

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES: 'THE BROCARD SEWELL COLLECTION'

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FATHER BROCARD SEWELL'S generous gift to the Society of his interesting collection of H.W. books has revealed several items hitherto unknown to us and, as was to have been expected, includes a few unique pieces.

Pride of place must probably go to an attractively bound set of Uncorrected Proofs of *Lucifer Before Sunrise*. The penultimate volume of *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* was dedicated to Fr Brocard Sewell and although neither these proofs, nor the finished copy of the novel which is also present in the collection, are actually inscribed to Fr Brocard by H.W. they remain the Dedication Copy, and as such are precious. Bound in before the title-page of this proof copy are some 24 printed pages, mostly of fly-titles and leaves bearing relevant quotations. Many of these have holograph corrections by H.W. - mostly of literals - and they all appear to have been printed up after the page-proofs were prepared.

There are other items connected with Fr Brocard's happy relationship with H.W. A copy of *In the Woods*, the 'fragment of autobiography' (later re-written and incorporated into *Lucifer Before Sunrise*) that H.W. allowed Fr Brocard to publish in a limited edition, the proceeds to go to *The Aylesford Review* which Fr Brocard edited until 1968. This copy bears a dust-wrapper in the second state (without the Thomas Bewick wood-engraving), and has a long note by Fr Brocard explaining that as insufficient copies of the wrapper were originally printed a second batch had to be ordered. The engraving was inexplicably omitted from these later wrappers,

Perhaps one of the most desirable (and equally one of the most difficult to track down) items in any Williamson collection is the special Henry Williamson Issue of *The Aylesford Review* (Winter 1957/58). Essays were contributed by W. Gore Allen, Malcolm Elwin, John Middleton Murry and the editor, plus an interesting piece by H.W. himself, "Some Notes on *The Flax of Dream & A Chronicle*". The copy in this collection is of great interest. It is bound in dark-blue cloth, printed lettering-label on the front paste-down end-paper bearing the following certificate: "THIS IS NUMBER ... ('3' written in ink) OF THREE BOUND COPIES. NUMBER 1 IS FOR HENRY WILLIAMSON: NUMBER 2 FOR MARGARET THOMSON: NUMBER 3 FOR THE CONVENTUAL LIBRARY, AYLESFORD PRIORY" (with a holograph certificate of release from the library). The facing fly-leaf bears a lengthy inscription in Fr Brocard's hand.

The collection boasts a really fine copy of I. Waveney Girvan's *A Bibliography and a Critical Survey of the Works of Henry Williamson* (The Alcuin Press, Chipping Campden, 1931. One of 420 copies), and where it reads on the title-page "Together with Authentic Bibliographical Annotations by Another Hand" H.W. has added 'i.e. Henry Williamson' in his distinctive script. This corroborates the fairly accepted theory that it was H.W. himself who was responsible for the interesting details (and often caustic remarks) following each collation.

We also found a copy of *Genius of Friendship: T.E. Lawrence*, the second impression of this memoir (of which there were just 1000 copies printed). The misspelt 'Shallonford' on the final page had been corrected in ink by H.W.

Fr Brocard's copy of the Francis Thompson Society re-issue of *The Hound of Heaven* (1967. One of 500 copies), is one of the few that H.W. signed. Hatchard's Bookshop in London was the scene of the ceremony that marked the publication of

this volume (with Lord Butler as chief V.I.P. if our memory serves). H.W. was also present, in his capacity of President of the Francis Thompson Society and quite out of the blue he elected to sign copies of the book. Alas, he stopped after signing about 24-30 of them.

We were particularly intrigued by a slim offprint of a lecture that H.W. read before the Royal Society of Literature in 1959: we have never come across this before. Indeed many of us will be familiar with the lecture itself, "Some Nature Writers and Civilisation", the Wedmore Memorial Lecture, which the Oxford University Press published, along with most of that year's crop of RSL lectures - as has been their habit now for many years - in *Essays by Divers Hands*, Vol. XXX, edited by N. Hardy Wallis (1960). Yet the offprint itself must be a most fugitive item. (1)-18 pages, either sewn or stapled into blue wrappers printed in black ("Reprinted from *Essays by Divers Hands* Volume XXX" etc.) and with H.W.'s presentation inscription, dated 16/9/60, to Fr Brocard. Obviously the lecturers were supplied with copies of these offprints, for presentation etc. We would be most interested to learn if anyone else has come across this offprint before.

Another rather obscure item in the collection is *A Fight Against Tithes* by George J. Gill, published posthumously from Haslemere in 1952, and edited by Donald and Mrs Sarah Shorey Gill. It contains an Epigraph written by H.W. ('Botesdale, June 1949') and in their foreword the editors "wish to thank Mr Henry Williamson for the unrestricted help he gave them in preparing this little volume for the press". (We bought a dozen or so copies of this volume from the family nearly ten years ago - in fact this copy is the one we sold to Fr Brocard - but now it seems to have completely disappeared).

Letters from a Soldier is less difficult to find, yet Fr Brocard's copy has attractions not normally to be expected. Walter Robson, Lance Corporal of the 1st Battalion, the Queen's Royal West Kent Regiment, and stretcher-bearer, died during World War II. These letters home to his wife were edited by H.W. who contributed a short introduction. Fr Brocard has signed this copy, as has H.W. and Robson's widow.

There are one or two periodicals in the collection that deserve a particular mention. Firstly an issue of *The Adelphi* which H.W. edited for a short period towards the end of the forties. The issue in question is that for January-March 1949, and it contains an editorial "Words on the West Wind" and also his "Notes of a 'Prentice Hand'". Other contributions are by Charles Causley, James Farrar and Helen and Ann Thomas. Bound in with this are the relevant few pages from "The New Saxon Pamphlets" (1944), a magazine edited by John Atkins and containing in this issue Malcolm Elwin's essay "Henry Williamson, Novelist and Prophet of Reconstruction".

The Aylesford Review died in 1968, but two years later Fr Brocard was doing his best to bring it back to life, albeit from several thousand miles away. His first issue of *The Antiginish Review* (St Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Spring 1970) contains "AN Affirmation" by H.W. with an introductory note by the editor. (The issue also prints poems by Frances Horovitz and Sylvia Bruce.)

We finish on a faintly absurd note with *Salar, historien om en laks* (Asmodts Forlag, Kobenhavn, 1956). Indeed yes, a Danish translation of *Salar*, and with the Tunncliffe vignettes! Bound rather unpleasantly in limp 'desk-diary' mock-leather, this particular copy has the saving grace of an inscription from the Danish publisher and a subsequent presentation inscription from H.W. to Fr Brocard.

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Over the years we have come across other weird and wonderful translations of H.W.'s books: *Tarka der Otter*; *Tarkas Jugendzeit, eine Ottergeschichte*; *Tarka la Loutre*; *Der Fluss vor Meinen Haus*; *Salar il Salmone* and so on. (H.W. tells us, surely, of a German *Flax of Dream* with the title *Willie Maddison*?). We should be delighted to learn of other translations or piracies of H.W.'s books that you may have come across.