

## Editorial

SQUIRRELS LANE - as we called it - ran from the end of our road to the main road a hundred yards away. It was unmade and very bumpy, and down one side of it stood trees with yellow numbers on them. Something to do with the war, I always thought, but I never knew quite what. They were just one of those reminders of my unremembered war that had ended ten years before, like rationing and bomb-sites and the little holes in our dining-room door where the darts had missed the board during our house's requisition by the Army. Among those numbered trees my friend and I hunted squirrels with our catapults. We never hit any, as far as I remember, but the stalking was fun. Our catapults were wonderfully made from quarter-inch square-section rubber carefully whipped to painstakingly chosen Ys cut from trees, and lashed to slings made of oiled leather. My friend Christopher *knew* about catapults.

My musings have begun because I have taken up *The Flax of Dream* again. My boyhood is there, not so much because I did many of the things that Willie Maddison and Jack Temperley did, but because boyhood's essence is so unerringly captured. The feelings of inadequacy; the awareness of beauty and the immaturity to express it; the irresistible urge to be naughty; the necessity of friendship; the awkward, convoluted relationships with adults; and many, many times I have laid down a volume of *The Flax* or the *Chronicle* to say to myself That's how it is, in wonder and gratitude that Henry got it so precisely. He has helped to make my undistinguished past, and my presence in The Scheme of Things, important to me in a way no other writer has done, and it is for that, principally, that I admire his work so much.

Which is why a walk round the lanes of Georgeham or the streets of Brockley or the fields of Stiffkey are so important. One's coming to grips with the human condition is sharpened, by visiting and the companionship of like-minded people. So it was at the Norfolk Farm in May, where we wandered over the fields on a wonderfully hot afternoon, led by Douglas Jordan, one-time worker on Henry's farm. One or two changes were afoot. "A very desirable residence," I said to Brian Fullagar in the shell of the old granary where building work was going on, not so desirable in those unbelievably bleak and hard-working days of the war.

It was a good weekend, with much conviviality. There was a fine buffet on the Saturday evening, and we were shown David Cobham's film of Tarka, which was followed by a lively question and discussion session. Conversation flowed for an hour or two, made awkward only marginally by the decent beer being across the road. Once again I enjoyed the clear morning light of Blakeney harbour; and there was still time to hear most of Stephen Clarke's fascinating talk on Henry's bibliography.

A roving editorial, this; but I am led now to record, sadly, that Stephen Clarke and Peter Rothwell have decided they must give up their work on the Editorial Committee. Two hard blows: I have valued their help and criticism and encouragement enormously since the *Journal* was launched, and the Society has benefited greatly from the expertise they have offered. I thank them both - personally, and on behalf of the Society.

W.H.