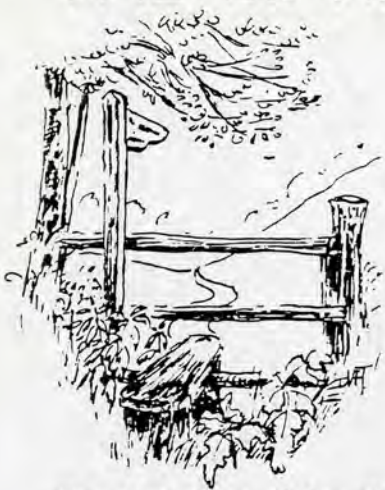


THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter No. 2



Our first Newsletter of 1981 goes out to our first 150 or so members. Greetings! We are very pleased, too, to welcome the Poet Laureate, Sir John Betjeman, and to pass on best wishes on the formation of the Fellowship, received from the poet R.S. Thomas from his home in Wales.

Members have joined from many parts of Britain and from overseas, including Dr. W.J. Keith from Toronto University, President of the Richard Jefferies Society.

The Ninth Birthday Walk will take place on Sunday, 1st March. Assemble Steep Church near Petersfield, at 10 a.m. for 10.30 start. Edward E. Thomas, one of our Vice-Presidents, and Harry Holmes from Hawkley, our Hon. Treasurer, are this year's leaders. The route will be a 'circular' one, over the Shoulder of Mutton Hill to Hawkley, via Happersnapper Hanger.

"To walk with Edward Thomas in any countryside was to see, hear, smell and know it with fresh senses"

- wrote Eleanor Farjeon of Edward Thomas (in her introduction to 'The Green Roads'), and in a letter to Eleanor, Edward wrote of this particular point on our route "It is a Hanger over and about Harry Roberts' (HAPPERSNAPPER)"

Pub Lunch in Hawkley, and return via Cheesecombe and Oakshott rill to Steep church for tea (kindly provided by willing helpers in aid of church funds). Followed, at approximately 4.30 p.m. by a short Birthday Tribute in Words, in the church, arranged by Michael Bakewell.

The usual Walk Sheet ("becoming collectors items" comments one of our regular walkers and an illustrated sketch map will be available, at a small charge to cover costs, at Steep on the day. See Anne or Vicky before the start. Please phone - or write, The Selborne Bookshop (Selborne 307) by mid-day Friday, 27th Feb. if you are coming.

A3 Bypass

The subject of the proposed by-passing of Petersfield was referred to in our previous newsletter. The fellowship has registered support of SCARRP. Details of their plans are enclosed. Another organisation concerned with the routing of the A3 is also active in the Petersfield area. This is the 'No-By-Pass Society'. The Chairman is Mrs. Margaret Ackroyd, 6 Sheep Street, Petersfield, Hants.

Auction Sale - Sotheby's, 15th/16th December 1980. Lot 378 Thomas (Edward) autograph letter signed - 1 page, small quarto, Steep, Petersfield, 21 March, 1915, to Frank Sidgwick, sold for £100. In the same sale Lot 301 Freeman (John) twenty-three autograph letters signed and two autograph poems, fetched £450. The correspondence included 'a long discussion of Freeman's plans to publish the poetical and prose work of Edward Thomas and his own memorial volume on Thomas.'

Eleanor Farjeon wrote of their friendship in 'The Last Four Years' ... "John Freeman and I became friends over the production of the book, and I understood why Edward felt affection for this quiet poet, this 'sort of angel, you know'."

Eleanor Farjeon Centenary

The centenary of the birth of Edward and Helen's friend Eleanor Farjeon falls on 13th February. On 10th February at 7.50 p.m. a programme 'A Life kept always young' will go out on BBC Radio 4. This will be repeated at 11.05 a.m. on the actual anniversary date, Friday, 13th February. The programme, written by Anne Harvey, a portrait of Eleanor Farjeon with friends taking part, will include Myfanwy Thomas,

Christopher Fry and Kaye Webb. Other events, including a Centenary Exhibition with some Thomas exhibits, are taking place during February at Burgh House, New End Square, Hampstead, NW3. (Phone Anne Harvey, 997 6443, for information)

Poems in their Place A series of programmes is scheduled for transmission on TV BBC2 later in the year. Edward Thomas is one of the poets to be featured.

From Sunday, 28th March, Colin Davis's series of 'Twelve good men and true' will be repeated on BBC Radio 4. The series includes his study of Helen Thomas.

New Publications

(for further details of these, and other titles in print, please see enclosed list)

The Poetry of Edward Thomas by Andrew Motion was published at the end of last year and has been widely reviewed. A Language not to be betrayed: selected prose of

Edward Thomas edited with an introduction by Edna Longley is due in June. Edna Longley was one of the two speakers on Edward Thomas at the Steep centenary celebrations in 1978. R. George Thomas, the other speaker, now has his The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas out in paperback. With a new introduction, this is based on his 1978 hardback but lacks the documentation of the textual edition. In Pursuit of Spring, with an introduction by P.J. Kavanagh, is to be published next month.

This is in the same series as The Icknield Way. W.J. Keith's The Poetry of Nature: Rural Perspective in Poetry from Wordsworth to the Present, contains a chapter on Edward Thomas's poetry, just as his earlier book The Rural Tradition contained a chapter on his prose. The Chess Player coming from the Whittington Press soon contains three unpublished Thomas essays. At the end of May Colin Davis's new paperback Twelve good men and true, based on his series on Radio 4, will be published. One of the studies is of Helen Thomas.

The Selected Poems and Prose of Edward Thomas edited by David Wright is to be published on Thursday, 28th May and the publishers, who have generously acknowledged the Selborne Bookshop's contribution to the wider appreciation of Edward Thomas's writings, have suggested an occasion to take place on publication of this Penguin English Library edition.

The Fellowship symbol which appears on our leaflet and newsletters etc. is based on a stile to be found in the countryside around Steep. It was designed, together with the lettering, by Victoria Thomson. 'Vicky' will be known to many of you, for it is she who has annually produced the illustrated 'birthday walkers' card which all of us taking part on the day sign, for presentation to Myfanwy Thomas. Vicky also painted the picture of the Red House sent to Myfanwy on the occasion of her 70th birthday. Mrs. Thomson has been made an honorary life member of the Fellowship.

Forthcoming Events

We hope to arrange a Reading - possibly either in Oxford or London, later in the year, and to have another Autumn Walk, following on the success of last year's Icknield Way occasion. The proposed walk to be in the area of the Quantocks, as seen through the eyes of Edward Thomas, who went there 'In Pursuit of Spring'. Full details in the next newsletter.

A Pine in Solitude - a portrait of Edward Thomas compiled by Anne Harvey will be performed at Bromsgrove on 3rd April.

Items for the Edward Thomas Fellowship Newsletter

The Hon. Secretary, Alan A. Martin, Munster Lodge, 29A Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 9PG, will always be pleased to receive information of relevant events, items of interest, publications etc., which could be included in forthcoming newsletters.

We hope to meet up with many of you on 1st March, at Steep for the Edward Thomas Birthday Walk.

Anne Mallinson
February 1981