

## Editorial

Our cover of young Llewelyn (or not so young – pushing 40?) in the Patchin Place years, contrasts with later images of him as Prophet – a change chronicled in Pat Quigley’s talk at the 2017 conference, and the Journal.

There are more sad losses to report, and this newsletter is largely taken up with tributes, to two very different people on the Powys scene.

Bill (W.J.) Keith was an academic, measured and thorough, a prolific author chiefly on Canadian subjects and authors interacting with nature, such as Richard Jefferies, as well as the Powyses. He was a long-term contributor to Powys conferences and publications, including the helpful Companions to JCP’s novels (still available online). I am happy to reproduce the photograph of Bill and Hiroko with P.J. Kavanagh at the 2004 conference in Sherborne.

Jeff Kwintner could be described as extravagantly creative in both of his lives, as a leader of 1960s male fashion and as ‘new-age’ publisher in his famous 1970s bookshop. His final disappearance came after a sad decline, but no Powysian can be unaware of how much we owe to his publications. He is celebrated here in his days of glory both as fashion innovator and as commander of a hand-picked team in promotion of Powys. Iain Sinclair recalls the exotic enterprises he was recruited to, Paul Roberts the wonders of the Village Bookshop in Regent Street, Richard Young how his photographic career was kick-started by Jeff, and Charles Lock celebrates Jeff as enthusiast and inspirer.

Other features include reports on the Conference at Street in August; an unusually eventful Llewelyn walk; views of Patchin Place; JCP’s introduction to his sister Marian’s book *Lace and Lacemaking* (1953) and a history of one of his favoured walking sticks. And the JCP-James Hanley letters, published at last, are reviewed on page 43.

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*President Glen*

Kate Kavanagh

*The Conference, Street 10-12 August 018 some notes*

An excellent traditional conference in this now familiar place. Talks concentrated on JCP, *Wolf Solent* and *Glastonbury* (most will appear in the next *Journal*).

On Friday Louise de Bruin introduced **Charles Lock**, our *Journal* editor and much-travelled lecturer. He began with a tribute to Jeff Kwintner, speaking as one of the many grateful to Jeff for his immense support of the Powyses.

‘*What happens when we read JCP?*’ We take nothing for granted, for a start. Long novels need special treatments, to keep our attention: Distraction, Diversion, and Digression. Inconsistencies (as in *Glastonbury*, brandy for whiskey, a peculiar route to Stonehenge) may be uncorrected on purpose. The various narrators may be conflicting, the over-ruling author’s ‘I’ unexpectedly appear, planetary influences come and go....

Saturday began with Chairman **Timothy Hyman** reading for **Anthony O’Hear** who disappointingly was unable to join us.

‘*Solent Solipsist*’ began with Nietzsche, ‘It is an *adventure* to live!’ and traced Wolf’s self-absorption from the first appearance of the Man on the Waterloo Steps, image of Despair, a threatening ‘reality’ counteracted by Wolf’s ‘Mythology’, a private line to the forces of Good and Evil; and ending with Wolf conceding defeat, accepting bodily ‘reality’ (including pleasure) in the form of a cup of tea – both images repeatedly appearing in the book. Does Wolf’s constant self-analysis debar him from interaction with other humans? He debates the detached nature of ‘reality’ but feels no barriers with vegetable Nature, his ‘real mother’. He is ‘a kind of poet’. The death of his ‘mythology’, wrestling with Good and Evil, leaves him in a common world. But he has the right to Forget, and Enjoy.... though we suspect that Forgetfulness might be a step too far.

**Nicholas Birns**, a wide-ranging teacher and writer in New York, editor of *Powys Notes* for the former Powys Society of North America, next gave us ‘*Close-Reading the Powyses*’, i.e. academic forensic analysis of vocabulary and style: a rich mine with the Powyses, from their Victorian education (many traditional quotations and references, both direct and submerged) allied to their unclassifiable modernism. Add to this the exceptional range of our multi-originated English language with its tendencies (or temptations) to alliteration and poetic emphasis, along with deliberate simplicity. All the Powyses exploit this, and NB feels Llewelyn too is now viewed with increased respect.

On Saturday it *rained* – a phenomenon after the heatwave. **Expeditions** continued undaunted, of tours with readings from *Glastonbury*: one round the town led by Raymond Cox our film-maker, and another further afield led by Johanna van Fessem



*Conference people:  
Dawn, Louise, Shelagh;  
Chairman Tim introducing;  
Taliesin Gore reading*

(from Holland, now a Druid living in Glastonbury), extending across fields to Whitelake river. Other destinations included the Tor; Chalice Well with its magical waters now nicely landscaped; the High Street with its Indian dresses and bookshops (one with a long Powys shelf among the occult panaceas and demonology), and a delightful classic teashop. Not forgetting the legacy of Clarks of Street, with its shoe museum and shopping centre.

The evening's **discussion** on *Glastonbury* with its huge cast of characters, many eccentric or troubled, included a tribute from John Hodgson to Miss Elizabeth Crow, a personality alarming to some but an untroubled example of that species most favoured by JCP, the Aunt: indomitable and helpful from disinterested love. Tim Hyman told of reading Powys aged 17 and always connecting his books with painting – landscapes with figures, rather than the non-specific colours of the wilder abstractionists then to the fore (Tim has several paintings featuring JCP and his scenes). Other topics touched on: JCP's 'chaoticism', voluntary or involuntary; the supernatural in *AGR*; different attitudes to Christ; whether piecemeal reading has value above the straight story; Persephone as the Virgin Mary in the Pageant; the unusually various social and political groups in the Pageant, anarchists and communists typical of 1930; the significance of Water throughout (from the Flood to enemas); how aware if at all of Glastonbury town was JCP in real life; other contemporary novels with supernatural elements; the sequence of epiphanies, the dropping off after key events, the chapter titles from religious holidays (or not); chapters as separable entities (notably 'Mark's Court' with Geard as hero); frequent references to classical painters (describing people or landscapes); the not always clear double time-setting (pre-WWI and 1930); whether JCP was consciously writing the Great English Novel, representing a whole world?; the influence of American authors; 'mythopoeic imagination'.

Sunday as always held a crowded timetable. **Belinda Humfrey** introduced a new member, **Taliesin Gore** from Exeter university, speaking on *Pan-psychicism in Wolf Solent and A Glastonbury Romance*.

Consciousness in all matter, all objects exerting magnetic strength, including planets (opposing or supporting) and the entire cosmos, is an ancient idea natural to JCP from childhood, explored in the 19th century by Gustav Fechner and William James. Wolf's 'mythology' claims to influence it, and characters such as Sam and John Crow in *AGR* are receptive, both to nature and to supernatural visitations. Wolf's one-man mental power cannot survive the complications of 'real' life. But in *Glastonbury* the cosmos continues its dialogue to the end.

Then the AGM (see below), followed by **Giles Dawson** talking about his mother **Patricia Dawson**, well known to most people present from her poems and her illustrations to *Porius* and *The Brazen Head* reproduced in and on covers of the *Powys*





*Review*, the attractive illustrated predecessor to the present *Journal*; also from frequent appearances in Newsletters (eg. *NL69* p.23). A number of Patricia's drawings were displayed, along with one of her sculptures from *Porius*, a moving group of two crouching figures (Morfydd comforting Rhun) which Giles hopes to have cast in bronze. Visiting Patricia's studio in Sydenham was a Powys celebration, with the papier-mâché figures (sadly, we heard, few surviving) alive among many drawings and prints.

*Wolf Solent*, as well as *Glastonbury*, seems an endless field for discussion, and for me prompted a revisit to Belinda Humfrey's 1990 collection of *Wolf* essays, in particular John Hodgson's illuminating contribution on 'Wolf as a victim of self-vivisection'.



Conference people:  
Chris Thomas, Johanna, Susan Rands,  
John Hodgson, Charles Lock



Chris Thomas

***Walking around Glastonbury***

At this year's conference, Ray Cox, who also produces films of the talks at conferences, organised one of two guided walks to places associated with *A Glastonbury Romance*. Members congregated in the Market Place opposite the Town Hall and then moved on to St. Margaret's Chapel and Almshouses, the Abbey, the George and Pilgrim Inn, The Abbots Tribunal, St. John's church, the Old Vicarage in Lambrooke Street, Bove Town and Bushey Combe, Wick Hollow, Bulwarks Lane, Wellhouse Lane, Chalice Well Gardens, the Tithe Barn, and Magdalene Street, where the walk concluded. Members stopped to listened to appropriate readings from *A Glastonbury Romance* at various stages of the walk.

I joined the other optional walk, expertly led by Glastonbury resident, Johanna van Fessem, to Stonedown, Wick, Splott's Moor, Whitelake river and the imaginary setting of Whitelake cottage where Nell Zoyland makes tea for Sam and Matt Dekker. Our walk followed the route taken by Sam and Matt Dekker at the beginning of Chapter 5 of *A Glastonbury Romance*. A thin shower began to fall as we turned into Dodd Lane, passed the Shekinashram, (where I recalled I once stayed in search of nirvana), and the incline that leads to the approach to the Tor from an undulating grassy meadow. At this point the Tor and St. Michael's tower seemed unusually close as if they were the guardians of *the immemorial mystery of Glastonbury*. In



*Louise with umbrella*



the late afternoon light the old terraced earthworks surrounding the Tor could be clearly discerned. We continued as far as another hill where a broad panoramic view opened out onto a vista of meadows and fields. We could just see Pilton and Worthy Farm and in the far distance we identified the outline of the Mendips reminding me of JCP's description of Lord P. who *owns half the Mendips*. A silver mist seemed to drift in front of us also reminding me of JCP's description in *A Glastonbury Romance* of *a soft light mist, filmy and gossamy as a wet sea vapor*:

We picked our way over the many drainage ditches, called rhynes, followed narrow footpaths and lanes bordered by high hedges, clambered over stiles, squeezed under fencing (avoiding the electric fences and nettles) and followed a section of the dismantled Somerset and Dorset railway until we reached Gog and Magog, two magnificent ancient oak trees, now sadly dying, described in *A Glastonbury Romance* as *two titanic trees*, or the *Two Oaks*, thought to have once been part of a Druid sanctuary. We certainly needed Johanna's guidance to get us this far as much of the route lay over private land which required permission to cross, and even JCP describes the difficulty of negotiating this part of the environs of Glastonbury given *the romantic name of Avalon*. As the rain continued to fall we stood beneath the



oak trees whilst Johanna read from JCP's rapturous description of the *Two Oaks* in Chapter 5 of *A Glastonbury Romance*. We reached Whitelake river which JCP describes as *a swollen stream* but after the summer heatwave it had now largely dried out.

Our brief Avalonian adventure in this *wind blown 'Numen'* felt like a pilgrimage to a sacred space. On the way it was easy to fall into conversation with other walkers. It was a pleasure and privilege to have the opportunity to converse with our speaker Nicholas Birns from New York, about Australian and New Zealand literature, and meet and talk to our guest Mike Jones of the Glastonbury Trust, editor of *The Oracle* magazine of Glastonbury events.

The logistics we had planned worked perfectly. At the end of the walk we were greeted by a small fleet of cars in the lane below Redlake Farm, ready to ferry us back via West Pennard, Havyatt and Edgarley to the Wessex Hotel just in time for dinner.

Benjamin Thomson

### *My Conference*

This was not only my first Powys Society conference, but also my first ever visit to Wessex, a place I've long wanted to travel to, not least because of JCP's novels. The long and fragmented journey to the south-west of England serves to make it feel even more distant from my home in the north-east than my university in Berlin does, requiring long train and bus journeys and an overnight stop in Bristol. In fact, Wessex feels similarly distant to the north-east culturally, and the Powyses' writings have created a whole exotic landscape in my mind populated by earthworks, thatched houses, and Neolithic monuments, by landmarks such as Maiden Castle, the Cerne Giant, and Glastonbury Tor. Such writing makes this feel also like a journey back in time, and simultaneously evokes Wessex as central to the identity and the history of England, as captured in John Crow's reaction upon visiting Stonehenge: "This is England," he thought in his heart. "This is my England. This is still alive".

The conference indeed proved the perfect occasion to finally visit this landscape. From my warm welcome upon arrival onwards, it was a very happy and inspiring three days. As many present remarked, there is a great novelty in talking to people who have even heard of the Powyses, let alone people so passionate and knowledgeable about their writing! It felt in equal parts a social occasion and an academic event; along with talking to so many friendly and fascinating attendees, each presentation was deeply stimulating and provoked animated discussion. Nicholas Birns guided us through a close reading of short extracts from the Powyses' works, breaking them down into their smallest units, and examining the texts in microscopic detail. Charles

Lock took in some ways the opposite approach, focusing on ideas of literary form, and considering how *A Glastonbury Romance* can be read not only as a long novel, but also as a collection of individual chapters, of short stories and novellas, that might function as stand-alone texts in their own right. In the discussion on Saturday Paul Cheshire talked movingly in giving a more personal, informal response to that novel.

Full of inspiration, I then made my way back north over several days, making sure to visit Sherborne and Yeovil, locations of *Wolf Solent*, and then, ‘gazing... with an ecstasy that was like a religious trance... an ecstasy that totally abolished Time’, Stonehenge!



*Ben Thomson with others*

### ***Recordings from this year's Conference***

Two DVDs are available of recordings from the 2018 Conference featuring talks by Charles Lock and Taliesin Gore, plus a panel and audience discussion on *A Glastonbury Romance*. Total time 2 hours 40 minutes. Other talks unfortunately could not be recorded.

£5 to Raymond Cox, 4 Lulworth Close, Halesowen, B63 2UJ.

email: [rymd.cox@gmail.com](mailto:rymd.cox@gmail.com)

Cheques to R.E.Cox, please, not The Powys Society.

Raymond Cox

***The Powys Society Annual General Meeting***  
***The Wessex Hotel, Street, nr Glastonbury***  
***August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018***

**Present:** Timothy Hyman (*Chairman*), David Goodway (*Vice-Chairman*), Chris Thomas (*Secretary*), Robin Hickey (*Treasurer*), Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*), John Hodgson, Dawn Collins, Kevin Taylor – and some 35 members of the Powys Society.

**Apologies:** Michael Kowalewski (*Collection Liaison Officer*), Charles Lock (*editor Powys Journal and ex-officio member*), and Jacqueline Peltier.

**Chairman** welcomed members to the AGM and read from the chapter ‘Culture and Painting’ in JCP’s *The Meaning of Culture* (Village Press edition, 1974, pp.72-74) beginning: *It would seem indeed a kind of treachery to the world spirit...*

**Chairman** commented that he was very pleased with proceedings at this year’s conference and found there were many linked themes in all the talks involving ideas about individual collapse, failure, treachery and the sense of failed inner projects, but in the end a sense of the painful discovery of self, and recognition that the individual is part of all life.

**Minutes of 2017 AGM**

**Secretary** reported progress on outstanding actions and said that proposals to film interviews with members of the Society potentially for posting on YouTube had been postponed until permission of interviewees could be cleared.

Plans to publish an up-to-date list of members with postal addresses and e-mail addresses has been approved and will appear in due course.

**Secretary** said that the committee had investigated the feasibility of acquiring microphones and sound speakers for use at events but had not made a purchase because of expense and finding suitable space to store equipment. Peter Birtles volunteered to identify other options.

The minutes of the 2017 AGM as published in *Newsletter* 92 (November 2017) were approved.

**Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of the Powys Society Committee for 2018-2019**

Nominations to the Powys Society committee as published in *Newsletter* 94, July 2018, page 5, were approved. The **Secretary** however said that the committee wished to call for nominations for an additional member of the committee. **Marcel Bradbury** nominated **Paul Cheshire**. The nomination was seconded by **Joe Sentence** and approved by Society members. The nomination will take effect immediately and remains in place for a statutory three-year period. **Secretary**

reminded members that information about the role of the committee and the terms of governance of the Society can be found in the Society's Constitution located on the Powys Society website.

### **Chairman's Report as published in *Newsletter* 94, July 2018**

**The Chairman** referred members to his annual report for the period 2017-2018 as published in *Newsletter* 94, July 2018, page 2, and noted that this had been a difficult year, marked by the loss of number of long-standing members. He said that the committee very much welcomes new helpers and volunteers especially anyone with skills related to formatting and proofreading publications. **Chairman** said that he, and also Louise de Bruin, are both planning to retire in the near future.

### **Treasurer's Report and presentation of annual accounts for the year ending 31 December 2017**

**Treasurer** said that the accounts for the year ending December 2017 had been formally audited and approved by accountants Hills and Burgess.

**Treasurer** referred members to the full statement of incoming funds and total expenditure published in *Newsletter* 94, July 2018, page 4, and thanked members for completing Gift Aid forms but encouraged other members to submit forms to enable the Society to claim useful additional funds.

The Charity Commission provided advice on commitment of surplus resources and confirmed that funds of charities should be used for the benefit of all members. **Treasurer** said that recent publication of the JCP/James Hanley letters is a good example of how surplus resources can be utilised in a beneficial way.

**Treasurer** however also noted pressures on resources such as increase in postage which inflated cost of producing *Newsletter* and the *Journal*.

### **Collection Liaison Officer's Report**

**Secretary** said that our Collection Liaison Officer could not attend the conference this year and referred members to the report on the Powys Society Collection at Exeter University published in *Newsletter* 94, July 2018, pages 7-8. Secretary said that Christine Fauch and her colleagues at Exeter University have initiated plans to develop a new project that will link some of the archives, including the Powys Society collection, but that work to integrate the Powys Collection inventories with the University of Exeter's main catalogue would not commence until at least 2020. Secretary said the University had invited the Powys Society to participate in another joint literary seminar in June 2019. Secretary encouraged members to visit the Powys Society Collection at Exeter University and said that staff are very helpful. There are many avenues for future research that can be explored at Exeter including connections with other Collections.

## Secretary's Report

### Membership

**Secretary** said that 16 new members had joined the Society since August 2017 and of these 9 new members have joined since January 2018, including new members in Belgium and USA. 1 lapsed member has been reinstated. 9 members were deceased including Roger Steele, Gilfrid Powys, Chris Wilkinson, John Powys, Michael Everest, Jeff Kwintner, Tony Dyer, James Nawrocki and Bill Keith. 7 members have not renewed their membership. 3 other members in Kenya, previously paid for by Gilfrid, have been removed. 1 member actively resigned from the Society. Total membership is now **243**.

**Secretary** said that it is important we continue to try and think of new ways to stimulate and encourage new younger membership – there are possibilities by engaging with latest developments on social media such as Instagram, as well as Facebook and Twitter and linking Powyses to contemporary environmental issues. **John Shapcott** said that he would be glad to provide **Dawn Collins** with contact details for manager of the Arnold Bennett Society Twitter account to help offer advice and collaborate on shared information. Other suggestions for encouraging new membership included an offer of a grant for students. **Janice Gregory** suggested establishing closer links with American members and identifying more contacts in USA

### JSTOR

The *Powys Journal* will be launched on JSTOR's digital platform, Lives of Literature, in September 2018. All back issues will be available for non-members to consult in a library with a subscription to JSTOR.

### e-book and rights project

Secretary said that Kevin Taylor had led this project and made excellent progress to sort out the complex situation regarding ownership of rights associated with JCP's books, and selection of the best and most appropriate editions of JCP's major novels for scanning to e-book versions. **Kevin** said that the books about the Powyses by Belinda Humfrey and Richard Graves will also be included in the project and that scanning of all texts should be in process by the end of the year.

**Kevin** said that the Agent and owners of the JCP estate are fully in support of the project. The Agent for the copyright holder, Christopher Sinclair Stevenson, approached Faber and asked if they wish to add e-book versions of JCP's major novels to their existing list but they do not seem to be interested,, which Kevin said gives the Society's project added value and impetus especially as most of JCP's major novels are out of print, except for *Wolf Solent*. Kevin noted that news has just been released about the sale of the late Peter Mayer's publishing companies, but



that there is little likelihood that the new owners will choose to reprint titles by JCP previously published by Overlook.

## **Facebook**

**Dawn Collins** updated members with information about the development of the Society's new Facebook page and enquired how many members actively use this resource. Dawn said Facebook offers lots of opportunities to help promote and raise awareness of the Powyses, to post news as well as enable members and non members to exchange views and opinions. Dawn said that she has established a reading group which is working very well allowing readers to engage in an on-line discussion of a preselected novel by JCP. Readers are invited to submit their views on selected works in advance of the on-line discussion. **Chris Michaelides** asked if these submissions could be made more widely available to other members as a pdf. **Dawn** announced that she plans to establish another reading group devoted to the women of the Powys circle.

**Chairman** extended thanks to editors of the *Newsletter* and *Journal*, especially to Louise de Bruin for her long service to the Society over many years, and to the conference organisers for their work during the year. Chairman also thanked Kevin Taylor for his work on planning e-book editions of JCP's novels and for offering to help with production of the *Powys Journal* following the retirement of Louise de Bruin.

## **Date and Venue of 2019 conference**

**Louise de Bruin** said that the 2019 conference will take place at the Hand Hotel in Llangollen, on the weekend 16-18 August 2019.

## **AOB**

**Stephen Powys Marks** informed members about progress he has made to arrange deposit of his collection of Powys and Johnson family letters in a professional archive centre or library. Cambridge University Library has offered to accession Stephen's collection and deposit in the library's Archives and Modern Manuscripts department, where they will be conserved in a professional environment and made available for public consultation. Stephen's collection fits well with other East Anglian collections at Cambridge University Library especially in the context of family and social history. However, Stephen said that he needs help with selecting material for Cambridge University Library since a significant part of the collection will still remain in his ownership, including his collection of family photographs, albums and personal papers. **Richard Graves** asked members of the committee to liaise with Stephen on these issues.

**Chris Thoms, Hon Secretary**

## *Secretary's Notes*

### **John Powys**

The committee of the Powys Society wish to express their gratitude on behalf of all members for the cooperation of the Estate of John Cowper Powys in supporting the work and activities of the Society and the agreement made by John Powys, shortly before he died, allowing the Society to continue to have free access, without seeking permission or payment of a fee, to reproduce any published or unpublished material controlled by the copyright holder. We especially wish to express our condolences to Amanda and William Powys for their sad loss.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

### **New Members**

We are very pleased to welcome ten new members to the Powys Society, who have joined the Society since the last announcement published in Newsletter 94, July 2018. New members are located in Belgium, USA, Kenya, Dorset, Bristol, Somerset, Switzerland, Hampshire, London and Mappowder. This brings the current total membership to 252, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

### **Powys Society Conference 2019**

The 2019 Powys Conference will be held at the Hand Hotel, Llangollen, from Friday 16 August to Sunday 18 August 2019. The draft programme and more information about next year's conference will be published in *Newsletter* 96, March 2019, and will also be posted on the Powys Society website.

### **Hampstead Meeting**

A meeting has been arranged at the Friends' Meeting House, Hampstead, London, for **Saturday 1 December 2018** at 2.00pm for start at 2.30pm. Vice-Chairman David Goodway will lead a discussion of JCP's *The Meaning of Culture*. For more information please see *Newsletter* 94, July 2018, page 7. The event is free. All are welcome.

## **Obituary**

**W.J. Keith, 1934 - 2018**

*(published in the Toronto Globe and Mail)*

W.J. Keith was born on May 9, 1934, in north London. He was educated at Brentwood School, Essex and entered Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1955 after completing National Service with the Royal Army Educational Corps. On graduation in English in 1958 he won a 'Non Resident Fellowship' offered by the Canada Council to undertake graduate studies at the University of Toronto, where he obtained an MA in 1959 and Ph.D (on Richard Jefferies, the Victorian nature writer) in 1961. In 1966 after five years teaching at McMaster University he was invited back to the University of Toronto where he taught until retiring in 1995. Keith edited the University of Toronto Quarterly for nine years and published widely on 19th- and 20th-century British literature and later, on Canadian literature. His books include *Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study*, (1965), a trilogy of books on rural literature in the United Kingdom; two books about the Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe; *Canadian Literature in English* with Longman, (1985), subsequently updated and enlarged with *Porcupine's Quill* (2006); *An Independent Stance* (essays, 1991) and several books on John Cowper Powys with the Powys Press in England. He was also a poet best known for *Echoes in Silence* (1992) and *In The Beginning and Other Poems* (1999). He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1979. In 1965 he married Hiroko Sato, an elementary teacher born in Japan. They both travelled widely, including birdwatching trips on all seven continents as well as cultural tours and cruises. William passed away quietly in his sleep on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Charles Lock

### **W.J. Keith: a tribute**

Bill Keith was my colleague at the University of Toronto from the time of my appointment there in 1983 until his retirement in 1995 when, aged 61, he decided that the pressures of academic life (especially the ideological) were compromising his calling as a teacher. Bill was taciturn about such matters though his convictions were deeply held and could be incisively worded.

From the first I had been impressed by Bill's openness to Canadian literature, a quality seldom found among British scholars at Canadian universities, and I remain lastingly indebted for the advice that I might enjoy Rudy Wiebe's *Blue Mountains of China*. I would soon agree that Wiebe could be compared to Patrick White; some years later, at Bill's prompting, I was to supervise a dissertation on Wiebe. Bill's well-regarded monograph on Wiebe, *Epic Fiction*, had appeared in 1981, together with a collection, *A Voice in the Land: Essays by and about Rudy Wiebe*. That recommendation was offered during the course of a long drive (Bill was the passenger) in June 1985 from Toronto to Hamilton in upstate New York; we were on our way to the inaugural meeting of the Powys Society of

North America. Arranged and hosted at Colgate University by R.L.Blackmore, it was a remarkable occasion: Colgate's Powys Collection was on display and all sorts of persons attended, most of them as it were improbable: few of us knew each other and none of us had much sense of the extent and diversity of JCP's admirers across North America. Alongside Bob Blackmore, Peter Powys Grey was the presiding eminence.

That meeting would bear considerable fruit, not least for Bill. Long interested in English rural literature, Bill had written two volumes of a trilogy; the first, *The Rural Tradition* (1974), on Richard Jefferies and other non-fictional prose writers, was followed by *The Poetry of Nature* (1980) on rural verse since Wordsworth. The third was to be devoted to fiction and would appear in 1988 as *Regions of the Imagination*. In 1978 Glen Cavaliero had published *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel 1900-1939*. It was no surprise that the author of *John Cowper Powys: Novelist* (1973) should give prominence to John Cowper and T.F. Powys in 'the rural tradition', and Bill followed the lead, handsomely – though Bill had made the first claim to the title of 'the rural tradition'.

From 1976 to 1985 Bill Keith had served as editor of the *University of Toronto Quarterly* – an eminent and influential post within Canadian academic life -- and in its pages in 1990 *Regions of the Imagination* was appreciatively reviewed by Glen Cavaliero. It should be noted that two of the three rural English volumes found no British publisher and Bill's trilogy remains little known in the land from which it draws its theme; this is particularly regrettable in the case of *Regions*, whose chapter on John Cowper was singled out for praise in the *UTQ* review.

After retiring from the University of Toronto in 1995 Bill devoted much of his time to Powys and frequently attended the Powys Society Conference in the UK, most recently in 2012. During these years he published three volumes under the auspices of the Society: *Aspects of John Cowper Powys's Owen Glendower* (2008), *A Glastonbury Romance Revisited* (2010) and *Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and the Powyses* (2013). In addition, *John Cowper Powys's Autobiography: A Reader's Companion* (2005 and 2008) regrettably not in print but published on-line by Jacqueline Peltier and still available from her at <http://www.powys-lannion.net>, as are Keith's *Reader's Companions to Owen Glendower* (2007), *Porius* (2004, 2009), and *A Glastonbury Romance* (2010). Each of these studies is systematically arranged, reliable and extremely useful.

Bill first addressed the Powys Society at Kingston Maurward in 1998 and thereafter was a regular contributor to the *Powys Journal*. His last contribution (in 2014) was a survey of the novels of Louis Wilkinson, every one of them. Bill surmised, with his typically understated humour, that this topic might exceed the editor's competence to dissent, adjust and revise. The editor conceded as much, and not one word of that essay was altered. At Colgate University almost thirty years earlier I had given a paper on JCP and Bakhtin, and it was in the journal whose steering Bill had recently relinquished, the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, that the lecture was published, in 1986. Two lives, as Powysians, as editors, as English professors of English in Toronto, have been threaded through the decades. The loss is felt, as are the manifold debts.

Nicholas Birns  
*The Elegant Powysian*

I first met Bill Keith in 1995, at a Powys Society of North America conference in Toronto. By then, he was near retirement in terms of his teaching career, but in his roaring prime in terms of intellectual rigor. Having discerned that I shared not just his interest in Powys but in Canadian literature, he remarked that the young waiter serving us drinks looked very like the Canadian Jack Hodgins, who was a friend of us. I riposted that he should ask Hodgins if he was in Toronto in 1975 (when presumably he could have fathered the young man). This established an easy banter between us which extended to many literary matters: when I mentioned I had recently been reading Dostoyevsky, he cited George Steiner to the effect that one either chose Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, and he responded he very much chose Tolstoy. This was in tune with his general literary emphasis, which was on closely observed, empathetic writing on the English rural landscape. His first book was on Richard Jefferies and generally he concentrated on the English rural tradition – speaking to one aspect of his identity as his Canadian interests did to another.

Bill's interest in Powys was a not entirely predictable outgrowth of these interests. Bill remarked to me that he was at first skeptical of reading John Cowper Powys, feeling he was too metaphysically oriented, but was persuaded by a student of his – Michael Ballin, later to become an eminent Powysian himself – to read JCP. This resulted in a major contribution to Powys studies, most of which took place during Bill's retirement. When I was editing *Powys Notes*, he contributed a major article on *Wood and Stone* (which involved an editorial tussle between us over whether the recent film adaptation of Stella Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm* had rescued the book from literary neglect). This was the first iteration of what became over the years seminal contributions to the field: including guides to *Porius*, *Owen Glendower*, the *Autobiography*, and many other contributions, small and large scale, on a writer who intrigued and fascinated him to the end.

Bill Keith had many sides to his literary talents: he was a fine poet, and, in his editorial work on *Near Water*, the final book of his friend Hugh Hood's twelve-volume novel-cycle covering twentieth-century Canada, *The New Age/ Le Nouveau Siècle*, showed good skills as a writer of narrative prose as well. Though the writers he emphasized – Powys, Jefferies, Hood, and the Western Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe – all shared certain traits, such as a fascination by nature, they were very different in temperament and style, and that Bill wrote informatively about all four shows the range of his own mind and imagination.

In 2004, I sent Bill a copy of my book on the British novelist Anthony Powell. Bill remarked that he and his wife, Hiroko, had been on a Hellenic cruise with Powell and his wife, Lady Violet, in the early 1980s. He remarked that Powell was warm, congenial, and, as he later found out, quite observant. This led me to conclude that Bill Keith had perhaps seen aspects of himself in the character of Professor Kopf in Powell's 1986 novel *The Fisher King*.



Bill Keith was kind and gracious while also being elegant and well-mannered. For him, the literary life was a dedicated and serious one, and it is this seriousness and integrity of purpose that he brought to the study of John Cowper Powys.

Susan Rands

***W.J.Keith and The Jefferies Society***

I first met Bill Keith in 1987 at the weekend conference at Swindon arranged to commemorate the centenary of the death of Richard Jefferies. I had been invited by the Secretary, Phyllis Treitel, a close friend since our Oxford days. I still have Bill's sequence of poems about Jefferies, *Worshipper of Earth*, written for, and delivered at the conference.

He had become President of the Jefferies Society in 1974 and did not retire until 1991, their longest serving President. Born in 1933, Bill grew up in rural Essex when his chief interest was in birdwatching. His last essay for the Society's *Journal* was an examination of Jefferies's knowledge of birds.

Bill emigrated to Canada for graduate work and his doctoral thesis, *Richard Jefferies, A Critical Study*, was published in 1965. Bill became Professor of English at Toronto University.

Bill's work on Jefferies shows all the characteristics we have come to value so much in his work on the Powys brothers. To quote from the tribute to Bill on his retirement by Andrew Rossaby (author of *A Peculiarly English Genius, a biography of Richard Jefferies*, 2017) 'Bill's notes identify the source of quotations, explain the meaning of dialect words, and elucidate obscurities. They follow references and trace derivations' and 'he has always been unstinting with help and advice over matters of research.' Bill bowed out from the Jefferies Society because he felt, he told them, that 'its expanding activities called for a more active President!' But I suspect he had become more interested in the Powys brothers, and to quote Rossaby again, 'his rare combination of scholarship, sensitivity and intelligence' has been manifest in all his fascinating publications about them.

After the conference at Sherborne school in 2004 Bill and Hiroko Keith stayed at the George and Pilgrim in Glastonbury, and I showed them Meare, the Old Wells Road,



*Bill and Hiroko Keith with P.J.Kavanagh at Sherborne, 2004*

Wick Hollow, Bulwarks Lane, Chalice Well Lane, and Cinnamon Lane on Kennard Moor. We had hoped to see the redbacked shrike which I had seen there recently. We then went to Whitelake where Hiroko made a sketch. After lunch I took them to Castle Cary station.

In 2010 the conference was at the Wessex Hotel and this time we took the Keiths to the 'Two Oaks' on Friday morning and had coffee in the Rainbow's End café in Glastonbury High Street. We discussed the Canadian novelist Robertson Davies whom we both enjoyed. Bill's article on JCP's influence on him appeared in the *Powys Journal* 2011 under the title *John Cowper Powys and Robertson Davies*.

### **Books and Pamphlets by Professor W.J. Keith**

Regular contributions to the *Powys Journal*, *la lettre powysienne*, and the *Powys Society Newsletter*

*Richard Jefferies, A Critical study*, OUP 1966

*The Rural Tradition*, A Study of Non Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside, Harvester Press, 1975

*The Poetry of Nature*, Rural Perspectives in Poetry from Wordsworth to the Present, Toronto, 1980

*Epic Fiction: The Art of Rudy Wiebe*, Edmonton, 1981

*Canadian Literature in English*, London, 1985

*Worshipper of Earth: A Centenary Tribute in Verse to Richard Jefferies*, Hub edns, 1987

*Regions of the Imagination: The Development of British Rural Fiction*, Toronto, 1988

Introducing Margaret Atwood's "The Edible Woman", Toronto, 1990

*A Sense of Style: Studies in the Art of Fiction in English Speaking Canada*, Toronto, 1989

*Frederick Philip Grove and his Works*, Toronto, 1991

*An Independent Stance: Essays on English- Canadian Criticism and Fiction*, Ontario, 1991

*Echoes in Silence* [Poems], New Brunswick, 1992

*'In the Beginning' and other poems*, 1999

*Literary Images of Ontario*, Toronto, 1992

For The Powys Society:

Reader's Companions to books by JCP, (available from <http://www.powys-lannion.net>):

*A Glastonbury Romance: A Reader's Companion* (2004, 2010)

*Owen Glendower: A Reader's Companion* (2007)

*Autobiography: A Reader's Companion* (2005, 2008)

*Porius: A Reader's Companion* (2004, 2009)

(also a previous listing of corrections to the text of the 1994 edition of *Porius*, 2003)

*Aspects of JCP's Owen Glendower* (2008)

*A Glastonbury Romance Revisited* (2010)

*Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and the Powyses* (2013)

## ***Jeff Kwintner***

***1939-2018***

### ***Tributes***

I knew that Jeff was not doing well, but it comes as a shock to hear he has gone. He made a dramatic intervention in my life. And he did nudge me into the Powys thicket. There is much to be grateful for, among all the madness, hustle, games and pain.

**Iain Sinclair**

The news of Jeff's death saddened me. He was a tormented man but a brilliant one.

**Morine Krissdottir (*past Chairman*)**

What sad news. Jeff was such a charismatic (if sometimes abrasive) character and he did so much to promote the Powys family's work. He has left a great legacy and will be sorely missed.

**Paul Roberts (*past Chairman*)**

Poor Jeff! Alas I did not know him very well. But I do vividly recall witnessing the opening of the Village Bookshop in Regent Street in the early 1970s and buying books there every weekend. It was a bibliophile's dream palace. Later I was

privileged to visit Jeff at his home in Cheltenham, with Kate and Shelagh, and saw his vast collection of vinyl records, film posters, and his specially bound collection of Village Press books. He gave opportunities and inspiration to so many people.

**Chris Thomas (*Hon. Secretary*)**

This is a very sad moment, hardly sad in the light of all that Jeff has been through in recent years, but as the moment that brings us most forcefully to recollect all that Jeff contributed to the reading of JCP. Such memories come back, the happiest those from forty years ago when Jeff ruled at the Village Bookshop on Regent Street; forty years later, I'm not sure that even London has seen many more improbable apparitions. I owe Jeff a very great deal.

**Charles Lock (*Editor, Powys Journal*)**



*Jeff with Glen at Montacute, 2012 (photo by Marcella Henderson-Peal)*

What sad news. Jeff did so much for JCP, and what fond memories of the Village Bookshop too. I would have liked to buy one of his suits.

**John Hodgson** (*past Chairman*)

What an amazing and extraordinary character Jeff was. Like many Powysians, once met never forgotten!

**Frank Kibblewhite** (*Powys Society webmaster*)

O, what a lot we all owe him.

**Louise de Bruin** (*Conference organiser*)

How sad to hear that Jeff Kwintner is dead! I feel that we all owe him a lot. I still remember our meeting at his bookshop, with JCP and Miller's rows of books, and his gift to me of JCP's *Dorothy Richardson*. So long ago... And of course, my Village Press *Rabelais* is in tatters. A cherished memory.

**Catherine Lieutenant** (*French translator of JCP's Rabelais*)

I did feel particularly sad to hear of Jeff's death. I did not get to know Jeff until we both joined the Powys Society committee. He had an almost mythical status before with his previous exploits. However he was very understated in his achievements and was immediately friendly with his bright eyes, always searching and enquiring. Despite his demise later he always not only recognised me but the deep searching seemed to remain. He will be much missed.

**Sonia Lewis**

Jeff was a lovely man to meet, courteous, funny and understanding (despite the defensive questions). What extraordinary things he did, and what a heaven-sent conjunction with Powys. PJ admired him greatly. 'John Cowper's essays. the way he writes, *helps* people, and it helped Jeff Kwintner... So he founded his own imprint to reissue just about every word JCP wrote. Kwintner deserves a statue.' (*Spectator*; 1983).

**Kate Kavanagh**

Nick Cohn

*from 'Today There Are No Gentlemen' (1974)*

Kwintner owns eight shops in London, four of them in the Kings Road, of which four are called the Squire Shop, three the Village Gate and one Thackeray... By the standards of his rivals, he was an oddity, because he was intellectual. Born in Hackney, son of a tailor, he'd grown up introspective and had gone to the Polytechnic, in Regent Street, to take a BSc. in Chemistry, when he began to read Jack Kerouac and *The Outsider* and went severely Beat. He lived it fully.

He washed dishes at Butlins, read Chinese poetry and bummed round Europe, studying Zen Buddhism. After a bit, as the novelty wore off, he set up a stall in Petticoat Lane.

Then, five years ago, he opened his first boutique, the Ivy Shop, in Richmond; now his turnover is £1 1/2 million. This was not a usual background for menswear ... Kwintner seemed like a prodigy. Obviously, he must have been tough, or he wouldn't have been so rich; still, in his personal dealings, he was hypersensitive, he was obsessed by his relations with his employees, by their opinion of him and by his competitors' opinion of him and even by my own opinion of him. "Would you say? Well, would you say I sold nice things?" he said, looking desperate; and halfway through our interview his wife rang him up, just to see how he was making out.

He cared about more than profit. When he started to talk about his business, he alternated great reams of theory and schemes with flashes of distrust. "Why should I reveal my innermost thoughts to you?" he said. "You're only dabbling, you're not involved; how could you understand?" For these reasons, I found him intriguing and likeable. He had flashes of true fanaticism, and real imagination. "Tell me something," he said, "how far do you think I can go?" Very far, I thought. In Richmond, he had sold mock-Americana, in imitation of Ivy League, and his custom was mostly latter-day Mod. Even when he moved to Chelsea, in 1967, he continued to work the same styles and they made him a decent profit but caused no great excitements. Two years ago, however, he began to ease out the campus look and replace it with the Olde Worlde English Gentleman. He saw that Carnaby Street drag must begin to lose speed soon, that outrage could not sustain indefinitely. Before anyone else, he realized that the sixties were not a new age dawning but a decade like any other, a certain mood, bound to pass.

So he started a reaction. He filled his windows with suits, not silks, but tweeds and wools, in quiet colours, and he gave them all waistcoats... they had an unPop calm and elegance, and they were cheap, from £25 to £30. Altogether, they carried a sense of past and Kwintner's shops were called The Squire or Thackeray, decorated with fake Tudor timbering. The mood was one of severe decorum. "I think it's nice to have nice shops and sell nice things in a very nice way" Kwintner said, and he set an atmosphere that was picked up by Carnaby Street, by the big-store boutiques like Way In and Cue, and by out-of-town boutiques as well. Everyone began to backpedal...



Paul Roberts

*Jeff Kwintner and the Village Bookshop*

The Village Bookshop opened in Regent Street in May 1973. On the ground floor, as one came in from the street, it seemed the sort of place of which there were a number in London at the time, a clear and uncluttered shop with a floor and shelves of polished pine, specializing in paperbacks. There was always music playing, classical, jazz and what has now come to be known as World Music, but which we then called 'folk'. This came from the record department upstairs ('nearer the stars and the toilet', as the publicity note put it), which was reached by what I remember as a curved, open staircase, which one climbed until one reached a sort of mezzanine from which the ground floor could be seen through railings.

I only rarely climbed those stairs, but I remember a place well-stocked with records hard to obtain elsewhere, and especially the small independent labels, and I remember too a staff that not only knew the music they were selling, but once persuaded me to buy the cheaper version of a classical piece because it was the better recording.

All of Jeff's staff were knowledgeable people, but they were also a pretty eccentric crew, especially the bald man with the vast red beard who would disconcert customers by suddenly turning to them with a huge false eye clamped between eyebrows and cheek -- Popeye redrawn by Robert Crumb, whose 'comics' were also on sale -- or answered their politely whispered questions as Donald Duck. I wish I'd had the nerve to ask his name, but I was too timid. Jeff served in the shop sometimes too, a slim figure with a head of tight black curls splashed with grey and a voice like cinders.

But it was as one approached the rear of the ground floor that it became apparent why this was one of London's most special bookshops and one which has fused itself into my mind as kind of ideal. With the stairs leading up to the music department to the right, the visitor faced a short flight of two or three steps down into the lower ground floor. These steps were curved into a concave arc and, as one looked ahead, the rear wall of the shop curved in the opposite direction so as to create an oval floor between steps and wall. The light was more subdued here and the rear wall was clad in stone, so that one had the feeling of having stepped down into a cave, or part of an ancient building. Set into the walls were shelves of thick pine, some several feet long, others no more than inches, and here one found the Village Press books, rows of titles by and about Powys and Miller as well as other works such as *The London Adventure*, or *The Art of Wandering* by Arthur Machen, the books on Zen (especially Alan Watts), exciting books from little presses, thick tomes and flimsy pamphlets. This was treasure indeed.

Music played here too, and in front of the shelves was a pond built of stone in which golden fish moved slowly. With the stone, the trickle of water, the lowered lights and the music, it was a magic place, but not a sombre one. It was a place to go for peace, a sanctuary in Regent Street, even if one knew every book on the shelves. And then, to the right, on a tall plinth, stood the massive bust of John Cowper Powys by Oloff de Wet, which when no-one was there I would quietly greet by touching my forehead in

homage against its cold cheek. I saw that bust again when Jeff opened another shop in Great Queen Street, where it stood in the corner of an elegant parlour. By then the end of its nose had been broken in an accident when it was moved, but it was still a thing of beauty and power.

Just as I had found the Village Bookshop by chance one Saturday afternoon so, by chance, I came upon its closing on another Saturday, in November 1981. My wife and I had decided to go into London on impulse and thought we might as well walk up Regent Street. As we reached the bookshop we saw huge signs filling the windows and hanging from the ceiling, announcing it would close that very day. The place was full of people, their arms cradling books. As so often in situations such as this, I was stricken with panic. There were books I didn't have, but would I be able to afford them? Jan told me calmly to collect together the books I wanted and eventually I hauled an armful to the till, where Jeff himself was serving. He ran his finger down the tall column of books and came up with a price that was in fact, far less than it ought to have been. And so I left the shop for the last time, weighed down with two bulging carrier bags. The next time I passed the building it was full of suitcases and handbags and looked just like any other shop.

Although Jeff later opened another bookshop, a special place had disappeared with the closing of the Village Bookshop. Of course, there were many stories among Jeff's admirers about why it had happened, but Jeff himself has recently told me that the truth was far more mundane than the dark conspiracies which some of us had imagined. The Village Gate chain, with its sixteen shops, was no longer selling three thousand suits a week and had gone into voluntary liquidation: the subsidy which had kept the bookshop afloat and had paid for the publication of all those books was gone.

Though he would probably laugh at the idea, I feel I owe Jeff Kwintner a great deal. He published the books I needed to read when no one else could provide them; he founded a bookshop unlike any other and he introduced me to Kenneth Hopkins and The Powys Society. Most important of all, once I overcame my timidity enough to speak to him, he prompted me with questions, as every good teacher should. Then, I was foolish enough to think that I could solve the mystery of Powys, that I could encapsulate his essence and describe it in words. But every time I proudly presented my latest solution, Jeff would unravel it with a question and send me away to rethink my grand ideas.

Like Powys and Miller, Jeff Kwintner is a life-enhancer, but that doesn't make him soothing company, as older members of the Society will testify. There are still those who remember his emulation of the Laughing Philosopher when he felt the approach to his favourite 'living book' had become too sombre and academic, too sterile and analytical.

Twenty-five years after founding the Village Press, Jeff Kwintner is now retired and, it seems, unlikely to venture into publishing again. Nevertheless, his legacy is important in showing what can be achieved when the passion and the means coincide. Who now would have the courage and the vision to take on his mantle?

*The back cover of NL 34 (July 1998, editor John Batten, where this essay first appeared – in a slightly longer and different form) has a list of publications from a Village Bookshop Newsletter (prices 5p to 45p), presided over by photographs of Groucho Marx and W.C.Fields.*

Iain Sinclair

*How I first met Jeff Kwintner*

*(Extract from The Verbals by Kevin Jackson, Worple Press, 2003 – [an interview with Iain Sinclair])*

There was one really extraordinary time, which happened when I'd just made a preliminary attempt to get into the Parks Department, before the job I had in Limehouse which led to the writing of *Lud Heat*. I was out on Hackney Marshes, where the job was marking out the white lines for the football pitches that were laid on top of the bomb damage from the Second World War, the rubble of East London. And I came back to Hackney one evening, and there was a large Rolls Royce, a blue corniche, outside my house, which was amazing, because in those days there weren't many cars around Hackney. And Anna had let in this couple, who'd turned up on the doorstep and insisted they must wait to see me. They were sitting in my room, looking at books, and when I came in the man just barked at me 'Are you interested in John Cowper Powys?' Well yes, reasonably...

It turned out to be a man called Jeff Kwintner, who had grown up in Hackney, educated himself through the Mare Street public library, where Henry Miller had led him on to Powys, and he'd become obsessed with Powys. He had now become very wealthy, with a chain of clothes shops called Village Gate, and the vision or instinct that he should found a press and acquire a bookshop. So his flagship property on Regent Street was going to be made over into Village Gate Bookshop, and he said 'You must be on the payroll. Turn up tomorrow to our office in King's Road, and consider yourself on the firm.' So I went down there the next day, and there was this whole bunch of people assembled – dowsers, ley-line freaks, jugglers, acupuncturists, nutters and visionaries of every kind, thronging this office, who were going to reinvent the culture. And I was immediately told to get out of the rags I was wearing, given a suit from his shop and a tape recorder and the keys to a red Ferrari.

I went home to Hackney, and was then shipped off to Wales to chase up John Cowper Powys's mistress and attend to the story. But by the time I got back to London, this guy said 'Oh no, no, we're finished with that, we're moving on to the next thing. Off you go to Avebury and Stonehenge, take some photos, come on, keep moving.' Everything was like that, Zen mastery and general all-purpose weirdness. One of the other people who was brought in had been working for Dunn's hatters. Jeff had said 'I can see you've got the vision,' and gave him a suitcase full of books by John Cowper Powys and a ticket to New York, shoved him on the plane. One way ticket. That was it. He was never seen again!



*Jeff at the Village Bookshop, 1970s*

Anyway, as I say, the second project after the Powys search in North Wales, was to go out and photograph sacred sites. So I went all over the place, and took photographs which were then exhibited in his shop, his gallery in Regent Street – Avebury, Silbury, Stonehenge, the Ridgway and all the rest of it, black and white, blown up as part of this New Age set up...

All this carried on for about six months. It was an amazing bookshop, where everybody turned up. Ted Hughes walked in and started buying books on Red Indian shamanism and ritual, Kenneth Patchen's wife, Miriam, turned up...and so it went on. I introduced a few other people into the scheme of things, and then one day I was taken with Brian Catling, who had a very bad stammer

at that point, and we were locked into this office on King's Road with bottles of champagne, to write – in half an hour! – exactly where the spiritual identity of Britain was at that moment in time. A motor bike rider was waiting for this piece... That was a deranged period of time, we cruised around town in this Rolls Royce with Kwintner and his house poet, Hugo Manning, pipe and duffle coat, going to the Sherlock Holmes pub... an element of that creeps into *Suicide Bridge*, one section is set in a bookshop where the magus flips open the *I Ching* or Pound's *Cantos*, or something, to see whatever gnomic message it delivers, and the day is set by that. So this whole thing of mad high commerce and visionary art was imposed on me right then, but with a secondary sense that it was all a game, it will never be real, but enjoy the ride while you're on it and react to it.

*Iain Sinclair writes on a visit to Blaenau Ffestiniog in 1973 ('Earth. Ankh. Autumn') in NL 58 (p.46), and in NL 84 (p.34), introduced by Chris Thomas, 'John Cowper Powys, Victim of the West' (from his book *Suicide Bridge*). He gave a talk at the Conference in Millfield, 2002 (see *The Powys Journal XIII*, 2003).*

Dawn Collins

*Jeff Kwintner in the life of photographer Richard Young*

I first came across Richard Young on his Twitter feed when I noticed: Where is Jeff Kwintner? Does anybody know? with the reply: *Last spotted down at the Chelsea Drugstore, drinking whiskey with John Cowper Powys*. Intrigued, I ‘Googled’ Richard Young to find out what it meant. My search lead me the renowned photographer who, I later learned, owes his career to the indomitable Jeff Kwintner.

Jeff deserves to be remembered not only for the Village Press but for the belief he showed in a young boy working in his Squire Shop on the Kings Road in 1968, who went on to become the celebrated photographer, Richard Young. He was a young lad with no particular qualification apart from a love of fashion when he took his first job with Jeff. He soon became restless and Jeff gave him £300 to go to America but after three years Richard returned still in need of a mentor and Jeff helped him again with a job in the Village Bookshop in 1973. Requiring illustrations for his Powys and Hardy publications he sent Richard off with a Nikon and three rolls of film to photograph sites in Dorchester. Unfortunately Richard, who had blagged that he could, actually had no idea how to use the camera and returned without a useable image. Although angry, Jeff gave him the camera and told him to learn how to use it. Richard says that it was Jeff’s Zen attitude to life that made it possible to forgive and encourage. It was only six weeks from then that Richard took his first very successful shot of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton kissing in the Dorchester Hotel; he was taken on by the *Evening Standard* and his career was ignited.

Richard spent eighteen months at the Village Bookshop at 69 Lower Regent Street and describes Jeff and the ambiance with great affection. He recalls one memorable journey with Jeff when they visited Phyllis Playter in Blaenau in 1972/3. He made a short Betamax video of Jeff talking with Phyllis but sadly that is now lost. Richard says that Jeff was the only person who gave him a chance at life and he owes all to Jeff’s help. It is his wonderful fancy to think of the two, Jeff and JCP, at the now long gone Chelsea Drug Store somewhere in the multiverse, drinking and talking.

Thank you, Richard.

Charles Lock

*A tribute to Jeff Kwintner*

Paul Roberts has evoked with most impressive accuracy the interior of the Village Bookshop, its curves and steps and levels, and the sense it gave to those who dared to step within of a cavern in which the floor was not quite steady, the walls not quite solid, and within which anything might happen, or be offered -- though no substance was more toxic (nor to some of us more magical) than the books of John Cowper Powys. I do not know whether there has ever been another bookshop dedicated exclusively (almost) to the purveying of a single author. Of course, quite a few have been dedicated to the purveying of a single book, the Bible, and there could be no doubt of the evangelical and missionary spirit that animated the Village Bookshop.

Such an interior would have been extraordinary wherever it had been located. This one presented its shopfront to the Café Royale; its premises were cramped because this was the most prestigious stretch of retail space in all London. Gerald Pollinger told me some twenty-five years ago of how a person unknown had asked for a meeting to discuss the rights for reprinting the works of JCP. Pollinger invited him to his office at 18 Maddox Street (between Hanover Square and Regent Street) and named humorously an outrageous sum – the exact figure of which I choose not to remember, for the sum I recall Pollinger reciting makes the memory spin. At the appointed hour a very flashy Rolls-Royce drew up in Maddox Street and like a medieval prince with a bevy of courtiers (‘cronies and floozies’) the man introduced as Mr Kwintner held out the named sum *in cash*. Gerald Pollinger was hardly lacking in flamboyance himself; he could appreciate this as a fine negotiating strategy, and ample testimony to the seriousness of Jeff Kwintner’s intent. The deal made (the Pollinger archives should be studied), Jeff Kwintner was asked where he planned to locate the shop. Pollinger assumed it would be in some trendy or bohemian neighbourhood, and was further shocked when Jeff pointed along Maddox Street to Regent Street, and said he could soon be found just down the street. Pollinger confessed to a sense of having been worsted; a very rare sense, it must be added, for as a Battle of Britain pilot, he was not easily intimidated or impressed. But he was proud of having his office in Mayfair and felt that this was one-up-manship on Jeff’s part, with very high stakes. Again he invoked the image of Jeff as a medieval prince exerting his power through charisma as well as funds. From their very different backgrounds, each found much to respect in the other.

That story I heard from Pollinger shortly after the close of the conference of the Powys Society of North America held in Toronto in June 1992; this would



have been some twenty years after the events of which he told. I first visited the Village Bookshop in the autumn of 1975, having already that summer purchased some Village Press editions of JCP from the stall run by Longman's Bookshop in Dorchester at the Weymouth conference of the Powys Society. Most of what the Village Press reissued was of John Cowper's non-fiction, and most of them, including *The Meaning of Culture* and *A Philosophy of Solitude*, appeared in 1974. These, not the novels, were what Jeff most valued, so the fact that the rights to the major novels were unavailable did not trouble him: the world urgently needed the guidance of John Cowper Powys. In 1975 the Village Press published its first original work, not a reprint but the long-delayed appearance of Malcolm Elwin's edition of John Cowper's *Letters to his brother Llewelyn*. Volume One (1902-1925) appeared in 1975; Volume Two (1925-1939), though also bearing the copyright date of 1975, was (for reasons not fathomed) made available only in 1983. By that date Jeff's income from the menswear business had declined. I visited the shop quite frequently between 1975 and 1980, and almost always found Jeff there, as though he had lost interest in what had made him so fabulously wealthy. The Village Press folded and Jeff's publishing enterprise, now much diminished, continued under the name of Greymitre Books, under which imprint John Cowper's only published play, *Paddock Calls*, appeared in 1984, as did JCP's *Diary for 1930*. (I am unaware of any motive for either name, Village or Greymitre: possibilities for 'Village' run from Greenwich and the Village Voice to what would be characteristic mischief on Jeff's part in naming thus a shop on Regent Street.) The Village Bookshop had closed and reopened with a new name on a very different site, where Longacre meets Great Queen Street, and on a commercial basis.

Jeff Kwintner played a decisive part in rendering me dissatisfied with the undergraduate curriculum at Oxford and in 1978 I was able to persuade the authorities there that JCP was an author worthy of doctoral research. My greatest debt was incurred in 1984 when, on a visit from Toronto in August – my first to London in some five years – Jeff with great excitement asked me whether I'd heard of this Russian named Bakhtin. He had read in the *TLS* in July 1981 a review by George Steiner of Bakhtin's essays collected as *The Dialogic Imagination*, from which Jeff had learnt that Bakhtin wrote monograph on just two writers, the very same as those on whom JCP had written books: Rabelais and Dostoevsky. I had read that review and noted that detail but had thought little more about it. Jeff however had immediately acquired *The Dialogic Imagination* and told me, when next we met, in 1984, that although he could make little sense of it he thought I would get the idea, and so he passed the book on, for a modest consideration. Treasured as both a gift and a purchase, the book has

remained close to hand for over thirty years. The essay that I wrote as it were on Jeff's commission, 'Polyphonic Powys: Dostoevsky, Bakhtin and *A Glastonbury Romance*,' published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* in 1986, bears a dedication to the one who had inspired its writing.

Jeff Kwintner was a figure to whom no modifier need be applied. The Village Bookshop was his greatest achievement, or should we think of it as a performance? It was a true 'heterotopia' (a place discontinuous with the space around) and to be within was to experience a certain benign force of enchanted inclusion. (I acquired *Ducdame* there.) Jeff's slow decline, first in wealth and then in health, was troubling to witness. There had been a touch of Merlin in the magic he wrought on Regent Street, and it may still be felt emanating from those compact monochromatic volumes through which so many of us came to know John Cowper Powys. The mystery of the man and the depth of our gratitude are alike unfathomable.

### *Afterword*

In the late 1990s, after some further publishing including two complete years of JCP's diaries, 1930 and 31, Jeff retired to Cheltenham (his older son Zac now lives there), at first to a country cottage (where he was suspected of being the hunted Salman Rushdie), then to a flat filled with books, records, images of the Buddha and portraits of film stars. He did not make another fortune on the racecourse, frequented libraries, made more plans for bookshops and did a great deal of driving. He met Shelagh Powys Hancox, his companion and later carer, at the Hancox bookshop which she had kept on after Alan died. With her he kept up with Powys Society events (including a stint on the committee), but increasing anxieties from his bipolar condition ended in a care home on the outskirts of the town.



*Jeff in Cheltenham 1996*

KK

## *Notes & News*

### **From Pat Quigley:**

To commemorate 10 years of Powys Society conferences I have put together an essay in an attempt to summarize the experience. I hope it will inspire members to compare experiences and maybe encourage others to attend conferences. (*Pat's essay can be found on the Powys Society website.* CT)

### **From Tim Blanchard:**

Latest news of *Powysland: The Discovery of John Cowper Powys*, soon to be published by the Sundial Press, has been posted on the Powys Society website and now also includes a link to a microsite and blog which enables readers to post messages and exchange views.

### **From Jacqueline Peltier:**

I found details on the internet of an academic thesis on *Weymouth Sands* and *Maiden Castle* which was presented at Durham in 1991 by J.R. Fox. Title: *The Shattered Skull*.

### **From Laura Wellner, Syracuse University Art Galleries, USA:**

Occasionally Powys readers have contacted me through Goodreads, Library Thing, and my blogs. I truly do love reading JCP's books, I have quite a stack that I have yet to read, I have some very old copies of *Wood and Stone* and *Ducdame*. My Fred works for Syracuse University Press and they carried a few Powys books many years ago as the distributor for Colgate University. It was through SUP that we discovered his books and we both read *Porius* as our first Powys book. (We've both read it twice and want to read it again!) We've gotten several of our friends and relations reading Powys or at least knowing about him if they haven't yet dipped in to read him. I work for the Syracuse University Art Galleries, I am the registrar of the Art Collection (our website: <http://suart.syr.edu/>), we have the Marion Powys lace collection that was donated to the university in 1965. I had stumbled upon the connection just recently while doing a review of the textile inventory, and it dawned on me that this is JCP's sister 'May.' You might want to include this information on your website. There are about 50 pieces of historical lace in the collection. We are in the process of an extensive digitization project of the art collection, and I have designated the lace collection to be photographed this Fall/Winter. It's a small world, and the internet brings many of us closer together in good ways. [*Dawn Collins notes that Peter Powys Grey left the collection to Syracuse. There is a nice article in American Craft, Aug/Sept 1982, Vol 41 No. 4, by Peter Powys Grey at the time of an exhibition of Marian's collection in 1982 at Syracuse.*] Also see JCP's foreword to *Lace and Lacemaking* by Marian Powys elsewhere in this Newsletter [CT]

**From Chris Thomas:**

**Fanny Butcher** (1888-1987), was a literary critic, book reviewer and long-time writer for the *Chicago Tribune*. She worked at the Chicago Little Theatre in a variety of administration roles and knew Maurice Browne very well. In the 1920s she mixed with Chicago bohemia and was a friend of H L Mencken, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Ring Lardner and Sinclair Lewis, as well as an acquaintance of Theodore Dreiser. In his autobiography Browne calls her the *dean of middle western literary criticism*. Fanny Butcher met JCP at the Chicago Little Theatre but was unimpressed: *he sometimes lectured on Thomas Hardy for as long as two hours, garbed in a voluminous black gown. She found him verbose and ingratiating, though they must have had some literary talk because he noted in her guestbook, 'Nearly all my favourite modern writers have been introduced to me by people in bookshops.'* Butcher did not favour (JCP's) florid, verbose style. She wrote in her diary on 18 January 1930 'I never did really like him'. Noting with disapproval the way he 'wangled a free book' out of Marshall Field's at a luncheon the store hosted in his honour – extract quoted from *The Rise of the Modernist Bookshop, Books and the Commerce of Culture in the Twentieth Century* by Huw Osborne, 2015. (Fanny Butcher's papers including her guestbook and diaries are at the Newberry Library in Chicago).

**From Dawn Collins:**

**Facebook Reading Group**

The Powys Society Facebook Reading Group discussed *A Glastonbury Romance* at the end of October. If you would like to join the Reading Group, participate in future discussions, and find out more about the Society's Facebook page please contact me at: decollins@btinternet.com

**Manuscript Items:** Two interesting items seen, in August 2018, on ABE, the internet site for second hand books:

**James Hawkes** records an original **autograph letter signed from JCP to Alyse Gregory** dated 27 October 1950. The bookseller says 'Condition: Very Good. Letter enthusing about a visit from Malcolm Elwin & his wife Eve to Powys & Phyllis Playter at Merioneth. The letter, scrappily written across both sides of the paper in Powys's sprawling hand, mentions a letter from the bookseller & publisher Ben Abramson which was originally enclosed ('P.S. You can keep Ben Abramson's letter'), but no longer present; perhaps discarded by Alyse. Single sheet (25.5 x 20 cm.), folded twice, one tiny tear to one fold at edge, in stamped envelope addressed in autograph with sender's address on verso together with inked note in Alyse Gregory's hand', *about M.E's & E's visit [...] Keep[.]*. Envelope roughly torn open at top edge.'

**Richard M Ford Ltd** has a letter signed from JCP to ‘**Mr Disspain**’: 8 November. 1 Waterloo, Blaenau-Ffestiniog, Merionethshire, North Wales., 1958. 8vo, 4 pp. Bifolium. Bookseller’s description: ‘Very good on lightly aged paper. Written in Powys’s distinctive, sprawling hand. Concerns William Blake and the monograph on him (1954) by Denis Saurat, who *‘must indeed be a wonder considering the scope of his interests.’ ‘Yes I was brought up by my mother on the Poems of Blake; so I am always interested by any reference to them or any reproduction of them. Indeed and indeed I can fully understand your being so hypnotized by the pictures of Blake that you find yourself going to see them when you had decided to go somewhere else’*. Powys is ‘in excellent health’.

**From David Goodway: *Muriel Spark and TFP***

Asked (in 1981) about ‘The Book I would Like to Have Written, and Why’, **Muriel Spark**, while name-checking several possibilities including Evelyn Waugh’s *The Loved One*, *The Book of Job* which ‘enchants me above all other books in the Bible’ along with the sonnets of Shakespeare, the dialogues of Plato, the notebooks of Kierkegaard, stories including James’s *Daisy Miller*, **TF Powys’s *Mr Weston’s Good Wine*** and novels by her ‘most-admired contemporary novelist, Heinrich Böll’, is adamant: ‘I would not want to have written anything by anyone else, because they are ‘them’ and I am ‘me’. ( *Gerald Dawe, from a radio interview*). At the Edinburgh Book Festival, 2004, she nominated TFP as a writer she believed had been unjustly forgotten. (*from Alan Taylor’s Appointment in Arezzo, 2017*)

***TFP’s grave at Mappowder church***

**Chris Thomas writes:**

In 1940 Theodore Powys left East Chaldon and moved further inland to live at The Lodge, in the little village of Mappowder, in north Dorset. TFP died on 27 November 1953 and was buried in the churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, Mappowder, on 1 December 1953. A marble headstone, in the form of an open book, marks the spot which TFP himself had identified as the place of his burial and is inscribed with the words: ‘In Loving Memory of Theodore Francis Powys/ At Rest/ 27<sup>th</sup> November 1953/ Aged 77 Years’. Adjacent is a memorial to his wife: ‘Also Of/ Violet Rosalie/ His Wife/ Died/ 22nd November 1966/ Aged 79 Years’.

TFP’s second son, Francis Llewelyn Powys died on 2nd May 1998. A memorial service for Francis and his wife Sally, who died in 1993, was held at Mappowder church on 30th May 1998. A tribute to Francis by Morine Krissdottir, which was delivered at the memorial service, was published in *Newsletter* No.34, July 1998.

The cremated ashes of Francis and Sally were interred in TFP’s grave but there is no memorial to Francis at the gravesite.



*The gravestone in Mappowder churchyard*

Recently the churchwarden of St Peter and St Paul, Pauline Batstone, who has just become a member of the Society, has dedicated her time to cleaning, clearing and restoring the condition of TFP's grave site. Pauline sent me an e-mail message in September and said:

'The grave is now cleared of overgrown plants, ash trees and ivy. There is a vase which belongs on the grave which I have unearthed so people can put flowers there if they wish. I gave TFP and Violet's names on the marble book at the foot of the grave a scrub but they probably need another going over. The ashes may explain the piece of wood I hit when I was digging out the ivy – the remains of a

box I suspect which the ashes may have been in. There was a very sad red rose bush struggling to survive which I have brought back and transplanted in my vegetable patch for the time being... If it makes it through next year and survives it could go back into the grave – it's the sort of thing which might have been planted in memory of someone and it was about where the wood was, so maybe planted to commemorate Francis, and Sally perhaps. There were also a couple of overgrown lavenders which were well past their prime and the rest was a mix of a few aquilegia, weeds and ivy.'

Louise de Bruin has kindly placed a supply of the Powys Society information leaflets in Mappowder church to help provide visitors with more details of TFP's life and writings and assist visitors to identify the location of TFP's grave in the churchyard.



Neil Lee Atkin

### *Celebrating the 134<sup>th</sup> birthday of Llewelyn Powys*

In welcome contrast to the rest of this record-breaking summer of 2018 which saw scorching Mediterranean temperatures of around 30 degrees for day after sweltering day and not a drop of rain for almost three months, Monday August 13<sup>th</sup> provided the almost perfect antidote; a fine cloudscape of sky; white lace interwoven with ribbons of blue and the occasional ominous-looking rain cloud, behind which lurked an imprisoned but quite fierce Sun – ready to pounce at the first chance of escape.... But with a fresh cooling breeze blowing gently from the south west, it was a perfect day for a celebratory Birthday walk over the Downs of High Chaldon.

A unique day too, for it marked not only Llewelyn's 134th birthday but also the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual 'Birthday Walk' & the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Dandelion Fellowship (the Friends of Llewelyn Powys), and for the first time in 23 years the annual gathering did NOT take place at the Sailor's Return in East Chaldon! Tom Brachi's excellent hostelry was closed for the day, so at 12 noon or shortly thereafter a total of 21 celebrants gathered at the Red Lion in the village of Winfrith for lunch and to raise a glass to Llewelyn's memory. Unfortunately illness prevented our regular M/C and Toastmaster, Chris Gostick from attending, and in his absence I was happy to comply with his request to lead the proceedings. Thus I duly arrived at our unfamiliar temporary venue along with son Jason Lee and grandson Marcus around 11.30am in order to welcome members as they arrived, and within minutes Ben Chadwick and Steph Bradley had joined us from Devon. They were closely followed by the arrival of the familiar green campervan with Byron Ashton and his lovely wife Eirlys on board, and whilst this joyous reunion

was taking place in the car park, our newest member, Rev. Richard Betts, Chaplain at Dorchester County Hospital, came over and introduced himself and duly received a warm welcome.

Whilst numbers attending the Birthday Walk have varied over the years from as many as thirty- two to as few as six or seven, this year having received apologies from Chris & Linda, from Richard Stone and Jenny and from Jed Redman who was



*Group at the Red Lion*

recovering from illness, and knowing that some of the regular walkers were unable to attend, I had reasoned that numbers would be low, and by the time the doors were opened at 12 noon to allow us in, there were just eight of us waiting outside. Suddenly to everyone's delight Janice Gregory, Alyse Gregory's great-niece, arrived closely followed by a convoy of cars transporting a contingency of Powys Society members directly from the Annual Conference in Street, and within minutes our gathering began not only to swell in number, but also to resemble a veritable writer's convention!

We were delighted to welcome author and local historian Judith Stinton back again, along with Dawn Collins whose company we had enjoyed for the first time in 2017, and it was a real pleasure to welcome and finally make the acquaintance of Irish writer Patrick Quigley, along with New Zealander Peter Tait and a host of others for whom the annual Dandelion Fellowship gathering and Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk would be a new and hopefully rewarding experience; these included Robin Florence Hickey and Marcella Henderson-Peal. Then the cake was well and truly iced with the arrival of long-standing members John Sanders and his wife Jayne, and Rosemary Dickens who had once again been driven down from Salisbury by Dennis White, whilst Pam Gillingham and Sue Appleby completed the celebrants and swelled the final count to twenty one – an excellent turn-out!

The staff at the Red Lion were extremely accommodating and provided us with a large room of our own, where at 12.30pm I opened proceedings by welcoming everyone to Llewelyn's 134<sup>th</sup> birthday party and we raised our glasses to his memory, before I read a passage from the Introduction to his 'Book of Days' (Golden Cockerel Press, 1937). We then enjoyed an excellent lunch before leaving in convoy for a further rendezvous a mile or so down the road at the 'Sailor's Return' in East Chaldon, where Tom Brachi had kindly allowed us use of the car park and beer garden and had left tables, chairs and parasols out for our convenience. But first we gathered together beside the slate plaque on the wall which commemorates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk, unveiled three years earlier by Janice Gregory & founder John Batten, and took photographs before adjourning to the beer garden where we enjoyed several short readings from Alyse Gregory's *The Cry of A Gull* (The Ark Press 1973, edited by Michael Adam) read beautifully by Dawn Collins.

The breeze from the south-west had swept away the ominous looking dark rain clouds by the time the majority set off on the Birthday Walk. Dennis drove Rosemary up as far as Chydyok and I followed the dust cloud in their wake up the long and occasionally wildly undulating flint track which leads ever upward from the village, still not strong enough to attempt the whole walk following my recent illness, but determined to get to the memorial stone by one means or another! I noted

one or two changes along the way; there were new signs erected near the gate at the end of the short Chydyok Road, (which leads from the village green up to the aforementioned track): 'Private Road': 'Pedestrians only'; and 'no vehicular access without permission'.

The track itself had deteriorated, the ruts widened and deepened, especially on the steep extremes of Chalky Knapp where the suspension took a pounding; 'vehicular access' was certainly not advisable! There were changes at Chydyok too, most notably in the part of the garden where Llewelyn had constructed his 'Terrace Walk' in 1933. The wire mesh boundary fence which divided it from the track appeared to have been crushed and mangled, and the 'Terrace Walk' beyond had been torn up and was no more than a turmoil of broken ground and dead or dying shrubbery. Perhaps a local bullock had escaped and run amok? We were debating this when we were rather abruptly challenged by an estate warden who demanded to know who we were and what we were doing here, asked if we had seen the signs, and informed us that unless we had permission, we were trespassing.

It took all of Dennis White's diplomatic skills to calm my exasperation after I had patiently and politely explained who we were and why we were here, and was told in no uncertain terms that none of that made any difference, we still needed permission. Thankfully we were rescued by the arrival of the leading group of our brethren, and the warden now grossly outnumbered departed with: 'next time make sure you get permission'. Thus I will be writing to Lulworth Estates to request permission for vehicular access as far as Chydyok Farm prior to next year's annual Birthday Walk.....

Further enquiries elicited the good news is that the 'Terrace Walk' is in the process of being restored. The walk along the footpath up and over Tumbledown was as exhausting and as exhilarating as ever, and the panoramic view eastward from the field gate above Bat's Head as equally breathtaking and spectacular.

A large herd of young bullocks grazed the clifftop downs as we walked westward along the old 'Gypsy Track' towards the Obelisk Field, causing some consternation and concern as they obstinately refused to move as we approached – or otherwise took a little too much interest in the humans who were invading their field! Indeed, such was their brazen bovine obstinacy that two ladies in our group who were bringing up the rear, deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, chose not to run the gauntlet of hoofs and horns and abandoned the path, making their way to the Memorial Stone across the Obelisk Field!

We gathered at the stone beneath darkly glowering but swiftly flying clouds which stretched from the northern horizon as far as Portland in the south, beyond which an azure sky back-lit the island which appeared to float in perfect silhouette on a silver sea.

Steph had picked a posy of wild flowers and we placed them on the Memorial Stone before gathering around it and taking a few moments to recall to mind absent friends like John Batten, the founder of the Birthday Walk, and former 'regulars' Bruce & Vikki Madge who sent greetings from their home in Cyprus; warm wishes for a swift recovery were expressed for Chris and Jed, and we remembered those who had gone before, amongst them Janet Pollock (née Machen), Leslie Harrison, and our dear friend and former stalwart member, Richard Burleigh.

We then enjoyed listening to a variety of well informed quotations from the writings of Alyse Gregory, from her journals and notably from her autobiographical 'The Day is Gone', read most eloquently by our newest member Rev. Richard Betts. Richard also made reference to Alyse's friends and fellow writers, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland, and received a round of appreciative applause from us all.

The breeze off the sea strengthened and gradually blew away the clouds as we walked back along the old Gypsy Track chatting about all things Powys, whilst drinking in the atmosphere of the here and now reality of time & place and carefully avoiding any further confrontation with the herd of young bulls! The Sun finally escaped and bathed the afternoon landscape in golden light as the familiar tall chimneys of Chydyok came into view across Tumbledown, and we made our way back down the long, steep and winding flint-strewn track to the village, where further delight awaited us in Pam Gillingham's garden. Once again – with Eccles Cakes at the ready – Pam was the perfect hostess, providing a veritable feast with a constant supply of tea and a variety of cakes & other goodies to a very appreciative happy band of pilgrims!



Chris Thomas

### *Photographs of Llewelyn*

The two photographs of Llewelyn Powys reproduced in this *Newsletter*, showing (on our front cover) Llewelyn in a relaxed and informal pose, probably sitting in his room in Patchin Place, and a more formal studio portrait, were both found by committee member Dawn Collins in a collection of photographs on the website of the Museum of the City of New York. As far as it has been possible to ascertain these photographs have never been cited in the context of the Powys family and do not appear to have been reproduced elsewhere.

The photographs, which are not mentioned by Malcolm Elwin in his biography of Llewelyn, were taken by **Jessie Tarbox Beals** (1870-1942) who is well known as a pioneer of photo journalism and the first female free-lance news photographer in the USA. Jessie Beals specialised in photographing celebrities, public figures, artists, and writers as well as scenes of daily life in Greenwich Village, including places of entertainment, shops and restaurants and later the homes and gardens of wealthy figures in California.

In 1905 Jessie Beals opened a studio in New York and in 1917 she also opened a gallery in New York to promote her own work. In 1920 she moved to Greenwich Village where she opened another studio. At this time she probably became acquainted with Marian and her lace shop.

It is not certain when Jessie Beals produced the photos of Llewelyn but it must have been at the time Llewelyn and Alyse first resided in Patchin Place between 1922 and September 1924, or later between November 1927 and April 1928.

More information about Jessie Beals can be found on the website and blog of the Museum of the City of New York. In 1994 the museum organised an exhibition of her work photographing Greenwich Village called: "Beal's Bohemians". The obituary of Jessie Beals was published in the *New York Times*, 31 June 1942. There is a biography by Alexander Alland. Jessie Beals papers can be found at Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. The website of the New York Historical Society also has a detailed catalogue of her photographic collection which includes references to Llewelyn and Alyse.

*For comparison, there is a 1928 portrait of LIP by Doris Ullman in NL 64 (July 08, last page)*



***Patchin Place, New York***

***Isobel to A.R.Powys***

*(from Stephen Powys Marks, son of Isobel)*

Dec 29 [1927]

Well Daddy Dear

I cannot yet write to my Mother as I have not got her Corfu address. I am moving into PATCHIN PLACE next week. I should never have dared to suggest sitting on my uncle's knees in such a way, but Llewelyn suggested it when there happened to be an apartment to rent. Next door to Llewelyn, & opposite Jack, so that we can wave from our windows. No 3. So now you can write to the Powys family at 3, 4 & 5 Patchin Place. Isn't it incredible good fortune. It has

— a small bedroom  
— a sitting room  
— a kitchenette  
— a dark dark dressing room  
    & NO bath  
    electric light  
    telephone

but my dear it is Patchin Place  
the very holy of holies.

***Patchin Place, Top Floor Front, Number Four***

*from The Owl, the Duck, And — Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe! by John Cowper  
Powys (Chicago, 1930, pages 3-5 and 13)*

Howls of prisoners from behind the bars of the Old Market Prison, with its tall sham-Gothic Clock-Tower, used sometimes to enter the narrow opening of Patchin Place. Another disturbing sound, less terrifying than this, but sufficiently formidable, was the rumble of the Elevated Railway, under whose mitigated thunder all the old three-storey houses on both sides of the little blind-alley used to shiver and shake. Growing upwards, from their roots in dusty ground outside these houses, rose several tall ailanthus trees, whose branches, in cold, clear, April weather, were now just beginning to put forth their large greenish-yellow buds.

It was in three little rooms, constituting what was always described as "Top Floor Front, Number Four," that a group of Persons lived, two of whom were human, two Divine, one an apparition, several inanimate, and two again only half-created.

The largest of these rooms was called by its human inhabitants "The Living Room" and by its other inhabitants "The Known World." The one next in size, with a window upon the alley, was humanly known as "The Alcove" and otherwise known as "Paradise"; while a small dark chamber, full of empty boxes and a mass of unwanted litter, which the human



tenants innocently named “The Ante-room,” was designated by the Other People of the place who understood reality better, by the brief and tragic syllable “Hell” ....

There was no bathroom at that epoch in the Known World; so that when the old woman decided to give the old man a bath it became necessary to open the ante-room door and take therefrom a small tin bath and a very large bath-rug. On these occasions – for the windows of the Known World faced East – a thin stream of April sunshine entered and illuminated, for the space of a few seconds, the thick darkness of Hell!

*(Ray Crozier’s talk in Dorchester on 7th July gave the history of this celebrated NY cul-de-sac)*

John Cowper Powys

***Foreword to Lace and Lacemaking by Marian Powys***

*(first published by C T Branford, 1953)*

Lace is a thing *sui generis*, like nothing else made by man or woman. It is the response, the retort, the aesthetic contribution of our chattering, screaming, lovemaking, scrambling humanity, so obviously descended from apes, to what we discern and detect in Nature of the tenuous, the rare, the delicate, the filmy, the super-refined. We find this super-delicacy in all directions in the varied fields and layers and strata and levels of Nature’s frantically eager and perpetually experimenting vitality; in coral, banked up for centuries under the waves, in corydalis, that delicatest of all foliage-bearing plants, under the leaves of the forests, in the smaller specimens of wall-ferns, in the patterns so delicately crinkled, so exquisitely curved, so harmonious in their mathematical arrangement of thick and thin, of rough and smooth, of lichen. In the fins of fishes, in the frost marks on windows, in the criss-cross patterns accidentally made where the pine needles fall, in the strange scrawls so amazingly designed by that greatest of all lacemakers, the goddess Tyche, Our Lady of Pure Chance, upon rocks and stones above the earth and also in the secretest caverns; on the faces of very old people and very young babies you see Nature fumbling and groping towards the beauty of lace.

And there is yet another about lace that makes it a thing *sui generis*, a unique aesthetic creation. It is androgynous and belongs to both men and women. In the matter of grace and charm, as well as the distinction and dignity of men, nothing gives a warrior, a ruler or a courtier a more seductive appeal than lace upon armour. It possesses that peculiar enticement that leads the imagination along one of those historic Renaissance-vistas of bi-sexual sorcery as in the pictures of the great Venetians, where there is less royal lace than in Van Dyck but where ordinary humanity is lifted up to a social level of general dignity and refinement such as we can only hope will one day return again. Indeed it might be said that as the victory of ordinary humanity over all unrighteous distinctions of class has really come to stay, and the simplest men and women can enjoy the aesthetic refinement of the privileged of the past, to be a virtuoso in the art of lace takes its natural place along with other forms of that pleasure-giving “art of man” which in Goethe realizes the intention of Nature.

Robin Wood

**Powys and Lord Jim: The Correspondence between James Hanley and John Cowper Powys, 1929-1965, edited with an Introduction by Chris Gostick.**

*The Powys Press, 2018*

This correspondence began with a letter dated 3rd October 1929, when John Cowper Powys replied to a lost letter from Irish-Liverpudlian James Hanley, requesting a copy of *Wolf Solent*. As *Wolf Solent* had just been published in Britain on the 29th September, Hanley was presumably hoping to review *Wolf Solent* for a Liverpool newspaper. Powys's warm response to Hanley, and encouragement to write again, led to many more letters and a lasting friendship between the two men.

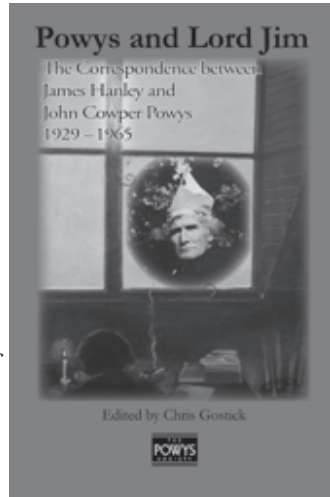
The year 1929 was significant for both men. Hanley's first novel *Drift* was accepted for publication later that year (published March 1930), while the success of *Wolf Solent* enabled Powys to give up his career as a lecturer and devote himself to writing (helped by the publication of *The Meaning of Culture* in September 1929 and *In Defence of Sensuality* in 1930). However, Hanley was

only paid 15 pounds for *Drift*, without any further royalties, so that it was not until 1931, with the publication of *Boy and Men in Darkness: Five Stories*, which had a preface by Powys, that he really began to establish himself as a writer.

Hanley's writings were greatly influenced by his experience of growing up in a seafaring Irish immigrant family in the industrial city of Liverpool, along with his World War I experiences as a merchant seaman and soldier. However, despite the obvious contrast with both Powys's middle-class background and the very different subject matter of Powys's novels, a warm friendship developed, encouraged by their shared compassion for those on the margins of society. This friendship became even closer when Powys, after his return to England, in 1935 moved with Hanley's assistance to Corwen, near to where Hanley and his wife lived.

The majority of these letters are from Powys; the first letter from Hanley was in 1939 to Phyllis Playter, and the first to Powys in 1947. All the same, because Powys often mentions things that Hanley had said in his last letter, there is from the beginning a strong sense of a continuing conversation: 'What a splendid letter you did write me. It cheered & interested me greatly & drove away pro-tem those devilish acids that torment my ulcers'. Given the small number of letters from James Hanley, Gostick helpfully includes the radio script of Hanley's essay on Powys, 'The Man in the Corner', as well as letters from James and his wife to Phyllis Playter.

The unique value of this collection is the detailed portrait it gives of Powys's enthusiastic support for a young writer, and this included significant financial help when Hanley's son



was born. Powys's letters often contain lengthy reviews of Hanley's works, and as well as praise he also offers invaluable comments. Reading, for example, the manuscript of *A Passion Before Death*, Powys suggested that a character's: 'discourse could be very considerably condensed'. Typical of his praise for published works are these comments in 1933 on *Ebb and Flood*: 'Never have I read such perfect description of boys –their ways & feelings'. Likewise in 1934 Powys was full of praise for *The Furies*: 'I've read every word ... with growing absorption & almost unflagging & unabated interest. It's great! Oh I do congratulate you from my heart'. However, later in the same long letter he criticizes a scene that involves the homosexual Titmouse: 'I didn't feel perfectly happy about the colloquy *on the back of the lion*. You were skating on thin ice, and, though you *did* get over, the ice, for me at least, cracked audibly now & then!' Powys is also critical of Hanley's use in *The Furies* of the impersonal 'one ... instead of 'you' or 'we' ', because 'it always struck me as precious & even affected', though he softens this by noting that Phyllis sees it as 'a prejudice of my own'.

Amongst Hanley's letters several condemning politicians are especially important for what they reveal about both his temperament and personal beliefs. In October 1939, writing to Phyllis, he is full of contempt for the upper class, whom he blames for the recently begun war. In 1947 Hanley is equally hard on Britain's socialist government: 'its gracelessness, its jeers, its love and vicious joy in bringing everybody down to one level, instead of everyone going UP to one level, which they could do by a single, bold imaginative stroke'. Hanley, like Powys, had anarchist sympathies, though he expresses himself violently: 'I would like to see all States blown up, all Irishmen do, they are a confounded nuisance'.

Because there are such a small number of letters from Hanley (and then only one before 1947), there are few comments by him on Powys's writings, though Hanley praises the 'splendid' *Lucifer*, and he is particularly keen on 'the extraordinary exhortations' of *In Defence of Sensuality*, which Hanley tried to get reprinted with a preface by him. But a letter from Powys, in 1934, does record that Hanley's 'word about 'Glastonbury' thrilled its author'. Also in 1951 Powys thanks Hanley for his 'eloquent' review of *Porius* in *The Recorder*. However, Hanley's essay 'The Man in the Corner' is full of admiration for Powys's writings, and he describes *Glastonbury*, *Autobiography*, and *Wolf Solent* ('the modern Hamlet') as 'extraordinary creations', as well as praising Powys's 'penetrating and often subtle assessment of other writers'.

This is a well-produced book that adds to our understanding of both writers, and the editor Chris Gostick, The Powys Press, and all those involved in preparing the work for publication are to be congratulated. Useful introductory material and ample notes are provided, along with interesting illustrations. These letters were gathered for publication long ago, so David Goodway deserves many thanks for championing their publication.

*Robin Wood is Associate Professor (retired) of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.*

*Chris Gostick's Lord Jim, Lady Tim and the Powys Circle (2000) is in the Cecil Woolf Powys Heritage series.*

*Mr Bailey and the Tortured Stick*

JCP and Phyllis met Mr and Mrs Bailey shortly after they arrived in Corwen, as the Baileys were the owners of the Glandwr Hotel. They often booked friends and relatives into the hotel *though a bit expensive*. They became *very kind neighbours* and visited each other often, although Powys sometimes found Mr Bailey's conversation a bit alarming. 15 May 1938: *had a long talk with Old Bailey who like a true Ex-Gamekeeper loves to discourse on eels crossing fields, on feeding pike with kittens, on hedge-hogs milking cows and on shooting trout with a gun!*

By 1940 JCP was writing in his diary, *I love Mr Bailey & I love Mrs Bailey ... one English, one Welsh... but my personal peculiarities jump rather with the Mrs than the Mr!* In 1946, when JCP was very ill with ulcers, it was Mrs Bailey who found him the olive oil he so desperately needed and she was also a great support and companion to Phyllis. Mr Bailey was the same age as John Cowper, but rather handier, especially after the Baileys moved next door to them in no 6.

3 May, 1944: *We & all Cae Coed have had no water No! have had NO WATER no water for 15 hours! Mr. BAILEY to the RESCUE though he is 73 years old! He mends our Bathroom window blown off its Hinges & a hinge broken. He goes also to ask about water.*

Mr Bailey gave Powys two sticks. The first one was hazel: *My 4th Pythagorean stick has just been given me by Mr. Bailey! He made it! I simply adore it it is Hazel.* The second one was of ash *of a beautiful and a varied colour* and was soon the one that accompanied him most often.

15 May, 1941 *On Tuesday 13th the stick I took was the "Tortured Ash" given me by Mr. Bailey. It is monstrous to twist wire round a living sapling like this! But since it has been done it would be an added cruelty & neglect to keep the Tortured Ash in a dark cupboard.* 23 March: 1948: *I lifted up my Stick my 12th stick of Melian Ash given me by Mr Bailey yes O yes of Melian Ash which is my Twelfth Stick and forced myself to have a forced ecstasy.*

Two questions arise in a curious mind from these entries: why did he call the stick "tortured" and why did he often refer to it as his Melian Ash? During the war, Powys became obsessed with the torture that was occurring in countless spheres and there are many entries in the diary referring to this – 27 references to torture in the 1941 Diary alone. (1 October: *Prayed for vivisected dogs, cats & monkeys & for men & women being tortured to death.*) It is possible that the twisted stick became in his mind a symbol of torture and thus became the "tortured stick."

The tortured was at the same time an instrument of torture – a spear. Powys knew his Greek mythology. The Meliae were the Oread-nymphs of the mountain ash-tree, born of Gaia, the Earth when she was impregnated by the blood of the castrated Ouranos, the Sky. The nymphs nursed their sons on the honey-sap (Greek *meli*) of the ash, and armed them with spears crafted from the wood of their trees. As always with Powys,

everything ultimately becomes a symbol of his inner life. Thanks to Mr Bailey, even sticks.

[An earlier article by Morine Krissdottir about JCP's walking sticks was published in Powys Society Newsletter No.43, July 2001. CT]

Ruth Hall

### *Travels of a Tortured Stick*

I have beside me a walking stick which belonged to John Cowper Powys. It is a twisted, tortured thing with a tale to tell.

My late husband Ron Hall, a passionate Powys devotee, was given it by John many years ago and it was one of his most treasured possessions.

In 'The Old Man With the Praise', Ron described how JCP gave him the stick. 'Down again in the hall I saw a number of extraordinary sticks. John picked one up and stood before me with it held out. 'I call this the Tortured Stick,' he said, 'see how it's twisted. It was a cruel thing to do. You look after it, and see! It's got an eye!' Sure enough, there in the handle was its eye. Wire had been wound round it when it was a thin thing and it had grown into a strong spiral. I swore to look after it.'

In 1975, Ron was in dire financial straits and wanted to help one of his sons. He decided he would have to sell the stick and wrote to Phyllis Playter for a letter of provenance. This she provided. In the same letter, he asked her if she knew of anyone who might be interested in buying it.

She did. There was a young man, she wrote, who was also a devotee and was publishing John's books in London. The young man of course was Jeff Kwintner. Ron wrote to him. The reply came quickly, enclosed in a parcel of books and accompanied by a cheque. On no account should he sell the stick. A correspondence developed between Ron and Jeff and that was how Ron came to work for him. The stick remained with us.

In that year, 1975, Ron decided to make a pilgrimage round all the places connected with JCP and we set off, beginning in Shirley, Derbyshire, at the vicarage where John was born and ending on Chesil Beach where his ashes were scattered. Wherever we went, we took photographs of the stick in whatever the setting.

At our final stop on Chesil Beach, we were accompanied by the writer Philip Callow, Ron's close friend. We stuck the stick in the pebbles and Philip photographed us with it.

When Ron died in 1985, I gave the stick to a young man who had become a friend of ours, another devotee of the Powyses. Ron was introduced to Stephen Batty (or Reverend Canon Stephen Batty as he later was) by a mutual friend who knew of their common Powys interest. I stayed in touch with Steve over the years and he treasured

the stick as Ron had done. Some members of the Powys Society may remember Steve giving a talk on TFP and Nietzsche at the 2011 conference.

In 2015, Steve and his wife, the artist Frances Hatch, moved into the rectory at Burton Bradstock, close to the Chesil. Steve and I decided to take the stick back to the same spot on the beach where Ron and I had taken it all those years ago. We wanted to pay homage to JCP again. It was a glorious September day and, under a blue sky, with clouded yellow butterflies dancing over the late summer flowers, we drove the stick once more into the pebbles.

Amazingly, we found that we could pinpoint the exact place of the original 1975 photograph by lining it up with the skyline where two pine trees survived from the wood that was there forty years ago. Steve dashed off and enlisted the help of a young couple who were on holiday. They took our photograph with as close a replication of the original one as they could manage, though it wasn't a perfect alignment.

Tragically, the following year, Steve was diagnosed with motor-neurone disease and died in May this year. Before he had even developed the first symptoms of his illness, he told me that he and Frances would be making wills soon and he wondered what I would like him to do about the stick. Should he leave it to my son, Joe? The presumption was that he would be old by then and I would be long gone.

One day recently I went down to the rectory at Burton Bradstock and Frances gave me back the stick. I have it now and will look after it for Joe who is at present living abroad.

### ***Notes by Chris Thomas***

Ron Hall (1929-1985), was a writer and novelist, author of *The Open Cage*, 1970. He was a friend of JCP and is mentioned several times in JCP's letters to Henry Miller: '*our spirited little Ron Hall*'. He produced the introduction to the Village Press edition of JCP's letters to Henry Miller (1975). A selection of JCP's letters to Ron Hall as well as his previously unpublished introduction to the letters appeared in *Powys Society Newsletter* No.89, November 2016. JCP's original letters to Ron Hall can be found at the Harry Ransom Centre in Texas; a collection of letters from Phyllis Playter to Ron Hall as well as some autograph pieces by Ron can be found at Yale University library. A memoir of Ron Hall by Jim Morgan and an elegy for Ron by Phil Callow appeared in the *Powys Review*, No.17, 1985.

'*The Old Man With The Praise*', written in 1952, is an account of a day Ron Hall spent with JCP and Phyllis. The memoir was first published in *Elegreba*, 1959, and reprinted in *Powys Review* 9, 1981/1982.

Rev. Canon Stephen Batty (1959-2018) died on Sunday 27 May 2018. His funeral was held at Sherborne Abbey on Friday 8 June 2018. He was formerly vicar of St Aldhem's, Branksome, and Rector of the Bride Valley benefice in Burton Bradstock. He had a keen interest in the work of TFP and presented a talk at the Powys Society conference in 2011 in Llangollen on '*Cold, silence, height: T F Powys and Friedrich Nietzsche*'. Stephen's talk was published in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXII, 2012.





*Tortured Stick at Maiden Castle, 1975*



*President Glen with Powys bag*