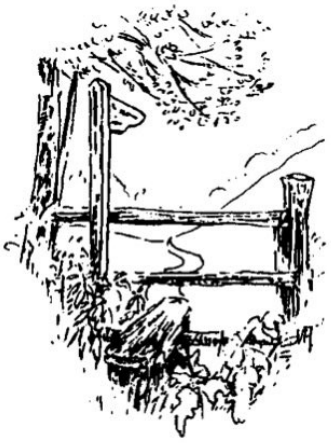
THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP



A perambulator with a cabbage in it stood at one corner; leaning against it was an ebony-handled umbrella and two or three umbrella-frames; underneath it an old postman's bag containing a hammer and other tools. Close by stood half a loaf on a newspaper, several bottles of bright water, a black pot of potatoes ready for boiling, a tin of water steaming against a small fire of hazel twigs. Out on the sunny grass two shirts were drying. In the midst was the proprietor, his name revealed in fresh chalk on the side of his perambulator: 'John Clark, Hampshire'.

The South Country

NEWSLETTER 86 AUGUST 2021 – CONTACT INFORMATION AND REPORTS

Chair: Mr. Jeremy Mitchell, Fairlands, Finchmead Lane, Stroud, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 3PF. Email: mitchjd.etf@outlook.com

Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary: Mr. David Kerslake, 3 Bream Close, Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 9UF. Email: etfmembership@gmail.com

Thanks as always are due to those providing reports, articles and information for the newsletter. Please send any for future newsletters, by post or email, to the editor's address above.

Chair's Welcome and Report

Welcome to the Edward Thomas Fellowship Newsletter number 86 for August 2021.

Well, we knew 2021 was going to be both difficult and different, which I alluded to in my introduction to Newsletter 85, and that was without the impact of the weather which has, in my view and apart from a couple of weeks last month, not really been on our side.

Having said that, the Fellowship, and your committee, has been busy holding an AGM – at which a move to Charitable Status was approved – followed by an excellent online talk by Matthew Oates; hosting a 'short', again online, Study Day in June featuring the mercurial Matthew Oates once more, William Wootten (talking about Walter de la Mare and Edward Thomas) and Guy Cuthbertson (I hadn't appreciated 'dogs' featured so much in Edward Thomas's prose and poetry); and, finally so far, the delayed Birthday Walk which took place on 18 July – on the hottest day of the year (no call for waterproofs and wellies this time!).

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us either electronically or in person and I hope that those who were not able to join us on either occasion do understand that we have been trying our best to engage with everyone during these difficult times.

Along the way, we also opened the new Edward Thomas Study Centre at Petersfield Museum on 9 June – more about that later. We have been opening it to the general public (no pre-booking required) each Wednesday and the first Sunday of each month and today (4 August) had our busiest day with 22 visitors.

We are hoping that as word gets out about this wonderful resource, not only for lovers of Edward Thomas and his work but also for followers of literature in general, more and more people will visit and make use of the reading and study facilities here.

Incidentally, I see that copies of three of the books reviewed in this or the next newsletter – *The Nature of Modernism* by Elizabeth Black, *Reading Walter de la Mare* by William Wootten and *Dweller in Shadows* by Kate Kennedy – are already on the Study Centre shelves!

There is also news later about this year's Literary Festival which will take place between 27 September and 3 October with a wide and varied programme. By the time you receive this Newsletter, many details of the programme should be available on the Petersfield Museum website – to which there will be a link from the Fellowship's website.

Finally, and before I sign off and let you enjoy the rest of the Newsletter, I must draw your attention to the document accompanying the Newsletter, which is the proposed Constitution of the 'new' charity which will still be known as 'The Edward Thomas Fellowship'.

The Constitution has been drawn up, with input from the rest of your Committee, by Richard Emeny and Ian Morton. The attached draft is the one that has been approved by your Committee at its last meeting in July and which is now put before you, the membership, for final approval.

As the move to Charitable Status was approved by the Membership at the AGM in March, we are now asking you to vote to accept the Constitution as presented. You may vote by sending an email to me – mitchjd.etf@outlook.com – or by post to Jeremy Mitchell, Edward Thomas Fellowship, C/o The Edward Thomas Study Centre, Petersfield Museum, St Peter's Road, Petersfield, GU32 3HX by 30 September.

If you are willing to accept the Constitution as drafted – and we have endeavoured to keep our aims and objectives as close as possible to those established by Myfanwy in 1980 – please vote 'yes'. If you do not wish to accept the Constitution as drafted and wish to vote 'no' please will you give a reason that may be considered by the Committee – this is not a vote on whether or not the Fellowship should become a Registered Charity, that decision has already been made.

Thank you again for your on-going support and I hope we can look forward to a return to a year with which we are more accustomed in 2022, starting with a Birthday Walk and AGM on Sunday 6 March.

Thinking of 2022, there are two significant anniversaries – the 100th anniversary of the death of W.H. Hudson on 18 August and the 125th anniversary of the publication of *The Woodland Life* in October.

If anyone has any thoughts about how we might draw more attention to these two important anniversaries, and would like to help us do so, I will be pleased to hear from you.

I will end my introduction with a plea you have heard before and one that is more pertinent as we become busier promoting the life and work of Edward Thomas - new members are always welcome to join the Committee and if you would like to know more about the work we do and how you might be able to help, I would love to hear from you – mitchjd.etf@outlook.com.

I will leave you all with these words I have just read that were written by Rupert Brooke:

"There are three good things in this world. One is to read poetry, another is to write poetry, and the best of all is to live poetry."

Jeremy Mitchell – 4 August 2021

******

The New Edward Thomas Study Centre at Petersfield Museum

Well, I seem to have been talking about it for years and I am thrilled to say it has finally happened and it is 'hello' from the new Edward Thomas Study Centre at Petersfield Museum, which opened to the public, and other users, on Wednesday 9 June.

Photograph courtesy of Patrick Chivers

You may recall this has been an almost 10-year journey to turn dreams to reality – which would not have been possible without the support from the team at the independent Petersfield Museum. The crucial element of that support was its ability to raise the requisite funding as part of an overall £4m redevelopment project (the Edward Thomas Fellowship is currently not a registered charity (more about that elsewhere in this newsletter), so many of the eventual funding sources would not have been available).

First though (for those who may be new to Edward Thomas and the Fellowship), a few brief words about Edward Thomas (1878-1917), husband, father, writer, literary critic and, finally, poet. In his early days he was a renowned literary critic at a time, at the beginning of the 20th Century, when newspapers ran several columns daily of literary criticism. He firstly wrote prose alongside his literary reviews (his first book, *The Woodland Life,* having been published in 1897 when he was 19 years old) and then poetry from December 1914 (his first book of poetry (*Poems*) was published posthumously

in 1917 (under the name Edward Eastaway initially) after he was killed on the opening day of the Battle of Arras.

Among his literary works are biographies of George Borrow and Richard Jefferies; critical studies such as that on Swinburne; prose such as *The South Country* and *In Pursuit of Spring*; and poetry including *Adlestrop* and *As the Team's Head Brass.*

Between 1906 and late 1916 Thomas and his family lived in three homes in Steep, a village on the edge of Petersfield, from where he wrote much of his significant prose and his poetry – hence the natural link with Petersfield Museum.

Although he was not required to enlist, he did so in 1915 (perhaps once having made up his mind to do so in 1914 he became 'released' to write poetry), first joining the Artists Rifles and then taking a commission with the Royal Garrison Artillery in late 1916.

So, all his poetry was written during the war years, but he was not a 'War Poet' per se, more a 'Poet of the Great War' as all his 'war' poems reflected upon the impact of the War on life on what we would now call the 'Home Front', and particularly on the countryside.

In all he wrote 144 poems within a two-year period and much of his work is only now reaching the audiences it deserves – and hopefully the Study Centre can help this process.

The idea of the Study Centre came about following an evening talk in Petersfield, given by Richard Emeny and Colin Thornton, to coincide with a small exhibition being held by Petersfield Museum. In chatting afterwards, when Museum Trustees were outlining their expansion plans, Richard and Colin mentioned a private collection of books by and about Edward Thomas that were about to be gifted to the Fellowship by the widow of one of their members, Tim Wilton-Steer.

The collection must have been amongst, if not the richest and largest in private hands, consisting of copies in first edition of all titles by Thomas – including his poetry, many signed by him, books and articles about his work, cassettes, CDs, original letters, photographs and sundry other items, all collected by Tim Wilton-Steer.

Hilary, Tim's widow, was keen for the collection to be publicly accessible and held as close to the Thomas' last home in Steep as possible. The significance of this private collection of books by and about Edward Thomas (some 2,000 in total), made it all the more important it was kept intact.

From that discussion grew the agreement whereby the collection would be loaned by the Fellowship to the Museum and the Edward Thomas Study Centre was thus created – initially in spirit and then in body as it formed an integral part of successful grant funding applications to Charitable Trusts, Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund for support towards what became a £4m overall project.

Project work started in 2016 and finally finished this year – after several packing, unpacking, repacking and unpacking sessions involving what is now a collection slightly in excess of 2,500 books, journals, magazines and manuscript letters. (Tim's collection having been added to by other donations and acquisitions, including a gift of over 100 books from the personal collection of Lesley Lee Francis (granddaughter of the American poet Robert Frost) relating to Frost's stay in England between 1912 and 1915 and the forming of his relationship with Edward Thomas).

There are of course, other Thomas collections in the U.K., notably the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, Cardiff University and the Bodleian Library. It would be natural to ask why Petersfield should start yet another archive. In fact, Petersfield has many advantages: it is within easy access of

London and the South, and it is much visited by students of Thomas's work, many of whom have previously commented that there should be 'something about him' in the town. More important is the difficulty in accessing other collections: the Bodleian is closed to all but Readers and Aberystwyth is not easy to travel to for most visitors and arrangements have to be made to study anything there.

The Study Centre will now open to the general public on Wednesdays (10 am – 4 pm) and, currently, the first Sunday monthly (11 am – 3 pm). It will be open to other users – readers, researchers, students, special interest groups etc – on a Tuesday by prior arrangement using the booking form on the Fellowship's website - https://edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk/the-edward-thomas-study-centre/.

An alphabetical list of all books held is also available on that page of the website – for downloading or searching.

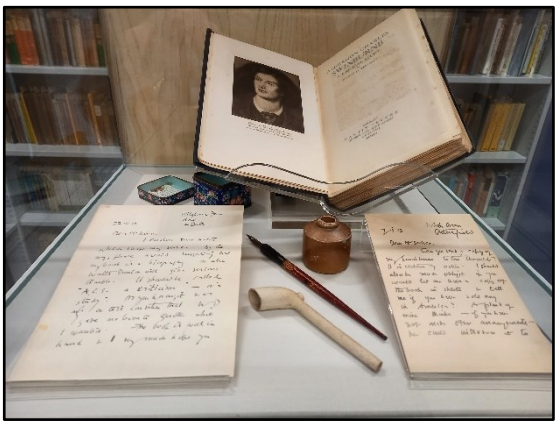
Should anyone wish to arrange a visit at any other time they may do so by first contacting Jeremy Mitchell (Fellowship Chair and Study Centre manager) on mitchjd.etf@outlook.com. The Study Centre is manned by volunteers so its opening hours are determined by its volunteers' availability – if anyone reading this article lives near Petersfield and is interested in volunteering please contact Jeremy as above – he will be thrilled to hear from you!

In addition to the 'library', there is a small office for private study*, a small meeting room* that will seat up to eight and a flexible space* that will accommodate any number between ten and forty depending upon the requirement – workshop, presentation, lecture etc.

* Indicates pre-booking essential.

The Study Centre is laid out as a library – with cupboards, bookshelves, picture gallery, a table and two chairs – a small office and a meeting room.

Edward Thomas Study Centre 'library'



Display case showing original letters and artefacts

I hope this whets your appetite and if you are in the area, for whatever reason, and would like to arrange a visit – either individually, as a family or as a group, please do not hesitate to get in touch (oh, and I was also principal fundraiser and application-writer for the capital project)

Jeremy Mitchell – mitchjd.etf@outlook.com

******

The Edward Thomas Walk 2021

The Edward Thomas Walk took place on Sunday 18th July 2021, and due to current Covid restrictions was limited to 30 participants. Members were required to pre-book online via Eventbrite and around 23 members signed up for the walk (although only 15 attended on the day). It was just over two years since the last Birthday Walk - which has always been one of the Fellowship's flagship events - and some members were keen to keep up the tradition, after a 27 month respite.

Around 15 intrepid walkers assembled in Bedales car park to hear a pre-walk safety briefing from the walk leader (Mike Cope) before the walk got underway at 10:30 am. The theme of the poetry readings selected for the day was: 'Summer' and 'Poems of place around Steep'.

The route proceeded eastwards towards Steep Farm, as the mercury hit a sizzling 30c, and then onto the Ashford Stream, where the first set of readings took place. The walkers then struck north past a cottage set in the woods, a large poultry house and an industrial estate, before gaining the road at Steep Marsh.

The route continued northwards towards a large chalk pit, at the foot of the Ashford Hangers, where the second set of readings took place, near the rim of a huge crater. It was appropriate that a prose piece on 'Chalk Pits' from 'The Last Sheaf' was read here by one of the members of the fellowship.

From then on, the gradient became progressively steeper for a few hundred metres, before levelling off and continuing on a narrow path, which contoured around the hanger. There were superb views of what Kipling called 'our blunt, bow-headed, whale-backed Downs', near a juniper plantation. The route continued through beech and yew woodland, which provided a welcome respite from the sizzling heat of the summer sun. Walkers were required to duck under or step over fallen trees at various points along the route.

Eventually we stepped into the sunlight of the Shoulder of Mutton Hill and proceeded to assemble around the memorial stone, where the third set of readings took place. The sarsen stone memorial was erected in 1937 to mark the 20th anniversary of Edward's death at the battle of Arras.

Lunch took place out of doors on the hill, to comply with government guidelines and current Covid restrictions. After 45 minutes in the sun, there was a general consensus to move back again into the shade. After further readings and a group photograph, we proceeded down the steep chalk slope, with fine views of the downs ahead of us.

The journey home continued along the Hangers Way towards Little Langleys and the waterfall at Mill Lane. We passed the war memorial, where Edward Thomas' name is listed in the roll of honour for Steep, and reached Bedales car park around 2:30 pm.

In order to mitigate the risk from Covid-19, no further activities were planned for the day. However, a few of the party journeyed on to 'The Wakes' in Selborne to participate in the tricentennial celebrations of Gilbert White, who was born on this day (18th July) in 1720.

Although walk numbers were down on previous years, the spirit of those attending was high, and the warm July sun was a welcome change from the March showers. It is hoped that walk numbers may increase next year, as more members feel able to venture forth again.

Mike Cope

******

Edward Cawston Thomas Poetry Competition

The Competition continues to attract a great deal of interest and response with this year's having attracted over 500 entries, many of very high quality.

The judge Jane Draycott commented "This has been an interestingly difficult final cut to make this year with so many strong poems submitted."

The Prize for 2021 was awarded to Vanessa Lampert for her poem 'Bedlington Terriers'. Joint runners-up prizes were awarded to William (Bill) Dodd for 'The Lady of the Tortelli' and to Caroline Gilfillan for her poem 'Evidence'.

The winning poems can be read on our website, and the three winners were able to read at the virtual AGM last March.

The 2022 Competition Judge will be the renowned poet Jamie McKendrick, who has published seven volumes of poems and two Selected Poems. The Competition will be advertised in the Autumn and will close in mid-January.

The Fellowship plans to produce another anthology of winning poems from the years 2020 – 2022. The first Anthology, the very attractive and rewarding 'A Nest of Singing Birds', is available to buy for £5.00 plus postage from David Kerslake, the Membership Secretary.

Margaret Keeping.

******

Membership Subscriptions

If you are unsure whether your membership subscription payments are up-to-date, please contact the membership secretary David Kerslake (see above for contact details).

Regrettably, any memberships that that are more than two years in arrears at the end of this year will need to be deleted.

Thank you for your continued support.

David Kerslake

******

Obituary Notice – Pam Snelgar

We were sorry to learn that Pam Snelgar, widow of the Fellowship's first Chairman, died on 24th June 2021. We send our condolences to her family.

A full memorial notice will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

******

ARTICLES

Our first article is one of a series of walks based around the route followed by Edward Thomas in his book In Pursuit of Spring. The walks have all been created by Fellowship committee member Ben Mackay. In the introduction Ben explains their origin. The original line spacing for this first article has been retained to maintain the integrity of the layout.

In Pursuit of Spring – One of a Series of Walks

Introduction

This walk in West Dean is one of a series of twenty seven rural and town ambles I constructed following up my interest in Edward Thomas's *In Pursuit of Spring.* The first is Wandsworth, Thomas's family setting; the last is on Cothelstone Hill in the Quantocks, the climax of the book.

Walking the actual route Thomas describes is, in many sections, inadvisable, given the prevalence and speed of traffic today. One could hardly imagine the gypsy children he recalled playing on the Hogs Back doing so today.

I created each walk with the intention of entering into the countryside he passed through or viewed from his bike with admiration and affection. Throughout his text, he notes topographical features, rivers and railways, bridges, churches, inscriptions and pubs, antiquities and, of course, the prevalence of songbirds and emerging Spring growth.

Where safe, in this walk I have included stretches of the road he cycled and have branched off it to explore his strongly-referenced Dean Hill which ran parallel to his *loose, flinty road*, the long yew- and hawthorn-dotted outline being a feature of chalk landscape he so admired. Its surface and subterraneous extent have been marked by the exigences of war in a way which would have amazed or perhaps startled him.

I have built the walk as much as possible on footpaths, trying to link places he mentions in the book. When possible, the walks are expanded with notes on the historical background of villages and towns as well as other related writers, landowners and worthies. It was a happy surprise, for instance, to discover connections in West Dean with the young Mary Wortley Montague, the celebrated early 18th century letter-writer, the introducer and practitioner of vaccination long before Jesty and Jenner.

The format of the walk was developed after valued feedback from ETF members and Bristol Rambler colleagues who tried out and gave feedback on the routes. Essentially, the walk directions are printed in bold, numbered steps. The introductory and background information has Thomas's words in italics for easy recognition, and other information is printed alongside the relevant route directions.

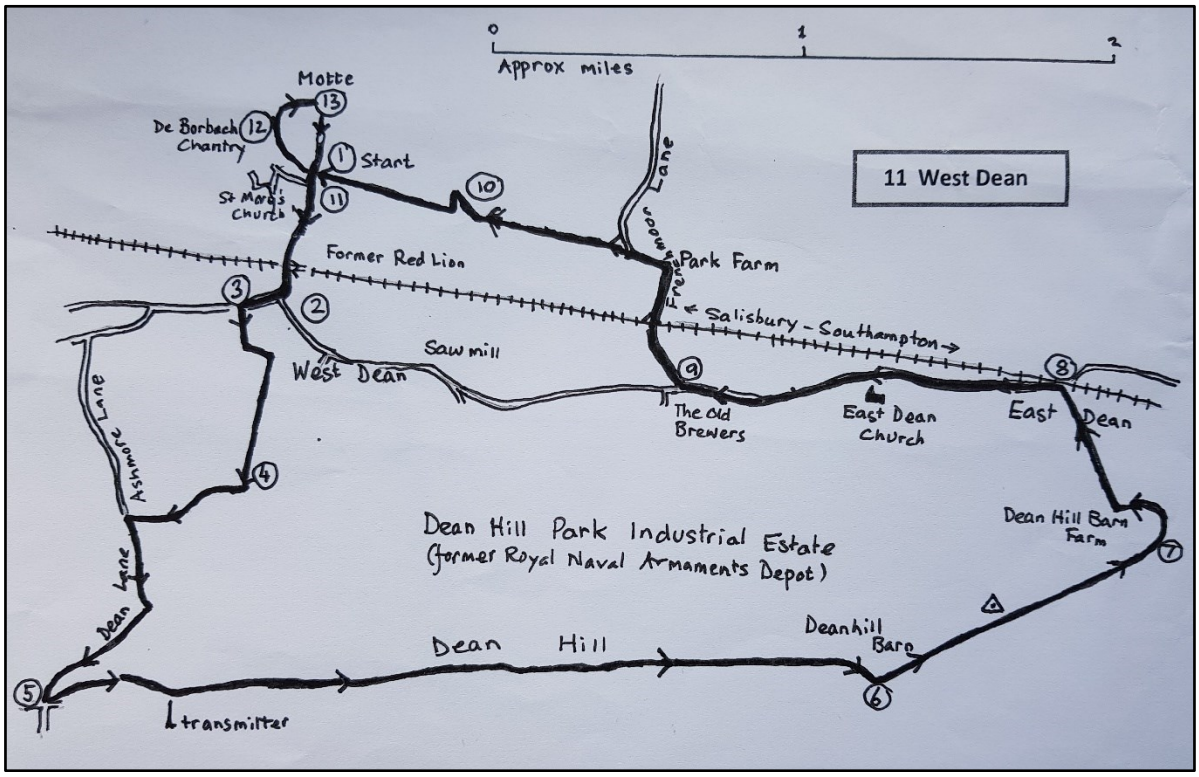
Like all the others in this series, the walks are usually on the shorter side and, given good health and comfortable walking boots, are easily accomplished within two or three hours – which will depend on exploration of aspects that Thomas includes, such as the sawmill, the intriguing de Borbach Chantry (*the old church*), and its neighbouring small camp.

The local history group has set up in the village useful information boards with old photographs.

West Dean and East Dean

Distance: 5.9 miles/9.5 km, with a 482 ft / 147m climb to the hill, otherwise moderate walking
***In Pursuit of Spring*:** Chapter 4 From Dunbridge over Salisbury Plain
Refreshments: The Old Brewers, East Dean SP5 1HU (Check website for opening days and times)
Map: Explorer 131

How to get there: Trains run to West Dean every hour from Salisbury (check timetable).
If driving, West Dean can be approached from the west, via Dean Lane off the A36 Salisbury Rd, or from East Dean on the Lockerley Rd or from the north on the Dean Rd from Tytherley.
Park on Rectory Hill, north of the level crossing (257:272).



Map of the route

West Dean, where I entered Wiltshire, a mile from East Dean, is a village with a Red Lion Inn [now closed]*, a railway station, a sawmill and timber-yard, and several groups of houses clustering close to both banks of the river, which is crossed by a road bridge and by a white footbridge below*.

West Dean straddles Hampshire and Wiltshire. Woodlands lie to the north and the geology yields mostly chalk with some flints and clay. Built on the River Dun, it is an ancient settlement with remains of three Romano-British villas. It was named Deaone in Saxon sources, Duene in Domesday. The modern name evolved over time. In 1796 a canal was begun and was operating by 1802; the railway came through in 1847. When Thomas visited the area, the village men worked on the Norman Court Estate as agricultural labourers or in the brick and timber yards. Others were employed as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, in dairying, in building and on the railway.
Thomas, an admirer of Gilbert White, notes that the clergyman-writer was also *curate at West Deane, near Salisbury, accepting it, writes Mulso, 'because it was your sentiment that a clergyman should not be idle and unemployed.' He often rode from Deane to Selborne – a fine ride to one with an eye for the downs.* (*A Literary Pilgrim in England, p.108, Methuen, 1917.*)

Edward Thomas: Dean Hill

1. Walk back into West Dean

West Dean House

Mary Wortley Montagu

Pass the redbrick wall of **Dean House** on the left. It is a 17-18th century construction, frequently added to subsequently. Part of it may have been a brewhouse; it was certainly the rectory when Edward Thomas passed through. It was sold off in 1961 and a new rectory was built further up the hill. In 1473 the parish of West Dean was enlarged with its centre at St Mary's Church. This building declined (see notes for 11 of this walk) and the new flint and redbrick **St Mary's Church**, on the right, was built in 1866.
The influential Evelyn family bought the manor of West Dean in 1618 and built West Dean House and terraced gardens (demolished in 1823) on the site of the present church. It was a Parliamentarian stronghold during the Civil War. The young Mary Pierrepont (1689 – 1762) eloped from here in 1712 with Edward Wortley Montagu He became ambassador to Constantinople and her letters relating to this tour of duty as well as on other matters are celebrated. She was an early advocate of smallpox inoculation. During the French Revolution the house became a refuge for French *émigré* nuns who felt compelled to move on, owing to the harassment from the navvies employed on the construction of the Salisbury-Southampton canal.

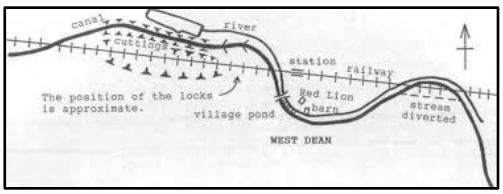
At the end of chapter 3 of *In Pursuit of Spring*, Thomas decided to take the train to Salisbury:
Luckily, a train was just starting which would bear me away from Dunbridge to Salisbury. I boarded it, and by eight o'clock I was among the people who were buying and selling fish and oranges to the accompaniment of much chaffing, but no bad temper, in Fish Row. He would have passed through the station at West Dean.
The line from Eastleigh to Salisbury had been opened up in 1847 when this station was built.

This walk does not include West Dean Farm, though Thomas paused there as he rode to Salisbury.
I turned back and west, and then south-west again on my original road, in order to be on the road nearest

Andrews' and Dury's 1773 Map of West Deane showing West Dean farm

2. Go over the level crossing down to the bridge over the River Dun.

West Dean bridge and station, BM



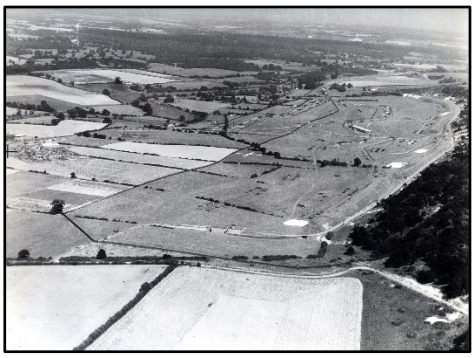
The course of the canal at West Dean

3. Continue up the Dean Rd in the Salisbury direction. Immediately past Ordnance House on the left is a National Speed Limit sign. Here, go left up the bank through an unmarked break in the hedge and a gateway into a field. Follow the lefthand side of the field to the end of the hedge by the beech trees. Go *to Dean Hill. This took me over broad and almost hedgeless fields, and through a short, disconnected fragment of an avenue of mossy beeches, to West Dean Farm. Nothing lay between the houseless road and the hillside, which is thick here with yew, except the broad arable fields, with a square or two given up to mustard flowers and sheep, and West Dean Farm itself. It is a house of a dirty white colour amidst numerous and roomy outbuildings, thatched or mellow-tiled, set in a circle of tall beeches. The road bends round the farm group and goes straight to the foot of the hill, and then along it.*

The former Red Lion pub on the left has had various incarnations since the 1600s when it was a dairy and two farms. Its façade was added in the 1790s. It has been known as The Crown, The Lion and became the Red Lion in 1905. It was unusual in that the bar was divided by the Wiltshire-Hampshire county border. A dairy remained attached right up to WWII. It has been a private residence since 1995.
This river crossing was guarded by a pillbox during WWII; it was demolished in 1961. The bridge was, in fact, a double bridge until this one was built in the 1930s. The earlier river bridge was the village focal point. Adjoining it, a second bridge was built to go over the 27-foot-wide canal which ran parallel to the river. The canal was a link in a larger project connecting Andover with Salisbury and Southampton Water. The Salisbury-West Dean section, with 7 locks, was opened in 1802 and carried chalk, lime and manure. Shareholders became wary and funds became scarce; by 1810 the project was dead. The canal bed was reclaimed and related brick and stonework was cannibalised for local buildings.

To the left lies the land which held the former Royal Naval Armaments Depot. As Britain prepared for war in 1938, 583 acres of Dean Hill farmland was requisitioned by the Ministry of Defence for the creation of a Royal Naval Depot for heavy weapons for the Portsmouth fleet. Irish miners, Scottish fitters and local labourers tunnelled into the chalk hillside and built 24 bunkers. Many associated brick and concrete offices, laboratories and 150 workshops (with internal gantries for the inspection, repair and refurbishment of weapons) were constructed, as was a special gauge rail link running south of East Dean Church for the transportation of armaments. High blast banks were raised to protect neighbours. The site opened in 1941. It continued to be operational till 2004, storing sophisticated weapons for all three military services as Defence Munitions West Dean. It was a staging post for the transport of nuclear weapons. It was closed in 2004 and has morphed into

left into the adjacent field and follow its righthand edge uphill.



Royal Naval Armaments Depot

Railway to underground tunnels

4. Go through the gate at the end of the field and continue forward, passing security gates on the left, and continue to the road, Dean Lane. **Turn left and go uphill, following it through a sharp bend to the right**.

5. Just before the crest of the hill, look for a stony layby on the left. Walk through the gap to the right of the gate and continue forward following the hill contour on a broad grassy trackway, with the treeline up on the right.

Norman Court, West Tytherley

Dean Hill Park, a light industrial and office complex. Most of its acreage reverting to agricultural and conservation use.

One of the West Dean Hill pillboxes, BM

In his Fieldwork Book 53 of May 1912, Thomas notes *Dean Hill E(ast) of Salisbury a long level ridge E(ast) + W(est) w(ith) a lovely slope to N(orth) thinly or thickly covered w(ith) darkest yew + sometimes crowned in yew or beech or both singly or in cluster or line*
The walk continues along this *lovely slope*.

A transmitter will be above on the top of Dean Hill. Also on the right is an eight-sided pillbox. At least seven will be seen on this stretch of the walk, some succumbing to ivy and weathering. With fear of an invasion after the Battle of Britain, defence lines were constructed across the country. The Home Guard manned these rural defences and were instructed to hold off the anticipated Wermacht Panzer divisions until army reinforcements could be summoned. Tank traps were constructed at river crossings – there was one in West Dean.

In the distance to the left and on the ridge carrying the Clarendon and Monarch Ways, the white building is Norman Court in West Tytherley. Set in 150 acres of parklands, it takes its name from medieval owners. It was bought by the Baring family and later the Singers, the major employers in the area. The death of the owner at El Alamein led to the estate being sold in 1945. The Court has been owned by a succession of private schools. To the right of it can be seen the tump of Woolbury Ring, a 20-acre hill fort east of Stockbridge.
Further along and rightwards to the south east lies Romsey, the Test Valley and the installations of Fawley Refinery on Southampton Water, backed by the Isle of Wight.
This stretch of the walk is accompanied by the security fence built by the Admiralty Constabulary, for whom 30 houses were built on the Depot site – now Hillside Close.

Dean Hill, BM

Dean Hill ridge (on the right)

6. Follow the path as it kinks to the left to Deanhill Barn. Continue along the concrete driveway for two thirds of a mile, passing the trig point (366 ft/111m).

Looking towards Lockerly, BM

7. As the path swings left continue downhill, passing Dean Hill Barn Farm (281:264) **and continue to the road and East Dean**.

8. At the East Dean road, turn left and **continue forward, taking care to be seen by traffic. This is ET's IPOS route.**

The ridge of the Depot blast banks lie down on the left. Coming off the ridge, the rolling terrain opens out with the spire of St John's Church in Lockerley seen ahead.
Pausing to look north, remnants of the Admiralty marshalling yard, the site of transfer sheds and standard gauge railway, can be seen on the right. This was a spur from the level crossing ahead and the Salisbury-Southampton railway. Just in front of the blast banks on the left, a narrow-gauge railway served the establishment's magazines, laboratories, workshops for the inspection, maintenance and repair of munitions and the storage magazines.

Trig point and looking north, BM

After East Dean House on the right, **St Winfrith's Church** (229:267) will be on the left. Of this, Thomas writes: *On the left, that is on the Dean Hill side, stood East Dean Church, a little rustic building of patched brick and plaster walls, mossy roof, and small lead-paned windows displaying the Easter decorations of moss and daffodils. It had a tiny bell turret at the west end, and a round window cut up into radiating panes like a geometrical spider's web. Under the yew tree, amidst long grass, dandelion and celandine, lay the bones of people bearing the names of Edney and Langridge. The door was locked. … on the other side of the road were an old cottage with tiled roof and walls of herring-boned brick, smothered from chimney to earth with ivy, in a garden of plum blossom; and next to it, a decent small home, a smooth clipped block of yew, and a whitewashed mud wall with a thatched coping. The houses of East Dean, either thatched or roofed with orange tiles, were scattered chiefly on the right.*

Water meadows lay off on the right, as does East Dean Manor and Manor Farm.

St Winfrith's Church, East Deane, BM

Thomas's **sawmill and timber-yard** are still in the village of West Dean down to the left. In his day it had a steam-powered mill. It was, and still is, owned by the East family. It used to process the timber of the nearby Norman Court estate, moving it by horse and pole wagons. In 1913 its products included brush boards for brooms and mining timber; nowadays it produces timber for construction, fencing, joinery and flooring. It still uses locally sourced timbers along with tropical hardwoods.

9. Pass the Old Brewers pub and restaurant on the left. Just beyond it on the right is Frenchmor Lane. Follow this over the railway and, following a finger post, to the left of Park Farm drive. Where the lane bends to the right, another finger post and stile are on the left. Continue over this and across the field upwards to the house in the hedge line ahead.

I went over river and railway uphill past the new but ivied church to look at the old farmhouse, the old church and the camp which lie back from the road on the left among oaks and thickets. On that Sunday morning, cows pasturing on the rushy fields below the camp and thrushes signing in the oaks were the principal inhabitants of West Dean.

The East family sawmill, BM

10. At the treeline, go to the right of the house and fence and, immediately on entering the next field, continue left, down to a track on the other side of the hedge, bear right and follow this up to the road ahead.

West Dean's 'old' church was built of chalk, flint and sandstone rubble. In the mid-19th century it was condemned as beyond repair and decommissioned in 1971. What remains is known as the d**e Borbach Chapel** now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. This was originally attached to the now demolished parish church. One of the graves belongs to James Thomas Cooper, who was hanged in 1831 for allegedly leading a riotous mob which destroyed agricultural machinery and farmsteads. A consecration cross can be seen on the inner door jamb and the medieval door is cross-boarded. Around the tiled and stone floor are fine 17th century iron work and alabaster, marble and limestone monuments to the Evelyn family, who owned the chapel in the 17th century. Among the more striking memorials is the one to John and Elizabeth Evelyn his wife, with its *bas-relief* of their eight daughters and three sons. Another is to the angel-assisted, God-beseeching Robert Pierrepont, his leg amputated and an inscription on a gilded copper internal door bemoaning his wastrel life.

11. Cross the road and follow the sign for the de Borbach Chantry, passing between the houses to a gate on the left into the churchyard.

The de Borbach Chantry, BM

Memorial to John and Elizabeth Evelyn, BM

Memorial to Robert Pierrepont, BM

This is *the camp* to which Thomas refers. It is an overgrown but discernible mound and ditch, a Norman Motte fortification which held a garrison to dominate the surrounding countryside. This may have been an earlier wooden structure; no sign of stonework has been revealed. An 18th century bowling green was set on the levelled top.

12. Take the way to the left of the churchyard gate and walk round the overgrown mound.

13. Turn right at the road and return to the start point.

With thanks to Wendy Britton of the Bristol Ramblers Association, Sara Sawyer and Tim Parkinson of the Edward Thomas Fellowship, and Catherine Carberry

******

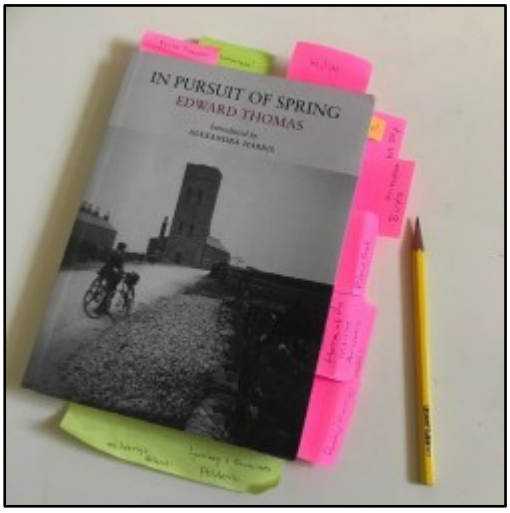
Remaining with In Pursuit of Spring, we are grateful to our friends at Black Swan Arts in Frome for the following article about their recent exhibition.

In Pursuit of Spring

An exhibition by Black Swan Arts in conjunction with Somerset Art Works (SAW)

Fifty works by SAW Members featured in an exhibition at Black Swan Arts in Frome, celebrating the book of the same name by Edward Thomas. The exhibition ran from March until the end of June and fortunately was able to benefit from some of the lifting of lockdown restrictions.

The launch of the exhibition was timed to coincide with the weekend on which Thomas finished his journey to find Spring, on 28 March 1913, with an online catalogue also available featuring artwork, artists' statements and quotes from the book, creating a rich and diverse response by Somerset artists to the themes expressed as well as the places on the Somerset leg of his journey. The exhibition not only explored ideas around hope, renewal and reflection, but also revealed some of the preoccupations of Somerset Art Works members as they made work over a difficult winter, looking for signs of change and a collective reassurance as we all emerged from the third national lockdown.



Welcome area and small exhibition

For those unfamiliar with the book, Edward Thomas sets out from his parents' home in Balham, by bicycle and heads west, entering the county near Tellisford and tracing a route through Radstock, Shepton Mallet, Wells, Glastonbury, the Polden Hills, Bridgwater and Kilve to meet Spring, and Winter's Grave, on Cothelstone Hill in the Quantocks. It's a unique account, delicately observed in places, of a rural road trip with World War I just less than eighteen months away, but the writing also produces some poignant observations which are ripe for artistic interpretation.

The plans for the show were seeded in an idea for a Somerset Art Works Members' winter exhibition at Black Swan Arts, for a themed exhibition responding to Thomas Hardy's poem 'The Darkling Thrush'. As with everything in 2020, this had to be parked but the idea of a Somerset Art Works Members' exhibition, responding to a literary theme or prompt persisted. *In Pursuit of Spring* provides many happy coincidences of timing and theming with Thomas' book; a journey with an undetermined end-point, emergence from difficulty and a moment where things are turning.

The exhibition had unique benefits for those involved. Artists had the opportunity to have their work seen online, with that specially-created online catalogue (still accessible – see link at end of article) as well as online shop and the promise of a physical exhibition, as restrictions hopefully lift. The timing was apt as it was a show which had only been planned from the turn of the year so the idea of re-emergence felt fresh and vital. Better digital resources meant that the work was more accessible, and more sustainable as people can experience the work without the need to travel. Having said that, many were also craving a return to seeing the work up close, so the flexibility to provide an exhibition which could work online but also 'live' when the time allowed was really welcome.

The exhibition was an ambitious-yet-cautious, absorbing and thoroughly engaging return for Black Swan Arts exhibition programme as they planned their route out of lockdown and the challenges of the pandemic. Exploratory conversations and subsequent planning discussions were facilitated by Zoom meetings- frequent catchups were held throughout January and February, with efficient agendas and clear actions speeding up the process and ensuring swift decision making! A callout was planned, with artists asked to respond to the book and submit work within a five-week period. The results were impressive; diverse and personal responses to the timeframe of Thomas' journey mirrored by a contemporary response to our own unique and challenging experience.

An example of how Thomas' words inspired the art

In terms of the physical exhibition, artwork occupied two spaces at Black Swan Arts- the former shop and downstairs gallery, and the Round Tower, a beautiful space which is a former wool-drying store. As with the online catalogue, the display of work was punctuated with quotes from Thomas' book.

The figure of a traveller looms throughout the show. Sally Muir's work consists of an interesting composite monoprint and drypoint work, responding to a couple of Thomas' own photographs that feature in the Little Toller edition of the book, which has been used to plan and research the exhibition.

Although David Brayne's cyclist is clearly shown, he encounters a 'pale mist at an uncertain distance' and as David says, Thomas seemed to enjoy the fleeting and often skewed impressions he experienced. This is a journey full of particular incidents and observations, but with a fluid sense of steady movement and a moment passing.

Some of the takes are personal and moving; Jenny Mellings and Benedict Mackay have both previously undertaken Thomas' journey, also by bike, with Benedict producing a series of walks along the route. Hans Borgonjon and Pauline Lerry talk about their families' accounts of World War I.

Much of the work is a direct response to now, with some artists creating new work made under lockdown such as Jenny Graham and Matilda Morton who both used mud and local materials in their work.

There were a good variety of mediums represented too with stained glass, collage, poetry, photography, printmaking, ceramics and sculpture as well as abstract and figurative responses. A display of contributing artists' sketchbooks provided an insight into how some of the work was conceived.

Although Thomas passed through towns including Radstock, Shepton Mallet, Wells, Street, Glastonbury and Bridgwater, the built environment hardly featured in artists' responses although Thomas' own photos do record places clearly identifiable as well as those unknown. They provide a fascinating insight into his visual and poetic eye and a record of the county just over a century ago.

Splashes of colour provide highlights amongst the restrained palette of much of the work, moods shift as artwork captures the hope which dares after the subdued winter we've just passed through.

Contours are mapped and puddles splashed in work that acknowledges a darker than normal winter and all that this spring might now offer.

Bicycle appropriately resting just outside the exhibition at the time of the visit by Fellowship Chair Jeremy Mitchell and his wife Deirdre

The exhibition closed on 27 June and if you were unable to visit it, the online catalogue is still available by following the link below.

https://somersetartworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/InPursuitofSpringCat.15MB.pdf

With thanks to Black Swan Arts, Somerset Art Works, Little Toller Books and the artist and curator Paul Newman

Words and images by Paul Newman

Taken from a blog published on April 10, 2021 by Paul Newman

******

Thanks are due to Nick Denton for the following article about Edward Thomas's much-loved poem 'Lob'. The article arose from Nick's research using Thomas' original Field Note Books and one note book in particular.

Field Note Book 54 - The Origins of *Lob*

Edward Thomas set out on Friday 10th May 1912 to walk south from Chiseldon close to Swindon along the Ridgeway. He reached Bruton the following Saturday before turning back to Salisbury. The walk, a year after he had walked the Icknield Way from Thetford, was a continuation from where he had stopped then at Wanborough.

His account of his journey along the Icknield Way was published in the spring of 1913 but he had been proofing it in the late spring of 1912, probably before his walk in May. In its concluding pages, he wrote "The easiest, the pleasantest and the wrongest thing to do is to take to the Ridgeway at Wanborough and follow it along the supposed south-westerly course under Liddington Hill, under Barbury Castle, and then up on the ridge to Avebury."

In fact he did decide to do the "wrongest thing" that May. Instead of trying to follow any continuation of the Icknield Way, south and west, whose low level route had been lost to the plough, he followed the higher much more clearly defined Old Ridgeway.

In stepping out that May morning in 1912 he may have been planning either an extension to *The Icknield Way* or, possibly, a second companion book on The Ridgeway. His field note books during these days are full of detail which he could have included in a book, especially FNB 54 which covered the first couple of days - May 10th and 11th - walking from Chiseldon to Market Lavington via Avebury. It never became a book - instead he was to turn to this field note book nearly three years later in 1915 and used some of his encounters to create two poems, *A Private* and *A Gentleman*, and most significantly much of the material for the first three stanzas of *Lob.* In this piece I focus exclusively on the origins of *Lob*.

In the penultimate sentence of *The Icknield Way*, Thomas was to write "It is a game of skill which deserves a select reputation - to find an ancient road of the same character as the Oxfordshire and Berkshire Icknield Way, going west or south-west beyond Wanborough."

Although in May 1912, "at hawthorn-time" he was in search of a more clearly defined ancient road, this sentence illuminates the object of his search in the first two lines of *Lob* "in Wiltshire, travelling/ In search of something chance would never bring". Later in the third stanza ("Many years passed…") he returns to the same stretch of country in search of Lob. But, in the first instance, according to his field note book, he was in search of an ancient road - the Ridgeway. Though not as difficult to identify as the Icknield Way, it still required skill to navigate. FNB 54 testifies to his efforts to track the ancient way and distinguish it from other tracks and roads and hollows along the way. He even spent some time trying to date it compared to the Wansdyke, an ancient earthworks, which it crosses at Red Shore, under Furze hill, south of East Kennett.

The first morning started with a meeting with an old lady - and some discussion about which way Rudge was. Thomas took the occasion to tell her about the Ridge(way) which she had not heard of.

This was something he was to ask of a couple of locals he came across the next day when walking from Avebury to Market Lavington via the Altons and Bottlesford. They also had no knowledge of the Ridgeway knowing it as just a footpath or a sheep drove. This could explain the reference in *Lob* to "Ages ago the road/approached. The people stood and looked and turned/Nor asked it to come nearer…"

I had originally thought this would be either the toll road or a more modern road. But the road would seem to have been the ancient way whose existence had been forgotten or never understood by locals and whose purpose had been irrelevant at best and at worst a possible threat. As Thomas pointed out of the Icknield Way, it encouraged both strange long distance travellers and those who prey on them. To the ancestors of those who lived in these villages the Ridgeway had been a symbol of modernity to which they had turned their backs, and their descendants had kept their backs turned, while resisting further waves of modernity.

At the outset of the poem, the old man whose face, "by life and weather cut/ And coloured, - rough, brown, sweet as any nut", later identified as Lob, has been said to resemble David ("Dad") Uzzell, Thomas's old friend and mentor from Wiltshire childhood holidays. But Thomas was also recalling a 77 year old man he had met on the second morning of his walk probably close to Honeystreet on the banks of the Kennet & Avon canal. He had entered a conversation with him about the path of the Ridgeway after Alton Priors, with a question about which side of the hedge it went as it approached the canal. The man knew about the track as a footpath but not as the Ridgeway. As in the poem, he is quoted in FNB 54 as saying "and nobody can stop 'ee" (walking on the footpath). He goes on to reminisce about when he was 25, "men dug in all barrows on Tan Hill etc. They thought as there was summat there as they wanted to find but they c(oul)dn't find it."

The old man pointed to a very precise date when the barrows on Tan Hill and other neighbouring hills were excavated around 1860 (i.e. 52 years before when he would have been 25). Dr John Thurman, a medical doctor and also medical superintendent of the Wiltshire County Asylum, had led these excavations, helped by his inmates. His other excavations in the late 1850s and 1860s had included the Long Barrow at West Kennett, Adam's Grave on Walker's Hill as well as other barrows on the hills north of Pewsey Vale. He had found a few remains in some of the barrows but others were empty and none had the treasure that the locals and the diggers would have counted "a find". Tan Hill may have been especially memorable for the old man because it was also the site of an annual sheep fair every August with a range of entertainments, which people flocked to from many miles around.

Edward Thomas noted down at the end of the record of the conversation with the old man "sapping miners working in Silbury?" This would seem to refer to an earlier excavation at Silbury in 1849,

under the leadership of John Merewether, dean of Hereford cathedral. He used miners to run a horizontal shaft into Silbury mound. (Thomas had not been impressed by Silbury which he had seen the previous evening as he was walking into Avebury. He wrote "Silbury on the other hand is too much like the tip from a mine…. made yesterday by Mr Carnegie. It is just gauche neither rude nor graceful".)

There is no record of these miners working on later excavations such as Tan Hill. Either the old man or, possibly Thomas, seems to have confused the two, and as a result Thomas misidentified 1849, the date of the Silbury excavation, as the date the old man was referring to. So in *Lob*, Thomas made the old man not twenty five years old when the barrows were opened up on Tan Hill, but a younger crow-scarer, who would have been aged no more than 14, the age the old man would have been in 1849.

The range of hills to the north of Pewsey Vale include Tan Hill in the west, and travelling east Milk Hill, Walkers Hill, and on the eastern side of the Ridgeway, Knap Hill and Golden Ball Hill. They feature in Thomas's sketches in FNB 54 with the subsidiary hills of Woodborough Hill and Picked Hill to the south. As he walked south along the Ridgeway from Alton Priors - he looked up towards his left (east) and saw a field of dandelions stretching "up to the pale sky & soft dissolving white clouds & above the dandelion presently is Woodboro Hill & clump". Beyond on the horizon would have been Golden Ball Hill. Was this an additional connection Thomas made between dandelions and gold in the poem, besides the dandelions' colour? Did he also link the dandelions to the purported ancient treasure that had never been found in these hills? In any event the dandelions were obviously flourishing that year. After Honeystreet he wrote jokingly of "some meads wired by Society for Preventing Cruelty to Dandelions."

There were also a couple of cocks on this stretch of the walk - not crowing but on wind vanes. Wind vanes were particular favourites of Thomas and he often noted down sightings in his field note books.

Thomas spotted a "very rustic cock" on the top of the church at Alton Bowers and another among the big boarded mills to the north of the canal at Honeystreet next door to the chimney, a local landmark. This was probably the same "half tumbled cock on vane" which he noted in the next line. This tumbled cock may have given him the initial idea of the copper weathercock, which had been shot by villagers.

Both the stories of dandelions being turned to gold and the copper weathercock being shot sound like tales from ancient English folklore, suitable to be told alongside well-known stories such as Jack the giant killer, the men of Golem and the giant of Shrewsbury, which are featured later in *Lob*. However there seems to be no tradition for either the former tales that I can find - although a dandelion shining

yellow under a child's chin was traditionally said to predict wealth. Was Thomas creating his own folklore, together with the elusive figure of Lob, based on memories of his journeying through Wiltshire on that May day?

Finally in the third stanza, the list of three names the poet was given by locals for the ancient he was in search of, included two local place names he came across that day. He had met a labourer on his walk who "says 'Adam's Point' ('where they dug for coffin') is on Walker's Hill" ("Old Adam Walker"). Bottlesford ("Bill Bottlesford") is the village Thomas walked through later that day, south of Honeystreet and then in the parish of Manningford. The third name came from his visit to the Alton Priors church. There he had found a monument to William Button ("Jack Button") put up by his grandson, Sir William Button. He wrote "Monument….standing on an old stone table looks much more venerable than the altar & m(igh)t suggest worship of Buttons"! He refers back to Walker, Bottlesford and Button later in the poem as "a mere clown, or squire, or lord". Whether Walker is a clown or Bottlesford a squire is unclear, but Button is certainly the lord as the Buttons were lords of the manor of Alton Priors from the 13th to the 18th centuries.

Edward Thomas never returned to this area of Wiltshire after this walk. The second search in the poem over the last three extended stanzas was in his memories and imagination, searching for Lob across the breadth of England through its countryside, history, traditions, folklore, folk names for flora and fauna and old place names. But the foundations of *Lob* lay firmly in that stretch of country from Avebury to Bottlesford which he traversed along the Ridgeway on 11th May 1912. After all, as he writes of Lob at the end of the poem, "now a Wiltshireman/As he has oft been since his days began."

Nick Denton is researching the places that inspired the poems of Edward Thomas, through his field note books, and published and unpublished work as well as walking in his footsteps in England and Wales. He posts his findings regularly on the website www.edwardthomaspoetryplaces.com (including a post about A Private and its origins and a future post on A Gentleman). Once the transcription of FNB 54 has been finalised, it will be placed in the Edward Thomas Study Centre at the Petersfield Museum.

******

In the previous newsletter we invited members to contribute a description of the circumstances in which they first encountered the work of Edward Thomas. We are very grateful to ETF member Brian Mitchell, who submitted the following account. Brian was also good enough to send a related piece he has written entitled 'Reminders of Thomas' which we also publish here.

If any member would like to submit a piece on the same theme or an article about a favourite piece of Thomas' prose or poetry, please send it to the editor (contact details are on the first page of this newsletter).

How I Came to Thomas

Faltering steps at first ……. Being given a poem of his at school with his name, only the name – and no background information. We copied it down from the blackboard into our English exercise books. In the first three years of my time at the local Grammar School in the early – mid 1960s, each year we were given a poem or piece of verse to learn by heart – a Spoken English competition within school. We all had to stand at least once in front of the rest of the form and recite the piece – and I hated the experience (though I had quite a good memory and some feeling for the words) being whittled down in these forced class auditions to the few performances regarded as the best.

I recall one year we were doing this in the Biology science laboratory with benches, Belfast sinks and water taps, Bunsen burners and gas taps in front and with rows of flasks and test tubes in wooden racks on shelves to the sides and a lab assistant pottering about in the background, requiring an additional act of imagination to be carried away by the words and ignore the distractions.

The Spoken English poem probably set in the second year, was 'The Owl' by Edward Thomas – no information given about the poet and no context. This appealed to me as it concerned natural history, an enduring passion since childhood, but not enough for me to want to strive for success in this recitation competition. I remember the most difficult lines to me were:

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice

It was the concept of his repose being 'salted' by the bird's voice that puzzled me, not so much being 'sobered' by it. Despite the reference in the last line to soldiers lying under the stars, I didn't know it was written in early 1915 when Thomas was agonising over whether to enlist. It would have been something like a decade later that I bought Francis Turner Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury* and was delighted to find the poem in it. It would also have been in those dozen years after first meeting the poem that I read 'Adlestrop' and 'Thaw'. I certainly knew the latter well when I was teaching in the late 1970s and I found it deconstructed on a page of the National Association for Teaching English's magazine (I think it was there) and also in a Radio 4 series on favourite poems by Vernon Scannell. However, I think 'The Owl' was my first contact with Thomas. Neither he, nor his life or poetry

featured in my English lessons at school. I seem to recall meeting some WW1 poems, probably by Owen, in my Lower Sixth but they were not part of the Board's examination syllabus.

One of the first poems I remember presenting to a class in my early years of teaching in the late 1970s was 'the Owl'. I think I had first prepared and piloted it several years previously in a Birmingham school for a class I was given on teaching practice. My way in was to get the class to close their eyes and imagine various sounds outside and what those sounds would make them feel or how they would react – a dog barking at the classroom windows, a teacher shouting, a bird singing. How much notice would they take of it? I found it best not to prolong this imaginative experience too much and keep the stimulus short or I'd run the risk of losing some of the class through repetition, and provoking unwanted sounds from the iconoclastic clown there invariably was in every class.

I cannot remember precisely where or when I met other poems by Thomas but just before I launched into a teaching career, I bought books (prose and poetry and criticism) on that other Thomas – Dylan, and the Dymock poet I most appreciated at that time – Robert Frost. The work of both poets must have first been encountered in the Lower Sixth Form English Literature lessons but I only recall a stage production of *Under Milkwood* which involved some budding thespians from my year, though not me.

For the dozen or so years I was teaching before the National curriculum was imposed in the late 1980s, my English Department set its own examinations, each teacher being asked to set and mark (for consistency) a whole year's examination paper (no algorithms then just the sweat from a mountain of scripts). It was customary in the first three years to set for each year a three part exam, the last 30 marks often based on poetry, especially in Y3 (now Y9).

One year I decided to set for the third section a compare and contrast task of two unseen poems upon which questions were set to direct students' attention to key features of the language. The poems were Thomas' 'Tall Nettles' and the more military 'Nettles' by Vernon Scannell. I recall an early 'easy' question, as a way into Thomas' poem, asking what three things the tall nettles covered up and through careless reading, 'springs' became one of them in numerous answers, which I now think may have said something about how their lives were disconnecting from the seasons and /nature more generally.

Over later years I never had the opportunity to teach the poems of Edward Thomas, though one year when I was already teaching a second year sixth and it was my turn to start a new A Level English Literature course, a colleague had – and took – the chance to teach the poetry of Robert Frost.

The only time I recall a Thomas poem being set for an official examination was in the GCSE Poetry Handbook, a set text specifically compiled by the Board, which was used for about 5 years from the late 1990s.

Each year a group of poems would be set from it and three questions would appear on the examination paper based on these, two of which specified a pair of poems for comparison and contrast and the third allowing the student to choose what they considered the most appropriate poems to answer the question. The Thomas poem was 'The Manor Farm' – sadly not one of my favourites and, given its subject matter, not an easy poem to teach to a lower ability group in a suburban comprehensive.

Brian Mitchell

******

Reminders of Thomas

On 19th February 2015 at 8.15am, as I was exiting the back door to go to the garage, I heard a disturbance not 'sweet' (as described by another Thomas – R.S. – in his poem 'A Blackbird Singing' – which, incidentally, in Donald Hawes' 1971 text *Poems Compared* is set beside Edward Thomas' 'The Owl' in order to compare '*the poets' responses to the sound made by birds … the writers' moods and poetic styles'*) but one unnerving – indeed, alarming! I returned indoors but later, leaving the house again, I saw a blackbird perched on the garden willow singing its customary sweet song when it broke into a snatch of whirring alarm towards the end. At 4.30pm, as it was getting dark (it was February!) the blackbird was there again on the willow singing its contemporary song-with-alarm. I didn't hear it again until 25th February when at 11.00am he was perched on a spray of willow overhanging the neighbour's garden singing quietly but including the alarm two or three times.

In 2013 the British Trust for Ornithology put out a call for members of the public to report birds they heard mimicking man-made sounds and although, as anticipated, they had plenty of Starling records, they also received a good number of reports of Blackbirds mimicking the sounds of ambulances, lorry reversing warnings and the ringing noise of a telephone. A paper published by the Wildlife Sound Recording Society in Spring 1984 briefly covers literature from 1717 to 1984 revealing the blackbird as a vocal mimic of alien species, mainly musical melodies played by woodwind and other instruments and parts of the songs of other bird species. But it wasn't until the 1960s that the blackbird's use of mechanical sounds, e.g. tape recorder switches, in their repertoire was noted and the copying of human whistles was fairly common. Indeed, during the recent lockdown the writer Michael Morpurgo came to communicate daily with the blackbird in his garden and that became a great inspiration to him and his writing. It is not generally known that the blackbird is at least a potential rival to that better known mimic, the Starling. R.S. Thomas would surely have been more disturbed if the blackbirds that were singing outside over many seasons referred to in his poem, as heard from his desk indoors in mild green April evenings, had suddenly broken into some man-made noise, for it is the very familiarity of that characteristic song that we appreciate.

I wrote an article about my own experience on that dim February morning in a series of articles called 'Birds and their Songs in Writing and Reality' which I had published in a local natural history Newsletter and I couldn't help quipping about the end of Thomas' 'Adlestrop' whose poem was written two years after the incident that was described in his diary entry for 24th June 1914 – a hundred years before my 'experience' – when he caught the express train from Paddington to Dymock, capturing the moment it makes an unscheduled stop at that small rural railway station:

And for that minute, a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

'Thank goodness,' I wrote*, 'that nobody seemed aware at the time of the blackbird's powers of mimicry and that no birds in that hazy surrounding network disturbed the tranquillity of that timeless moment by terminating their songs with the steam whistle of the train, the hooting horn of an early motor-car, a factory blower, a copper's urgent strident whistle or the frantic ringing of a bicycle bell!'*

While researching in recent years for the centennial commemorations the lives of men who died in WW1 and whose names (over 200) are listed on the three War Memorials of the nearby town and my two local villages, I discovered one very distantly related to me, who before he enlisted in 1915, was a well-known and respected amateur footballer for the town and went on to play for Aston Villa Reserves, Walsall in the Midland League and two League Division One teams, Burton United and Leeds city (as they were then called) from 1903-08 and several other lower league clubs before returning to Atherstone Town in 1911 which that year became a founder member of the Birmingham Combination.

He enlisted in December 1915 joining the Royal Garrison Artillery from March 1916 and, served with 346 Siege Battery. He was killed at Passchendaele on October 19th 1917, aged 38. According to the chaplain who wrote to his mother, he was sitting in a little shelter near his gun when an enemy shell came over and the shelter took a direct hit – there were no other casualties for the battery on that day.

Of course, this is reminiscent of Thomas' fate. He transferred from the Artists Rifles in 1915-16 to the Royal Garrison Artillery and was killed at a similar age, 39, and also in 1917, though in April near Neuville-Vitasse at the opening of the Battle of Arras and it was supposedly by a blast from a German shell that sucked all the air from his lungs and stopped his heart where he was standing, leaning in the doorway of a dugout, filling his clay pipe.

Thomas's body apparently showed not the slightest sign of injury, which I doubt was the case with the local soldier with a direct hit with a shell, but both had died in a moment of rest, their deaths coming literally out of the blue, not specifically in action through 'k.i.a.' is what appears in official records for both.

Brian Mitchell

******

Many thanks to Jane Hill for contributing the following brief but moving account of how she came to Thomas.

How I Came to Edward Thomas

As a rebellious teenager, I wasn't always receptive to the books my father thrust at me. He was a passionate, enthusiastic reader, and had had some success in introducing me to Browning, and even Tennyson, but I was developing my own tastes – though I had secretly read my way through the paperbacks on his shelves, from Evelyn Waugh to Graham Greene and even Nabokov's *Lolita*. Often I would resist what he wanted me to read, out of defiant bloody-mindedness.

Then came the day he gave me Edward Thomas's *Selected Poems*. I already knew *Adlestrop* – Dad had taken us to the village to imbibe the spirit of the poem – but one reading of *Old Man* and I succumbed: Thomas's moving meditation on time and memory and regret was simple, melancholy, and something we could truly share. I resisted no longer. In the hardback *Collected Poems* that he bought me during my first undergraduate year, each poem was annotated in ink with its date of composition, and Alun Lewis's fine tribute, *To Edward Thomas, On Visiting the Memorial Stone above Steep in Hampshire*, was copied out in the prelim pages in his careful hand. It was a gift I have treasured all my life.

My dad was a history teacher who understood both mental anguish and the beauty of a bare branch against a winter sky. He, like Thomas, was a Lambeth boy, and his own father had been wounded in the legs at Arras on the same spring day in 1917 that Thomas died there.

When Dad died suddenly in 1988, I stumbled my way through *Lights Out* at his funeral. Thirty years later, in 2018, I was proud to be able to read the poem again, but better, out on the hillside on my first Birthday Walk. For it was thanks to my father that I ever discovered Edward Thomas. Only fitting, then, that on Dad's headstone are inscribed (slightly adapted from *What Will They Do?*) the lines suggested by my brother Christopher:

"…I in them as they in me
Nourished what has great value and no price"

Jane Hill

The next short article is about an exciting and innovative approach to publishing Edward Thomas's prose. Thanks are due to Irfan Shah and Tracie Johnson.

'Where Lay my Homeward Path' - Unearthing Hidden Treasures

Earlier this year I, along with my partner Tracie Johnson, decided to make books by hand. It was, in its own clumsy way, an attempt at Arts and Crafts and was an idea formed during lockdown – that great inversion in which quixotic ambitions suddenly became as feasible as any 'respectable' plans.

The book in question, we decided, would be a collection of short stories by Edward Thomas. This is because, whilst looking for poems by Thomas, I had stumbled across four particular stories from his posthumous collection, 'Cloud Castle and Other Papers', that had held me spellbound. Further foraging uncovered another six stories from other sources, which I felt were hidden treasures that really needed to be shown anew to the world.

Within these ten stories, I think there is to be found writing which cleaves true to the tough sentimentality of those who love and know the land, and which are now imbued with historical interest, with their descriptions of flora and fauna, that serve as repositories of faded words. Words such as gold agrimony, pilewort and brooklime flow through these stories like the ships in Masefield's 'Cargoes'.

Thomas' prose writing has often been damned with faint praise and so I found these stories revelatory. Tales such as 'A Man of the Woods' and, more humorously, 'Seven Tramps: A Study in Brown' are calloused, with fists plunged into the soil of Thomas' South Country, or guiding us:

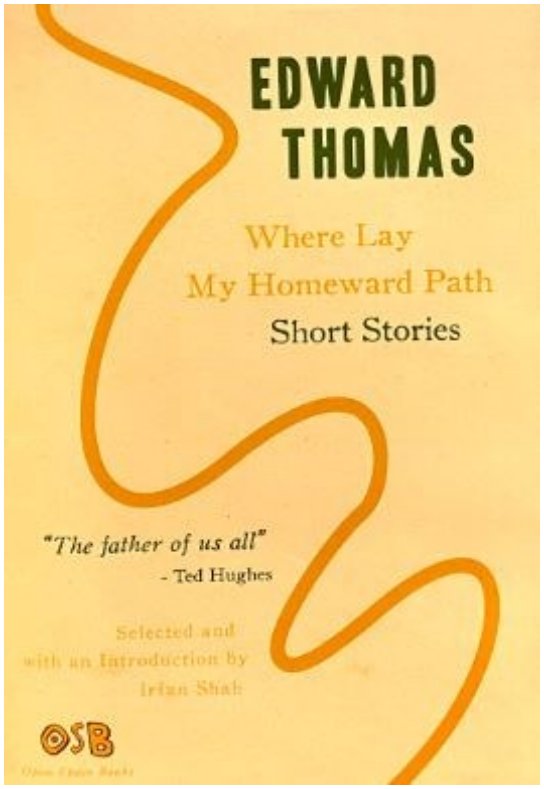
through thickets of perpendicular and stiff and bristling stems, through brier and thorn and bramble in the double hedges.

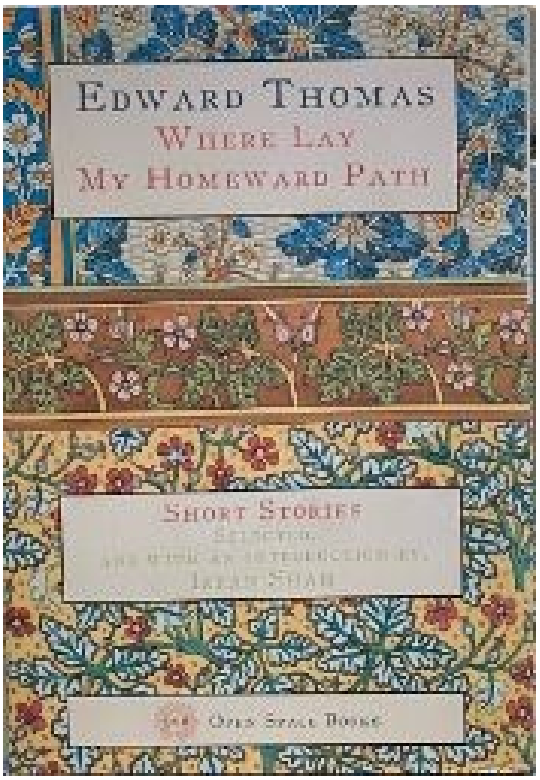
and 'Mike', a narrator's reminiscences of his dog, is cruel, loving, clear-eyed and elegiac. Single sentences disarm:

He forgave me so readily that it took some time for me to forgive myself.

and what one might learn from dogs – of the comfort of dirt and the futility of grudges - one also senses in the stories in this collection.

Together, Tracie and I have collected the stories; prepared the layout and design of the text blocks and covers; glued the spines; added the mull to strengthen them; cut boards; added endpapers and book cloths, and designed and printed out dustjackets. 'Where Lay My Homeward Path' is our own small adventure with a beloved writer. The books will have a variety of covers and two examples are shown below:





All this has been done in a small room overlooking, not Thomas' South Country, but the Yorkshire Dales! And all this has been done during lockdown - that great inversion in which the best of Thomas' fiction is revealed, we hope, to be touched with the same genius as his poetry.

From the beginning of September you can find out more about our progress by visiting: www.openspacebooks.co.uk

Irfan Shah

******

It's time we heard from Thomas himself! The following article, written by him, was first published in the journal 'Literature' on September 23rd 1899.

The Frontiers of English Prose

There are many differences between the literatures of last century and today. For example, an affectionate portraiture of *t'es dehors* (?) has been added. But a most noticeable fact is the apparent destruction of the boundaries between poetry and prose if not between verse and prose. The same writers work in both styles indifferently; for how many writers of the day have not produced at least one volume in each? That in itself is nothing new. Sidney, the Herberts, Spenser and hundreds more did so. The point is that not only do most writers use verse and prose, but they treat also in both styles, the same subjects or subjects of the same class. In the last century no writer would have dreamt describing in prose the riverside scene of Richard Feverel and Lucy Desborough. Whence, then, this audacity of prose? As was said above, it was traceable far back but in particular to the work of great poets at the beginning of the century.

Of course, verse develops earlier than prose. It is the natural form of literature for men when their joy is expressed by laughter, their sorrow by tears and sighs. Sappho's poetry is perfect; but certainly no contemporary wrote perfect prose. In England also, there is nothing in prose to compare with the ballads except the *but-and-and* romances. From the first some fastidiousness was imposed by verse – by metre, by rhyme, perhaps. In Italy poetry had a sumptuous patrician vocabulary of its own, and so it had, to some degree, in England. Not for a very long time would this vocabulary mix with the vulgar prose. Chaucer tried: but surely his intricate prose, though purely English, is a failure; and the nearest to triumph at any early date, is the romantic prose of Kitsun's (Usk's?) 'Testament of Love'. Spenser's prose is not very significant. Shakespeare's is not; or that of the other poets of his day, except Sidney's, though the poets Du Bellay and Ronsard were then carving exquisite prose in France. As for Milton, for the form of prose he did little, indeed; but he swelled its vocabulary conspicuously, and in his liveliest work we see the possibility of what is to come. Sir T. Browne came, with the same splendour, but a wonderful delicacy and sweetness too, and with a full quiver of rhetoric, melody and metaphor; and Dryden with no striking matter, but a careful attempt at scholarship which produced a style so fastidious, that men like Chesterfield declared they would use no word that was not to be found in his work. Drummond of Hawthornden, Ben Jonson's friend, a true poet, ought not to be omitted; for part of the 'Cypress Grove' is a philosophical rhapsody full of modern opulence and melancholy. Then, in the eighteenth century, this line of development, that promised such magnificence ahead, was cut short. The spirit of prose – argumentative and partisan – entered into verse. The spirit of poetry breathed only in pensive Gray, pastoral Dyer, and homely religious Cowper.

But the air was highly charged at the junction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: 1800 is precisely the date of Wordsworth's publication of the second volume of "Lyrical Ballads". This volume contained "Hartleap Well" and "Poems on the naming of Places"; but it is the manifesto by way of preface that is of importance at present. That stirring piece contains an earnest and a prophecy of the character of much that is weightiest in the literature of our century.

It would be (he says) a most easy task to prove that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose *when prose is well written*.

The opinion was startling if not new, and, as we have seen, the enunciation of it had been prepared for. Poetry had been too long and too harshly divided from prose. Life, like a lyre, had been touched in all her strings by poetry: while prose hung back. Take an example. The plays of Shakespeare contain innumerable pictures of natural beauty, which harmonize entirely in their subtlety, mysticism, and feeling, with the attitude towards Nature as it finds expression today; but the prose of his time was leagues behind. As Wordsworth was writing this preface, prose had, in fact, after centuries of lagging, drawn level with poetry, whose birthright it claimed to divide. A notable fact! For in the literature of Rome and Greece, prose never went abreast with poetry. Let us hear Wordsworth again.

It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* (the italics are his) differences between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and accordingly we call them sisters; but where shall we find bonds of connexion sufficiently strict to typify the affinity between metrical and prose composition . . . The same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

Wordsworth himself put life into his theory by actual prose of the kind suggested. Nor was he alone. Other poets, of whose verse the poetic quality is popularly more incontestable than his, from metre turned aside to prose, permanently or at intervals. Coleridge, the impassioned dreamer, received from Mill the title of "the seminal mind of the century". When the seed is of that kind, the fruit will be likewise, and hence the vague horizons, the generosity to doubt and idiosyncrasy, of this age; hence a *rapture* in all modes of prose composition, even philosophy. And yet more; confidently and successfully he treats matter as *poetical* as "Kubla Khan" in prose. See, for instance, "Allegoric Vision" in the "Poems" of 1834; and "Over the Brocken" in Gillman's "Life of Coleridge". Coleridge, too, has a passage very pertinent to the subject in hand. It is to be found in that volume of fragments which Mr. E.H. Coleridge christened "Anima Poetae" (1895), and read as follows:-

When there are few literary men, and the 999,999/1,000,000 of the population are ignorant, as was the case of Italy from Dante to Metastasio, from causes I need not here put down, there will be a poetical language; but that a poet ever uses a word as poetical, which he, in the same mood and thought, would

not use in prose and conversation, Milton's prose works will assist us in disproving. But as soon as literature becomes common, and critics numerous, in any country, and a large body of men seek to express themselves habitually in the most precise, impassioned, sensuous words, the difference as to mere words ceases, as, for example, the German prose writers. The sole difference in style is that poetry demands a severe keeping – it admits nothing that prose may not often admit, but it often rejects.

Soon after Coleridge, other poets began writing notable prose. There is no unnatural gap between the versifying and prosifying periods of Scott's life, but a natural transition, involving not even a change of subject-matter. The loveliest passages in his fiction differ quite inessentially from his verse; the ballad scene between Bertram and the girl, in "Guy Mannering", would fit (so to speak) the same bezil as many a scene in the "Lady of the Lake" or "Marmion". Here was the beginning of the new romantic fiction, which expresses in prose many things for which another age would certainly have employed verse. Lyrical, idyllic, elegiac prose, all was henceforward possible; they have been realised by De Quincey, by Ruskin, by Pater, by the author of "Aylwin", and by others.

Byron, again, despite his weakness for the eighteenth century, was not unmoved by the new spirit. His imitation of Ossian is well known. But most of all Shelley, in whose work the heat and purple of passion are more constant than with anyone else wrote prose such as Wordsworth had anticipated. It is fragmentary, indeed; and chiefly to be found in his letters, where, of course, a man can reasonably be autobiographical and so have a store of unusual flame and colour at hand: but such pieces as the "Defence of Poetry" and "The Coliseum" and "On Love" permanently extended the boundaries of our prose. A few quotations without comment will, perhaps, not be unacceptable:-

What is love? (he writes in the fragment "On Love") What is love? Ask him who lives, what is life? Ask him who adores, What is God? . . . In solitude, or in that deserted state, when we are surrounded by human beings, and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, and the waters, and the sky. In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is, then, found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the leaves beside them, which, by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone. Sterne says that, if he were in a desert, he would love some cypress. So soon as this want or power is dead, man becomes the living sepulchre of himself, and yet what survives is the mere husk of what once he was.

We see (exclaims Helen in "The Coliseum") the liquid depths of Heaven above through the rifts and windows; and the flowers, and the weeds, and the grass and creeping moss are nourished by its unforbidden rain. The blue sky is above – the wide, bright, blue sky – it flows through the great rents

on high and through the bare boughs of the marble-rooted fig-tree and through the leaves and flowers of the weeds, even to the dark arcades beneath. I see – I see its clear and piercing beams fill the universe, and impregnate the joy-inspiring wind with life and light, and casting the veil of its splendour over all things – even me. Yes! And through the highest rift the noonday waning moon is hanging, as it were, out of the solid sky. The cemetery (he writes in a note to "Adonais") is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The change was wrought before Shelley died. Here, however, names become so numerous that most are of necessity left unmentioned. De Quincey, perhaps, is the most typical of all; and was conscious, as he himself boastfully records, of his revolution in prose, which, under his touch, possesses most of the beauties of verse – melody, passion, imagery. In Germany and elsewhere the same progress had been made, but more rapidly; and it acted considerably upon De Quincey, by way of Richter, whom he translated; still, on the whole, he was accurate in saying that he knew of no precedent in literature.

As to France the mere names of J.J. Rousseau, Ducis, Chateaubriand, Hugo and their compeers will be more elegant than brief criticism. Before De Quincey's death, his work had been followed by Ruskin's, with the addition of a minute and tender knowledge of natural things to the armoury of prose. Both these writers were also careful philologists, improving, defining our vocabulary, and thus continuing the work of Coleridge, who first made the study of words a beautiful and living thing. Their successors are innumerable, though their advance has not been unopposed; for we know how Matthew Arnold doubted whether Ruskin was not going beyond the limits of prose. The field has been won; prose shares it with verse, having in her grasp the lyre of life and claiming to touch every string by right, and to sing "of man, of nature, and of human life".

Edward Thomas

******

FROM THE ARCHIVE

In the last newsletter we included an article written by and in memory of Ken Watts titled 'A Lasting Acquaintance – David Uzzell' that was first published in Newsletter 27 in August 1992.

Ken followed up his 1992 article with a second one that appeared in Newsletter 43 in July 2000. In it Ken sought to correct a popular misconception about 'Dad' Uzzell. We publish it again here to complete our tribute to Ken.

Following the article we publish 3 letters transcribed by Julia Maxted from typescripts donated by her uncle, Edward Eastaway Thomas to the Fellowship, copies of which were also donated to the University of Gloucestershire Special Collections and Archives by his family.

Was 'Dad' Uzzell Ever at Hodson Bottom?
Notes made in 1995 by Ken Watts of Trowbridge

The August 1992 issue of the Edward Thomas Newsletter included a piece headed 'A Lasting Acquaintance: David Uzzell'. When I wrote this article more than three years ago I accepted, as have many before me, Helen Thomas's account in Chapter 3 of 'As it Was' (1926) of the 'tiny honeymoon' spent with Edward Thomas at 'the cottage of his old gamekeeper friend', David ('Dad') Uzzell in September 1897. Her description leaves us in no doubt that the cottage which she so precisely described is the gamekeeper's cottage at Hodson Bottom on the Burderop estate but research subsequent to my article being written casts considerable doubt upon David Uzzell having ever lived at Hodson.

In spite of the fact that 'poacher turned gamekeeper' has entered our language as an expression for a reformed character, it has always seemed a little improbable that the slightly disreputable David Uzzell should have become the gamekeeper at Burderop, and the use of the word 'somehow' in my article was meant to express my slight mystification at such an appointment. In two of his slightly disguised pen portraits of 'Dad' Uzzell, Edward Thomas mentions that he was a gamekeeper, but further investigation suggests that he was unlikely to have been the keeper at Burderop, that he probably never lived at Hodson and that Helen may have created a fiction by transposing David and 'Granny' Uzzell from their home in Swindon to Hodson Bottom, and possibly also telescoped Uzzell and the Burderop keeper into a single character. Even if Edward and Helen Thomas did not stay at this cottage in 1897, they would almost inevitably have visited it as this time because of Edward's interest in its associations with Richard Jefferies, and they would undoubtedly have visited it in 1907 when Edward was researching his *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* (1909) and they both stayed little more than a mile away at Broome Manor Farm.

A check of the few Burderop papers in the Wiltshire record Office in Trowbridge threw no light on the matter, and neither the 1891 census nor the annual editions of the North Wilts Directory show an Uzzell at Hodson. My search of the 1891 census returns for many parishes in North Wiltshire, including Swindon and Chiseldon – Hodson is in Chiseldon parish, failed to discover David Uzzell. At this time Edward Haylock, the gamekeeper of Jefferies *The Gamekeeper at Home* who had lived at Hodson Cottage, was living at 21 High Street, Wroughton, presumably in retirement as he was then 70 and his wife Emma was 63. It is said that he had been dismissed from the Burderop keepership as a consequence of his rudeness. Alfred Williams wrote of his eccentricities in *Villages of the White Horse* (1917), and he certainly seems to have been a rather itinerant gamekeeper. He was born in Cambridgeshire in 1821. His five sons (at least three of them keepers) were born in Forfar, Scotland (1859), Marleybone (1861), Weston in Hampshire (1862 and 1864) and Woolston, Hampshire (1865).

The fact that his youngest son Joseph was born in Hampshire in 1865 suggests that he came to Burderop between that date and 1871 when he appears in the census for Chiseldon. It may be significant that none of his sons succeeded him at Burderop, in spite of the fact that the 1881 census lists three of them (Edward, Samuel and Edwin) as under keepers to the Burderop estate. In *The Gamekeeper at Home* Jefferies recorded that the gamekeeper's son was his assistant, and the other sons were employed about the place, which is consistent with Haylock's three sons being listed as keepers in the 1881 census.

In 1881 the head keeper to the Burderop estate was F. E. Fripp (information from Mrs Sheila Povey of Swindon), and in the 1891 census the gamekeeper was John Walters, a single man aged 34 living at 'Hodson Park Wood Keeper's Lodge' From 1893 to at least 1897 the North Wilts Directories list the keeper as John Thomas Staniforth. In 1901 he had been superseded by Thomas Harrod, and in 1902 John Jones took over as keeper and at his death his son R. Jones, who had been his father's under keeper, succeeded to the Burderop keepership in December 1931. He apparently remained as keeper for almost 60 years until his death in 1987. His widow Hilda Jones was still alive in March 1995.

The directories do not reveal the location of David Uzzell in the 1890s, but they do list his three sons, the 'Bill and Tom and Charley' of Edward Thomas's letter to 'Dad' Uzzell dated 22nd December 1910 – living in Swindon. William Uzzell was in 1898 at 31 Queen Street and in 1906-10 at 38 Haydon Street, Thomas Uzzell was in 1897-98 at 23 Turner Street, in 1901 at 15 Cambria Bridge Road, and from 1906-10 at 6 Morley Street. Charles Uzzell was in 1906 at 16 Byron Street, in 1910 at 130 Chapel Street and in 1917 at 6 Cambria Houses. David Uzzell himself appears at 6 St. John Terrace where he was still living when he died in 1919. We know from the autobiographical *The Childhood of Edward Thomas* that David Uzzell 'lived with his wife under the roof of a son' and that the middle son with whom he lived was probably Tom who at the time of the 'tiny honeymoon' was at 23 Turner Street in Swindon. When he was at Oxford in 1897, soon after the honeymoon, Thomas wrote to 'Dad' Uzzell a letter in which he speculates about his patron saint and says 'I forgot it was St. John'. Thomas generally wrote mildly humorous letters to his old friend and I suspect that this reference to 'St. John' is a pun on 'John Street Terrace'. If this is so, David Uzzell was already living there in 1897, the year following the honeymoon described by Helen in *As it Was* in 1926.

There is a possibility that David Uzzell was an underkeeper occupying the keeper's cottage at Hodson because for some reason the head keeper did not require it, but this seems unlikely. Uzzell does seem to have had some connection with Burderop because in an early letter from Oxford Thomas wrote to 'Dad' referring to the time when they were 'out all night like we did at Burderop'. In his *A Diary in English fields and Woods* for 1895 (published in *The Woodland Life* 1897) Edward Thomas refers in

the entry 31 May to the keepers of 'Burderop on the hill' and then described 'the low dormer-windowed cottage of Richard Jefferies' gamekeeper'.

In a letter dated 23rd August 1992 Edward and Helen's younger daughter Myfanwy, writing of the stay at Hodson Cottage, told me that, 'from something Mother once said, it was a fictional licence', and she recalled that when she visited Hodson Cottage in 1967 shortly after her mother's death she saw the book containing the gamekeeper's records and that there was no mention of David Uzzell in that book, which subsequently seems to have been mislaid. It may also be significant that Professor R. G. Thomas (the accepted authority on Edward Thomas who talked a great deal with Helen Thomas) practically ignored the alleged Hodson honeymoon in his definitive biography *Edward Thomas: A Portrait* (1985) except for a reference to 'Helen's own warm-hearted account, although in his Biographical Table to his *Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley* (1968) Professor Thomas had listed under September 1896 'ET and Helen spent a honeymoon at Swindon and put up in the cottage of his old gamekeeper friend' (*As it Was* p. 43).

The alternative possibilities seem to be that either Helen's account was a fiction to romanticise their honeymoon and that they actually stayed with the Uzzells in Swindon (either at 23 Turner Street or 6 St. John's Terrace), or that they stayed at Hodson Cottage with keeper Staniforth and Helen telescoped the characters of the keeper and David Uzzell into a single person living at Hodson. Helen would have known the cottage from visiting it with Edward in 1909 when he was in Wiltshire researching his biography of Richard Jefferies.

From his letters to David Uzzell, Edward Thomas seems to have known the middle son Tom better than Bill or Charley, and this familiarity may have arisen from staying with him at 23 Turner Street in 1896. The mystery may not be resolved until the 1901 census returns become available in 2001. These may reveal David Uzzell living in Swindon rather than at Hodson, either at 6 St. John Terrace or at the home of his son who was by then living at 15 Cambria Bridge Road only a short distance from the cottage in Cambria Place (now The Lotus Chinese restaurant at 171 Faringdon Road, but then 19 Cambria Place) where Edward Thomas used to spend his boyhood holidays with Grannie Thomas and met David Uzzell fishing the nearby Wilts and Berks Canal (now destroyed over this stretch) near the present Brunel Shopping Centre.

Mrs Frances Gay, for long secretary of the Richard Jefferies Society, researched this subject many years ago also came to this conclusion that it was unlikely that David Uzzell had ever lived at Hodson. In a letter to Andrew Rossabi Professor W. J. Keith – who wrote a biography of Jefferies – mentions an extensive correspondence he had with the late Mrs Gay which led him to conclude that he would take a great deal of convincing that David Uzzell was ever at Hodson.

Notes: All the streets mentioned above were in New Swindon.
Queen Street is south of Fleet Street.
Haydon Street is south of Station Road, near the station.
Turner Street is north of Westcott Place, off Manor Road.
Cambria Bridge Road runs south from Faringdon Road.
Morley Street lies between Commercial Road and Regent Street.
Byron Street was on the site of The College at Regent Circus.
Chapel Street is east of Cricklade Street at Gorse Hill, and
John Street was south of Fleet Street, near Fleming Way.

Two Letters from Edward Thomas to David 'Dad' Uzzell

The following two letters are published by permission of the Edward Thomas Estate.

[To:] Mr. David Uzzell,
6 St John Street Terrace,
John Street,
New Swindon,
Wiltshire

61, Shelgate Road,
Battersea Rise,
London, S.W.
25.IV.97

My Dear Dad,

When I got home I found that I had very few books left, very much to my surprise, but if these I send are of any use, I am glad to let you have them.

Later on, I will try to send you my flats and a jack line. I think you will find here a few of the very small bait hooks you like, also a fly.

My book will very likely be out next month and I really will make sure of letting you have a copy. Your name is not mentioned in it, but I have referred to you, so that you will know whom I mean.

I hope you are well, in these cold east winds. The chestnuts are almost in blossom here now, so we don't suffer much. Give my kindest regards to all in your house.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Edward Thomas.

This second letter is undated. However Thomas lived at this address from 1897 to 1898 when he was studying at Lincoln College, Oxford. This fact is now commemorated with a plaque placed by the Fellowship.

113 Cowley Road,

Oxford.

My dear Dad,

I have been wanting to write to you for a long time, but I had forgotten the name of your patron saint! Certainly it was not St. Thomas, for he looked after you so badly. I forgot it was St. John. I wonder do you know much about St. John in the New Testament? I expect not. You army people prefer the army gazette and the tambourines and collecting cards to the Bible, I think.

How has the world been treating you? Anyhow, the weather has been kind enough, except that it has been very rainy. I was so sorry not to be at Swindon this year at the time when the cuckoo and the swallow come, and when the 'goosey-ganders' and 'water babbles' come out in the fields along the canal. And Yarn Hob – Geb Robert that is – do you remember it? A little flower, something like ragged robin, with hairy leaves that smell curiously. As it happened, my father was down at Swindon instead of me, so I have to wait till July, I expect; but then I very much hope to have a few weeks at Swindon, and we will have some fine times, 'won't us'? Shall we go out all night, like we did at Burderop that time when we heard the nightjar, and shall we see the sun rise? Are you game for this? I don't suppose care is turning your hair any whiter. I doubt it could be whiter if it tried. I am wondering if you have very much news for me; if you have, or even if you have not, send it to me; for I want to hear from you. Have you at last got a real, respectable little grandchild, and is it a boy? It ought to be a proper kid, considering his handsome, good-natured mother, and Tom with his good looks and equally good temper. I wonder will the youngster turn out to be a great painter, greater than Tom. Give my best wishes to the old lade and all the boys, and accept my best wishes for yourself from

Yours affectionately,

P. E. Thomas

This final letter has been published by the Fellowship twice before, in Newsletters 31 – 1994 and 54 – 2005 but it seemed appropriate to include it here to complete the sequence. Thanks are due to David Rice, the great grandson of David Uzzell, for permission to publish the letter

Letter from David 'Dad' Uzzell to Helen Thomas May 5th 1917

Swindon.
Wilts
May 5th, 1917.

I heard of dear Edwin's Death I saw it in the sketch so I went to rubing George (Rubin George, editor of Swindon Advertiser [see ETF Newsletter No. …] one of the soitety that he belonged to he made inquirys for me and found that it was rite it was a blow to me and my famley we all liked him we was cut up as bad as if it had been one of our hown boys Mr George and some of is friends put it in the Swindon advertiser it is very nice if you would like it I will send it to you if you get this letter let me know if you would like it. The sorrow of it made us very sorry Bill my eldest son said he could not work it upset him so. I haven't got over it yet and Mrs Uzzell she is sorrey because he was so kind to me. Did he ever tell you of one of our rambls When we came to a hous in the country to have a cup of tea and the fowl came into the room and went into the cubord and laid an egg in the cuberd and Edwin had it for his tea laid while you wait. How is the dear children taking it give my love to them and tell them to be good to mother and help her as much as they can and God will Bless them all I should like to hear from you and the son if you will let me know anything about him was he buried out in France bless him I told him in my last leter if we did not meet on herth I hope to meet him in heaven now you cher up there is a good woman according to nature I shall be the first to go I am going to try hard to go how is your son getting on he must think that his Father died for his King and Country to help save we Old People and Wimen and Children. He was a hero but some body had to be heros for us. now I must conclude with Love and respect to you all from David Uzzell God Bless you all rite soon pleas.

******

BOOK REVIEWS

The Nature of Modernism – Ecocritical Approaches to the Poetry of Edward Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and Charlotte Mew by Elizabeth Black (Routledge 2019 – 232 pages)

Elizabeth Black, a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, will be familiar to many Fellowship members from her talk on Edward Thomas and mental health in the Digital Festival last year. This review is something of a digest: some readers may be less familiar with at least two of the authors and perhaps with the concept of Ecocriticism so I have tried to convey the substance of the book. Footnotes and a bibliography will take interested readers further.

The Nature of Modernism – the title's double meaning escaped me at first – does concern itself with nature, the natural world, and with Modernism. The central argument is that critical approaches to Modernist writers, of both prose and poetry, have overlooked their interest in and anxiety about the environment and the human and non-human relationship. She argues that an ecocritical approach would be relevant and rewarding. Early chapters provide a framework to clarify both Modernism and Ecocritical theory and practice in an accessible way. There is nothing too esoteric or specialist for a lay reader.

Modernism, Black argues, has broadened in attention from the High Modernism we associate with Eliot and Pound, but the focus on the urban and anthropocentric remains - cosmopolitan, international, abstract, complex and experimental. With the expansion into alternatives and marginalised areas she argues for a look at responses to place at the turn of the 20th Century, when a crisis of awareness at the disconnection from nature and the land can be found in the literature. The 1st World War was an impetus for change from the old ways while modernity – noise, pace, the growth of suburbs – had created a kind of pull-push attitude towards the urban, a questioning of how human beings fitted in the modern world. In literature new forms- fragmentation, multiple voices, collapsed time frames, anti-realism – mirrored the times.

Ecocriticism, the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, sees modernity as destructive when it privileges human economic interests, and Black argues that many Modernist writers can be found to have reflected a quiet anxiety about this destruction. Acknowledging the complexity of the word 'Nature', British ecocritics have focussed attention on inter-relatedness within our man-made rural landscape. Literature has exposed false representation of country working conditions (I thought of Hardy's Tess and the threshing machine) and shown the power structures in the social order. But Ecocriticism has extended beyond the rural to look at nature writing in all texts and all places, finding a link between creativity and place and showing that Modernist writers were aware of the fragility of place. Certainly some of the 'men of 1914' had sought to edit out nature from writing as decadent and feminine, but by changing the emphasis from

the flowery 'idyllic' and unreal (as in much Georgian poetry) nature in writing adapted and survived. The theme of human response to nature and place especially, conveyed in new forms and language, would bring new insights.

The main section of the book considers the work of Eliot, Thomas, Mew and Sitwell, ordering them in relation to how large a space is devoted to each with Eliot's The Waste Land and The Four Quartets having the lion's share. The Edward Thomas chapter is subtitled 'The Path to Ecological Modernism' and its argument is that as Thomas's content and thought was modern while his forms were traditional, if pared down and direct, his poetry forms a bridge between Georgian and Modernism. Black acknowledges his linguistic originality, as in the question form and the expression of uncertainty, but mainly focuses on the themes of change and disruption including warfare. Home and homelessness, restlessness, alienation from self and community are exemplified in many poems, Home (2) as one such. She cites David Gervais's comment that the poems are 'vehicles for exploration, not decoration'. Black recognises that Thomas, having cut away from rhetoric in prose, was developing his own ideas and language: 'Words' 'The Word' 'The Unknown Bird' all concern language and the human/nonhuman identity. Identity, slippage and memory as in 'Old Man', encounters with countrymen and their disappearance, the need for close contact with the natural world, threats to its integrity and sometimes the extreme alienation of poems like 'Rain' – these are all themes that Thomas's readers know well and which ecocritics now find illuminating and essentially 'Modernist.'

Black concludes the chapter by considering Edward Thomas and our present epoch, the Anthropocene, recognising Thomas's ability to see the long view of human history, as in 'February Afternoon.' While writing about war there is a correlation with today's anxieties that several critics, including Longley, have found, seeing a foreboding of the current crises in the environment.

Turning to T.S.Eliot was a daunting task for me. I had taken on board the comfortable belief that Eliot and Pound were (unfortunate?) departures from the true English line from Marvell and Hardy through Thomas, Hughes to Larkin, and not for me. Although I enjoyed 'Prufrock' I had never read the 'Four Quartets' and barely looked at 'The Waste Land.' I hoped that Black's focus on the 'green' aspects of both would elucidate them in an accessible and interesting manner and I think it certainly helped, especially with 'The Waste Land.' The title itself means that this will be relevant to ecocritics. Black argues that Eliot's work modernised nature writing and made it relevant for today and that he had a clear preoccupation with environmental issues, human intervention and place, deepened by anthropology and psychological and spiritual insights.

'The Waste Land', in its urban setting, explores the spiritual and physical consequences on human beings of dissociation from nature and from tradition and community. Black claims that the over-emphasis on the symbolic has taken away from the reality of locations that Eliot made plain.

Ecocritics favour the material as much as the symbolic in what is referred to as the 'material turn': landscape is of central importance in the poems while also standing for more than itself.

Eliot's prose writing, I learned, was explicit in predicting environmental damage- he had experienced the Dust Bowl and other crises and wrote 'My poetry shows traces of every environment in which I have lived.' There was in fact drought in England as he wrote. A short biographical section illustrates the complexity of Eliot's relationship to London which reminded me of Thomas. (I did take exception to his dismissal of Oxford as 'very pretty but I don't like to be dead'!). London was at first the place to be, diverse, historic, occasionally beautiful, and he remained there all his life but later saw it as 'a sordid, chaotic, barren hell': the Thames pollution, the alienation of the people, the machine age all amounted to moral, spiritual and actual degradation.

Black addresses past critical writing on Eliot in ecocritical terms including Leavis and Eagleton and explains the intriguing mythological background to 'The Waste Land'. Moving on to 'The Four Quartets' I expected a greater challenge but, while not pretending fully to understand the poems – who does? - I found Black's exposition of their complexities, together with listening to Eliot's readings, rewarding. The four locations that were personally 'significant soil' to Eliot ground the poems with their beauty and meaning and root them in a way that 'often eclipses the larger philosophical and theological themes…. The journeys are an act of rediscovery and re-enchantment with nature which result in a fresh vision of place:

"the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time."' I am still reading 'The Four Quartets' and do admit to being less than convinced by her emphasis in this great poem.

Black's Edith Sitwell is a misunderstood and neglected writer, in part due to her eccentric appearance and upper-class image, elements that distracted from her serious experimentation. More recently she has been unpopular with feminist critics as antagonistic to much of women's writing especially what she saw as 'confessional'. Black argues that her poems are utterly original, following science, patterns in nature, trying to reproduce and communicate sensory experience in nature and yet reworking traditional folk and nursery tales. Many show how social forces break the bond between man and nature. The YouTube recording of 'Façade' is worth listening to gain the idea. Later Sitwell moved from experimental sound to explore mood and emotion as an outsider – 'I have always walked alone' though seeing 'all living beings, animals and plants' as brothers. Later still she despaired at the threat of nuclear war and her world held no possibility of redemption. Through it all Black finds nature heightened into unusual, unconventional imagery, using nature as a spur to imagination.

Charlotte Mew was a revelation to me, and I understand that she has emerged from neglect to regain some of the respect that was hers initially, admired by Hardy, Woolf, Harold Monro, Walter de la Mare and Pound. Her focus is on human relations with nature from the point of view of the

marginalised and oppressed, an alternative to the Modernist theme of alienation but connected to it. Another Londoner, Mew saw good in the city – anonymity that was protective, colourfulness, some liberality – and sometimes fear, restriction and oppression in the country. 'The Farmer's Bride' is very well worth looking up for its sympathy with the 'female otherness' and with the male, in their mutual incomprehension. Trees were significant to her, and she mourns their execution as in 'The Trees are Down'.

Black explains an ecofeminist perspective in which the female may be seen as 'naturally' closer to nature, a positive, but thus perhaps open to exploitation and domination by an unsympathetic community. Mew does not restrict herself to female victims as 'Ken' another outsider, gentle and innocent yet persecuted, illustrates. Internment, being indoors equating to imprisonment as in the 'Farmer's Bride' is a painful theme. In other poems – 'The Quiet House' and 'The Fête' – there is a strong sense of trauma, fear and loss and with them an altered perception of the natural world.

Mew's war poems are particularly interesting to Thomas readers- like him perceiving war and its consequences from home, protesting against violence and recording signs on the landscape. Her moving poem 'The Cenotaph' is a woman's account of private grief, with humble tributes brought from home. Tim Kendall has noted the 'coincidence of concerns' shared between Mew and Edward Thomas. The draw of death is certainly one of those shared concerns, and the power of beauty in nature to resist that draw another, though she eventually succumbed when in a nursing home with a view of 'only bricks where no sun came.' {Mew is the subject of a new biography, 'This Rare Spirit', by Julia Copus. Faber, April 2021}. Surprisingly, Thomas does not appear to have reviewed Mew's work. I did check with Richard Emeny who recalled a letter, possibly to Bottomley, saying that he liked her work. Perhaps a reader might know that letter.

Black concludes the book with re-emphasising the relevance of ecological thinking both in the past, the early 20th century, and in our present day. 'The poets in this book revitalised poetic representations of nature in order to reaffirm its continuing importance to modern society and encourage a sense of responsibility that could challenge environmentally destructive aspects of modernity.' Her argument is mainly persuasive and thorough and well worth reading.

Margaret Keeping

******

Haunted by Christ: Modern Writers and the Struggle for Faith by Richard Harries – Chapter 5 on Edward Thomas (SPCK 2018)

In *Haunted by Christ*: *Modern Writers and the Struggle for Faith*, Richard Harries explores the conflict between faith and doubt in twenty nineteenth and twentieth-century writers.[1] In chapter 5,

"Edward Thomas: The elusive call," he discusses Thomas as "a link between the high seriousness of Victorians about religion and a world apparently at ease with secularism". Thomas, he argues, straddles Romantic yearning and Modernist skepticism, a position that is consistent with what Robert Frost referred to as Thomas's indecisiveness.

In considering the dialectic of yearning and skepticism in Thomas, Harries emphasizes the perception of readers that in his best poems Thomas seems to be in touch with something just out of reach, something he cannot even name. In poems such as "The Glory," Thomas suggests that "the glory of the beauty of the morning" tempts him to reach for something "sweeter than love." The last line – "I cannot bite the day to the core" – concedes the impossibility of tasting that sweetness, of returning to Eden through what Eliot in *Little Gidding* refers to as the "unknown, remembered gate."

Thomas's reach for transcendence, which Harries refers to as his "elusive call," is inseparable from his love for nature in all its seasons and moods, especially his love for birds. The main vehicle for this "elusive call" is birdsong, the sensitivity to which is one of the hallmarks of Thomas's poetry. One thinks of the blackbird in "Adlestrop" whose song evokes the music of all the birds in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, or the song of the "The Unknown Bird," which is compared to a cock crowing "past the edge of the world, / As if the bird or I were in a dream." Years later, when Thomas remembers that sound, he becomes as "Light as that bird wandering beyond my shore." On the other hand, in poems such as "February Afternoon," birds are associated with skepticism. The black rooks and white gulls following the plough are symbols of unending cycles of time and pain while "God still sits aloft in the array . . . stone-deaf and stone-blind."

Harries anchors Thomas's restlessness both in the spiritual crisis of his age and in the circumstances of his personal life, including his marriage, his poverty, and his preoccupation with death. One of the issues he ponders is whether the "elusive call" is related to certain periods or is part of the human condition. In certain poems, Thomas's loneliness seems to go beyond the absence of human beings to the absence of God in the early part of the century, to a milieu in which belief was not a serious option for the intellectual avant-garde. On the other hand, some of the poet's younger contemporaries responded to secularism by returning to faith. Harries compares Thomas's mixed response to the call of the numinous to that of writers whose yearning was eventually alleviated by faith: C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and R. S. Thomas. These writers felt that their tantalizing experience with natural and human beauty was both rooted in and fulfilled by divine beauty. What in Edward Thomas was a nameless sense of dissatisfaction was in these writers accepted and integrated into a more comprehensive understanding of themselves, their neighbors, and God. "One of the basic themes of Christian teaching [is] that we will continue to have unsatisfied longings until we focus them on God, when they become transmuted into another kind of longing" (60). In the prayer of Augustine, "our hearts

are restless until they rest in thee." In "The Pulley," George Herbert argues that restlessness is a gift, part of God's plan to draw us to himself. Although tending toward this orthodox position, Harries equivocates, leaving unexplained the mystery of unsatisfied human longings.

[1] Richard Harries. *Haunted by Christ: Modern Writers and the Struggle for Faith*. London: SPCK, 2018 (paperback, 2019). xvi+233 pp. Chapter 5: pp. 47-60.

Jewel Spears Brooker

******

John Nash – The Landscape of Love and Solace by Andy Friend (Author) and David Dimbleby (Foreword) (Thames and Hudson Ltd 2020 – 352 pages)

In general, critics have given more time to Paul than to John Nash and have regarded Paul as a more significant artist. This book aims to redress the balance. His work was certainly different from John's, and became ever more so, but in the early days just before the First World War, Paul gave John a considerable amount of help not only technically, but in ensuring he was introduced to recognised artists and people of influence including the ubiquitous Sir Edward Marsh who bought several of his paintings. This mixture of talent and introductions led to his being invited to be a member of the Cumberland Market Group, with which included well-known artists such as Robert Bevan Harold Gilman and Charles Ginner. He became someone to reckon with despite his age. To members of the Fellowship, and especially those who are familiar with John Nash's work, there are comparisons and similarities to be found between the two men.

Much has been written about the Nash brothers, Paul and John, especially Paul, that it must have been difficult for Andy Friend to set forth on a full length biography of the younger brother. Not only have there been books about them, but books about other people frequently refer to them: Tirzah Garwood and Ronald Blythe for instance both wrote charming and very different but delightful books. They appear in most works about twentieth century British artists. Consequently, much is already known about them and Andy Friend has bought together a treasure house of detailed information. If this makes the book sound like a potboiler, it is not; it is a thoroughly interesting and readable account of a man's life and, I am glad to say, is understated. In other worlds while Friend refers to the many extra marital affairs that John conducted, there is nothing salacious, melodramatic or pornographic in the text. The book is a pleasant, well written account of one of the most important British artists of the 20th century and can be recommended to anyone who wants to find out more about the man, his life and times.

John Nash was born in 1893 in Earls Court. His childhood was much disturbed, particularly by his mother's serious mental health problems, which ultimately led to her being confined to an asylum, though not before she had attacked him with a knife. Not surprisingly John and his two siblings, Paul and Barbara, stuck together, supporting each other when necessary. That aside, his life followed a largely conventional pattern for a son of a reasonably prosperous family. Nash was sent to Wellington College which he hated and from which he ran away. With its military background, Wellington was an unfortunate choice for a sensitive, quiet boy. He left it in 1911, a year after the death of his mother

Nash failed the Oxford entrance examination and took a job with the Middlesex and Bucks Advertiser, which taught him not only about journalism but about typefaces, cartoons, captions, and drawings, all of which were to prove useful in later life. At the same time, he took art classes in the Chelsea Polytechnic, where he met William Rothenstein, who was astonished by the drawing skills of the largely untaught youngster and recommended that he should attend the Slade. It was here that he met students who were to become friends and influences permanently. Noticeable among them was Dora Carrington with whom he fell deeply in love and Christine Kuhlenthal who later became his wife.

Despite continuing affairs with Mary Lloyd and Margie Agnell, both married, John and Christine, having negotiated what would now be called an open marriage, which had always been favoured by both of them, were married in 1919. Despite the inevitable strains brought on by affairs on both sides, the marriage was successful and lasting. The couple moved several times, living in the Chilterns and moving always into deeper country and spending the last 34 years of their lives on the Essex Suffolk border close to Constable's birthplace. Nash had cousins who were related to Constable in the area. Nash lived in and became an artist of the English countryside, not in its more dramatic appearance such as in the Lake District or the northern moorlands, but in its calm southern aspect- chalk downs and quiet rivers. There were annual vacations, prospected and arranged by Christine, to other areas, Wales being a favourite. These were working vacations, but it is the more intimate landscapes of south-east England that predominated.

This is not the place to provide a resume of Nash's career, which is already well-known: branching out into oils wood engraving (my favourite), lithography and book and magazine illustration made him well-known in different spheres. He was indeed prolific. He was elected to the Royal Academy and over many years became respected as a sort of grand old man of art, even if he found himself left behind by the growth of abstraction and modern art. His status became somewhat akin to that of the playwright Terence Rattigan, when the badly named kitchen sink school of drama arrived. In both cases the pendulum has swung back. Friend's book is lavish with the detail of his career and equally in its illustrations.

What may be of particular interest to Fellowship members are the similarities that can be drawn with Thomas. It is unlikely that Nash ever met him, but he was certainly aware of him and called him 'Paul's friend.' Like Paul, John was also a friend of Gordon Bottomley, close to both brothers and to Thomas of course. The similarities are sometimes striking. Both men felt short of money: the only period of Nash's adult life when he had a regular salary was when he was a war artist. The rest of his life he depended on original artwork, whether as illustration watercolours or whatever. He became so well-known. so prolific that it is difficult to see how he could have been seriously short of money after the first few years. Thomas by contrast had the poorly paid regular reviewing work for the Daily Chronicle, other reviewing work, as well as income from commissioned books. Again, after the first few years of work he was not as badly off as he believed. Both men however perceived that they were.

A more significant similarity is the two men's attitude to the country. After the First World War which affected Nash deeply and badly, the country for him clearly meant tranquillity and beauty. Thomas's attitude was similar but more realistic: his country is not idealised. Both men excluded humans from their vision and from their work- Nash almost entirely (except for portraits) and Thomas only slightly less so. There is a touch of sentimentality in Nash's often poetic landscapes, and he avoids the harshness of country life. Thus, when he produced the fine school poster showing children chasing escaping rabbits at harvest time, it appears to be little more than a playground game. Anyone who has witnessed or taken part in it will be aware of it as bloodthirsty serious business. It was killing, though killing for food. Thomas would not have baulked at the violence of the bloodletting. Despite rare lapses into sentiment, he saw things as they were.

Both men had occasional attacks of depressive illness, but Thomas did not suffer the tragedy of losing a son. William Nash fell out of the door of the family car and was so badly injured that he didn't survive. John and Christine's grief was prolonged and their marriage was badly affected. John found some relief in even greater volumes of work which was Thomas's partial answer to his own suffering.

Friend's book is a very readable detailed account of Nash's life. It has a quietness, which both Thomas and Nash would have appreciated, and it also describes the art world of the day- artists, and hangers-on in such a way as to illustrate the spirit of the times. Nash like Thomas was a quiet man, who hated art politics and art noise. As much as Thomas, he knew his flora and fauna, writing a short treatise about himself as artist and plantsman, while his plant engravings are for many his finest work. Thomas too might be described as a plantsman. This book does Nash justice and suggests that in many ways he was the painting equivalent of Thomas's verse.

Richard Emeny

******

Members might be interested in the following essay entitled Running the 'Household Poems': Edward Thomas and Money by Martin Brooks. It was published in the Cambridge Quarterly, Volume Fifty Number One, March 2021. If members would like to read the full article the CQ number can be obtained from Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP.

Abstract

This essay explores the ways in which the poet and essayist Edward Thomas represents money in his personal letters, in his prose writings about countryside, and in poems addressed to his family. Thomas was persistently anxious about his income and worried that he couldn't write the kind of book that would both appeal to his publishers and allow his own self- discovery. He understood this dilemma through his reading of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode'. Drawing on unpublished letters between Thomas and his wife, Helen, the essay reads Thomas's quartet of 'Household Poems' as an expression of his attitudes at once to money and to 'Dejection'.