

THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter No. 5



"It is January ..." wrote Edward Thomas in 'The Heart of England' "... and the predominant grass is green and shining in the sun." Today, as we send you greetings for the new year, in this our fifth Newsletter, we look out on a white and frozen land. Hopefully though by March we may be walking on grass again and shall be able to recall the opening sentence of March Doubts ... "all day the winter seemed to have gone." And, on another cheerful note of welcome to 1982 this summer will see 'The Heart of England' in print again.

The Tenth Birthday Walk - from Steep to Selborne - will take place on SUNDAY, 7th MARCH. This year we celebrate the Walk's first decade, so it is a special occasion. On 3rd March 1973 Major John Bowen of Petersfield inaugurated the Birthday Walk: the outcome of a talk that he and Anne Mallinson had had earlier on the subject of a walk which Edward and Helen took to Selborne from their home in Steep some sixty years before,

"Come on, and let's go to Selborne. You've never been there. We needn't touch roads at all, and you'll love it, and I know a woodpecker's nest." - Helen Thomas: 'World without End'.

To mark this tenth March occasion John Bowen will again lead the walk and he will be accompanied by Edward Thomas's grandson, Edward Cawston Thomas from Essex, son of the poet's son Mervyn (who died in 1965). Other members of the family, including his daughter Myfanwy, will also be present.

The Walk will start from Steep church at 10 a.m. The distance is approximately 8 miles. Pub lunches available in Selborne at both the Queen's Hotel and the Selborne Arms. Facilities also available in the Village Hall for those bringing their own food

An Exhibition 'Walking with Edward' - some Memories of March Days' will be staged in the Village Hall and the Selborne Bookshop will put on, in the shop, a special display of Edward Thomas titles, and associated items. Gilbert White's Home in Selborne will also be open to the public from 12 noon. 'A Literary Pilgrim in England' includes a chapter on Gilbert White.

Return from Selborne to Steep Arrangements will be made for walkers to be transported back to Steep by motor coach during the afternoon. A nominal charge will be made to cover cost.

Tea in Steep church, kindly provided by willing helpers, in aid of church funds

The Birthday Tribute in Words arranged, as usual, by Michael Bakewell will follow. Michael will be joined by several other readers.

The Walk Sheet and Illustrated Sketch Map will be available on the day, or by post, from 1st March on receipt of 35p (in postage stamps) sent to Anne Mallinson, The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hants, GU34 3JH.

IMPORTANT As we shall need to know approximate numbers attending in order to make adequate coach arrangements for return to Steep, and also to advise Selborne pubs, we should be most grateful if you would let Anne (as above, Selborne 307) know the number in your party by not later than Wednesday, 3rd March - preferably earlier.

N.B. IN THE EVENT OF SEVERE WINTRY CONDITIONS being either forecast, or on hand, for the weekend of 6/7th March a decision will be made by the Committee and John Bowen on Friday afternoon 5th March. If in any doubt phone Selborne 307 on Friday evening, between 7 and 8 p.m., or Saturday morning between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. The Walk will be postponed if necessary

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Church Bells on Sunday At 7.45 on Sunday morning, 7th MARCH, the BBC will broadcast the bells of All Saints, Steep and St. Mary, Selborne in celebration of the Tenth Edward Thomas Birthday Walk.

... "And when it falls on Sunday, bells
are a wild natural voice that dwells
on hillsides ..."

'A Pine in Solitude' - A portrait of Edward Thomas. THURSDAY, 25th FEBRUARY, Purcell Room, South Bank, London at 7.30 p.m. Book now.

A programme compiled by Anne Harvey from Edward Thomas's poetry, prose, diaries and letters, with extracts from the writings of Helen Thomas, Robert Frost, Eleanor Farjeon, Walter de la Mare and others.

Cast: Annette Crosbie, Tom Durham, Anne Harvey and Benjamin Whitrow (both Tom Durham and Anne Harvey are Fellowship members).

Booking opens 25th Jan. Tickets (£2.40, £1.80 and £1.20) from Royal Festival Hall Box Office, London SE1 8XX (01-928 3191), or, if still available, sold at the Purcell Room 45 mins before the performance.

Edward Thomas: A Portrait by William Cooke 1978 - this book, a shortened version of the biographical section of his 'Edward Thomas: a Critical Biography', published by Faber in 1970 and now out of print, is available to paid up members of the Fellowship at the special price of £2.25 plus 30p postage. (Price to non-members £3). The Selborne Bookshop is handling sales of this publication on our behalf so please send your order and remittance to them at Selborne, Alton, Hants, GU34 3JH.

Membership Renewal - Subscriptions now due please. Form attached for use of annual subscribers, or for those wishing to pay by banker's order, if not already doing so. In spite of inflation the annual subscription will remain the same for the current year. We hope you are enjoying the Fellowship, the occasions arranged and our Newsletter. If distances prevent active participation we trust that the regular information provided is of use and interest to you. Certainly your support is much appreciated and we look forward to hearing from you, and to meeting you again, this year. At the present time our numbers stand at 235, and we hope that it will increase during the year. IT IS REGRETTED THAT MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RENEW THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS BY 31ST MARCH WILL HAVE THEIR NAMES DELETED FROM THE MAILING LIST, BECAUSE OF POSTAGE COSTS.

Coming Events

In addition to the two events already mentioned you may like to know in advance of two further occasions in mind for the autumn. (Also, if we are to proceed with the planning of the second event, we shall need to hear from you by 1st April at the latest).

An Autumn Walk in Wiltshire (Swindon area), to be arranged in association with the Richard Jefferies Society. Provisional date: Sunday 26th September.

A Visit to the grave in France of Edward Thomas

In response to requests from a number of members, the possibility of arranging a group visit to Agny (near Arras) has been investigated. Travel would be by motor coach, starting from Southampton and travelling to Dover via London. Departure would be on a Friday morning, returning to England on Sunday night. Accommodation on the Friday and Saturday nights would be a hotel in Lille (50 minutes by auto-route from Arras) and prices quoted include room with bathroom and toilet, breakfast and evening meal, lunch on day of return, holiday insurance and taxes.

The cost per head would be:-

- (a) For a party totalling 20 - £94.00
- (b) " " " " 33 - £83.00

If there is a sufficient demand, the visit will be arranged in October 1982, leaving on 8th or 15th. Will any member who would like to take part inform the Hon Secretary in writing by April 1st at the latest (Alan A. Martin, Munster Lodge, 29A Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 9PG), stating which departure date would be preferred. If it is decided to go ahead with this visit, a deposit of £20.00 per head would be required at time of booking, with the balance due 6 weeks before departure. The

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Fellowship has insufficient funds to underwrite this visit, and it is regretted that it will not therefore be possible to refund any payments once they have been made

New Publications

1. Myfanwy's memoirs of childhood 'One of These Fine Days' is due from Carcanet New Press in the spring. The publishers have promised to let us have full details and order forms by March 7th.
2. The Whittington Press report that 'The Chess Player' is still available at £14.50 (plus £1 postage), and a small number of the vellum copies at £60 plus postage. 'The Chess Player' is comprised of three essays by Edward Thomas, two of which are published here for the first time; introduction by Professor R. George Thomas and two wood engravings by Hellmuth Weissenborn. Only 350 copies printed in May 1981.
3. Both Andrew Motion's 'The Poetry of Edward Thomas' (Routledge) and Edna Longley's 'A Language not to be betrayed' (Carcanet), published in 1981, were widely reviewed, and welcome, publications. And 'The Poetry of Nature' by William Keith, which has a chapter on Edward Thomas, was good to receive in this country from Toronto University Press.
4. 'The Green Book', a quarterly, has been brought to our notice. This slim volume includes occasional Edward Thomas pieces. A sample copy will be on show in Selborne on March 7th.

It is hoped to have a full list of Edward Thomas books in print available too on the day.

From the last Newsletter:

- a) Out of print titles We have a further two addresses to add to the list of those specialising in Edward Thomas antiquarian and secondhand books:- (1) Paul Gibb, 1A Chapel Street, Tiverton, North Devon (2) Mrs. Mary Heath, Torridge Books, Longclose, Langtree, Torrington, North Devon.
- b) Poems inspired by Edward Thomas Anne Harvey would like to thank all those who have been in touch with her. She now has a most interesting collection of tributes, both known and those previously unknown. Now Anne would like to find a publisher. Do you know of a possible one? If so, please advise the Hon. Secretary.
- c) Poems in their Place BBC Cardiff still have no transmission date to give us.

The Quantocks Walk The autumn walk on the Quantocks (see previous newsletter), which took place on Sunday, 27th September, was a most happy and enjoyable day, and the perfect 'ET weather' which miraculously broke in for the occasion, sandwiched between two very wet and stormy days, added to our pleasure. The only regret was that, understandably, a few would-be walkers were deterred from setting out for Somerset by Saturday's appalling weather. But those who had faith in what Jill Balcon first called our luck with 'ET weather' converged from many counties - to join leaders Shirley Toulson and Richard Emeny at the Triscombe Stone for the start. Lunch in West Bagborough, at the Rising Sun, was thoroughly enjoyed, sitting outside the inn in warm sunshine. Everyone was delighted to meet Edward Thomas's charming 17 year old great granddaughter, Lucy, out on her first walk. With her mother and father, Mervyn's son Edward, they had driven from Essex - via Eastbury in Berkshire to collect our President, Myfanwy, and her daughter Rosemary. So three generations of Edward Thomas's family were present on this happy occasion. We missed having our other Vice-President with us, Edward Thomas from Surrey, who was unable to attend, but happily the poet's niece, Cecily Walker, was present, as usual, from London. After lunch, and a steep climb to Tilbury Farm, Richard Emeny read from 'In Pursuit of Spring' the description of the stone statue standing on the hillside there, and walkers relaxed on the grassy slope below the statue enjoying the same panoramic view described in the book. Later in the afternoon Shirley Toulson and the party sat again on the turf, this time under the wind-blown clump of beech trees known as 'the seven sisters' high on The Quantocks, while Shirley read, appropriately, some passages from Edward Thomas inspired by autumn. Then back along the ancient ridge track to the Triscombe Stone, and so to journeys home from 'where the west begins', lit by one of the most spectacular sunsets of the year.

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Alliance of Literary Societies

The Fellowship has joined the Alliance of Literary Societies. Formed this year to assist collectively with the preservation of part of our national literary heritage. 29 societies have joined so far, and if a voice of protest is needed now, it can be strong and powerful. The Fellowship has also joined the newly formed John Clare Society.

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.