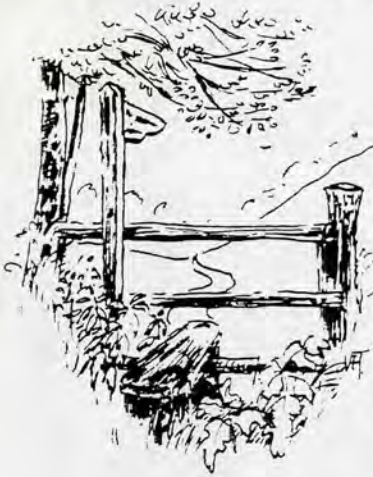


THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter No. 3



Our third Newsletter comes to you with my apologies for slightly short notice regarding our next gathering, but, happily, as it has been mentally compiled in such evocative places as the 'Dolau Cothi Arms' at Pumpsaint, in Caermarthen-shire, and at Adlestrop - en route to the Blewbury Festival to hear, unbeknown to Myfanwy until the interval!, her talk on 'Our Parents, Helen and Edward Thomas' given in Blewbury church to a delighted audience - I am able to include a few more items which may be of interest to you all.

Radio Wales 19th JUNE, 9.30 - 9.59 pm. 'A Private Person - Myfanwy Thomas' produced by Sian Lloyd.

'To Edward and Helen' - An Anniversary visit to Eastbury, SATURDAY, 11th JULY 2.30 pm

Ten years ago the window engraved by Laurence Whistler 'in celebration of the lives of Edward Thomas poet and Helen his wife' was installed, and dedicated on 16th October, in the small downland church of St. James the Greater in the Berkshire village of Eastbury. On 11th July 1977 a simple ceremony took place in the churchyard there, when flowers from their three Steep homes in Hampshire were placed on Helen's grave to commemorate the centenary of her birth. To be followed a year later by the dedication of the two Laurence Whistler lancet windows in Steep church to mark the centenary of the birth of Edward Thomas on 3rd March 1978.

By kind invitation of Myfanwy Thomas an Eastbury occasion has been arranged for Saturday, 11th July, an afternoon get-together from 2.30 pm. Meeting Myfanwy at Bridge Cottage (Helen's home too until her death in 1967). An introduction to Eastbury, with the opportunity to view the window in the church and to visit Helen's grave. (Bronwen is also buried close by). Tea at 4.30 pm followed at 5.30 pm by an occasion in the church, devised by Michael Bakewell, 'All kinds of loveliness and truth' a tribute in words. We are very pleased to welcome Andrew Motion as one of Michael's co-readers. Please advise Anne (042 050 307) or Alan (01 977 4507) if you hope to be present. Eastbury lies in the Lambourn valley, on the road winding between Newbury and Lambourn via Great Shefford. The meeting time of 2.30 pm will allow people to link up with friends beforehand. Pub lunches are available at several inns situated in the Lambourn valley, for instance at Gt. Shefford and at East Garston.

'Where the West Begins' - a Walk on the Quantocks, SUNDAY, 27th SEPTEMBER, 11 am

Last September a reprint of 'The Icknield Way' was celebrated with a walk along part of the Way, from Cholsey to Blewbury. This occasion was so much enjoyed that the idea of a further September walk was put forward for 1981. 'In Pursuit of Spring' reprinted earlier this year has happily given us another natural location, and Richard Emeny and Shirley Toulson, who both live in Somerset, have planned a route for us and will be our guides. Full details in the next Newsletter but please make a note of the date now, Sunday, 27th Sept. 11 am for 11.30 am start. Meet Triscombe Stone (top of Cockercombe) Map ref. 164360 Sheet No. 181. Note If you would like to consider the possibility of making a weekend of it in Somerset (with an informal get-together somewhere on the Saturday evening) we should be glad to know. If there is sufficient interest we will pursue this idea.

" ... we are not just following a good writer on a bicycle we are following, through his twists and doubts and snarls and epiphanies, one of the great poets of his generation ... " from P.J.Kavanagh's introduction to 'In Pursuit of Spring'.

The Birthday Walk 1982 will take place on SUNDAY, 7th MARCH, from Steep, Hampshire. Make a note of the date now. This will be the 10th Walk and a special occasion. Details in the next Newsletter.

This year's Birthday Walk was another happy and enjoyable day, although we could well have done without the mud - and the heavy shower towards the end which resulted in some very wet walkers arriving at Steep church! But the fine tea laid on for us all did everything to warm and welcome us back. The day ended, as usual, with Michael Bakewell's presentation of the Birthday Tribute in Words. An occasion which becomes more looked-forward to and somehow more moving every year. Steep church was packed this time with the walkers and I think each one lived again their climb up the Shoulder of Mutton hill as they listened to Michael reading William Cooke's 'Memorial Stone' (i.m. Edward Thomas, 1878-1917) with such feeling and perfection. And Tom Durham, too, savouring with Edward the idea of cycling west as he read from 'In Pursuit of Spring', and Anne Harvey marking the centenary of Eleanor Farjeon's birth with passages from 'The Last Four Years'. There were the poems too written for Edward Thomas by fellow poets from Wilfrid Gibson, Walter de la Mare, W.H. Davies, Elizabeth Jennings and Alun Lewis. A memorable end to the day's walk.

A descriptive sheet on the route for the Walk, and an illustrated sketch map, were provided at the start. Copies of these two items are still available and can be despatched to any member on receipt of their name and address and 35p in postage stamps, sent to The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hants.

Brought forward from our last Newsletter

'Poems in their Place' BBC Cardiff still have no transmission date for this series. Hopefully they will go out before too long. Keep an eye on your Radio Times.

New Publications

A Language not to be betrayed (Carcanet) and The Selected Poems & Prose of Edward Thomas (Penguin English Library) have both gone to September. Perhaps we shall be able to celebrate publication at the time of the Autumn Walk.

'Vicky' has an exhibition in the Selborne Bookshop for a month from Tuesday, 23rd June, celebrating ten years 'Behind the Selborne Scene'. We both would welcome you to the Private View that day.

Blewbury Festival On Monday, 8th June, Myfanwy was invited to talk on 'Our Parents - Helen and Edward Thomas' in Blewbury church as the day's event in the 15-day Blewbury Festival. I was privileged to attend this delightful and informal occasion, and to hear, as the church clock struck 8 pm, Myfanwy reading her father's account of his walk to Blewbury along the Icknield Way, of hearing "a pleasant gong-like bell strike two at Aston." And, of the Blewbury clock "beating slowly with such gigantic and ancient peace inside the church that I did not enter." Little could Edward Thomas have known that one day his daughter the younger would be reading his own descriptive passages in that very same church!

'They thought him a Gypsy' To mark the centenary of the death of George Borrow, The Selborne Bookshop will be staging a small exhibition for one month from Monday, 27th July to honour the anniversary. The title is taken from Edward Thomas's George Borrow, The Man and His Books and the display will feature the book, published by Chapman & Hall in 1912, and 'Gypsy Borrow' by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, who wrote of Thomas's book (and Eileen Bigland's biography) ... "their books are by far the best on Borrow simply because both have some insight into the minds and ways of wayfaring folk."

On Sunday, 26th July, the anniversary of Borrow's death in 1881, a wreath will be laid on Borrow's grave in Brompton Cemetery, London, at 6 pm., followed by a tribute. If any members would like further details of the occasion I shall be happy to notify them on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. (I shall be attending the ceremony)

Congratulations to Andrew Motion on winning this year's Observer Poetry Prize with his poem 'The Letter'. The Fellowship sent him a congratulatory telegram. We look forward to having him with us at Eastbury on Saturday, 11th July.

Items for the Edward Thomas Fellowship Newsletter

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

Anne Mallinson
June 1981