moment's notice. What are a few white hairs or one dim eye? The spirit is all and you are all spirit.'

‡ A poem by JCP to Phyllis Playter :

A wind-tost leaf that

imperceptibly

Drafts on the air unseen

yet ever seeing

I made my heart a candle

'gainst the rain

A candle 'gainst the wind-swept

window pane.

- ‡ An early letter to P.P. c.1921
- ‡ Autograph of the ending of *A Glastonbury Romance*
- ‡ Diary for 1929
- ‡ Diary for 1939, where Llewelyn's death is recorded thus:
Saturday 2 December. 'Lulu died this morning. We all three felt numb and cold, and not believing it or realising it.'
Monday 4 December. 'Yesterday we all 3 went to the mountain ... we have made a carnedd Llewelyn ym Mhowys.'
- ‡ Photo of the cairn to Llewelyn.
- ‡ JCP's final diary entry in 1961 :
'We are now both of us Phyllis and John, still downstairs, and it is now half past six.'
- ‡ A big enlargement of a beautiful photograph taken by Allan Chappelow (1919–2006), of an aged JCP, lost in thought, seeming to look outside the window, sitting on the window sill, half smiling. (Probably taken at Corwen)
- ‡ A few translations of his works are shown:
Wolf Solent, in Hungarian
A Philosophy of Solitude, in Japanese
Adamo Skald (Jobber Skald), in Italian
The Art of Happiness, in Swedish
Confessions de deux Frères, in French (tr. by C. Poussier & A. Bruneau)
- ‡ A big panel giving in Welsh and English the categories of JCP's main works. Thus:
Nofelau / Novels
Athroniaeth / Philosophy
Ysgrifau / Essays
Barddoniaeth / Poetry
Hunangofiannol / Autobiographical
- ‡ A copy of the big illustrated quarto, *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers & Other Poems* by W. E. Aytoun, which turned JCP 'once and for all into an obstinate, incurable romanticist.' (See *Autobiography*, 'Shirley')
- ‡ A bust of JCP by Olof de Wet
- ‡ The first page of the manuscript of *Wolf Solent* which, judging by its beginning, gave me the impression it was of an early version.
- ‡ A letter from JCP to Gilbert Turner (1945) giving him the list of the characters in *Porius*.
- ‡ Diary for 1937
- ‡ A speech in Welsh given by JCP on the occasion of his ordination as a member of the Powys Gorsedd at Corwen in May 1936.
- ‡ An address book kept by JCP during the last 20 years of his life.
- ‡ A letter written by JCP to Marian during WW2, which was returned by the censor because it contained drawings. These were strictly forbidden, because of the suspicion they could be codes.
- ‡ Videos from *The Great Powys*, a film directed by Herbert Williams at Kingston Maurward during the 1994 conference, showing scenes in which the Welsh actor Freddie Jones reads and plays passages from *Owen Glendower*.

Llewelyn Powys's 129th Birthday, 2013

Dandelion Fellowship Annual Gathering and Walk

The great Flemish artist, Breughel the elder, is believed to have painted a series of pictures representing each month of the year. His picture of the month of August, now in the New York Metropolitan Museum, treats of a harvest landscape with the corn standing ready for the sickle, as it were a solid substance of golden bread! Evidently the genial opulence of the month of August had deeply stirred the artist's imagination. Everything in his picture seems to be praising the earth, whose procreant urge has given birth to so much sweltering life ...; each several spearhead of bearded corn stands grateful in the sunshine.

(Llewelyn Powys, *The Twelve Months*, John Lane The Bodley Head, 1936).

August 13th. Llewelyn's birthday, the weather he loved best, with hot sunshine ripening the corn, and butterflies everywhere, the sky blue, and phlox and marigold out in the garden.

(Alyse Gregory, Journal 1944).

Alyse Gregory's words are a perfect description of the day sixty-nine years later. Last year's torrential downpour was but a distant memory as we gathered at noon in The Sailor's Return, with the surrounding landscape bearing a remarkable resemblance to Breughel's quintessential painting of the month of August, as described by Llewelyn.

This was real 'Dandelion' weather, and myself and my two fellow 'Dandelions', Jason & Sean, had driven down overnight from Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire respectively, whilst once again Byron & Eirlys Ashton in their distinctive green camper-van had motored all the way from Caerphilly in Wales to join us.

We were met on the sun-drenched, parasol-tabled terrace at The Sailor's Return



Group at Chydyok.

by our *Newsletter* editor, Kate Kavanagh, and joined by John Sanders from Wellingborough, who had interrupted his holiday with wife Jayne for the walk up to Llewelyn's Stone high on Chaldon Down. Salisbury artist Rosemary Dickens arrived with daughter Mel and father, Norman (96), and with the tortuous climb up and over Chalky Knapp (and ageing legs!) firmly in mind arrangements were quickly made for Kate & me to have a lift with Rosemary and Norman in the car, as far as Chydyok ...

Chris Gostick and friends had previously arrived for lunch with John Batten, originator of the Birthday Walk, and had brought apologies from Rob and Honor Timlin who sadly couldn't be with us owing to Rob's recent illness. Richard Burleigh's much lamented absence was entirely due to a lack of transport, and after Chris had proposed the annual toast and we'd raised our glasses to Llewelyn, we drank a toast to 'absent friends', wished Rob a quick and full recovery, and the five who were walking set off in full sunshine. I suddenly had an attack of conscience and decided to join them, painful verruca, dodgy knee and all as they dawdled through the sun-drenched village towards the Chydyok road. Twenty minutes later as I enviously watched Rosemary's car carrying Kate, Mel and Norman creep past with tyres crunching on the steep climb up to Chalky Knapp, leaving a thick trail of dust in its wake, wondering if I'd made the right decision! But with Jason frequently urging, *Come on dad, onward and upward, you can do it*, and the delightful company of John, Byron, Eirlys and Sean, Chalky Knapp was a breeze. We took a welcome rest and gazed in awe and wonder at the surrounding landscape, golden corn in full splendour as far as the eye could see.

We received a very warm welcome at Chydyok from Fabian Heus, a fellow Powys Society member from Holland who was staying there with his family, and we were very kindly offered refreshment and invited to look around at our leisure. A total of nine then made the pilgrimage up over Tumbledown and along what Llewelyn sometimes called 'the old Gypsy Track' towards the Obelisk Field, and finally to Llewelyn's Memorial Stone, set close to the barbed-wire boundary fence and standing almost in the top corner of the field, facing southward to Portland and the sea.

I read several passages from Alyse Gregory's, *The Cry of a Gull*. A significant one from September 28th 1947:

Gertrude, Katy and I have just got back from putting Llewelyn's ashes in the place dug by Mr Trevis, three feet deep in chalk. We climbed the stile and got over the barbed wire fence and walked through Tumbledown and along the cliff path, Gertrude carrying a spade, Katie a fork, and I a shovel. The sky was overcast with dense clouds forming a curtain, the horizon as if a silver pencil had traced a thin line all round the edge, the sea sometimes deep blue, sometimes blue-grey. Gertrude carved an ankh with a penknife on the wooden box that held a zinc box with the ashes, then she got in the grave and placed it on the floor. Katie had brought a sunflower to place on it and Gertrude 'boy's love', and I ground ivy which I associate with all our walks together, and a yarrow, my wedding flower. We filled it in again

and came back along the cliff picking up sticks for our fire.

And in October 1947:

Have just come from Llewelyn's grave where I met the quarrymen and Betty and Walter Miller. We watched it lowered into place facing the sea with a strong east wind blowing. The head quarryman said, 'It will last a thousand years, it will last forever'.

It was such a beautiful day that we lingered beside the stone on the ewe-cropped down-land grass of this venerated and solitary place, before slowly making our way back along the coastal path. Down in the village Rosemary took us to St Nicholas' churchyard where we paid our respects at the graves of Walter Franzen, Katie Powys, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland, and our own sadly missed Janet (Machen) Pollock. It struck me as we left for the long drive home that the two simple words on Janet Pollock's memorial stone were a version of the message on Llewelyn's. 'Love Life' – and we most certainly had on this most memorable of days, in our wonderful 'fellowship of the Dandelion'.

Neil Lee-Atkin

What luck with the weather! I was very glad at last to be able to join this yearly event (its nearness to the Conference makes it difficult). I was sorry to miss the chance of saluting John Batten, expert editor of the *Newsletter* for many years. Thank you, Rosemary and Mel, for the half-way lift. I had never been to Chydyok before, and it was a bonus finding Fabian, that most enthusiastic Powysian, with his beautiful family. I had imagined the house more isolated, not with the big barn beside it. It was hard to envisage the garden of the 1930s.

The clifftop was exhilarating, the sea dark blue with the distant line of Portland. A large flock of identical sheep ran like a cloud of starlings, herded to an enclosure by a knowing dog. The Stone is impressive, its lettering still deep. I was intrigued by the story of it having been moved, and the site of the box of ashes now unknown. Perhaps this is more poetic – mythology tells of many hidden graves. Perhaps Llewelyn's devotees acknowledge this, and have abstained from a search with metal detectors. The wind bloweth where it listeth. It is not hard in this place to feel the presence of that strong spirit.

Kate Kavanagh

Patricia Dawson memorial

Patricia Dawson's children are currently arranging a memorial exhibition weekend, to be held in Clapham, south-west London, on 12th and 13th April 2014. Details will be up on Giles Dawson's Website as soon as such a thing exists! Meanwhile members can contact him on <gilesvdawson@gmail.com> (tel 01608 810137).

Katie's Cross

A note from John Sanders

I first repaired the cross at Janet Pollock's request thirteen years ago. Last year I noticed that the bottom portion had rotted away again, and after gaining permission from Stephen Powys Marks I made a second repair. On both occasions I brought the cross to work on at home in Northamptonshire, leaving an explanatory note at the church.



Tony Atmore

A Letter to Powys Society Members

This is a personal letter to fellow members of the Society, about John Cowper Powys and me. I would like to share my thoughts and feelings for John Cowper, and would welcome any response. In no way is this a literary probe into his works, an elucidation of or investigation into John Cowper's books (in the words on the back cover of Fawcner's *JCP and the Soul*). It's just what John Cowper means to me. I'm into my eighties, and somewhat forgetful, but not of John Cowper's writings. I've been with these for much of my life.

First, naturally, came *A Glastonbury Romance*. In 1955 I returned to England after completing my BA at the University of Cape Town, my birthplace. I was visiting Glastonbury because in those days I leaned quite heavily towards Roman Catholic Christianity, and I had to climb the Tor – Wearyall Hill? – to pay homage to Joseph of Arimathea's Holy Thorn Tree. Back in town I came across a bookshop, and there in the window was *Glastonbury Romance*. I had never heard of John Cowper Powys. But being in Glastonbury on 11th July, why not buy the town's Romance? I'll never forget

reading it. Nothing in print had moved me so much. Over several years (some of them back in Africa) I managed to get most of JC's other works. Later, I joined the Society. I knew by then that John Cowper was Master of European – including English! – literature and philosophy.

When my wife was ill three years ago, Glen Cavaliero sent me a lovely Cambridge card, writing 'I hope John Cowper will continue to offer sustenance ... I have always read him at times of trial.' Sadly a few months later, Prue died. Now I live alone, with my cat Dorabella and until very recently with my ancient Yorkie Maddy (now in spirit only), and lovely little garden, and I still get sustenance from John Cowper.

And I'm Happy, for which blessing there are good reasons, JC being one of the best. I'm a fan of Scandinavian crime novels, but I can't read too much these days, so it's mainly him. Reading, thinking about, feeling about, remembering John Cowper and I am happy. I look into, read through again, nearly all his writings. And the works done by his admirers. At the top of the pile are the Great Six, *Wolf Solent* to *Porius*: these are My Bible.

I love the actual stories, the great accounts of great – or minute – events; thoughts and discussions on history, philosophy, Christianity, other religions; the characters, their often strange relationships, their romances. These and all the other themes that writers enjoy studying and commenting upon, sometimes critically. The John Cowper novels – romances to me, great poetic romances – are like marvellous fruits or flowers, with many layers and leaves and petals, in whose centres lies the heart of My Bible: the passages in the Great Six that some readers consider just JC's padding or unnecessary interpolation: the sentences, paragraphs, sometimes even pages, about Nature. John Cowper's, Wolf's, Porius's poetic insights into Nature: flora and fauna; planet Earth with all her largely forgotten miracles and mysteries; Universe and multiverses with their miracles and mysteries discovered during the last few centuries by clever men and women; God, god and goddesses, life and death, relationships with fellow beings – from humans to blades of grass – and their souls.

I am aware of possible connotations my botanical image might produce in readers' minds: as with Wolf's Gerda when '... like a plant that has unloosed its perianth she displayed some inner petal of her personality ...' (102) As Morine Krissdóttir writes, '*Wolf Solent* is replete with nature imagery – glorious descriptions of plants, flowers, sky, ponds, birdsong, which at first glance is romantic nature worship and, at second glance, erotica.' (221)

From H. P. Collins's *Old Earth Man* to Harald Fawknér's *Amorous Life* and *JCP and the Soul*, to Janina Nordius's '*I Am Myself Alone*', Morine's *Descents* and many other writings on John Cowper, investigations into Wolf's 'mythology' and Porius's 'cavoseniargizing', into 'ecstasy' and 'soul', may fascinate, delight, interest, amuse, annoy me. Overall, though, the things people say about him dilate – blossom – rather than deflate my belief in John Cowper and Nature being at the heart of My Bible.

A year ago in the *Newsletter*, rather to my surprise, Harald Fawknér wrote 'Flowers have souls ... even stones have receptivity, exhibit specific forms of personal,

individualized responsiveness.' (PSNL 76). John Cowper's stones with their souls are generally much larger than mine, I think. I like little stones I've found in the fields or on the Heath when I was out walking with Maddy, bits of limestone, shining quartz and sharp menacing flints. I embrace their often keen-edged souls. Little stones with tiny holes through them enthrall me, subtle entries into the depths of our Earth. I've recently discovered the Hebrew Bible's word *nephesh* – life force, breath of life (spare me all the Christian Biblical translations of *nephesh*, please!) – this is my feeling about soul. This little quote from *Wolf* is a petal from my Bible, an enchantment:

It was a worship of all the separate, mysterious, living souls he approached: 'souls' of grass, trees, stones, animals, birds, fish; 'souls' of planetary bodies and of the bodies of men and women; the 'souls', even, of all manner of inanimate little things ... Their beauty held him in a magical enchantment; and between his soul and the 'soul' ... of whatever it was he happened to be regarding, there seemed to be established a tremulous and subtle reciprocity. (54,55)

Quite by chance, I've just been introduced to the opera *Thaïs*. My wife and I heard little of Massenet, but lately he has regained his rightful place as an excellent 19th century composer. So another overwhelm! *Thaïs* sings '*Je n'ai pas plus choisi / mon sort que ma nature*!' ('I no more chose my destiny than I did my nature.') I don't know about choosing *mon sort*, but *ma nature*? JCP's Nature perhaps chose me. Either way, *ma nature est sa Nature*.

Far far more significant than my old boy's day-dreamings is the longer term future of John Cowper and the other Powyses, which no doubt is a concern of every member of the Society. Will JC's books still be available and read by the end of the century? In a fascinating article in the latest *Radio Times* (July), Daniel Barenboim is quoted as saying '... we have to find a radical way to make a change in musical education. Otherwise classical music is not going to survive another 50 years.' No *Thaïs*! Can any of us Powysians radically change ordinary education? No more *Porius*! I feel helpless. Perhaps the Internet will save him/them/it – but that's way beyond me.

This is more than enough for a personal letter. If I go on quoting John Cowper and *Thaïs* (and Barenboim), I'll be writing a book. If what I written tickles anyone's fancy, please do send a comment. My address is: Tony Atmore, 2 Ransom Road, Tiptree, Colchester, CO5 0TL. My email: <tonyatmore@gmail.com>

Just a word about me and the Society. For many years I've had a problematic to diagnose but none the less painful neuropathic condition, which has made it difficult for me to travel, even to sit in a comfortable chair. So my attendance at Society meetings and gatherings has been sparse. I'm sorry about this, It has been a great loss to me. But the wonderful *Newsletter* and *Journal* nearly make up for this. Thank you all.

Tony Atmore

Littleton
from
J.C. & M.A. Powys
April 25th &
August 4th 1904

Like coloured spokes pass one by one
All pleasures and all pains —
Except the Wheel they circle on
There's nothing that remains —
Yet where the Wheel itself first ran
The Wheel full circle tends —
With "Ave frater!" life began
With "Vale frater!" ends —

Inscription celebrating his brother Littleton's birthday and wedding day in the first of two volumes of *Poems and Dialogues in Verse* by W. S. Landor (limited edition, London: J. M. Dent & Co, 1892); part of a set including six volumes of Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* (1891); page height 9 inches.

T. F. Powys: A Prayer

Holy Goddess Earth, parent of Nature, who dost generate all things, and regenerate the planet which thou alone showest to the folk upon earth: Thou guardian of heaven and sea, and arbiter of all the Gods, by whose influence Nature is wrapt in silence and slumber, thou art she who restorest day and puttest the darkness to flight, who governest the shades of night in all security, restraining at thy will the mighty chaos, winds and rain and storms, or again letting them loose. Thou churnest the deep to foam, and puttest the sun to flight, and arousest the tempests; or again at thy pleasure thou sendest forth the glad daylight.

Thou givest us food in safety by a perpetual covenant; and when our soul fleeth away, it is in thy bosom that we find our haven of rest. Thou too art called by the loving kindness of the Gods, the Great Mother, who hath conquered the god of mighty name. Thou art the force of the nations and the mother of the Gods, without whom nothing can be born or come to maturity.

Mighty art thou, Queen of Gods! Thee O Goddess I adore in thy Godhead, and on thy name I call: Vouchsafe now to fulfil my prayer, and I will give thee thanks, O Goddess, with the faith that thou hast deserved

.....

Mappowder

August 20th

Theodore Francis Powys

Quoted as a 12th-century monk's prayer in *Life in the Middle Ages* by Jay Williams. Written on the front flyleaves of The Phoenix Library edition of *Fables* (Chatto & Windus 1929, with drawings by Gilbert Spencer) in the Powys Collection. Other notes marked on 'Darkness and Nathaniel', 'The Seaweed and the Cuckoo Clock', and 'John Pardy and the Waves'. Phoenix 'now called No Painted Plumage'.

Ficke, Powys and Friends

Arthur Davison Ficke (1883–1945), friend of Edgar Lee Masters, lover of Edna St Vincent Millay, lawyer, poet, novelist, and connoisseur of Oriental art and Japanese prints, wrote several poems about John Cowper Powys. JCP was one of Ficke's closest friends in America.

'Portrait of the Incomparable John Cowper Powys Esq', from 'Ten Grotesques', was published in the *Little Review*, March 1915 and reprinted in *Newsletter* 43, July 2001 (page 17, following one on JCP by Edgar Lee Masters. For a study of this sequence of Ficke's poems see *Midwestern Miscellany* 8, 1980). 'To John Cowper Powys, on his Confessions' first appeared in the *Little Review*, April 1916. It was republished under the title 'King of Salamanders: To John Cowper Powys' in Ficke's *Selected Poems* (Doubleday, 1926), and was reprinted in *Newsletter* 30, 1997 (pp.12–13). An extract from this poem can also be found on Jacqueline Peltier's website. The Powys Society Collection contains a copy of Ficke's *Selected Poems* with a curious inscription by Ficke which probably only JCP could properly interpret: 'To John Cowper Powys with love and terror from his friend Arthur Davison Ficke.'

Ficke wrote at least two other poems about John Cowper Powys but these seem to be much less well known. They are printed below. The short poem 'To John Cowper Powys' was included in Ficke's collection *The Secret and other Poems* (1936). 'Portrait' (one of several with that title) was first published in *Poetry: a magazine of verse* vol. 53 number IV, January 1939. This poem may or may not be about JCP as, unlike Ficke's other poems dedicated to JCP, it is not directly addressed to him by name. However when an extract from the poem was reprinted in a local newspaper, *The Niagara Falls Gazette*, on 4th February 1939, in a column by Richmond George Anthony entitled: 'Poetry Promenade, a weekly digest of America's outstanding current poetry, with thumbnail sketches of her contemporary poets', Ficke is reported as saying: 'John Cowper Powys ... may be suspected ... as the subject of "Oh burning eyes"'. Perhaps Ficke also had in his mind a conscious or unconscious memory of JCP's description of Mr Evans in *A Glastonbury Romance*: '... his burning eyes, flashing forth from beneath his bushy eyebrows ...'

Ficke was originally regarded as a poet of great promise. He helped to launch Harriet Monroe's magazine, *Poetry*, and his poems appeared in the first issue in October 1912. The February 1913 issue of *Poetry* was devoted to his work with some other poems by Witter Bynner, who also wrote a fine tribute to his friend, *Ave Atque Vale*, which was published in *Poetry* vol. 56 No.1, April 1946. In later years, largely due to his commitment to rhyme and traditional forms of verse – odes, elegies and sonnets – Ficke's reputation as a poet declined and he fell out of favour with contemporary critics (see the article: 'Missed by Modernism' in *Western Illinois Regional Studies*, Fall 1991). Ficke was the subject of a long article by Ella Watson Bashford, in *The Chatham Courier*, dated 9th October 1930. She described the area around Hillsdale as an artist's colony and a place of great local interest. Ella Bashford also

wrote about JCP and Phudd Bottom in a separate article in the same newspaper on 4 December 1930. The article about Ficke was headed: '*Columbia Gains in Favor As New Haven for Artists – Arthur Davison Ficke, Poet, Teacher, War Veteran and Mrs Ficke, Painter, Join Group Establishing homes in the County, Lyrics of Berkshire in Preparation*'. Ficke's obituary was published in the New York Times on 4th December 1945.

CT

It was through Ficke (pronounced 'Fickey') that JCP bought the house at Phudd and Ficke who introduced its next owner Alan Devoe when JCP left in 1934. JCP devotes several pages to Ficke in *Autobiography*. In 1927 JCP visited the Fickes in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a happy weekend recorded by Gladys Brown Ficke (see Ben Jones's article in *The Powys Review* 21, with photographs – another of JCP with Gladys on the same occasion (captioned as Phyllis) is in *Review* 18).

At Hillsdale, Ficke and Gladys lived at 'Hardhack', a hilltop house on Phudd Road. They often appear in JCP's Diaries; JCP calls him 'the Squire'. The Fickes had a Chinese manservant and changed for dinner. Gladys Brown Ficke painted JCP's portrait. Phyllis felt disregarded by the Fickes; JCP noted in 1930, 'They are simple where the T.T. [Phyllis] is very subtle and they have no more idea of what she is like than they have of the Holy Ghost'. Gladys Ficke's unpublished novel *The Final Beauty* (written in 1934–6) contains fictionalised portraits of JCP and Phyllis (see the article by Melvon Ankeny in *The Powys Journal* xiii). She also began a biography of Arthur. 25 years later, in June 1959 (Arthur having died in 1945) Gladys visited JCP and Phyllis in Blaenau Ffestiniog (see NL77, page 37). They found her 'a totally different and very nice person' (entirely due to Psychiatry, she explained). A memorial stone to both Arthur and Gladys is in the woods below their house (see below).

KK



Two Poems by Arthur Davison Ficke

To John Cowper Powys

Again upon this hill we meet
As in so many an earlier time.
Not friendship, now, has grown less sweet
Nor the fantastic lure of rhyme
Nor clouds, nor birds nor anything
Within our earliest youthful ken.
So let us be alone, and fling
Away the wickedness of men;

And in the gentleness of a mood
Not lost to us, though all forget,
Pledge with a sober quietude
The distant days when first we met –
Our equal lust for passing hours
That are so lovely as they pass –
Our equal faith in certain powers
Seen, ah how darkly! through a glass.

Portrait

Oh burning eyes!

I know not what it is you see afar —
Whether the portent of an unborn star
Or the invisible edge of the abyss.
I only know that, madman as you are,
You seem to watch a nobler world than this –

This besmirched day

Wherein the smoke obscures the forgotten sky
And ignominious merchants say their say,
And starving men crumble dead sand, and cry
For honest bread ... You smile and go your way,
And who is mad, I wonder, you or I?

At Ficke's private funeral ceremony on the Hardhack estate on 4th December 1945, Edna St Vincent Millay recited from one of Ficke's favourite poems, Milton's 'Lycidas', as well as one of her own sonnets written many years earlier and addressed to Ficke –

And you as well must die, beloved dust,
And all your beauty stand you in no stead;
This flawless, vital hand, this perfect head,
This body of flame and steel, before the gust
Of Death, or under his autumnal frost,
Shall be as any leaf, be no less dead
Than the first leaf that fell, this wonder fled,
Altered, estranged, disintegrated, lost.
Nor shall my love avail you in your hour.
In spite of all my love, you will arise

Upon that day and wander down the air
Obscurely as the unattended flower,
It mattering not how beautiful you were,
Or how beloved above all else that dies.

[from *The Poet and her Book*, a biography of Edna St Vincent Millay by Jean Gould]

Gladys Brown Ficke remembers:

Another friend who lived near us for six [*sic*] years was John Cowper Powys, who came because Arthur was there and because the countryside reminded him of Dorset. His calls never caused me any worry. He was an invalid himself; he did not drink; he went home at a reasonable hour. And what a great conversationalist he was! Some people said he was a yes-man. It is true that he hated controversy and would agree to any aggressive statement, that Hoover was or was not a boxing glove, or that vivisection was commendable (the thing he lamented more than anything else in the world); but given a theme interesting to examine amicably, let it be the style of Pater or Cummings, the philosophy of Aristotle or Russell, or sex relationships, or the flora of Columbia County, John could talk with as much vehemence as a Texas senator, and with something to say. Sitting in a deep chair, bent forward with his long bony hands clasping his knees, with his shaggy stockings down over his shoes and his shaggy tweeds all a-wrinkle, his eyes would flash and his lowering brows lift half way up his forehead while the eloquent spate of words flowed from his big mobile mouth. And Arthur, lolling in his camel's hair bath robe, would chuckle and egg him on, and finally take the floor himself. There was a fine give and take between them, a gracious balance that they both liked. One afternoon John read *King Lear* to us and literally acted – though seated – all the parts. It was both funny and an unforgettably illuminating performance.

After Powys returned to Wales, Alan Devoe moved into our neighbourhood, he much younger than Arthur but they became intimate and devoted friends. Over the hills they strolled together, discussing the nature of life, whether it be in the manifest insects and toads and birds and beasts so familiar to Alan or the unmanifest mysteries. I never knew anyone who, having a chance to know Arthur at all well, did not love to be with him, talking.

[from 'Arthur Davison Ficke and his Friends', Yale University Library Gazette Vol. 23 No. 3, January 1949]

The Peltier website has details of several of JCP's friends, including Ficke, with a photo of him by Carl van Vechten.

See < www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/America/Ficke.htm >.

News and Notes

The full text of **Albert Krick's 'Reminiscences'** of JCP (extracts appeared in NL 78, March 2013, p.29) is available on request from Hon. Secretary (see address inside cover of *Newsletter*). The full text of the reminiscences now include an Introduction and explanatory notes. CT

'This Week' column of a recent TLS heralded the eighth volume of *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, including unpublished letters from all periods of the author's life. Among new correspondents are **John Cowper Powys** (pictured), Sylvia Townsend Warner and Lord Kitchener ... 'a most absorbing volume for anyone who is interested in the inner lives and outer worlds of the Victorians and the art of letter-writing in which they excelled'.

Following the TLS review of reissues of **James Purdy**, a letter to the paper from **Charles Lock** drew attention to the fact that it was not only Dame Edith Sitwell to whom Purdy appealed and who befriended him, but also JCP, as evidenced by their letters in the latest *Journal* xxiii (2013). (See JCP's indignant letter, page 35). **Nicholas Birns** (of the 'New School' in NY) is currently writing on Purdy and the Purdy-JCP letters published in the *Journal*.

Meanwhile, the 'Freelance' column for the TLS of 26th July, by Charles Boyle, quotes JCP on the subject of booksellers (from the introduction to *The Pleasures of Literature*): 'Every good bookseller is a multiple personality, containing all the extremes of human feeling. He is an ascetic hermit, he is an erotic immoralist, he is a Papist, he is a Quaker, he is a communist, he is an anarchist, he is a savage iconoclast, he is a passionate worshipper of idols ...'

From **David Goodway**: The first Folio prize (for books written in English and published in the UK) will be awarded next year. Its judges are to be drawn from 'a specially selected group of writers and critics' known as the Academy. On 5th July the prize launched a series of blogs by members of the Academy, celebrating books that could have been worthy winners had the prize existed in the past (see <thefolioprize.com>). Among the blogposts are Philip Pullman's: 'It's difficult. I'd like to see John Cowper Powys's *Wolf Solent* of 1929 recognised a bit more widely; and Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* would be a fine choice for the year 175 (roughly, and had it been written in English). But if we're sticking to the 20th century, I'd like to see my favourite little-known author, the American MacDonald Harris, get a boost for his *The Balloonist* of 1977 ... (Saturday *Guardian* 13th July 2013, 'The Week in Books')

From Patrick Quigley: *The Novel Cure* by Ella Berthaud & Susan Elderkin (Canongate, 2013, pp. 223-4) offers *Wolf Solent* as a cure for Internet addiction. 'As a way of rediscovering how to live in the world again – sensually, sexually, with the full

engagement of mind and body, it can't be beaten.' Some praise!

A glimpse of Vicarage life comes from **Peter Foss** with the **Montacute Library List** (Mrs Powys, Secretary). Subscription 2s a year, non-subscribers rd a book. Books exchanged every Wednesday from 4 to 4.30. Queen Victoria, Dickens, Scott, Trollope, Eliot, Mrs Gaskell, Mrs Craik, Mrs Humphrey Ward, Mrs Henry Wood (who qualified for a Mrs?) among many.

'A Churchyard Cough and a Green Coat', a chapter in John Gray's *The Silence of Animals*, is almost entirely on Llewelyn Powys. It begins *If you were consigned to an early grave, what would you do in the time that might be left? One such person decided to sit by a small pond ...* followed by long quotations from that essay (the pond and the hare), ending *Being mortal was not a punishment for Powys, though he hated the thought of dying. The fact that he was never far from death left him free to follow his fancy, which was the sensation of life itself.* (See reviews of the book in *Newsletter* 79, N&N, p.35.)

Jacqueline Peltier translates and introduces extracts from JCP's diary for September 1929 (early days at Phudd) in *Patchwork, revue littéraire* for June 2013. JCP appears comfortably in company with 11 other writers, all seemingly alive and kicking, authors of poems and mostly short pieces, original and off-beat as himself.

The letters from JCP and others to Dinah White, who looked after Father **Littleton Alfred Powys** in his paralyzing illness, which were sold at auction last year, have been given five-star treatment by their purchaser in view of future sales. A stout folder describing contents of the letters and research on the senders make a coherent but sad story of the last years of John Cowper's son.

New books from **Lucy Sullivan** in Australia:

False Promises: Sixties philosophy against the Church: A sociological memoir enhanced by statistics 1903-1993 (Windrush Press). '... This book reviews the contrasting social philosophies and policies of the first and second halves of the 20th century that produced such different social outcomes, in order to address the question, *How did we get it so wrong?*' and

1959: The Diary of a Young Girl by Lucy Vokes, edited by Lucy Sullivan. '... This diary of a nineteen-year-old girl student at the University of Queensland reveals in embryonic form much of what was to come ...'

The Green Road Into the Trees: An Exploration of England (Preface publishing, Random House', ISBN 978-1-848-09332-4) by **Hugh Thomson**, a travel-writer from China to Peru, turns to England, Maiden Castle, and a gloomy look at JCP, from whom he was put off by a keen schoolmaster presenting him with *Porius*. 'His monolithic Wessex novels now stand like desolate tors' ... 'Landscape is held over his characters like a hammer over an anvil' ... Thomson does grudgingly admit that (though not for him)

‘some of the set pieces and detail are extraordinary’, quoting Dud’s peculiar visions of the earthwork itself: supermammoth dung, the Kraken’s shell, the Tortoise of creation, the nest of a gigantic Jurassic dragon-bird ... [*A very interesting discursive account of a wandering along the Icknield Way from Dorset to Norfolk. SPM*]

★ ★ ★ ★

NY revisited

Another happy visit to NY by Editor included the ritual visit to Patchin Place (seemingly undisturbed, now with two plaques on No 4 commemorating e.e.cummings, and still no-one else). Still no discovery of whether there were or are yards at the back of the buildings on this side of the alley, where some of the well-known photographs might have been taken? *We Lived in Patchin Place* by ‘Boyne Grainger’ (Cecil Woolf Powys Heritage series) was presented to the NY Public Library Jefferson Market branch opposite Patchin, for their Local History section.

Upstate, JCP’s Phudd Bottom house is excellently cared for as ever. Its owners are not over-

loath to be interrupted, just as JCP before her – but we were kindly invited inside for a look. I was impressed by the steepness of the cottage stairs. They were small rooms for a tall man. The low windows in the double attic bedroom have been increased in size, but it must always have been an attractive lair. The yellow woods with the falling leaves were even more beautiful than last year.



*Above: looking out of
Patchin Place, 2013.*

*Right: The Editor revisits
Phudd Bottom, 2013.*



JCP on James Purdy

(published in Letters section of The Observer, 14th July 1957)

A Desperate Cry

Sir, — I have been reading with astonishment and indignation Mr Tom Hopkinson's review of *63: Dream Palace*, by J. Purdy; a book which he describes as displaying a 'narrow, demoniac talent' and as revealing 'a strongly homosexual tendency both in an explicit and implicit way'.

Has Mr Tom Hopkinson ever read Aristophanes? Has he ever studied the treatment of Oedipus by Sophocles? Has he never been obsessed by the genius of Shakespeare to the extent of identifying himself with the feelings of King Lear when he howls forth in the storm: *And yet I call you servile ministers / That have with two pernicious daughters joined / Your high engendered battles 'gainst a head / As old and white as this? Does not the echo of that howl — nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters! Then let fall your horrible pleasure!* — ever ring in the ears of Mr Tom Hopkinson?

Homosexuality — nothing! Cannot Mr Tom Hopkinson hear the desperate cry of all created things at some epoch of their lives when they feel this ultimate terror and horror and despair, of which Milton wrote so well that he was aptly described by the Mr Tom Hopkinson of his time as *secretly on the side of Satan*?

Homosexuality — nothing! O how easy it is for the Mr Tom Hopkinsons of this world to apply the particular term of abuse fashionable in their age, and most popular among normal 'Heteros', whether they wish to abuse Sappho because she invented the most effective metre for expressing emotion ever invented, or to abuse Catullus for believing in eternal sleep!

Has Mr Tom Hopkinson ever read Shakespeare's Sonnets? Would he scold Dante for delighting in horror: Dante who certainly surpasses even James Purdy in his recognition of the vein of abominable and appalling cruelty and horror that lies for all of us creatures of this planet at the bottom of our experiences of life?

No doubt in his eager anxiety to damn all the greatest poets who have looked down the deepest into the nature of this world, our righteous Mr Tom Hopkinson would accuse Dante of conceit when he cries out to the spirit of Virgil: *Tu se' lo mio maestro, e il mio autore; / tu se' solo colui, da cui io tolsi / lo bello stile, che m'ha fatto onore.* And what does our virtuous critic of James Purdy feel when he encounters in Dante's Hell, at the very entrance, those who lived without blame and without praise, mixed with that caitiff choir of the angels who were not rebellious nor were they faithful to God, but — whether *mos* or *teros* — were for themselves? ... *che non furon ribelli, nè fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sè foro.*

Homosexual, heterosexual — nothing! Do you, or don't you, try to dig down to the heart of life upon this Planet Earth along with Homer and Shakespeare and Milton and Dante, as Mr James Purdy struggles to do?

(reprinted in *Elusive America*, ed. Paul Roberts, page 190. Is this (Sir) Thomas Hopkinson (1905–90), noted journalist and editor (Picture Post, Lilliput) of left-wing views?

Neil Lee-Atkin

Reading Llewelyn Powys

It was most refreshing to find Arjen Mulder's essay, 'Into the World and Back Again; Reading Llewelyn Powys for the twentieth-first century' in the 2013 issue of *The Powys Journal*. However, I must take issue with the writer on several points.

Mr Mulder is to be congratulated for making some very salient observations, and I'm sure that all Llewelyn admirers would relish knowing the truth about those final two years at Clavadel; would love to read the unpublished letters between Llewelyn and Gamel and see the deleted chapters of *Love & Death*, the unpublished sections of Alyse Gregory's journal, and even the unpublished material from Llewelyn's diaries – especially those which Peter Foss has yet to tackle! But there are many questions yet to be answered from the published material which is readily available and has been in the public domain now for many years.

Biographical works about Llewelyn Powys began in 1935 with the publication of Richard Heron Ward's *The Powys Brothers*, but with only 48 of the 195 pages devoted entirely to Llewelyn it could hardly be called a biography. This was closely followed in 1936 by the publication of Louis Marlow's contentious *Welsh Ambassadors* which only allowed us glimpses of the real Llewelyn, largely from his exchange of letters with Louis; but these cannot be relied upon by any seeker of truth owing to the frequent somewhat ribald and occasionally licentious banter between the two friends. Perhaps of greater biographical significance was Louis's *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys* published in 1943 under his own name of Wilkinson. The first full-length biography came three years later, and for far too long Malcolm Elwin's *Life of Llewelyn Powys* (1946) remained the only biographical source material for those sufficiently interested in learning about Llewelyn's life, until Kenneth Hopkins's *The Powys Brothers* (1967) and his widely acclaimed *Advice to a Young Poet* (1969). Then, following publication by the The Ark Press of selected entries from Alyse Gregory's journal under the title *The Cry of a Gull*, and of Llewelyn's letters to Gamel Woolsey as *So Wild a Thing*, both in 1973, Elwin's original was clearly outdated and there was a call for a new biography. But during the next decade, apart from the biographical aspects in Belinda Humphrey's 1980 publication, *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*, and some scant clues to Llewelyn's relationship with Gamel in the 1983 Warren House Press *Letters of Gamel Woolsey to Llewelyn Powys*, introduced and edited by Hopkins, there was only R. P. Graves' excellent *The Brothers Powys* (1983) available to shed further light on Llewelyn Powys.

Mulder calls it 'shocking' that there is no 'new biography' of Llewelyn Powys and suggests what might be included in such an undertaking, before lamenting, 'Peter Foss's *Study of Llewelyn Powys: His Literary Achievement & Personal Philosophy* may supply some of these wants, but there's no copy of the book in Holland and I regret that I've not been able to consult it.' I find this a very strange comment inasmuch as Peter Foss's book is available globally to anyone via the Internet, even in Holland,

and having read and digested Mulder's essay several times, it seems clear to me that the writer would have benefitted greatly by availing himself of its study – especially the 'personal philosophy' section.

Drawing any distinction between a 'local' writer and a 'global' writer is in my opinion entirely superfluous in Llewelyn's case, as is the parallel that Mulder draws using J. M. Coetzee as an example of the transformation from local to global, a useless exercise in this instance. In fact, I believe even a distinction between local & global does Llewelyn a grave disservice, for as Jim Morgan (one of the Powys Society's founder members) points out: 'All great writers that I can think of are rooted in what the Welsh call their bro'ie, their native soil – Shakespeare, Rabelais, Tolstoy, JCP – it is their universality that makes them "global" '. I would contend that Llewelyn Powys was always an intensely local writer whose roots were firmly planted in Wessex soil, and refute Mulder's claim that Llewelyn 'started as a cosmopolitan writer and ended as a local writer'. Any claim of this nature must remain a matter of opinion, but I don't believe there is any evidence to support it.

Llewelyn's first six published books, *Ebony and Ivory*, *Thirteen Worthies*, *Black Laughter*, the 'Little Blue Books' *Honey and Gall* and *Cup Bearers of Wine and Hellebore* and *Skin for Skin*, which it seems are being labelled 'cosmopolitan' (whatever that means in this context) do have a universal appeal, but the 'African' books cannot be termed 'cosmopolitan' merely because they are written by an Englishman about his five years spent in a foreign country! Llewelyn was writing about his locality at the time, his brother's stock farm in Africa, thus the writing is local in every sense of the word, with frequent references and parallels drawn retrospectively from his experiences of life back home in England. Whilst *Skin for Skin* may well be judged to be 'cosmopolitan' it is also clearly rooted in local Wessex soil, and on countless occasions when at Clavadel – as in Africa – Llewelyn reflects and reminisces about Montacute and his family at home, local themes which continue in much of his later work and mark him firmly with the stamp of a local writer. *##not &##*

With reference to what Mulder calls 'the American adventures', the topic of Llewelyn's third autobiographical book, *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, and the statement that 'Llewelyn stylizes himself like the tramp poet', I would point out that he slept on rooftops owing to the fact that he had T.B., and wrote under an open sky on a shaky kitchen table in a back garden for the same reason. He lives (temporarily) 'in dark smelly rooms' because he's severely financially impoverished at the time, and 'worries that someone might want to steal his old oil coat' simply because he cannot afford to replace it. Llewelyn may well have been popular and a bit of a novelty with the in-crowd of 'modernists' around *The Dial*, and moderately successful, but hardly the huge success that is claimed here. In his letters to Louis Wilkinson Llewelyn frequently bemoans his relative poverty and complains vociferously about the scant payment for his published work. Yes, Llewelyn becomes recognised and acknowledged amongst modernist authors 'in line with Eliot, Joyce, Marianne Moore, trans-national, cosmopolitan, global' – but precisely because he is a local writer with his

roots firmly in rural English soil, the aspect of his writing that lends so much unique charm and character to his developing style and rendered him so appealing to his newly acquainted American friends.

In considering the tone of Llewelyn's writing, Mulder discusses how 'Each of the three Powys brothers moves on a different plain of consciousness, a different plateau of awareness and sense of life'. Of Llewelyn he writes: 'In every study that I read Llewelyn is considered to be a realist. He is not. The theory of realism is a tough one, and I won't go into it now.' Neither will I, except to say that the medieval philosophical doctrine of Realism (as opposed to Nominalism) is as valid today as it ever was, but in every study of Llewelyn Powys that I've ever read he has been described as a Rationalist, not a Realist. Philosophically the two are NOT the same.

Although I believe Mulder is partly right in claiming that Llewelyn was not a Realist, and that his developing style relied heavily on legend as the main inspirational and motivating force for his imagination and creativity, I would contend that each scene is viewed through the eyes of a realist!

At the risk of splitting philosophical hairs, Llewelyn was neither Realist nor Rationalist in the true sense of the terms – but more an empiricist than either. For a complete description of Llewelyn's personal philosophy, the roots of his philosophical beliefs and how they evolved throughout his life and the events which helped shape them, the 'Personal Philosophy' section of Peter Foss's *Study* cannot be bettered. Of all the books written about Llewelyn, Peter Foss's perceptive in-depth study is by far the most valuable and informative; a fascinating revelation of the often contradictory mind of a man who, until Foss's work was published, remained something of an enigma – even (or especially) to those who loved him.

At this point it may be prudent to ask whether we are discussing the real Llewelyn Powys, or the Llewelyn Powys as he projected himself through his published work – there is a wealth of information to show a wide divergence between the two. Mulder highlights the problem perfectly in his comments about *The Cradle of God* (1929), hailed by many as one of Llewelyn's finest achievements. Mulder writes: 'The book is especially interesting because it suggests Llewelyn could have been a far more interesting and greater writer if he had stuck to the belief of his childhood. *The Cradle of God* proves that he was a born believer. He really feels his way into the Christian faith. As a professing atheist he is far less convincing and doesn't rise above the level of ideology. But when he allows himself to be religious, he rises to an empathetic and sympathetic level of understanding that is universally human, instead of repeating the outmoded rhetoric of atheism and anti-clergy hobby-horsing dating from the late 19th century.' Mulder then hammers home his anti-atheist position by continuing: '*The Cradle of God* begins with Llewelyn setting out to understand the true significance of the Christian faith, the faith of his forebears, his father, his civilization. He sits on a bank by the side of a downland track, looks into the night sky and proclaims: "Mystery beyond mystery, space beyond space, and against them the belief of my heritage like a single candle flickering in the void, like a wooden match struck for a



A portrait taken in Weymouth, date unknown.

moment in a heathen temple". That may sound like a critical statement, but there are no anti-religious feelings here. Llewelyn explores a living faith, the beliefs of his heritage, its gesture against the void, not the cry of a single gull, but a match of self-

awareness struck in a heathen temple of unconscious fears and desires'. Yes! Yes! And he finds it futile!

The Cradle of God IS especially interesting; in fact it's a masterpiece of the essayist's art, but how Mulder can conclude that 'it suggests Llewelyn could have been a far more interesting and greater writer if he had stuck to the belief of his childhood' is beyond my comprehension. Neither does the book prove that 'he was a born believer', but more that he was born a believer! Yes, born, baptised, brought up and educated as a believer, but never a 'born believer'. As for Llewelyn 'really feeling his way into the Christian faith'; this was the impression Llewelyn skilfully created in the dialogue, but in reality he had no need of 'feeling his way' because he was already well acquainted and had an excellent knowledge and experience of the Christian faith long before he ever set out for Palestine. Let us not forget that whilst still at Sherborne it was anticipated that Llewelyn would eventually take holy orders and follow in the footsteps of his father by becoming a clergyman. Of course, having a clergyman father and being brought up in the relatively sheltered environment of a Victorian vicarage with morning prayers every day, bible stories after dinner, regularly reading the Lesson at Sunday services in his father's church and sometimes standing in for Rev. Powys by taking the weekly Bible Class at Montacute, Llewelyn was well versed in the Christian faith. It would be quite remarkable were it otherwise.

Mulder continues: 'As a professing atheist he is far less convincing and doesn't rise above the level of ideology.' I would argue that as a professing atheist he rises way above the usual 'outmoded rhetoric of atheism and anti-clergy hobby-horsing dating from the late 19th century' or any other level of anti-Christian polemic. No one writes about atheism in the same way as Llewelyn Powys; with so much grandeur and eloquence of expression, with so much poetic passion and conviction. Indeed, on occasion Llewelyn describes feelings so enriched with his passion for the poetry of existence that he rises along with his religiously inspired words to heights of ecstasy, which many of us might count way above the level of mere ideology.

I think Mulder is confusing Llewelyn's hostile attitude towards Christianity with his attitude towards religion, for which I believe he developed a natural aptitude which is evident in much of his later 'rationalistic' work, but which showed the first signs of his empirically shaped religiosity as early as *Skin for Skin* (1926), three years before *The Cradle of God*. Llewelyn's is a 'religion' of Life, and he worships, celebrates and writes about his life-affirming philosophy with the passion of a true believer, but I don't believe, as Mulder suggests, that 'Llewelyn is writing for an audience of non-believers'. He wrote specifically for non-believers in the *Rationalist Annual*, but he didn't become a member of the Rationalist Press Association until early in 1937, just prior to his final removal to Switzerland. The 'Us' Llewelyn refers to means all of us; atheists & Christians, believers and non-believers alike; his is an intensely universal message addressed to a universal audience by an intensely local writer.

The final book Mulder plunges into in search of answers to his 'local or global' conundrum is *Love and Death, An Imaginary Autobiography* (1939) and he is to be

congratulated for capturing the essence of the tone of the writing which he describes as 'elegiac realism'. However, he also states that 'There is no sign of Middle Earth to be found in the story': yet in the two sections from which he quotes in order to point out the difference in style between the first 60 pages of the book and the style of the remainder, there are distinct elements of Middle Earth. Blend the two together, and the 'imaginative affinity ... made it possible for us to step clean out of time and enter freely into a new world [Middle Earth?] where romance was instant in the very grass leaves ... in the time that is always over the hedge, always beyond each gatepost, always on the other side of the next hill'. Sounds distinctly Middle Earth-ish to me!

Finally, Mulder targets chapter 23 and writes: 'In chapter 23 Llewelyn rails against the clergy for no particular reason, but even before the book was published, Llewelyn wrote to H. Rivers Pollock, 'I believe the book would have been better if I had left out the polemical chapter', and Mulder goes on to ask, 'So why didn't he remove it? Where was editor Alyse when author Llewelyn needed her?' The conjecture which follows and stems from Mulder's 'suspicion that Alyse played a trick on Llewelyn, she took revenge' is at least very interesting, but in my opinion most unlikely. He continues, 'The Love and Death from the title in the current shortened edition refer to Llewelyn's love and death. But if there was a second part of the book about Alyse that would suggest that Gamel had the Love-part and Alyse represented Death. It's your imaginary autobiography, Alyse must have thought, not mine. I'll make it into your imaginary nightmare, not mine. This would also account for not taking out the irrelevant Chapter 23, maybe even encouraging Llewelyn to retain it.'

There are several problems with this conjecture, not least that it questions Alyse's motives and casts a dark shadow of doubt over her loyalty and integrity, and if true, makes a deceit of her later journal entries. Furthermore, if the final chapters of the book which were omitted – in which Llewelyn died and then returned to earth to Alyse – had been included, then how does that suggest that the 'Death' in the title refers to Alyse? It's Llewelyn's 'imaginary autobiography', not Alyse's.

For those unfamiliar with the story in *Love and Death*, chapter 23 is a diversion from the narrative, for it recounts a dream or otherwise imaginary scene in which Llewelyn finds himself in bed at home on Chaldon Down being nursed by his sister Gertrude, when he receives a visit from a young clergyman. At this point in the book Llewelyn is stung; his dreams and the magical world created by their love have just been shattered by Dittany's betrayal with arch-love rival Randal Pixley. The visit of the clergyman encourages him to launch into a polemical tirade against Christianity and the orthodox Church. He is using this chapter and the episode it describes as a device for preaching his newly developed philosophy and his credo of life-affirmation. But this is not as out-of-context as it sounds, for throughout the book he makes numerous similar comments, and I believe what he's doing is constantly weighing his developing rationalist/realist philosophy and measuring it against his experiences as detailed in the story he's telling. At the point in the story where his philosophy is finally confirmed by events he is able to expound it more forcibly, hence chapter 23.

This is not simply about Llewelyn's 'love and death'; it's about the universal dichotomy of love and death, the love and death of relationships, the death of love. As such it projects a subliminal nihilistic viewpoint which accords entirely with Llewelyn's professed atheist philosophy which is summarised perfectly in the final few pages. A philosophy which, writes Llewelyn, 'was consolidated in Africa, but it was Dittany and her death that prompted my dangerous scholarship'.

Given the oft-repeated and obvious parallels in *Love and Death*, with Gamel Woolsey being seen as the model for Dittany Stone, is it perhaps a step too far to speculate that the loss of Gamel to Gerald Brenan was the tipping point which 'consolidated' or confirmed Llewelyn's philosophy? Perhaps so. But it is interesting to note that during his affair with Gamel and following her marriage to Brenan, he wrote and published some of his best philosophical essays and books, like the wonderfully titled *Impassioned Clay* and the beautifully inspiring and poetic *Glory of Life* (dedicated to Gamel Woolsey), *Now That the Gods are Dead*, and finally *Love and Death*, which Llewelyn claimed was his 'Testament'. Of course, when drawing parallels with the book's characters from real life we must remember that Llewelyn sets the story of his summer of love with Dittany Stone in his '23rd year' which would make it 1907–8, long before he met Gamel Woolsey and round about the time he first met Marion Linton, to whom he became engaged after spending a week at her home in Derbyshire in 1909. So perhaps he projected the model of Marion Linton onto his actual experiences with Gamel Woolsey, and 'Dittany Stone' became a literary composite of the two?

Perhaps, apart from its polemic in chapter 23, many commentators including Mulder might regard *Love and Death* as more whimsical than philosophical? If so, following Mulder's theory, all the more reason why Alyse wouldn't quibble about the inclusion. But whimsical or not, I still believe it remains Llewelyn's best book. 'Are we simply not yet mature enough to see the modern and old now timely fused in it?' asks Arjen Mulder. (Who is this 'we'?)

Mulder's final observation is fascinating and his introduction to the quotation from *Petrushka and the Dancer* very moving, as is JCP's display of 'brotherly love' in his defence of Llewelyn. But whether John Cowper's assessment of Llewelyn is accurate is a question that can only be answered by a future biographer. The same must equally apply to Alyse's motives in respect of *Love and Death* and whether her brother-in-law is right in his assessment of her. One thing is certain; if what JCP claims is true and she did set out to destroy Llewelyn's 'peculiarities', I think history shows us quite clearly that she failed. In *Skin for Skin* Llewelyn writes: 'Insensitivity is the one cardinal sin.' Given his track record with the opposite sex and with Alyse in particular, that statement remains VERY peculiar!

Perhaps it IS shocking that there is no new biography of Llewelyn Powys after all.

Neil Lee Atkin. Sept. 2013

To Mary
from John
with his love
and a thousand
kind ones

Chesham. 1938.

Johnny, I can give no thy fiddle
If you can mean to have it
Nay, I'll not give my fiddle
To any man alive.
If I should give my fiddle
I'd give it to the one who
For any & I should
My fiddle and I have had.

Inscription in Glory of Life, by Llewelyn Powys (John Lane The Bodley Head, 1938), page height 8.9 inches. This is in the copy which had belonged to Marian Powys Grey, then her son Peter, and was one of the substantial collection purchased by the Society after Peter's death in 1992, and was offered to members through a catalogue issued with Newsletter 23 in 1994.

Werner Stein

Now we know who Stein is.

Seven years ago I posed the question ‘Who is Stein?’ My article in *The Powys Newsletter* 58 in 2006 was the start of a long-drawn out search for the artist who had provided designs for ten fine dustjackets for books by John Cowper Powys published by Macdonalds between 1951 and 1963. That article was supplemented by a short fully illustrated notice in *The Powys Journal* XVIII.

The artist and the publisher used just the name ‘Stein’, and the standard works on artists including those who did illustration work did not identify the artist, nor could many others whom I approached, yet now, in the last few months, much of what I wanted has been revealed from a resource I had not known of at the time.

At the time of my article I had come across an on-line catalogue from a Crime Fiction bookseller in Grimsby who had a long list of books with Stein dustjackets; 56 books were listed from 8 publishers, the earliest in 1945, 39 from Macdonalds themselves. This bookseller did not know any more than the artist’s surname.

To be fair, shortly after the *Newsletter* article appeared Kate Kavanagh had two letters from Sally Connely, one of our earliest members, explaining that she had met Stein once during her own search for an art job in 1953 or ’54: she gives valuable clues to identifying Stein, who, she said, always simply went by that single name. There might have been enough for me to follow up, but I was then trying the various other potential sources, and left Sally’s for another time. Sally’s letters are printed below, revealing that Sally thought that Stein was a Jewish German refugee, and had worked as Art Director of one of the leading advertising agencies. She says that Malcolm Elwin thought that Stein was the best artist that Macdonalds had ever employed, high praise indeed.

At last, the breakthrough came when the latest issue of *The Penguin Collector* arrived in June 2013; enclosed was a leaflet advertising the first major study of Noel Carrington’s life in publishing and design, itself the first book from ‘Design for Today’, a new publishing enterprise run by Joe Pearson. Now Joe Pearson knows everything about Penguins (author of *Drawn Direct to the Plate: Noel Carrington and the Puffin Picture Books*, 2010) and a great deal else, so when I wrote to reserve a copy I asked for his help over Stein: he immediately told me that the person who would know if anyone did, was Chris Mees of Arts:Search <www.arts-search.com>.

Chris Mees replied instantly with a string of information. The ‘Stein’ I was seeking was WERNER STEIN, born in Berlin on 10th March 1914, a largely self-taught artist. He was creative executive for Pritchard Wood & Partners (1943–49), Young & Rubicam (1949–51), and Mather & Crowther (1951–61), and later became a partner in Creative Presentation (Publicity Campaign Planning Services). He was a Member of the Society of Industrial Artists [later Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, now Chartered Society of Designers] from the 1950s to at least the early 1970s. The SIA Yearbook for 1959–60 gives his specialisms as ‘Illustration, Lettering



and Publicity Design'. Between 1959 and 1972 he was living at 75 Hornsey Lane Gardens, London N6. I have not yet found his date of death, but hope that an enquiry to the present-day Chartered Society of Designers will produce it. He would have been 39 or 40 when Sally met him.

So, we see that Stein had senior positions in leading advertising agencies from 1943 to 1961, and, as both Chris Mees and Sally Connely say, he was also extensively involved in illustrating books and designing book covers, confirmed by the book-seller's Crime-Fiction list: these activities occurring at the same time show a very productive career.

I tracked down on the internet and bought a copy of *Treasure Island* published in about 1950, just about the same time that Stein did the dustjacket for *Porius* (1951). As well as 8 coloured plates, including the frontispiece, there are more than 35 excellent line drawings ranging from vignettes to full-page images illustrating scenes from *Treasure Island*. Its front cover is shown on our back cover (slightly reduced), and the flowing line-drawing 'We waded ashore' on the last page. Also on this page are miniatures of three other covers by Stein, and on page XX his design for the dustjacket of *Porius*.

As Stein was working in a senior position by 1943, he must have come to this country before the War, as Sally suggests as a refugee. He would have been in his early twenties. It could well be that he was interned as a potential enemy alien on the outbreak of the War (as, for instance, Nikolaus Pevsner and Hellmut Weissenborn were), but I have not been able to check this so far.

One of the people I had approached fairly recently was Michael Harvey, whose newly published memoir *Adventures with Letters* I bought last year at the Whittington Press Open Day. He replied 'Stein is a real puzzle! I began designing jackets in 1957, remember well seeing his jackets in book shops looking very non-English. None of our Eric Gill purity. Two other designers, Berthold Wolpe who mostly worked for Fabers, and Hans Tisdall who mostly worked for Cape impressed me. There's a light touch of Tisdall in some of Stein's work but not as inventive as Tisdall's.' I have since discovered that Tisdall (1910–1997) was a German émigré like Stein (changing his name from Hans Aufseesser, and previously Professor in Düsseldorf); another most eminent engraver, designer, published and teacher, and émigré was Hellmut Weissenborn (1898–1982).

It is surprising that so many published sources and personal contacts should have been unable to identify this artist until recently: perhaps his principal activ-



ity in the commercial world of advertising agencies had in some way tainted his reputation. At any rate, now we know who 'Stein' is.

I would like to say how grateful I am to Chris Mees for putting me on the right track in my search.

Stephen Powys Marks

Sally Connely wrote about her encounter with Werner Stein in two letters to our Editor in October 2006 and March 2007, the first accompanied by an account dated October 2006.

*Blackthorn Winter
Georgeham etc,
EX33 1JZ
8th October 2006*

Dear Kate

Apropos the query of SPM in the July '06 Newsletter, "Who is Stein?", I send the enclosed which could be sent on to Stephen and/or printed in the November Newsletter (if it is not too late) whichever you think fit.

It does not throw much light on the question but might be of some interest.

All the best ~~

Sally

"Stein"

On pages 21 and 45 of the July Newsletter, Stephen Powys Marks ask, "Who is Stein?" As Stephen has said, Stein designed a great many bookjackets for many different publishers, including ten titles for John Cowper Powys published by Macdonald's. Besides these, he also designed the jacket for The Strange Case of Robert Lou1is Stevenson by Malcolm Elwin (Macdonald's, 1950), and for Malcolm's triple biographical study of the early years of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey. The First Romantics. The design for this latter was one of Stein's failures, probably a rushed job. He also did the illustrations for at least two titles for the Macdonald Illustrated Classics, Wuthering Heights and Moby Dick. Those for the latter, especially, were outstandingly good. He had the gift of getting inside the essence of a book.

He was a refugee in this country, presumably German Jewish, and came here either at the beginning of World War II, during or just after. He took every job that offered. He once told Walter Parrish, the Production Manager at Macdonald's, that he had know great poverty and privation — persecution too, quite possibly — and he was never going to be "that poor again."

He was the head of the art department of one of the big London advertising

agencies, but, alas, I have forgotten which one. It wasn't CPV (Coleman, Prentis(s) and Varley) or JWT (J. Walter Thom(p)son) or Benson's — (certainly not CPV) — the big 5 at that time. Walter gave me an introduction to Stein when I was looking for an art job in London — having carried my stuff around from Highbury to Streatham, getting bits and pieces of freelance, but nothing permanent. This would have been in 1953 or early '54. I was 21 or 22 at the time, and at that youthful age it is hard to guess correctly the ages of older generations — but Stein looked then in his late 40s or early 50s.

He looked at my efforts, especially at one of the illustrations for Wuthering Heights, Hareton Earnshaw as a child, which I had deliberately tried to be influenced by Stein's particular style. He finally pushed everything away, and told to go out and "live" — which piece of advice could have been interpreted in several different ways. I came away from the interview as depressed as from every other at that time. (I found an art job in London eventually, but not in an advertising agency.)

Malcolm Elwin, the "literary adviser" to Macdonald's for 21 years, and general editor of the Illustrated Classics, considered Stein to have been the best artist the firm ever employed. He gave an impression of tense, concentrated, rather severe, vigour and energy. He probably had his own reasons for wishing to remain anonymous. So far as I knew, no one ever knew him as other than Stein.

Sally Connely

October 2006

[address label]

8th March 2007

Dear Kate

Apropos Stein, p.31 November Newsletter, please could you tell Stephen Powys Marks he made a mistake about the jackets of the Macdonald Illustrated Classics. Stein did not design any of their jackets. He did the internal illustrations for the 2 titles I mentioned (possibly "Dombey & Son" as well, & others - but I cannot get at the boxes to look them up). The jackets for the whole series of 41 volumes were an homogeneous stiff celluloid cover, transparent, with title, author & illustrator written on the celluloid.

Please could you put a note into the April Newsletter to this effect as well. If too late for April then July.

A small item, certainly, but I do not like to see such errors perpetrated.

Best wishes

Sally C.



*'We waded ashore as fast as we could',
illustration by Werner Stein
for Treasure Island (c.1950), actual size.*