

Editorial

All our good wishes have been with Glen our President, in Addenbrooke's hospital, Cambridge, after suffering a stroke, and it is with great sorrow that we have now heard he has died. Many tributes to Glen and his poetry, and many contributions from him have appeared in Newsletters over the years. He will be celebrated on the Powys website and in our next (Spring) Newsletter.

This year has been shadowed by several other lamented losses to the Society – of Cecil Woolf, Tordis Marks, and, sadly unexpectedly, of Jacqueline Peltier, a moving spirit of energy and Powys appreciation since her introduction to Weymouth as a young schoolgirl, leading through years of Powys contributions to her recently published new French translation of *Weymouth Sands* as *Perdita Wane*. It was a great pleasure to meet her son (another 'Jeff') and grandson Arthur, younger brother of Rémi whom we had seen at our last Llangollen conference with his grandmother Jacqueline (see photo in *NL* 92, p.20). JP's excellent *lettre powysienne*, an always stimulating companion to our *Journal* and *Newsletter*, opened windows to Powys interests in Greater Europe. Jacqueline's role as the Society's ambassador will be taken on by Marcella Henderson-Peal, a later but equally active and sympathetic Society member in France and beyond. And we think of Max Peltier, a supportive power behind the throne, to whose technical help we have so often been grateful. Tributes to Jacqueline are on pages 20-27.

An obituary by David Goodway of our great benefactor, Cecil Woolf, is on p.27. An account of his memorial, and of the memorial farewell to Tordis Marks, are in News & Notes.

As usual in November, much of this issue covers the Conference in August. Other features are on JCP in Wales: four sonnets on local themes from a Welsh newspaper, and a house that may have inspired *Owen Glendower*. Also, anticipating our meeting on Dostoevsky in December, JCP's views of Dostoevsky from different angles, with the 'masks' John Cowper found so similar.

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August in Llangollen again, the friendly Hand hotel with its neat pretty garden (well-handrailed for OAPs) sloping down to the river wall ... that magical river Dee (Dyfrdwy), its patterns of foam white on brown rushing and swirling along, too fast to follow; the quieter song of the river under the louder rush from the weir above, the strong beautiful trees making dark caves over the water ... *Newsletters* 49 and 50 – 2003 – *sixteen years ago!* – were dedicated to our first conference at Llangollen, and to JCP at Corwen, the books produced there, and father and son staying together at Valle Crucis. It is always a pleasure to return (see page 8).

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Corrections to NL97

In *Newsletter* 97, July 2019, in Treasurer's Report, page 9, there are two misprints:

For accounts year ending 31 December 2017 the figure for income received from books should be: **£525.93**

For accounts year ending 31 December 2017 the total expenditure should be: **£16,403.45**

* * *

A Meeting

London, Sunday 1st December

A discussion of JCP's book *Dostoevsky* (John Lane, 1946, Village Press 1974), led by Kate Kavanagh, will be at **Pushkin House**, 5A Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2TA, at **2pm** on **Sunday 1st December**. (See NL 97, pp 3-4 for more information.) The event is free. All are welcome. Refreshments will be provided. **Please notify Secretary** if you wish to attend this event.

* * *

The Powys Society Annual General Meeting

The Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen

August 18th, 2019

Present: Timothy Hyman (*Chairman*), David Goodway (*Vice-Chairman*), Chris Thomas (*Secretary*), Robin Hickey (*Treasurer*); Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*), Dawn Collins (*Social media manager*), Kevin Taylor (*eBooks and Powys Journal production editor*), Paul Cheshire (*Web editor and JSTOR manager*); Charles Lock (*editor Powys Journal and ex-officio committee member*) – and some 25 members of the Powys Society

Apologies were received from Michael Kowalewski (*Collection liaison officer*), Anna Rosic (*co-opted member*) and John Hodgson

The Chairman read a passage from one of JCP's letters to his sister Katie Powys. The Chairman referred members to his annual report for the period 2018/2019 as published in *Newsletter* No. 97, July 2019 and said he considered it important that we look ahead to the future. The Chairman said he had given an optimistic statement of the Society's proceedings and activities. The Chairman invited more members to come forward and volunteer their fund of skills and knowledge to help provide new perspectives on the lives and works of the Powyses. The Chairman thanked everyone who had contributed to making 2018/2019 a successful and productive year. He said he was very pleased to see such a wide range of books available at this year's book sale and thanked all those members who had made generous bequests and donations to the sale from their private collections.

Minutes of 2018 AGM

The minutes of the 2018 AGM, as published in *Newsletter* No. 95, November 2018, were approved.

Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2019-2020

Nominations to the Powys Society committee as published in *Newsletter* No. 97, July 2019, were approved. **Secretary** noted that in view of the loss of Jacqueline Peltier the committee should appoint someone to succeed Jacqueline and fill the vacant role of official representative of the Society in Europe. Secretary invited **Marcella Henderson-Peal** to take on this role. Marcella accepted the invitation. Members approved the nomination. Secretary said he would write formally to Marcella making this appointment.

Treasurer's Report and presentation of annual accounts for the year ending 31 December 2018

The Treasurer referred members to the full statement of total income and expenditure as published in *Newsletter* 97, July 2019. Treasurer said that the auditors of last year's accounts, Hills and Burgess, had examined documents carefully and verified all figures within three days of submission. Treasurer reported that the total balance of accounts at the beginning of the year was £12,911.40 and that for the year ending 31 December 2018 there was an excess of expenditure over income of £1,791.23. Total income was £15,899.77 and total expenditure was £17,691.00. Treasurer said that the largest expenditure was on the eBook project (£3,505.00) but that private contributions had helped to make a significant difference to final balance. Treasurer noted that sales of publications increased. At the book sale at last year's conference a total of £570.00 was raised. Treasurer acknowledged work of Kevin Taylor and Paul Cheshire who have helped to establish two new accounts which reflect growing sales of e-books and increasing use of PayPal facility.

Collection Liaison Officer's Report

Michael Kowalewski sent apologies for absence. Secretary summarised the message by e-mail he had received from **Jon Murden**, Director of the Dorset County Museum, detailing progress of renovation of the museum, and especially redevelopment of the Writer's Gallery and display of items on loan from the Powys Collection held at Exeter University. Secretary said that the museum, which is planned to reopen in August 2020, will contain not only a new library, but also two other meeting rooms, with seating for between 12 and 40 delegates, wi-fi, tea and coffee making facilities, and a range of presentation aids. In the meanwhile all the Powys collection items, previously on display, have been removed and put into storage by accredited fine-art handlers, packed into custom art crates or conservation grade boxes, and are currently stored off-site in a secure, environmentally controlled warehouse. Secretary said that Jon Murden had confirmed that Dorset's literary heritage will continue to play an important part in the future interpretation of the county's story in the museum and that this will be visible across the new 'Hardy's Dorset', 'People's Dorset' and 'Artists' Dorset' galleries. The museum plans to show more of the Powys art and sculpture collection than ever before.

Secretary said that **Michael Kowalewski** commented that the message from the Director of the Dorset County Museum seemed very positive but still leaves some unresolved issues, especially about the long term display of physical memorabilia and Gertrude's paintings. Michael said that when the museum is ready to set up the Writers' Gallery he plans to do what he can to help on behalf of the Society.

Donations to the Powys Society Collection at Exeter University

Dawn Collins said that she had received donations from **Amanda Powys** (letters diaries and artefacts) and **Stephen Powys Marks** (books) and is currently drawing up a detailed and annotated inventory of the contents.

Belinda Humphrey suggested that the Society should acknowledge the value of the Powys collection at the National Library of Wales. **David Goodway** responded and said that the Society very much recognises the value of the collection of Powys manuscripts and books at the library. David noted that NLW is mostly only interested in acquiring new additions directly related to JCP and Wales. Belinda asked whether it would be possible to secure access to old BBC radio broadcasts relating to JCP. **Secretary** asked Belinda to take this forward and find out what still exists and whether copies of broadcasts can be acquired. **Colin Laker** referred members to the Screen and Sound Archive at NLW which includes a comprehensive collection of films, TV programmes, videos, and sound recordings relating to Wales and Welsh culture. Some members recalled a film made for Welsh TV by Herbert Williams in 1994 called *The Great Powys* which was shown at the 1995 conference [*its star Freddie Jones has*

recently died -- see *News & Notes*]. A proposal was approved to screen the film again at a future conference. Secretary said that a copy of the film had been deposited in the Exeter collection. **Kevin Taylor** volunteered to investigate copyright and obtain permission to show the film at a future conference. **Marcella Henderson-Peal** said that she had recorded a talk given by **David Jones** about his memories of living next door to JCP in Corwen when he was a boy in the 1930s. Marcella said she would liaise with Paul Cheshire and investigate possibility of uploading this recording to the website.

Secretary's Report

Stephen Powys Marks

Sympathies were expressed for Stephen whose ill health had prevented him from attending this year's conference. In an e-mail message to committee members Stephen said how much he regretted missing coming to the conference.

Membership

Secretary said that since the 2018 conference 19 new members had joined the Society. 9 new members joined between January and August 2019. 1 member, whose membership had previously been cancelled, was reinstated, 1 member was removed who had not renewed their subscription, 1 member actively resigned, 1 member is now confined to a care home, and 3 members were recently deceased (condolences were extended to members of the families of Jacqueline Peltier, Cecil Woolf and Richard Comben). The current membership total is now **258** but it is expected that more members may be removed later this year if they don't respond to reminder letters. Secretary said that the majority of the membership is located in UK but there is also significant membership in France and USA/Canada. Now we have our own PayPal account this seems to offer a good option for members – easy to use and pay for things including membership. Secretary said that there now exist more ways in which we can potentially encourage new membership through offering more flexible **student discounts**, exploiting more on-line resources such as social media, developing the **web site**, exchanging information with the **Association of Literary Societies** (also a valuable source of help and advice) and promoting **e-books**. Members of the committee would be very interested to learn of any other ideas or new initiatives that might help increase membership.

50th anniversary event

Secretary said that the highlight of the year had been the special event held in Cambridge in March hosted by Corpus Christi College, which was well attended and very much enjoyed by all who participated. The event was reported in *Newsletter* No.97, July 2019. The archivist at Corpus Christi College, Lucy Hughes, said to Secretary that she is keen to build a larger archive of material relating to the Powyses.

Donations and Bequests

Secretary said that bequests of books from private collections had been gratefully received from the estates of Michael Everest and Richard Comben and that Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe had also generously donated his large collection of Powys books to the Society for resale at the conference.

Promoting the Society

Members discussed potential to raise awareness of the existence of the Society by planting flyers in books and bookshops.

Secretary said that a donation of books and a folder containing items recording JCP's residence in Corwen 1935-1955 had been kindly accepted by the **Corwen Heritage and Cultural Society** and will be put on open display in the Corwen museum. A wider range of books, leaflets and a supply of Society information flyers was also presented to Corwen library and information centre, for use by visitors.

Exhibition: Poetry and Poets associated with Corpus Christi College

A small display of items relating to writers and poets associated with Corpus Christi College in Cambridge is planned to open in the Parker Library in September and will include examples of JCP's early poetry.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

Secretary said he especially wished to express thanks to Kevin Taylor, Dawn Collins and Paul Cheshire for all the work they have done on development of e-books, social media and web site, and JSTOR. Thanks are also due to Kevin for assistance with production of the *Powys Journal*.

London meeting

Secretary reminded members that a meeting will be held on Sunday 1 December, at 2pm, at Pushkin House in central London, to discuss JCP's book *Dostoevsky*. The discussion will be led by Kate Kavanagh. The event is free and everyone is welcome to attend.

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Charles Lock thanked **Kevin Taylor** and **Louise de Bruin** for assistance with close scrutiny of texts and making corrections. The Chairman said the issue was a tribute to the dedication of everyone involved.

Powys Society and social media

Dawn Collins said that the Society is gradually building a good following on Facebook but that she would like to see more members as well as non members post their own comments on the Society's Facebook page. The Reading Powyses on-line group now has 28 members.

Dawn explained she is developing a photographic project and compiling an informal souvenir album containing portraits of members. This is intended to be a

celebration of membership which will in due course be made available on request as a print-on-demand book. Members were invited to inspect the photos that Dawn had put on display during the conference. **Charles Lock** said he considered this is a very good initiative.

Dawn said that the Society's Instagram account is under development.

Publication of e-books

Kevin Taylor said that eight e-books were published in March (including major novels of JCP as well as books by Richard Graves and Belinda Humfrey). Kevin said that to date 204 copies of the e-books had been sold world-wide which means that if the current upward trend of sales of e-books continues then the JCP estate should receive royalties earlier than anticipated and the Society will offset costs far more quickly. There is therefore potential here for the Society to earn increased income from this project. 55 copies of *A Glastonbury Romance* have been sold (the strongest seller to date, closely followed by *Porius*).

Development of Powys Society website and access to the Powys Journal on JSTOR

Paul Cheshire introduced himself as our new website editor and explained briefly what he had done to expand and improve the website since March (as described in *Newsletter* 97, July 2019). Paul said that he had inherited web content from Frank Kibblewhite but had recoded the material to make the site more responsive and secure and had added new features such as site search. The website also now allows anyone to purchase items or pay for membership and events using a dedicated Powys Society PayPal account. In due course Paul says he plans to incorporate more archival material. He will also continue to remove out-of-date material. Paul then explained what JSTOR is and that we plan to offer members access to back issues of the *Powys Journal* through JSTOR online starting next March, after we have received annual income of \$2000. We have also agreed to pay JSTOR \$300 for all our members to have access to PJ.

Richard Graves said that many early websites have been archived by British Library and it might be worth cross-referencing this material on the current live site.

Kate Kavanagh said that *Newsletter* indexes should be posted on the website. Paul said that he thought there were opportunities to post more audio visual material on the web site. Paul said he felt very positive about developing web site and using new media

Date and venue of 2020 conference

To be held on 14-16 August 2020 at the Wessex Hotel in Street.

Some members raised possibility of selecting another venue on a date later in the year but Louise said this would be difficult to achieve at comparable cost level.

AOB

Belinda Humfrey suggested actively making a proposal to a film maker to undertake filming a novel by JCP.

Janice Gregory said she would be willing to approach readers in USA and encourage them to consider joining the Society.

Chris Thomas,
Hon. Secretary

Kate Kavanagh

The Conference

Most of us owe our knowledge of **Alyse Gregory** to Jacqueline's booklet *A Woman At Her Window* in the Cecil Woolf *Powys Heritage* series. The first talk, on Friday evening, 'Out of the Shadows', by Alyse's great-niece **Janice Gregory**, extended and filled in gaps for the life of that remarkable and admirable woman, especially for her forty years of 'life before Llewelyn': her early glamorous time in Europe followed by active service as a suffragette, then involvement with the literary world of New York, editorship of *The Dial* and involvement with its owner/managers James Sibley Watson and the eccentric Scofield Thayer. Alyse's later life was inevitably sad, given her devotion to the man she married, but she continued to produce literary journalism as well as fiction and was sustained by her talent for friendship, up to her bravely managed solitary exit.

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On Saturday (in place of the postponed advertised talk on Nietzsche by Elmar Schenkel) we celebrated **Jacqueline Peltier** and her work. **Marcella Henderson-Peal** (and others), recalled JP as a champion e-mailer, requiring instant response ... JP has described her early time in Weymouth, some of it in a convent with kind nuns, recalling the Esplanade and the wishing well; she then studied English literature, married Max in 1961 and had their three children; they moved to Paris in the 1970s. She had spotted *Weymouth Sands* on the British Council stand at a book fair in Nice; this led to other JCP books, translations, guidance from her supervisor Michel Gresset, and her dissertation in 1986 on American landscapes in JCP (printed in no.18 of *The Powys Review* – that excellent magazine edited by another energetic enthusiast, Belinda Humphrey). Then came the bookshop 'Shakespeare & Co' in Paris, discovery of the Powys Society; contact with the bookseller Margaret Eaton; her first conference in 1983; and the *lettre*, from 2001-2017. She was an excellent translator, her English near-faultless. Other enthusiasms were for George Borrow, Apollinaire, and of course Proust. Her last outing was on 15th June, to a happy Powys-themed dinner group at the Père Louis restaurant in Paris. (see photo page 21)

Charles Lock and **Angelika Reichmann** then read their tributes to Jacqueline (printed on pages 23 and 29), celebrating her energy, her kindness and encouragement, enthusiasm, learning, and skill as a translator. The Peltiers' Lannion website was widely inclusive, as were the 32 numbers of the *lettre powysienne*. Weymouth remained at the centre of her imagination: she designed an interactive guide to Weymouth and its history. The edition of Miller-JCP letters (2014) was edited and entirely set up by the Peltiers. She translated JCP's *Suspended Judgements*, the collection of essays largely devoted to French writers. Jacqueline's laughter is memorable, as many at the conference would agree. For Angelika, Jacqueline was a profound influence, who will forever exemplify the spirit that guides the Society as a community: that of tolerance, acceptance, open-mindedness and selflessness.

Other members added their tributes: **Louise de Bruin** recalled that Jacqueline often saved the Society at times of disagreement... and it was Max who guided her when the *Journal* switched to computer. **Belinda Humphrey** said that she owed much to JP's joyous personality and generosity – she tirelessly promoted *The Powys Review* online, resulting in subscriptions from all over the world. She was a wonderful companion. **Patrick Quigley** met JP in Dublin and they came back together through North Wales, JP driving like a demon. A wonderful woman. **Goulven le Brech** owed much to JP's guidance, both through emails and through the Lannion website and in person, to Paris bookstores and other Powys sites. **Kevin Taylor** worked with her on several publications, always a good experience. She kept her eye on the ball and looked intensely at detail (perhaps a second language helps awareness). She and Max discussed constantly and chose titles. She could reconstruct Weymouth as Joyce did for Dublin. **Anna Rosic** recalled travelling by train with JP to a Borrow conference, JP making friends all the way. **Chris Thomas** noted how she was always willing to listen – and with **Louise** recalled her insistence on quick responses. All welcomed Jacqueline and Max's son Jeff and grandson Arthur who were with us at the conference.

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From Exeter university, **Chris Campbell's** lecture titles – *Excavating and Extracting: the archaeology and aesthetics of historical memory in the novels of John Cowper Powys and poetry of Kamau Brathwaite* – alternatively, *Limestone and the literary imagination: Dorset, Barbados, a world-literary comparison* – promised something unusual. His excursion into *global literature and environmental history* proved interesting: *commodity frontiers* and the *world ecology perspective*, *co-productions of human and nature* turned less abstract with the treatment of land by invasive capitalism, such as the sugar industry in the Caribbean; chains of influence such as sugar profits financing Welsh slate, and *structures of feeling* especially in the *limestone frontier* common to both Portland and Barbados, and often mentioned in *Weymouth Sands*.

Both CC and Janice Gregory, as well as Goulven le Brech, provided helpful sheets of quotations and photographs to supplement their talks. Extracts from Brathwaite's 'Mother Poem' (1977) echoed JCP in *Weymouth* and *Maiden Castle*, and again linked with Llewelyn Powys visiting the Caribbean in 1931 (when Brathwaite was just born. LIP especially liked Barbados: finding it 'in many ways resembled Portland ... a healthy island and we may go to live there one day'...)

Brathwaite's involvement has been with erupting decolonisation forces and the fragmentation of slave culture, with its need for Africa as a communal anchor in the crumbling British Empire; for the forging of post-colonial identity and the role of English as a shared language. And labour disputes also surfaced with JCP, and with 'oolite man Skald'; and Llewelyn noted anxieties in the Caribbean ruling class: both were Englishmen conscious of the history of dispossession. And always, there is awareness of the porousness of limestone, its ubiquitous presence in public buildings, in the bones of Portland and in the caves, the dust and coral of Barbados.

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There were the usual **Saturday excursions** to hilltop and monastery ruins. The new train station at Corwen was not yet open: having been a busy station until the 1960s, then 'axed', it is now being restored. Corwen museum documents this. A group was entertained in the museum and a splendid folder on JCP's life in Corwen (1935-55) was presented by Chris Thomas. Another group climbed the hill behind Cae Coed where JCP regularly walked, tracing his poem 'The Ridge'.

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In the evening, **Richard Graves** performed on the theme of JCP's vision of the supernatural, as embodied by Merlin/ Myrddin Wyllt. A series of glimpses, many from *Autobiography*, ranged from JCP as a small child announcing biblically that he was Lord of Hosts, through his father's tales of royal ancestry, medieval romance, the 'Volentia Army', magical medieval feelings at Cambridge, Welsh legends, the storm in Verona amphitheatre; and in America, friendship with 'fellow-magician' Dreiser, and his own vision of the Multiverse as a duality of love and malice where all beings and all matter have souls. On to the Grail and Arthurian romances, parallel worlds with other beings, and Merlin's role in these, with changing personality. Pagan, Christian and demonic aspects appear in Merlin and appeal to JCP's deeply religious character, open to both Athene and Jehovah. RPG much admires the film 'Excalibur'. He referred to Robert Nye's *Merlin* (the wizard as anti-Christ); out-of-world experiences described by Doris Lessing in *The Golden Notebook*; also to Arthur Koestler on the connexions and illusions between science and religion; Bertrand Russell on Edison and 'mind stuff'; and William James's universe as *thought*, not a machine, with Black Holes linking parallel realities.

JCP moved easily in this world of ideas, where it was respectable to believe in everything going on for ever. He professed to hate the ideas of Robert Graves, but his imagination was not un-close to Graves's *White Goddess*. His 'rituals' of stone-kissing, etc. allowed for magical influences, including his own. *Ducdame*, *Glastonbury*, *Weymouth*, and *Morwyn* (where sleeping Merlin briefly wakes) lead on to *Porius* and its forest world of wonders, with Myrddin as 'herdsman from the South'. When *Porius* carries him he is aware of carrying the whole world, and the magician ends as an incarnation of Saturn, renouncing power to abide deep underground. In 1950 JCP wrote a new preface to *Wolf Solent*, insisting on death as an end. A publisher's editor, Norman Denny, attempting to de-mythologise *Porius* was answered by 'I Am John!' (the letters they exchanged were printed in *Powys's Notes of the PSNA*).

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Sunday began with **Goulven le Brech** on the phenomenon of the **Little Blue Books** and their creator Emanuel Haldeman-Julius (he added the name Haldeman of his wife and partner in the enterprise). The books appeared from 1919 to 1978 but peaked in the 1920s. It was an age of 'self-help' and 'self-education' guides, in which JCP strongly (and LIP more obliquely) took part, but H-J designed his booklets to be read by anyone, educated or not, for the price of a sandwich. There were hundreds of millions of the little books, over 2000 titles extracted from writers old and new, from Plato to Powyses, birth-control to Nietzsche, many with 'daring' titles, in colossal stocks, expertly advertised, sold by mail order and in shops and markets, all little (5x3 inches) though not all originally blue. Their mission was education, socialist encouragement, anti-capitalism, anti-religion, destroying social lies. H-J operated only in the US, free from problems with copyright. Titles were often changed to sound saucier.

H-J (1889-1951) came from a Russian Jewish immigrant family. Encouraged by his school librarian, he was fascinated by 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' and the *Rubaiyat* (both early LBBs). He wrote for socialist papers, and in New York was part of the Greenwich Village scene that included Will Durant and the Powyses, whom he was to invite to contribute to the LBBs. JCP's (10) included several reprinted by our Jeff Kwintner, like *100 Best Books* and *The Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant*, as well as essays on writers. Llewelyn's two had poetic titles (*Honey and Gall*, and *Cup-Bearers of Wine and Hellebore* – prudently subtitled by H-J as *Studies in Mystic Materialism* and *A Book of Intellectual Rowdies*).

H-J, 'the Voltaire of Kansas', had his base in Girard, Kansas, not far from the Playter Kansas home, and Phyllis worked there at the time when she and JCP met. Her translation of Fontenelles's *Dialogues of the Dead* appeared as a LBB in 1925.

A centenary LBB symposium was held in Girard recently. The LBB collection is in Pittsburgh university archive.

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The **AGM** followed (see page 2).

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The conference concluded on Sunday morning with **David Goodway** on the beginnings of the Powys Society: from the first Hampstead meeting in December 1967, resulting from advertisements placed by Barbara Spencer (of Salford), through talks by Benson Roberts and Mrs Redwood Anderson (friends and neighbours of JCP in Wales) to May 1968, with a paper on *Wolf Solent* by Glen Cavaliero (a former Anglican clergyman then retraining at Cambridge with a PhD in English). This was the first meeting attended by DG, who had been alerted by several older Powys enthusiasts. March 1969 saw the founding of the Society proper, and its regular meetings in the Friends' Meeting House in Hampstead, which still continue. Other familiar names appear: Belinda Humfrey, Derrick Stephens, Rod Harper, Gilbert Turner, Kenneth Hopkins. Angus Wilson became President. In 1970 the 'mysterious and difficult' – and admirable – Barbara Spencer resigned, feeling a formal Powys Society was premature. Tim Hyman joined the committee in 1971.

September 1972 saw the immensely successful conference at Cambridge, with its 'dream line-up' of speakers including George Steiner and all the Wilsons: Angus, G.W.Knight, and Colin (overcome by the occasion). Yearly conferences (almost) have followed, most in the South-West – to DG's regret – the only more northern one in 1976 at Buxton in Derbyshire, with Angus Wilson. For DG it is the range of the Society that gives its special value, with enthusiasts outnumbering academics, and in the early days several members of the Powys family itself, notably Isobel Marks (daughter of Bertie, mother of Stephen, she whose cry of *In the family we say 'PO -is'* crushed any unfortunate pronouncing of *Pow-is* to rhyme with *cow*). Mary (daughter of Lucy Powys) and Gerard Casey, Rosemary Manning (friend of Alyse), elusive Giles Wordsworth, Sven-Erik Täckmark (leader of Swedish Powysians), Francis Feather (of the essential TFP collection), Margaret Eaton and Joan Stevens (booksellers), poet Jeremy Hooker ... 'Marvellous, happy memories' to thank the Society for.



David Goodway and Janice Gregory



Richard Graves



Jeff & Arthur Peltier in the audience



*Charles introducing Goulven
with David Goodway*



A merry group



Tine's up!

CONFERENCE DVDs

Talks from the **2019 Conference** at Llangollen are available on 2 DVDs, containing:

Richard Graves: 'John Cowper Powys and Merlin'

Chris Campbell: 'Excavating and Extracting: the archaeology and aesthetics of historical memory in the novels of John Cowper Powys and poetry of Kamau Brathwaite'
(introduced by Chris Thomas)

Janice Gregory: 'Alyse Gregory – Out of the Shadows'
(introduced by David Goodway)

Goulven le Brech: 'The Philosophy of the Little Blue Books'
(introduced by Charles Lock)

PLUS: The Dee in full flow; a steam engine on the Llangollen Railway.

These two DVDs are available for **£5** from:

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

e-mail: rynd.cox@gmail.com Tel: 01384 566383

Please send a cheque to R.E.Cox, not The Powys Society

Other DVDs available:

2018 Conference Copies of talks by Charles Lock and Taliesin Gore, and a panel and members' discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance*.

2 DVDs £5

2015 Conference One copy only, with talks by Nicholas Burns, Robert Caserio, John Gray, Cathy Roscoe and Chris Thomas, plus readings by members of favourite passages from the Powyses.

4 DVDs £8 (If you are interested in this set please ask if it remains available before ordering.)

2002 Copies now available of the **Millfield School Conference** (*In View of Glastonbury*) which was originally recorded (uncredited) on VHS tapes. They include talks by Iain Sinclair and Colin Wilson, and a discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance* with Margaret Drabble, P. J. Kavanagh and Timothy Hyman. Also readings at the foot of the Tor by Richard Perceval Graves.

2 DVDs £6

Note for viewing the DVDs on a TV:

The camera can record using either the widescreen aspect ratio (16:9), suitable for viewing on a widescreen TV, or the 4:3 aspect ratio for regular or older TVs. The 2019 recordings were made using the widescreen aspect ratio. This should not present a viewing problem. The aspect ratio may be able to be changed on the TV.

Taliesin Gore

My Conference

This year's conference was the third that I have attended, and, I hope, in a long line of conferences to come. Upon arriving I was very pleased to see many familiar faces from the two previous conferences. I had a strong feeling of spiritual homecoming in this company, which I regard as a natural extension of my experience of encountering and inhabiting the universe of JCP's work over the last few years.

Another familiar face for me was Chris Campbell, a lecturer at the University of Exeter (from which I graduated with my MA last year), and one of the very few younger academics currently doing research on JCP's work. His cross-cultural reading of Weymouth Sands and the poetry of Barbadian writer Kamau Brathwaite was highly stimulating, applying a cutting-edge and contemporary methodology to the study and contextualisation of JCP's works which, it is to be hoped, will open up new vistas of research to future Powys scholars. Equally novel (although in a different way!) was Richard Graves' talk on 'JCP and Merlin.' It was a rallying cry to future conference speakers to move away from the perhaps dryer conventional mode of academic discourse and to try to channel something of the magic and 'psychic magnetism' for which JCP himself was famed as a lecturer. Needless to say, it made for a very entertaining Saturday evening, and its thesis, namely, the connection between some of JCP's more esoteric ideas and the insights of modern physics, was, I think, very pertinent and interesting. These were the talks which most stood out to me as primarily (at this stage at least) a devotee of JCP, but all were, of course, fascinating.

As always, however, it was not only the talks which made this year's conference so special, but equally the unique atmosphere arising from the combined erudition and enthusiasm of so many Powysians gathered together in one place for the space of a few intense and highly stimulating days. There could be no better tribute to the personalities and writings of the Powyses that they have inspired the devotion of such a wonderful group of kind, welcoming, enthusiastic and intelligent people. I feel deeply grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of this society, and I look forward to the pleasure of attending many future conferences.

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Pat Quigley

In the Footsteps of John Cowper Powys

On the blustery Sunday afternoon after the conference six enthusiasts gathered beneath the ancient oak at Cae Coed. How many times did John Cowper Powys greet that rugged trunk with a tap of his walking stick? Walking was as essential to John Cowper as breathing and reading. In his memorable conference lecture, Richard Graves described those daily walks as a means by which Powys heightened his enjoyment of life.

Our goal was to attempt to follow a typical John Cowper walk across the slopes of the Berwyn Mountains and to search for places described in his diaries and letters. To follow his footsteps would mark an appropriate ending to the conference, a sort of fringe event. The path began on a steep laneway with unmortared stone walls where we read from the abandoned novel, *Edeyrnion*, describing the lane in 1940. Although the walking trail was marked by weathered signs it appeared that little had changed in the last eighty years. A little further on we paused at the headstone marking the grave of John and Phyllis' spaniel, the Old, and read a moving account of his death in March 1939. John Cowper visited the grave every possible morning for the next sixteen years to speak to his beloved companion.

Only a short distance from the houses we were absorbed into a green tunnel of ancient beech and oak trees. The light filtered through a canopy of leaves over branches and rocks covered in moss. Ancient boundary stones stood like sentries in the walls; we had left the Twenty-First century for the realm of Myrddin Wylt and Porius. As we moved upwards the vegetation became more luxuriant with wild roses and blackberries on either side.



The group under the oak tree

Walking for John Cowper was an essential ritual where he named rocks and trees after people in his life and characters in his fiction. On this mountain he could give his imagination free rein to transform it into a magical place of familiar spirits. Alas, there were so many spectacular trees and rocks we could only hazard a guess at which ones he selected, but it was easy to imagine him following the stony path with the aid of a specially chosen walking stick.

Roads can change, but walkers usually take the most convenient route and these remain constant over centuries. We soon approached farm buildings rented by the sheep-farmer, Ebenezer, in the 1930s and paused to retell the story of the farmer with one hand and Hannah, the woman with the withered arm. Further up the slope we passed the first of two reservoirs where John Cowper often led the sometimes reluctant Old. As we walked through the Forest of Cynwyd we looked for traces of places he described as the Great Willow ('my Mother-Confessor – my Psycho Analyst Practitioner & my Saviour Tree' – *Descents of Memory*, p.364), Eiliseg's tower or The Homeric Fount.

The cairn of stones, Carnedd Llewelyn, that he erected in February 1940 to commemorate his brother, was also elusive. He recorded placing a huge rock on top so that it resembled a tiny Stonehenge. It may have been scattered by the winds or swallowed by the pine forest. A bare knoll stood in for Llewelyn's memorial as we read about the ceremony on the mountain conducted by John Cowper along with Phyllis Playter and Gamel Woolsey.

As the path became steeper, we absorbed fresh energy with a verse from his poem, 'The Ridge':

I can see the path and I'm still alive and climbing;
Is it nothing to be alive and be able to climb?
The labour of lifting the feet and the labour of rhyming,
Is not their power the art of marching in tune with Time?

We were uncertain if a particular gate was the 'Grouse Gate,' although a change of terrain to fern and heather suggested we were on land the OS described as 'grouse butts'. The view opened out to dramatic vistas of the valley of Edeyrnion. Two hours after starting we reached the summit of a ridge only to discover another in the distance. Our destination, the remains of the hunting lodge, Liberty Hall, was still far off.

It was time to return, but the appeal of such a search is that it can never be complete. As we descended the sun penetrated the clouds to shine like a searchlight on the prehistoric stones of Caer Drewyn on the opposite side of the valley. It was a moving sight, a memorable ending to a magical experience. We had only sketched out a skeleton of a walk; there is much more to be added. If others have information on John Cowper's mountain I would be delighted if they would contact me at patquig2002@yahoo.com. Our short foray into John Cowper's landscape of the imagination was, we hope, only one of many.

Dawn Collins

The Dandelion Fellowship – Llewelyn's Birthday Walk 2019

How perfect the weather was.

Seven met in the Red Lion at Winfrith for lunch and the all-important 12:30 toast to missing friends and Llewelyn, and thence on to the Sailors Return and a photo or two of our small group which entailed balancing a mobile on the empty flower urn. Fewer on the walk than previous years but none the less enthusiastic on a beautiful day.

On to Chydyok. We walked along the white chalk scymitar slash on either side of which the fields were swaying with golden ripe oats. Some years the crops have been cut and we see stubble or fallow earth all around. We felt the abundant yield of the earth was very Llewelyn and we remembered his words ... 'Behold! The grain grows golden in its husk' ... and we felt 'gratitude for having seen sunlight on corn.'

Nearby the house we read a passage from 'Shambles Foghorn' in *Earth Memories* that reminded us of the importance of listening. As we walked southward along the path, on the highest point, just before it starts to drop away to the coastal path, we looked back northwards over the roof of Chydyok nestled in its sheltered spot and noticed the horizon shadowed with passing pockets of "storm". We marvelled at the lack of rain for every Llewelyn's Birthday walk.

On to the oolitic block.

Gently, wild flowers placed on the memorial stone were weighted with a small rock to prevent the breeze from claiming them. The large rectangular Jurassic block sits now very near but not on the original resting place chosen by Alyse, Katie and Gertrude in 1942. They laid the ashes three feet deep on 28th September. We noticed the enlarged bright white crustose lichen that was clinging to the carved face of the Portland stone. Last year there had been a small snail making its way along the downward stoke of the sharply carved 'W' of 'Llewelyn'. *Llewelyn Powys 13 August 1884 - 2 December 1939* with the inscription: *The Living The Living He shall praise thee* (Isaiah 38:19). Fittingly Biblical for his pagan spirit.

This year we missed Rev. Neil Atkin who was not able to lead the walk but his appropriate words were with us from the Book of Days and the chapter 'August':

Let us not be deceived. Life is its own justification, life that asks nothing more than to be allowed to live, to be allowed to eat and reproduce its kind, and for a season to feel the sunlight. (Impassioned Clay)

As long as the mind still flickers with recurrent apprehensions, our delighted spirit can send out heathen prayers of gratitude for having seen sunlight on corn. (Glory of Life)

Behold! The grain grows golden in the husk, the green apples swell on the whorled twigs, and the shell of each hazelnut is neatly fitted with its ivory kernel. What have we to fear ? (Skin for Skin)

The purpose of life is happiness, a happiness that can be fulfilled by a free appreciation of the natural poetry of existence. (Pathetic Fallacy)

Pam read and we remembered those missing and passed away. Paul Cheshire lay in the grass which was alive with small crickets and butterflies, and we all wondered at the blue all around, and the fortitude of Alyse. Somehow the small group did not feel 'empty' but just as joyous

as a crowd, our minds full of words and sky.

The heifers that now graze the fields along the coastal path were not too frisky and we returned to Pam's in Chaldon Herring for enormous scones piled with blackcurrant jam and thick cream. Not forgetting gallons of tea without which no meeting of Powysians would be complete.

Next year will be the 25th Birthday Walk: all are invited to what will be a very special occasion.

We send heartfelt good wishes to Neil Atkin who was in our hearts as we read at Llewelyn's stone. Strength for next year, dear friend.



laying flowers on Llewelyn's stone

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In Honour of Jacqueline Peltier

*Powys scholar, translator, writer,
founder and editor of la lettre powysienne 2001-2017*

Jacqueline died on 24th June 2019

Some tributes by her friends

from Marcella Henderson Peal

Our dear Jacqueline was (difficult to use the past tense) a wonderful character and a true Powysian who contributed so much to the Powys Society and introducing JCP further to French-speaking admirers, producing the *lettre*, setting up the Powys-Lannion website, writing so many articles and so much more.

I always loved to see her thorough enjoyment of the Conference, sitting in the front row, determined not to miss a mere second of the talk, listening so attentively to each and every one before giving her opinion, and then there was also her wonderfully jolly laughter.

Goulven le Brech and I were reminiscing over the phone and had both been thinking how extraordinary close to all things Powysian Jacqueline's life has been and to what extent her adult life had fitted into a Powysian cycle.

At age 15 she had discovered Weymouth and her last Powysian task was to produce an improved translation of *Weymouth Sands*; her last outing was her trip to Paris, delighting in a particularly enjoyable Powys Dinner on Saturday June 15th, when most probably the last pictures of a happy very much alive Jacqueline were taken by Charles during and after the dinner. She was taken to hospital on the following Monday.

Yesterday afternoon, minutes before she passed away in a deep coma, her son Jeff was reading JCP's poem 'The Ridge' to her.



Jaqueline in Paris with Chalres Lock, Marcella Henderson-Peal, Jean Pascal Ollivry and Goulven le Brech

She has now left us to go to the other side of the Ridge and I hope, like to imagine, that she is now having passionate conversations with JCP and every single member of a family she has loved so well. I was extremely fond of Jacqueline. She was more than a Powys-related friend and such an inspiration!

from **Chris Thomas**

I feel deeply saddened at the passing of Jacqueline. I think she was the first person I spoke to seriously at a Powys Society conference. She was always so interested in everything, always willing to discuss and consider new ideas and theories. She was very generous and understanding and very proud of her role as an honorary member of the committee and official representative of the Powys Society in France. She edited *la lettre powysienne* with great skill. I cherish memories of working collaboratively with her and Max on a new edition of the JCP-Henry Miller letters. She was a convivial conversational companion and interlocutor. She introduced me to new people and new books. I will miss her telephone calls from Brittany. I will miss her e-mail messages and I will greatly miss talking to her at our conferences.

from **Dawn Collins**

I am so sad to think that we will not have Jaqueline's presence at the conference. And sad also for her family, poor Max. How touching though to know that her son was reading that beautiful poem by her side.

from **Paul Cheshire**

I was very sorry to hear this. I had a nice exchange of emails with Jacqueline quite recently to check she was happy with my acknowledgement on the website of her part in Bill Keith's *Readers' Companions*. She was glad to be acknowledged there. It's at times like this I am only too aware of the Powys Society history I am not party to: acutely conscious that her passing will have much greater impact on those who have that shared history. I'm sorry for your greater loss.

from **John Hodgson**

Very sad and unexpected news. Jacqueline was a deeply passionate Powysian, and I'll so miss her effervescence at conference!

from **Timothy Hyman**

I'm very sorry to hear Jacqueline couldn't pull through. A lot of us will feel grief for her. She was so brave, intense, prickly, lively, loyal and *productive*. At various points she has played important roles in the fortunes of John Cowper Powys, and in our Society.

from **Michael Kowalewski**

Terrible and totally unexpected news. Personally devastated, she was always so kind to me. Words fail. I have just trawled through my e-mail correspondence with Jacqueline and am moved by her endless graciousness, kindness, patience and good judgment – not only of Powysian matters. She is unfailingly sympathetic and encouraging, for instance over an extremely hostile response to a review of mine concerning a book about Theodore. The loss of her expertise and wisdom is terrible for Powys studies but it is also a personal loss of such a warm person. She was kindness and civility personified. She will never be forgotten.

from **Robin Hickey**

This is such sad news. I enjoyed her writings so much which allowed me to get to grips with JCP's wider circle. I was looking forward to seeing her at this year's conference and will miss her. My condolences to her family.

from **Susan Rands**

Jacqueline and I joined the Powys Society in 1983 when the conference was at Weymouth, but it wasn't until 1989, after the conference at Sussex University, when Jeremy Hooker gave an especially good talk, that Jacqueline came to stay with me for three weeks while my husband was away on his continental holiday. I went to meet her at Castle Cary station and was still crossing the bridge when I saw her among the crowd emerging from the train looking so bright and brisk and hopeful. It was just 60 years since JCP



Jacqueline with Charles Lock & Tim Hyman in Bath in 1984

had been going about Glastonbury with Llewelyn, Alyse and Gamel in preparation for writing *A Glastonbury Romance*, but I think neither of us was conscious of it at the time. The first day we climbed the Tor, looked at St John's church and had a drink at the George and Pilgrims inn. On the second day we went to the Abbey, Wearyall Hill and Cradle Bridge, also to Haddon's second-hand bookshop, long since closed, in a very old house in Benedict Street where Jacqueline bought Eric Benfield's *Dorset*. At the Abbey House she asked the Weatherwax-like figure of a gardener, whom we happened to meet, about the elms described in *A Glastonbury Romance* overlooking the wall with Silver Street from the Abbey grounds. He said there were only saplings there now but there had been big ones with a rookery. That afternoon we went to Wookey Hole, and the following day Jacqueline's friend Philip Shepherd came to collect her. She had been a wonderful guest and brought much more generous gifts for me and my younger daughter, who was at home at the time, than we felt we deserved. Jacqueline's death which seemed so much too early, and so sudden, was a great and saddening shock.

* * *

Charles Lock

A celebration of Jacqueline Peltier

2 October 1939 – 24 July 2019

Those of us in the Powys Society who knew Jacqueline for thirty-five years and more will have treasured her energy and enthusiasm, the dedication of her learning, her skills as an editor and as a publisher – and all of us will have counted on the sheer vivacity of her presence.

la lettre powysienne was a brave venture, a third publication alongside the *Powys Journal* and the *Powys Society Newsletter* within a field whose potential readership worldwide was somewhat limited. Yet over 16 years and through its 32 numbers (the last in the spring of 2017), *la lettre* published a rich assortment of contributions, many of them with a French angle or emphasis. Each item was in both French and English, time-consuming perhaps for the editor but hardly a challenge for one so bilingually gifted. Jacqueline's vocation was truly that of a translator, not only in the conventional sense but more extensively, in sharing and reaching out, always keen to include others in her enthusiasms and her undertakings. Nor was she averse to provoking others into challenging her own fine discernments and resolutely-held convictions, political as well as literary. Powys was not the only writer held sacred; Proust was untouchable.

Jacqueline's interests in Powys extended beyond the family to members of 'the circle'; she wrote a pioneering study, *Alyse Gregory: A Woman at the Window* (1999) for the 'Powys Heritage' series issued by Cecil Woolf, to which she also contributed articles on John Cowper's friend Bernie O'Neill and his cousin Ralph Shirley. And to the *Powys Journal* she contributed in 2007 what remains the definitive account of Marian Powys's life and of her achievements in the world of lace.

No less important than these, and *la lettre*, was the contribution made through the Powys-Lannion website that Jacqueline managed with her husband, Max. Setting it up in 1996, they were far ahead of anyone else, including the Powys Society, in realizing the need for Powys (and Powysians) to have a presence online. (Jacqueline and Max were the first to encourage Stephen Powys Marks to use digital technology in producing *The Powys Journal*.)

W.J. Keith's extremely useful 'Reader's Companions' to JCP's *Autobiography*, *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Owen Glendower* are most conveniently available on the Powys-Lannion site, and much of the work, as Bill Keith acknowledged, was Jacqueline's, thanks not only to her technological skills but to her provision of details and her amplifying of annotations. That site has for more than twenty years provided a locus and an exchange for the gathering and dissemination of Powysian information. We can delight, above all, in the 'Interactive guide to *Weymouth Sands*,' with maps, photographs and local historical details, all of which give us a vivid sense of the town as it was at the time of the novel's composition and publication (in the early 1930s), as also of Weymouth at the end of the nineteenth century, when John Cowper had known it best during visits to his grandmother.

Weymouth was at the centre of Jacqueline's imagination quite as much as of John Cowper's, thanks to a remarkable displacement in childhood that saw her educated for one year at a school in Dorset. In the summer of 1951, aged eleven, she had been learning English in Weymouth and staying with a family who lived on the Dorchester Road towards Upwey. So entrancing did Jacqueline find the town, the Chesil Beach, Portland, Lodmoor, the Wishing-Well, that it was arranged for her to spend the following year at school there. The Convent of the Sacred Heart, founded by French nuns in England after the Revolution of 1789, had established a school in Weymouth in 1910, on Carlton Road North, near the railway and equidistant between Radipole Lake and St. John's Church. Jacqueline respected the Sisters for their good sense and kindness: they allowed the pupils out on their own to roam the town, the beach, the backwater. In words best left in French, she explained to readers whose sense of Weymouth might be less idyllic that in the early 1950s '*la foule était bien moins vulgaire qu'elle l'est devenue depuis*.' Known like the back of her hand, the town was to remain the 'great good place' in her life, and *Weymouth Sands* its defining representation.

Yet it would be a long time, more than twenty years after her sojourn in Weymouth, before Jacqueline discovered John Cowper Powys. Marie Canavaggia's French translation, *Les Sables de la mer*, had appeared in 1958, but that had been made not from the American edition of *Weymouth Sands* but from *Jobber Skald*, the British edition that, for legal reasons, had been stripped of all topographical specificity; without the name 'Weymouth' in the title there was no reason at all why the book should have caught Jacqueline's attention.

Jacqueline was brought up in Asnières, that suburb of Paris where Seurat's figures bathe. Marrying Max Peltier in 1961 (her maiden name was Blumbergs), Jacqueline gave birth to two of her three children before resuming her education at the University of Grenoble in 1969; her study of English continued at the University of Nice. These dislocations (including a year in upstate New York in 1965-66) were due to her husband's employment with IBM – an acronym, it was said, for 'I'll be moved'. And it was when visiting a book fair in Nice in 1974 that her eye was caught, at the British Council stand, by Constable's 'Weymouth Bay'. Not the famous painting that hangs in the National Gallery, showing the view from Osmington, but a detail of a sketch in the Victoria and Albert Museum: the Bay seen from the west, under a threatening sky. This was the cover of the Rivers Press edition of *Weymouth Sands* of 1973—and all its place-names were intact.

Jeff Kwintner was just then beginning to reprint JCP's works through the Village Press, and each of those titles would be acquired by Jacqueline. In the late 1970s, when the youngest of her children had reached school age, she resumed her studies, this time at the Sorbonne and under the

supervision of the most eminent Powysian scholar in France, Michel Gresset. Her thesis, ‘American Landscape in J.C. Powys’s *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*’ was submitted in 1984; a condensed version was published in the *Powys Review* no. 18 (1986).

In 1982, through the workings of the great goddess Tyche, Jacqueline met in the Parisian bookshop Shakespeare & Co. a young English assistant who was not only familiar with the name of John Cowper Powys but recommended that she get in touch with Margaret Eaton, influential antiquarian bookdealer and for many years a member of the Powys Society. Thus encouraged, she made her first visit to Weymouth as an adult in 1982 and in 1983 Jacqueline returned to Weymouth, this time to attend the Powys Society Conference. I met Jacqueline at the following year’s conference, in Bath; over the decades since she attended almost every one of our conferences, in Wessex or Wales or wherever.

It was twice my pleasure to meet Jacqueline on her home ground, in Paris. Following his retirement, she and Max moved to Brittany – her mother’s family was from Brest – and in 1996 settled in the town of Lannion. Fond as she was of Brittany and its craggy north coast, Jacqueline remained a Parisian. A graduate of the Lycée Honoré de Balzac, she had worked as a student at Shakespeare & Co., and was awarded her highest degree from the Sorbonne. Jacqueline’s most ambitious and prestigious work of editing was of the correspondence between John Cowper Powys and Henry Miller; though published by the Powys Press it is a work of some consequence beyond Powysian circles. Not only did Jacqueline edit and annotate the text, but she and Max undertook the typesetting, layout and design—as they had done for many years with volumes in Cecil Woolf’s ‘Powys Heritage’ series, and with other publications under the Powys Press imprint. It was entirely appropriate for both Henry Miller and Jacqueline that in May 2014 the launch of *Proteus and the Magician* should be held at Shakespeare & Co., a legendary location in the history of modern literature and the reading heart of anglophone Paris. Gathered there in celebration and *hommage* were a number of distinguished French admirers of John Cowper and of Henry Miller: the philosopher Robert Misrahi, the philosopher and novelist Fawzia Assaad, Barbara Wahl, editor of and commentator on the work of her father Jean Wahl, the eminent philosopher and founding figure of existentialism; JCP’s letters to him were published in *PJ* XXIV. Also attending were Judith Coppel-Grozdanovich and Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek, both translators of JCP, Liliane Ruf, Dana Wentwright, and some familiar to us as members of the Society, Marcella Henderson-Peal, Sylvie Vaudier, Jean-Pascal Ollivry and Goulven Le Brech—as well as two representatives *de l’Albion perfide*, Chris Thomas and myself.

It was Marcella Henderson-Peal who had taken the initiative to arrange that event, and earlier this year, on Saturday 15 June 2019, Marcella organized a gathering on a smaller scale: a dinner for French Powysians at ‘Au Père Louis’. (The photograph shows Jacqueline next to Goulven Le Brech.) Though clearly not in good health, Jacqueline was in excellent spirits, undiminished in her enthusiasms, her deprecations, her ebullience. Hers was a laughter that will not soon be forgotten, a laughter that expressed uncontainable resources of both enthusiasm and defiance.

Realizing that *Les Sables de la mer* had been based on the edition of *Weymouth Sands* that, as *Jobber Skald*, left the town unidentifiable and immune to any charge of libel, Jacqueline was determined to restore the place-names to the French translation. This would have been a relatively simple task, yet no publisher could be persuaded to take it on. In the course of her negotiations

Jacqueline discovered that the absence of place-names was not the only problem with *Les Sables de la mer*. After publishing *Jugements réservés*, her translation of *Suspended Judgments*, an early book of critical essays by John Cowper on writers mostly French, Jacqueline decided in 2016 that she would undertake a fresh translation of *Weymouth Sands*, making use of her own topographical knowledge, which could hardly be rivalled even by a lifelong inhabitant of Weymouth. This work, almost completed at the time of her death, is more than a translation; it should stand as an edition in its own right, accompanied as it is by maps, photographs and explanatory notes that will be invaluable even to readers less than fluent in French. Its title, *Perdita Wane*, may seem a perplexing choice, though few would doubt that it is an improvement on *Jobber Skald*. The name ‘Perdita’ illuminates the links between *Weymouth Sands* and *A Winter’s Tale* and even hints at Proust’s *temps perdu*, while also (I suspect) alluding to Weymouth as, for both John Cowper and Jacqueline, a land of lost content. Perdita herself arrives in Weymouth on a boat from across the Channel, just as the translator had first come to that town through its harbour. Though published posthumously, *Perdita Wane* will, for those readers who have known the translator, hold memory to the rhythm of ‘each separate wave’ as heard by both Magnus Muir and Perdita Wane on Weymouth Beach.

Let me end by recording an observation made by Jacqueline on that last occasion. As we knew, Proust and Powys were her favourite writers, and as well as almost all the Powys Society conferences held over the past thirty-five years, Jacqueline had attended a number of Proustian conventions in Cabourg, the seaside resort in Normandy on which Balbec is modelled. Not the least striking difference between these two writers, Jacqueline observed, gently, lay in the quality of their admirers: Powysians tend to be friendly, welcoming, unpretentious and non-partisan, whereas Proustians could be suspicious, fractious, factional, sometimes irreconcilably at odds over the significance of a preposition or a conjunction. That difference may be attributed to the fact that, so far, none of the Powyses has been subsumed into an academic industry. As long as Powys remains thus neglected we should value, without complacency, Jacqueline’s quietly-worded appreciation of how much John Cowper had given her, not least through those who share the rapture and the fascination of reading his works. Here in the Powys Society, to which in turn Jacqueline gave so much—rather more than I had realized until, in mourning her loss, I undertook to compose these words – her presence will be missed and her friendship cherished in the memory of each one of us.

With my thanks to Max Peltier, Marcella Henderson-Peal and Louise de Bruin.

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Angelika Reichmann
A tribute to Jacqueline Peltier

Emotions are complicated, facts come more easily. Let me start with them. It was in November 2007 that I first wrote to Jacqueline to inquire about publication possibilities in *la lettre*. I remember how long it had taken to muster up my courage to word that first e-mail. Not knowing Jacqueline, I had no idea about her possible reaction to a query of that kind, coming from a nobody and from Hungary. That is, from a post-socialist country that even back then was hardly on the intellectual map of Europe, and – except for philosopher Béla Hamvas – definitely not on the map of Powysians. Little did I suspect that the editor behind *la lettre* was a most generous woman who made it her

personal mission to support research on the Powyses. The rest is history – my history – and could be summed up in one short phrase: I owe Jacqueline everything. She introduced me first to the editors of *The Powys Journal* and thereby launched my career I have in international publishing. That invaluable professional help was matched by the personal guidance, no less invaluable, that I received from her throughout the years. Hard to tell whether more important professionally or personally was her introducing of me to the Society in 2009; this has been an experience of immense spiritual enrichment. And of deeper significance yet, our correspondence soon turned personal to reveal that – despite differences in age and upbringing and geography – we had much in common, and I had much to learn from her. I first met her in 2008 and had the pleasure of her company for the last time in 2016. Her experience and wisdom helped me through some complicated periods. She became a guiding friend and a profound influence in my life.

In paying tribute to Jacqueline I find it easy to start with cold facts but impossible to remain with them. Immense gratitude is what I feel, yet I know that she would not care for gratitude. Whatever she gave, it came from the infinite generosity of her heart. For me, the things she did will always be understood as embodying an understanding not only of the letter—*la lettre*— but the spirit of JCP's writing. For me she will forever exemplify the spirit that guides the Society as a community: that of tolerance, acceptance, open-mindedness and selflessness.

I cannot find it in my heart to talk about what Jacqueline *was* for me: I can see her walking on Weymouth Beach and recall her telling of childhood memories in the sunshine on an August day; I can see her smoking her one cigarette after a long day in her Lannion garden, in the company of dear Max and the ever-alooof (and feline) Grishka. Let me conclude with her laughter: I can hear now her sardonic defiance in permitting a waiter to bring, together with a bottle of wine, a jug of water: 'Pourquoi? in case of fire?'

* * *

David Goodway

Cecil Woolf
1927 - 2019

Cecil Woolf was born in 1927 on the Waddesdon estate, Buckinghamshire, where his father Philip was land agent to Jacob de Rothschild. His uncle Leonard was, of course, married to Virginia Woolf and Cecil was to self-publish a charming memoir of the couple, *The Other Boy at the Hogarth Press*, as recently as 2017. Educated at Stowe he was taught English by none other than G. Wilson Knight – 'Wilson' as he affectionately referred to him – and that he explained was the source of his commitment to the writings of John Cowper Powys.

Persuaded by two bachelor uncles to join the family stockbroking business, he didn't last long, leaving to become an antiquarian bookseller. It was at this time that he began to indulge his interest in Frederick Rolfe, self-styled Baron Corvo, bringing to press unpublished novels (such as *Nicholas Crabbe* (1958)), editing the *Venice Letters* (1974) and compiling the standard Soho Bibliography. He was also responsible for the bibliography of another admired writer, Norman Douglas.

In 1960 he launched his own imprint, Cecil Woolf Publishers. Friendship with Nancy Cunard, a prime mover behind the celebrated *Left Review* survey of 1937, *Authors Take Sides*

on the Spanish War, led to his own sequence: *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam*, *Authors Take Sides on the Falklands* and *Authors Take Sides on Iraq and the Gulf War*. *Authors Take Sides on Syria*, to which I was recruited, has yet to appear...

There were also to be three series of extremely attractive booklets. There are more than eighty in *Bloomsbury Heritage*, edited by his wife Jean Moorcroft Wilson. Jean, the author of major biographies of Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas and currently Robert Graves, was also responsible for *War Poets*. Our own Tony Head edited the *Powys Heritage* series, fifteen items dealing with all aspects of the Powys family and circle. Yet Cecil's numerous hardback Powys publications related exclusively to John Cowper; and it is these that not only distinguish his list but I believe constitute also his lasting publishing achievement.

Wilson Knight's uncollected essays on JCP were gathered as *Visions & Vices* (1990) and *The Diary of John Cowper Powys for 1929* appeared in 1998. But centrally are the handsome volumes of letters to ten correspondents with catchy titles on the dust-jackets, if not the title-pages, published between 1983 and 2008. Of these most are short, ranging between 70 and 190 pages - Wilson Knight, Sven-Erik Täckmark (*Powys to Eric the Red*), the Trovillions, Ichiro Hara (*Powys to a Japanese Friend*), Glyn Hughes and Emma Goldman - yet they also included the substantial and really important correspondences with Philippa Powys (*Powys to Sea-Eagle*), Frances Gregg (*Jack and Frances* - in two volumes) and Dorothy Richardson. It was Cecil's extravagant, improbable intention to publish John Cowper's collected letters! This accounts in part for the inclusion of the negligible letters to Frank Warren; although when I commented on this Cecil's justification was that he just published whatever was offered him by Gerald Pollinger, the agent then acting for the Powys estate. So when I complained too about the unsatisfactory matter of his only publishing a fragment of the work on Keats - as *Powys on Keats: Volume One of John Keats: or Popular Paganism* (1993) -- his response was the same: as the editor Cedric Hentschel remarked it was 'based on the single copy I have seen, as released by Mr Gerald Pollinger to the publishers'.

In 1994 *Elusive America* appeared as the first volume of *The Uncollected Essays of John Cowper Powys*. It was stated that there were one hundred essays in total and the titles of two companion volumes were announced: *England Revisited* (covering 'English life and literature and Powys's own life and work') and *The Wind That Waves the Grass* ('European and Russian literature and social and philosophical issues'). Jean has declared that 'My great wish is that Cecil Woolf Publishers continue, and I have every intention of doing my utmost to ensure it does, either with me or our children, or with someone else who shares the same values and ideals'. How fitting it would be if Cecil's noble Powys publishing programme were to be concluded with the resurrection of these two missing volumes.

My first contact with Cecil - disregarding a fleeting introduction in the reading room of the British Museum by Douglas Gill, his pseudonymous collaborator on *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam* - was when Gerald Pollinger placed my edition of the Emma Goldman letters with him. It was to be many, many years before this saw the light of publication. Intervening were problems with printers, lengthy disappearances into hospital on account of a botched operation, similarly ample family holidays in France, troubles with the warehouse in Lincolnshire. Other

editors were hit by IT difficulties: one of the reasons Janet Foulis's Dorothy Richardson was held up was because of incompatibility between what was available to her in Tunisia and Cecil's system. I soon learned to cease fretting and just to go with the flow. Like many others I found Cecil a delight, enjoyed much talk on the telephone and particularly relished invitations to the house in Mornington Place for tea. I came to regard his intellectual and aesthetic centre as certainly not Bloomsbury or even Powys but the post-1945 Soho bohemia. One of his greatest regrets, he said, was being denied permission to publish any of the remarkable fiction of Julian Maclaren-Ross. (Not only were the two men friends, but Maclaren-Ross married Cecil's cousin, Diana (aka Molly), whom Cecil compared to the film actress Veronica Lake.)

As one climbed the stairs to the drawing-room one would pass piles of unsold books, among which JCP's letters were prominent. My concern was that on subsequent visits nothing seemed to have changed: it was always exactly the same titles. It therefore came as no surprise to hear Cecil to lament that none of his Powys stock broke even, let alone made money. We have much to thank him for.

Cecil Woolf Memorial, 19th October 2019

David Goodway read on behalf of the Powys Society at the memorial for Cecil Woolf which took place on 19th October in St Peter's church, Eaton Square, London. Friends and associates filled the large church, which was rebuilt after a fire in 1987: its elegant, cheerful, modern interior suited the occasion well. Recorded music (The Lark Ascending, Bruch and Callas) played at intervals, as Cecil's wife and collaborator, the author Jean Moorcroft Wilson (in a beautiful pink-feathered hat such as she is famed for) led us through Cecil's life, with contributions from their family and from literary societies published and helped by Cecil. The party afterwards took place high up in one of the extra rooms provided by the rebuilding: its guest list doubtless an historic record of the near-century of literary life so much encouraged by Cecil Woolf.

* * *

News & Notes

From Louise de Bruin:

On 24 August – a beautiful day – a Memorial Service for **Tordis Marks**, Stephen's wife, took place at Ammerdown Centre near Bath, a retreat centre which Tordis loved and where she had regularly gone for retreats. In the Chapel her son Edward and daughter Dorothy read out the many moving letters and emails the family had received after her death. Afterwards some walked, others were driven through the beautiful landscape to the Column Field on top of a high hill. Dorothy and some friends arrived after us on horseback, she carrying Tordis's ashes which she scattered on the hill after giving part of them to Edward who scattered his on foot. Afterwards a delicious cream tea awaited for us down by the Chapel. Tordis was an ardent



Susan Rands, Tordis and Stephen Marks, July 2011

horsewoman all her life and had loved Dorothy's new horse and had longed to ride her/him, which she thus did for her last journey on earth. A very frail Stephen attended the ceremony in a wheelchair.

*

Richard Comben's magnificent bequest of his Powys library has now been received, and will be offered at the next Conference, in Street.

*

Freddie Jones:

Actor Freddie Jones, who played JCP in Herbert Williams's 1994 film *The Great Powys* (shown at the Powys Society Conference at Kingston Maurward, Dorchester in 1995) died on 9 July 2019 aged 91.

*

From Paul Weston:

I have added another JCP *Glastonbury Romance* video presentation on YouTube in response to a further Holy Thorn drama. It covers pretty much the same ground as the one I delivered at the Powys Society conference in 2010 but there are some significant upgrades.

See: John Cowper Powys and the Psychogeography of Wearyall Hill

From Pat Quigley:

The most recent issue of the Polish journal, *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy*, is a special English-language issue on Northern Ireland and includes my essay on ‘Captain Jack White: Ulster Prophet of Dissent’. Readers of the *Newsletter* will remember that Captain White was one of John Cowper Powys’s favourite correspondents in the 1930s & early 1940s when they exchanged views on anarchism and politics (See *Newsletter* No.85, July 2015 and *la lettre powysienne*, Nos. 30 and 31, 2015/2016). The essay highlights the importance of the friendship to White when he was in ill-health and isolated in his County Antrim home. *Wolf Solent* was published in a Polish translation in Poland in the 1960s, but I have been unable so far to trace any other books translated. *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy* is a journal devoted to cultural studies with articles in the field of cultural theory and results of empirical research from various areas of culture. It is addressed to the academic community of cultural studies and to all humanists interested in scientific reflection on culture, published by the Committee on Culture Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Management and Social Communication of the Jagiellonian University of Krakow.

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From Chris Thomas:

In his diary column in the *New Statesman* for the issue dated 26 June 2019 **Andrew Marr** wrote about his plans for summer reading: ‘Presenting Radio 4’s Start the Week means most of my reading is chosen for me. By June I have piled up huge amounts of stuff I’ve been desperate to read for months. I tend to have a reading plan each summer. This year, I’ve been thinking about all those authors who were very big when I was growing up in the 1970s but have mysteriously vanished from most bookshops. Why? Were we all wrong back then? There’s only one way to find out. So I have been stocking up on **John Cowper Powys**, Lawrence Durrell and even Hermann Hesse. I will let you know...’

*

One of the last things **Cecil Woolf** produced before his death was an introduction to *Virginia Woolf at Home* by Hilary Maskill, Pimpernell Press, 2019, a description of the houses where Virginia Woolf lived: 22 Hyde Park Gate, London; Talland House, St Ives, Cornwall; 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, London; Hogarth House, Richmond, London; Asheham House, East Sussex; 52 Tavistock Square, London; and Monk’s House, Rodmell, East Sussex.

*

In February this year I watched a programme on BBC TV about the famous American singer songwriter, **Carly Simon** (born 1945), and suddenly realized that her father, **Richard Simon** (1899-1960), whom she was talking about, was of course the same

person as the co-founder in 1924, with Max Schuster (1897-1970), of JCP's American publishing company, **Simon & Schuster** – “my daring publishers” (*Autobiography*), and “my Haroun al Raschid Jewish publishers”(JCP letter 20 June 1930 to Dorothy Richardson). A photograph, taken by Phyllis Playter in May 1931, of the editorial team at Simon & Schuster sitting on the steps of Phudd Bottom and listening to JCP read from the manuscript of *A Glastonbury Romance* was published in *Powys Review* No.9, 1981/1982, and appears on the front cover of *Newsletter* 46, July 2002. JCP's letters to Max Lincoln Schuster are located at Columbia University rare book and manuscript library (11 folders). Some of the details of JCP's relationship with Simon and Schuster, especially on the publication of *Wolf Solent*, are covered by Peter Schwed in *Turning the Pages: an insider's story of Simon & Schuster, 1924-1984*, Macmillan, 1984: “*Wolf Solent* stands alone in S&S's first decade as the work of fiction of which the house could be completely justified in being proud.” (p.55)

*

‘Dummy’

Jacqueline was puzzled while making her *Weymouth Sands* translation by the ‘pet-name’ *Dummy Skald* shouted at Cattistock by the quarrymen (see the ‘Sea-Serpent’ chapter of *WS*, page 285 – also p.414, chapter 11, ‘Sylvanus Cobbold’). Is it disrespectful, mocking, complimentary or affectionate? According to dictionaries ‘Dummy’ is *American* slang only (from German *dumm* as in *dummkopf* – English equivalent might be “dimwit” or “barmy” ?) JCP often uses American slang – always ‘kids’ (in 1929 not universal as now), and others less familiar like ‘dubs’ (for Dopes, or Duds). At one point the Jobber is said to be acting like a ‘real’ dummy in a fair. His favorite exclamation is ‘By Dum!’ Could members cast any further light?

* * *

Dawn Collins

Facebook news

My recent post on Facebook in which I raised the possibility of adapting JCP's novels for the cinema or a TV series produced a good range of positive responses. My post reached 459 people with 139 engagements and 26 likes, 8 comments and 5 shares. So we are slowly building a following on line! I'd like to encourage members and non-members to actively post comments on the Facebook page. Please get in touch with me if you would like to help manage the Facebook page and assist me to post new suitable material. There are now 28 members of the Reading Powyses on-line Group of which 9-15 individuals regularly actively take part in the live discussions and most other members of the group visit the discussion page.

Our last discussion was on *Maiden Castle*. on October 29th. It might be noted that participation in reading group discussions is equivalent or similar in attendance to the physical group meetings held in Ely or London. The live on-line reading group discussions start at 7pm and wind up about 9-9:30pm. Participation is international and usually includes individuals in the UK, Ireland, France, USA and Germany.

* * *

Chris Thomas
A Gift for Corwen

At this year's conference we were delighted to welcome as special guest on Friday evening Mike Wyeth of the Edeyrnion Heritage and Cultural Society which looks after the Corwen Museum. At the reception I was very pleased to be able to present to Mike donations from the Society which we hoped might help visitors appreciate JCP's presence in the town. I also invited Mike to transfer a gift of photographs, books by JCP and information flyers about the Society to Corwen library and Information Centre.

The donation for the museum consisted of a folder of items documenting the life and writings of John Cowper Powys in Corwen between 1935 and 1955, which can be maintained on open display. It includes: copies of photographic portraits of JCP; a photographic copy of a portrait painting of JCP by his sister Gertrude; contemporary newspaper cuttings relating to the Corwen Gorsedd and Corwen Eisteddfodd in 1936; 2 poems by JCP about the Gorsedd and Eisteddfodd originally printed in the local newspaper *Yr Adsain* in 1936; photographs of local places and landmarks associated with JCP and which feature in his novels *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*; a set of topographical guides to places in and around Corwen associated with JCP and his novels *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*; facsimiles of letters from JCP; the facsimile of a page of JCP's diary dated 24 December 1939 containing information about the completion of his novel *Owen Glendower*; a sketch map, drawn by JCP, of Corwen illustrating the imaginary landscape of his novel *Porius*; transcriptions of two letters from JCP to his brother Theodore about living in Corwen dated 28 October 1938 (plus a facsimile of part of original letter) and 15 April 1947 (originally published in *Powys Review* No.3, Summer 1978) including JCP's drawing of Owen Glendower throwing his dagger at the church of St. Mael and a drawing of JCP walking up to Pen y Pigyn; a list of books written by JCP whilst living in Corwen; holograph ALS dated 6 January 1960 from JCP to a correspondent Mr Disspain and copies of the Powys Society information flyer.

The donation also included examples of past periodical literature (the *Powys Review*, *Powys Notes*, *Powys Journal* and the *Newsletter*) with selected articles about JCP and Wales and his novels *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. We donated to

the museum editions of *Owen Glendower*, *Porius*, and *Obstinate Cymric*, and the Powys Society's own publications *Proteus and the Magician* and *Powys and Lord Jim* as well as current issues of the *Newsletter* and *Powys Journal*. Copies of these books were also donated to Corwen library so they can be made available for the purpose of public lending.

The Powys Society is indebted to David Jones, who when he was a boy in the 1930s knew JCP and Phyllis. It was David's original proposal that we should donate materials to the Corwen museum and library. At our conference in 2017 David delivered a short talk describing his memories of JCP and Phyllis in Corwen.

* * *

Anthony Head

JCP and Reginald Moore

The item in the July *Newsletter* (No. 97) by Elizabeth Berridge about JCP and Reginald Moore prompted me to dig out my own photocopies of their letters and my correspondence about them with Cecil Woolf back in the mid-1990s. Gerald Pollinger had asked Cecil to consider publishing them, and had given him a package of the letters already typeset. Cecil sought my opinion on them and gave the package to me in the spring of 1996.

It comprised 18 letters from JCP and five from Moore (as well as five others by neither JCP nor Moore that were largely irrelevant) and totalled only 37 pages. There were a few insertions of editorial comment between some of them. But there was also a lengthy 16-page Introduction by Berridge, much of it identical or very similar to the passages reproduced in the *Newsletter* from her *London Magazine* article.

I wrote to Cecil in June 1996 that 'my first impressions are rather unfavourable', but he replied in September that he hoped I could take the project in hand 'and make it into an attractive, slim collection'. I obviously wasn't taken by it and I find that I returned the package in December that year with a promise to send a letter in January 1997 giving my full thoughts on it. I don't have a copy of that subsequent letter, but 'rambling, inconsequential, unfocused' was among the several notes I had jotted down about the collection, as was '[James] Hanley is often the main subject and, as such, an intrusive presence' in a volume that ought to focus on the main correspondents. There were also words and phrases that Berridge had not been able to decipher in JCP's letters and so these parts remained blank, and it was obvious too from her Introduction that she was not well up on what Powys readers already knew about JCP's life and character.

So I obviously told Cecil that I thought publication was not a good idea. I was relieved that in his reply in March he expressed relief himself, saying he had in fact been 'uncertain about accepting it' and was grateful 'for helping me to make up my mind and return it to Gerald.' The *London Magazine* article that appeared in the 1998/9 issue must then have been adapted – perhaps by Berridge herself – from her original Introduction to this proposed volume.

JCP and Frances, 1929
(continued from NL97, p. 27)

When JCP visited England in 1929 he met Frances Gregg several times in London, where he stayed with his brother Bertie in Hammersmith (see NL97, p.27). His diary for June 19, 1929, records: ‘...F. came to supper here & met Helen Galland ...’ Next day, June 20th, the diary notes: ‘Watched Bertie bathe in the river before breakfast. Had a nice talk with Helen Galland [an American friend] while she ate her breakfast...’ Shadows in the photograph of JCP gazing at the Thames at the bottom of Bertie’s garden (see *Newsletter* No.97, cover) indicate that it was taken in early morning, possibly on that day – possibly it was Helen who took the photo.

JCP visited Frances and her family in Suffolk on August 10th, when she violently attacked *Wolf Solent*. They did not meet again in London. On August 13th (while staying with his wife and son at Folkestone, but address c/o Llewelyn at The White Nose Cottages) he wrote to her contritely, in his diary saying ‘... this was the best of her onslaughts and it tallies with many words of the T.T. How can it not then be in some way justified? This malleability hid a certain old surging up of maliciousness responding to her maliciousness!’ At the end of this letter he seems to refer to their earlier meeting in June, and happily visiting Bertie’s garden in Hammersmith together.

CT, KK



Drawing by Gertrude Powys, 1929, of Isobel Marks who appears in the Hammersmith photograph with JCP

JCP’s letter to Frances begins:

Aye! But I did so like seeing you...I didn't like to see, my old friend, that lamentably sad and wounded look which now and then was in your blue eyes – but as you say & let's hope (I suppose) that so it was, that look was more due to physical than mental suffering...

and ends:

*I saw a look on your face, Frances, that touched me not a little, this was a look of pleasure & most sensitive happiness, when we went down Bertie's garden to that wall overlooking the river – who knows not that look, if not I. **

**The Love Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg, Volume 1, edited by Oliver Wilkinson, Cecil Woolf, pp.183-184.*

Susan Rands

JCP's description of his parents

From Susan Rands

Among the remaining papers belonging to my stepfather, Malcolm Elwin, which I still possess (the bulk of the collection is now located at the University of Exeter) was unexpectedly found an undated and unsigned original manuscript, three pages in length, written in JCP's hand, with a description of his parents. On the evidence of Malcolm Elwin's description of John Cowper's parents quoted below, from his biography of Llewelyn published in 1946, it does appear to have been produced by JCP at Elwin's request for use in the biography. There are other clues in the manuscript, in notes at the head of each page. I do find JCP's description beautifully explicit of his parents' relationship and his with them.

A transcription of JCP's manuscript

Page One E.M's Original Version

"To no man could the complexities of JCP's impressive genius appear more bewildering than to his own father, but inheriting from his mother his sensitive poetical imagination John followed [his] mother's example in never allowing his father to suspect his own lack of it. She never permitted a hint to her husband that his simple primeval nature was incapable of sympathy with her inward self."

Page Two J.C.P.'s modest suggestions for an emendation – but of course to be put in Malcom Elwin's words.

Resembling his father in many of his outward movements and outward physical peculiarities and with several of his father's long descended ancient Brythonic tribal peculiarities in his bones and something too of his father's aboriginal Welsh instincts (Brythonic or otherwise!) John's more flexible, more fluid and more feminine nature, and much more restless intelligence naturally & inevitably were forced to evaporate into thin air in the presence of his father as a wave is forced to go this way & that, over and round and even under when in contact with a massive promontory of rock. But this needed no conscious effort of his because the feminine element in his soul secretly admired and honoured and respected – as a cloud might enjoy being altered in shape – the elemental simplicity of the promontory around which it flowed. P.T.O.

Page Three continuation of John's suggested ideas for Malcom Elwin's choice & words – John's attitude to his father may indeed have had in it a great deal of that feminine awe & wonder and delight in a certain simple inarticulate masculine power of

J.P.T.'s modest ~~own~~
suggestions for
an emendation -
but of course to be put
in Malcolm's words.

Resembling his father in many of
his outward movements and
outward physical characteristics
and with ~~several~~ of his
father's long-descended ancient
Brythonic ~~physical~~ features
in his bones and something
too of his father's ~~apocryphal~~
Welsh instincts. (Brythonic or
othered) John's more
flexible and fluid ~~and~~ as less intelligent;
and more feminine nature; ~~more~~ rather ~~and~~
naturally to inevitably ~~and~~
were bound to incorporate
into their act in the presence of his
father as a wave is forced to
go this way or that, and even
over and round and even
under when in contact with
a massive promontory of
rock. But this needed no
conscious effort of his because
the feminine element in his
soul secretly admired and
honoured and respected
- as a cloud must enjoy being
addressed in such - as
elemental incidents of
the kind which ~~is~~ found
in the

cosmic magnetism such as an imaginative woman whose favourite novelists were the Brontes would naturally feel – making her – making John with so much of the woman in him! – feel weak in strength and power – uncertain in opinions -- feel in fact able to satisfy it, her his deepest instincts – as the poet with Nature and its deep-simple mystery – in flowing like water or air round this Promontory of Rocks & Stones & Trees – without any thought of wanting anything in return and not indeed wanting or conscious of any resemblance or comparison!

It is I think in fact the essential feminine always more restless always more wandering always more sceptical as opposed to the essential masculine.

*

From Malcolm Elwin's The Life of Llewelyn Powys (Bodley Head, 1946), p.10 (ch.1, "Origins")

To no man could the complexities of John Cowper Powys's eccentric genius appear more bewildering than to his own father, but, inheriting from his mother his sensitive poetic imagination, John allowed his more flexible, fluid, and feminine nature to flow about his father's essential masculinity like waves about a craggy promontory. With a deep admiration and reverence for his father, so far from resenting as subservience this subordination of his personality, he revelled in his deference like a woman in a Bronte novel. In his *Autobiography*, the impulse to 'glory in the feminine aspects of my character' he significantly calls 'Cowperism.'

Such 'Cowperism' inspired his mother's attitude to her husband. The subordination of her personality, which the masculine Llewelyn impatiently regarded as abasement, was demanded by her devotion. She never permitted a hint to her husband that his simple primaeval nature was incapable of sympathy with her inward self....

Peter Foss

John Cowper Powys at Plas Uchaf

A sketchbook owned by Gertrude Powys, currently in private hands [1], contains a drawing [SEE COVER] showing the figure of John Cowper Powys with his dog ‘The Old’ sitting in the doorway of a Welsh house. The caption (in Gertrude’s hand) reads ‘JCP at ancient house near Corwen’. Although the picture is not identified, when I was first shown it some eight years ago, I guessed that this was a depiction of Plas Uchaf, the ‘oldest house in Merioneth’ [*sic*] and one of the most important surviving medieval halls in Wales [2]. In fact, I knew it because I had stayed there.

This came about as follows. For ten years I was personal assistant and amanuensis to Sonia Rolt, widow of L.T.C. Rolt, founder of the Inland Waterways Association and author of books on canals and engineering. Sonia was a close friend of Sir John Smith who started up The Landmark Trust in the 60s; she organised the selection of books for the small libraries in Landmark properties in Wales and the Marches and I helped her with this. One of our first visits (in 1998) was to four properties in North Wales, of which Plas Uchaf was one. The Landmark had rescued the building in 1971 when it was derelict and in danger of collapse; they restored it to SPAB specifications (as advocated by A.R. Powys, its secretary) [3], and adapted the layout so that guests could stay in it for breaks. (See www.landmarktrust.org.uk.)

Identifying the drawing was not quite so straightforward because the house looks different after restoration, but my instinct, based partly on the shape of the doorway, was right. John Cowper Powys moved to Corwen in 1935. From 1938 to the 1950s the house was occupied by a family called Wilson who altered the frontage (as contemporary pictures show), and so the picture clearly dates from between 1935 and 1938. In fact it was done by Gertrude in September 1936 when she



Plas Uchaf today

visited John and Phyllis with her painting gear. John would have known of this house from his first days in Corwen. It was recognised among the local people for what it was, though only known to the outside world through the work of experts on early Welsh architecture. One of these was Iorwerth Peate, first curator of the folk collection at the National Museum of Wales (and later St Fagans) and author of *The Welsh House* (1940), and with whom Powys began a correspondence in October 1937. As his diaries show Powys often used to walk across the Dee and into the waterlogged fields between the confluence of the rivers Dee and Alwen. A small tributary here, near the farm called Glanalwen, he called the ‘Duddon’. Plas Uchaf stood on the ridge above the Alwen and could be seen from the meadows. It occupied a strategic position adjacent to an outcrop of boulders and limestone (part of which was used as a quarry). The confluence of the two rivers below Corwen, and its associated marsh and meadowland, was an important natural resource in medieval times, and in fact gave its name to the demesne, which was called ‘Kymmer’. The word ‘kymmer’ or ‘cymer’ in Welsh means the junction or confluence of rivers. Indeed, the original name for Plas Uchaf was ‘Plas o Kymmer’, which indicates its significance at the heart of the barony [4].

We come now to this significance. When Powys knew it in the mid 1930s, the house was lived in by a gamekeeper in the employ of Col. Vaughan Wynn of the Rûg estate. For well over a hundred years, the house had declined in status, housing farmers and servants of the original owners (before Rûg acquired it, it was part of the Gwerclas estate) [5]. But it is clear that in pre-modern times it had important status not only by virtue of its construction but also through its putative early ownership. The 1986 ‘Pevsner’ (*The Buildings of Wales* series Gwynedd volume by Richard Haslam et. al.) describes it as a seat of the ‘lords of Edeyrnion’ (p.581), although it is probably more correct to say that they were ‘lords of Kymmer’, part of the commote of Edeyrnion, who could boast their descent from a branch of the royal house of Wales (See A.D. Carr, *The Barons of Edeyrnion 1282-1485*, Parts 1 and 2, 1963-4). The particular lord whose ancestral seat it was at the time of Owen Glendower was Rhys ap Ieuan, ‘lord of Cymmer’ (fl. 1392-1415), a kinsman of Glendower. There is some uncertainty as to whether he was a supporter of Glendower or not; however, he survived the devastation that was meted out on many parts of Edeyrnion in the aftermath of the uprising, and his family prospered in after years.

Mentioning Glendower brings us not only to the period of the house but also to Powys’s novel. Tree-ring dating undertaken in 1996 (by Peter Smith) showed the vast trusses to date from 1435. However, when Powys visited it in 1936, it was considered then to be a hall of the late 14th to early 15th century (say, c.1390-1410), and this is what Peate had also thought [6]. There is, however, some debate as to whether it replaced an earlier timbered house on the site (which might have been destroyed in the ravaging of Edeyrnion by the Crown). Nonetheless, Powys considered this house contemporary with or earlier than Glendower, and he must have had it in mind as representative of a medieval hall when planning his novel. It is possible even that Powys was not only familiar with its Cyclopean stone exterior but also with the remarkable interior, although at this time there still existed a floor dividing the hall into two storeys and inserted in the 16th century. This floor, with its massive carved beams, was clearly a ‘high status’ improvement. (The panelling and beams were

removed in 1960 and apparently re-erected in a house called Fronfeuno at Llanycil near Bala.) [7]

The importance of the house, a Grade 1 listed building, is well covered in the article by Peter Smith and Ffrangcon Lloyd, ‘Plas-Ucha, Llangar’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* N.S. Volume XII (1965), pp.97-116, with its excellent technical drawings and plans. When the floor was removed the full glory of the vast timber structure was revealed – a house of six bays, with original cruck blades, king-posts, cusped wind-braces and what is called a ‘spere truss’, dividing off the screens passage from the main hall. In the roof was a complete louvre truss which supported a raised timber vent, allowing the smoke from a central hearth to escape. This louvre truss is a rare survival, as also are



Plas Uchaf: the hall

the casements and the shutter-grooves to the medieval windows. It is likely the stone walls of boulders and rubble (and three- and four-centred arched doorways) are original to the construction, as they would be needed to support the thrust of the roof. It was thought that further bays existed at the east and west ends, but they have since gone. The Landmark Trust has reconstructed the bay at the east end for purposes of accommodation, but also to show what the original length of the hall was. This extension did not exist in Powys’s time, or at least only at first floor level with a lean-to roof (the walls here are over three feet thick). Again, at a later date, after the insertion of the floor, dormer windows were added in the upper storey, and these together with the sloping roof at the east end can be seen in Gertrude’s drawing. The pictures in Monroe’s article and in the RCHAM inventory show the house as it was when Powys visited it.

I have no doubt that Plas Uchaf left a deep impression on Powys’s mind when he came to make a start on *Owen Glendower* in 1937. Whilst the novel’s visualisation of banqueting halls (at Dinas Bran, for instance) indicate fortified stone dwellings, there is a brief description of this type of timbered ‘homestead’ in Chapter XVI (‘The Forests of Tywyn’) – the hall of Rhys Dda – which summons up something of the character of Plas Uchaf itself:

It possessed... an air of romantic antiquity, carrying the mind back... beyond the age of castle-building, to that remote epoch when few, even among well-to-do gentlemen, possessed moats or battlements. The outer walls... were composed of a species of rubble into the composition of which plenty of small stones had entered, but it was the time-blackened ancient woodwork, almost entirely of oak, that gave the place its air of immemorial antiquity (p.563).

Notes

- 1 My thanks to Stephen Marks for showing me this in September 2011.
- 2 The judgement of Peter Smith, author of *Houses of the Welsh Countryside: A Study in Historical Geography* (1975). He surveyed the house and had it dated by means of dendrochronology in 1996.
- 3 A.R. Powys, Secretary to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 1912-1936, and author of *Repair of Ancient Buildings* (1929).
- 4 Among the documentary evidence that supports this is, for instance, a marriage settlement of 1766 which employs the expression 'Kymmer alias Plas Ucha' ('Ucha' is another form of 'Uchaf'; the word means 'upper mansion or hall'). For much of the history of Plas Uchaf and its barony see the work done by Jenny Lees, especially her website www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk. Also her 'History of Gwerclas' in the Denbighshire section of her website.
- 5 Gwerclas (now Wernlas) lies just to the south of Plas Uchaf and below it by the River Dee. The family seat was moved there in c.1600, although the dignified mansion is of c.1767. However, there is an adjacent mound which some purport to be evidence of an even older seat. Plas Uchaf probably adopted its name meaning 'upper' when the seat was moved to this more convenient lower position.
- 6 L. Monroe, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1933). This article was the first substantial examination of the architecture of the house before the removal of the inserted floors. Prior to that, an inventory of the Royal Commission on Historic Monument for Merioneth had noted and illustrated it in 1921.
- 7 Fronfeuno was re-constructed by Mr Lloyd Jones c.1961, using recycled material from a number of places including Eaton Hall, Cheshire, then being demolished, in addition to the beams from Plas Uchaf, which he owned. The story is still extant that they were shipped to America.

* * *

Chris Thomas

Four poems by Ioan Powys

By September 1941 JCP had been living in Corwen for just over six years. During this period he completed *Maiden Castle*, published *Morwyn*, *The Pleasures of Literature* and *Owen Glendower*, worked on a book of personal philosophy, *Mortal Strife* (published in 1942), and made an abortive attempt at writing a contemporary novel entitled *Edeyrnion* [1] with locations set in Corwen, which he finally abandoned towards the end of 1941. He made a serious study of the Welsh language and was soon reading books and newspapers in Welsh. However, one year after arriving in Corwen he was not yet convinced of his progress and declared *not one word can I make out of a modern Welsh book, or newspaper; & I can see I'll never speak or understand the spoken language. But I shall be able eventually to read Biblical Welsh I think...* [2]. Sometimes he delivered a lecture, in English, to a local audience. In December 1943 he was invited by the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion to give a lecture in Corwen on the Welsh influence on the work of Rabelais [3]. Morine Krissdottir notes: *John was immensely happy...in Wales he recognised that he was finally in a place in which he felt grounded, at home* [4]. JCP and Phyllis found themselves gradually integrated into a closely-knit Welsh speaking community, although Phyllis was not always happy with her situation. JCP recorded in his diary *contemplating our mortar-less Stone-walls the T.T. had a REACTION against Wales!* [5]. JCP however willingly engaged in local cultural affairs and participated in the Corwen Gorsedd and

Powys Eisteddfod in 1936 when he was installed as a bard. Did he perhaps at this point identify with ancient Welsh poets, with Taliesin and Iolo Goch, or did he perhaps identify with William Blake? *Hear the voice of the Bard! /Who Present, Past and Future sees* [6]. JCP also wrote poetry for special occasions during this period, such as two poems dedicated to his participation in the Gorsedd and Eisteddfod and two eulogies for neighbours who had died in 1940 and 1941. Meanwhile he struggled to compose an ‘englyn’ [7], a difficult Welsh verse form [8], for the Corwen Eisteddfod in 1937 where he was also invited to deliver a speech in Welsh. He recorded this event in his diary on 3 July 1937, *Thanks be to Bendegeitfran* [9] *I got thro all right.*

The four occasional poems referred to above, which JCP composed between 1936 and 1941 and which he proudly signed with his new bardic name of Ioan Powys, were originally published in a local Corwen newspaper called *Yr Adsain*. These poems are reprinted here. One of the poems, entitled *Marwnad*, an elegy for his near neighbour, William Williams, who died on 12 June 1940, was reprinted in *Newsletter* No.55, July 2005, see back cover and p. 60. A note in *Newsletter* 55 records that a cutting of JCP’s poem, *Marwnad*, from *Yr Adsain* (The Echo) was found by a reader tipped in to a copy of an old anthology of Welsh songs and poems, *Caniadau Cymru*, edited by W. Lewis Jones (1st edition, 1897, 2nd edition, 1907, published by Jarvis and Foster, Bangor) which had been passed down from JCP’s collection of books.

As far as I can determine the other poems published in *Yr Adsain*, have not been reprinted before. Although it would be hard to classify these poems amongst JCP’s best attempts at verse-making they do have some biographical significance especially for anyone particularly interested in this period of JCP’s life in Wales – the poem entitled *Yng Nghoed Pen y Pigyn* (*In the Woods of Pen y Pigyn*) for instance reflects JCP’s continuing interest in Arthurian themes as well as his concern with Welsh history and Owen Glendower. They also tell us something about his perception of himself and his role as a Welsh bard, as well as of the local people he met on his walks around Corwen. In order to provide some background and context for each of these poems I have quoted extracts from JCP’s diary and reports published in *Yr Adsain*.

The Proclamation Ceremony of the Gorsedd in Pen y Pigyn woods, 16 May 1936

JCP’s diary, 13 May 1936

Her [the T.T.] first words (I always regard her first words as an Oracle) were about my not going to have my hair cut before the Gorsedd day for I have such a Bardic Look!... I went to call on Gwenllian Williams... She told me I was to be admitted into the Inner Circle...

16 May 1936

The Gorsedd-Cadair Powys was an extraordinarily thrilling event in our life. Katie heard the band play her favourite Men of Harlech as it came up the Hill. And the cornet turning to East & West & North & South was most satisfying & the Horn of Plenty [10] brought Ceridwen’s cauldron to my mind. But the chief thing was the Arch-Druid ...Ioan is my name! Ioan Powys.

18 May 1936

And did mention my new Gorsedd name ‘Ioan’ – ‘Yo-arn’! It was as if some Secret Glory had been obtained for us...It was very weird, exciting & a little awe inspiring.

The cutting down of trees in Pen y Pigyn Woods

JCP's diary, 19 May 1936

I was shocked; for...Rûg [11] has sold the noble trees of Pen y Pigyn Wood to a timber merchant & they are cutting them down – all the big trees.

Yr Adsain, 19 May 1936

Penypigyn Woods Corwen/To be cut down this week/Timber fellers are busily engaged this week in cutting down the trees in Penypigyn Woods. The mountains will look very bare without the trees and no doubt the footpaths will be cut up when the timber hauling commences there. Another beauty spot is being wiped out.

JCP's diary, 21 May 1936

I have composed a sonnet called *Yng Nghoed Pen y Pigyn* on the subject of their murdering the great oak trees there. I could hear them crashing down... Pattie will take my 'pome' to the offices of the *Adsain*.

Yng Nghoed Pen-Y-Pigyn

(first published in *Yr Adsain* 26 May 1936)

I bowed my head, I saw the Druid stand,
I touched the sword, I heard the magic horn
That from this sacred grove ere CHRIST was born
To the four winds blew "Peace" throughout the land [12];
Calling the bards of Powys – But is it "Peace"
Among these trees? They bend, they stoop, they fall!
They muffle up their heads in their own pall
Like murdered Caesars. Murder is their "Peace."
No mystic influence from the Stream Divine
Can raise those prostrate limbs. Under that bough
No more can lovers – 'Tis Glyndwr we lack!
This ruined grove of Druid trees was thine.
Can no horn wake thee where thou slumb' rest now?
Hush! He's with Arthur. He will yet come back.

*

The Powys Corwen Eisteddfod 22 August 1936

JCP's diary, 22 August 1936

A fine day for the Powys Eisteddfod!...the Mist white & dense filled the valley between Rûg & the flag staff of Pen y Pigyn! It looked a marvellous sight. Slowly in a god like manner it moved from West to East as if it were a living part of the Gorsedd ritual...my Niece & I helped to dress the Druid. I was more impressed than ever before by this Druid whose bardic name is 'Rhosier' but his real name Roger Hughes [13]. His dignity and aplomb & sacrosanct reserved manner is like that of a Grand Lama of Tibet [14]. He is Perfect...the man is incomparable in

his office. Then we marched my niece and I behind the Welsh Dragon & behind the Horn of Plenty which we both furtively touched for Luck. It is the heathen Grail in a different form from the Cauldron.

***Sonnet on The Chairing of the Bard at
Powys Corwen Eisteddfod on Saturday Aug 22 1936***
(first published in *Yr Adsain* 25 August 1936)

What horn is this that conjures every clod
And every drop of water and drift of air
From Zenith unto Nadir till I swear
My fealty, long deferred. To this proud sod?
Into this own, as if he were a god,
Mounts the young Bard with no man to gainsay.
Immortal shadows are with us today,
In sandals of old kings his feet are shod;
Old kings, all slain in battle, holding more dear
The harp than the harp's glory on their shields
"Fear him who fears not death!" There's not a stone
From Caer Drewyn to Dinas Brân but sheer
Through its tellurian navel something yields
Response, to feel old Powys her bard enthrone.

Yr Adsain, 25 August 1936

Powys Eisteddfod at Corwen was a huge all round success. The Gorsedd in Penypigyn Woods was amongst the best ever held at that famous spot. Rhosier (the Rev. W Roger Hughes, Bryneglwys), conducted the proceedings. In the bardic circle were three of Britain's most famous novel writers – Messers John Cowper Powys and James Hanley, and Mrs Elena Puw Morgan [15], Corwen.

*

A threnody for William Williams (1888-1940)

William Williams ('the philosophic Road Man') died on Wednesday 12 June 1940

JCP's diary, 13 June 1940

I composed & the T.T. typed a letter I mean a Sonnet & a letter to the "*Adsain*" in memory of Road Man Friend Mr William Williams - *Marwnad* ['Elegy'] – Ioan Powys ae cant. ['who sang it'] (as it always says.)

Yr Adsain, 18 June

The Late Mr William Williams/Passing of Popular Townsman

The death occurred suddenly during the early hours of last Wednesday of Mr William Williams aged 52 years, Brookside Cottages, Corwen (formerly of Plas Onn Terrace). The deceased although in moderate health had continued with his work as a County Council employee up to Tuesday evening. He was very popular in the town, and was for several years a playing

member of Corwen cricket club. He took a n active part in religious work in the town, and was a member of the Corwen Free Church Council and the Zion Presbyterian church and Sunday School having acted for a period as Sunday School Superintendant and teacher.. He took a great interest in singing... Mr Williams was a member of Corwen Parish Council and the Edeyrnion District School Managers.

Marwnad

(first published in *Yr Adsain*, 18 June 1940, reprinted in Powys Society *Newsletter* No.55, July 2005)

We never used to meet but in a trice
Charmed by your voice I leant upon my stick
To hear you, little guessing how the wick
Of life was burning low. 'Twas as a Sais
You spoke, but thought yn Gymraeg. Once or twice,
As with rich dignity you broke off quick
And smiled your meaning, you explained this trick.
Ah! You must now translate from Paradise
Until our foes hear the tremendous tongue
That always hath made tyrants stammer and blink:
"Who takes the sword shall perish by the sword!"
Too soon, too soon, the Invader's bells are rung.
You hear, you tell me, from beyond the brink
The thunder of the chariots of the Lord!

Ioan Powys ae cant. [16]

*

A threnody for Miss Ceurwen E Williams (1930-1941)

Ceurwen Williams died on Thursday 18 September 1941

JCP's diary, 11 May 1940

Saw no sign of this "Williams Family with so many big bouncing girls" from Tynant. Are they Welsh? They must be! There is an old gentleman with them & the mother.

16 May 1940

...it was my lot to tell news to the Wesleyan Minister... i.e. about the Williamses of Ty uwch Lyn who are Wesleyans

18 May 1940

Up mountain saw the dark little Williams girl feeding that lamb they keep in the shed at night out of a bottle.

10 June 1940

Up mountain and saw one of the younger girls of the Williams family – so shy, so sweet, so

desirable, leaning on a gate – and self conscious too! This one was the one whose name I couldn't catch – like “Caerwen” [17] The fair stolid one – not Vesta

1 August 1940

I met Mrs Williams the pretty mother of all those delicious children. I gave a raspberry [*sic*] to each of these.

2 August 1940

Met three of those lovely bewitching girls of Ty Uwch y llyn, all of them “too young for love.”

Yr Adsain, 23 September 1941

Death of Miss Ceurwen E. Williams

The death occurred, on Thursday last, after a brief illness of Miss Ceurwen Elizabeth Williams, the 10½ year old daughter of Mrs Williams, Ty Uwchy-ilyn, Corwen (formerly of Siamber, Tynant). Deep sympathy is expressed with the family in their sad bereavement. The funeral took place at Llangwm Churchyard on Saturday last when the Rev Edward Davies Corwen officiated. The funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr John Price, Northyn Terrace, Corwen.

Sacrifice

In memory of Ceurwen E. Williams

(first published in *Yr Adsain* 23 September 1941)

Not in the perilous air nor drowning sea.
Not in the camp, nor in the factory-shed.
Not at the docks, nor at the scorched pit-head.
Is the only sacrifice for victory.
Light-dancing as the merriest sun- mote
That pierced the mist was Ceurwen; but our town
Must play its part in beating tyrants down;
And so death takes our tenderest by the throat
O! precious flower, no sooner blown but lost;
Who knew not why nor where nor how were made
The embattled Nation and the savage Creed;
You are a part of that pure Holocaust
That innocent blood, that Price that's always paid
When of a better world sown is the seed.

Ioan Powys (John Cowper Powys)

Notes

1. 'John Cowper Powys's Unfinished Welsh Novel: An Introduction to *Edeyrnion*', by Peter J. Foss, *Powys Journal*, Vol.1, 1991, pp. 45-50
2. *The Letters of John Cowper Powys and Dorothy Richardson*, edited by Janet Fouli, 2008, letter dated 14 June 1936, p. 108. Iorwerth C. Peate notes JCP *acquired an excellent reading knowledge*

- of the language although he was shy of writing and speaking Welsh (John Cowper Powys Letters, 1937-1954, edited by Iorwerth C. Peate, 1974, p. viii. See also JCP letter to Sven-Erik Täckmark, 16 February 1937: *my struggles with the Welsh language I fear wd strike you as pathetic...I get on better with reading it.*
3. *Yr Adsain*, 7 December 1943
 4. *Descents of Memory*, Morine Krissdottir, 2007, p. 331
 5. 24 August 1937, *Petrushka and the Dancer; The Diaries of John Cowper Powys, 1929-1939*, selected and edited by Morine Krissdottir, 1995, p. 253
 6. Introduction, *Songs of Experience*
 7. *Petrushka and the Dancer*, p. 249
 8. For a discussion of the Englyn see: *The Origin of the Welsh Englyn*, John Rhys, Y Commrodor, 1905, pp. 93-94 and *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, John Rhys, 1891, pp. 384-385
 9. Bran, folk hero in the *Mabinogion*, cited in Owen Glendower. Bendefreitigan [Bran the Blessed] appears in *Porius* – see Bill Keith's *A Reader's Companion to Porius*
 10. The rituals of the Gorsedd and Druidic ceremony were invented by Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg [1747-1826]) and are described in his *Barddas, A Collection of Original Documents, Illustrative of the Theology, Wisdom and Usages of the Bardo-Druidic System*, edited by John Williams, vol.1, 1862, Vol.2, 1874. See also *The Gorsedd of the Bards of Britain* by Iorwerth C. Peate (who corresponded with JCP), *Antiquity*, March 1951
 11. The Rûg estate covers a large geographical area around Corwen and Llangollen. During JCP's residence in Corwen the owner of the Rûg estate was Thomas John Wynn, the 5th Baron Newborough (1878-1957)
 12. As part of the Gorsedd ceremony the Archdruid withdraws a sword from its sheath three times and calls "Is there Peace?" the Assembly replies "Peace".
 13. Rev W. Roger Hughes (1898-1958), licensed as a curate in 1925, served the living of Bryneglwys-yn-lan 1933-1958, rural Dean of Edeyrnion and Canon of St. Asaph cathedral, editor of *Yr Haul*, 1930-138, rural district Councillor, winner of the Chair of the Powys Eisteddfod, 1930, author of *Cerddi Offeiriad* (poems) [*Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, NLW]
 14. JCP was fascinated by the religious traditions and culture of Tibet. He read with great interest *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1932) by the famous traveller, explorer and Buddhist, Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969). In his diary, 3 March 1934, JCP recorded *Last night read Alexandra David-Neel on Tibetan Magic & the creation of living Entities by the power of the Mind...Again at breakfast the little T.T. did read from this favourite book of hers. She adores to think of Tibet.*
 15. Elena Puw Morgan (1900-1973). Author of *Y Graith (The Scar)*, 1938, and *Y Wisg Sidan*, 1939, several books for children and many short stories in Welsh. She was the first woman to win the National Eisteddfod's prose medal (1938)
 16. 'ae cant' means ...*said it* or ...*composed it*. JCP appears to be deliberately emulating bardic poetry as in for instance *The Gododin (6th century): Hwn yw e gododin anerin ae cant/This is the Gododin Aneurin sang it* or a poem in *The Black Book of Carmarthen: Marunad Madauc mab Maredukt kyntel y prydit maur ae cant/An elegy for Madog ap Maredudd, Cynddelw the great poet sang it*. JCP probably consulted Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales* (1868) which includes these texts. We know he also acquired a copy of the single volume 1870 edition of the *Myvyrian Archaeology of Wales*, a collection of ancient Welsh texts and manuscripts, compiled by Owen Jones, William Owen Pugh and Iolo Morganwg, 1801/1807 (see letter to C. Benson Roberts, 8 May 1939: *To this book*, says JCP, *every single scholar who ever writes refers.*)
 17. The official register of deaths (BMD) records her first name as Ceinwen which is also recorded in the burial register for Llangwm church in Denbighshire. Both forms of the name mean "blessed", "fair" or "lovely". JCP may well have identified the name with "the Welsh Demeter" Ceridwen.

JCP's Dostoevsky

I

From One Hundred Best Books

(G. Arnold Shaw, 1916 –

abridged version reprinted as Little Blue Book no.435, 1923)

43. Dostoevsky. Crime and Punishment. The Idiot. The Brothers Karamazov. The Insulted and Injured. The Possessed. *Translated by Constance Garnett and published by Macmillan. Other translations in Everyman's Library.*

Dostoevsky is the greatest and most racial of all Russian writers. He is the subtlest psychologist in fiction. As an artist he has a dark and sombre intensity and an imaginative vehemence only surpassed by Shakespeare. As a philosopher he anticipates Nietzsche in the direction of his insight, though in his conclusions he is diametrically opposite. He teaches that out of weakness, abnormality, perversity, foolishness, desperation, abandonment, and a morbid pleasure in humiliation, it is possible to arrive at high and unutterable levels of spiritual ecstasy. His ideal is sanctity – not morality – and his revelations of the impassioned and insane motives of human nature – its instinct towards self-destruction for instance – will never be surpassed for their terrible and convincing truth.

The strange Slavophil dream of the regeneration of the world by the power of the Russian soul and the magic of the “White Christ who comes out of Russia” could not be more arrestingly expressed than in these passionate and extraordinary works of art.

II

The Reader Critic

This article was first published in The Little Review, February 1915. The titles are transcribed exactly as they appear in the Review. This issue also included Margaret Anderson's comments on JCP's style as a lecturer in her note 'Our first Year', as well as a brief review of The War and Culture and Alexander Kaun's review of JCP's recent lectures at the Little Theatre (for quotations from Alexander Kaun's review see NL96, March 2019, p.24). CT

Mr Powys on Dostoevsky

(A reader sends us these jottings from one of Mr Powys's lectures)

Shudders of life.

I have only one thing to do – to bring you into a strange mass of palpable darkness with something moving in it. Dostoevsky is really a great mass, a volume, not a cloud, nor a pillar of fire nor a puff of smoke, but a vast, formless, shapeless mass of darkness, palpable and drawing you towards itself.

Reading him is dangerous because of the inherent sense of fear likely to be accentuated in those who are a little mad and whose madness takes on the form of fear. We go on a visit to a madhouse, to hospitals with Dostoevsky. But with him this whole world suddenly changes into a mad house. It is all haunting madhouses and hospitals filled with the maniacs of the particular fear we are subject to.

(Life is all a running away – a distraction. We are running away when we are talking, when we are making love – then more than ever, perhaps.)

In Dostoevsky we suddenly realize that these Russians are ourselves. If the religion, mysticism, liberalism, despotism they possess were only Russian there are excellent books written by travellers in Russia for us to read. But Dostoevsky is different. If I could but mesmerise you... It is like reading the gospels in childhood, being overrun and overthrown by fate and then after one has lived meeting the words of the childhood situations and making associations.

I do not think of him as an artist, though he is a great one. You do not think of him... In ordinary life we suppose half the things and more we might say. Vanity and fear are the ultimate things. In Dostoevsky the people tug and scrape at one another's vain nerves with adder's poison. He gives one the sensation of discovering one's self and betraying one's self. He reveals as friends talking and discussing in the small hours of the morning reveal themselves to one another. The talk may be a describing of the animal functions of the human body. But in reality it is the psychic tingling, electric vibrations which the physiological structure exerts upon mind! Mind! Mind! Dostoevsky is interested in what people actually feel. He is more with people who have written diaries than with so-called realistic novelists. One gets from him a sense of perversion of human imagination... He is the most important of novelists full of ripples and vibrations of imagination. Everybody has imagination. The things we do are nothing. Imagination is the only thing over which Will has no power.

Nietzsche says that he got all his contemporary philosophy from Dostoevsky. He got from him even his idea of the inner circle of aristocratic souls who really rule the world, are themselves unhappy, and take with others to places which they (these others) cannot enter. Dostoevsky thinks that the secret of the world is in abandonment, perversion; Nietzsche in hardness, stiffness, the gay, the strong, the beautiful, aristocratic, dominant... Nietzsche with all his reality does not describe life as it is. Zarathustra is a dream-impossible perhaps. But Dostoevsky does describe life. Nietzsche's man is absolutely alone – has his own hell... Dostoevsky has that too. But in a different way. He gives the feeling of a third person where two are alone. Do not think that Dostoevsky is a mystic. The essential thing is that you have this sense of a third person to which genius appeals. Dostoevsky is a stronger as well as a truer one than even Nietzsche himself.

Nietzsche is a skater upon the ice, a dancer upon a tight rope who remains a white, balanced figure on the surface. Dostoevsky plunges – into a darkness full of voices.

You must get there by a form of perversion. Every one of his characters is incurably hurt. Nietzscheans harden their hearts and live on the surface. All Dostoevsky people are weak. He thinks that only out of weakness will redemption come; abandonment to every emotion. In that he is Dionysian... Dostoevsky I cannot put into words. Perversion; Disease; God is Disease; God is Pain; Dostoevsky depicts how Disease gives one illumination. We have an idea that we must be well. Even Nietzsche says that. The Greeks said it ages ago. Dostoevsky says "No; – I offer you a new value" He has a lust for fools – understands the mania that people have of making fools of themselves. God is Folly; God is Cruelty – perhaps an epicene God.

Dostoevsky is a celebralist. His speciality is imaginative reactions. All the lusts that have stretched their wailing arms, all the hopes, all the goblins... In sex as in everything else people are not what they are doing; they are in that vortex of what they imagine themselves. Dostoevsky understands all that. Those frank spoken people who think they know sex are puritans on the other side. They have no imagination.

We can overestimate what Dostoevsky has from Russia and not attribute what he is to himself. Other Russians are Russians – Turgenev, Tolstoy, Andreyev, Chekhov, Gorky – but they are not as big as he is; perhaps they are more of the broader stamp.

....Constance Garnett's translations are masterpieces. The French are too artistic to translate Dostoevsky... No one can approach Dostoevsky in creating a saint. Russia as the spiritual bringer back of the world to Christianity – this runs through his works. He is the Christian. His books are full of translations from Scripture. He understands the underlying psychology of the gospels. Nietzsche said that putting the gospels with the art of the Old Testament was a crime in the name of Art. The Old Testament is undoubtedly finer art, but the New is psychology – masterly.

III

Images

From a letter to Dorothy Richardson, dated December 31st, 1932:

I've got a queer book of Death Masks of "great men" as that old Victorian phrase runs [...] and in it there's the death-mask of Dostoevsky & I'm struck by the terrific toughness and rude strength of his face which to me resembles those busts, more or less authentic, so they say, and so surprisingly rugged sturdy & tough, of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes.

From Dostoevsky (1946)

page 11

But at least we shall have, those of us who keep Dostoevsky's Euripidean death-mask as the figurehead of our new Argo, the classic exultation of not being left

behind like the Lotus-Eaters, but of being on the wave-crest of human destiny, even if that wave be carrying us whither we know not, and without compass or chart!

page 27

...His death-mask has indeed a striking resemblance to certain naturalistic busts of the Greek Tragedians, especially to one of Euripides. This particular resemblance is natural enough when we consider the juxtaposition of extreme faith side by side with extreme doubt which characterizes Milton's favourite among these dramatists; but it is not only in busts of Euripides but in those of all the great historic Greeks that we detect a superabundant vital strength, at once rugged and very flexible, suggesting a titanic fury of magnetic force that could be swiftly, deftly, and without effort *converged*, first at one point in life's circumference, and then at another, and at other times deliberately permitted to transform itself into melting weakness.

page 208 (end)

Not for nothing does Dostoievsky's death-mask resemble the death-mask [?] of the most modern and the most heretical of the ancient Greek Dramatists. Not for nothing does there run throughout his work as it ran throughout his own life, a mysterious resilience that startles and almost shocks us. It is in fact the old Hellenic challenge to fate; the old Homeric acceptance of fate, the old human vitality that contains death as its final ingredient, the vitality that will yet make *man*, rather than any Man-God or God-Man, the creator of man's future.

KK

