

THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter No. 9



"The crooked paths up the Downs begin to glitter like streaks of lightning. The thrushes sing. From the straight dark beeches the snow cannot fall fast enough in great drops, in showers, in masses that release the boughs with a quiver and a gleam. The green leaves close to the ground creep out, and against them the snow is blue. A little sighing wind rustles ivy and juniper and yew. The sun mounts, and from his highest battlement of cloud blows a long blast of light over the pure land."

- The South Country: 'Spring'

....And may the sun indeed herald a fine spring day for our Birthday Walk and the celebration of 'The South Country' - as announced in this our Ninth Newsletter. (The book will be available at both Newbury and Steep.)

The Twelfth Birthday Walk will take place on Sunday, 4th March, 1984. Assemble outside Steep Church, near Petersfield, at 10 a.m. for PROMPT 10.30 a.m. start. A Welcome at 10.20 a.m. (see note re Car Parking) OR join 30 minutes later at Petersfield - outside the main Post Office in the Square (parking available in Square) by 11 a.m.

The Walk will be led by Frances Guthrie, a great-niece of Edward Thomas's friend James Guthrie, who lived at South Harting when Thomas was at Berryfield Cottage. "I saw Guthrie yesterday....the morning being lofty and blue I walked to South Harting." - from a letter to Gordon Bottomley, Berryfield Cottage, 16 February 1907.

The Route will be a circular one via Petersfield and Buriton, then up and along the South Downs to South Harting - the lunch-time halt. "He would descend from the hills", wrote Guthrie of his friend. There are three inns at South Harting, the Coach and Horses, the White Hart and the Ship. We shall leave South Harting promptly at 2.05 p.m. for the return route, by way of Goose Green and Petersfield, which is a shorter walk and mainly on the level, along lanes and field paths. The complete walk is of some 12 miles. In the event of no frosts it could be muddy and wet in places!

The usual Walk Sheet and Sketch Map will be available, at a small charge to cover costs, at Steep on the day, or by post, from 1st March, on receipt of 35p. (in stamps if you prefer) sent to Anne Mallinson, The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3JH.

Tea will be available, as usual, in Steep Church - the proceeds of which go to church funds. Tea and home-made cakes will be served from 3.30 p.m. until 4.30 p.m., and again at 5 p.m., after the Birthday Tribute. Tea will not be served during the readings.

The Birthday Tribute, in verse and prose, will be presented by Jill Balcon and Myfanwy Thomas between 4.30 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Edward Thomas publications, including 'The South Country', will be available in Steep Church.

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IMPORTANT. Car parking arrangements at Steep. Please park your car at Bedales School (signposted), in Church Road, Steep, and not elsewhere. The entrance is some 150 yards west of Steep Church.

N.B. IN THE EVENT OF SEVERE WINTRY CONDITIONS being either forecast, or on hand, and you are in any doubt about the Walk taking place, telephone Anne Mallinson, Selborne (042-050) 307 or Alan Martin, 01-977-4507.

"Thank you very much for the Eighth Newsletter.... Every time I read the Newsletter, I really enjoy it and how I wish I could visit England and join the walk."

- a member from Minato-ku, Tokyo.

'The South Country' - Edward Thomas J. M. Dent 1909 and 1932

In the last Newsletter reference was made to a reprint of this work. Now we have details of not one but two editions! The first, from J. M. Dent, comes in March and the second, from Hutchinson, in April. Both in paperback.

THE SOUTH COUNTRY With wood engravings by Eric Fitch Daghish. Introduction by Helen Thomas. (1932) New preface by R. George Thomas. Everyman Paperback 1984 £2.95 Leaflet enclosed.

THE SOUTH COUNTRY Introduction by John Wain. Hutchinson Paperback 1984 £3.95 "'The South Country' shows Thomas at the peak of his powers as a descriptive writer, sensitive not merely to the changing seasons and subtle rhythms of the natural life around him, but to the moods and the way of life of the people too.... The republication of 'The South Country'....will please all of Thomas's many admirers, and evoke for a new generation a sense of what it must have been like to live in the south of England in Edwardian times." - from the cover of Hutchinson's edition.

Edward Thomas: A Celebration will launch Dent's edition of 'The South Country' on Saturday, 3rd March, 1984, 12 noon-2 p.m. R. George Thomas, Emeritus Professor of English, University College, Cardiff, will speak on Edward Thomas and 'The South Country' at 12 noon, for approximately 45 minutes, followed by discussion and social time, with light refreshments. Our President, Myfanwy Thomas, will be present.

The occasion forms part of the 1984 Newbury Literary Festival "Visions of the Future/Echoes of the Past".

Tickets (send cheque/P.O. and s.a.e.) £2.50: O.A.P.s, students, Members of the Arts Workshop and the unemployed £2.00. Available from The Arts Workshop, Northcroft Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG13 1BU. (Northcroft Lane is off Northbrook Street, the turning opposite Boots. The Arts Workshop is 50 yards down the lane on the right - the old Temperance Hall.)

On the evening of 3rd March, in another part of 'the South Country' - Hampshire - an Informal Occasion will bring this special anniversary day

to a close. By kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Holmes, of Hawkley (Harry is one of our Committee members and led the 1981 Birthday Walk), we shall meet at their home, 'Churchfield'. This venue is a short distance from Oakshott, where another Harry, Dr. Harry Roberts, entertained Edward Thomas some 70 years ago.... "Edward Thomas", wrote Winifred Stamp, "....would sit in the firelight in our rather bare big room talking to Harry or singing Welsh songs in a clear, pure, slight voice, which matched his physique to perfection."

On Saturday, our host, Harry Holmes, appropriately 'in the Chair', will be asking us, over a glass of wine, "What does Edward Thomas mean to you?" Is it nostalgia for the Edwardian countryside? — Thomas's honesty and personal integrity? His way of looking at nature?

The evening at 'Churchfield', Hawkley (which lies between Steep and Selborne) will start at 7.30 p.m. As Hawkley is not easy to find in the dark, if you are unfamiliar with the area, for it is approached by narrow lanes from every direction, it has been suggested that we meet in Selborne soon after 7 p.m. — and no later than 7.15 p.m. — outside the Queen's Hotel in the main street, and we'll go on from there together. The Queen's Hotel (and no doubt other pubs in the area) provide bar food between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Members hoping to attend Mr. and Mrs. Holmes's evening should let either Anne Mallinson (Selborne 307) or Alan Martin (01-977-4507) know as soon as possible, and certainly by 1st March. The occasion will probably last a couple of hours or so.

Of Birds and Bells on March the Third

Kilvert's Diary - Quinquagesima Sunday, 3 March 1878:

"As I walked in the Churchyard this morning the fresh sweet sunny air was full of the singing of the birds and the brightness and gladness of the Spring. Some of the graves were white as snow with snowdrops....

"....The whole air was melodious with the distant indefinite sound of sweet bells that seemed to be ringing from every quarter by turns, now from the hill, now from the valley, now from the deer forest, now from the river. The chimes rose and fell, swelled and grew faint again."

'March the Third' - 'Tis Sunday, and the church-bells end when the birds do:

"Here again (she said) is March the third
And twelve hours singing for the bird
'Twixt dawn and dusk, from half-past six
To half-past six, never unheard....

"And when it falls on Sunday, bells
Are a wild natural voice that dwells
On hillsides; but the birds' songs have
The holiness gone from the bells."

Plaque on The Red House - August 1985

It is with pleasure that we announce that a plaque is to be placed on The Red House, Cockshott Lane, Froxfield, in August 1985. Mrs. Leslie Sykes, the owner of this house, in which Myfanwy Thomas was born on 16th August, 1910, has kindly agreed to the Fellowship's suggestion that a plaque should record that Edward Thomas lived in the house, 1910-1913. This house with "sixty miles of South Downs at one glance" was the second of the family's homes in Hampshire. A plaque on their first, Berryfield Cottage at the foot of the Shoulder of Mutton, was unveiled in 1937.

Further details will be given in the next Newsletter. It is hoped that you will wish to make a contribution towards the cost of this plaque.

Putting the 'Shoulder of Mutton' Back on the Map

When the 'Pathfinder' Series of the Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 Sheet SU 62/72 was published last year, it was noticed that the name 'Shoulder of Mutton Hill' did not appear on this new edition. As the Edward Thomas memorial stone stands on the hillside and references to the hill are ever-increasing, we felt that the Ordnance Survey should be aware of this literary landmark, and that the distinctive name of this hill should be reinstated on the map.

Ordnance Survey have replied "Your wish for the name to be shown has been noted and it will be added to the map at the earliest convenient opportunity."

The Autumn Walk will take place in Kent, on Sunday, 7th October, 1984.

Please make a note of the date now.

Fellowship Leaflet

The new leaflet is not yet available but it will be sent to you with the next Newsletter.

Edward Thomas Centenary Windows, Steep Church

An illustrated brochure is being designed. This will be available for purchase later in the year. Particulars will be given in the next Newsletter.

EVENTS

An Exhibition at Ely

In an exhibition of stained glass, sculpture and paintings at The Gallery, The Old Fire Engine House, Ely, there will be two glass panels by Paul Quail, inspired by poems of Edward Thomas. The artist has taken the themes from 'Tall Nettles' and 'The Pond'. Enquiries for opening times to Ely 2582. The exhibition will be held from 1st February to 1st March, 1984.

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Subscriptions

We should be most grateful if those who have not yet paid their subscription for 1984 would do so please. It will save so much time and money in sending out reminders next month. Most sincerely, it is hoped that you wish to continue your membership, but sadly if this is not the case, please advise the Hon. Secretary, so that we can keep our records correct. Remember, too, Bankers' Orders save us all a lot of effort - hopefully those members paying this way (and it is never too late to change) should have adjusted the amount to take care of the increase in the subscription rate.

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 on relevant events, items of interest, publications, etc., which could be included in forthcoming Newsletters, and names and addresses of prospective new members.

Anne Mallinson.

February 1984.