

THE POWYS SOCIETY

News Letter

February 1973

The Society has been in existence since December 1967 when a meeting was arranged by the founder secretary Miss Barbara Spencer, to discuss the formation of a proposed Powys Society. The early meetings were mainly reminiscences by people who had known the Powys family. At this time ~~there was no declaration~~ of intent, and much of the discussion and conversation was devoted to John Cowper Powys. The first paper to indicate a departure from the somewhat nebulous and formless meetings hitherto held was a talk on Wolf Solent by Glen Cavaliero. This was the first published paper and was followed by one on The Literary Criticism of John Cowper Powys by Robert Adkinson. Unfortunately this paper was not published, but like the one on Wolf Solent it bore the stamp of authority. It was after this meeting in March 1969 that a Committee was elected, and the following members became the first officers:-

Chairman	C Benson Roberts
Deputy Chairman	David Goodway
Secretary	Barbara Spencer
Treasurer	Rod Harper
Committee	Belinda Humfrey Derrick Stephens

The first meeting of the Committee was held in April and one of its immediate results was to decide that the aim of the Society must be the establishment of the true literary status of the Powys family by promoting reading and discussion of their works. It was intended to hold three meetings a year, in March, June and October, and any papers read would be distributed to members. To defray the cost of preparing these papers and of the postage a subscription of ten shillings (50p) was imposed. About this time Angus Wilson consented to become President, and the structure of the Society took on a firmer and more purposeful turn.

In October 1969 the novelist Rosemary Manning read some of the letters written by Alyse Gregory to Llewelyn Powys. Since then the following papers have been sent to members:-

Kenneth Hopkins:	Louis Wilkinson (March 1970)
Timothy Hyman:	Powys' World Book (June 1970)
Kenneth Hopkins:	A Miscellany concerning the houses in which the Powyses had lived. (November 1970)
Timothy Hyman:	The Modus Vivendi of John Cowper Powys (March 1971)
John Boulton:	The Market Bell T F Powys' unpublished novel (May 1971)
Harry Coombes:	Reserve and Ebullience: two brothers in literature (November 1971)

In the summer of 1970 Barbara Spencer resigned as secretary, and Derrick Stephens, a committee member, took on the job.

The first meeting in 1972 was held in April, when the novelist John Toft read a paper on Atlantis. The summer meeting took the form of a discussion on the Powys world and was introduced by Glen Cavaliero.

September 8 - 10 was the occasion of a weekend conference to celebrate the centenary of the birth of John Cowper Powys. This was held at Churchill College, Cambridge, and among those contributing were George Steiner, Angus Wilson, Colin Wilson, and G Wilson Knight. H P Collins was prevented by illness from attending, and his lecture was replaced by a discussion under the chairmanship of David Goodway in which Kenneth Hopkins, John Brebner and Glen Cavaliero answered questions put to them by **Mrs Diane Fernandez**. A series of seminars were lead by Angus Wilson (on *Porius*), Glen Cavaliero and John Brebner (on *Wolf Solent*) and Timothy Hyman (on *Weymouth Sands*). Sixty people were resident at Churchill, and nine others came in to the lectures and seminars. An exhibition of Powys material held by the College was displayed in the Bevin Library, supplemented by some manuscript material from the private collection of Mr E E Bissell. Two portraits and a bust of John Cowper were on view, the portraits by Gertrude Powys and Augustus John being on loan from the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, and the bust being lent by the sculptor Olaf de Wet.

Those who attended will not only remember the lectures, seminars and countless conversations, but also the hospitality of Dr and Mrs Steiner, who invited everyone for drinks at their house on Saturday evening, when Dr Steiner's own collection of Powysiana was on display.

Arising from the centenary celebrations was an exhibition of John Cowper Powys' books and pamphlets at the Norwich City Library. This was arranged by Geoffrey Cooper and Kenneth Hopkins, with the kind permission of Mr Philip Hepworth, the City Librarian. The material on view was from the private collection of Kenneth Hopkins, and was a splendid sight.

A similar exhibition was arranged by Martyn Brandford and Gillian David at the County Library, Bridgend, Glamorgan, using material available in the Library and drawing on the personal collection of Benson Roberts.

On November 3rd the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies at Leeds arranged a Powys Centenary Lecture which was presented by Professor Wilson Knight, who lectured on *John Cowper Powys: A Centenary Appreciation*. David Goodway was largely responsible for this arrangement. It was fitting that a Board of Extra-Mural Studies should have remembered J.C.P. - a mighty lecturer who could draw a capacity crowd.

During the autumn, members of the English Department, University College, Swansea, with financial help from Yr Academi Gymreig, gave a centenary reading from J.C.P.'s works, arranged by Sonia Tilson and produced by Peter Thomson, lecturer in Drama. Suzanne Delaney and members of University College read the selection.

Belinda Humfrey arranged a J.C.P. day at Lampeter, with a lecture by Jeremy Hooker from University College, Aberystwyth, and a production by Peter Thomson of the Swansea centenary reading with six Lampeter students as readers.

On November 25th Yr Academi Gymreig held a reception and reading of J.C.P. at the Royal Hotel, Cardiff.

In 1973 the Reading by Lampeter students is to go to Aberystwyth, where there may be a special seminar or lecture on J.C.P. There will also be a seminar at Leicester University in March, conducted by Glen Cavaliero.

Newspaper accounts of the Centenary appeared in the Swedish newspaper Aftonblader, October 7 1972, written by Sven Erik Tackmark, and in Le Monde, November 3rd 1972 by Diane Fernandez. A brief note in Figaro indicated the publication in the spring of Ducdame (Givre et Sang) and A Glastonbury Romance (Les Enchantments du Glastonbury) translated by Diane Fernandez and Francois-Xavier Jaujard. Diane Fernandez has also contributed an account of J.C.P. to the new Encyclopedia Universitas.

Professor Wilson Knight's lecture on Powys' Humour, given at the Centenary Conference, will be published soon in the Contemporary Review. The London Magazine for Feb/March 1973 will contain an essay on John Cowper Powys and his critics by Robert Nye.

Glen Cavaliero's book on John Cowper Powys is to be published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford, and Jeremy Hooker's in the Writers of Wales series by the University of Wales Press. Also scheduled for publication in the autumn are reprints of Owen Glendower and Atlantis (Cedric Chivers, The Portway Reprints) and Weymouth Sands (Rivers Press, Cambridge, with an introduction by Angus Wilson). Other items are being considered but nothing precise can be reported as yet.

At the Annual General Meeting in October 1972 the first chairman of the Society, Benson Roberts, retired. He had guided the Society through its early and somewhat difficult years, and the members present expressed their thanks to him for his efforts in putting the Society on a firm footing. His place as chairman was taken by Glen Cavaliero. Rod Harper, who had been treasurer since 1969, also decided to retire from that office, and again the grateful thanks of the Society were recorded for his efforts alongside that of Benson Roberts. The structure of the new Committee is:-

Chairman	Glen Cavaliero
Deputy Chairman	David Goodway
Secretary/Treasurer	Derrick Stephens
Committee	Belinda Humfrey Gillian Jackson Timothy Hyman Kenneth Hopkins Gilbert Turner

It was decided that the subscription should remain at £1.00 (£1.50 for husband and wife) and £2.00 for overseas members. This sum should be regarded as a minimum subscription, and any member wishing to make a larger contribution is most welcome to do so. Members would help very much by notifying any change of address, and are expected to pay their subscriptions each year without any reminder. ANY MEMBER WISHING TO RESIGN IS ASKED TO DO SO IN WRITING. This does help to keep the members' register accurate and up-to-date, and helps to control postage costs.

At the conclusion of the A.G.M. Mrs Gwyneth Miles read a paper on John Cowper Powys: Landscape, Romance, and the Regional Novel, which all members have had by now. The talk on March 31st will be given by Michael Roulstone, on Llewelyn Powys.

Members may be interested in the following publications:-

1. Essays on John Cowper Powys, edited by Belinda Humfrey. Available from University of Wales Press, Merthyr House, James St., Cardiff CF1 6EU. Price £3.75 plus 15p postage. 1972.
2. The Powys Brothers by Kenneth Hopkins. Available from the author at Warren House Press, Southrepps, Norfolk. Price £2.25. Reprint of the edition published in 1967.
3. Neglected Powers by G Wilson Knight. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971. Includes five chapters on John Cowper Powys.
4. The Way of Cosmic Purpose by Joan M Peterson. Available from Rigel Press, 21 Concurry Street, London SW6. For members interested in J.C.P's philosophy. 1970.
5. The Powys Family. A catalogue of books in Dorset County Library. Compiled by K Carter (Librarian). Available from Mr Carter at 40p. 1972.
6. The Powys Family. A check-list of the collection in the Colgate University Library. Compiled by Thomas E Davies. Colgate University Library, Hamilton, New York. 1972.