

THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP

NEWSLETTER 53

January 2005



The average man seldom gets into a book, though he often writes one.

It is a witness to the increasing interest in Edward Thomas that there are now more of his books in print than at any time since the Second World War, and there is a list of them, and where they can be obtained, later in the newsletter. Last autumn Signal Press republished *Oxford*, and that publication is being followed by a conference mounted by Oxford University at which a number of contemporary poets will read work of their own that has been inspired by Edward. Not planned to be too academic, the conference will include lectures as well. A booking form is enclosed for what promises to be a most stimulating day, which we hope many members of the Fellowship will attend. *Six Poems by Edward Eastaway*, just about the scarcest and most expensive title is another New Year treat being reprinted by the Cyder Press.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Birthday Walk, Sunday 6th March 2005

Following the success of last year's arrangements, we will again be having a morning and an afternoon walk with Bedales School being our centre. Please meet at 10.00 a.m. for a prompt start at 10.30. Bedales will be providing a buffet similar to last year's and an order form that also gives more details of the day is enclosed. As usual we will end the day with tea in Steep Church to be followed by the Birthday Tribute, which this year will celebrate with readings the books currently in print. There will also be a bookstall in Bedales at lunch time.

Walksheets will be available on the day or in advance by post from mid February. Please send a stamped addressed envelope to Stephen Turner, 4 Eversley Drive, Fleet, Hants., GU51 1BG.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED. Any 'non-walking' volunteers who would be prepared to help with various tasks on the day to ensure the smooth running of the event would be very welcome. As this will be Mothering Sunday, there may be a shortage of village helpers at the Church for afternoon tea. It would be extremely helpful if we could find volunteers to help in serving and in particular with the washing-up! If you feel that you could help with any of these important tasks, please telephone Stephen Turner on 01252 810852 to discuss them further. .

As you will know from previous years, one of the special things about the Birthday Walk is the readings during the day, which enhance everyone's enjoyment of the event. If you would like to be involved in the readings on this event, or perhaps in the future, please contact Anne Harvey on 0208 997 6443. Anne will then be able to keep a list of volunteers that she can call upon as and when required.

As usual there will be an informal get-together and supper in the Queen's Hotel, Selborne on the Saturday evening before the walk (5th March). If you would like to be there, and everyone is welcome, please arrive by 7.30 p.m.

Edward Thomas and Contemporary Poetry, A One-day Conference at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, Saturday 12th March 2005.

Mention of the Conference has already been made and a booking form is enclosed. Poets taking part include Michael Longley, John Fuller, Tom Paulin, Jon Stallworthy, David Constantine and the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion. Edna Longley, who spoke to the Fellowship at the unveiling of the Memorial Windows in Steep in 1977, will be one of the plenary lecturers. Members will be most welcome at the event. The poets will be reading and speaking about their own work in the afternoon, and it possible to attend for the afternoon only at a reduced price of £10.00

Fellowship Study Day, 25th June 2005 London.

Partly because of the Oxford Conference, our regular Study Day this year will be different in format to previous ones. It is many years since we visited the areas of London known to Edward and his family, so there will be a South London walk, visiting the various homes where Helen, Edward and their parents lived. There will also be some readings and other items. Plans are still under discussion, but we will meet between 10.30 a.m. and 10.45 for a prompt start at 11.00 a.m. at Stockwell Station on the Victoria Tube Line. Members should bring their own packed lunches. The day will end by 6.00 p.m. For further details, please send a stamped addressed envelope to Anne Harvey, 37 St. Stephen's Road, London W13 8HJ. Because we shall be visiting private houses, numbers have to be limited to thirty, so please contact Anne early if you wish to take part in the day.

Autumn Walk, Sunday 25th September 2005.

We will be returning to Eastbury and the Berkshire Downs this autumn, the area that Helen made her home. Our last visit was in 2000. Full details will be in the August newsletter.

REPORTS OF EVENTS

Autumn Weekend in Sussex, September 25th and 26th 2004.

"Sussex ----- the sweet core of the world." (Belloc)

The Autumn event opened with 60 members attending a day of talks in the Amberley Working Museum. Our first speaker, Kim Leslie, from the West Sussex Records Office, is well-known for his talks on the literary associations of the area, in particular the life and work of Hilaire Belloc. His entertaining and informative talk was richly illustrated with excellent quotations and slides.

As well as Belloc and other local writers, the area is connected with the composers, John Ireland, Edward Elgar, and Arnold Bax, Master of the Kings Musick, who made nearby Storrington his last home. The artist, Arthur Rackham, was Eleanor Farjeon's friend and neighbour when she rented a cowman's cottage in Houghton for two years, following Edward Thomas's death. It was interesting to be reminded of the significant -- if not close -- friendship between Thomas and Belloc and to remember that the title of *The South Country* comes from a Belloc poem. The morning ended

all too quickly, our minds alive with Belloc's wide range of ideas and writings, and his crowded life.

After lunch, Oliver Hawkins, great great-grandson of Alice and Wilfred Meynell spoke. After many years at the very centre of London's literary life, the Meynells moved to Greatham, near Pulborough in 1911. Oliver concentrated his talk on the Sussex years where the seven grown-up Meynell children often lived, or stayed with their growing families, at the main house, Humphreys Homestead, or in one of the surrounding dwellings. As in London, literary and artistic friends visited, amongst them Wilfred Scawen Blunt, J. C. Squire, Shane Leslie, Belloc, E. V. Lucas, David Garnett and the Farjeons – Eleanor and Viola Meynell were close friends. It was at Greatham that Eleanor met D. H. Lawrence when Viola had lent the Lawrences Shed Hall, her cottage, and the two friends notably typed his latest novel, '*The Rainbow*.' The Lawrence and the Francis Thompson associations with the Meynells would make full-length novels in themselves -- Thompson is buried at Storrington. It was a privilege to hear of this family, so little known today, of whom Wyndham Lewis, in his outspoken publication, BLAST, wrote 'Blast Clan Meynell!' Francis Meynell, the youngest son, writer and publisher of the renowned Nonesuch Press, unlike the other Meynells, felt pride in this epithet

Third speaker of the day was Robyn Hudnut, grand-daughter of Robert Frost, and daughter of Marjorie who sadly died following her birth. The word to describe Robyn's talk must be 'enchanted' -- fresh unscripted, and inspired, and we were transported to New England where for several years she was brought up by Robert and Elinor Frost. She talked of the places, poems, the seasons and personalities of her childhood and her grandfather's influence which has informed her life and her work as an artist. The afternoon, like the morning, ended too soon, but the cards painted by Robyn, of the place in California where Belloc's wife, Elodie, came from, given to each of us, will be a reminder of the visit -- completing a day that many pronounced to be amongst the Fellowship's most memorable events.

The Sunday walk, planned and perfected by Stephen Turner (ably supported by Pam) was equally enjoyable. It concentrated on the area described by Eleanor Farjeon in her unpublished memoir with many readings from 'Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard' and the 'Sussex Alphabet' -- first printed at James Guthrie's Pear Tree Press. Those of us who stayed for the afternoon walk were rewarded high up on the Downs by the bluest of skies, a warm sun and breathtaking views of Sussex.

Anne Harvey

Many people wanted to be in touch with Robyn Hudnut. Her address is
9 Via Estrada, Tiburon, California 949 2 0.

For those unable to walk, there was a visit to the Amberley Working Museum, about which Margaret Ottewell writes-

We few non-walkers decided to visit the Amberley Working Museum nearby, which was celebrating its Silver Jubilee Year.

Since opening its doors to the public in 1979, the Museum has gone from strength to strength, thanks to the efforts of a stalwart volunteer workforce, with additional support from various bodies.

In the Hayloft Theatre we watched an information video showing that the museum covered 36 acres of former chalk pits under the South Downs. In the same room was a fine display of fossils found in the chalk deposits.

There are over 30 buildings housing various working exhibits meticulously restored, the tools of their trade displayed on the walls. We visited the Machine Shop, Ironmongers, Printing Workshop, The Tools and Trade History Society building, the Woodturners' Shop, and Forge to name but a few. There were craft workers demonstrating pottery manufacture, a walking-stick maker, broom maker, and clay pipe maker. We had only time to watch the clay pipe maker, and were fascinated to see how a small lump of clay went through various stages before being transformed into an almost finished pipe.

A narrow gauge railway runs to different parts of the site and there are rides on a vintage bus or tramcar. There is a Nature Trail with a diversity of habitats where plants and animals have colonised what was once bare chalk.

Being there for no more than the morning, we could cover only a small part of the site but it certainly whetted our appetite to return.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2005 are now due. If you do not pay by standing order, please send your subscription (£7.00 single, £10.00 double or family) to the Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Larry Skillman, 'Eastbrook,' Morleys Road, Weald, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN14 6QX if you haven't already done so.

COMMITTEE NEWS

At their next meeting the Committee will be discussing, amongst other items, the future format of the newsletter. There is always a lot to include, and there are constraints of postage and other costs. Various ideas have been suggested- from retaining the *status quo* to having a shorter news bulletin and an annual publication of longer articles. No decisions have yet been made and the Committee would welcome members' views. If you have a view you would like to add to the discussions, please contact the Editor of the newsletter: Richard Emeny, Melrose House, 4 High Street, North Petherton, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 6NQ, telephone: 01278 662856, email: remeny@halswell.fsnet.co.uk. Please note the change of address.

OBITUARY

Some members will have seen in the national press, obituary notices of Ellen McCutcheon, the almost legendary landlady of the Harrow Inn in Steep, which is well known to many members. Her family's tenure of The Harrow date back to the early twentieth century, and the recipe of the inn's famous soup dates back to that period too. We have been assured that things will remain much the same.

We are also sad to hear of the death on 27th September 2004 after a long illness of Diana Tyacke, wife of David Tyacke, one of our first committee members. We send our condolences and best wishes to David

NOTECARDS OF THE ROBIN GUTHRIE PORTRAIT

With the kind permission of the Guthrie family, the Fellowship is producing a notecard of Robin Guthrie's full length portrait of Edward Thomas. This will be available early in 2005 and members are invited to place their orders by completing the enclosed order form and sending it to the Chairman at the address shown. The folded notecard measures approximately 10cm x 21cm and is printed on coloured card described as 'straw'.

The notecard includes an envelope and is enclosed in a cellophane bag. The cost, inclusive of postage and packing is £1.50 or £5.00 for four notecards.

Orders will be despatched towards the end of February 2005.

The Guthrie portrait is reproduced at the back of the Newsletter. The reproduction on the actual notecards will be superior in quality.

THIRD SET OF NOTECARDS- PROGRESS REPORT

In the August 2003 issue of the Newsletter, members were invited to choose their favourite poems or prose extracts to be published in a further set of six notecards. As a result of that invitation and with further input from our President, Myfanwy Thomas, and the committee, the following four poems and two prose extracts have been chosen. Against each is shown the artist who has been invited to produce a wood engraving as illustration:

Poems

The Owl	Geraldine Waddington
It rains	Ian Stephens
Out in the dark	Sarah van Niekirk
The Wind's Song	Paul Kershaw

Prose extracts

From <i>The South Country</i> , Chapter xiv	Cordelia Jones
Beginning: 'The country is deserted in The rain, and I have the world to myself ...'	
From the essay, 'The Stile' in <i>Light and Twilight</i> beginning: 'I was gathered up With an immortal company...'	Linda Holmes

All the artists are members of The Society of Wood Engravers and many members will be familiar with three of them who produced illustrations for the second set. They have all accepted the invitations, and, if all goes well, finished artwork should be sent to the printers by late summer 2005. Further information and an order form will be included in the next Newsletter.

**REMEMBRANCE DAY 2004: FATHERS WHO FOUGHT AT ARRAS:
MYFANWY THOMAS AND ANNE MALLINSON, THE FELLOWSHIP'S
FIRST CHAIRMAN**

Remembrance Sunday has been a special day in my life now for over seventy years: since my twin sister, Barbara, and I were old enough to realise the significance of our annual November pilgrimage to the village church and war memorial in the Cotswold parish of Uley. Here we were brought up- in the absence of our parents in Nigeria- by a niece of the Victorian diarist, the Rev'd Francis Kilvert. And her son had served, and suffered, in the Great War.

But, in those idyllic, pre- Second World War years of childhood, we were unaware that our own father too had fought in the First World War at Arras in April 1917, and had been wounded in the second battle later that month. When he died in 1972- two years after my first meeting with Myfanwy- a whole new chapter opened up. And Remembrance became a joint experience.

My father kept his memories of the First World War to himself. He had no son, and, with little knowledge of his twin daughters, deemed their interest would not embrace the events and horrors of the Great War. He kept his memorabilia in a locked wooden box. "It's to go to the Imperial War Museum," he would say. Now I can understand why- and they are ready to accept it. But, at present, I'm working on a programme based on part of its contents: a two way correspondence with his parents- from the Somme in 1916, Arras and then St. Quentin in 1918, where he was captured on the 21st March and remained a prisoner of war in Germany until his release in December. On 10th April 1917, William Dowson wrote to his 2nd Lieut. Son, of the 21st. Trench Mortar Battery, "We hear today of the great blow your army is administering to the Germans opposite Arras, Lens and St. Quentin..."

Two days earlier, on 8th April, Edward Thomas, 2nd Lieut, 244 Siege Battery, wrote in his diary, "A bright warm Easter day but Achicourt shelled at 12.30 and then at 2.15... I had to go over to battery at 3 for a practice barrage... but we were twice interrupted. A 5.9 fell 2 yards from me..." The following day at 7.36 a.m. he was killed by the vacuum effect of a shell. It was the first day of the Battle of Arras.

So, in November last I found myself once again making my way to the Lambourn valley to visit Myfanwy. Remembrance Day had come round again. On many occasions over the years, we have spent time together on this day. A day of quiet talk, of reflections and remembrance. A day shared in a long and happy friendship.

Myfanwy's greeting was as warm and friendly as ever. With her red poppy pinned to her blue jersey, we watched the service at the Cenotaph on television. I had already placed my cross at the foot of the war memorial in the churchyard at Eastbury, and visited Helen's grave under the cherry tree in the upland corner.

O Valiant Hearts... How beautiful and moving are the words- and the music of Nimrod. How can one forget?

Anne Mallinson

REVIEWS

OXFORD. By Edward Thomas. Introduction and notes by Lucy Newlyn. Oxford: Signal, 2005.

In *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, Edward Thomas says of the topography in 'The Scholar Gypsy' and 'Thyrsis' that, although he cannot say how 'Cambridge people or Newcastle people' are reached by it, 'I doubt if it is at all necessary to be Oxonian to enjoy it'. 'No doubt it touches Oxford men on a weak spot', and it counts on the fact that Oxford 'is exceptionally well-known to a good sprinkling of Arnold's most likely readers, but it does not require 'use of map or previous association'. These remarks could be applied to Thomas's *Oxford* as well, and more easily, because that book provides far more detail, and, in the first edition, sixty colour illustrations. This new edition has only 12 illustrations, but it also has a map, a long introduction and copious notes. The notes explain terms like 'freshman', 'Parson's Pleasure' and O.U.B.C., as well as providing sources for the quotations and allusions. So, while Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford will no doubt sell many copies, I am sure that the book will be read and enjoyed by Cambridge people and Newcastle people, and I hope it will be read in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and even beside the Oxus (which incidentally, also features in Matthew Arnold's poetry).

Oxford has now been treated with more respect than it has been granted before. By giving the book a long introduction and many notes, Signal Books have made the statement that *Oxford*, and Thomas's prose in general, should be regarded as important, even classic, literature. By making the introduction and notes entirely readable, Lucy Newlyn has insured that the book will give more pleasure than the reprints that have appeared in the past. There is also a biographical sketch by Colin Thornton, and a list of selected further reading.

The notes are valuable, not least because, as Lucy Newlyn says in her introduction, '[e]verywhere in *Oxford*, echoes of past writers can be heard, and the book 'is haunted by its own literary origins'. 'Quotations from books, poems, conversations, epigrams, anecdotes, reminiscences- all are added to the melting pot, with no concern as to the different registers in which they are written', and the higgledy-piggledy quality derives partly from its hurried assemblage against deadline pressures'. Even a century ago finding original things to say about Oxford was a challenge, and Thomas had to find 60,000 words. He wrote to Gordon Bottomley on 18th February 1903 'panic-stricken with the feeling but I have not the courage, or the endurance, or the information that is necessary'. He asked for books, literary references and anecdotes, and fulfilled the commission by including many quotations from other writers.

The quotations are part of Thomas's dependence on the past. Thomas's description of a cottage garden applies to his own book too: 'a thoughtful conservatism and a partnership between many generations have given it an indubitable style'. *Oxford* is not a straightforward piece of travel writing about Oxford in 1903. He provides portraits of 'Undergraduates of The Present', including one that is clearly a self-portrait, but Thomas ignores some recent arrivals, such as women and North Oxford ('where female undergraduates and wives of dons were to be found'). The houses to the north and east of the city are dismissed as 'sermons in brick, arranged in perfect successful imitation of Tooting'. Nonetheless, today, the houses of North Oxford are, like female students, not only admired but also integral to the identity of the university and the city. Thomas also ignores east Oxford, despite having lived in it for a year, at 113 Cowley Road, before he entered Lincoln College. A chapter

describing the life on the Cowley Road a century ago would be fascinating, not least because east Oxford was on the very verge of its explosion (the explosion of the internal combustion engines of Morris's motor-cars into a huge area that did not need to have any contact with the colleges. Thomas is more interested in the more beautiful parts, especially 'The Oxford Country'. Indeed, the countryside crops up throughout the book and throughout the city: Ivy-leaved toadflax, wallflower and ragwort 'form a trail from the villages, upon wall after wall, into Ship Street and Queen's Lane, by which the country may be traced', and the college gardens are fragments of the countryside, to the extent that 'when in February the heavy rain bubbles at the foot of the trees, and spins a shifting veil above their height and over the grass [...] it is hard to throw off the illusion of being deep in woods'.

In *The Childhood of Edward Thomas* (1938) though, Thomas would later describe the life within the 'sermons in brick' near Tooting and find some goodness and books within them too. In *This England* an anthology (1915), under the title 'Both are good', Thomas included a sentence from William Hazlitt's *Sketches and Essays*: 'It always struck me as a singular proof of good taste, good sense and liberal thinking, in an old friend, who had Paine's *Rights of Man* and Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* bound up in one volume, and who said, that both together, they make a very good book. Perhaps Thomas's *Oxford* should be bound up in one volume with *The Childhood of Edward Thomas*. *Oxford* is, in many ways, autobiographical, and it was given its prequel when Thomas wrote about his childhood a decade later; but Thomas's prose style, and his approach to prose, had changed so much between 1903 and 1913. Moreover, the two books portrayed two very different cities, Oxford and London; and Thomas's life in London was so different from his life as an undergraduate. *Oxford* begins with a comparison with, and rejection of, the city of his childhood: 'Passing rapidly through London, with its roar of causes that have been won, and the suburbs, where they have no causes, and skirting the willowy Thames, - glassy or silver, or with engrailed grey waves- and brown ploughlands elm-guarded, solitary, I approached Oxford.'

Guy Cuthbertson

[There is an order form for *Oxford* enclosed with the newsletter]

VIOLA MEYNELL 1885 – 1956, A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY by Raymond N. MacKenzie, published by the Edwin Mellen Press Ltd (New York, Canada & Lampeter, Wales. Studies in British Literature, volume 52). Anne Harvey writes:

At first sight this looks like a dull, utilitarian, weighty, academic tome geared towards a PhD thesis, but turns out to be a lively, engaging, immensely readable book, in which the author fully explores all aspects of Meynell's life and work. He has had support and co-operation from the Meynell family, and I remember meeting him to discuss Eleanor Farjeon's friendship some years ago, when his researches began. Viola Meynell's work deserves some recognition and maybe a discerning publisher will consider republishing her fine short stories. In view of our visit to the Meynell home territory last September, the appearance of the book is apposite.

IN SEARCH OF JOHN GOLD

About ten years ago the Editor heard of a man named John Gold, who had worked as a brush maker in the Kendal Museum, and who had walked with Edward Thomas during his visits to the Lake District and Gordon Bottomley. It was rumoured that correspondence between the two existed. Gold had died in the 1950s and had had a daughter, but I was unable to trace her and the trail ran cold.

In 2004, a copy of *Rose Acre Papers* (the rare 1904 edition) came up for sale. The copy was given to Gold in 1910 by Edward and signed by him. Independently, but at the same time, a collection of letters from Edward to Gold along with others to him from Masfield, Bottomley and Helen Thomas was auctioned.

The letters from Helen are from Forge House, where she lived during the 1920s and are most moving. It is also clear that for Edward, Gold was an important friend, and certainly close enough for Edward to give him a signed copy of *Rose Acre Papers*. Helen was keen to contact, and, if possible, see Edward's old friends. In the Gold family she found kindred spirits and she kept in touch with them (Gold had married a Daisy Rigby and had a daughter).

The family business of basket and brush making had been established in Kendal probably in the mid 19th Century and John Gold, one of nine children, continued with it until its closure, probably due to cheap foreign imports.

There are probably no Golds in Kendal now, but there may well be descendants of other unknown friends who hold small caches of correspondence to and from Edward Thomas.

CLIFFORD BAX AND EDWARD THOMAS

By Colin Scott-Sutherland

The friendship between Edward Thomas and Clifford Bax began in the winter of 1910. "The simplest and happiest way of putting a keener edge on our perceptions is to associate with a friend of maturer taste," wrote Bax (1), declaring that as he got to know Edward better he realised how raw was his own literary sense by comparison. During the ensuing summers of 1911/12, Thomas visited Bax often at his recently acquired manor house at Broughton Gifford in Wiltshire, the initial empathy between them being literature. Bax was essentially a town dweller, yet was particularly sensitive to Edward's earthy Nature mysticism. "He was not of his age. Everything that he cared about was timeless. The moods of the sky, the design of the flowers, their names that are peepholes into earlier ages, the life of the countryman, the ways of birds and woodland animals- these were his interests; and to them he added a fastidious taste in words and a warm response to the literature of chivalry." (2) The old Manor House at Broughton Gifford was at the centre of "that unsophisticated England which has been pictured for all time by Thomas Hardy." (3) Part of that England was undoubtedly the game of cricket. Bax, who had a wide circle of friends, had since boyhood been a keen amateur cricketer. (4) And now, in the August of 1911, his first year at the Manor, he had the idea of a series of cricket 'weeks' in which a non-too-strictly literary eleven might share companionship and the game with

like-minded friends in the nearby villages. His friends happily accepted the invitation, knowing from Bax family days at Ivy Bank, the kind of hospitality they might expect! "On the morning of the day that was to bring us all together I awoke early. An elfin breeze turned back the summer curtains of my window, and I saw that the sun had been up for two or three hours, and that the day would be clear and hot. Across the fields came the voice of a labourer calling to someone: and a cock still crowed at the nearest farm. 'Coming from London' I thought, 'they will like these noises; and thank heaven it looks as though we shall have a week of perfect weather.' And then, getting up briskly because of my gay mood, I considered the various men who at that moment perhaps were anticipating a holiday in the West Country as gladly as I was anticipating their companionship." (5)

Among these names- legendary in the memories of "The Old Broughtonians" (6) – J C Snaith, Francis Colmer, Reginald Hine, Dr Godwin Baynes, Herbert Farjeon, Arnold Bax- was that of Edward Thomas. It would be interesting to know just how closely this literary companionship with Bax was shared by Edward Thomas. Clifford's philosophies as Buddhist, Theosophist and occultist must have seemed strangely esoteric to Thomas. Yet they remained close friends until Edward's death in 1917. (7) In fact Edward might have been closer in spirit to Arnold Bax, "I wish I could hear him play again. For me there is no other playing. But we have no musical instrument except the woods here." (8) Arnold would certainly have recognised the music of the woods!

Though scarcely a committed cricketer Edward once remarked that "a cricket score reads like a sonnet." And it was to these cricket weeks at Broughton Gifford that Edward joined as 'third man', in the matches that had been organised with local teams. Though he contributed little to the game, he enjoyed the company: "I should have been miserable parting with you all at Warminster." (9) To someone's challenge that cricket was a boring game, Clifford retorted, "whoever made a lifetime friend by constantly rushing about" – and it was these friendships that had a liberating effect on those dark moments to which Edward Thomas was prone.

On 7th August 1912 the match was against Melksham- lost by 47 runs- and Edward scored 1 before being bowled by Newman. (No shame as Newman took seven of the O B's wickets!) The match against Box was lost by 34 runs, though Edward ended not out, without score. The next game against Broughton Gifford was their only success- won by seven wickets with Edward scoring a handsome two before being bowled by Bull. Edward was out for a duck in the next two matches against Trowbridge and Calne. The cricket records show that 'the tediousness of this match [Calne] may be realised by observing that only 206 runs were scored from 90 overs.'

In a period in which he had little work on hand, Edward wrote 'a thing' for Clifford. It is not certain which of the two papers he refers to in his letter of 28th August, but his writings at this point, published in *Orpheus* (10) were entitled 'The Chess Player' and 'Green and Scarlet.' The latter appeared in the April 1913 issue- and by April 1914 the periodical was forced to cease. The last game of 'The Old Broughtonians' against Wendover took place on 9th August 1914. A note in the records states, "This was the last game in which Lynn Hartley took part," and by 1918 the world had changed irrevocably. Looking back in 1921, Clifford marked that "joy that should last forever".....Edward had also turned from face and book "to go into the unknown."

NOTES

1. *Inland Far* Heinemann 1925 p 165
2. *Ibid* p 171

3. Ibid p 173
- 4 He and his brother Arnold engaged in five-a-side (sometimes only three-a-side) games with visitors and the Ivy Bank gardeners. Cricket was a passion. As Ernest Belfort Bax writes, "I can well remember having occasion to call on relations on the afternoon of that eventful Saturday, the first of August itself- I found them preparing to go to a cricket match." (*Reminiscences and Reflections of a mid and late Victorian*). Allen and Unwin 1918.
5. *Inland Far* pp 78/9
6. The title that Clifford gave to the Manor House team.
- 7 Helen Thomas however, disliked Clifford (Undated letter to the author). Jan Marsh, in her study of Edward Thomas (Elek 1972 p 82), says 'it was to Clifford, the shallowest and perhaps the most selfish member of the group that Thomas was most attracted.' I personally found him in old age, modest, and the epitome of old fashioned courtesy.
8. Letter dated Wick Green, 28th August 1912, printed in the Fellowship Newsletter 52.
- 9 Ibid. Warminster was the final match of that series. Edward had a prior bicycle tour with his son, Merfyn.
10. The art magazine *Orpheus* developed from *Transactions of the Theosophical Art Circle*, first published on 24th December 1907 The publication lasted, quarterly, until April 1914 when lack of support forced closure. Contributors had included Clifford, Arnold, Gwendolen Bishop (Clifford's wife), AE (George Russell), Eleanor Farjeon and Jean Delville.

THE FIRST PUBLISHED WRITING BY EDWARD THOMAS?

Recently, Tim Wilton-Steer acquired a copy of *Young Days*, the journal of the Sunday School Association, the edition dated February 1895. It had been found by Stephen Clarke of Clearwater Books, who had promoted Edward's work for many years, and who sadly died this August at the young age of fifty-five. The journal includes an article signed by P. E. Thomas, and may well be the earliest of his published writings. It does not appear in the collection at Cardiff. While it may read a trifle woodenly, it does not show many signs of the Paterian influence that was to be apparent in Edward's writing within a year or so. His interest in Richard Jefferies is more evident. It is interesting too to read some precursors of the poems, in for instance, the observation of the bayonet-like reeds, a much deadlier image by 1915, and to make a comparison with the diary section for March in *The Woodland Life*, published just two years later. The article was illustrated in the text by small engravings of birds. If any member knows of an earlier piece of published writing, the Editor would be grateful to hear from him or her.

BIRDS IN MARCH

BY A YOUNG NATURALIST

This month is full of interest in regard to bird life. The greater number of those birds depart, which only spend the colder months with us; while those which left our shores in the autumn begin to return; and the staunch feathered friends, that stay with us throughout the year and have been living in flocks since autumn, now choose their mates and start their nest-building.

Come with me, and let us try what we can see. On our way from London to the open country, we cross the Thames. On the river, the gulls are almost the only birds to be noted, except the multitude of sparrows in the withy beds, and the rooks which constantly visit the banks. Ere the month is over, the gulls will have left the narrow river for the open sea. How unceasing are their motions- now dashing at some fish near the surface or at some floating refuse, next riding buoyant as a cork high out of the water, and then taking prolonged flights beyond the horizon. The gull's presence is doubly welcome to us inland dwellers, because he reminds us of happy summer days by the sea.

With the opening of March, the rooks begin to repair their old nests or to build new ones in the high elms, and all through the day the air rings with their noisy cawings- not even the fall of night reducing these noisy brawlers to silence. While the rooks are thus fussily engaged, a wood-pigeon is cooing softly to his mate, suggesting, perhaps, where their flimsy nest of twigs shall be built, to receive the two pure white eggs. Aloft, several skylarks are plainly outlined against the sky, carolling a sweet song to their loves in the grass beneath.

At this time, also, the thrush is preparing a nest to receive her eggs, light blue with brown spots. The inside of the thrush's nest is smooth and watertight, and resembles a divided cocoanut-shell.

We may also notice just now, a pair of robins reluctantly leaving a high mound covered with ivy, and flitting to the shelter of a blackthorn bush, whence they look anxiously towards the intruder. A short search reveals a half-finished, cup-shaped nest of moss, grass, and horsehair, with some feather, cosily hidden behind a large ivy leaf, and resting in a slight hollow in the ground.

From a young oak standing solitary in a low hedge of hazel, a handsome chaffinch, with white barred wings and pink breast, sings a simple snatch; the song is low and then interrupted by a call 'pink-pink' to his careless mate, who is perhaps wandering helplessly in the ash-copse yonder. But suddenly he stops his tune- he has seen us- and hurriedly flies away to the copse, with a wavy motion. By the end of the month, if it be not too cold, the pair will start a nest in this oak,- and what a masterpiece it is! The outside is covered with lichen to harmonise with the tree on which it is built, and the inside is a beautifully felted mass of feathers, wool, and hair, on a foundation of dry grass and moss.

In the latter part of March, the chiff-chaff, our first visitor from the East, arrives, and the woods are full of his gentle lay, poured forth whilst hopping along the boughs of an ash, or from the undergrowth of briar. He is a tiny bird of sober brown, and not easily noticed by a casual observer. In some districts, solitary cuckoos may be seen thus early, but the greater number will delay their journey for a month or more. A few swallows, too, will be seen here and there; these however, are the more eager spirits, and the bulk of their comrades will not leave the shores of Africa and the eastern lands till the end of April.

Before the month is out, the linnets will have left the open fields and may be seen in pairs flitting over the gorse, where they love to build their nests of rootlets, wool, hair, and feathers. Over the plantation of oak and fir, just by the lake there, is a number of large birds circling and mounting with curved wings, and now and then uttering a hoarse croak. They are herons,- rather a rare sight near London. Like the rooks, earlier in the month, they are repairing last year's nests- huge structures of sticks, reeds and grasses- which will contain several large eggs of a greenish blue.

Fluttering about the hedge, a pair of small, plain-coloured birds are noticed. They are silent, except for an occasional chirp, but are not at all shy, and may be approached quite closely. These are hedge-sparrows, much like the house-sparrow in general appearance, but slimmer and less assertive. They have a nest, which is all but finished, low down in the hedge, composed of moss and grass, lined with hair taken from the tree-trunks, where the horse and cattle delight to rub their sides.

Wandering along, we come to a woodland mere, and amidst the reeds and rushes growing along the shore, or in the shallow water at the edge, we spy a moor-hen's nest approaching completion. It is made of the long bayonet-like reeds and other water plants, curled around so as to form a large shallow platform. The pewits, or lapwings, have also paired this month, and are seeking a suitable place- such as the hollow made in the sodden turf by a horse's hoof- on which they are content to lay their pear-shaped eggs. They fly angrily about the head of an intruder, uttering meanwhile their peculiar shrill cry of 'pee-weet, pee a weet.' These are attractive birds with their crests and green-marked plumage brightly gleaming in the mid-day sun.

Such are only a few of the marvels revealed in the month of March. They can be seen by all of you, who seek them in the true spirit of the nature-lover; and I trust these notes of mine may help as a sort of spy-glass, until your own natural gift of observation has been improved by use.

P. E. Thomas

THE SCHOOLING OF HELEN NOBLE

By Kedrun Laurie

Mary and Helen attended one of the Girls' Public Day School Trust schools at Wimbledon, under an exceptional headmistress [...]. Helen's love of literature was very much widened and encouraged by a beloved English teacher, Miss Fowler, who recognized her good qualities that at Wintersdorf had been outshone by the 'bright and shining lights' of Irene and Mary. But she still hated school and was considered dull by the other teachers and begged to be allowed to leave when she was sixteen. Her mother who was glad of some extra help in the larger house, where she and James entertained a good deal though his health was not improving, allowed Helen to stay at home.

So wrote Myfanwy Thomas in her edition of Helen's memoirs and letters, *Time & Again*.¹ Recently I resolved to see if researching the background to this account, placing Helen's personal history within the wider context of the enormous changes in girls' 'education which took place during her time at school, would assist our understanding of the unjustifiably self-deprecating woman who wrote to Sylvia Townsend Warner in her eighty-ninth year:

A propos our little talk on the telephone, how I do realize in myself a terrible fault. It arises from my earliest years when my two brilliant sisters - at school - not afterwards - dominated me and crushed me into a wormlike state of lack of confidence etc in myself. That is not to excuse it at all.²

Incidentally I will sketch an impression of something else: the literary milieu which attracted Edward Thomas to this family and in particular to the kindly journalist father, James Ashcroft Noble (1844-1896).³

The Noble family was from Liverpool. It was Ashcroft Noble and Helen's birthplace, but since 1883, when a two year-long attempt to live in London had been terminated by Noble's ill-health, they had lived just up the coast from Liverpool itself, in or near Southport. For most of this time they were at Alger Villa, 16 Eastbourne Road West, Birkdale.⁴ Here the girls, Irene, Helen and Mary, attended Wintersdorf School, a private school of a type which from the 1870s was fast disappearing before the spread of girls' day or 'high' schools.⁵ Small private establishments like Wintersdorf had been favoured by those few middle-class parents bold enough to send their daughters to school in the 60s and 70s, because they seemed like a safe extension of the home environment. In 1864-7, however, a Schools' Inquiry Commission delivered a damning condemnation of the want of 'thoroughness', 'foundation' and 'system' of girls' schools. It recommended the establishment of a network of girls' secondary schools in towns across the country in which academic subjects would be far more strenuously taught so as to prepare girls for the challenge of higher education.⁶

When set against this movement towards reform, the foundation of Wintersdorf in 1867 can seem something of an anachronism, although it is hard to be sure, since apart from a *Wintersdorf Gild Magazine* of 1908 and Mary Simon's *Wintersdorf Hymnal* (1893) no archives relating to the school remain.⁷ This makes Helen's description of it in *Time & Again* all the more valuable. According to her, Wintersdorf was a boarding school which a few day girls were allowed to attend. Because Mr and Mrs Noble were 'intimate' friends of Miss Mary and Miss Sarah Simon, who ran it with their elderly mother, their daughters were probably allowed to attend without paying fees.⁸

Wintersdorf existed for the daughters of rich north country manufacturers and professional people; they came from Lancashire, Yorkshire and even Northumberland and were for the most part from homes of cultured people; but there was also a slight admixture of the vulgar rich at whom Miss Mary looked very askance.⁹

I have said that as a small private academy it was old-fashioned, but Wintersdorf also had an unusual or, as Helen calls it, 'unique', character. Liverpool had at this time, in no small part due to the literary activities of Ashcroft Noble himself, a reputation as a 'distant outpost of the Aesthetic Movement'. Richard Le Gallienne (1866-1947), who was born there, and whose subsequent London career as a poet was launched in the North by Noble, called it 'Liverpool the Lovely, the Golden City', 'Tyre' to Birkenhead's 'Sidon'.¹⁰ Anticipating Edward's discovery of beauty in Swansea, with its chimneys like 'temple pillars', Le Gallienne developed a part Whistlerian, part Claudian aesthetic for Liverpool, based on its dying sunsets and golden seas, its 'gloomy wynds of deserted warehouses, still as temples'.¹¹ Hence, for him, it was entirely natural that poets should emerge from a mercantile background, for Liverpool:

pretends all day that it is the Mayor in the gilded coach and the pury merchantmen she cares for; but it is really you, a poor shabby poet, she loves all the time, - for you only does she wear her gauzy silks at evening.¹²

Wintersdorf, similarly, transmuted the commercial background of its pupils by absorbing them into an overwhelmingly aesthetic atmosphere. It 'put the arts before everything, and we acted and played and sang and danced and wrote poetry much more than formal exercises in arithmetic and geography.'¹³ Although it was not an overtly academic school, it can reasonably be argued that it was advancing and modernising the traditional tuition of 'female accomplishments' by placing them on a higher plane. It encouraged its pupils to express themselves individually and artistically with a freedom that ran counter to conventional expectations of girls. Helen remembers that after a while both girls and teachers adopted the unconstricted artistic dress of the habitués of Liberty's department store (founded 1875) and the Grosvenor Gallery (founded 1877):

The school under Miss Simon whole-heartedly adopted this craze and so did my parents.[...] The older girls dressed in graceful and loose dresses with sashes of silk round their waists and big bows behind. Japanese fans and Japanese china decorated their dormitories, and gauzy scarves with rainbow colours were draped over their looking-glasses or the heads of their beds.¹⁴

Art books and reproductions of pictures by Holman Hunt or Edward Burne-Jones were given as prizes for artistic or intellectual attainments. (The Liverpool Academy had bravely supported the Pre-Raphaelites in the 1850s and 60s, and two of the main private collectors of Rossetti's work, George Rae and Frederick Leyland, lived in the area.) Ashcroft Noble lectured the older girls once a week on poetry and literature; Christina

and D.G. Rossetti, Swinburne and Tennyson.¹⁵ William Watson (1858-1935), whose first poem had been published in the Liverpool *Argus*, a weekly edited by Ashcroft Noble, in 1876, judged the annual sonnet competition (won twice by Irene) and gave a piano recital at the school.¹⁶ Richard Le Gallienne lectured on 'Beauty', and even Oscar Wilde, whom Noble admired very much, came to lecture on 'The House Beautiful'.

Helen admitted that, although her conviction that she was intellectually inferior to her sisters made her unhappy at Wintersdorf, she did in fact benefit from its influence. It stimulated her interest in the arts, literature and drama in particular. Indeed it is of note that at Wintersdorf her talent for writing first received recognition when she gained (to universal disbelief) top marks for an essay entitled 'A Trip Round the Coast of England in a Ship'.

However, after a dispute with the Misses Simon, the Noble family left Southport for Liverpool in 1892.¹⁷ It seems that it was the following year they moved to London.¹⁸ Their first London house was 15 The Grove, Wandsworth (now St Ann's Hill), 'a little new villa in a row'.¹⁹ The terrace was called Agincourt Villas: it consisted of 22 houses, probably those for which a local builder submitted plans in 1892.²⁰ Number 15 was eventually renumbered as number 37, and appears to have been destroyed by a V1 flying bomb on the 16th-17th July 1944. 15 The Grove was where Edward Thomas made his first visit to Noble, while, in Helen's telling vignette, she and her sisters, typically for a group of aesthetic girls, were singing extracts from Gilbert and Sullivan's 'The Mikado' (1885) around the piano.²¹ On 9 December 1895 the Nobles moved to a bigger house in Wandsworth, 6 Patten Road, just across the Common from the Thomas home in Shelgate Road.²²

Once back in London, the ailing Noble, with only three years of life remaining to him, was as hard-working as ever. He continued to supply introductions on the poets with whose work he was acquainted to Alfred Miles's 10 volume anthology *Poets and Poetry of the Century*, and had a selection of his own work included in it.²³ He consolidated his already successful journalistic career by writing articles for the foremost London periodicals, including the quintessentially nineties *Yellow Book*, published by John Lane. Helen tells us that Edward was rather fascinated by the decadent movement circulating around the *Yellow Book*, but that she was repelled by it.²⁴ Noble's first paper in the *Yellow Book* appeared in volume 4, January 1895, when Aubrey Beardsley was still art editor; his second in April 1895. This was the infamous number delayed after Oscar Wilde's arrest, so that Beardsley's plates, tainted by his having once illustrated Wilde's *Salomé*, could be removed.

Another member of Helen's circle, particularly close to both her and Edward in the years after their marriage, was affected by the Wilde debacle. The young Franklin Dyall, just down from Liverpool, where he had been a school contemporary of Le Gallienne, was playing the butler in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the St James's Theatre when the arrest took place. Although Wilde's name was removed from the playbill in a desperate attempt to keep what had been a highly successful play running, it could not long withstand the public reaction against anything to do with the disgraced author, and closed soon afterwards.²⁵

Noble's book *The Sonnet in England and other Essays*, was published by Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head in 1893. The title essay, with its complimentary references to him, was on record as having very much pleased Rossetti on its first appearance in 1880, a fact which had gone a long way to making Noble's London

reputation.²⁶ The book 'was bound in a cinnamon-brown cloth, and had a gilt lyre on the cover.'²⁷ This cover design, which was by Austin Young, and the choice of publishers, really confirmed Noble's status as a metropolitan aesthete. He had finally taken on the colours of the Bodley Head, like his younger Liverpool protégés William Watson and Richard Le Gallienne, if, ironically, a little in their wake.²⁸ But in 1895 he would seem the younger man when he signed a petition against the harshness of Oscar Wilde's prison sentence, while the conservative Watson sent Lane a cable demanding the withdrawal of all Wilde's books from the Bodley Head's list.²⁹

In 1894 Noble helped to found the Liberal journal the *New Age* (he was part-proprietor) and the same year began his editorship of the monthly *Illustrator...for the Sunday School teacher and Bible student*.³⁰ In 1895 he published a fine collection of essays and reminiscences entitled *Impressions and Memories*. This volume, which he lent to Edward Thomas on 10 November, bore a dedication from 'their loving father' to his children, and included the words: 'to Helen, whose love makes household ministries divine'. This is contrasted with: 'to Irene [...], who may some day, I hope, write worthy books of her own' and: 'to Mary, the mighty book-girl, with her forward gaze towards the mathematical tripos'.³¹ His categorisations were perhaps a little over-prescriptive. Inevitably, none of his children quite fulfilled his prophecies in the way he envisaged.

Helen's part of the dedication recalls Wilde's views on the house beautiful, the elevation to an art form of the traditional women's sphere of home decoration that was so characteristic of the aesthetic movement. In this respect it is a relatively modern, even feminist, appraisal of Helen's strengths, as sensitive to her individuality as one would expect from the man who had written in *Impressions and Memories* how highly he valued the 'inner life of little children', and one of whose legacies to his daughter was his respect and liking for the young.³² Moreover, Noble was not a typical Victorian middle-class father, emphasising the sexual division of labour by departing daily for the office. He inhabited in a relaxed way the traditional female space of the home, working from a study which was 'the general sitting-room [where] all visitors were invited. Nothing disturbed my father so much in his work as to be left alone.'³³ His study, with its succession of distinguished visitors, amplified his children's formal education and was perhaps their most formative school.

Yet there is also in Noble's use of religious metaphor, and in particular of the word 'divine', an echo of earlier, more conservative views. These were shared by Miss Mary Simon, who wrote an article for the *Wintersdorf Gild Magazine* as late as 1908 comparing her work as a schoolteacher to that of a mother, and sanctifying both functions.³⁴ Helen also considered motherhood sacerdotal, as may be seen from the passage in *As It Was* describing the laying out of baby clothes before the birth of her first child.

If I had been laying an offering on the altar of my God, I could not have felt a deeper ecstasy than in that simple act. It was humbleness, pride, joy, wonder, tenderness and seriousness, combined into an overwhelming emotion, lifting my soul nearer truth than it had been before, or ever will be again. I cannot recall what I thought, but I believe in that moment I took on my motherhood.³⁵

Noble's metaphor originates in George Herbert's seventeenth century hymn 'Teach me, my God and King', whose penultimate verse reads: 'A servant with this clause / Makes drudgery divine: / Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws, Makes that and th' action fine'.³⁶ It is further coloured by John Ruskin's vision of the home as a 'sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth', ordered, comforted and adorned by woman. There was

undoubtedly a Ruskinian element to Wintersdorf's emphasis on the arts and beauty, and the school may have taken on something of his attitude to the education of girls as well. Although Ruskin celebrated an ideal womanhood, believed indeed that girls should be given the same education as boys, he also thought that education should be differently directed, extending: 'only so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends.'³⁷ A similar view was taken by Noble's 'dear friend' Richard Holt Hutton, who was in fact Professor of Mathematics at Bedford College, founded in the 1840s for the undenominational and academic training of girls of both secondary and adult age.³⁸ Hutton was an early supporter of Emily Davies, the founder of Girton College, in her attempts to raise the standard of girls' education. In the 1860s, however, he became a member of the Senate of London University, and the tone of his articles in the *Spectator*, of which he was joint editor, changed, as he now declared that although girls should receive the same education as boys up to the standard of university local examinations, it would be more appropriate for their subsequent training to be vocational. He supported, much to Emily Davies's disappointment, London University's position that their matriculation requirements for girls should be of a lower standard than those for boys.³⁹ Noble's views were probably as mixed as Hutton's. These were the conflicting messages of Helen's background.

Edward will have already read in the dedication to *Impressions and Memories* Noble's definition of the girl he would marry, when he received a letter from him on 19 November in which the father repeated his earlier assessment of the relative qualities of his daughters. Helen was a good aesthete but a poor intellectual, better at feeling than at thinking. With these words Noble pushed things in a fateful direction:

I think that when you get to know my Helen she might make a very nice friend for you. She is a few months older than you, but she is in many ways younger than her years, and she loves Nature and beautiful things just as you do, though in some ways she is not so clever as the others.⁴⁰

By the time the family moved to London, Irene, four years older than Helen, had left school and become a secretary. She was passionately interested in the theatre and a close friend of Richard Le Gallienne.⁴¹ Later she would become involved with the powerful Women's Liberal Federation, a pro-suffrage organisation uniting hundreds of local women's Liberal associations throughout the country.⁴²

The two remaining girls, Helen and Mary, were sent to Wimbledon High School, the GPDST school referred to by Myfanwy above. London offered Noble a much wider range of education for his daughters than Southport could possibly do. He will have been aware of the example of James Aldis, father of Helen's friend Janet, who as a keen believer in higher education for women (though not, in fact, in coeducation), had had to take the extreme measure of persuading the Governors to let his girls attend the boys' school of which he was head, Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall: 'because he saw no other way, in Walsall at that time, of giving them a decent education.'⁴³ Such was the schooling of Janet Aldis.

The Nobles may have been guided in their choice of Wimbledon by James Ashcroft Noble's friend Alfred Perceval Graves (1846-1931), the folk-song collector. In the seventies Graves was an Inspector of Schools for Manchester, where he knew Noble's friend, Alexander Ireland, the great book collector, and owner of the *Liberal Manchester Examiner*, whose literary supplement Noble edited from 1884. Ireland and Graves certainly visited Noble at the home in Ainsdale, between Southport and Liverpool, where

he lived from about 1880, and there is no reason to suppose that they did not visit him at his earlier house in Liverpool too.⁴⁴ Although in 1879 Graves moved to Yorkshire, and later to West Somerset, he obviously kept in touch with Noble. When, in the nineties, he came to London as Inspector for Southwark, he placed his daughters by his first marriage, Mary and Susan, in Wimbledon High. They both started in May 1893, in the same batch of girls, 21 altogether, as Helen and Mary Noble. Mary Graves was in fact almost exactly the same age as Helen (d.o.b. 6 June 1877) although Susan was only 8.⁴⁵ Their address in the register was originally given as Edenhurst, Arterberry Road, just south of Wimbledon Common.⁴⁶

Graves, as his son by his second marriage, the poet Robert Graves, acknowledges, was ‘an educational expert’ and extremely particular about the right choice of school for his children.⁴⁷ It is likely that Noble would have sought and followed his advice, the more particularly as they had girls of the same age.

Wimbledon High had opened on 9 November 1880 at 74 Wimbledon Hill, with twelve girls. In 1887 the rapidly expanding school moved into an imposing new building on Mansel Road, opened by HRH Princess Louise, the patroness of the Girls’ Public Day School Trust (or Company, as it then was). This was the school Helen attended. Although the present school is still in Mansel Road, the 1887 building burnt down in 1917. However, it was replaced with an almost identical one in 1920, and two Victorian houses in Wimbledon Hill Road, one of which was the first accommodation of the school, are also incorporated into the site.

The aims of the Girls’ Public Day School Company were outlined by its founder in 1872 at an inaugural meeting at the Albert Hall. Maria Grey, herself a convinced suffragist, declared that the schools would be:

places not only of instruction, but of education in the true sense of the word, and a training of the individual girl by the development of her mental and moral faculties, to understand the relation in which she stands to the physical world around her: to her fellow-beings, whether as members of her family, her country or her race; to her God, the Father and supreme Lord; and to know and perform the duties which arise out of these relations.⁴⁸

Despite including religious instruction in the curriculum, the schools were to be undenominational. Thanks to a scholarship system, they were also to be without class distinctions or social exclusiveness, although fees were, in any event, moderate. Above all they were intended, within a conservative but nonetheless feminist agenda, to give girls an academic education similar to that of boys. The seriousness of this aim was beginning to be proved by results, for in 1890, by which date there were already 34 GPDST schools, the first BA degree was obtained by a former pupil of Wimbledon. Eleanor Roberts took her degree at the University of London, which had finally allowed women to take its examinations and degrees in 1878. Thus the reputation of WHS would have made it most attractive to the liberal Noble, with his progressive ideas on the education of girls. But the conventional ‘muscular Christianity’ of Maria Grey’s words would also have appealed to this ‘strictly moral Bohemian’, he who in 1886, for example, had written a hymn, ‘Lord Jesus, in the days of old’ for the girls of Wintersdorf.⁴⁹ Yet Noble had no allegiance to any particular church, and when he died the Rev. Tarrant conducted his funeral service in the Wandsworth Unitarian chapel, while the Rev. W. H. Dyson of Ramsgate performed the Church of England rites at the grave.⁵⁰ An undenominational school would have been

to his liking. And after his disagreement with the Misses Simon, Noble may have been relieved to have his girls in a publicly-managed rather than a private educational establishment.

Wimbledon High was not a school which wanted to keep its girls in a separate sphere, as the confident, outward-looking tone of Maria Grey's remarks makes clear. Perhaps, therefore, it was here that Helen learned to give her domestic skills a public face, to take pride in them and the contribution they made not just to the family but to society. On leaving she took a series of jobs as a private nursery governess, from the summer of 1896 to the summer of 1899. Though this was the most traditional of occupations for an unexceptional middle-class girl in need of a livelihood, Helen's account of her work in *As It Was* is joyously self-confident, and when she assumed her final post with Beatrice Logan in St Peter's Square, Hammersmith, it was, she makes clear, as a companion and equal member of the household. She was, after all, unlike her forbears in the field, an *educated* governess. In Autumn 1909 she began teaching in the kindergarten at her children's school, Bedales, founded in 1893, progressive and co-educational, and a third category of school from the two she had attended, if perhaps a little more in the Wintersdorf than the WHS mould. On 1 April 1914, with characteristic certainty that domestic matters were appropriate to a political journal, she contributed 'A Talk to Mothers', frank in its advice on teaching children the facts of life, to the newsletter of the Women's Liberal Federation.⁵¹

Kelly Jones, the WHS Librarian, responded with great enthusiasm and helpfulness to my enquiries about Helen and Mary Noble. She extracted the following information from the 'Register of Pupils':

Helen Berenice Noble.

Date of birth: 11 July 1877

Parent: James Ashcroft Noble, Journalist

Address: 15 The Grove, Wandsworth

Former School: Wintersdorf, Birkdale, Southport

Date of Admission: May 1893 (age 15)

Date of Leaving: July 1894 (age 17)

Mary Geraldine Noble

Date of birth: 14 April 1879

Parent, Address, Former School and Date of Admission: same as Helen.

Date of Leaving: July 1897 (age 18)

Of Helen, Mrs Jones writes:

Beyond the Register, I can find no mention of her in the magazine - usually a good contemporary source of information about high-fliers - I think she must have left without taking any exams and does not seem to have made a mark in any other way. Her sister Mary seems to have quite a different experience of the school. She took her Higher Certificate in English, French, Elementary and Additional Maths, one of only six in her year to so succeed, academically speaking.⁵² She was on the editorial committee of the School Magazine for two years, and obviously kept in touch with the school, as her marriage to Arthur Valon in Wandsworth in 1900 is recorded in a later magazine.⁵³

The 'exceptional headmistress' to whom Myfanwy refers was Miss Edith Hastings, head from the school's opening in 1880 until 1908. She came to Wimbledon from Nottingham High School aged only 29, and had, despite her youth, already been headmistress there for 4 years.

And what of Helen's 'beloved' English teacher, Miss Fowler? Mrs Jones was again able to help:

A register of staff was not kept until about 1908, and there seems to be very little in writing about members of staff, beyond what can be gleaned from the magazine. I can find her name only in the magazines dated December 1893 and December 1894 (both relating to the previous school year, the two years that Helen was at WHS) - she is recorded as being on the Committee for the Tennis Club, the Hockey Club and the Art Club in both those years, and appears in a list of the 'present staff under Miss Hastings', where she is attributed with the Modern Language Tripos, Newnham College, Cambridge. Unfortunately, at that point, she disappears without trace! There is nothing at all which specifically links her with English.

In about 1947 Harry Hooton, who was married to Helen's girlhood friend Janet Aldis, acclaimed Helen's two books, *As It Was* (1926) and *World Without End* (1931) as: 'lovely but heart-breaking'. ' "If only she would write!" Janet and I used to say after receiving one of her vivid, impulsive letters. Well, she has written, and we are the richer by two masterpieces.'⁵⁴

I told Kelly Jones about Helen's books and she replied:

Helen Noble was obviously a very talented young woman, so it is quite baffling that she obviously did not enjoy being at Wimbledon - perhaps it was more to do with having been uprooted and moved south at a rather crucial time in her young life, or being sandwiched between two sisters who were more prepared to conform.[...] Or perhaps she found WHS dull and obsessed with academic achievement in comparison to Wintersdorf.

It would be true to admit that [she] had completely slipped the net as far as research about distinguished and interesting Old Girls is concerned. She will definitely be added to our list. I will keep all the information you have given me in the archive in a new, special folder on Helen.⁵⁵

I know that members of the Fellowship will be as pleased as I am about this frank recognition by her old school of Helen's distinct achievements as both a woman and a writer.

¹ (Manchester: Carcanet, 1978), pp. 43-4. 'Now, Helen, are you too going to be a bright and shining light of the elementary school?' was the question asked of her by Miss Mary Simon when she first went to Wintersdorf. *Time & Again*, p.36.

² R.George Thomas, *Edward Thomas: a portrait* (1985), p. 158.

³ See Kedrun Laurie, 'James Ashcroft Noble (1844-1896)', *The 1890s Online*, <http://www.1890s.ca>.

⁴ *Time & Again*, p.42 and information from Southport Local Studies Library. The Nobles lived in Alger Villa from 1886 / 7-1892. Eastbourne Road West is now Crescent Road. After Noble's death, a memorial brass was placed in the Unitarian Church, Portland Street, Southport, where he sometimes preached, by his widow.

⁵ Josephine Kamm, *Indicative Past: a hundred years of the Girls' Public Day School Trust* (London: George Allen & Unwin for the Friends of the Girls' Public Day School Trust, 1971), p. 30.

⁶ Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p.46. Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History* (London: Methuen, 1965), p.214.

⁷ The date of foundation is inferred from Phyllis Lovell, ed., *Wintersdorf Gild Magazine*, vol 1, no 1 (1908), p.50. I am grateful to Andrew Farthing of Southport Local Studies library for supplying me with a copy of this.

⁸ The Gild magazine does not mention a Miss Sarah, but a Miss *Hilda* Simon.

⁹ *Time & Again*, p.35.

¹⁰ In a lecture of October 1894 to the Liverpool Philomathic Society at the Adelphi Hotel. Richard Whittington-Egan and Geoffrey Smerdon, *The Quest of the Golden Boy: the life and letters of Richard Le Gallienne* (London: Unicorn Press, 1961), p.263.

¹¹ Edward Thomas, 'Swansea Village', *The Last Sheaf* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928), p.158.

¹² Richard Le Gallienne, *Young Lives* (Bristol: J. Arrowsmith, 1899), pp.78-81.

¹³ 'outpost' : Percy Muir, *Minding My Own Business* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), p 5. *Time & Again*, p.35.

¹⁴ *Time & Again*, p.37.

¹⁵ 'The Burden of Christina Rossetti' in Noble's *Impressions and Memories* (London: J. M. Dent, 1895), pp.55-54, will give an idea of his lecture at Wintersdorf.

¹⁶ Southport Local History Library.

¹⁷ *Time & Again*, p.42.

¹⁸ There is a letter from Noble to William Downing, the Birmingham bookseller and publisher, addressed from The Grove, Wandsworth and dated 9 July 1893 in Birmingham City Archives, MS 1366/B/6/322.

¹⁹ 'new villa': Helen Thomas with Myfanwy Thomas, *Under Storm's Wing* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1988), p. 19.

²⁰ Battersea Library has a drainage plan submitted by a local builder for 22 houses in The Grove, dated 29th July 1892. There were 22 houses in Agincourt Villas. Information from David Ainsworth at Battersea Library.

²¹ *Under Storm's Wing*, p. 20. It will be recalled that Yum-Yum refers to herself as 'a child of nature'.

²² '9 December': James Ashcroft Noble to Edward Thomas, 30 November 1895. National Library of Wales, 22919B, f41v, f42. Quoted with permission.

²³ Alfred H. Miles, ed., *Poets and Poetry of the Century* (London: Hutchinson, n.d. [1891-7]), vol. 8, pp. 672-6.

²⁴ *Under Storm's Wing*, p.53.

²⁵ Charlotte Gere with Lesley Hoskins, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* (London: Lund Humphries, 2000), pp. 104-5. Dyall was the son of Charles Dyall, the first curator of Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery. In 1907 he would marry Phyllis Logan, for whose mother Beatrice Helen had worked as a governess.

²⁶ 'The Sonnet in England', *Contemporary Review*, September 1880, pp.446-71. See also Vivien Allen, *Dear Mr. Rossetti: the letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Hall Caine 1878-1881* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000).

²⁷ John Lewis May, *John Lane and the Nineties* (London: John Lane Bodley Head, 1936), p.126. In his preface to *The Sonnet in England* Noble wrote: 'I cannot feel less grateful to my friendly publishers, who have commended my work to all lovers of books by the pains which they have taken to render it externally attractive.'

²⁸ Le Gallienne's *Volumes in Folio* was the Bodley Head's first book in 1889. Watson's *The Prince's Quest*, first issued by Kegan Paul, Trench in 1880, was reissued by the Bodley Head in 1892, with a new edition the following year.

²⁹ James G. Nelson, *The Early Nineties: a view from the Bodley Head* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1971), p.211.

³⁰ Obituary *The Times* and information from Southport Local Studies Library. The *New Age*, where Edward Thomas's first paper, 'Wild Fruits', was published in November 1895 (James Ashcroft Noble to Edward Thomas, National Library of Wales, 22919B, 6 November 1895, f 12) was in 1894 described as a 'Weekly Record of Culture, Social Service, and Literary Life'. The editor from May 1895 to July 1898, Noble's close friend A. E. Fletcher, made it more socialist in tone, and subtitled it a 'Journal for Thinkers and Workers'.

³¹ James Ashcroft Noble to Edward Thomas 11 November 1895. National Library of Wales, 22919B, f19.

³² *Impressions and Memories*, p.95.

³³ *Under Storm's Wing*, p.19.

³⁴ Mary S. Simon, '“For their sakes I sanctify myself”', *Wintersdorf Gild Magazine*, pp.7-13. Yet Wintersdorf surprises again with the statement in the same magazine that for some years past Dr Marie Stopes, future author of *Married Love*, had been their botany lecturer. (p.52).

³⁵ *Under Storm's Wing*, p.72.

³⁶ I am very grateful to Phyllis, Lady Treitel for pointing this out to me.

³⁷ John Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens', *Sesame and Lilies* [1865] (London: J. M. Dent, 1920), pp.109, 111. The original lecture was given in Manchester Town Hall in 1864 in aid of a fund for additional schools in a crowded area of the city.

³⁸ 'dear friend', *Impressions and Memories*.

³⁹ *Hope Deferred*, p.191-2. Daphne Bennett, *Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women 1830-1921* (London: André Deutsch, 1990), p.72.

⁴⁰ James Ashcroft Noble to Edward Thomas, 19 November 1895. National Library of Wales, 22919B, ff 34 v and 35.

⁴¹ In August 1902 she and her husband Hugh McArthur lent Le Gallienne their flat at 64 Chancery Lane to recuperate after a cure for alcoholism. *Quest of the Golden Boy*, p. 394.

⁴² Reference to Mrs McArthur, *Women's Liberal Federation News*, 1 April 1914, p.3.

⁴³ A.C.W Aldis, 'James A. Aldis, Headmaster 1881-1897', undated typescript in the archives of Queen Mary's Grammar School, p.2. I am grateful to Mrs C. L. Ward, the School Librarian, for her generous help in supplying material.

⁴⁴ According to the Liverpool Street Directory Noble was living at 13 Moscow Drive, Stoneycroft, Liverpool from 1876-8, the time when Graves was in Manchester. However, Noble's account of the visits to his house of literary men, 'Sandycombes', in *Impressions and Memories*, can only be of Ainsdale.

⁴⁵ Mary Graves contributed an article to the School Magazine in December 1893. In adult life she became a professional gardener, having been one of the first women to train as such at the Botanical Gardens in Dublin.

In *Goodbye to All That* [1929] (London: Penguin, 1960), Robert Graves, born in 1895 in Wimbledon, recalls in about 1905 the terrifying experience of waiting for his two elder sisters in the school cloakroom and being sniggered at because he was a boy in this 'secret world' of girls (p.19). His sisters Rosaleen and Clarissa were at WHS from about 1899, as were his younger brothers, John and Charles, small boys then being allowed in the Preparatory.

⁴⁶ The *DNB* gives 1895 as the date Graves came to London. Graves himself states that he moved to Lauriston Road, Wimbledon Common, in June 1894. A. P. Graves, *To Return to All That: an autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930) p. 271. Arterberry Road is very close to Lauriston Road.

⁴⁷ *Goodbye to All That*, p.17.

⁴⁸ *Indicative Past*, p.47.

⁴⁹ Helen's described her parents' friends, the children's author George Macdonald and his wife, thus, and I have thought her phrase an apt borrowing for Noble. *Time & Again*, p.48. The hymn was published in Noble's *Verses of a Prose Writer* (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1887), but not included in the *Wintersdorf Hymnal*.

⁵⁰ 'Funeral of Mr. Ashcroft Noble', *Daily Post*, 8 April 1896. (Liverpool Record Office).

⁵¹ *Women's Liberal Federation News*, pp.3-6. I am grateful to Richard Emeny for letting me have a copy of this article.

⁵² 'During the year, four candidates have taken the London Matriculation Examination, all of whom passed it. Dora Harris, Mary Passmore and Grace Summerhays in the first division, and Mary Noble in the second.' Extract from *WHS Magazine* (1897) reprinted in *WHS Centenary Magazine 1880-1980*, p. 24. I am indebted to Clare Gray, WHS Secretary, for supplying the references from this.

⁵³ R. George Thomas describes Mary as a 'gifted academic in later life'. *Portrait*, p.24. She died in the late 1920s.

⁵⁴ Harry Hooton, 'Edwy', originally written for Rowland Watson, published in the *Edward Thomas Fellowship Newsletter*, 33, August 1995, pp. 4-8. This quote p.8.

⁵⁵ Letters from Kelly Jones to author 2,19,21,28 April, 5 May, and 8 June 2004.

PUBLICATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

A *Bibliographical Checklist of the Works of Edward Thomas*, compiled by Jeff Cooper and Richard Emeny, is now available. This is the most comprehensive list of Thomas's work ever published and it includes the reviews (over 1900) and magazine articles as well as the books. It is not a bibliography giving details of every edition, variant etc., but is an invaluable working tool for anyone wishing to see the full range of Thomas's work and is excellent for the collector too. The checklist gives title, date and place of first appearance. At an offer price of £5.00 inclusive of postage and packing, it is a bargain and an order form is enclosed with the newsletter.

Six Poems by Edward Eastaway is being reprinted in a facsimile edition by the Cyder Press and an order form is enclosed. This is the first time that James Guthrie's Pear Tree Press edition has been reprinted and the Cyder Press photographed each original page to produce this handsome book as close as possible to the original.

The *Collected Poems* was finally published by Faber on 21st October 2004. It will probably remain the standard edition for many years, for the text of the poems is that of George Thomas's *variorum* edition, introduction and notes, originally published by OUP, with the Faber introduction by Walter de La Mare, and a new introduction by Peter Sacks. It could hardly be more authoritative, and, although there is much in it, it is a book that can be slipped into a large pocket. The poet, James Fenton, named it as his book of the year and John Simpson, the foreign correspondent, promised it to himself as a sixtieth birthday present. It normally retails at £12.99.

Other books currently in print are: *Light and Twilight, In Pursuit of Spring* both published by the Laurel Press, 282 The Common, Holt, Wiltshire, BA14 6QJ, *Oxford* published by Signal Books, an order form for which is enclosed with this newsletter;

The Country, Keats, Four-and-Twenty Blackbirds, Edward Thomas on Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas on the Georgians, all published by The Cyder Press, University of Gloucestershire, c/o Professor Peter Widdowson, Dept. of Humanities, PO Box 220, The Park Campus, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH. None of these editions is expensive, ranging from £7.50 to £12.99

There were several reviews of the *Collected Poems*, including a particularly interesting one by Ian Sansom in *The Guardian* on 6th November 2004.

Poems by Edward Thomas, selected with a forward by Myfanwy Thomas, was published as a Greville Press Pamphlet. It is a delightfully printed selection, which can be obtained from The Greville Press, 6 Mellors Court, The Butts, Warwick, CV34 4ST.

Robert Frost, An Adventure in Poetry, 1900 – 1918 by Lesley Lee Francis, Frost's granddaughter can be obtained from Transaction UK, c/o The Eurospan Group, 3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU., telephone: 0207 240 0856. This is a new edition of Lesley's fascinating book, *The Frost Family's Adventure in Poetry, Sheer Morning Gladness at the Brim*, first published in 1994.

An Imaginary England, Nation, Landscape and Literature, 1840 - 1920 by Professor Roger Ebbatson will be published by Ashgate Publishing at 130 Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4SB in April 2005 @ £40.00 hardback. Orders should be sent to Ashgate. It includes chapters on Thomas and Richard Jefferies and is described as 'highly theorised and original.'

Much publicity was given to the publication of the new *Dictionary of National Biography*. The section on Thomas was written fittingly by Edna Longley.

The Cotswolds in Literature is a weekend study break at the Farncombe Estate Centre in Broadway on 22 – 24 July. It will cover all types of literary figures who have drawn on the Cotswolds for inspiration over the centuries. The course tutor is Gordon Ottewell. Details can be obtained from the Farncombe Estate Centre Ltd, Broadway, Wores., WR12 7LJ, telephone: 0845 2308590, email: enquiries@FarncombeEstate.co.uk

The Language of Love, Anne Harvey's anthology has been re-issued by Macmillan in time for Valentine's Day. Two performances based on the anthology are at the National Portrait Gallery at 3.00 pm, 13th February- admission free, and at the Salisbury Playhouse on the evening of 20th February. Details from the box office: 01722 320333. Isla Blair, Julian Glover and Stefan Bednaraczyk will be performing.

I Once Met Robert Frost was an article in 'The Oldie' by James Roose Evans in January 2004. In it Frost reflects on his friendship with Edward and his views on the war.

Pamela Blevins, an American member, has kindly sent an article by her on ***The Christian Science Monitor*** in its great days, entitled ***Marion Scott and The Christian Science Monitor, Ivor Gurney and Christian Science Healing*** in which she explains the attempts by Christian Scientists to cure Gurney of his mental illness. She pointed out that between the wars, 'The Monitor' printed some excellent articles on English writers including Edward Thomas. Marion Howells, the friend of Ivor Gurney, was a regular contributor.

The Imperial War Museum is mounting a major exhibition of the paintings of William Orpen, entitled ***Politics, Sex and Death***. It runs from 27th January to 2nd May 2005 and includes a number of his paintings and drawings of the First World War, when he was an official war artist.

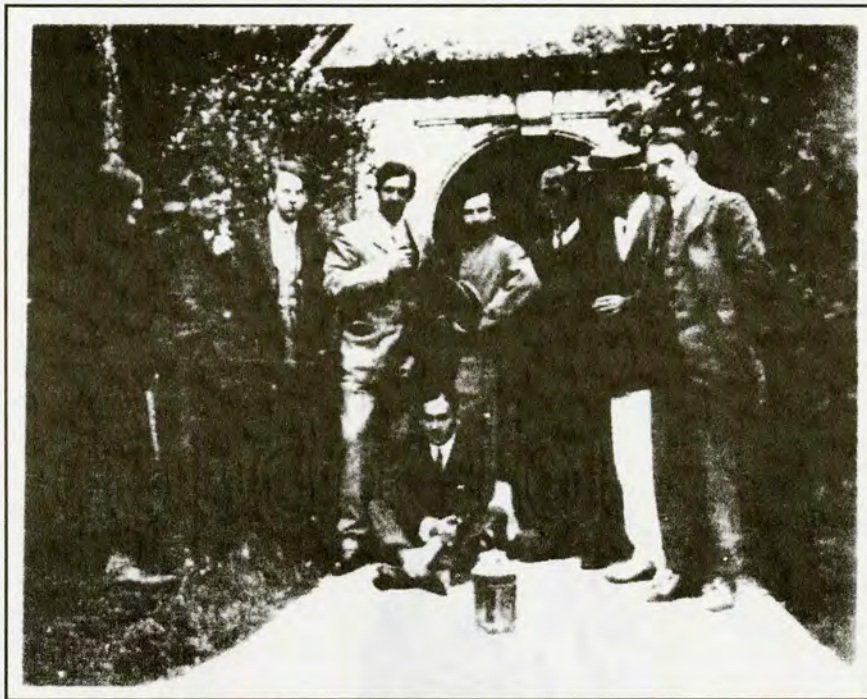
The ***Warminster Museum*** staged a First World War exhibition to commemorate its 90th anniversary. It contained an excellent photograph of Camp 15 where Thomas was stationed, and we thank David Dodge for sending a copy for the Fellowship's archives.

Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture, edited by Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift, London. Reaktion Books, 2004 @ £17.95 was reviewed at length by Martin Haggerty in the international journal *Planning Perspectives*. Not on the face of it a likely journal to find Edward Thomas material, Martin found a stupendous misunderstanding and misquotation of the 'Literally for this' statement to Eleanor Farjeon when Thomas enlisted.

The Times of 18th September 2004 included a fine article on 'Walking in Days Gone By' by Christopher Somerville. Edward Thomas was central to the article, which also questioned whether the increasingly technological equipment available for walkers was spoiling the recreation. A week earlier, the 'Gardens Review' section of *The Times* by Katherine Swift quoted 'Adlestrop' as a memorial to her grandfather, killed at the Battle of Cambrai in 1917.

Tideline, an enterprising poetry magazine from Wells-next-the-sea in Norfolk contained an article on Edward Thomas and James Guthrie.

Thanks as always to the many contributors to the Newsletter. Please send relevant items to the editor, Richard Emeny, Melrose House, 4 High Street, North Petherton, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 6NQ. (note change of address). Telephone: 01278 662856, Email. remeny@halswell.fsnet.co.uk



The Old Broughtonians at Calne
 Photo: J.J. Farjeon
 Edward Thomas 3rd from right



Myfanwy At Home
 Remembrance Sunday 2004



Robin Guthrie's lino-cut of Edward Thomas