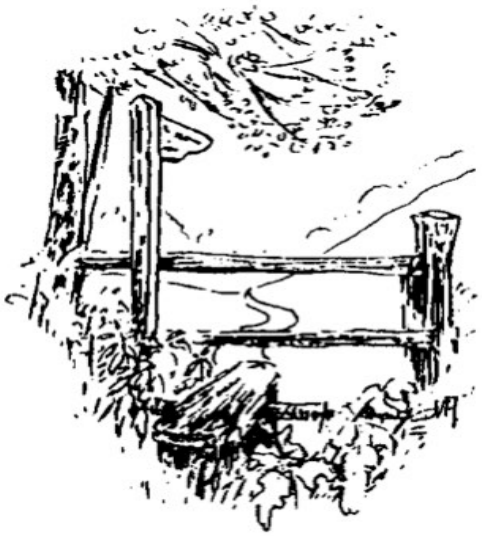
THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP



"As the sun rose I watched a proud ash tree shedding its leaves after a night of frost. It let them go by threes and tens and twenties: very rarely, with little intervals, only one at a time; once or twice a hundred in one flights….A gentle wind arose from the north and the leaves all went sloping in larger companies to the ground- falling, falling, whispering as they joined the fallen, they fell for a longer time than a poppy spends in opening and shedding its husks in June. But soon only two leaves were left vibrating. In a little while they also, both together, made the leap, twinkling for a short space and then shadowed and lastly bright and silent on the grass."

- from 'The Heart of England'

NEWSLETTER 79 January 2018

2017 was inevitably going to be a busy year. First and foremost it was the centenary of Edward Thomas's death, and more than forty of us travelled to Arras and Agny to commemorate the day, as reported in the last newsletter. Being on the exact site of the observation post at the exact moment of his death a hundred years earlier was a moving and extraordinary experience. A month earlier we had the customary Birthday Walk, which was followed by an equally moving Tribute in Steep Church. Over many years Steep Church has been a generous and welcoming host on Birthday Walks and other occasions, so it was a pleasure this year for the Fellowship to join The Friends of Steep Church as a group member. The June event, which has also been reported, was the Study Day combined with the opening of the Edward Thomas Centre, based round Tim Wilton Steer's collection and a book launch, in Petersfield Church and Museum. It was good to see a full house and to welcome our Joint Presidents, Edna and Michael Longley, together with Guy Cuthbertson, Tom Durham, Matthew Hollis, Michelle Magorian and Edward Petherbridge.

It was decided to have a quiet autumn and to celebrate the unveiling of the memorial stone unobtrusively and personally. At the AGM in 2018 there will be two resignations. After many years of service as designer of the website, maintained by Madeleine and him, Martin Haggerty has decided to retire. In recent years he has been unseen, because he is lucky enough to live in distant Northumberland, but his work and support for the Fellowship over many years has been invaluable, and we are all much indebted to him. Having visited him in his remote and lovely home, I don't doubt his retirement will be worthwhile and productive. The second retirement is my own as Chairman. I have decided that now is the time to hand over to someone else. Being Chairman has been a great pleasure as well as a privileged

responsibility, and I thank all members for their support. The Committee too has been a great support, working on matters often not obvious to members. I thank them most sincerely.
Our current Committee is both strong and talented, and I look forward with great optimism. While there will undoubtedly be some changes and new ideas, I know that the unique character of the Fellowship will be maintained. It is also encouraging that two members of the Thomas family are Committee members; the lapse of time has not diminished the interest of later generations, increasingly remote from their forbear.
I wish all in the Fellowship a happy and successful future,

Richard Emeny
December 2017

The Birthday Walk - Sunday 4th March 2018

As in previous years, there will be two walks during the day, and you are welcome to join either or both walks. The walks will start at the car park of Bedales School, Church Road, Steep, GU32 2DG. Parking and toilets will be available throughout the day.

Those coming on the morning walk should meet in the car park between 10:00 and 10:15 am. The morning walk (a fairly strenuous 4 ½ miles) will start at 10:30 am prompt, and will include a visit to the memorial stone, on the Shoulder of Mutton Hill. The afternoon walk will start at 2:30pm from the car park of Bedales School, and will be a more leisurely stroll of around 2 ½ miles.

Members of the Fellowship will read appropriate poems and prose during the walks.
Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear (walking boots or wellingtons) for both walks.
All those participating in the walks do so at their own risk.
Our lunch stop will be at Steep Memorial Village Hall. **Please bring a packed lunch**. Drinks will be available to purchase at a modest cost. We shall end the day at Steep Church around 4:00 pm, where tea will be available. The Fellowship's short AGM and the Birthday Tribute will follow this. The walk sheet will be available to download from the Fellowship's website from early February 2018 onwards.

Mike Cope (mikecope@tiscali.co.uk)

The Autumn Walk 2018
The Autumn Walk will be on 22 September 2018 and we will meet in the Aston Upthorpe Village Hall, Berkshire, time to be announced. In the morning there will be a presentation by Professor Patrick Dillon a specialist in environmental history with particular reference to the Berkshire Downs. Lunch will be a bring your own picnic or use local pubs, which are expensive and heavily booked in advance. In the afternoon Prof. Dillon will lead a walk around the village, Lollingdon and Aston Tirrold villages, retracing Edward Thomas' steps and covering other literary associations with the area, notably Masefield.

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Richard Emeny, Chairman, The Edward Thomas Fellowship

Richard first became aware of the poetry of Edward Thomas at school, so it was not surprising that after the celebrations widely reported in the broadsheets for the centenary of Edward's birth held at Steep in 1978 that Richard first became aware that there was a wider interest in the poet. Sometime later, he made contact with Anne Mallinson who ran the post office in the village of Selborne. Anne also had an interest in the poets and writers in Hampshire and frequently organised literary events in the Selborne area as well as selling books and pamphlets from the post office.

Richard Emeny, Arras, April 2017 (photo by Mike Cope)

Anne Mallinson more than any other person was instrumental in the founding of the Edward Thomas Fellowship. From her home in Selborne she built up a list of people who were interested in Edward and sent out a newsletter giving details of the events taking place in the area.

One of these events was an annual walk organised by Major John Bowen on or around the 3rd March in the Steep area taking in the Shoulder of Mutton and other places associated with Edward. The first walk organised by John consisted of three small boys and a dog. Anne became aware of this walk and in conjunction with John gave details of the event in her newsletter. This brought greater numbers to the walk over the years. It was therefore inevitable from the interest shown in those early days that Anne realised that it would be beneficial to form some organisation in Edward's name. Consequently, on the 28th September 1980 at The Chequers Inn, Cholsey the Edward Thomas Fellowship was inaugurated with a walk consisting of some 18 members to Blewbury and back to Cholsey along the Icknield Way.

In those early days the Fellowship's committee consisted of Anne Mallinson, chairman, ably supported by Major General David Tyacke, Gordon Frater and Alan Martin who was our first secretary. As the membership of the Fellowship grew, so did the committee and it was in 1985 that Richard was asked to become the South West Region member of the committee. Four years later in 1989, Alan Martin relinquished his position as Hon. Secretary and the baton was passed to Richard. Richard was the Fellowship's secretary for 13 years, not only did he carry out the many functions of being the secretary but in 1990 he took over from Anne Mallinson as the editor of the newsletter.

It was from this time onwards that Richard's skill as an editor came to the fore, the newsletter developed from giving information about forthcoming events and reports on readings and concerts to an erudite literary journal. His very close association with the Thomas family and Myfanwy in particular brought to the membership's attention many articles that would not have been found without great time being given to research.

Inevitably the time required in being both secretary and editor was becoming too much, so Richard relinquished the position of secretary to Colin G. Thornton in 2002. A cursory glance through the Newsletters on the Fellowship's website will give you an indication of just how much time Richard gave to the Fellowship. Relinquishing the time consuming constraints of the secretary, gave Richard the opportunity to broaden the scope of the newsletter into an erudite journal and a magnificent source of information in regard to not only Edward but also Helen and their family. In 2008 Richard passed the responsibilities of the newsletter to Guy Cuthbertson.

Richard remained a member of the committee and in 2009 our then Chairman, Edward Cawston Thomas (Edward's grandson) decided to step down. On the recommendation from both Edward and Colin the committee unanimously elected Richard to become our Chairman. Over the next 18 years Richard steered the committee with a passion for both the welfare of the Fellowship and its members.
As if he had not enough to be going on with, Richard in conjunction with Peter Widdowson of the Cyder Press, reprinted Edward's biography of 'Keats' and later in 2004 he selected and edited 'Edward Thomas on the Georgians.' A regular speaker on Edward Thomas, Richard's talks and lectures are always thought proving and interesting.

The name Richard Emeny is frequently to be found in the acknowledgements page of the many books about Edward that have been published over the last 30 or so years.
So having made the decision to step down as our chairman, it only remains for me to say that without Richard's input, the Fellowship would not be in the strong and respected position that it is today within literary circles.
As a fellow member of the committee, I worked very closely with Richard and I know just how much time and effort he has put into our Fellowship over the period of 32 years, without his enthusiasm and dedication it would not be the true 'fellowship' that it has become. Throughout all this time, Richard's wife Liz has supported him on all occasions and we take the opportunity to also say thank you for everything that she has done.

We are privileged that Richard has agreed to stay on the committee in an advisory role where his knowledge will be an asset to the future of the Edward Thomas Fellowship.

Colin G. Thornton

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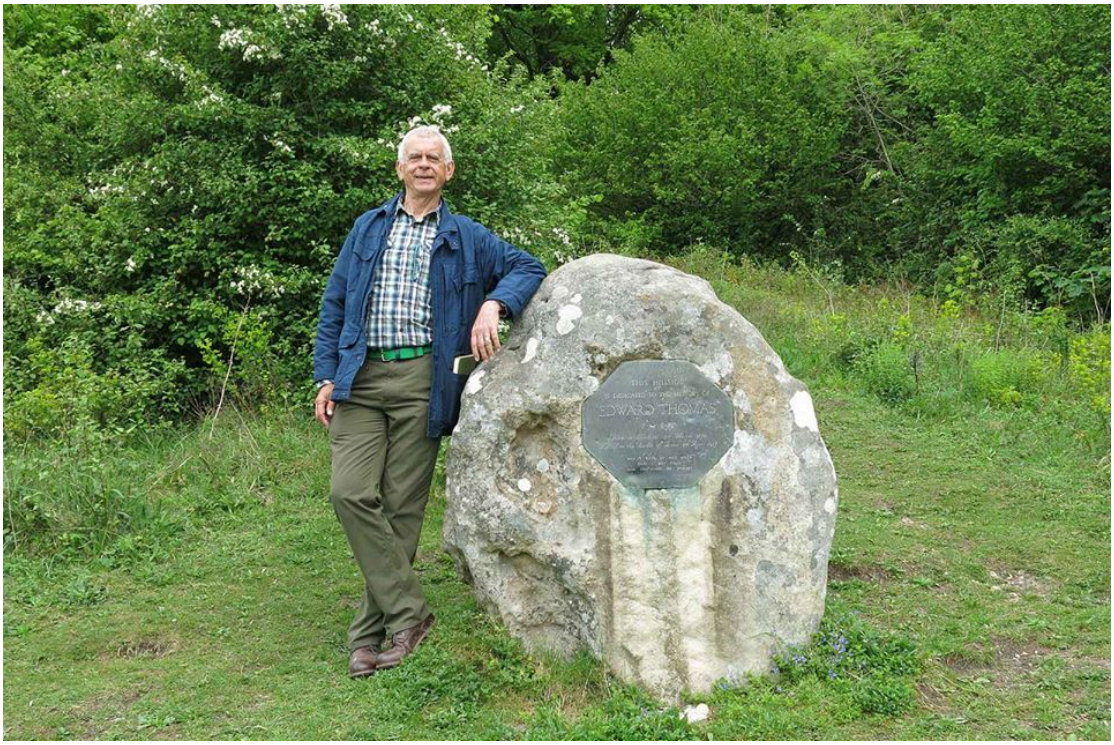
Ian Morton

At the AGM this year, Ian Morton announced his retirement from the post of Secretary. He continues as a Committee member. Ian took over the Secretary's post with very little notice, and immediately made his mark by quiet efficiency, so quiet that at times he seemed not to be there, but he always was, and he worked tirelessly for the Fellowship. I am personally very grateful to him for all his hard work, especially as his tenure covered the busy period of the centenary of Edward Thomas's death and of the First World War in general. He also modernised and streamlined the administration, never an easy task. He has been a constant help and support. I hope his advice and wisdom will continue to be available to the Committee for many years to come, and on behalf of all the membership I offer him our thanks.

Richard Emeny
December 2017.



Ian Morton, Steep, May 2017 (photo by Mike Cope)

Last March Ian officially retired from the post of Secretary of the Fellowship. Perhaps it was then that we fully appreciated just how much Ian had done to keep the Fellowship and its activities running smoothly. He became Membership Secretary in April 2012 and additionally held the Secretary post from October 2013.
Ian has continued to do a great deal for the Fellowship throughout the past year but he's now determined to hang up his hat from further secretarial duties.
Ian is a quiet man disinclined to say much about himself but we wanted to know more, and we want him to know how much we all appreciate his years of work for the Fellowship. So, here is Ian in his own words:

Questions Questions…

What drew you to Edward Thomas and when? In 1964 I was studying for my GCE English Literature exam and hating every boring moment, particularly the poetry. And then Adlestrop. I was a London boy born and bred and knew little of the world outside my South London manor of Battersea and Clapham. At last a poem I could understand and the blackbird song through Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire transfixed me. (I was of course without knowing it living in Edward Thomas territory). The poem lingering in the depth of memory, life moved on and in 1976 Breeda and I moved to Bearsted in Kent with our young family. A local history book was published and there was the poem again and details of Edward's life. I started my limited collection of his work and never looked back.

How long have you been a Fellowship member? I joined around 1987 after entertaining the secretary of the Rupert Brooke society to dinner. (Breeda was the secretary of the local Literary and Philosophical Society in Warrington where we were living, and he was a guest speaker.) We were in discussion about Brooke and Thomas and he asked if I was a member of the Fellowship? No - well write to this chap Richard Emeny the secretary.

You became both member and overall secretary for some time- what was that like? I did not volunteer for either post but was quite flattered to be asked to do one and then the other. On reflection holding the two posts was challenging and made possible only by having a good

Chairman and support of committee members. It is an excellent facet of this committee that if somebody says they will do something they never let you down.

What have been your proudest moments? Very difficult to say but I think seeing the completion of the cataloguing of the Tim Wilton Steer collection. To have been able to touch those wonderful first editions and their dedications from Edward was most moving.

Have there been some anxious moments? Too many to say but having two of our members locked in their room at Borwick Hall and having to get them out through the window was hair raising!

What locations do you feel bring you closest to Thomas? Walking by myself in town or country.

Can you choose three favourite poems? Can I have four? Thaw by Edward Thomas, In Memoriam by E.A. Macintosh, Munition Wages by Madeline Ida Bedford and The Road to La Basse by Bernard Newman and Harold Arpthorp.

What do you think the Fellowship has achieved? Its original objectives - and in a way that is the next big challenge. Is there something new or continue doing the same?

What does Breeda think as she has always been involved too? She has enjoyed the good company within the Fellowship and interest in the life of Edward's family.

And now about you: not Fellowship related

If you could go back in time, where would you go? To quote a phrase 'I have lived through the best of times and the worst of times' and I don't think I would change it for another, except perhaps the flag deck of the Royal Sovereign at the Battle of Trafalgar

What is your greatest achievement? Haven't got one yet.

What did you want to be when you were growing up? A Royal Naval Officer - Navigation

Is there a book which changed your life? The Greening of America by Charles A. Reich.

Have you written poetry yourself? As with music the mechanics of poetry are a complete and utter mystery to me.

What is your most treasured possession? Don't like owning things really.

Do you have a guilty pleasure? That first sip of a good gin and tonic.

How do you relax? It was road running until my knees gave out so now it is cycling

How would you like to be remembered? For having done one or two good paintings.

Margaret Thompson, December 2017-12-05

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The Autumn Walk- Sunday 8th October 2017

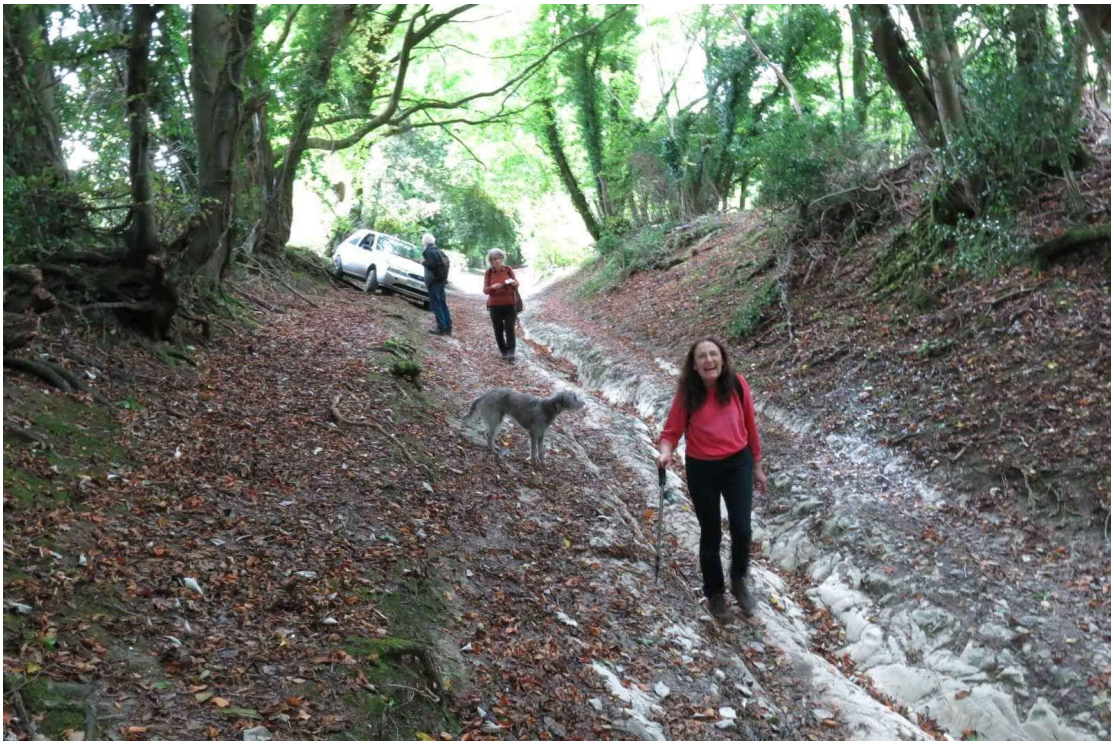
The Autumn Walk began at the Hawkley Inn and followed the Hangers Way southwards to Oakshott. A group of around 12-15 walkers took part in this informal, low-key event with poetry readings en route. About a mile from Hawkley, where the Hangers Way crosses a lane, we expected to find the stile which inspired the ETF logo. Unfortunately it was no longer there - and only a gap in the fence remained. Our route took us up a tall slope, where there were fine views north to the Rhenish helm bell-tower of Hawkley church, and then on through Oakshott Hanger.

Autumn Walkers, October 2017

We continued up and over the ridge, then downhill to the memorial stone on the Shoulder of Mutton Hill, which served as our lunch stop, where an excerpt from 'Lob' among other poems was read. [It was noted 'Lob' seldom features in poetry readings due to its length, which is a great pity as it was, as Edna Longley tells us in The Annotated Collected Poems (2008, 211) 'very close to [Edward's} heart' and well received by his literary circle – Ed.] How different and pleasant the hillside looked in October than early March, when we normally visit! It was almost 80 years to the day when the memorial stone was unveiled (2 Oct 1937) and the significance of the occasion was not lost on those present, and found its way into some of the readings.
The return journey involved a detour to the trig point on Wheatham Hill (now called 'Cobbetts View') where there were fine views north over the western weald. By popular opinion it was decided to return via a different route- a rutted byway, which turned out to be particularly hazardous. All walkers took great care on the slippery chalk , some crouching down on all fours to negotiate the terrain, but no accidents were recorded.

After levelling out, the route continued via a sunken lane to Hawkley village green where the walk began and our cars awaited. The village pub was temporarily closed for refurbishment and so the usual post-walk drink did not materialise. Nevertheless, the day appeared to pass off well, the conversations flowed and the mild autumn weather did not disappoint.

Mike Cope



Marie-Marthe Gervais-le Garff Margaret and Marc Thompson and Monty, and the abandoned car, atop the drover's road. (Photo by Mike Cope)

Mike Cope on Ashford Hanger looking back towards Hawkley (photo by Julia Maxted)

Edward Thomas Study Day, Oxford University Continuing Education Department
28th October 2017

A very impressive seventy people attended the seminar run by Oxford's extra-mural department on 28th October. Most of these were from outside the university, including several members of the EdwardThomas Fellowship, though I gather some of the younger people were first year students.

We met in a large lecture theatre with a display of support materials at the back with some other related publications supplied by the ETF. The day consisted of four presentations from specialists in the field of Edward Thomas studies, including the familiar figures of Guy Cuthbertson from Liverpool Hope University and Jean Moorcroft Wilson, the biographer of Thomas and others including Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg and Virginia Woolf.

The morning speakers, unfamiliar to me, were Dr Andrew Webb from Bangor University, and Dr Judy Kendall from Salford University. Andrew Webb began the morning with a fascinating presentation on poetic form, showing how form and syntax reflect thought patterns, mood and actions – meandering walks, meandering lines, hesitant thoughts, broken syntax etc. This was an original, interesting and stimulating lecture which I much enjoyed.

Judy Kendall followed with a highly original presentation called 'The Interruption of Birds'. Judy showed us how birds and bird imagery permeate Thomas's work, but also serve a more subtle poetic purpose of interruption and what she called divagation ('wandering'). She also, like Webb, showed how imagery in Thomas reflects thought with inversions and interruptions reflecting hesitation and doubt, including doubts about writing and failing to write. Birds and their imagined freedom provide interruption and opportunity. He wrote best when he focussed least, perhaps. 'Language will generate new perspectives when we are not looking' (Rowan Williams – The Edge of Words). This was an unusual and interesting perspective on Thomas which I would be interested to see develop further.

After lunch, there was no chance of a snooze when Jean Moorcroft Wilson swept up to the platform. Her subject, 'Edward Thomas, War Poet?' showed how much of the poetry, though not battlefield poetry in the Wilfred Owen mode, nevertheless has war as its solemn background music ('War is off-stage, never forgotten' - Jan Marsh), with even the apparently 'rural' poems affected by war-induced melancholy and regret. Thomas's tone of voice is highly distinctive and 'modernist' at least in the way the poet dealt with loss, identity and disaffection. In addition, his concern with the environment and losses and change in association with it are distinctive and innovative.

Guy Cuthbertson concluded matters with a tour de force on 'Edward Thomas's England', a thoroughly entertaining breeze around various aspects of Thomas and his England, which as Guy showed, in an idiosyncratic map of Thomas sites, included Wales. Guy also placed Thomas in the tradition of literary walkers and wanderers including Cobbett, Borrow and Jefferies. A lively way to end the day!

There was little time for questions and other interaction – in some ways a pity, given the amount of experience and knowledge of Thomas among those attending. The final session overran when pent-up questions were allowed to flow. All in all though, a brilliant day with an extremely healthy enrolment and high quality presentations. Also congratulations to the organisers for managing to recruit speaker able to speak with such fresh voices and novel views to an audience of mainly grizzled Thomasites!

Martin Johnson

Edward Thomas and the Interruption of Birds.

This is a version of a lecture for the Edward Thomas Study Day, Oxford University, Rewley House, October 2017.

by Judy Kendall

In this lecture I am going to consider Thomas's process of composition which is manifested most strongly in two of the characteristic features of both his prose and his poetry - his use of interruption and his references to birds. Frequently, these two elements coincide. They are essential markers of his style for any Thomas reader but as I hope to illustrate here they are also prime indicators of his own views on and approach to poetry, indicators of what he felt poetry could and should do, and also of his own creative processes when writing and rewriting (he did often rewrite or revise, but frequently on the same day as the initial scribbling down of lines) his poems.

The OED provides a useful definition of interruption:

> OED a. A breaking in upon some action, process, or condition (esp. speech or discourse), so as to cause it (usually temporarily) to cease; hindrance of the course or continuance of something; a breach of continuity in time; a stoppage.

For Thomas, such interruption, or hindrance in the course or continuance of something, often took the form of what he called 'divagations' – straying deviations or digressions from an apparent line of argument, often not only interrupting but in fact ambushing that argument.

Here is the OED definition of divagation:

> OED The action of divagating; a wandering or straying away or about: deviation; digression.

He valued these fiercely.

He uses the word 'divagations' in a letter written to his friend, the writer, critic and literary editor, Edward Garnett. Here, Thomas is defending his poem 'Two Pewits' from Garnett's criticisms of it. This letter, which is undated but we can assume was written between 1915 and 1917, is already interesting for those who have read Thomas's epistolary correspondence with care for evidence of Thomas's growing confidence in his writing. Thomas stands up to Garnett far more surely and firmly in terms of criticism of his poetry than he ever did for his prose, an indication that he knew at last (for his poems were all written in the last couple of years or so of a very long prose writing career) that he had found his creative way, so it is all the more important we take note of what he says here:

> "I am going to try and be just about the lines you have marked in 'Pewits', though I am not sure whether you question the form of them or the 'divagations' of the idea, but probably the latter – if only I could hit upon some continuous form as you suggest! I doubt if it will come by direct consideration."1.

This propensity for divagations was something Thomas recognised, and enjoyed, long before his breakthrough into poetry. We see him praising writers for their eagerness to roam beyond known territory or planned structures. In a 7 June 1909 review of Pound's *Personae*, in the *Daily Chronicle*, he writes: :

‘And part of our pleasure in reading the book has been the belief, in which we are confident, that the writer [Pound] is only just getting under sail, that he will reach we know not where; nor does he, but somewhere far away in the unexplored.’

Similarly, in 1913 when reviewing the first (1911-12) *Georgian Poetry* anthology, he writes of W H Davies and Walter de la Mare that:

‘Messrs Davies and de la Mare alone have penetrated far into the desired kingdom, and that without having been certain of their goal or of their way, or possessing any guide or talisman known to anyone but themselves.’
2.

He concludes criticism of an early version of Frost’s ‘The Road Not Taken’ with the words: ‘There. If I say more I shall get into those nooks you think I like.’ (Thomas to Frost, 13 June 1915, Spencer, 2003, p.63.).

In Thomas’s own poems his words are constantly getting into such nooks. This is often enacted as an interruption of progressive logical thought, achieved, paradoxically by a continuous close following, or non-interruption, of what can seem like every possible extension and reversal of a particular train of thought, movements that definitely, to recall the OED definition of 'interruption', act as 'hindrance[s] of the course or continuance of something' – movements that, in other words, resist logical progression. Instead we have reversals, repetitions and circles around an idea, which seem to defy logical heuristic leaps. Critics often observe this. Edna Longley names Thomas as a ‘master of inversion’, listing the qualifiers and negatives he uses as he moves through a ‘complicating resistance of clauses that begin “Even”, “At least”, “And yet”’, such as in the first stanza of ‘Old Man’:

the thing it is:
At least, what that is clings not to the names
In spite of time. And yet I like the names.
(Longley, 1986, p.43; *CP*, p.19.)

Stan Smith refers to Thomas’s ‘labyrinthine syntax’ and Thomas as looking ‘Janus-faced at every threshold in opposite directions’. Andrew Motion describes moods or situations in the poems as being ‘ambushed and forced into precision by modifiers and conditionals’. An example is the closing lines of ‘[For Helen]’ (or 'And you, Helen.' [Household poem to Helen]: ‘myself, too, if I could find / Where it lay hidden and it proved kind.’
3.

In ‘Out in the dark’, an aside, 'if you love it not', placed in the very last line of the poem, inverts the whole subject-matter. Such a last minute about-turn is typical of Thomas. While in this last stanza (and previously) the poem seems to focus on fear of the dark, the whole thrust of the text is temporarily reversed by the insertion of that aside:

How weak and little is the light,
All the universe of sight,
Love and delight,
Before the might,
If you love it not, of night.
(*CP*, p.375.)

Similar inversions can be detected in Thomas's prose. Thomas's prose piece, 'Insomnia', is an essay that in its title and initial paragraphs appears to be about difficulties in falling asleep,

the success of which seems to depend on a lack of anything deemed as 'worthy for more than a moment to interrupt' (p. 96).

However, this essay turns out in fact to be essentially about the creative process: its progression, and in this case its ultimate abandonment. The essay conducts its business through ceaselessly changing divagatory movements, which themselves replicate and provide thoughtful reflections on its subject-matter, whether it be achievement of the state of sleep or of a creative output. About half way through, the essay strays away from its apparent main topic, insomnia. It seems to wander off course in an apparently random manner, interrupted in fact by a bird, namely a robin, or rather the robin's song, which is described at length over several lines of poetic prose.

Typically, in this essay, a bird is present at an essential moment of illumination – even though (and perhaps because) the bird, a robin, or to be precise the song of a robin, remains off-stage, invisible, though audible, and apparently tangential to the text itself. It is in fact crucial, indeed, pivotal to the final achievements of the piece.

Thomas makes use of the interruption of birdsong to move into a vein that approaches the subject of creative composition, and ends up delving deeply into the specifics of poetic composition. In terms of the piece itself, the narrator is pushed into poetry by his experience of the bird. The bird's

> 'absolutely monotonous, absolutely expressionless, […] chain of little thin notes linked mechanically in a rhythm identical at each repetition.' (p97)

are experienced as being at one with its environment, an environment that includes the reluctant human listener: making up a 'harmony of bird, wind, and man' (p.97). Still desirous of sleep, the narrator strives to escape awareness of this 'dawn harmony', but in so doing, is drawn into a fascination with it that results in an attempt at poetry. The process of composition is not completely successful in terms of output, but it does produce three lines, two of which rhyme, and a sense of form – these lines being ascertained as making up lines 1, 3 and 4 of the first verse.

> The seventh of September

and

> The sere and the ember
> Of the year and of me.

The autobiographical nature of this account becomes clear when details in the essay are compared with a letter from Thomas to de la Mare that describes an almost identical process. The letter is undated but elements in it strongly suggest its date to be the same 7th September of the poem, in 1913, before Thomas's mature poetry is usually considered to have begun (see *Edward Thomas's letters to de la Mare*, p .166):

> "This address will most likely find me till Saturday morning, tho it is not the time & place to do nothing in, which is all I have to do, except that in sleepless hours this morning I found myself for the first time) trying hard to <u>rhyme</u> my mood & failing very badly indeed, in fact comically so, as I could not complete the first verse or get beyond the rhyme of ember & September. This must explain any future lenience towards the mob of gentlemen that rhyme with ease. "

So interruption and divagatory process are very evident in this essay, as well as a periphery of birds (so peripheral that it is only the song, far-off, outside, that we hear). This is prescient of Thomas's poem 'Beauty', again about an attempt to write a poem, contrasted with and ending with a description of birdsong outside, far-off, which both divides and yet also gives the writer comfort.

I sit and frame an epitaph –
'Here lies all that no one loved of him
And that loved no one.' Then in a trice that whim.
Has wearied.
And
some fraction of me, happily
Floats through the window even now to a tree
[…]
[…] Like a dove
That slants unswerving to its home and love.
There I find my rest, as through the dusk air
Flies what yet lives in me: Beauty is there.

Thus, in 'Insomnia', the narrator's deliberations result in the onset of the composing process, but only when the composing process is not their aim and his main concern is to return to sleep. His attempts to make his mind a blank, escape from awareness of dawn and the robin's insistent song, have an unintended effect: 'Gradually I found myself trying to understand this dawn harmony.' (p 97)

Rather than deliberately setting out to compose a poem, he is ambushed into a state of mind conducive to such composing – and one of the essential qualities of such a mind seems to be the lack of intention to compose.

The tangential tracing of the process of poetic composition, from its initial moments to a successful flow to, in this case, a final abandonment, also by implication leads to success in tracing the elements that occur during the process of falling asleep, which remain parallel to the process of poetic composition.

In brief, directed focus and striving upon the goal, whether it be sleep or poetry, results in failure. Falling asleep and writing poetry are what happens when the author is not trying for them. Remember W H Auden's 'In Memory of W B Yeats': 'Poetry makes nothing happen'. We could turn this on its head in Thomas's case to say 'Nothing makes poetry happen' – certainly in this case the poem fails once the would-be poet's whole attention is focussed upon it, and falling asleep, which is ultimately what happens to the speaker at the end of the essay) occurs when he is no longer striving for that particular goal but is focussed on the poem:
'by continual helpless repetition of them [the lines of the poem] I rose yet once more to the weakness that sleep demanded.' (p98).

The particular features necessary for such a state of mind are hinted at in the following lines from the last paragraph of this essay. Instead of a thinking intellectual engrossment the mind is filled with sensory impressions of the environment outside and of the physical sensations of the body within – the poet/narrator/would-be sleeper has moved from an intellectual to a sensory frame of mind:

'Gradually I became conscious of nothing, but the moan of trees, the monotonous expressionless robin's song, the slightly aching body to which I was, by ties more and more slender, attached.' (p98)

In this case, when sleep is not looked for, this sensory focus results in sleep. On the previous page, a similar awareness of the bird's song and its environment, when sleep is the goal and poetry is not, result in poetry.

So, to recap, because this is quite a complex tangle of points: creative production of texts or poems seems to occur, in Edward Thomas's case at any rate, but also many poets/writers report this, when the writer is not focussed upon the task in hand. Too much focus upon the

task of creating the poem actually drains/interrupt/ stop the creative urge. So how do you accomplish a task that you must NOT put in the centre of your attention? Try not thinking of a red fox's tail, my father used to say, and we would immediately have an image of that fox in the centre of our minds. Thomas seems to be revealing in 'Insomnia' a way in which this delicate balance of the attention, of keeping focus on what is periphery without destroying its peripheral features, can be achieved. This is by keeping the mind on the present moment, whether it be physical sensory impressions from outside or from within.

These impressions, which for Thomas often include birdsong, or other activities of birds, off at the side of his vision or hearing, are temporary, because of their nature in residing in the present moment. They soon become past. This means that the attention, if kept within the present, has necessarily to shift to new points of focus.

Additionally, as I note in detail in *Edward Thomas- Birdsong and Flight,* Thomas tends when talking of birds to use twin descriptors. They are almost always referred to as doing more than one thing at a time, often flight and song. I give a long list in *ET B & F* but for example, in 'If I were to own', the 'plovers /fling and whimper' (*ACP*, p. 115). In 'Ambition', the jackdaws 'shout and float and soar' (*ACP*, p. 59). In 'The Hollow Wood', the goldfinch 'flits and twits'. The thrushes in 'March' 'sang or screamed'; the birds in 'She dotes' 'sing and chatter'; and so on.

In 'The Other' a reference to starlings uses two contrasting verbs to evoke a starling. One describes sound ('wheeze'). The other is tactile ('nibble'). As if these alternatives were not enough, the inaccuracy that Thomas seems to be suggesting is there in any verbal description of natural phenomena is emphasised here by the need to follow these two verbs with another comparison, of starlings with ducks.

Such a complex and ever-fluctuating relationship to the environment and to the present, accompanied by allusions to sensory impressions that are almost ungraspable in their momentary and shifting nature, often occurs in Thomas's poetry and in particularly in the last lines of poems, as if as a reminder that an end or conclusion is never as final as it seems. In 'Old Man' we are told the thing 'clings' and yet we are only told what it does not cling to – the name.

> the names
> Half decorate, half perplex, the thing it is:
> At least, what that is clings not to the names
> In spite of time.

This can also be seen in the last lines of May 2015 'The Glory' where the attempt to nail down (rendered as a physical sensory biting down upon) the temporary present moment is inevitably doomed – the bite closes its jaws on nothing:

> How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to,
> Is Time? I cannot bite the day to the core.

And perhaps here we can put W H Auden's quote the right way round ' Poetry makes nothing happen'.

Another example comes from the last lines of Thomas's January 2015 poem 'Man and Dog' for example, where a robin, as in 'Insomnia', appears, coinciding with a man but only for a moment, celebrated for a moment in a togetherness and a physicality that references light, colour, movement and sound, making thickly present what is also emphasised as essentially temporary and passing:

Stiffly he plodded;
And at his heels the crisp leaves scurried fast,
And the leaf-coloured robin watched. They passed,
The robin till next day, the man for good,
Together in the twilight of the wood.

Man and robin coincide for just a moment, a time-limited moment and yet also timeless in the strength and physicality called up here.

However, the nothing that happens when we try to bite to the core or nail down that tiny moment of bird and robin, is also the nothing that poetry can make happen, can make both very strong and very present. To quote Rowan Williams in his enormously interesting and sometimes difficult work *The Edge of Words,* 'The Hegelian pattern of positing, critiquing and re-founding what we say about anything at all is a far more fruitful and faithful version of how we speak than any mythology of a single 'creative' speaker reinventing his or her world. We continue to learn' (Pp 41-2) Williams' dialectic or Hegelian re-founding (where one proposition is opposed by another and then reconciled at a higher level by a third) brings us back to Thomas's divagations, continually re-saying, moving on, turning things round or on their heads.

A similar bird example to that in 'Man and Dog' occurs in 'Often I had gone this way before' (the second 'Home' poem). The poet, listening to birdsong is immersed in it, both in and out of time:

one nationality
We had, I and the birds that sang
One memory.
(*CP*, 177)

The speaker has a strong experience but is unable to articulate it, remaining caught in the experience, unable, like the birds themselves, to distinguish the end of the song:

as he ended, on the elm
Another had but just begun
His last; they knew no more than I
The day was done.

Paradoxically of course this very insistence on a lack of articulation is in fact an articulation of that experience – a great example of peripheral attention brought into a focus that retains that peripherality. It is almost as if Thomas is pretending not to write the poem – and this links in very well with his repeated refusal to alter lines and also his very quick writing habit, a poem often written, revised and completed in one day – composed while, for example, rushing up the hill to his study. He has recorded in a letter how he could hardly wait to light the fire before scribbling on paper the poetry he'd thought of while walking up to the study.

How is it possible to keep that focus in the periphery, centring the attention in the margins without turning those margins into the centre?

For Thomas, as often for the Japanese haiku, the answer, as you might have guessed from my title, is interruption. Thomas valued birds for their interruptive quality. It is rare that a poem of his centres upon the bird, they occur at the periphery, often but not always, at the end of the poem. Even when they seem central to it, such as the birds in 'Often I had gone this way before' the attention of the speaker, the poet and the reader frequently dances off in another direction. Birds are (as I talk about in detail in my book *ET Birdsong and Flight*) divagatory in their very nature. Bird watchers will know how we rarely see them still, visible, close up,

in profile long enough to get hold of the bird book, leaf through it and look them up. Often identification is acquired through an awareness of their movement, their location, the fleeting glimpse of colour, shape or rhythm of flight, the snatches and reiterations of song. Simon Barnes in B*irdwatching with your eyes closed* (London Short Books 2011) admits that when hearing birdsong outside of its environment he often can't identify it. It needs that peripheral, sensory, environmental context to be what it is.

Recognising a bird sound from no context whatever is very hard. I have been caught out more than once, generally on the radio when they have played me a chunk of bird sound and challenged me to identify it. The mind goes blank: are we in the garden sipping Pimms in late spring, or on an open boat offshore in the depths of winter? I have failed these tests ignominiously.

The human mind demands context, not just for the convenience of identification, but in order to understand what the whole thing is about.

(*Birdwatching with your eyes closed*, London Short Books 2011), p. 34)

In Thomas's poetry, he leaves his birds be, as temporary, fragmentary glimpses of beauty. They might appear to interrupt the main body of the poem, or they might act as a starting point from which the poem veers off, but it is their very ability to stay on that edge, always moving, never still, never predictable, that allows Thomas to create his thick illuminatory moments of now in which (and note how he uses two birds to define this moment – their flight and their call or song)

> This heart, some fraction of me, happily
> Floats through the window even now to a tree
> Down in the misting, dim-lit, quiet vale,
> Not like a pewit that returns to wail
> For something it has lost, but like a dove
> That slants unswerving to its home and love.'
> ('Beauty' *CP*, 97)

Even when, rarely, as in 'Two Pewits', the birds seem to take centre stage, (and it is interesting that Thomas selects Peewits for this focus, the bird that 'returns to wail', they are still ever on the move – even in 'Beauty' that 'returns' suggests a previous leaving. In 'Two Pewits' indeed, the birds remain tangential in the way they dart in and out of frame, like the divagatory syntax of the poem, twisting and turning, as we noted at the start of the lecture, and as Thomas himself observed in his defence of such divagations to Edward Garnett. The peewits are 'now low, now high', 'Plunging earthward, tossing high,' ' 'twixt earth and sky' – the poem ending with the frame within which they shift and shift again, a frame that is both spatial and temporal, of earth and moon, riding and resting:

> While the moon's quarter silently
> Rides, and earth rests as silently.
> (CP p 139)

We are taken both in and out of a place or a time that is never stable and firm, but it is rich and deep.

We are taken to what I elsewhere have called 'the parallel universe of birds', and I am ending with one of my own poems here, written when I was immersed in research and writing on Thomas, and reflecting I think some of that focus on birds as peripheral, central, illuminatory in their marginal or untouchable location and time:

> *Rain Vision*
>
> Turning the corner, I see you looking up into the trees.

‘Listen,’ you say. ‘The parallel universe of birds.’

I stop, arrested by your eyes, your half-collapsed umbrella.

‘You look so happy,’ I say.

You gaze at me, smiling.

The rain, the rain.

(Kendall, *The Drier The Brighter*, p. 58)

Finally, I will leave you with a thought from Rowan Williams in *The Edge of Words,* which links so well with what we are talking about in Thomas – interruption and the peripheral universe of birds:

‘because language is connected in opaque and sometimes untraceable ways with what it talks about, it will generate new perspectives when we are not looking, so to speak – when we are not preoccupied with reinforcing habitual and normal idioms and practices.’
(Williams, p. 136)

Footnotes.

1. Thomas to Garnett, undated letter placed after 21 April 1915 and before 19 January 1917, *A Selection of Letters to Edward Garnett,* (originally in *Athenaeum*, 16 and 23 April 1920, sel. by Edward Garnett; repr. by The Tragara Press, Edinburgh, 1981), p.29
2. Review of *Georgian Poetry*, 15 January 1913, cited Longley, 1981, p. 114
3.Stan Smith, 1986, p.110, p.211; Motion, 1991, p.77;*CP*, p,299.

Judy Kendall, University of Salford, October 2017

Judy Kendall monographs

Edward Thomas, Birdsong and Flight, Cecil Woolf Books, 2014 (in Guardian round up of best nature books of 2014)

Edward Thomas: the Origin of his Poetry, University of Wales Press, 2012

Edited letters

From Poet to Poet: Edward Thomas’ letters to Walter de la Mare, Seren Press 2012 (in Guardian round up of best books of 2012)

Edited letters and poems

Edward Thomas’s Poets, Carcanet Press 2007

Own poems, inspired by Thomas

The Drier The Brighter, Cinnamon Press, 2015

Lloyd George Knew His Father

Eighty years ago, on the 2nd October 1937, small groups of people could be seen climbing the Shoulder of Mutton – with yet more used cars and a few tried cycling.

Why? Well, twenty years previously, on 9 April 1917 a fledgling poet but renowned critic, biographer, essayist and writer on rural matters had been killed at the Battle of Arras during the First World War. All these people were making for a clearing about fifty yards below the ridgeway along the crest (we now know of it as Cockshott Lane) to unveil a Memorial stone to Edward Thomas – in the landscape he knew and loved so much.

The memorial had been the brainchild of Rowland Watson, who had a life-long interest in the life and work of Thomas, and he became Secretary to a fundraising committee which

included Lascelles Abercrombie, Clifford Bax, Jesse Berridge, Robert F Cholmeley, Walter de la Mere (yes, that Walter de la Mere, whom Thomas himself had known for many years), Wilfrid Gibson, Eleanor Farjeon (writer of "Morning Has Broken" amongst much else), and several others. Many of these were either literary figures or, not mentioned here, family members including his son Merfyn and brother Julian.

The letter of appeal of 2 March 1936 was signed by Stanley Baldwin (Prime Minister) and former Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. Other notable signatories included the Poet Laureate of the time John Masefield, whose voice, on the 2nd October 1937 could be heard 'booming across the valley' as he read a poem in tribute to Edward Thomas.

There are many, many stories that spin off from both the life of Edward Thomas and also his work – whether that be his writing on rural matters (still greatly underrated), his literary criticism (a favourable review from Edward Thomas in the early twentieth century would be the making of a poet or writer – e.g. the American poet Robert Frost, who became one of his closest friends but unknown when they first met), and, of course, his poetry.

However, one that struck me was how on earth did Rowland Watson manage to persuade both Stanley Baldwin and David Lloyd George (not exactly political 'bed-fellows') to endorse his appeal letter. The answer was delivered to me in Richard Emeny's excellent recent book *"Edward Thomas: A Life in Pictures"* (and from which he has kindly allowed me to draw much of my material for this article). Within the introductory chapters Richard has written "As a Liberal he (Philip Thomas, Edward's father) had travelled to work daily with Lloyd George before he became Prime Minister. He was a member of the Clapham Liberal Association and became candidate for the constituency in the 1918 election but was not elected".

So, Lloyd George knew his father and, my supposition backed up by transcripts, written by Rowland Watson, of telegrams between the various parties, is that Rowland Watson, knowing he had secured the support of Lloyd George approached Baldwin who replied "only if Lloyd George will" (or words to that effect. Once Rowland Watson produced the telegram from Lloyd George, Baldwin had little choice so the campaign had almost the highest level of support in the country – and all because Lloyd George knew his father!

Jeremy Mitchell. October 2017

This piece was first published in the Steep and Stroud Newsletter No. 556 (November 2017).

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Edward Thomas' last letter to Eleanor Farjeon

On Tuesday, 3rd April 1917 Edward Thomas wrote letters to a number of his friends that would not reach them until after his death on Easter Monday, 9th April.

One letter went to Gordon Bottomley and another to Eleanor Farjeon who had previously sent Thomas a parcel containing nothing but Cox's pippins – his favourite apple – and a chocolate Easter egg. Thomas did not discover the egg until Monday, 2nd April, and the following day he wrote to acknowledge the gift. His letter, which also inspired Eleanor's poem 'Easter Monday (In Memoriam E.T.)', was still puzzling her more than forty years later when she published it at the end of her memoir. She wrote:

'Edward's last letter of all came after his death. It was begun in ink, six days before the battle, and finished in pencil five days later.

April 3

My dear Eleanor

I didn't discover the Egg till Easter Monday, because I was taking apples out one by one from a corner I had nibbled out. So now I must write again to thank you for an Easter Egg. It was such a lovely morning Easter Monday, though I can't praise it so well today when the ground is snow slush and the wind very cold though not colder than my feet.

(So far in ink; then pencil to the end)

Since beginning this I have been up to the O.P. and back and got muddy to the waist. I went to see what sort of dug-out had been made for us to retire to when we are shelled out, and it was wholly bad, and there is but one night left to put it right. Instead of putting the R.E.'s on to it, it was left just to any old N.C.O. and 5 men and is already half derelict.

Well, this is the eve, and a beautiful sunny day after a night of cold and snow. I am sorting out my things to get together just what I must have to live with over at the battery or wherever I am to be during the next 4 or 5 days. It will be safer there and also we shall be on duty all the time. The clear sunny day is giving the Hun every chance of seeing what is doing about here and he may pay us particular attention. Still I should like many such days to dry up the mud and keep our dug-out free from dripdrip. I have been strengthening it so that unless it gets something very heavy right on top it will be safe. I doubt if I can tell you much more. So goodbye. May I have a letter before long.
Yours ever
Edward Thomas

The eve of the Battle of Arras was April 8th, so the pencilled lines, with 'but one night left to put it right', were written on Easter Sunday. I read with bewilderment those odd sentences the letter begins with. 'I didn't discover the Egg till Easter Monday' – (but Easter Monday was still a week away). 'It was such a lovely morning, Easter Monday' – (but this is still Easter Sunday, this is the eve). I don't try to understand them.'

It is, however, possible to unravel the mystery. On 17th March in the course of a letter to Helen, Thomas had written 'I wonder when Easter is.' On Sunday, 1st April, he seemed sure: 'Easter Sunday – a lovely clear high dawn.' The following day the discovery of Eleanor's egg must have confirmed his mistaken belief that it was Easter Monday which was still a week away.

The continuation of the letter in pencil was also written on 3rd April and not the 8th as Eleanor imagined. Thomas's description of it ('a beautiful sunny day after a night of cold and snow') was virtually repeated in the letter to Gordon Bottomley of the same date ('a beautiful sunny day that began cold with snow'). Thomas also described how, on a visit to the Observation Post, he got 'muddy to the waist' – a phrase repeated in the letter to Bottomley. In both that letter and in his diary entry for 3rd April Thomas used the words 'the eve', by which he meant not the day before the battle but the day before they moved to their battle station positions to begin the preliminary bombardment prior to the battle. The Germans would inevitably retaliate, hence the urgency to rectify the dug-out into which Thomas moved on the 4th.

At some point Thomas might well have realised his mistake regarding the Easter weekend and would have mentioned it in his next letter to Eleanor. But there were no further letters.

William Cooke

This extract is from a book that focuses primarily on the friendship of Edward Thomas and Gordon Bottomley. The author is currently seeking a publisher and anyone interested should contact him via the ETFN.

A letter written by Philip Henry Thomas

I recently obtained a very interesting and revealing original autograph letter, written by Edward Thomas's father, Philip Henry Thomas and addressed to Roger Ingpen. The letter is dated Dec. 31st 1917, just a few months after the publication of the first collection of his son's poems and shows the writer's concern that a second collection should follow:-

13 Rusham Road. Balham S.W. 12
Dec. 31/17

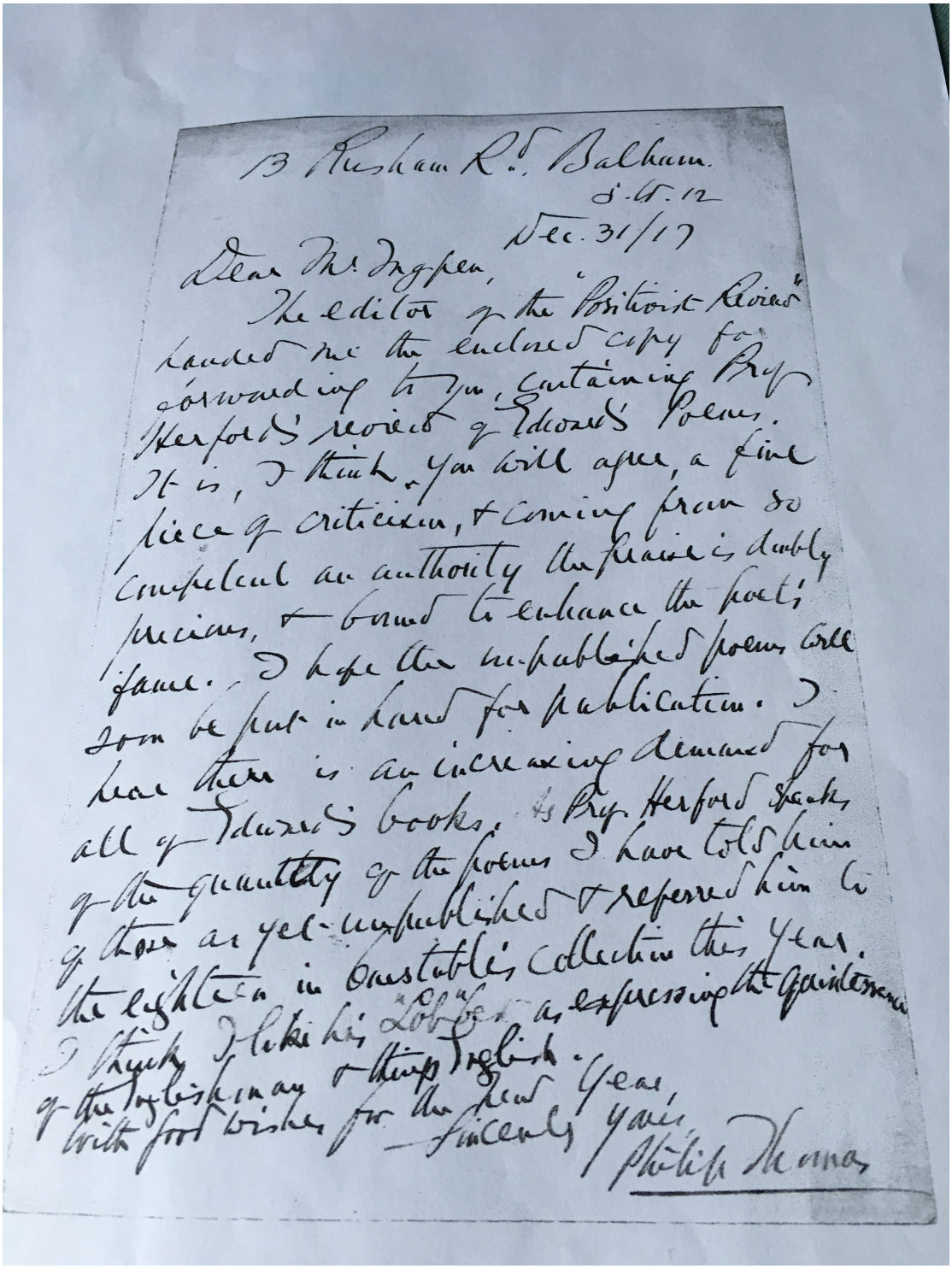
Dear Mr Ingpen

The editor of the 'Positivist Review' handed me the enclosed copy for forwarding to you, containing Prof. Herford's review of Edward's Poems. It is, I think you will agree, a fine piece of criticism, & coming from so competent an authority the praise is doubly precious 7 bound to enhance the poet's fame. I hope the unpublished poems will soon be put in hand for publication. I hear there is an increasing demand for all of Edward's books. As Prof. Herford speaks of the quality of the poems I have told him of those as yet unpublished and referred him to the eighteen in Constable's collection this year. I think I like his 'Lob' best, as expressing the quintessence of the English man and things English.

With good wishes for the New Year,
Sincerely yours, Philip Thomas

Roger Ingpen, as the time was working for the publishers Selwyn and Blount, who published Edward Thomas's first two collections, he would go on to himself publish further editions of the poet's work. This letter is one of the very few indications that we have of the father's opinion of his son's writings after his tragic death, he himself died not long after his tragic death, he himself died not long afterwards in 1920.

Noel Crack



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With good wishes for the New Year,

Sincerely yours,

Philip H. Thomas

Copy of a letter from Philip H. Thomas to Roger Ingpen, December 31st 1917

Book Reviews

Under the Same Moon: Edward Thomas and the English Lyric
EDNA LONGLEY
London: Enitharmon Press, 2017
302 pp.

Under the Same Moon sees Edna Longley attempt to bring Edward Thomas within the umbrella of the English lyric tradition, countering the received view of him as an isolated figure caught between the *fin de siècle* and the rise of Modernism. In that respect, her aim is similar to that of other, relatively recent publications: works like Guy Cuthbertson and Lucy Newlyn's edited collection *Branch Lines*, which considers Thomas's influence on contemporary poetry, and Matthew Hollis's popular biography *Now All Roads Lead to France*. Longley's book stretches the net wider, and the primary strength of *Under the Same Moon* is that it succeeds in establishing a series of strong links between Thomas and his poetic predecessors, while at the same time showing how he opened up new terrain for those who came after him.

Edward Thomas was someone in whom a sense of the English lyric tradition ran deep. There can be little doubt that he regarded the Romantics as the "source and touchstone for contemporary poetry" (67) and Longley argues persuasively that Thomas's verse "marks the point where, in English language poetry, Romantic aesthetics undergo a modern metamorphosis." (65) This transformation was achieved, not by pandering to the vagaries of poetic fashion, but through careful scrutiny of the lyric canon, and Thomas's job as literary reviewer for the *Daily Chronicle* and *Morning Post* certainly helped in that regard, since he had the task of assessing new editions of the Romantics' work. While he may have resented the demands this made on his time, his own writing clearly benefitted from the process via osmosis, and there are numerous instances where Thomas's critical judgement foreshadows his own poetic practice. Thus, his admiration for Keats's "sensuous eye" (72) anticipates his emulation of that attribute in poems like 'Digging', 'Sowing' and 'The Brook'. Thomas's reading of Coleridge is equally perceptive. He notes, for example, that:

> Coleridge loved mildness and wildness equally. Mildness, meekness, gentleness, softness, made sensuous and spiritual appeals to his chaste and voluptuous affections and to something homely in him, while his spirituality, responding to wildness, branched out into metaphysics and natural magic. (72)

Thomas was able to recognize this kind of paradox in Coleridge because it reflected dualities in his own chameleon-like character. Accordingly, Longley observes that 'The Chalk Pit' "contains a self-portrait in which he figures as 'mild and yet wild too.'" (72) What is more, the presence of such temperamental affinities would have served to strengthen Thomas's fragile conviction that he too was a poet. All of which makes the familiar narrative – repeated here by Longley – that Thomas only became a poet when he sat down to write 'There was a time', increasingly difficult to sustain. As J.B. Priestley once said of Yeats, Thomas was, "a poet first, last and all of the time".

The fourth chapter of *Under the Same Moon* – 'Epistolary Psychotherapy' – sees Longley return to a topic that she has previously written about with considerable insight. As that title suggests, the chapter is concerned less with the relationship between the poetry of Thomas and Philip Larkin, than with the role that letter writing played in their lives, as Longley sets Thomas's letters to Gordon Bottomley alongside Larkin's extensive correspondence with his long-term partner Monica Jones. Aesthetically, these two poets had much in common. Longley makes the valuable point that "[a]lthough nearly half a century separates Thomas's birth from Larkin's, the latter belongs in spirit, as the former more immediately, to the posterity of the *maudit* 1890s." (236) Both men, in other words, were

devout decadents and confirmed worshippers of beauty, which goes a long way to explaining their "almost masochistic sense of vocation." (236)

Acknowledging at the outset that Thomas and Larkin's letters grant relatively little insight into their poetry, Longley argues instead that, "where Larkin and Thomas coincide is in their therapeutic use of, and need for, epistolary distance." (243) Rather than constituting an intimate form of communication, then, their letters were invariably a means of keeping the correspondent at arm's length, and resemble poems only in so much that "letters, too, may involve masks, performance, artful self-veiling, unreliable narrators". (231) Thomas's correspondence with Bottomley is instructive in this respect, with the latter acting as a reassuring source of dialogue and encouragement for Thomas's frustrated literary ambitions rather than a personal confidante. Thus, Longley's claim that those letters resemble a therapeutic exchange between "patient and psychiatrist" (245) is hardly substantiated. Thomas says as much himself when he warns Bottomley that,

> tho I am the Confessor, I can never confess everything to one man, even to you – I find I have unconsciously arranged my confessions according to the person & so each of three or four is frequently surprised and put on the wrong scent. (246)

Larkin's tortuous relationship with Jones seems to have operated along similar lines, with letters serving to bridge and, paradoxically, maintain distance. Although both writers dabbled with psychoanalysis at different stages of their lives, Longley runs the risk of perpetuating the stereotype of the poet as depressive when she suggests that "Thomas thought depression and artistic 'intensity' might be interdependent" (236). Here, she makes an important and necessary distinction between the two men. For whereas in Larkin's case letters became "a way of living in writing" (248), Thomas, with his distrust of 'bookishness', retained a recognisably Romantic sense of the primacy of life over art.

There are occasions in this book when Longley's commentary flits from poem to poem without the narrative thread required to bind the reading together. It is also the case that *Under the Same Moon* is best conceived as a collection of essays rather than a holistic study of Thomas's life and work. However, by virtue of Longley's impressive ability to combine attentive close reading with a wide-ranging contextual awareness, this remains an immensely valuable contribution to the growing field of Thomas scholarship and a fitting work to set alongside her *Collected Annotated Poems*.

S.J. Perry, University of Hull

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Land Writings: Excursions in the Footprints of Edward Thomas
JAMES RIDING
Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017
166 pp.

Land Writings is not an easy book to pin down or categorize. It could either be placed within the genre of experimental New Nature Writing or read as a research paper in Human or Cultural Geography. The author's stated aim in the first chapter is 'to remain within the phenomenological re-turn in the humanities' and 'to encourage a phenomenological re-reading of the way in which humanity scholars have dealt with representation '. These aims are to be achieved by 'hitching a ride with such literary societies who memorialise, preserve or claim landscape in this way'. The Edward Thomas Fellowship (ETF) is such a literary society - chosen to assess how poetry readings mediate, alter and enhance one's experience of place, and how the place does the same for the literature. But this is a book not solely for academics. After a technical opening, the writing style becomes more relaxed and colloquial. The book explores how literature interacts with and transforms landscape and becomes part of the vitality of those places - which *'may have been forgotten sites without the mapping of a few intrepid members of a literary society'*. Two chapters describe walks around Steep with

individual members of the ETF (the first with Colin and Larry; the second with Doug). Another describes the author's experience of the Birthday Walks (or 'Loops') from 2009 to 2011. The final eight chapters are given over to a literary cycle ride- following the route taken by Edward Thomas in 'In Pursuit of Spring' (IPS). There are numerous quotations throughout the book from the poetry, prose and War Diary of Edward Thomas- and his life story gradually unfolds as the chapters unravel. It is clear that Mr Riding has a high regard for Edward's writing- but not in a sentimental way.

The author describes his involvement in three Birthday Walks *'as an outsider trying to infiltrate a literary walking group'*. The loops around Steep are similar year to year and so he records his general impression of the experience, as well as the three car journeys that got him there: one was undertaken after a drinking session in Aberystwyth; another '*in a little silver bubble of a car.* S*urfing sticker in the back window ... hubcap missing'*; on the third, he extols the virtues of a Little Chef on the A303 - *'the most important three-digit road in Britain'*. As part of his research, the author fly-posts sites around Steep with poetry written on scraps of paper.

Towards the end of his literary cycle ride from London to the Quantock Hills (in the footprints of Edward Thomas), Mr Riding envisages a dialogue between Edward and The Other Man: *'The Other Man refused to stay in Shepton Mallet. He was very angry with Shepton, and called it a godless place. Edward laughed, supposing he lamented the lack of Apollo or Dionysus or Aphrodite. The Other Man mounted and rode on towards Wells'.*

Every so often, we are reminded of the author's Mancunian roots; the mention of Morrissey and quotes from Billy Bragg lyrics give the book a contemporary edge. Works by Will Self, Pearson, Merleau-Ponty and Sebald are extensively referenced. The writing is witty, accomplished and original. I pondered what writing style Edward Thomas might have adopted, had he been born in 1978, rather than a century earlier.

The book is not without faults: it appears to lack a clear sequential narrative timeline; the chapters seem to have been put together haphazardly, with numerous digressions. Parallels could even be drawn with Edward's own topographical writing!

This is a thought-provoking, subversive book, written in a contemporary experimental style, which traditionalists might dismiss. For others, it is a book that pushes the boundaries of geographical writing a little further and causes one to reflect on how literary societies claim, interact with and preserve landscape.

Mike Cope

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Land Writings: Excursions in the Footprints of Edward Thomas
JAMES RIDING
Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017
166 pp.

This latest contribution to Edward Thomas studies is published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, which means that it comes in the form of a pleasantly-produced hardback, on the cover of which is a photograph of the Polden Hills in Somerset, taken by Edward Thomas himself in 1913. (The full collection of photographs taken for the original *In Pursuit of Spring* journey can be accessed at Rob Hudson's website, and a selection is available in a clever then-and-now montage published in the *Guardian* online on 7/4/2016). On the other hand, because copy-editing is not one of the services provided by this publisher, the text not entirely free of misprints or careless mistakes. I doubt, for example, that the author intended the full implications of the verb used in the sentence on the back cover asserting that Edward Thomas remains an enduring presence in the downland that he *trampled* daily. Or, on second thoughts, in a work much concerned with footprints and by no means devoid of humour, perhaps he did.

Land Writings is about landscape and memory and their relationship to each other. These by now well-trodden academic themes are wittily woven into the unromantic reveries conjured up by memories of a number of personal journeys: a pilgrimage to Arras, an ascent (or not) to

Kotor, Fellowship walks around Steep, a train journey to the Houses of Parliament and the protest march that followed, through London suburbs on a journey that takes the author past Stonehenge and Glastonbury and Coleridge Cottage in Nether Stowey. The real and textual journeys come to a neatly symmetrical rest at the memorial stone on Cothelstone Hill where Edward Thomas, and more recently James Riding, found the death of Winter and the (re)birth of Spring. Part travel essay, part creative work in its own right, proceeding in what the author calls "rough-circles in the footprints of a dead poet", the book is divided into seventeen discrete but thematically-related chapters. It is a scholarly work, but one which wears its learning breezily and in which the very mixed bag of a bibliography is, on the whole successfully, made to do the work of the absent notes and index.

These *land writings* have a much greater unity of outlook than the plural noun in the title would imply. The brief excursions outside 'Edward Thomas country' have a structural value: they are there to destabilize and reroute a too cosy view of Thomas's world, and ours. Riding announces this as "a primary concern" at the end of his introductory chapter:

And the contemporary desire to turn the lands of England into one of Thomas's poems, or the using of landscape poetry to construct an imagined past is a primary concern in this book. This appropriation of the words of poets and writers, the art of the past, has a real politics that can presently be seen in a backward-looking British political landscape. (8)

In contrast, Riding's own landscape writing is cleverly saturated with "the words of poets and writers", offered not as backward-looking references but as companions from the past accompanying a traveller in the present, fragments of memory that work their way to the surface when all our senses are stimulated by the excitement and fatigue of travel. The effect is not unlike Robert Graves' veterans recalling war; indeed, given that landscape and memory, in the long shadow of the First World War, are two of the ways in which James Riding connects past and present, it seems appropriate to quote the first stanza of that 1938 poem:

Entrance and exit wounds are silvered clean,
The track aches only when the rain reminds.
The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood,
The one-armed man his jointed wooden arm,
The blinded man sees with his ears and hands
As much or more as once with both his eyes,
Their war was fought these twenty years ago
And now assumes the nature-look of time,
As when the morning traveller turns and views
His wild night-stumbling carved into a hill.

- Robert Graves, *The Complete Poems in One Volume*, 358.

Not being known as a poet of the English landscape, Robert Graves is one of the few writers that Riding does *not* quote. But many others are there: naturally Thomas himself and his well-known friends, but also, lending spirit to the appropriate places, living poets such as Alice Oswald. Riding makes the delightfully perceptive and unfinished remark that "Most people walk with poets without realizing" (130) and it would be fair to say that his travel-essay seeks to make the reader more aware of these unacknowledged presences. It is largely wrought out of other writers' words: constant and sometimes repeated allusions in the form of quotation, imitation, mimicry, and even (on occasion) parody. Many of these are signalled by the use of italics, but those not so signalled will provide a kind of guessing-game, pulling readers into participating in Riding's writing by completing it with their own memories of walks and poems.

These *Land Writings* are clearly meant to be read by the members of the Edward Thomas Fellowship whose company Riding shared on several "dot to dot walks" and "birthday loops", and which are retold from memory here (24-88). But this well-travelled author is a cultural geographer and so he is also writing for fellow-geographers. To judge by the critical compliments quoted in the front and back matter, these academics appreciate what he as to

say. One calls the book "a breakthrough text", while another puts her finger on the originality of the work in terms of creative geographical writing:

As he journeys in imaginary fellowship with Thomas, Riding goes to the heart of a landscape *methodos*: a mode of thinking about place that is also a way of travelling through it, linking the walk to the peripatetics of memory and mood, intimation and association.
With the proviso that the book is not only about walks but also about the very different rhythmic experiences provided by car-journeys and bike-rides having Thomas's poetry (and that of many others) quite literally in mind, I would not only agree with this judgement, but add that for readers wishing to get an overview of the creative turn currently being taken in human geography, the relaxed and circular sweep of this book makes it a good place to start.
What Riding's writings successfully perform is the proposition that preservation and commemoration are acts that should be undertaken not *in search of* a particular poet, such as Edward Thomas, but, more simply and at the same time more profoundly, *accompanied by* him. "We are all poets when we read a poem well," observed Thomas Carlyle (whose politics, it has to be admitted, were somewhat backward-looking). By following in the footprints of the earlier poet, over journeys set in those late years when Thomas was moving from prose to poetry, Riding hopes to achieve the same metamorphosis. As he says on the last, forward-looking page, "I was glad to have haunted Edward Thomas for a little while, instead of the other way round." (166)

In sum, many a pleasant hour could be spent with this book. My only quarrel, but it is a real one, is with the definition of poetry implied in the several times repeated phrase, "the shock of the poetic". In my view, it is neither the nature nor the function of poetry to shock. There are plenty of journalists or pseudo-journalists content to use shock tactics, but poetry and poetic writing, I would agree with Keats, works differently:
Poetry should be great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject.—How beautiful are the retired flowers! how would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, 'admire me I am a violet! dote upon me I am a primrose!
- John Keats, letter to J. H. Reynolds, 3 February 1818.
Happily, Riding does not on the whole follow his own advice. If he sometimes, indeed quite often, takes off his cycle-clips in awkward reverence to the geographical fashions of our time, he remains throughout a good, and at times poetic, companion.

Helen Goethals, University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès.

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Edward Thomas: A biography.
JEAN MOORCROFT WILSON
London: Bloomsbury 2015
480 pp.

' I want to introduce you to - not my own but the work of Mr Edward Eastaway. He is not yet known as a poet, but I think he will be and should be. He is a man who feels England to her roots, and the poems are so deeply English in character, and seem like a quiet and dignified growth of her earth, that I believe this is the right moment for them to appear…'

Eleanor Farjeon's insightful letter to Blackwood was prophetic, and it is still very much 'the right moment' for Edward Thomas. The last two years have seen this autobiography published along with Edna Longley's study of Thomas and the English lyric and Richard Emeny's 'Life in Pictures. The centenary of his death has been marked by ever-growing recognition.

Moorcroft Wilson's is a cradle to grave biography, straightforwardly chronological, with a backing of impressive research, much of it from original sources, underpinned by her knowledge as a biographer of 1st World War poets. In her introduction Moorcroft Wilson declares her intention to re-examine 'myths' about Thomas. My sense is that some of these have contracted already, but she does cite recent instance in her support. Amongst the 'myths' are the views of Thomas as continuously wretched depressed, the belief that he was a writer of 'hack' prose and finally the manner of his death. As Newsletter readers are very familiar with the outline of Thomas's life, especially the last four years, I won't summarise the 'story' of Thomas but will focus on these aspects together with others that strike me as enlightening.
His Oxford life, already the subject of Lucy Newlyn's 'Oxford' introduction, still surprised me - his habitual use of opium, that Victorian 'delicious terror', especially, and the extent of his rebellion against his puritanical background. But it is a positive account in that life-long friendships emerge and as Moorcroft Wilson points out the reading he was able to do at Oxford also lasted his whole life.

Through the gravely difficult early years she shows Thomas's strength of character as much as his well-known failings of temper and mood. She does this by a detailed look at the work. He knew as early as 1900 that he was a 'prose poet' and was able to use his gifts in well-respected commissioned work as well as finding enough reviewing to live on. Moorcroft Wilson looks closely at *Horae Solitariaea* for what it reveals about Thomas and as being worth reading in itself: Thomas considered it the best thing he had done for some years. But the following few years, despite the pleasures of country life, are a long tale of depression, suicidal thoughts and disharmony, alleviated only by Thomas's tremendous capacity for friendship. Moorcroft Wilson devotes considerable attention to Thomas's contemporaries and friends and their importance to him, and the capacity he had for humour and happiness in their company. By contrast she also shows us Thomas at his worst and Helen taking responsibility for it:

'I have deprived him of it all, the joys of life and love and success.' But while Thomas sought physical remedies for his neurasthenia it was Helen who clearly understood that 'it is his morbid and introspective temperament' that was at its root. Only Bronwen's 'flame of life' alleviates the rather grim picture of these years. Even nature, he felt, was no longer a help to him. Eventually it seems the help he himself gave to WH Davies – a good review, advice and the use of a cottage- brought welcome purpose to him and to the family.

Moorcroft Wilson is enlightening on her analysis of the prose works of this time: her linking the field notebooks to stories in Light and Twilight, Rest and Unrest and her ideas on Thomas's 'mysticism' are valuable. I particularly liked her recognition that Thomas's stories, written at a time when the short story was undergoing a revolution developed by Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, DH Lawrence and Joyce, were ahead of their time
She sees Thomas as looking for structure in his prose work that fully emerged only in *'In Pursuit of Spring'*. Thomas's observations and diversions strung loosely together, sometimes added to make up the word-count, and could not always produce his best work. None the less The South Country and In Pursuit were original 'prose poems'. It is amusing to learn from correspondence with his publishers how he resolutely avoided defining locations if he could get away with it: he wrote travel and topographical work as vehicles for his thoughts. *The Happy go Lucky Morgans* – an essay on suburban life, not a novel, Moorcroft Wilson believes - is similarly lacking the usual structure. The Richard Jefferies biography, though, she recognises as inspired by Thomas's enthusiasm and self-identification with his subject.
We arrive at the Wick Green house and the story becomes more familiar, with Harold Munro and Clifford Bax appearing: for me there is a sense of the poetry becoming imminent. The years 1912 -13 were particularly interesting as Moorcroft Wilson picked out elements in notebooks and prose that were to appear in the poems, notably in The Icknield Way and of course in In Pursuit of Spring. We see the interest in old roads 'the pathos of old roads worn deep and then deserted' and the emergence of the Other Man, the double, with Thomas's

'perpetual sense of the other tenant', again an instance of Thomas's being in tune with current thinking at the time.

Thomas' field notebook of 7th September 1913 contained his first adult poem and Moorcroft Wilson quotes it in full:

The 7th of September
Of the year and of me – (that line crossed out)
The sere and the ember of the year and of me
There will always be firs to moan
And robins to sing at cold dawn.

Moorcroft Wilson notes literary influences - Macbeth and Byron- behind the poem and raises the question of whether Frost was crucial after all in Thomas's development. She also suggests that it was Thomas's therapeutic move in expressing himself through poetry that saved him from despair, at least as much as becoming a soldier was to do and she has linked the life to the poetry to demonstrate this.
We arrive at the meeting with Frost, then at 1914 and for this reader at least the story became so familiar that I skimmed a little. For anyone newly needing detailed information it is all there, including helpful footnotes. I enjoyed her tracing back to twelve years earlier Thomas's conviction, following Wordsworth, that there was no real barrier between prose and poetry. He was already well-prepared to take up Frost's suggestion that *In Pursuit of Spring* was a source for possible poems.

The end of summer neared, with it came Thomas's growing awareness of the war and his sense of its personal meaning for him. By 'November' I was eagerly awaiting Moorcroft Wilson's response to the 'significance' of the 'gamekeeper incident' in Thomas's enlistment decision. I was very happy that she dismissed the 'defining moment' argument, recognising instead Thomas's complex of reasons, primarily his patriotism. A little earlier we find the same common-sense approach, backed by evidence, to Frost's 'The Road Not Taken' question and the claim that it shamed Thomas into enlisting. Her evidence clearly refutes this: Thomas had read the poem in November '14, taking it as a comment on walking and trespassing, far removed from having any direct part in his enlistment eight months later.
Once the poetry is 'running' Moorcroft Wilson follows its development in great and rewarding detail, acknowledging the insights of Edna Longley especially. She uses the field notebooks again, tracing references sometimes as far back as five years. I found this the strongest and most readable part of the book.

After enlistment we have a complex view of Thomas from his friends, many of whom see him as greatly changed for the better, a view modified by Paul Nash's view of Thomas as 'always oppressed by sadness and pessimism.' Helen's anxiety and loneliness, and Eleanor Farjeon's valuable devotion are sensitively covered, and I was relieved to find evidence that Thomas's relationship with Edna Clark Hall was much as I had deduced from the poems alone when writing about it.
While considering Jean Moorcroft Wilson's study of the final stage of Thomas's life, his ten weeks in France, I compared it with Richard Emeny's published two years later in 2017. (*Edward Thomas: A Life in Pictures*, Enitharmon Press.) The first relies on letters and the war diary and does have full but well-known detailed information. But Richard Emeny's has the great advantage of illustration, showing the war diary's dense writing, a view as Thomas would have seen it from his Observation Post and a very moving photograph of Thomas's temporary grave. I would not have been without those.

Jean Moorcroft Wilson queried the tradition concerning Edward Thomas's manner of death, the belief that he died as a result of his heart stopping due to the vacuum created by an exploding shell. She cites a previously undiscovered letter from his Captain, Lushington,

saying that Thomas was 'shot clean through the chest' by a shell. But we are aware that Lushington has given the 'vacuum' account more than once. And again Richard Emeny's 2017 work, his literally 'hands-on' evidence of the absence of blood on Thomas's clothes does refute Moorcroft Wilson's 'discovery'. But she saw what she saw and was entitled to form her own view.

I quote in full the last paragraph of the autobiography: 'But does the exact manner of Edward Thomas's death matter? Yes, it does. For the legendary version of his end places him in the realm of myth and threatens to obscure the real miracle of his life, his writing. The most authoratitive poetry critic of his time, the innovator of new forms and approaches in a number of prose genres and among a handful of poets who helped reshape English verse in the early twentieth century, it is Thomas's achievements in life we should be remembering him for rather than the manner of his death.'

This paragraph may signal to some that we had reached the end, but I'm afraid I turned the page expecting a concluding chapter and perhaps an exploration of Thomas's legacy. There was none. True, these matters were addressed, fairly briefly, in the Introduction, but having followed Thomas's life thus far I was left with a sense of loss and disappointment, as though he had been dismissed too easily. This is my only criticism of the book which is extremely thorough, the product of solid work through the archives, letters and field notebooks, and a strong enough foundation in the most valuable material of all – Thomas's own work.

Margaret Keeping
Margaret Keeping's A Conscious Englishman is published by Streetbooks.

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Edward Thomas – A Miscellany
ANNA STENNING (Ed.)
Plymouth: Galileo Publishers (Rucksack Editions) 2017
256 pp.

It is not often that a book review begins with the physical properties of the book but this one will. Dr. Anna Stenning's selection of Edward Thomas' prose and poetry is one of four books published so far by Galileo in their Rucksack editions. These books are designed to be taken on walks and read in the open air. The book is fit for purpose. It fits comfortably into a bag or large pocket. It has a waterproof cover and the build is robust. You can open the book fully at any page without the whole thing falling to bits. The illustrations by Anna Dillon perfectly evoke Thomas' love of the countryside and periodic sombre moods. The publishers claim the book is 'physically designed to be taken to wild places'; so I did.

As I live in Wiltshire there were plenty of wild places associated with Thomas to choose from. I chose Pewsey Vale. Thomas walked here while staying in Devizes with fellow-writer and 'Fisherman's Friend' Stephen Reynolds. Their thirty mile round trip to Savernake Forest near Marlborough would have taken them along the ridge that Thomas described as looking like 'the backs of a train of elephants', from where you can look out across the Vale to the Plain beyond. I climbed to the top of Adam's Grave, checked there was no one within earshot and began to read aloud. I chose Lob.

'To turn back and seek him, what was the use?
There were three Manningfords – Abbots, Bohun and Bruce:
And whether Alton, not Manningford, it was,
My memory could not decide, because
There was both Alton Barnes and Alton Priors.
All had their churches, graveyards, farms and byres,

Lurking to one side up the paths and lanes,
Seldom seen well except by aeroplanes;'

As I looked down from a slightly lower altitude, there it was, all laid out before me. Reading the poem in this way proved to be for me a novel and enlightening experience. In a more general sense simply reading the word 'earth' when you are actually standing on it, or 'sky' when you can actually see it adds so much to the experience. I don't know why this surprised me. Anna Stenning's book is urging us to have that experience and for that reason alone I recommend it. But there is more.

The book is comprised of roughly twice as many prose extracts as poems; seventy-three to thirty-eight. Prose and poems are assembled under ten chapter headings: Birds, Flowers and Plants, Footpaths and Roads, The Historic Landscape, The Journey, People, Buildings and Towns, The Seasons and the Weather, Inns and Sleep and Folk Traditions. The prose extracts are taken from twenty-two different published works, reflecting the diverse nature of Thomas' prose writing, that's even without contributions from his voluminous journalistic output. His country books lead the way with *The South Country* contributing thirteen extracts, *The Icknield Way* eleven, *In Pursuit of Spring t*en, *The Heart of England* seven and *Beautiful Wales* five. Other extracts are selected from The Happy Go-Lucky Morgans, The Childhood of Edward Thomas, Richard Jefferies, Four and Twenty Blackbirds and his War Diary to name but a few, whilst *The Last Sheaf* contributes a hefty eight extracts. For those not as familiar with the prose as the poems and keen to address this imbalance, Anna Stenning's book is an excellent place to start.

I would guess that selecting and placing the prose extracts was more straightforward than selecting and placing the poems. With so many gems to choose from which can be left out? For those that are chosen, how do you decide which chapter to place them in? Readers will of course have their own views on both questions, there is no 'right' answer in every case. To take a personal favourite The Owl as an example. It actually appears on page 116 in the chapter The Journey. The poem begins, 'Downhill I came'. Thomas was clearly on a journey but the poem could just as easily have found its way into the chapter on Birds or Inns and Sleep. Or even People, as it seems to me not so much about Journeys, Birds or Inns and Sleep but fundamentally about those:

'Soldiers and poor,
Unable to rejoice'.

It goes without saying that each individual brings his or her own unique set of memories, thoughts and feelings to every poem they encounter. A further complication is that many of Thomas' poems start off appearing to be about one thing, often the natural world, and then they turn into a poem about his real subject; himself. Aspens is a good example of this. Reading verses one to four for the first time might suggest the poem belongs in either the Flowers and Plants or The Historic Landscape chapter but the final verse suggests that the poem is more at home where Anna Stenning has placed it, in the chapter People and one person in particular who, like the aspens, 'ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves'.

As well as selecting and placing the prose and poetry extracts Anna Stenning contributes some insightful observations of her own. Her comments are always illuminating and thought-provoking. For example, in the main introduction she reminds us that in relation to the countryside he loved Thomas was 'a middle class Londoner' and therefore 'an enthusiastic outsider' looking from the outside in. This outsider status was something he shared with many writers about the countryside but not with someone, for instance, such as John Clare who stood in the thick of it. In pointing this out Anna Stenning helps the reader develop a fuller appreciation of the context of Thomas' writing about the countryside and its inhabitants.

Each of the ten chapters have shorter introductions which nonetheless contain equally welcome observations. In the introduction to the chapter Birds for instance we are told that Thomas, 'walked in the steps of the poets who saw birds as a metaphor for our own lives; yet wrote with the naturalist's awareness of particular species'. This seems to perfectly encapsulate Thomas's writing about birds, illuminating the path ahead for the new reader and providing those more familiar with Thomas' writing about birds with something to reflect upon.

In her introduction Anna Stenning reminds us that Thomas himself compiled a number of anthologies on nature, literature and poetry. A Pocket Book of Poems and Songs for the Open Air (1907) 'included poems from his friends and contemporaries as well as folk songs chosen for the pleasure they would give. The prose and poems in this volume have been chosen to serve the same purpose'. And they do.

D. Kerslake

Books received
Beyond Spring: Wanderings Through nature by Matthew Oates (Fair Acre Press 2017)

Books for review (and offers of reviews) should be sent to the Newsletter Editor: Julia Maxted, 54, Southmoor Road, Oxford OX2 6RD

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Publications and Performances

An Italian translation of Thomas's poems (selected), with Introduction etc., has been published this year: *La Strada Presa: Poesie Scelte*. Trans. Paolo Febbraro (Rome: Elliot), poet and literary journalist.

Edward Thomas' *The Country* is a 1913 prose book on the importance of the country and the natural world to writers through the ages and to Thomas' contemporaries. Tim Whittingham has produced an e-book for Kindle with Introduction and footnotes.

The Nature of Modernism: Ecocritical Approaches to the Poetry of Edward Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and Charlotte Mew by Elizabeth Black has been published in 2017 by Routledge. Below is a note of thanks from Elizabeth:

'Members of the Fellowship may be interested in the chapter on Edward Thomas in my new book: *The Nature of Modernism: Ecocritical Approaches to the Poetry of Edward Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and Charlotte Mew* (Routledge: New York, 2017). The book opens with an extended study of Thomas, which argues that the originality of his modern nature poetry pre-empts many aspects of modernist poetry's search for new ways of writing about human/nature relations in response to the dislocating experiences of war and modernity. Throughout my research I have gained support and knowledge from Fellowship members and from the excellent newsletter, and I am very grateful to be part of such a wonderful group.'

More information about the book can be found here: https://www.routledge.com/The-Nature-of-Modernism-Ecocritical-Approaches-to-the-Poetry-of-Edward/Black/p/book/9781138244092

BBC Radio Cymru broadcast '**Edward Thomas and the Journey to War'** on Sunday 12th November.

In this programme, Gwyneth Lewis presented a comprehensive portrait of Thomas, the man and his work. The programme featured interviews from Cardiff University's Special Collections and Archives. Among the extensive collection are recordings with Helen, Bronwen and Myfanwy.

The readings in '**Words and Music – Solo'** on BBC Radio 3 on 22 October 2017 explored the gap between solitude and loneliness. The actor Toby Jones read the words of John Clare, Ralph Ellison, Edward Thomas, John Williams and George Herbert.

The 'Autumn Miscellany' of the Hampshire Recorder Sinfonia included a sequence of Edward Thomas' poems read by Geraldene Hayes – **Out of the Wood of Thoughts** – on 18th November 2017 at The Maltings Centre, Alton.

An exhibition of paintings by David Webb, inspired by Thomas' was held in October 2017 at the Richard Jefferies Museum, Swindon.

Tim Dee's programme from April 2017, **'In Pursuit of Edward Thomas'** with Matthew Hollis was repeated on BBC Radio 4 on 7th January 2018.

A short Edward Thomas article by Mike Cope was published in the Edward Barnsley Workshop Annual Review 2016 to mark the centenary of Thomas' death.

The world premiere of Alec Roth's **A Song Cycle on poems by Edward Thomas for Tenor & String Quartet** commissioned for the Autumn in Malvern Festival took place in Great Malvern Priory on 24 September 2017

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Study Day 2019

Early stage planning is underway for a joint Study Day with the John Clare Society in the Autumn of 2019. Further details will be made available in due course. If you wish to make any suggestions/comments please send these to David Kerslake at etfmembership@gmail.com.

Thank you

Please continue to send any details of forthcoming events, as well as any articles for publication in the Newsletter to me: Julia Maxted, 54 Southmoor Road, Oxford OX2 6RD, or by email to: maxtedjj@gmail.com Thank you.

The Edward Thomas Fellowship Twitter account is thriving and anyone may read the posts by the Fellowship and other users about the life and work of Thomas and his contemporaries by typing this address into their web browser: https://twitter.com/edwardthomasfs
Likewise the Edward Thomas Fellowship Facebook group site is going strong with much interesting content to be found there.