MEETING IN LONDON
DECEMBER 5TH 2015 — SEE PAGE 24

Editorial

Another successful Conference, reported with a selection of personal views, and a collection of longer Powys pieces: one of JCP's last fantasies with its mixture of domestic, metaphysical and loony; a Frenchman, Marc-Édouard Nabe, known for controversial views but admirable appreciation of JCP; Michael Caines's review of Llewelyn from the *TLS* (with title-altering gremlin). The Llewelyn Walk celebrates 20 years with an illustrated record, *Dandelions, Ground-Ivy & Yarrow.* 'News and Notes' casts its net wide, and P. J. Kavanagh, who died suddenly on 26th August, is remembered with an early (1983) Powys piece, 'A Book in My Life' (on *The Art of Happiness*).

With thanks for all those kind letters received.

KK

ON OTHER PAGES

We were all terribly shocked to learn of the sudden death of PJ Kavanagh so shortly after the Llangollen Conference when he seemed very much his usual self, as always with his pipe and his little radio to follow the live cricket commentary of The Ashes. On the Saturday night devoted to readings from the Powys brothers' works he participated with extracts from JCP's* Dostoievsky. *Michael Caines has kindly given us permission to reprint the obituary he wrote for the* Guardian *(3 September 2015). More obituaries available on line are, among others, in the* Independent, *the* Daily Telegraph, The Times, *and the* Scotsman. *There also was an article in* The Spectator – *'Remembering PJK'.

CT and LdeB

Michael Caines writes *(with some amendment by KK):*

On St George's Day 1951, the second day of the battle of the Imjin river, Second Lieutenant Patrick Kavanagh of the Royal Ulster Rifles was shot. While comrades in the Gloucestershire Regiment made a defiant stand against the Chinese army, and many of Kavanagh's friends were killed or captured, he was taken to hospital with what turned out to be merely a flesh wound. A doctor called it a million-to-one shot, without which the Korean war could have denied Kavanagh, who has died aged 84, his future life of broadcasting, acting, writing poetry – and writing much else besides, including a remarkable memoir, *The Perfect Stranger*.

Even before national service loomed into view, Kavanagh's life had been eventful. He was born in Worthing, Sussex, son of Agnes (née O'Keefe) and Ted – both entirely Irish by blood, but mother from Edinburgh and father from New Zealand. His father worked for the BBC and was the prolific creator of It's That Man Again, the hugely popular radio comedy starring Tommy Handley. During the second world war, the family was 'bombed from flat to flat', as Kavanagh later recalled in verse; life was 'a show on the road, a series of one-night stands', his father's world 'a vast / Gillray cartoon (only kinder)'. It was a varied upbringing, including a convent school in Barnes, west London, a monastic boarding school, holiday job as a Redcoat at Butlins, luxury time in Switzerland and working as a newsreader in Paris, where he took acting classes, and met the jazz musician Charlie Parker. He was then called up for National Service, found himself in uneventful Northern Ireland and volunteered for Korea.

Back home, he read English at Merton College, Oxford, and taught English for the British Council in Barcelona. Meanwhile he had fallen in love with Sally Philipps,

daughter of the novelist Rosamond Lehmann and the artist and communist Wogan Philipps (later Lord Milford). They married in 1956, and the following year were semt by the British Council to Indonesia. In 1958, Sally contracted poliomyelitis; she died in Java.

This is the life described in *The Perfect Stranger*, a joyous yet unsentimental account of Kavanagh's early life and his few years with Sally. A story of love and tragic loss, and also a 'sometimes funny, sometimes painful account of youthful pretension and awkwardness, self-righteousness and self-doubt', as David Nicholls called it in the *Guardian*, *The Perfect Stranger* was turned down by several publishers before Chatto & Windus published it in 1966. It won that year's Richard Hillary prize.

Kavanagh's first collection of poems, *One and One*, had appeared in 1959, but there was to be nothing else in book form until after the success of *The Perfect Stranger*. He had acted at Oxford (a memorable Cassius by all accounts) and spent the intervening years as an actor, at Salisbury Rep. and the Old Vic, welcoming the routine and camaraderie. In 1963 he moved to Gloucestershire 'by a lake / Not even the Green Dragon locals know is here', and married the translator Catherine Ward ('I would if I could write new words for women / because of you'). They settled in Elkstone, a village halfway between Cheltenham and Cirencester, where Kate masterminded the conversion of a barn into the home in which they would raise their two sons; Kavanagh adopted a ruined cottage as his study, when not called away by TV appearances or radio broadcasts, or travel articles for the then new *Telegraph* colour magazine.

Indeed, in the winter of 1964, exploiting his talents as a performer, Kavanagh found himself co-presenting Not So Much a Programme, More a Way of Life, a short-lived satirical television show, alongside David Frost and Willie Rushton. Kavanagh's later broadcasting and acting career took in work as varied as the documentary Journey Through Summer (1973), a perambulatory exploration of Britain; presenting Radio 4's Poetry Please! ('A surprising number of requests', he observed, 'come from people who ... have read little or no poetry since they left school'); and, in 1998, playing a cameo role in Father Ted, as Father Seamus Fitzpatrick, a collector of Nazi war memorabilia, whose relics include an actual surviving member of the Wehrmacht. After that, Kavanagh, a lean pipe smoker with a distinctive face and voice, was plagued with offers of more work playing Irish priests.

Kavanagh had declared in *The Perfect Stranger* that 'my blood on both sides of my family is Irish as far back as anybody can be bothered to trace'. This ancestry informs *Voices in Ireland: A Traveller's Literary Companion* (1994) and his travel book *Finding Connections* (1990 – an attempt to trace his great-grandfather who emigrated to Tasmania). He had many Irish friends and often visited them. He adopted the pen name PJ Kavanagh in deference to the great Patrick Kavanagh, whom he met twice. 'Why don't you change your fuckin' name?' was the only thing of any significance the older man said to the younger. At their second meeting, PJ was advised to buy Patrick a placating drink. The poet of *The Great Hunger* and *On Raglan Road* refused to turn around but instead stood 'with his hand cupped out behind him for the brandy'.

Kavanagh continued to publish volumes of poetry, including *Life Before Death* (1979), *An Enchantment* (1991) and, lastly, *Something About* (2004). He was awarded the Society of Authors' Cholmondeley award for poetry in 1993, following the publication of his *Collected Poems*; his *New Selected Poems* appeared last year.

As the title of a 1974 collection, *Edward Thomas in Heaven*, might suggest, mysticism and the natural world were among this Roman Catholic countryman's abiding concerns. He had 'an eye for rural things', as Frank Kermode put it, but 'all are subdued to the colour of his own mind'. Wary of the 'nature poet' label, Kavanagh could wryly see himself as some of his critics did: as 'a man who woos a rural muse / ... suitably dejected'. 'Quiet', as he surmised, is indeed a predictable critical adjective for describing his knack for coaxing verse that was fairly traditional in form into conveying what John Bayley called 'the impression of talk'.

Writing of himself in the Yeatsian third person, Kavanagh suggested that the natural 'surfaces' the poet sees serve primarily as a 'mesh for what lies under': 'A net that he could cast and then pull up, / Dazzled, by the light that has been caught'. Notwithstanding the exceptions, joy and hope were, for him, keynotes of his work. In answer to Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach', he could write: 'No melancholy, long, withdrawing roar / Today'. Hence Kavanagh's admiration for the different yet complementary work of fellow poets such as that of his American friend Peter Kane Dufault, who wrote what he called 'nature poems for grownups', and, despite their occasional, fierce disagreements, that of Peter Redgrove (with whom he once undertook a drunken road trip together in a borrowed car around the west of Ireland, in company with Pearse Hutchinson, the Irish poet whom PJK had met in Barcelona, another life-praiser).

Kavanagh's further literary projects included an anthology, *A Book of Consolations* (1992) of which he was especially proud. He edited the *Collected Poems of Ivor Gurney* (1982), *The Essential GK Chesterton* (1987) and, with his old friend James Michie, *The Oxford Book of Short Poems* (1985). *A Song and Dance*, the first of his four novels for adults, appeared in 1968, and received the Guardian fiction prize. One of his two children's books, *Scarf Jack* (1978), was adapted for television.

He was a columnist for the *Spectator* ('Life and Letters', 1983–96) and the *Times Literary Supplement* ('Bywords', 1996–2002); these essays were collected in *People and Places* (1988) and *A Kind of Journal* (2003). They convey the meditative, nature-tracing, side of his personality, as well as his love of detail and, always, humour – in one early poem he presented heaven as 'big rooms filled with laughing'.

Kavanagh is survived by Kate and their two sons.

Patrick Joseph Gregory Kavanagh, poet, actor and journalist, born 6 January 1931; died 26 August 2015.

Kate Kavanagh adds:

PJ pretended that he only came to the Powys conferences as my 'minder', but in fact he enjoyed them and made many friends – in spite of the difficult clash with cricket. He had 'cottoned' (as JCP would say) to John Cowper at least since the 1960s when acting at the Old Vic in Bristol, and we were drawn to Glastonbury Tor. The Millfield Conference was I think the first he performed in: from then on we would lure him with interviews and parts in plays. PJ went to look at JCP's Phudd in upstate New York in the early 70s (his account of this has been reprinted in Jacqueline's *Lettre*), and by happy chance met Peter Dufault, the poet who lived along the road. They became lifelong friends, and PJ invited Peter with another close friend, Pearse Hutchinson, as resident poets to the Cheltenham Literary festival. It was a smaller festival in those days, and PJ was hired as director to boost it with his theatrical connections. Instead (or as well) he invited long-unseen writers he admired, like Rex Warner and Philip Toynbee, and had poetry readings by Irish poets (like Heaney) before they were so famous.

We had wonderful times with his anthologies (I was navigator and note-maker), especially *Voices in Ireland* which took us all over the island in our VW camper van, and *Consolations* when we rented a cottage near Monemvasia in Greece, bearing a trunkful of Penguin Classics.

This year's Conference was an especial pleasure for both of us, with a lovely room overlooking the river (singing its tune all night) and woods up to Dinas Bran on the summit which I was so pleased to attain (with JCP's walking stick passed on from Peter Dufault) and look down on the Hand Hotel where PJ lay happily enjoying the commentary from Lords. He loved the often idiotic badinage of the commentators: comedy was what sustained him – like his father. He saw himself (perhaps us all) as comic characters, not least in *The Perfect Stranger*. He was always pleased when anyone said the book had made them laugh, not just cry at the end.

PJK's *The Perfect Stranger* was republished earlier this year by September Publishing, *New Selected Poems* last year, by Carcanet

The Conference

Llangollen, 21–23 August 2015

Llangollen again – welcome for the seventh time. Castle ruins on the bare hilltop – dense trees, rushing river, town with happy holidaymakers, the friendly Hand Hotel. As always at Llangollen, more participants than usual (fifty-plus), this time with several newcomers as well as old friends, international-flavoured with six Americans and six from France.

All seemed fairly unchanged, except that the seating formerly in our lecture room having disintegrated, relays of carriers of smart red-upholstered chairs brought replacements from the dining room, carrying them back for each meal. The choir (male voice) and rock band (The Misfits) performed in the evenings, according to custom.

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At the committee meeting, Charles Lock described the important finding of notes on John Cowper's lectures in San Diego, California, *c.*1915.

Plans for promoting the archive in its new home at Exeter were discussed, along with the nature and fate of the various papers still stored at the DCM, which David Goodway has been investigating – some very important and worth preserving (see AGM report, page 15).

The Society has received a donation of £500 from the late Graham Carey. How might it be most suitably spent?

We hope to continue publication of JCP's Diaries – the unpublished and interesting wartime ones from Corwen in the 1940s (in progress of editing) and the full versions of those from the 1930s (America and Wales).

A meeting in London is planned for 5th December (*see page 24*) and we hope for a return to East Anglia in April. Suggested speakers for 2016 will be approached and announced in due course – ideas welcomed.

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On Friday evening Chris Thomas gave us an anthology of what might be called expanded footnotes to *Wolf Solent*, that rich mine of interesting details. The list of authors quoted by John Cowper is certainly impressive – both as openly quoted 'familiar quotations' and as incorporated into his prose. Chris sees these as like the 'buried treasures' described in *Autobiography* – threepenny pieces (the little old silver ones) hidden and often forgotten in tree-stumps during his fantasy games in the woods.

Chris discussed the use of memory, focusing on both personal and conscious as well as collective and unconscious sources, in *Wolf Solent* and JCP's other writings – 'I am a worshipper of Memory' JCP says in *Autobiography* – quoting from Jung's essay *Psychology and Literature* to show how JCP fitted Jung's classification of a 'visionary' writer, as one who has the ability to tap into some unconscious primordial vision of archetypal images. As an example, the image at the beginning of *Wolf Solent* in which JCP describes Wolf's 'mystic sensation' of ecstasy rising up inside him like 'some great moonlight-coloured fish from fathomless watery depths': the image derives from JCP's deep personal memories described in *Autobiography* (watching the salmon trout at Harrod's Mill Pond, and seeing enigmatic ripples on a lake near Shirley) as well as references to ancient religion and mythology, alchemy and the Grail romances. A letter from JCP to Boyne Grainger in 1931 declares his admiration for John Livingston Lowe's great

book, *The Road to Xanadu* (1927) about the sources of Coleridge's poetry, declaring this to be the best example he knows of 'the way the imagination of a poet gathers his materials'. JCP could have been talking about his own method of 'visionary' writing.

Chris next discussed possible sources of the name 'Wolf' (always an evocative word that may have attracted readers). Not unknown as a first name (common in Germany) and as a family or given name occurring with a number of JCP's acquaintances, possible acquaintances and people he had been told about, including Jack London, called 'Wolf' by his friend the Californian poet, George Sterling (also a friend of Llewelyn and JCP); the futurist sculptor Adolf Wolff, the missionary Joseph Wolff, the actor William de Wolf Hoper, the poet Robert Wolf, Freud's Wolfman – and a reference to himself as a 'mad wolf' by Jane Heap in the *Little Review* in 1916.

Finally, Chris referred to the probable origins of 'Mukalog', the ugly 'rain god' 'indian idol' possessed by (and possibly possessing) Jason Otter, the poet in the book. Not, of course, *East* Indian (*Wolf* was written in America) – these six-inch figures were produced, it seems, by the Pueblo Indians in the South West states (New Mexico), for sale to tourists. Edgar Lee Masters had one which he gave to Robinson Jeffers, who refers to it in a letter to Masters at the end of 1926. The gift of the idol of a rain god is described by Lawrence Clark Powell in his book about Jeffers first published in 1934. The form of the name 'Mukalog' may come from the glossary of Indian names in Mary Austin's description of her tour of New Mexico – *Land of Journey's Ending*, first published in 1924.

Time ran out, so we must wait for the *Journal* for the final part of Chris's talk, on other sources including the narrative importance of paintings in *Wolf Solent*, especially the significance of Raphael's painting of the *Transfiguration*; and a discussion of the relationship between JCP and the American collector of antiquities, Edward Perry Warren, who lived in Lewes in the 1890s, for which *Wolf Solent* provides evidence.

★

John Gray has given talks at our conferences and written about the Powyses over ten years or so (e.g. on Powys philosophies at Chichester in 2006 – review of Llewelyn's 1910 diary, and review of his latest book, in *Newsletter* 85). His subject on Saturday morning was 'Three Powyses on Religion: John Cowper Powys, Llewelyn and Theodore on Belief and Non-Belief'. He started with disclaimers, on not being a systematic philosopher – as for his own faith, referring to P. G. Wodehouse who when asked if he had any religious beliefs, answered 'Hard to tell'.

Powys attitudes, thoughts, moods – can they be labelled? Llewelyn epicurean, Theodore gnostic, John Cowper pantheistic – do these labels fit? What did they respond to? All were looking for a liveable successor to family piety – to their father. All believed in interior life not action, sensation not reasoning. Their differences were more of temperament than belief.

Llewelyn's essay on the doomed oiled bird – the 'Blind Cow' rock with its relentless moan of the sea – is there 'a whisper of hope'? (No). He enjoyed occasional Christian ritual (as poetry) but 'Christianity is *false*'. He was not an Epicure in the ancient sense (their aim being painlessness, tranquillity, as in Buddhism), but in a *fin-de-siècle* sense, as in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, or Wilde's cult of sensation – seeking pleasure rather than happiness. Llewelyn would risk his life for pleasure. For him, religious variety was *poetry*. *Impassioned Clay* claims all creeds to be absurd. Llewelyn *hated* death, while to his friend the political philosopher Michael Oakshott, who visited him in the 1930s — reading to him (Hobbes's *Leviathan*) and meeting all the Powyses in an East Chaldon pub (TF drank the most) – death was a non-event.

Theodore was best described by Alyse Gregory – close to Bunyan and Traherne on one side, Nietzche and Freud on the other.

Gnostics in the ancient world saw God as a Demiurge – a less than total god, not totally 'good', sometimes self-annihilating – not unlike TF's Mr Weston, or like Blake, pro-Jesus, anti-God, seeing Jesus as relieving humans of the burden of immortality. But in *Unclay* there is no hidden knowledge (*gnosis*); no scepticism; no search for tranquillity. Meditation seeks to detect the *moods* of God.

John Cowper did not seek (or expect) peace, but *endurance*, as with rocks. He found the idea of perpetual serenity HORRIBLE. We must struggle to *enjoy*. He is always hostile to conventional christianity (from 'Lucifer' to 'The Ridge'.) He hated World Views (like William James who imagined an afterlife like a crowded boarding house). He had no interest in religion as ethics, only as 'roads to unthinkable possibility'(*Meaning of Culture*), leaving gaps open for symbols. The most anti-religion of the three, he argued for freedom of mind, 'suspension of disbelief', pluralism, Pelagianism, 'negative capability', rejecting life after death in favour of *multi*-life illusions.

Among questions, Chris Thomas reminded us of JCP's worship of *Demeter*, mother-goddess, from the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum. JCP made efforts with *contemplation* but found difficulty in sitting still.

Belinda Humfrey recalled good Parson Heyhoe in *Unclay*, an object of mockery (though Powyses generally treat clergy with respect). They all, she claimed, hated *other people*.

Louise de Bruin, with Tim Hyman, remembering Gerard Casey, connected T. F. Powys with mystics like Eckhardt or Boehme. Louise also emphasised the role of Nature in the lives of the Powyses as a form of religion – of landscape and above all of *flowers* (their family flower book was as big and well-thumbed as a Bible).

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Nicholas Birns, on Saturday morning, spoke on 'J. C. Powys's Radical Medievalism: *Porius* and *Owen Glendower*'. Charles Lock, introducing him, said that this was NB's first conference but he had written on Powyses for many years. He recently collaborated with CL over the Purdy–JCP letters and with the literary journal *Hyperion*; he was also an expert on Australian literature.

Owen Glendower and *Porius*, JCP's crowning works, will not please everybody. Too philosophical, too historical, not for nationalists or strict medievalists, they rebel against conventional expectations. Both books are set in the 'middle ages' (i.e. before printing and America), 1000 years apart. *OG* could be a boring book, given its involvement with Shakespeare and with military history. The character of Rhisiart turns it to a great book.

Rhisiart is normal, Welsh, rationalist, the straight man, our surrogate, part warrior part priest, a survivor. Owen is different on all counts. Written in WW2, *OG* raises questions of patriotism, Europeanism, racial conflict, the decline of the old Wales. It is not typical history, with its many women: history and romance collide. Its chapters have their own worlds.

Porius started as the story of Boethius (he still lurks in the background). Its obscure period both harms and helps. There is something very American about the book, with its ethnic pluralism. It seems designed to have few readers (not 'pitched' – could be titled 'How not to please Leavis'). Its last line – *There are many gods; and I have served a great one* – with its vision of a 'golden age', is a journey's end (Richard Maxwell saw the book as about a child growing to maturity) and indicates a choice – *a* great one.

In discussion, comments included Tim Hyman's that Myrddyn/Merlin as Saturn is a god

who refuses (or renounces, or abstains from) power, which Porius also does. He also noted JCP's involvement with the recent Spanish civil war and its conflict between socialism and religion.

Robert Caserio thinks we need more history, or less: the world of *Porius* could be traced to the end of the British empire at the time it was written. He referred to Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, re-enacting British history – 'something will remain'; to Arthurian interest in the 1940s (T. H. White); to Jed Esty on David Jones's *In Parenthesis*; and to Ford's *Parade's End*, as contemporary attitudes to war. *Porius* deals with German/ Saxons making a virtue of losing, and Celts willing to lose rather than dominate.

Chris Thomas said that JCP's 1940s diaries show his interest in the war. (Phyllis, a news-junkie, read newspapers closely and also relayed from her aunt's radio next door.)

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Saturday afternoon, by great good fortune (unlike the last conference here) was sunny and almost hot. Many of us went to Corwen (two on a vintage train), others to Valle Crucis along the canal, or to the vertiginous canal aqueduct along the valley. A smaller group, including Editor with the help of JCP's walking stick (inherited via Ficke and Dufault), achieved the summit of Dinas Bran with its animal-shaped castle fragments on the sheep-cropped turf, long blue views and dizzying green swoops to the cliff of layered stone across the valley – a natural quarry (or is it?)

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In the evening, **Tim Hyman** our Chairman introduced a series of readings by members of their favourite Powys passages. He began with the 'Caput-anus' soliloquy by Sylvanus in *Weymouth Sands*, a moving revelation of this complex, JCP-like character. **Kate Kavanagh** read the conversations in *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* between Mr Weston and John Grunter: Grunter unfazed by Mr W coming nearest to revealing his true nature, his 'inventions' of death and resurrection. **P. J. Kavanagh** read JCP's interpretation of Dostoevsky as a 'medium', in the book *Dostoievsky* (1946), one of the many reprinted by Jeff Kwintner's Village Press, without which The Powys Society would have been less likely. We must all value our immense debt to Jeff, and wish him well in his late-life afflictions. Sonia Lewis read the beginning of the 'Maundy Thursday' chapter in *Glastonbury*, with its typical shift (but not unconnected) between metaphysical and commonplace. **Robert Caserio** (in a glorious green shirt) read the hilarious start to TFP's Fable 'The Seaweed and the Cuckoo-Clock' about unlikely, comic and occasionally tragic marriages between objects. **Raymond Cox** read a series of connected sentences by JCP on thought and communications, crowds and individuals. **Jacqueline Peltier** read the early passage in *Weymouth Sands* when Perdita arrives on the ferry, seeing Weymouth unfolding before her. Jacqueline herself came from France to school in Weymouth aged 12, and got to know it well, and was led to the book. (Now if it had been Bournemouth! would she be there?) **John Hodgson** read the episode in *Porius* when Porius supports the weight of a collapsed Myrddyn Wyllt and sees into what the magician contains – all of nature, animal and vegetable, down to the heaviness of compost. Finally, **Stephen Powys Marks** read from Llewelyn's essay 'Out of the Past' (in the original *Earth Memories*) with its touching account of his aged father wandering to Stalbridge, his memory now only filled with eighty-year-old scenes.

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Sunday morning began with **Robert Caserio** talking on '*Unclay*'s Version of Pastoral: T. F. Powys's Place in Regional–Political Writing in 1930s Britain'. In the *Fables* (1929) voices can

come from anywhere or anything. There's a permanent battle in TFP between genres – fiction, society, allegory – *Unclay* (1931) is his homage to Jane Austen. Parson Heyhoe carries Austen around like a bible. Farmer Crawford overhears a reading of *Mansfield Park* and hears his name, so abandons his sinful intentions. Does Austen drive out vice?

But Austen's fiction is no match for TF's reality. In *South Riding* (1936), in the generic mode of social history and politics, Holtby battles against isolation, poverty, sickness. Valentine Ackland's report on 'real' country life in dead-alive villages has elements of social hope through collective being. TF has social *scale* but it is unconnected; he plays with religions and with his artificial characters (Death as a clown). Antisocial realism? No one unionises in Dodder ...

Is 'Unclay' a noun or a verb? surely a noun (human figures in a landscape of clay). The 1930s saw a war of different kinds of 'realism'. 'Social' v. other realities, later 'magical' realism. Different voices and solutions: de la Mare, *Precious Bane*, *Lark Rise* among many. In *Unclay*, it is impossible to say who or what will speak next.

Heard in discussion: 'No Powyses in Romantic Modernism' (CL)

'Why such extreme repulsiveness, why is TF so *extreme*' (BH)

Caserio: Hayhoe (stronger than other parsons – an Austen character – is a contrast to the other horrible males. TF includes both. In *Unclay* the antisocial is paramount, forgetting the balance of comedy with horror.

Tim H: A comparison with anarchist painting. Seurat, Ensor, two strands in antisocial art. Anarchism *seems* antisocial but this is exploration rather than a solution.

Nick Birns: Dickens, D. H. Lawrence, are close to TFP. This paper could be about DHL.

Mervyn B: 'Did TFP show solidarity with the agricultural depression in the 1930s?

Caserio: We can assume this, but not in a political way. He had solidarity with poverty – seeing poverty as a kind of solution – but this is not at the forefront.

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After the AGM came a talk by **Kathy Roscoe**, 'Wisdom for the 21st Century: the Life-Philosophy of John Cowper Powys', introduced by **David Goodway,** on her discovery of JCP as a practical psychological helper, a useful antidote to the difficulties of modern life and a support to self-esteem.

Kathy Roscoe & David Goodway

Four DVDs of the 2015 Conference

"Signs and Wonders"
Llangollen, August 2015

DISC ONE

Chris Thomas: 'Buried Treasure: JCP's Sources and the creation of *Wolf Solent*', introduced by **John Hodgson** (90 m)

DISC TWO

Robert Caserio: '*Fables* and *Unclay*: T. F. Powys's Unmatched Place in Regional-Political Writing in 1930s Britain', introduced by **Charles Lock** (53 m)

Kathy Roscoe: 'Wisdom for the 21st Century: The Life-Philosophy of John Cowper Powys', introduced by **David Goodway** (32 m)

DISC THREE

Nicholas Birns: 'Powys's Radical Medievalism: *Porius* and *Owen Glendower*', introduced by **Timothy Hyman** (48 m)

John Gray: 'Three Powyses on Religion: John Cowper Powys, Llewelyn and Theodore on belief and non-belief', introduced by **Tim Hyman** (48 m)

DISC FOUR

Favourite passages from the Powyses, read by members (c.85 mm)

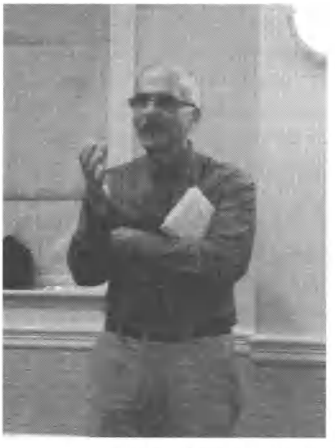
The Llangollen Canal; **Valle Crucis Abbey** (*c* 6 m)

The cost of the 4 DVDs is **£8.00** including postage to UK addresses. Please send cheque to Raymond Cox (**NOT** to the Powys Society) at:

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

For delivery to overseas addresses please e-mail Raymond Cox at
< rymd.cox@gmail.com >

Raymond Cox
Jacqueline Peltier



Robert Caserio
Stephen Powys Marks
Kate Kavanagh
Chris Thomas
John Gray

A Conference Gallery

Charle Lock
Nick Birns
Sonia Lewis
John Hodgson
Tim Hyman

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting

The Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen, August 23rd 2015

Present: Timothy Hyman (*Chairman*), David Goodway (*Vice-Chairman*), Chris Thomas (*Secretary*), Anna Rosic (*Treasurer*), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser and publications manager*), Charles Lock (*ex-officio, editor Powys Journal*), John Hodgson, Shelagh Powys Hancox, Dawn Collins, Jacqueline Peltier – and some 40 members of The Powys Society
Apologies were received from Michael Kowalewski (*Collection Liaison Officer*).

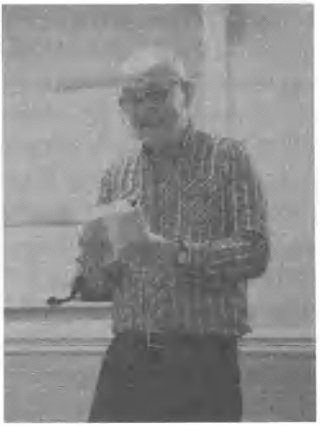
Minutes of 2014 AGM

The minutes of the 2014 AGM as published in *Newsletter 83* (November 2014) were approved.

Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of The Powys Society Committee for 2015–2016.

Nominations to The Powys Society Committee as published in *Newsletter* 85, July 2015, were approved. The Hon. Officers and Committee members from August 2015 will therefore be the following:
Officers: **Timothy Hyman** (Chairman), **David Goodway** (Vice-Chairman), **Chris Thomas** (Secretary), **Anna Rosic** (Treasurer);
Committee members: **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter editor*), **Louise de Bruin** (*Conference organiser and Publications Manager*), **Shelagh Powys Hancox, John Hodgson, Dawn Collins, Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Liaison Officer*) and **Charles Lock** (*ex-officio, editor Powys Journal*).

The Secretary explained that there still remained one vacancy on the Committee and proposed that **Jacqueline Peltier** (*official representative of The Powys Society in France*) be nominated as 11th member of the Committee and in recognition of her



hard work to raise awareness of the Society outside UK as an *honorary committee member*. The proposal was seconded by the Chairman and approved by members.

The Chairman announced that **Anna Rosic** has said that she does not wish to be nominated for another period as Treasurer after August 2016. The Chairman thanked Anna for all her very good work managing the Society's accounts and financial affairs over the last few years and invited members to nominate a successor to take effect from August 2016. **Robin Hickey** volunteered to take on the role and assist Anna during the course of 2015/2016. The Committee and members accepted her offer and said they very much appreciated her coming forward.

Hon. Treasurer's Report

The accounts of The Powys Society for the year ending 31 December 2014 were published in *Newsletter* 85, July 2014, page 6. The Treasurer said that the Society's Accounts for 2013 showed cash in the bank of £19,936.93. At the end of 2014 this had been reduced to £16,124.54.

The reduction is due to the cost of having the Powys Society Collection valued by Crown Fine Art -£600, and the cost of transfer to Exeter University which was £3,822. In total £4422. Without this expense we would have been a bit better than breaking even.

At the moment we have **£8,364** in the **Savings Account** (bank statement 31st July 2015), **£1,787.70** in the **Community Account** and **£13,273.20** in the **Business Savings Account**. At this time of year the figures are distorted by conference receipts which will shortly leave the accounts when we settle the bill from the venue. If we maintain our current level of spending the accounts will remain healthy, but any additional regular outgoings would put us annually in the red.

The Treasurer announced that the Society had just received a donation of £500.00 from the estate of **Graham Carey** and that the Committee is giving consideration to projects which might best benefit from this generous gift.

Collection Liaison Officer's Report

Apologies for absence were received from **Michael Kowalewski** who sent an e-mail to say that he had very little to report independently of a collective visit by members of the Committee to Exeter University in June to inspect the condition of the Collection. The visit was vey successful and members were satisfied that the Collection is in good order and well managed by Exeter University. This was followed by a visit, over two days, to Dorset County Museum undertaken by **David Goodway** and **Michael Kowalewski** to review and inventorise the remaining miscellaneous papers of the Society which have been temporarily left behind at the museum. David Goodway said that these papers constituted a combination of things – some less important, but others seemed very important to conserve and actually were not really "business" papers at all but formed part of the Bissell gift, whilst other papers looked superfluous and redundant. Some of the papers have a strong business and historical

interest to do with the formation and early days of the Society. David noted that papers relating to Village Press had been removed by Morine (originally her property). David mentioned especially the attendance book of the Society's London meetings, 1971-84, signed by the attendees; list of attendance at the JCP Centenary Conference, Churchill College, Cambridge, 1972, letters from JCP, Phyllis Playter, Littleton Powys, Alyse Gregory, Louis Wilkinson; copies of papers read to the Society (up to 1975); correspondence to Derrick Stephens (founding secretary of the Society) from (among others) Wilson Knight (voluminous!), Phyllis Playter, Gerard and Mary Casey, George D. Painter, Malcolm and Eve Elwin. David Goodway said that he plans to produce a detailed report on these papers which he will send to Christine Faunch at Exeter University to enable her to assess how much of this material they are willing to accept. Michael said that he had offered to help David in any future cataloguing of these papers. Hopefully Exeter will accept all the papers as a direct gift to themselves thus simplifying the ownership issue.

As reported to members previously Michael said that an agreed procedure for new materials deposited in the Collection has been established with Exeter University which will limit what can be added to manuscript material unless agreed beforehand and vetted for condition.

Michael said that he had had no public enquiries at all about the Collection. The Powys Society website indicates Christine Faunch as the first point of contact but he said he did not know whether she has received any enquiries. Michael encouraged members to visit the Collection in its new location and see how well Exeter's retrieval system works in practice for readers and researchers.

Secretary said that now that the Collection is safely established at Exeter University this seems a very good opportunity to raise awareness by a new generation of students. The staff at Exeter are keen to help integrate works of the Powys family in the English syllabus as well as sponsor lectures and events although these ambitions are limited by available funding.

Hon. Secretary's Report

Secretary reported that 15 new members have joined the Society since August 2014 which includes new members from the Netherlands, USA and France, showing that we still attract international interest. 10 new members joined the Society in 2015; in addition two members rejoined after an absence of a few years. However, seventeen members were removed from the membership list due to non-renewal. One member (David Gervais) was deceased.

Total membership is now **251**. This is still quite respectable especially since we recently received news of another literary society (Gerard Manley Hopkins) which almost folded for lack of membership but has since been rescued by keen volunteers.

Secretary said that he would like to appeal to members to submit to him their e-mail addresses to help the Society create a mass circulation contact list enabling

Committee to communicate with members much more efficiently. Secretary also said that a new list of members is planned shortly which might include member's e-mail addresses if permission is granted.

All the new titles published by The Powys Press can now be ordered via Amazon which includes a handy 'Look Inside' feature to enable prospective buyers to assess content. This has been successful enabling us to reach out to non-members and sell more titles than we might previously have done. Secretary said that the Committee wished to thank John Gray for his review of Peter Foss's edition of Llewelyn's 1910 diary, *The Conqueror Worm*, which appeared in the June edition of the *Literary Review* (reprinted on page 48). The Committee was also pleased to see a review by Michael Caines in the *TLS* of Peter's book (reprinted on page 48). The Secretary said that the Committee welcomes suggestions from members of potential new titles for publication.

Secretary explained that good progress had been made with digitisation of *The Powys Journal.* The volume for 2014 is now available on the LION database in libraries which subscribe to ProQuest resources. Vol.XXV, 2015, will be available later this year. All back copies of *The Powys Journal* will be available in 2016 on Periodicals Archive in the same way although a date has not yet been scheduled. Charles Lock said that arrangements are being considered to achieve this faster through alternative digital sources. Charles also noted that we should add *The Powys Journal* to the inventory of Powys Society titles available on Amazon and appealed to members to notify him of suitable books with Powysian content for review in *The Powys Journal.*

Secretary thanked Frank Kibblewhite for dedication he has given to refreshing, updating and maintaining our website, especially during the period earlier this year when content was not available.

Secretary appealed i) for members to renew membership early in the new year which helps save time and overhead costs, ii) for volunteers, iii) for suggestions for speakers at conferences, ideas for new activities and events which will be considered by the Committee, iv) for ideas how we might attract more new members

Chairman's Report

The Chairman referred to his report published in *Newsletter 85*, July 2015.

The Chairman proposed that the Graham Carey legacy should be dedicated to help meet the costs of developing a new publication.

The Chairman agreed that the visit by the Committee to Exeter University earlier in the year was a great success and was very helpful. This enabled members to assess the condition of the Collection and members were very pleased to see all items displayed in the same manner and order as they had been displayed at Dorset County Museum maintaining distinction between the Bissell and Feather bequests.

The Chairman said he wished to extend his deepest sympathies to Marie-Marthe and the family of David Gervais whose death was reported in *Newsletter 85*.

Appreciation and thanks were expressed by the Chairman to Anna and Louise for work on organising the Conference so efficiently, to Charles Lock for producing another excellent *Powys Journal* and to Kate for her sterling commitment to producing the *Newsletter*.

Members of the Society expressed their thanks to the Chairman, Secretary and all members of the Committee for all the work they do on behalf of the Society.

Date and venue of conference 2016

Members voted to hold the 2016 conference at the **Wessex Hotel, Street,** from **Friday 12th to Sunday 14th August 2016.**

A O B

Stephen Powys Marks explained that he is in the process of identifying a suitable location for the deposit of his personal family collection, which includes a lot of material association with both the Powys and the Johnson branches. He is seriously considering either Corpus Christi College, Cambridge or Cambridge University Library, mainly because of the strong East Anglian connections, and of course that so many Powyses, Johnsons and Pattesons were students at Corpus. The most significant part of his collection is a substantial number, nearly 1,400, of original letters; he has not decided about a lot of other paper records, such as sketch books, scrapbooks, and photographs.

Stephen also apologised for errors that had occurred at the printers leading to a limited number of faulty copies of *Newsletter 85* being sent out. Stephen asked members to notify Secretary if they had received a faulty copy which will be replaced. [*SPM, later note: the error consisted of two copies of just the middle pages 15–42 pages being bound in, or just the reverse, 2 copies of 1–14 and 43–56 only. So far in October we are much relieved to have heard only of 6 faulty copies.*]

Patrick Quigley proposed that the Society should facilitate online reading groups to help members share knowledge and ideas about Powys books. Patrick agreed to submit a proposal to be published in the *Newsletter*. (*see N&N, page40*)

Marcella Henderson Peal asked for information about availability of the American *Powys Notes* which has now ceased publication. **Nicholas Birns** said he had some old copies and knew that some libraries in Australia and USA also held a run of the journal. Secretary said that he was awaiting a delivery from Katie Trumpener, wife of Richard Maxwell, of many copies of *Powys Notes* and these would be offered to members at the book sale at the next conference but if, in the meantime, anyone wished to obtain copies of *Powys Notes*, they should contact Hon Secretary.

Chris Thomas
Hon Secretary

'My Conference'

Nicholas Birns

I was very pleased to be able to attend the 2015 Powys Conference in Llangollen and see firsthand the conviviality and intellectual stimulation that I had read about for so many years in the *Newsletter*. I flew in to Manchester on August 18th – my entire trip spanned the 18th to the 25th, just like the action of *Porius* in October 499 – and spent the night before the Conference in Shrewsbury, staying right on the Severn, and took the train to Ruabon early the next day. I was apprehensive about whether the Llangollen bus would show up, but indeed it did, almost immediately after my debarkation. I arrived in Llangollen, crossed the bridge and checked in at the Hand Hotel, a reassuringly old-fashioned and comfortable environment. I met my New York Powys friend David Balcom Stimpson and his wife Natasha almost immediately and we had a festive lunch, in which even the Caesar salad came with 'chips'.

The Conference proper began that night, with an opening reception, where I met friends such as Jacqueline Peltier, with whom I had been corresponding for over fifteen years, in person for the first time, and got to see others such as Susan Rands and Belinda Humfrey whose work I had been reading for even longer, in addition to re-encountering Charles Lock – one of my earliest academic inspirations – as well as Kate Kavanagh and meeting her husband Patrick, the noted poet. After the first of a series of festive meals whose characteristically English robustness – Yorkshire pudding, black pudding, eggs and sausages – provided an opportunity for me to evade the culinary dictates of my vegetarian partner back in the US – we heard Chris Thomas give a voluminous and engaging talk on the possible source of the 'Wolf' in *Wolf Solent*.

The distinguished philosopher John Gray spoke next day on the inexhaustible question of Powys and religion, followed by my own talk, followed the next day by Robert L. Caserio's rigorous and insightful discussion of T. F. Powys, the antisocial and mismatching, and Kathy Roscoe's eloquent discussion of Powys's non-fiction and the new social agenda that could proceed from it. Thus both JCP and TFP were addressed and though there was no single talk on Llewelyn, his name was mentioned throughout the Conference. I was pleased both by the positive response my own talk, on Powys's radical medievalism in *Porius* and *Owen Glendower*, received, and by the easy way academics and non-academics mingled, and intellectual substance was made accessible without being dumbed-down (both Robert and I mentioned Bruno Latour, but lived to see another day). This struck me as very much in the spirit of Powys, whose intellectual curiosity was at once both labyrinthine and broad-minded.

A highlight was the free period on Saturday afternoon, where with David, Natasha, Chris Thomas and Susan Rands I climbed Caer Drewyn and then went to Powys's house in Corwen. Happily, we met Roger Jones, a man now in his seventies who had lived in the area all his life and had known John Cowper Powys, Phyllis

Playter, and Phyllis Playter's mother well as a boy. JCP had even given the ten-year-old Roger a signed copy of *Owen Glendower* – not exactly the gift of a young child's desire, but one Jones nonetheless still kept and treasured. I had met people who had known the Powyses before – I had the privilege of being in Peter Grey's New York garden apartment on two occasions – but meeting someone with living memory of the man in Corwen gave me an even more intense feeling of connection. I wrapped up my stay in the UK with a night in Chester, seeing the Roman ruins, and then back to Manchester and New York.

Powys's life connected the non-academic and academic, the British and American, and my first visit to Wales powerfully renewed these links for me personally. After I came home, two deaths at once confirmed this sense of connection and augured some of its inevitable melancholies: the poet Charles Tomlinson, who had taught my mother at Bristol University, died in August, to be followed soon after by P. J. Kavanagh whom I had just met in Llangollen, and whose poetic domain was downriver from the same Severn on which I had gazed in Shrewsbury. Time passes on for all of us; but my trip to Llangollen enabled me to meet some of the still-living giants and commune with the spirits of the dead that, through their mind and imagination, still resonantly live with us.

Kathy Roscoe

After a gap of four years, I returned to Llangollen in August to attend my second Powys Society Conference. This time, I was coming as a speaker, a wonderful opportunity given to me by Chris Thomas and David Goodway to talk about JCP's life philosophy. As I renewed old acquaintances, those intervening years quickly melted away as we swapped news about our lives and activities. But very soon, talk turned to the Powyses' books. I glanced about the room at the small groups standing in conversation, many with their heads leaning in, straining to follow conversations before their words were drowned in the sea of voices. What has struck me at both the conferences I've attended is the level of enthusiasm and eagerness to talk.

Being a Powysian can be a lonely and frustrating experience and I think what people enjoy most about the Conference is the opportunity to talk about the books. For some, myself included, it is the only opportunity to discuss and share their thoughts and feelings on the Powyses' works. I think the Powys Society is more valuable to its members than many other societies founded around more popular writers. Readers of Dickens, Hardy, etc. will find others in their daily lives with whom to talk about those writers and their works, whereas a Powysian filled with enthusiasm, questions, and ideas is without an outlet when those around them have not heard of the Powyses. The Powys Society Conference is the only place to meet and share with other admirers of their works.

In my talk, I hope I didn't give the impression that I dislike the lectures. I did enjoy them. They are interesting and offer insights that only an academic can provide – so

certainly have their place, but I particularly enjoyed the readings on Saturday evening. It was interesting to see each individual's particular choice which reflected their personality a little, and it was good to hear extracts of the Powyses' own words at the conference, making them present in a tangible way. I think Stephen Powys Marks exemplified the spirit of it when he stood up to read a favourite passage by Llewelyn. Saturday evening had an intimacy and palpable atmosphere of shared admiration. Others too, felt the same way – I think it was the sharing, the interaction; those things are so absent in our lives normally, as I mentioned above.

Reading by its nature is a solitary exercise and has its pleasures as we know, but books are also for sharing, discussing. Perhaps group discussions with one member feeding back to the group would provide an outlet for people's desire to discuss their ideas or read extracts from the works. Sometimes in the dining room, really interesting ideas are discussed which only the handful of people involved ever get to hear. I think Pat Quigley's idea of an on-line book club is very good for this reason.

Coming as a speaker was an honour, and I feel privileged to have shared my thoughts on JCP's life-philosophy and my plans for publishing an anthology of his philosophical ideas.

Geoffrey Winch

Anticipation is one of my pleasures when it leads up to a Powys Society conference: who will or will not be there? – will there be an encouraging number of 'first-timers'? – and always the hope that I'll enjoy the lectures and talks. Then that pleasure is always enhanced during my actual journeying to the venue knowing that so many others are on their way too having set off from a diversity of places within the UK and way beyond. My decision this time to use the A-roads west of Birmingham as I motored up from the south coast – instead of the motorways north of that conurbation – enhanced my pleasure even further as it enabled me to arrive at the Hand Hotel with plenty of time to relax before Tim welcomed us at the reception – yes! I avoided, this year, the horrendous delays caused by so much traffic heading for the V-Festival.

This was my eighth Powys Society conference, and my third at Llangollen. Happily there were so many of those familiar and friendly faces, though, sadly, a few were missing this time round. But a goodly number of 'first-timers' were present and, though every conference develops its own individual characteristics, I did wonder whether some of them thought it was normal for the lecture room to be practically devoid of chairs as we went in after dinner. That was until some of the personnel who'd been waiting on us at table only a short time before began bringing chairs in through a side door, two or three at a time, ably assisted by anxious Powysians. But once there were sufficient chairs it was Chris Thomas who delivered the first paper, and he really set the scene for all those that followed over the weekend – so much detailed research and analysis. For me – principally a book collector and an ordinary

reader (that is if any reader of the Powyses can be classed as ordinary) – it is an opportunity to be presented with the academic insight of others and then to listen intently to the discussions that follow. All of this informs my reading, thus making it all the more enjoyable. And no lecture or talk this year failed to live up to expectations.

The Saturday evening at the Conference is always an opportunity to be entertained by something entirely different, and this year a handful of members read selected favourite passages from Powys writings. All were enjoyable, engaging, and sometimes very amusing. But for me the highlights were Jacqueline Peltier's moving reading from *Weymouth Sands*, and Stephen Powys Marks – determined that Llewelyn's writings should not be ignored – when he read part of the essay 'Out of the Past' recalling a very poignant moment of the Powys family's history.

So now anticipation becomes one of my pleasures leading up to the 2016 Conference which will be my third at Street. I will have to decide whether or not to travel there as before along the A303 knowing it will subject to all its routine delays, or whether to try an alternative route....

Amélie Derome — *an Odyssey in JCP's Wales*

When my companion Kévin and I landed at Manchester Airport on the 21st of August, I had not set foot in the United Kingdom for many years. As a child, I was brought up in Berkshire but left to move to Paris. I never broke the link that I shared with the English language and set to to study English literature and translation in the South of France where – of all places – I discovered John Cowper Powys. Leaving the scent of lavender to breathe the fresh English air, I was thrilled to discuss him in his own land. Taking three different trains and a bus to Llangollen was an experience in

Jean Pascal Ollivry, Nicholas Birns, Amélie Derome and partner and David Stimpson – at the summit of Caer Drewyn (Mynydd y Gaer), Corwen, Saturday 22 August 2015.

(Photo attached by courtesy of Catherine Bayliss)

itself. As the landscape grew greener and greener, it almost felt like an initiatic journey.

Arriving at the Hand Hotel, I was both intimidated and excited. Here in Llangollen, it seemed that everyone had a kind word for me and offered much welcome help. Listening to Chris Thomas's lecture, I was thrilled to finally get access to detailed information on JCP's sources. The following day, Nick Birns's talk proved the perfect introduction to visiting Caer Drewyn. In the back of Louise de Bruin's car, I daydreamed about JCP's long walks, a reverie jogged by the sight of one of his walking sticks, which Kate Kavanagh showed me. In the evening, Patrick Quigley had indeed a lovely surprise in store for us: the visit of David Jones, JCP's neighbour in Corwen. He kindly showed us a letter JCP sent him for his birthday, in which he discusses Milton's poetry.

In the morning, the joy of the final talks mingled with the somewhat sad hustle and bustle of departure. At the last minute, I asked Stephen Powys Marks for the complete set of *The Powys Review*, so I might bring back a precious and longlasting souvenir of these three very special days. We had decided to stay a day longer, and took the train to Corwen to see JCP's house, and I could not help thinking of how much he disliked these modern machines. Thanks to the *Powys Reviews* I had just bought, I was able to recognise the cottage at once. In front of his dog's tomb, I was reminded of Céline, discussed in Marcella Henderson Peal's and Charles Lock's paper on Marie Canavaggia – a great lover of animals, his pets were also buried in his garden in Meudon. I rang Jones's doorbell, and was welcomed by his black dog, another touching coincidence. He shared his memories of JCP over a cup of tea, before he toured us around the Dee Valley. I left it with a pang on the last day, but also with the feeling of a duty to keep promoting JCP in France.

Jean Pascal Ollivry

I joined the Society in 2009 but attended the annual conference for the first time this summer. These meetings usually take place simultaneously with another event in which I regularly take part, and until this year I had stuck with Estonian-French lexicography. If I decided to go against my wont and to attend the 2015 Powys Conference, it was mainly because of the venue for the conference, and because of the promise of an excursion to places connected with *Porius*. After all, reading *Porius* has given me the initial impulse to explore various web resources about JCP, resulting in my eventual discovery of the Society.

I'll freely admit that I feared this meeting, being convinced that I would land among real Powys connoisseurs and make a fool of myself. I was spared that last bit, and I'm very grateful for this. On the contrary, everyone was almost unbelievably friendly. For instance, I had been thinking for years that I should contact Jacqueline Peltier instead of recklessly plundering her rich website without a word of thanks,

and there she was, cheerful and encouraging. Chris Thomas, who has been most helpful when I looked for various publications difficult to locate, turned out to be even more interesting and congenial in the real life. Charles Lock was there too, whose articles about *Porius* were so close to my own opinions. It was also a privilege to get precious reading advice from John Hodgson, or to find a link with the American Powysians in the person of Nick Birns. I do not wish to minimise the interest of the papers which were read during these three days, but the interstitial conversations were undoubtedly the best part for me.

The conversations and, obviously, the excursion to Corwen and the ascent to Mynydd-y-Gaer. By a happy coincidence, the elements of the landscape Porius contemplates from the tower of his fortress make up a good part of the first two chapters of the book, and these are those I know best since I translated them. I had reached the very spot from which it all started, in 499 and in the 1940s; everything fell in place, a circle closed. I'm deeply grateful to all the individuals who organised the meeting and, very concretely, rendered possible this precious moment.

Having mentioned my translation of the beginning of *Porius*, it seems here appropriate to acknowledge the work of all of Powys's translators. I discovered JCP with *A Glastonbury Romance*, and at the tender age of 19 this would not have been possible without Jean Quéval's work. Even if Powys's reception in France leans more on the philosophical side than would be my taste, everything that has been done in the field helps me to apprehend the difficulties and clarify my own approach.

Meeting in London, Saturday 5th December, 2pm

at the Bunhill Meeting House, Quaker Court, Banner Street, London EC1Y 8QQ

Our past Chairman, John Hodgson, will lead a discussion of *The Pleasures of Literature*, by John Cowper Powys, published in the UK by Cassell & Co. in November 1938. The American edition was published in October 1938 under the title *Enjoyment of Literature*, by Simon & Schuster. Derek Langridge in *John Cowper Powys, A Record of Achievement* (1966) noted significant variations between the two editions. The American edition lacks the long essay on St Paul, which JCP's American editor, Quincey Howe, disliked.

Our discussion will focus on JCP's attitude to world literature and his favourite authors, expressed especially in the Introduction and the Conclusion, and comparing his choice of writers with the authors he discusses in *Visions and Revisions* (1915), *100 Best Books* (1916), and *Suspended Judgments* (1916). At the end of the Introduction to *The Pleasures of Literature* JCP wrote: 'Books ... are man's word against the cosmic dumbness, man's life against the planetary death, man's revelation of the God within him, man's repartee to the God without him.'

JCP wrote most of the essays in *The Pleasures of Literature* in 1937, following a commission from Simon & Schuster in 1936, between publication of *Maiden Castle* (1936), *Morwyn* (1937) and working on *Owen Glendower.*

Bunhill Meeting House is located through a rectangular archway off Banner Street, a short walk from Old Street Underground station. It is set on the edge of the recently replanted and refurbished Quaker Gardens. For more information about the venue including a local map please visit the Bunhill House web site at:
<http://studymore.org.uk/bunlet.htm#location>

All are welcome. The event is free with refreshments provided after the discussion.

Books for Sale I

Morine Krissdóttir has a number of first editions, some rare items and a selection of other titles in her Powys collection which she would like to offer to Powys Society members. Please contact Morine direct by e-mail or write to her at the address below and she will send a list of her books available for purchase.
<morine@krissdottir.com>

Morine Krissdóttir
63 Redwood House
Hawthorn Road
Charlton Down, Dorchester, Dorset. DT2 9UH

Books for Sale II

David Wright, a non-member, has some Powys books he is offering to sell from his private collection of first editions. David says he is willing to offer Powys Society members a reduction of 10% off the quoted prices. Postage and insurance will be charged extra. Payment is only required on receipt of books. If you would like to obtain any of these titles please contact David direct, either by e-mail or by writing to him at the address below:

<hazelwright199@btinternet.com>
David Wright,
Mill House, 199 St. Margaret's Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4HN.

Postscript: David says '*I knew a John Powys at Brighton Library School in the mid 1960s. His father,* [*Francis Powys*], *who owned the Powys book shop in Hastings, was very critical of other drivers, when behind the wheel. Son John subsequently worked as an assistant at Hastings Library.*'

[1487] POWYS, JOHN COWPER. The Art Of Happiness. London: Bodley Head, 1935. First Edition. 8vo, over 7.75" – 9.75" tall. Cloth. Very Good / G+. The first edition and the earliest impression. Very small damp stain to top corner front board. Light to moderate foxing throughout text. Dust jacket bit soiled and chipped at head and tail spine with loss. Short tear foot of front panel, but is not price clipped and reads 6s net. Protected in a professional plastic jacket. £37.00

[2547] POWYS, JOHN COWPER. Pair Dadeni or, The Cauldron of Rebirth. Llanybri: The Druid Press, 1946. First Edition. 8vo , over 7.75" – 9.75" tall. Printer Wrapper. Near Very Good / No Jacket. Printed paper covers (paperback). Spine and rear cover bit discoloured. Very rare. Published by Keidrych Rhys and Lynette Roberts at Llanybri. £75.00

[952] POWYS, JOHN COWPER. Obstinate Cymric. Carmarthen: Druid Press, 1947. First Edition. Cloth. Very Good+ / Near Very Good. First edition and the earliest impression. Contemporary signature on end paper. Dj spine and fore edge front panel bit discoloured and slighttly foxed with tiny tear head spine. Variant Dj in blue and it's not price-clipped. £17.00

[953] POWYS, LLEWELYN. Skin for Skin. London: Cape, 1926. First English Limited Edition. 8vo, over 7.75" – 9.75" tall. Cloth. Near Very Good / No Jacket. The first English edition and the earliest impression and limited to 900 copies or which this is no. 232. Covers very slightly dust dulled and spine joints are a bit rubbed of colour. E.p.s bit foxed, text slightly browned? Uncut. £8.00

[947] POWYS, T.F. Mockery Gap. London: Chatto, 1925. First Edition. 12mo, over 6.75" – 7.75" tall. Cloth. Good+ / No Jacket. First edition and the earliest impression. Spine label bit discoloured and chipped (spare tipped in at rear). Spine bit discoloured. Faint, small abrasion on front cover and rear e.p. Covers bit dulled and possibly ex-library? but still a respectable copy with no stamps. £6.00

Chris Thomas

Note by SPM: The measurements given are pointless: all they tell you is that a book is somewhere between 7.75 and 9.75 inches tall.

P. J. Kavanagh

A Book in My Life (1983)

If you think of the happiness of the old Matisse, painting his lovely colours and lovely girls, and compare this with the misery and malice that disfigured (we are told) the last years of Somerset Maugham, similarly aged, only a few miles down the coast, you can't help thinking that painting, or almost any activity, is better for you than writing. There are exceptions, of course – Goethe, Blake – but on the whole writers seem to fare badly: 'We poets in our youth begin in gladness; / But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.' Indeed, not long ago, a school of criticism was erected on this; the degree of talent gauged by the disastrousness of the life, with suicide the stamp of authenticity.

That, of course, is the worst kind of romanticism, and I have always taken comfort from the contrariness of that still insufficiently appreciated genius, John Cowper Powys. Far from deteriorating, he began his best work at sixty and after a life of struggle, penury, ill-health and very little public success, became not only happier, but in a strange way healthier. He should have been dead years before – quite early on he had so much of his insides cut away that he had what he called a 'pseudo-stomach' – but he went on till he was ninety-one, emanating more and more energy, intelligence and goodwill, genially existing on bowls of bread and milk. He would have been the first to describe himself as a crafty old saurian – above all things he admired Homeric, Odyssean guile – and he had clearly found some way of adjusting his psychic dial to wavelengths of good news. How?

In 1935, at the invitation of his American publishers, he wrote a book, *The Art of Happiness,* answering that question. (He had published another book with that title in 1923, more philosophical, but this one concentrated on the technique, the 'art'. His publishers had met him, and realized that at the age of sixty-two he had some tips to offer.)

This has been republished by the excellent Village Press which deserves an article to itself. The way John Cowper Powys writes, in his essays, *helps* people, and it helped Jeff Kwintner who had just made a million in the rag-trade, from his Village boutiques. So he founded his own imprint to reissue just about every word John Cowper Powys wrote. Kwintner deserves a statue.

Powys begins his book by disposing of the cult of Unhappiness. He identifies it for what it is, a desire to revenge ourselves on the world. 'To be unhappy in order to punish! That really does seem a human instinct. But how pathetically absurd!' Nevertheless, the problem has to be faced: 'If at any moment a sensitive person were made fully conscious of the appalling pain in the world he would go mad and die howling.' Nature herself makes sure we remain 'too sturdily selfish' for that. However, we must remain aware, and yet not 'howl' and we can do this by *controlling our own thoughts.*

I italicize this because it is the core of his advice. He does not like the word 'happiness' – 'the annoying jauntiness, and even the bouncing babyishness of the word' but it differs from pleasure, or joy, in that it is subject to mental volition. He now proceeds to a series of practical tips, with examples: he calls them the 'Icthyian leap' (like a fish out of the water), 'discarnation', the 'panergic' stance. He apologizes for the names, he is the enemy of obfuscation, but is also a profound believer in the magic of naming. But it is astonishing, as he says, how we allow ourselves to be at the mercy of any thought, however banal, that pops into our heads. 'We lavish our energy on plans to improve our condition but seldom concentrate on heightening our mental reaction to the moment as it passes.' This is generally so true that anyone who can help us not to re-play an old film in our minds, or dwell repetitively on some grievance, will do us a great service. He says it is up to us: 'We can be unhappy ... or we can *force ourselves to be happy.*'

In this case the italics are his, he is fond of them, but no one must have the impression that his book is a regime of mental hygiene. On purpose he avoids religious consolations (he does not want to put anyone off, and in this case he barely considers them necessary). He calls it an 'impious' book, and the recommendations towards selfishness and deception in his excellent chapters called 'Woman with Man' and 'Man with Woman' (his book is nothing if not to the point) might be startling to some. But as much as anything he is redefining, freshening, these words. He was the son of a vicar and he is possibly having a sly dig at the Reverend Francis Powys in his re-writing of scripture; he lays much of our misery at the door 'of those tremendous commandments, in both the Old and the New Testaments, commanding us to love instead of to be at peace in our own souls.'

But what balm there may be for some self-tortured soul in his next paragraph:

> What a liberating flood of planetary happiness pours through us when we experience that great moment of Conversion, turning us from love to peace! It is then that we realise that we can be free and happy and honourable and pitiful and kind *and yet not have to love anybody.*

That makes me smile, I'm not sure why; like a disciple at the mouth of a cave, overhearing the Master. There are many such moments: 'A woman is happier living with almost any man who does not get drunk and beat her than with the best of mothers.' 'Men, down at the bottom of their hearts, *are afraid of life itself.*' (A source of irritation to their women.) He sees life as war – not against each other, but against negation. 'There is undoubtedly something, in our abandonment to misery, of an evil and destructive satisfaction.' As so often with Powys, he prefers the attitude of women: 'To be attracted by the exquisite delight of making love to the incredible yieldingness of an enchanted body, only to discover – when he comes to live with this body – that he has landed himself with a personality ten times more belligerent than he is, is a startling shock to most young men.'

He writes, as I have said, to be understood by everybody, which is a sure way, alas, of getting yourself underestimated. But Stevie Smith has it right, as she usually has

(though her drawing of a bearded, robed harp-player is, thank goodness, fanciful; the sage was clean-shaven and reassuringly jacketed.) She wrote a little poem called 'Homage to John Cowper Powys'

> This old man is sly and wise,
> He knows the truth, he tells no lies,
> He is as deep as a British pool,
> And Monsieur Poop may think him a fool.

(*Spectator,* 1983, collected in *People and Places*, 1988)

The Fantasies

Kate Kavanagh (from NL 55)

Are they entertainments, Surrealism, metaphysical speculations, Freudian dreams, automatic writing, indulgences, nightmares, comments on current events, projections of 1 Waterloo, attempts to exorcise fears? Ludic or ludicrous? Schoolboy or sage?

Their predecessors are *The Owl, the Duck* ... (1930) and *Morwyn* (1937). Glen Cavaliero discusses the fantasies in his essays 'JCP Space Traveller' (*The Powys Review* 16, 1985) and 'The Comic Spirit' (*Review* 20), and in his excellent afterword to *Three Fantasies* (1984). Ian Hughes's review of *Three Fantasies*, also in *Review* 20, sees them as 'glosses on the major writings' (putting in the 'queer ideas' and sexual fantasies, often wittily). To this reader, their traceable elements, random selections from memory and changes of tack, with the narrator's detachment, are very like those of dreams. They are occasionally unpleasant, often funny, and (in details) lifelike.

In most of them at least half is formed by Discourses — anti-religion and anti-vivisection, on the death of God, the differences between men and women, the consciousness of the inanimate, the interplay of Mind and Matter and of individual humans with Space and Infinity.

If they have a message, it must be that infinity and personality create each other.

Shillyshally

It happened quite often, as Mr. Cashawait and Miss Ashtop sat in the parlour of their stationer's shop in Rum Street in the County of Shell in the little Kingdom of Shillyshally that their thoughts drifted to the question of marriage. They were cousins and it had been in this little room at the back of his parents' shop that they had

decided that when they were grown up they would run this place together. Neither of them had any relations left alive now; and that may partly have been the reason why the possibility of their marrying one another had a tendency to waver across their minds. It was a quaint thing that it should be so but for some reason or other they both felt, though they had never discussed the subject together, a deeprooted prejudice against marriage in general, not only for themselves but for anyone.

Shillyshally was an island in a group of islands who were all under British control; most of them with their own native ruler. The ruler of Shillyshally was King Om who had no wife and no daughter but who had twin sons, now young men in their teens, one called Dom and the other called Pom. The traditions in Shillyshally went very far back. One of them declares that the Sea-Nymph Thetis the mother of Achilles built a little fountain here to which she would repair as a last resort whenever all other fresh water failed her.

Miss Ashtop growing weary of her talk with Mr. Cashawait had just drifted to a tiny window which looked out, not on Rum Street as their shop did, but on a back alley called Quick-quack. Quick-quack was a great resort for stray fowls of every kind who wanted to be sure they weren't in danger of being run over or having stones thrown at them. Miss Ida Ashtop now turned to her cousin Jacob Cashawait and told him excitedly what she'd seen. "Who'd have thought it!" she cried. "There's Prince Dom and Prince Pom strolling down Quick-quack as if they owned it!" Jacob jumped up and ran to her side. "By God! If I won't slip out and get them to come in—I've got a good half-bottle of Dad's sherry left, and you could let'em have a couple of those honey-cakes you made the other day. By God! I'll slip out and bring 'em in!" Jacob did as he said. The tiny side-door just served his purpose.

Prince Dom looked delighted to come in; and Prince Pom, though more hesitating and more cautious, accepted the situation and followed his brother. In a minute or two they were both seated at a little round table in front of the fire upon whose smouldering red logs Jacob soon threw some splinters of wood while Miss Ida brought her cakes and the wine and the glasses.

"I'm so glad you saw us, Miss Ashtop," said Prince Dom. "A good cup of tea at this moment is just what I wanted." "It's not so much the tea," said Prince Pom, "it's these divine honey-cakes of yours, Miss Ashtop. I adore them."

"Does King Om ever think of buying an air-plane?" enquired Jacob Cashawait; addressing both Princes at once. Prince Dom, the eldest, sat nearest to him; so he was naturally the one who replied. "Yes, we have at last persuaded him. But, O my dear Mr. Cashawait, it has been an awful business! But we've done it and he has agreed."

"But I expect the worst part of it will begin now," said Miss Ida. "You're absolutely right; as you girls generally are," said Prince Pom. "You see, neither of us knows anything about air-planes. And of course it wouldn't be right for us just to skip about the whole coast round here interviewing people when the whole "brunt", as they say, of the situation lies on Father and he's got the knowledge and the money as well as all the instincts of a business man. What we must do is somehow—*but how?*

that is the question—get hold of owners of air-planes and have some good long talks with them." Prince Dom looked with deep approval at Prince Pom. "You have put it well, brother. You have put it well."

It was at this moment that the King's Chief Steward Sir Log Lorm strode into the room.

"It's all fixed up. I've seen to it myself, Prince Dom. Yes! I've settled it all, myself, Prince Pom. You needn't bother about us any more Mr. Cashawait. No! not any more, Miss Ida. I've done it all. The best air-plane on the whole coast was for sale; and as the Chief Steward of King Om, I have now, after face-to-face negociations with its background owners, settled the whole business. The air-plane is ours." "What is its name?" enquired Miss Ida. "O never mind about such a trifle as that!" bellowed Sir Log Lorm. "The point is that the negotiations are over and the best air-plane on the coast, probably on the whole coast of Britain, is absolutely and entirely King Om's."

"But I still think it *is* rather important," protested Miss Ida, "what its name is to be. Let's discuss it a little. What would you suggest, Prince Dom? What would you suggest, Prince Pom?" "I would suggest Bumpkin," laughed Prince Dom. "O, no! Why not call it "Broadside!" cried Prince Pom. "I bet what you'd like to call it," roared Sir Log Lorm, glancing vindictively at Miss Ida, "would be 'Quim-Quam' or something that would suggest the whimsies of a wanton wench." "I think 'Bum-Quam' sounds rather nice," murmured Jacob Cashawait. "At least it sounds like a lively air-plane ready to dodge storms and meteorites," cried Miss Ida, "but what I would call it, if I were King Om, would be . . . ." "You shut up!" growled Sir Log Lorm; "Naming an air-ship aint no job for a gal like you!" "I'd like to have a bunk in it, anyhow," said Miss Ida boldly. . . . "a real sailor's bunk."

At this moment Prince Dom cried out in a clear ringing voice: "I've thought of it! It was your talking of a bunk, Miss Ida, that put it into my head. Let's call it *Runk*! I am sure that if once we named it by that name we should hear voices from all over the world referring to it."

"But don't you see," bawled out Sir Log Lorm: "what a lot of loathsome words rhyme with 'Runk', such as 'funk', 'punk', 'hunk', 'trunk', not to mention the final, fatal word 'sunk'?"

It was at that moment that an event occurred that in after-time, however many years intervened, was never forgotten by anyone there present. The event was nothing less than the sudden appearance of King Om himself. It was obvious to all that Sir Log Lorm His Majesty's High Steward was more astonished than anybody else. What he did was as startling as it was grotesque. He went bouncing, like a man-shaped ball, round and round the feet of his master. The King was dressed in an armoured jerkin and wore black silk knee-breeches and silver-buckled shoes; and the effect of the doting adoration produced by his Steward's queer goings-on hardly affected him at all.

"I think, children," the King said, "*We will* call our air-plane *the Runk*." And having

said this, and beckoning to Sir Log Lorm to follow him, King Om went away as rapidly as he had appeared.

"Well, that decides it," said Prince Dom: and Mr. Cashawait uttered a purring sound of approval while Miss Ida cried with clear vexation: "But I don't like you two Princes to leave us, as I know you *will* now you've an air-ship whatever you are going to call it!" Mr. Cashawait uttered a still stronger murmur of approval. What he was really afraid of in his heart was that his lively cousin should suddenly decide to go with them. As a matter of fact this *had* crossed her mind; but as she looked at the two Princes she definitely decided against it. But it was not very long after its blessing by King Om and Mr. Cashawait and its condemnation by Miss Ida that *the Runk* set out on its airy voyage with nobody onboard save the two Princes. Dom and Pom soon found out how to sail it and they became more and more skilful the further and faster they went and the more completely the Earth, the Sun and the Moon and the Stars were all left behind. After their final goodbye to all these the two Princes seated in the prow of *the Runk*, had a long and important conversation.

"If we are lucky enough to escape clashing into any Unknown World," said Prince Dom, "where do you think we shall come out?" — "Well, my dear," responded Prince Pom, "I don't myself believe we shall ever *"come out"* as you call it. I believe we shall by degrees be swallowed up in Nothingness; that is to say if only we escape hitting any other World resembling our own Earth."

"What do you mean," enquired Prince Dom, "by being swallowed up in Nothingness?" "Well, my dear; I'll try to tell you, but it's a rather difficult thing to describe as I see it," replied Prince Pom. "You must first remember, anyway, what is the opposite of Nothingness. I am surely right, am I not, when I say that the *Opposite of Nothingness* is *Anything*? Now here we are, Dom and Pom, alone in our air-ship *the Runk* exploring Empty Space. In our air-plane are all the Elements. Air is there. Fire is there. Earth or Soil is there. Water is there. And mixed with the elements in *the Runk* are, we may be sure, such small bits of Matter as the legs of insects, the wings of moths, tiny splittings of wood and pieces of metal."

"But what I want to make clear to you," went on Pom, "is that both you and I seated here in the prow of our ship *the Runk*, together with our ship itself, would not, could not be *what we are* if it were not for the existence of our Opposite, namely *Nothingness*. Think, for instance, what it would feel like if there were no Empty Space and if we were surrounded by Solid Matter. If what we had around us were only Empty Space it would not feel anything like as bad as that. Why wouldn't it? Simply because if it were Solid Matter all round us we should be lost in Hell at the mercy of merciless Devils.

"Think of today being actually," Pom went on, "the Seventh of July!" "But what about the elements in our own bodies?" asked Dom, "and all the Elements in *Runk*? I should have thought they would be rather a trouble! What, for instance, about our own senses? What we taste and *touch*? What we hear? What we *see*? What we *smell*? If you and I are real and true and honest Elementalists? That is to say worshippers of

Air and Fire and Earth (or Soil) and water and what we taste?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Dom," answered Pom. If we were voyaging as we are in *Runk* alone in Space and knew we could go on forever without meeting any World or any other Space-Voyagers, we should know what Space was all right; but should we know what Nothingness was or is? No, we should not. And why not? Because to know anything we have to know its opposite. The opposite of Nothingness is Matter. By Matter I mean the material whereof our *Runk* is composed, its wood, its metal and all the rest, and also of what we ourselves are composed, our flesh, our bones, our skulls. The reality of Nothingness is one necessary concomitant of all the Matter which it excludes. The smallest thing it is excluding, such as a bit of an insect's leg, or a bit of an insect's wing, or one of my own eyebrows or a hair from the top of my head or a drop of your spittle or a snip from one of my finger-nails is essential for the existence of Nothingness. That Nothingness should exist as a background to Everything seems to my mind a perfectly reasonable and natural thing. In my mind I have only to try to visualise all the quantity of Matter in big and little pieces that makes up this *Runk* and ourselves in it, to feel that all this cannot possibly go drifting through Space without some quite definite relation to the All and Nothing of the entire Universe. Let us, therefore, my dear Dom, compel our imagination to see our Universe as a mass of all the material things we can think of existing side by side while enriching them all is the great encompasser Nothingness: If Nothingness were absent we should only be sailing as we naturally can do through Empty Space hoping that we shouldn't land ourselves on some unexpected and unknown world or be crashed into by some air-plane sailing in the opposite direction."

"Well, isn't that what we're doing now?" interrupted Dom. "What I can't see is the difference which your precious Nothingness makes! As long as there is no unknown world to break into and land upon, as long as there is no danger of our crashing into another air-plane, what good can the presence of Nothingness do?" "I will tell you, Dom," said Pom. "It does us good because, without it, all we should have would be what is given us, by Chance, or by Fate, or by the obstinate intention of our own Will-Power. It is the existence of *Nothingness* at the underside of all we achieve or enjoy that endows these achievements and enjoyments with that delicious feeling of victory over something which it is of the essence of both our human soul and our human body to demand of life. If *Nothingness* were not there, if we were only working upon the mass of Matter of which we ourselves are a portion, we should be liable at any moment to be seized by a feeling, yes, by a hopeless, helpless, resistless feeling, of absolute despair. It was this feeling that the most sensitive of all our English poets, William Cowper, felt when he was dying. It is from this ultimate despair that the presence of this Nothingness at the background of our life, or even *as* the background of our life, saves us. You see, my dear Dom," said Pom firmly and resolutely, "without this presence of Nothingness as the background of everything our life would be like a perpetual skating on the cracked ice of everlasting despair. It is precisely that despair, Cowper's despair, which is destroyed by the presence of *Nothingness*.

Nothingness is with us forever, it soaks into us forever, it is in the innermost cells of both our soul and body. And without understanding its presence, without realizing that its presence gets into our body and soul, we gain perpetually by its being there. O my dear Dom," concluded Pom, "I tell you that in order to live happily we have to have a perpetual awareness of the way the happiness of life depends on the presence at life's deepest core of something that is as oblivious of the difference between life and death as of the difference between everything and nothing."

Up and up and up and up went *the Runk* with Dom and Pom sitting at her prow talking. Suddenly, when far out of sight of Sun, Moon and Stars, they encountered a Being who astonished them. This Being was composed of Two Heads. One of these Heads was made of Fire and Air, while the other was made of Earth and Water. In each Head the two elements were wrestling together. Apart from his two heads this strange creature was shaped like a man. He had two arms, two hands, two legs but no features, his eyes, ears, nose and mouth were lost in the wild and desperate struggle that went on all the time in both his heads. It would be hard to say which of his two heads flung forth the more ferocious of these struggles. The one that swirled upwards in the battle between air and fire with the most massive bulk was the air. It was black as night, but it was more tangible than any darkness that Dom and Pom had ever seen in their lives before. Each of them felt it was just as if he had stretched out his arm from his bed in the midst of a wild dream and had found that he was surrounded by a floating substance that he could catch and squeeze in his hand and as he did so force it to exude big drops as thick and black as ink. Through this visualisation of tangible darkness there whirled upwards the arrow-like flames of pure fire. In colour it was bright yellow; not like the red glow of coals in a grate, but like the bright glow when you first strike a match. To say that these yellow flames flickered upwards would be to make their ascent far weaker and more tentative than it was. They burnt upwards, they soared upwards; and yet they quivered and wavered as they went. Yes, they writhed and vibrated and twisted upwards. What they never failed to suggest were the uprushings and leapings and twirlings of wild serpents filled with the faith that the faster they could ascend the sooner they would reach the prey they wanted to devour. What increased the excitement of the battle was the obstinate resistance which the down-pressing, side-pressing, hell-drooping, weight-gathering, abyssloading, lead-plunging, night-descending, death-pulsing, droop-throbbing, gravethumping, pulse-precipicing, blotting-out, slanting-down, and ending up with that crashing, all-gone sinking, all-relasping collapse with which the air resisted the fire.

The other head of King Chaos was also an exciting battle, but quite a different one. Here Water and Earth were fighting. The chief shapes the Earth took were rocks and the dark ground that can be dug into below, yes, silently below, grass meadows and corn-fields. In the Rocks were Fossils from primeval times and in the ground under the grass and under the corn were plenty of big earth-worms the years of whose lives were known to none. Banks and coasts of sand and pebbles were always resisting the waves of the Sea; some as enormous as Chesil Beach but never quite as

towering as St. Alban's Head or St. Aldhelm's Head or as the Great Orme's or Great Worm's Head or some of the cliffs along the coast. Oh yes, the wildest battles of King Chaos's Earth and Water were between the waves of the sea and the tall cliffs along the Coast. It was in those places, where they were caught lying on the beach or climbing up to a ledge or eating their lunch on rocky projections that so many human beings were always being killed. The surging foam of the waves when they strike the rocks at the foot of the cliffs is terrifying to anyone who looks down upon it from the top of the cliffs; and so is the foam whirled up by the waves as they overtake each other before they've struck the land at all. Each wave as it reaches the rock upon which it has resolved to break, or has been fated to break, has a tendency to change its colour. Indeed, before it bursts into foam it may be blue or green, or light blue or light green, or it may be purplish in colour as to appear almost black. "I'll make you change your colour," says the rock to the wave. "I'll drown the kids you're guarding," says the wave to the rock. In the memories of such persons as are growing old today at the sea-side near the village of Shillyshally the recollection of white sea-gulls coming in from the waves and of wooly heads of white sheep flocking together inland as hastily as if the sea had threatened to swallow them up are beginning to grow confused. What these human beings do not see is the tall figure of King Chaos with his two heads.

His body had no underclothes at all but he wore a thick robe, three or four inches thick it was, coloured in four large squares, each square representing the war-like urgencies of one of the adversaries in one or other of the King's two heads. King Chaos kept striding, as he had done for as long as the Universe existed, up and down the enormity of Empty Space where no worlds could be seen. King Chaos's own private thoughts, independent of all that went on in his two heads, were as follows. Up and down his naked body, beneath his flowing robe, they ran. "All that is springs from me," he thought. "I came from Nothing, and when I go back to Nothing, all goes with me."

There was not a soul in the outskirts of Shillyshally who did not repeat this thought before he or she died.

The End.

NOTE by Jacqueline Peltier

Shillyshally: imaginary place name based on 'shilly-shally' or similar, first recorded in OED as 'shill I, shall I' in 1700. It means to be irresolute or undecided. Thanks to Paul Roberts and Robert Carrington, who drew my attention to this story, published in *BETWEEN WORLDS: an international magazine of creativity 1960–1962, Vol 1, Summer 1960,* Gilbert Neiman, editor, published for the Inter-American University by Alan Swallow, *San German, Puerto Rico & Boulder, Colo.* This short story/fantasy carries the subtitle '*A Fairytale For Children 88 Years Old*'. Contributors' blurb at back has 'John Cowper Powys continued to write with all the vitality of the Master he is to his present age of 88.' (The Powys Collection has the typescript of this and a letter from the editor transferring rights back to author.) It is not listed in Langridge but is recorded in the Dante Thomas bibliography.

News and Notes

From Peter Foss (to Stephen Marks)

Dear Stephen, I said I would say more about the cover picture on *Newsletter* 85.

This very affecting picture of Katie and Lucy (I believe from Louise's collection, though there may be copies in other collections – perhaps yours?) has, as you may know, been reproduced in two previous publications: in *The Powys Journal* ii, 11, where the caption reads 'Katie, seated, and Lucy at Montacute Vicarage', and in Chris Scoble's huge book, *Fisherman's Friend* (about Stephen Reynolds), Plate 70, where the caption reads 'Katie Powys, with her sister Lucy behind, in the garden of Montacute Vicarage about the time she first met Reynolds'. Now it appears for the third time in NL 85, described as 'Katie and Lucy and pigeons in Montacute Vicarage garden, about 1905'. I think the date must be about right (from Lucy's hairstyle perhaps), though 'pigeons' should probably be 'doves'.

However, the setting is not in fact Montacute Vicarage, as Montacute had no shutters on downstairs windows, and the structure of the vicarage was Ham Stone, not brickwork. I recognised this first when cataloguing (and in the process studying) Louise's collection, where there is another picture taken at the same location and time, which is captioned 'Aunt Annie, Margie, Katie and Lucy'. 'Margie' was Margaret (*b.*1886), a great friend of theirs, and daughter of the Reverend Cecil Frederick Blyth. He was rector of Rickinghall, Suffolk, from 1903 to 1913, and is buried there. The setting is in fact Rickinghall Rectory, which the two girls were visiting at that time. In my next email I shall send you a picture of the Rectory and you will see the exact place they are seated beneath the shuttered windows and on a front terrace. As far as I know Montacute never had a flock of doves. Note also how nicely dressed the young girls are for their visit!

Peter

Rickinghall Rectory, Suffolk.

* * * *

The **memorial for David Gervais** on 9th July was a beautiful occasion, beautifully organised. The motto on the programme is from Ruskin: *There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and admiration.* The memorial took place in the curious old-new church at Steep, Edward Thomas's Hampshire village – David was a leading member of the Edward Thomas Fellowship – and poems by Thomas were read, as well as some of Valéry's *Cimetière marin*. Anna, Louise and Kate represented The Powys Society, and a series of tributes read out included one from our Chairman Timothy Hyman. Old friends recalled David (always a high-achiever) at successive periods of his life – school, Cambridge, Reading university; his family members described him from different angles (Marie-Marthe amusing on his hilariously irregular driving). Between the speakers, 'Music for Contemplation': a solo violin and cellist gave us Bach. Afterwards the distinguished French-English congregation were regaled in a nearby pub with a sumptuous English Cream Tea such as David would certainly have enjoyed.

KK

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from Raymond Crozier

One of the aims of the **Modernist Journals Project**, which is a joint venture of Brown University and the University of Tulsa, is to construct a searchable digital archive of English-language magazines of 'artistic or literary significance' for the period 1890 to 1922. Its web site (http://modjourn.org/) lists a large number of periodicals published during this period, many of them now digitized and searchable. A search using the phrase 'John Cowper Powys' identifies fifty-two 'hits'. Fourteen are in *The Little Review*, where contributions date from 1915 to 1921; twenty-five in *The Masses*, 1914 to 1917; one in *The New Age*, 1915; nine in *Poetry*, 1915–20; three in *The Seven Arts*, 1916–17. A search for Llewelyn yields seven entries, six in *The New Age* and one in *The Smart Set*; I could identify no entries for Theodore. A search for Frances Gregg identified fourteen 'hits,' eight in *The Egoist*, 1915, 1916; one in *The New Freewoman* (a previous incarnation of *The Egoist*), 1913; two in *The Little Review*, 1914, 1915; two in *Others*, 1915; three in *Poetry*, 1913, 1915); two in *The Smart Set*, 1916, 1918).

Individual editions of the digitized magazines can be downloaded and searched and, if wanted, saved and printed. There is a wealth of fascinating information in these journals. I give some brief examples from *The Little Review*, founded by Margaret Anderson in 1914. It is well known for its serialization of Joyce's *Ulysses* leading to its prosecution for obscenity in February 1921 after publication of an instalment that included the *Nausicaa* episode involving Bloom spying upon Gerty MacDowell. JCP gave evidence for the defence in the trial, which took place in the Jefferson Courthouse, located in West 10th Street across the road from the entrance to Patchin Place. Anderson, the co-defendant along with Jean Heap, praised Powys's testimony in *The Little Review*, January–March 1921, suggesting that the support of someone with his obvious intellect should have been sufficient for the judges to

dismiss the case. She was being over-optimistic and the case was lost. She heard JCP lecture; the February 1915 edition includes notes jotted down by a listener to a lecture he gave on **Dostoievsky**, which, in the absence of recording, convey some sense of his content and style. The magazine carried announcements of his lectures. Anderson encouraged him to submit articles and reviews and the income from essays and book reviews was important for JCP during those years. The March 1915 edition includes a review by Powys, 'Maurice Browne and The Little Theatre', a poem 'Portrait of the incomparable John Cowper Powys, Esq.' within a series of poems, 'Ten Grotesques' by Arthur Davison Ficke, and a review by Anderson of Powys's book, *Visions and Revisions*. In this editorial essay she writes (p. 26) that Powys 'was one of the main inspirations behind the coming-to-be of the magazine' and 'its godfather'. The November 1915 edition contains a long essay on Theodore Dreiser by JCP and an essay on JCP on war by Margery Currey.

This project offers a valuable resource for researchers into the Powys brothers and the literary and artistic scene of early twentieth-century New York. While *The Dial* is listed in the directory of periodicals, it is not yet digitized so we have to wait for access to the brothers' many contributions to this journal and to appreciate the editorial work of Alyse Gregory.

* * * *

from Robert Caserio

I want to pass on an interesting result of my having bought a first edition copy of JCP's ***The Art of Growing Old*** (1944) at the Conference book sale this year. The flyleaf shows that the volume previously belonged to Crofton Gane, who, from 1933, was the chairman of Gane Furniture. He introduced the work of Marcel Breuer and the Bauhaus to British furniture design. In 1936 Breuer redid the interior of Gane's house to make it a modernist showroom. The Gane Trust now continues his memory.

Gane has written his name (in beautiful script) on the flyleaf of *The Art of Growing Old*, and has added the following: *'mid March 1960 // This book which has lain little regarded for half a dozen years or more, is now read with growing profit and growing pleasure.'*

This note fits well with the Society's interest in the practical effects of JCP's 'ideas' or 'beliefs' on his readers. And it also nicely illustrates a convergence between JCP and modernist aesthetics.

Chris Thomas adds: **Crofton Gane** (1877–1967), was a pioneering furniture designer, determined to make the design and manufacture of English furniture an important modernist art form. He was also interested in textile design, sculpture, and typography. Marcel Breuer (1902–81), was a Hungarian modernist architect and furniture designer, an early graduate of the Bauhaus, and a pupil of Walter Gropius, who came to London in the 1930s: Crofton Gane asked Breuer to design an exhibition pavilion, the Bristol Pavilion, to enable Gane to display his products at the 1936 Royal Show. Crofton Gane and Marcel Breuer were also associated with

Isokon, a company devoted to contemporary design of houses and flats in a modern Constructivist style, (such as the famous Lawn Road Flats in Hampstead in 1934) as well as the modernist design of furniture and domestic interiors.

* * * *

from Chris Thomas

In his talk at this year's Conference John Gray referred to the English philosopher and political theorist, **Michael Oakeshott** (1901–90), who had once told him in a private conversation that he had been personally acquainted with Llewelyn Powys, and that in the 1930s he used to visit Llewelyn at Chydyok where he read to him from *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (Oakeshott's essays on Hobbes were later published in a collected edition in the 1970s). John Gray notes that this information also appears in Oakeshott's *Notebooks: 1922–1986* (Imprint Academic, 2014, edited by Robert Grant and Luke O'Sullivan): the relevant section about Oakeshott's visits to Llewelyn can be found in the index under 'Powys'. The reference reads: *'A memory. I went to see Llewelyn Powys as he lay dying in his garden hut in Chaldon Herring. He could not speak above a whisper, but after a time he pushed a book towards me; it was lying on his bed. It was* Leviathan. *And he whispered to me: 'Read to me about the Kingdom of the Fairies'* [ie. the Roman Catholic Church]. *And I read until the sun went down.'*

This reminded me that a few years ago I was contacted by Luke O'Sullivan, editor of Oakeshott's *Notebooks*, who asked about the source of an article by Llewelyn referred to by Oakeshott. I was able to provide this which was Llewelyn's essay *The Book of Common Prayer*, first published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, May 1934. This occasioned an exchange of e-mails in which Luke told me that Oakeshott had also reviewed JCP's *The Meaning of Culture* in the *Cambridge Review* in 1930 (this is not mentioned by either Langridge or Dante Thomas) and which was reprinted in *M. Oakeshott, The Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence: Selected Writings* vol. 3, ed. L. O'Sullivan (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), 58-60.

In this connection I also received at the same time an e-mail from Professor Robert Grant, at the University of Glasgow, who is an acquaintance of John Gray and an authority on the work of Michael Oakeshott:

> *JCP, as his novels show, was something of a sexual mystic. I've never got on with them, or indeed even so much as finished one - too lush, overheated and overwritten, I thought – but will have to review them properly, since MO was a fan, as he was of LP, who was also interested in sex, but more in a rumbustious, 'tumbling in the hay' style. The Powys I thought seriously good was the middle one, T.F. (of* Mr Weston's Good Wine *fame). He too was interested in sex, but in a much more nearly 'normal' way, as part of a fulfilled spontaneous life, and inseparably from its ethical and moral elements, from love, in short.*
>
> *Michael Oakeshott kept up with LP's widow, Alyse Gregory, and it was when visiting her at her place near Chesil Beach (the area was thick with Powyses) with his mistress Mary Walsh in c. 1955, that he had his first brush with the law regarding skinny-dipping. On this occasion he and Mary Walsh were only reported to the police. The following year, however, when Michael Ooakeshott was bathing naked and (as he thought) alone on the same stretch*

of coast, he was charged with indecent exposure and subsequently convicted of it, reportedly under some antiquated by-law. Just goes to show where all this 'advanced' thinking can lead, eh? Or perhaps it's something in the Dorset water."

After his retirement from the LSE in 1968 Michael Oakeshott lived in Dorset, in the village of Acton, near Langton Matravers.

* * * *

Harald (H.W.) Fawkner's new book from The Powys Society, *John Cowper Powys and the Elements: A Phenomenological Study of* Maiden Castle, is a companion to *John Cowper Powys and the Soul* (2010) on *Weymouth Sands* and *Wolf Solent*. It presents enticing chapter headings – Equanimity, Base Metals, Flora, Destiny ... *'The idea of personality is of course key to everything Powysian; yet it would be a mistake to assume that personality for Powys is something primarily human ...'* (from the Introduction). A review will follow in NL87.

* * * *

from David Stimpson

A previously unrecorded review of ***The Complex Vision*** by John Cowper Powys: *Theosophical Outlook*, October 1920, was published by the Blavatsky Lodge of Theosophists in San Francisco.

* * * *

from Brenda Rossini *(Winnetka IL) to Michael Kowalewski*

I happened to read a review of Peter Foss's recent Powys publication and it stirred some memories.

I was born in Sherborne and attended school there. My parents then moved to America. Years ago, while in college, I met **Kenneth Hopkins** (a visiting professor *a l* Pnin), here from Norfolk (where a neighbour had been Henry Pratt/ Boris Karloff). Prof. Hopkins was completely immersed in research and writings on and about the Powys brothers; naturally, a young chick from that neck of the woods – the primroses, cowslips, daffodils, and gorse – was a burst of welcome cheer. I tried to join him in his enthusiasm, but sadly, I was more inclined towards John Fowles and, for a while, Thomas Hardy. All in all, they were from a place always within my heart.

* * * *

from Chris Thomas

We have just received a **request from an Italian publisher** to translate Peter Foss's *The Conqueror Worm*.

* * * *

from Chris Thomas

At the Conference Richard Comben mentioned to me he had found a reference by **Stephen Fry** to Glen Cavaliero and his praise for the Powys brothers in Fry's recent autobiography: *More Fool Me – A Memoir*. Fry mentions meeting Glen at a dinner party: 'Adorable old-fashioned English don. Great expert on those marvellous Powys siblings, John Cowper, Llewelyn, Philippa and TF.' Later I telephoned Glen: he laughed and said he had heard about the reference and remembered the event very well. It took place in November 1993, organised by Glen's friend Paul Hartle,

Director of Studies in English at St Catherine's College. Stephen Fry had told him how much he admired Glen's *A Reading of E. M. Forster* (1979).

* * * *

from Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

There are 2 Powys references in the same poem in Auden & MacNeice's ***Letters from Iceland*** which I have just spotted, but may be well-known.

The 23-page poem at the end called '(Their) Last Will and Testament' concludes (p.246 in the 1965 edn):

> We leave to Cowper Powys Glastonbury Tor
> The White Horses to the Horse Guards, and the vale of Evenlode
> To all those shell-shocked in the last Great War.

In an earlier passage (p.241) written by MacNeice only:

> Item to Littleton Powys more and more
> I leave my admiration and all the choice
> Flowers and birds that grace our English shore.

* * * *

from Lance Pierson*, on the committee of the (Gerard Manley)* ***Hopkins Society***:

We came close to closing a year ago because of falling member numbers, but a core of us formed a new committee and are keeping things going with some new initiatives. I thought that as a fellow member of the Alliance of Literary Societies you would be sympathetic to our needs. We have launched a website, still in its very early days (www.hopkinssociety.co.uk). We are aiming to raise awareness of what we're doing and as I'm sure you know, in order to climb nearer the top of search engines, we need more than just the occasional visitor to click on it. So I wondered if you would consider having a link to our webpage on your site as a Society with similar aims? We have a reciprocal link already up to your site and would be so grateful for your help.

* * * *

from Patrick Quigley

Proposal for an ***Internet Powys Book-club.***

Reading and talking about books are among the most pleasurable activities we can engage in. Many readers are captivated by the Powys family because of that flood of marvellous books they created and the many studies, biographies and memoirs produced in their wake. The Annual Conference is an ideal way to renew friendships and make fresh acquaintance with the books. However the conference only lasts a weekend and the intensity soon disappears unless one keeps up contact and keeps up reading.

I have always envied the lucky members who can partake of the stimulating conversations at meetings throughout the year. One solution would be to find a local book-club and persuade them to adopt some Powys material instead of the more obvious choices. I don't fancy my chances – I gave a lecture on John Cowper to a writers group some years ago and some of them still aren't speaking to me.

So – why not an Internet Book Club for Powys Society members which would be a way of exchanging views and encouraging each other to read more? For a start I

suggest three books, one by each brother, easily available: *Wolf Solent*, *Fables* and *A Struggle for Life* (Llewelyn's essays). Members could select one, two or all three if they wish and submit their email address. The co-ordinator (me) would group the emails together and send a 'start email' to participants. This would contain the emails for their group (based on the choice of book) and they would be free to make comments and contact each other as they wished. The only caveats are the usual – no abuse of privacy, no personal attacks, obscenities, insults etc., but I'm sure Powys Society members are well-behaved. They would be free to form sub-groups and go on to read further books if they wished.

I'm not sure where it would go from there. Maybe some readers would write about the books for Newsletters. It might encourage members to set up reading groups in their own areas and have mini-gatherings throughout the year. Anyway we should set the ball rolling and see what happens. I would suggest a 'start date' of Monday, 28 December, after the Christmas rush. I would be glad to receive any comments from members. email <patquig2002@yahoo.com> tel 00353 857133106

Marc-Édouard Nabe

Preface to John Cowper Powys, *Dostoïevski* (Paris, Bartillat, 2001)

A Champion of Tears

He's an awkward customer, this Powys – muddled and vague, a simpleton ... And yet this essay, no more than a lecture padded out with enthusiasm, is one of the books that most make you want to read Dostoievsky.

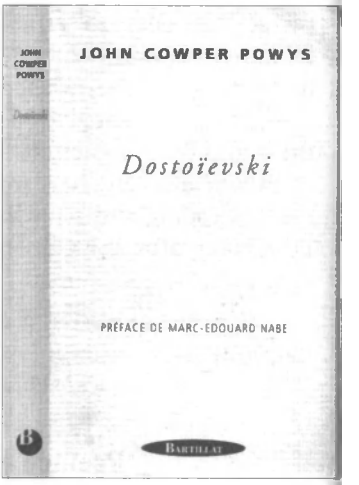
No need to compare John Cowper Powys with the great specialists and admirable connoisseurs – Grossman, Bakhtine, Motchoulski, Frank, Catteau, Markovitz ... I list them because their intelligent studies of the personality and work of the most Russian of Russians have for me turned them each in their own way into characters from Dostoievsky.

Powys is always a Powys character, I mean from Powys's novels, though these are the most dostoievskian of the twentieth century, along with those of Bernanos and Simenon – three 'Brothers Dostoievsky'.

Intelligent study is not for John Cowper Powys. He responds with all the simplicity of his animal nature, the famous 'stupid being' he frequently borrows from Gertrude Stein, as a test for his character as holy fool.

There is a worshipper of chaos in Powys and what fascinates him in Dostoievsky is that he is a past master of the exploration of Chaos – in the Greek sense, that is, of a teeming void preceding all existences, to which they unconsciously seek to return as if to the golden womb of their lost underworld.

By 1946 Powys had written several long novels: *A Glastonbury Romance, Weymouth Sands, Maiden Castle*. His power as a storyteller entitled him to approach the greatest of all novelists. His publishers asked him to write a *Life* of Dostoievsky for a pocket collection, but Powys does not tell the life-story of the great Theodore [Fedor]. He doesn't know much about it, anyway. Instead he chooses to tell what Dostoievsky has meant to himself. He reads him in the translation by Constance Garnett, whom Powys adores, calling her with reason, because of her excellent Dostoievsky translation, the foremost writer of her time. He who in his lectures let loose wild statements (calling the Karamazov father the character most like God – that ogre for whom all women were objects of lust and whom all his sons had dreams of murdering) decides once and for all to describe the pleasure he has from thinking constantly about Dostoievsky.



This essay, clumsily put together, is a series of electric discharges in a reverse direction to what might reasonably be written about a beloved author. Powys endlessly talks of the electric shocks given by the Russian to the nerves of the reader (and the narrator!), as if we were all suffering from illness and Dostoievsky in his writing is trying to find out why. In another book, *The Pleasures of Literature*, Powys compares Dostoievsky's work to the Apocalypse, and regrets that his idol never wrote a commentary on St John. Here, instead, it is to St Paul that he compares him.

Epistles to the soul and oracles of the heart, Dostoievsky's books hold the 'mystic magic of the Greek Orthodox Church'. Another point that has not been underlined by anyone else (yes, one can underline a point even if italics would only coarsen it): 'Dostoievsky's super-Russian orthodoxy equalled that of a Greek paganism transcended by Christ'. Powys charges forth. A polyphonist but polytheist too. It is the tragi-comic – even the comic tragedy – in Dostoievsky (whose death-mask always reminds Powys of Euripides) that links him to the fate-ruled ontology of ancient Greece. Powys so much enjoys Dostoievsky as a reactionary that he sends him back to the Greek world-view, to a time when it was impossible to imagine that any man-made modernism could disturb thoughts of eternity. Dostoievsky, though rightly placed on a level with Dante and Shakespeare, had not previously been taken seriously as a Homeric author. Now he has.

Powys, rejecting both catholic and communist churches, as an elderly puritan Englishman glad to recognise his own limits, quivers with desire and fear when faced with the characters in Dostoievsky, more alive to him than many so-called real people. He saw them as warriors, 'quixoting' the windmill of Fate (whose sails turn the opposite way to the hands of a clock) to the limit of masochism, of chaining oneself to a rock and devouring one's own liver. With Dostoievsky, Prometheus and

the vulture are one and the same. Life is an epic, and the one who can write it dies of it – such is a great novelist. 'Hagiography of a great writer' could have been the title of Powys's book on Dostoievsky.

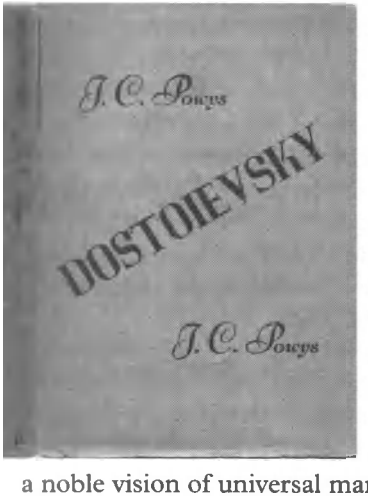
And this leads him, living constantly with the four great books, to see a development in their power. For him the progress is through *Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, The Possessed* [*Devils, Demons*], to *The Brothers Karamasov*. Sadly, Powys sets aside *A Raw Youth* [*The Adolescent*], one of Dostoievsky's least known books, written unusually in the first person, together with other shorter tales also ignored by Powys.

Powys gallops excitedly from chapter to chapter with a lyricism both ridiculous and splendid. Great Celtic poet that he is, he consigns academics and biographers to the lower slopes of banality, flattened by his frenzied onrush.

*

Granted, Dostoeivsky's novels are essentially constructed of dialogue. Everyone says so. But who has noted that 'even the background is only faintly seen through a mist of words'? To the point that one frequently thinks one is quoting Dostoievsky when in fact the memorable phrase comes from one character, immediately contradicted by another?

Dostoievsky himself never speaks. Powys justly maintains that the spun-out arguments of those conclaves of hysterics were incompatible with the skill of a playwright. Dostoievsky had no sense of dialogue any more than Shakespeare had – it was only the culture of his time that prevented the Englishman from being a novelist (*Macbeth: A Novel*). No more gifted for describing scenery than for dialogue, Dostoievsky is able to make his creatures speak while absorbing like sponges the world that surrounds them, nourishes them, destroys them. With Dostoievsky, everything is absorbent, which is what makes his country a marshy one to land on – a desert-island refuge for those who are not afraid to cry An isle of tears! Dostoievsky's work is so stuffed with all that has been wept for since the beginning of Time, that a close reading, while staunching the flow, provokes a total thaw. Chaos meets the Word and their collision causes a flood.



Powys, himself a black magician, was uniquely able to say that Dostoievsky was one too. His obsession with placing him at the summit, and his scorn of critics – even of the reservations of readers unsympathetic to lyricism – has made him almost too popular with adorers of Dostoievsky. Powys takes it all on: from the pan-Russianism that held him back from some kinds of universality – though it was not his fault that being Russian at that point in time came to mean a noble vision of universal man – to the often repellent wallowing in sordidness and putrefaction. He has an answer to everything.

I can never be grateful enough to Powys for his assertion in this book that Dostoievsky is 'a superman, overflowing with excessive enjoyment of life, with lavish and generous vitality'. This was exactly what Dostoievsky wanted, to 'bring to light the bowels of the earth, in a tragic hymn to the god of joy'. Back to the Greeks again. They over-stressed their tragic sense of life, as joyfully as others did the comic sense of this same life. Something that cannot be said for a lot of gloomy ancestors. The physical fitness of those literary Titans was valued by John Cowper Powys, rickety, ulcerated, one-eyed, constipated, uncoordinated, dying at 91 after writing 100 books! What they wrote could only be written by someone in good shape. All complaints about ill-health are a plot by soul against body. Even if he wanted to, a great artist could not suffer from epilepsy.

In the last chapter of *The Idiot*, that whole ending both dazzling and dark, when Prince Myshkin finally joins Rogozhin, who shows him the foot of Natasha Filippovna, not sleeping but dead, a short phrase describes the state the hero finds himself in: 'He got up, broken in pieces'. Translators have tried to avoid an absurd image with 'cast down', 'powerless', 'destroyed'. But Dostoievsky meant what he said. One can indeed get up broken in pieces. Like films run backwards, where a bulding falls to pieces and rebuilds itself in space bit by bit, growing as if by a miracle. Broken in pieces, characters in Dostoievsky are still on their feet, in a state of suspended breaking, as you might say. It is this that gives them their strength.

In contrast to the British sense of humour, Powys praises the sense of humour of other nationalities. In his eyes, even Chinese and French have a livelier sense of fantasy than English exalted amateurs. Powys is a professional, like Nietzsche, Chuang-Tse, Balzac and Dostoievsky. Dickens, somehow, just manages to avoid being 'a miserable scullion in the cosmic kitchen'. A definition that only Gallic dinosaurs seem to escape. For Powys, a true artist is a fanatic. Aesthetes cannot understand this. It makes them afraid, and Dostoievsky plays with this fear in his books. Mankind has a phobia for human beings as they are, which only an artist great as Dostoievsky can exorcise: his choice of the novel, which 'ordinary folk' can enjoy, is all to his credit. The stories told by Dostoievsky are poignant. Reading them makes one sob, if no more. As did Powys, he who admitted in his journal to having 'a heart of stone, but a benevolent stone'. You need to be strong to invent such bloody melodramas. A muscular champion of tears – this is Dostoievsky.

Another cliché pulverised by Powys: sexual perversion sullying the norm of the insect of lust. For Powys it is Dostoievsky who is normal, conveying the richness of sexuality. Only sexual romantics are good for nothing but to be treated as virtuous. Erotic sentimentalists love to be taken for moralisers. There is nothing idyllic in sexuality by default. Powys, aware of himself being a native of the land of the Grail, a latter-day Arthurian knight of chastity, insists that in matters of sexual perversity, everyone is warped except Dostoievsky. He is not interested in love stories. Compared to him, Thomas Hardy is an insensitive monster, since he walls-in his libido with conventional fantasies of union and courtly monogamy. Courtly love is one of

the cruellest imaginable. It lacks the pity that overflows in Dostoievskian love. Perhaps we need to be semi-oriental as Dostoievsky was, almost Byzantine, at least with a 'despairing, sex-saturated mysticism', to allow pity, in an outburst of humility, to help us relearn to make love.

Inevitably, this sexual love whose purity Powys extols, this phallus with a heart of gold, is called sentimental by lazy cynics. Powys, challenging, calls it the 'ecstasy of pity-love'. What matter if it means self-humiliation – yet another cause for enjoyment!

The ecstasy of pity, drawing on the reserves of our nervous system, has no space for compassion for women; hence Dostoievsky's fierce analysis of those wrongly called weak. You need the liveliness of a cat to escape so many mice. Contradicting all the biographies of his time, Powys denies that any of the women in Dostoievsky's real life had a role in the creation of the larger-than-life women inhabiting his novels. Dostoievsky, like a Greek god, gave birth to them out of himself. Powys is misogynist on behalf of Dostoievsky, not wishing him to appear less female than all those Russian women – sadistic, foolish or bluestocking – he being so feminine in his capacity for enjoying his own suffering.

Powys demolishes another cliché, that of Dostoievsky's bad style. It was precisely his fascination with newspapers, bringing him the still-smoking flesh of news like fresh meat thrown to a caged tiger, that led Dostoievsky to heights of romanticism. Had he started like other people by being a poet, or playwright or essayist, he would not have been capable of the psychic acceleration needed to penetrate the whirlwind of a novel. Powys is on the right lines, defending him as 'a pithecanthropoid reporter' – a war correspondent, that is, fresh from the front line of life. His observation of the influence of journalism on writing is one later emphasised by sensitive dostoievskians, drawing on the Russian's personal experience of working for the papers. Those who deride the clichés, repetitions and carelessness in Dostoievsky's language, without recognising how much they owe, sociologically and psychologically, to his love for news-items, have not grasped the art of writing at its highest level.

Powys realised, though in a confused way, that Dostoievsky's love of contradiction was nourished by the popular press as if by a dynamo. He wanted to write novels in the way newspapers are written – or should be written, by a writer: giving as quickly and as well as possible the ever-renewing news of the world as it happens in the self-contained world that is mankind. A novel is a microcosm, skilfully explaining public and private connections in the same way as a press agency does, happily inventing a narrative technique so sophisticated that it can only pass as haphazard. Dostoievsky revolutionised the novel more than Flaubert did, since it is not good writing that transforms the novel, but writing novels that will transform the reader.

A final cliché that Powys attacks: Dostoievsky's interest in politics. Despite the ideologies of his time – in which he advanced retreating – becoming a militant anti-nihilist from disgust at militancy and the nihilist element in militancy – Dostoievsky, as Powys says, 'refuses to take politics seriously'. He is not subversive, like other

reactionaries with extreme hostility to progress. His political views are more like a revelation in the bathtub. Any other convict condemned severely as he was by the Tsar would have persisted, even if privately, in his original rebellion. Dostoievsky, seeing what a Christ-like spirit could gain by accepting punishment, however harsh, creates a standpoint both impossible to believe and (it must be said) impossible to maintain in the Russia of his time. It is because his Little Father did condemn him (almost to death) that he thinks him in the right, because he sees the sentence as a mere metaphor: a sign (if you will) of an act of chivalry (since he was spared execution) by a supreme power – the only one able to slay the dragon of personal pride. Every Russian ego needs a Nicholas I: such is what Dostoievsky thinks.

It was not even because he realised the childishness of Petrachevski's circle of agitators, in which he took (so little) part, that he became a fan of the Tsar to the point of being perceived as a yes-man, bum-sucker, conservative, reac, super-facho, etc., but because he felt he ought to thank the authorities for setting him back on the right road of understanding himself and others that he had found in the House of the Dead. Thanks to the Tsar, he had achieved salvation and joyfulness because punishment is salvation, and pardon happiness – most people would reverse the words! Dostoievsky glorifies a law that punishes mankind obliviously, for both mediocre wickedness and commonplace rebellion. What he learnt about himself in Siberia is invaluable compared to what, in his vanity, he imagines he could do to change the rest of his land.

It is for this reason that he in his turn is so severely against idealistic waverers who, under cover of humanitarian altruism, in fact believe only in their own idea of other people, thus allowing them to escape the truth about themselves. Plainly, you don't need a slap to tell you you have a cheek. The socialist desire to relieve human suffering, with all the false religion that comes with it, was the chief scourge that Dostoievsky wanted to fight against. Who can fight against suffering? If this means 'an excess of personal liberty' (Powys), it is inviolable. Neither Prometheus, Dionysos nor Christ took on the abolition of suffering on earth.

Punishment tells much about crime. It is necessary for estimating it. Without punishment crime makes no sense, and without understanding it it might as well not have happened. It is punishment that encloses crime. The Saints are those who have understood, accepted and upheld punishment. Sainthood is saying first No to Yes, then Yes to No.

*

Where Powys is weakest is on the subject of Christ. It would need another book to explain the role of the white Christ in the life or the work of Dostoiesky. Powys would like to think of the Russian as like himself, unable to believe in God, that 'atrocious insect, tormenting his pitiful progeny before devouring it'.

The old, rapturous, Celt (well, he was 74), Dostoievskianised to the core in his Welsh outback, makes a sermon out of a worship, both ancient and modern, for Christ as a fetish, a true medium capable of annihilating inquisitors of dionysiac

guilt, of right as well as left, rich or poor, woman or man. He puts all his faith in a new generation, not of christians, but Christ-ians, whose art of personal happiness will provoke a manifesto for the individual, free and unaided, free to be alone as some Americans know how! This is what Welsh anticommunism leads to. Dostoievsky may not have taken politics seriously, but it is hard to take seriously what Powys has to say about politics.

Where Powys is convincing, is when he explains why Dostoievsky is the greatest novelist of all time: what it is in his technique (and interpreters more established than he is would agree) that makes these 'colossal melodramas of the nerves and words of cities' the only ones to support the claim. Compared with what? Compared with life. For Powys, the principles behind these complex books are simple ones: (1) Not putting the reader into the consciousness of one hero alone, but into the unconscious of several. (2) Revealing the creatures portrayed in four dimensions, and making them independent and recognisable beings (harder than producing a child, according to Powys). (3) Inventing a believable plot with continuous suspense and always in scenes with physical realism. In all, giving a deep impression of a reality made up of 'chaotic and enigmatic chances' such as in life do not often come our way.

Others may develop these truths and systemise Dostoievsky's passionate artistry. But Powys, impetuous in his 'Welsh delirium' was one of the first to say them – at that date truths could still be told.

Many writers, Proust, Gide, Suarès, Claudel, Somerset Maugham, have spoken well about Dostoievsky. Even Léautaud: 'He's an intellectual health hazard that one should keep at arm's length and not try to know better'. All the same, it is impossible just to read Dostoievsky, you have to re-read, and re-re-read. I cannot recall when I first read *The Possessed.* On the other hand, I know that I ended by reading the books once I realised that I had read them the first time without understanding and above all not remembering them. We need little ways of deadening the shock, because without having read it carelessly before, who could take wholly to heart the tale of the little victim Marie that Prince Myshkin (Powys's 'noble Jesus-crazy Idiot') relates to the Epantchin girls ? One example among millions.

If Powys, no more than any other, is unable to remind his reader of every magnificent moment that reading Dostoievsky has given him, it is not due to lack of memory, time or space. It is because, faced with Dostoievsky, one lacks strength. One collects one's tears in cupped hands and bathes one's face with them. Powys's *Dostoievsky* does not teach us about Dostoievsky, nor about Powys, but it is a breath of love, and in these suffocating times, anyone who loves love should read it, and breathe deeply.

Patmos, 30 octobre 2000
(*translated KK*)

The English Dostoievsky *(1946) shewn on page 43 was purchased by SPM in 1950, as a remainder reduced from 7s 6d to 2/- at a small town store. Its dust-jacket was an 'economy' re-use of the cover of an earlier book published by the Bodley Head. My very first Powys acquisition, 65 yeasr ago!*

Michael Caines

Llewelyn Powys and the senses

[*from TLS, 12 August 2015*]

Peter J. Foss, editor *THE CONQUERING WORM* [*sic*]
Llewelyn Powys: A Consumptive's Diary, 1910
179pp. Powys Press. £10. isbn 978 1 874559 48 1

Llewelyn Powys
EARTH MEMORIES
176pp. Little Toller. £12. isbn 978 1 908213 22 8

Writing about the countryside – about the short life of a fox or the life cycle of a farmed field – can give the impression of both permanence and nostalgia. The flowers return, hibernation ends; but the old ways are lost. Llewelyn Powys, whose finest work implies a lifetime of dallying in country lanes, wrote these essays in the last decade of a relatively short life, and charged them with an atheistic-sensual spirit. Why was it that, for Powys, subversive ideas arose merely from having time to stand and stare at the world around him, to fix it in words, to record the stories of those old ways? Perhaps it was because for this Powys – whose literary older siblings included the prolific, long-lived John Cowper Powys and the morbid fabulist T. F. Powys – there was comparatively little time to spare.

In April 1909, a few months before his twenty-fifth birthday, he had sat by the bed of a school friend from Sherborne, who was dying of tuberculosis. The occasion is marked with a Lear-like entry in Powys's diary – "Cough, cough, cough: howl, howl, howl!" – reproduced by Malcolm Elwin in his authorized biography of 1946 (reprinted 1953), with a corrective further "howl" and the information that Llewelyn

Wood-engraving by Gertrude Powys from Earth Memories, full size (*SPM*).

had undertaken this melancholy duty to "relieve his father", a Somerset clergyman. The consequences became apparent in the winter: "There is blood in my mouth. That drop of blood is my death warrant. I must die". He had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis, probably from his old school friend. He was "quite resigned" to dying, he wrote in his diary on November 7: "There is no sensation unknown to me. I have experienced everything and shall be found ready. . . . I shall die brimful of goodness, with no remorse and no regrets, only a little piqued by God's impatience". God would have to wait a little longer: Llewelyn was packed off to Switzerland, to the sanatorium at Clavadel, near Davos Platz.

Even as his world shrinks to the community of doctors, nursing staff and fellow patients, with occasional visits from friends and family, Llewelyn writes longer diary entries, on average, than he had done in previous years: he walks the mountain paths, reads and rests, flirts and, as often as possible, goes further. "Afterwards I led this incorrigible lady of mine up to her bedroom; there she is in her element", and so on. Evocative news reminds him of home ("the golden beauty of the celandines, the smell of the hedgerows, the breath of Dorset"); "passionless and pure" stretches of time give way to "stray thoughts" ("the crimson possibilities of life which I shall *never renounce*"). Fellow sufferers acquire nicknames (the Jocular Whisperer, the Bully-boy), and literature is everywhere, whether it is the latest H. G. Wells to be debated and discarded, or the old favourites, seeping even deeper into the bone than TB ("Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin . . ."). "Read letters on the side of a delectable mountain": 1910 was to be bucolic as well as tubercular.

For the right medical historian, *The Conquering Worm* might offer some slight interest as a record of sanatorium life – there are convivial scenes, the pre-war social rituals, the outdoor aspect of the cure and the solitary confinements – but this is rather like saying *King Lear* would make interesting reading for a political analyst. "Carried toys into a woman's chamber", Llewelyn writes on January 25, "a woman deaf and dying, madly snatching at forbidden pleasures, as they recede further and further from her." Yet the Jacobean fever that seems to take hold here gives way in the succeeding paragraph to another turn as the Clavadel Benny Hill: "Told fortunes and courted girls! girls! girls!"

The first part of Peter J. Foss's overburdened title derives from Edgar Allan Poe ("the play is the tragedy, 'Man', / And its hero, the Conqueror Worm"); it appears in the first entry in this diary, which gives Foss an immediate opportunity to demonstrate the depth of his knowledge and the uncertain course of the year ahead. (Foss has published a Llewelyn Powys bibliography and a critical study, and edited Powys's diaries for 1903, 1908 and 1909.) For Llewelyn, having made it as far as Clavadel, originally wrote "The conqueror worm conquered". It seems a haemorrhage in the summer made him revise his opinion. He went back to that last word, and prefaced it with an honest "un-". [*The correct title of the diary is "The* Conqueror *Worm*".]

This consumptive's diary is full of such allusive self-dramatics, and Foss is correspondingly assiduous in his relaying of supportive information in the endnotes.

The Poe allusion necessitates a second paragraph about the obsession with this author that Llewelyn had caught from John Cowper. And there is plenty more to annotate – though Foss cannot keep up with the sinister side to Llewelyn's pursuits: a final reference to a longed-for "little Caterham schoolgirl" is met with a dry note about Caterham School, "founded 1811 in Lewisham, moved to Surrey in 1884 . . .". Ultimately, the reader has to read for the sake of the patient and his passionately vivid visions:

> I dreamt that a man held the earth in his hand, a brown globe. The half that was turned towards us was brimful of goodness, joy and gaiety; the other half we could not see. Presently the man said, "let me now reverse the world for the other half cannot be ugly, cruel and brimful of wickedness as you suspect, for God would not have suffered it." Saying this, he turned the ball over and it broke.

In his remarkable memoir *Skin for Skin* (1925), Llewelyn gives his version of what happened after his Clavadel year: he returned to England, to walk and read as before. In the winter of 1911, however, he went back to Switzerland, found himself fifteen miles from the sanatorium, took the Furka Pass to arrive triumphantly and astound his old friends – and that night suffered a major haemorrhage. The conquering worm had turned. Yet Powys survived, at least for a little longer, as *Earth Memories* testifies: this is a selection of the essays he wrote in the 1930s, his final decade. He had followed his brother John into a literary career, and to America, producing volumes of autobiography, fiction, polemics about Palestine, essays and reviews; there had also been a difficult but creatively productive stint in Africa with another brother, as may be seen from another recent selection, *A Struggle for Life* (2011).

In fact, *Earth Memories* opens with an essay called "A Struggle for Life", that describes the course of his consumption, and how Kenya was good for his health, despite its hardships. Back in England, Powys invests in a "revolving shelter" and puts it in a hermit's spot near Weymouth.

> In the early mornings I would wake to look upon a small still bay with rocks and rippling pools. Little hedge birds would begin to twitter on the grey stone wall near the empty nettle-filled well, while over a restless sea, behind the outline of a cornfield, black hungry cormorants would follow each other on their way to their distant feeding places.

Occasionally puffed up with Augustan effort, prone to grandiloquent if often charming quirks, Powys's prose falls easily into this manner of general description, as it hops from phrase to descriptive phrase.

Eventually, he established himself in another lonely spot on a Dorset cliff, with his American wife, the writer Alyse Gregory – and at the same time consolidated his reputation as a charismatic observer of the natural world and West Country life. His work appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Adelphi* as well as the *Dorset Echo* and *Weymouth Carnival Magazine*. These essays are the mature fruit of philosophical arguments on walks in the Alps and down Somerset lanes in the company of his siblings. Hints persist, too, of an extra-mural sensibility, in his commendation of

Egdon Heath, for example, "King Lear's heath": "The bracken here is so tall that lovers on their Sunday walks need never be disturbed by anything worse than midsummer flies".

Details from those diaries filtered into the published work – purged, for the most part, of their more potentially scandalous elements. What remains is Powys's philosophical rebellion against conventional beliefs. 'Our haughty minds are nothing but the senses in flower', he believes: far from distrusting the temporal delights that come through the body, we should abandon ourselves to them with confidence.

> The way of the senses is the way of life. It is the people with their hands in the till and their eyes on heaven who ruin existence. ... Natural happiness should be the prerogative of men and women, just as it is the prerogative of the mole in its winding tunnel or the stickleback in its shining stream.

Earth Memories should not be confused with *Earth Memories*. The new selection, that is, borrows the title of a collection made by Powys himself in 1934, but omits almost half of its contents, including "Natural Happiness", the essay quoted above. In their place come alternatives from two subsequent collections, *Dorset Essays* (1935) and *Somerset Essays*(1937). This adjustment seems to make little difference, however, to the impression Powys invariably gives of close, sagacious observation of, say, the habits of stoats and weasels imbued entirely with a sense of the brief joy of life and the immensity of the ages.

This sense of a spiritual world is inescapably present, in pieces such as "Somerset Names" and "Natural Worship", but also in remarks on partridges and the "secret laws by which these birds have preserved their species down the centuries". Watching herring gulls "at the hour before dawn, shattering with their wild wilful living cries the august stillness of the downs" prompts the imagination to "escape from its contemporaneous limitations": "These ancestral, pterodactyl voices ... shock the mind into a remembrance of the planet's long travail". Inescapable, too, is the occasional, over-excited repetition: "I would wake usually at six o'clock . . . soon afterwards the hoarse abrupt diluvian cry of the first hungry gull flying inland!"

Llewelyn's odd outbreaks of exclamation marks would seem to signal the influence of the constantly agitated John Cowper Powys on his younger brother. Each essay in *Earth Memories* is adorned with a woodcut by their sister Gertrude. Both would outlive him by some twenty years. He died in Clavadel in 1939. "I am not so well", he wrote to a friend, "but have had a happy life for half a century in sunshine."

Michael Caines ***is an editor at the TLS. His most recent book,*** **Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century,** ***was published in 2013.***

Rob Timlin: ***The Llewelyn Walk, August 2015***

The Friends of
LLEWELYN POWYS
Meet here on 13 August each year
To celebrate his birthday & honour his Will
As established by John Batten
13 August 1995

These words can be read on a plaque that now adorns the exterior wall of the 'Sailor's Return' in East Chalden and unquestionably enhances the pub's already attractive appearance. The crisp white lettering on an oval slate cannot fail to catch the eye of any seeker after refreshment approaching the building's front door.

Commissioned by Chris Gostick – and, indeed, financed by him – the plaque was unveiled at midday on the one hundred and thirty-first anniversary of Llewelyn Powys's birthday by Janice Gregory, great-niece of Alyse (and of Llewelyn, too, as she pointed out!). Among the score or more gathered to witness the occasion we were all delighted to see John Batten himself, accompanied by son and grandson. After all, if it wasn't for John inaugurating the event twenty years ago, none of us there – or any of the many others attending previous gatherings – would have been at that place at that particular time.

These words can also be read on the back of the book *Dandelions, Ground-Ivy & Yarrow: Celebrating Twenty Years of the Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk*, edited by Neil Lee. Published in a limited edition of 100 copies and launched to coincide with the plaque's unveiling, this splendidly produced book documents all preceding meetings with the original Newsletter reports and accompanied by appropriate coloured photographs. These are framed by Chris's introduction and Neil's afterword followed by a note by Chris on Llewelyn's will.

Despite adverse forecasts the weather this year remained dry, even if somewhat humid. The subsequent walk maintained the usual itinerary and rather than attempt to repeat the many existing fine descriptions of the route I will refer readers to other Newsletters or to the publication above. I would add, however, the remarkable fact that a considerable proportion of the eighteen or so pilgrims making their way to the Llewelyn stone this year were from three generations of Neil's family! All those present agreed that the 2015 walk was especially rich in conviviality.

Janice Gregory and John Batten unveiling the plaque. (ph. Rosemary Dickens)

Neil Lee-Atkin

A Memorable Day
Twentieth Anniversary of Llewelyn's Birthday Walk

In direct contrast to the Breughel-inspired golden August described by Llewelyn in *The Twelve Months*, his 131st birthday dawned grey and overcast and by late morning the Sun was still abed, whilst the rain fell gently but steadily on the Dorset village of East Chaldon. However, nothing could dampen the spirits of the large gathering of devotees assembled outside the 'Sailor's Return' as they waited patiently for the doors to open and accord them welcome shelter from the elements. A warm welcome it was too, as landlord Tom Brachi opened early to allow access, and by 12.30 no fewer than twenty-seven Friends of Llewelyn Powys, including John Batten, who had travelled down from Montacute with his son & grandson, were comfortably settled in the bar enjoying a splendid lunch and eagerly awaiting this special day's proceedings. John Batten then acted in lieu as Llewelyn's Executor, and bought the first round of drinks all round to loud cries of appreciation.

At precisely one o'clock, Master of Ceremonies Chris Gostick invited everyone to join him outside in the drizzling rain where, after warmly welcoming all new members, he gave the official welcome and proposed the toast to Llewelyn's memory. We all raised our glasses, after which Alyse's great-niece Janice Gregory was invited to unveil a specially commissioned plaque to mark the occasion. Janice gave a short and eloquent speech, humbly expressing her thanks and delight at the honour (she felt) accorded her, before removing the cover to reveal a magnificent oval plaque of Welsh Slate to great applause and gasps of approval and appreciation.

Chris then paid a warm tribute and proposed a toast to our founder, John Batten, and to 'absent friends', especially remembering Janet Machen who had nurtured Chydyok for fifty years, allowing many Powys Society members the privilege and experience of staying in Llewelyn & Alyse's former home, one half of which they had shared with his sisters, Gertrude & Katie Powys. I then thanked Chris for his generous donation of the cost of the plaque to the Dandelion Fellowship, and announced the launch of a colour-illustrated book under the imprint of New Age Poetry Press to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Memorial Walk, appropriately entitled *Dandelions, Ground-Ivy & Yarrow*.

The excitement and the rain had both abated somewhat by 2 pm as we set out under leaden skies for the annual trek up to Llewelyn's Memorial Stone set beside the Old Dagger's Gate Road high on Chaldon Down. Well, some set out to walk – whilst the elderly and somewhat less able-bodied were conveyed as far as Chydyok in two vehicles— one driven by Dennis White containing Rosemary Dickens, Beverley Wells, my wife Ann and our granddaughter, six years old, Elisha, the newest and youngest member of the Dandelion Fellowship; the other driven by myself accompanied by my sister Lynne. The other members of my family, son Jason and twelve-year-old grandson Marcus had chosen to brave the elements alongside regular walkers Rob & Honour Timlin, John Sanders, Chris Gostick, Linda Goldsmith, Byron Ashton and his two friends Terry & Tony, and Janice Gregory. The Battens walked as far as the Chydyok Road before returning to join Bruce & Vikki Madge and Jayne Sanders at the 'Sailor's Return', whilst sadly Jed Redman had to retreat immediately back to Somerset owing to family illness.

Thus eighteen of the original twenty seven congregated at Chydyok for the final climb over Tumbledown to the stone, but not before we had learned that the former Powys home had new

tenants and was no longer a holiday let! Thankfully the rain stayed away for the duration of the walk, and though the visibility was restricted by the lowering sky, the view from the cliff-top path was still breathtaking as we approached the Obelisk Field, with Portland slowly emerging from the mist to our left, and behind us the magnificent rampart of chalk headland stretching eastward from Bat's Head to St. Aldhelm's Head in the far distance.

At Llewelyn's Stone I read an excerpt from *Glory of Life* (p 22–3) in which Llewelyn expounds the Religion of Life and Natural Worship, and Chris read an excellent passage from 'Poetic Faith' (p 87) in *Damnable Opinions*, the two perfectly complementing each other. Having laboured valiantly to reach our place of pilgrimage we were reluctant to leave and lingered awhile enjoying the atmosphere redolent with the poetry of existence, and taking photographs, perhaps to later remind ourselves that we were actually there and it hadn't all been some magical dream!

We were just cresting Tumbledown on the way back when we encountered Society member Richard Stone, his wife Jenny and their friend Rae Lynne from Amarillo, Texas, who had arrived late following a breakdown on the motorway. Rich and his party continued up to Llewelyn's Stone, whilst we returned to East Chaldon and waited for them at the pub which by then had closed. This had swelled our ranks to thirty, and with the addition of Jeremy Selfe, the churchwarden of St. Nicholas' Church, and fellow villager Philip Gainsworth, both of whom had attended the unveiling and toast to Llewelyn, took the final number to thirty two, a new record!

Reluctant to leave and break the spell, a dozen of us lingered outside the 'Sailor's Return', chatting, admiring the new plaque and taking photographs of each other standing beside it, and when we eventually left, took with us fond memories of a very special day – a truly momentous day which will stay long in the memory of all.

Dandelions, Ground-Ivy & Yarrow: Celebrating Twenty Years of the Llewelyn Birthday Walk

August 13th 2015 was the Twentieth Anniversary of the inauguration of the Llewelyn Birthday Walk at East Chaldon in 1995, and to celebrate it a small 117-page limited edition fully illustrated souvenir book has been produced, setting out the background of each walk with reports by those who took part, many originally published in the Society's *Newsletter*.

Normally priced at £10.00, copies of the book are available to Powys Society members for a limited period at a cost of £7.50 including p&p from:

Neil Lee, 1 Church Hill, Spridlington, Lincolnshire ln8 2dx.

Cheques payable to: Rev Neil D. Atkin. For overseas mailing costs or any other enquiries please contact Neil at: <reblee.tom@gmail.com>

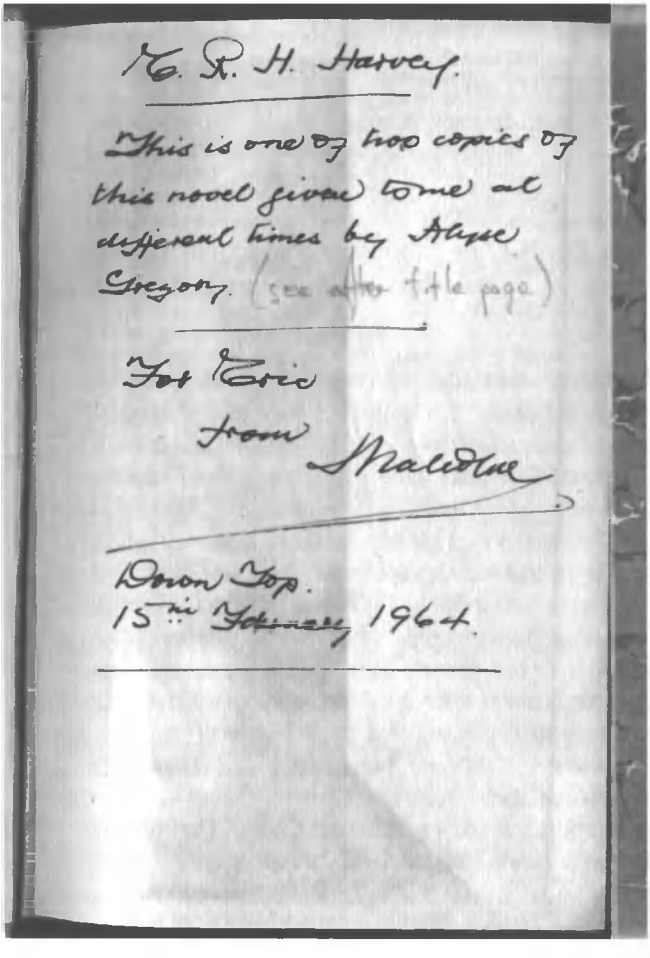
Dandelions, Ground-Ivy & Yarrow

Celebrating Twenty Years of the Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk

A very special Blackthorn Winter

This year I have made two very significant additions to my Powys collection. One, bought at auction, is a signed etching of T. F. Powys by Frederick Carter (1883–1967), image measuring 7.25 by 9.25 inches, done in 1934. The other is a copy of *The Blackthorn Winter*, Philippa Powys's novel published in 1930, bought at a new Book Fair in Bristol under Brunel's great hammerbeam Station roof. Our old friend Steven Ferdinando had a stand with considerable stock displayed there; we had chats of old times.

The first thing about the book that is special for me is that it has its original striking dust-jacket; this is complete though it has had some crude repair with white self-adhesive strips inside the top and bottom of the spine, causing some buckling. But I am of course thrilled to have this copy with the dust-jacket which I have never seen myself before. The turned-in flaps have kept the bright green and red marbling which has usually faded wherever it is exposed to the light or wear.


E. R. H. Harvey.

This is one of two copies of this novel given to me at different times by Alyse Gregory. (see other title page)

For Eric
from Malcolm

Devon Top.
15th February 1964.

Far more special, indeed unique, is the provenance, as you will see in the inscription on the flyleaf (page height 7.4 inches); it also has an inserted personal letter from Malcolm Elwin to E. R. H. Harvey. Harvey was the Managing Director of Purnells who did the printing for Macdonalds of so many of JCP's books, thus hugely helping to ensure their survival; this included the quarter-leather bound limited edition of *Lucifer* in 1956 (560 copies). See over for JCP's dedication of *Lucifer*.

From the transcription below you will see that this copy indeed has a very interesting provenance. It is one of two copies which Alyse had given to Malcolm Elwin and this one was then passed on by Elwin to Harvey.

I nearly missed it, as Steven Ferdinando had already traded it with another bookseller, and had borrowed it back to ask me who this "Eric" was; so keen was I on it that Steven persuaded

the other dealer to let me have it instead, but of course I had to pay quite a lot for this treasure. I wonder where it has been in the fifty years since Elwin's letter to Harvey.

Purnells was one of those excellent businesses swallowed up by the voracious business-destroying megaliths of recent times, like the equally fine Bath Press (formerly Pitman Press) in Bath which had done excellent work for the Folio Society, for example, with its exacting standards for reproducing wood-engravings and the like.

Stephen Powys Marks

Lucifer was

GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED
TO
E. R. H. HARVEY, M. C.

Down Top, Poole Lane. Woolacombe, North Devon
Sunday 16th February 1964

My dear Eric

I left here for Nottingham last Wednesday, breaking the journey at Cheltenham. I stayed Thursday night with my nephew & as he is already risen (he gets up at 6 & leanes for his office at 8). I was early away on Friday morning for my return journey. Hence I passed through Bath shortly before 3 p.m. which seemed the wrong sort of time to present myself at [?] Linleys, & I went on to spend one night at the Luttrell Arms, Dunster, before driving home over the moor yesterday. It was a very different drive from that after seeing you last Monday week, for there was quite thick fog on the moor, & visibility was mostly limited to 30 yards or so.

I am now in a forlorn state of complete solitude, & don't feel very cheerful at the moment.

As you will want to know more about Katie Powys in view of J.C.P.'s letters to her, I asked Alyse Gregory if she had a spare copy of her only novel, The Blackthorn Winter, which I enclose herewith for the Powys section of your library.

Yours ever,

Malcolm