

## CHOOSING THE FIRST ELEVEN

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WHILST WATCHING THE RAIN fall from the comfort of the pavilion most cricketers have enjoyed the pleasant pastime of selecting the best M.C.C. side, or perhaps the best World team of all time. Arguments are thus stimulated about the respective abilities of different cricketers and great fun can be had, particularly when pressing for the inclusion of one's own favourite star.

This game was played at a more intellectual level in order to pass the many hours I spent at sea when travelling as a National Serviceman to Japan in 1951. My friends and I went on to choose the best eleven from the World's Composers, Artists, and Writers, and we argued well into the night before deciding upon the final selection. Beethoven always came first, but should Bach precede Handel? Who could accurately place Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci in the same league as Picasso or Van Gogh? Obviously the arguments were never really resolved, and so I was amused when given a copy of *Who Did What*, a widely read American publication which attempts to select the 5000 men and women *Who Have Shaped The World's Destiny*.

As with most other selections the interesting people are often those who are left out, and one wonders why. We read of Aneurin Bevan, Oswald Mosley, and Enoch Powell, but not of Rab Butler or Herbert Morrison, although each enjoyed great influence in his time. Kathleen Ferrier is included, but not Beniamino Gigli, Stanley Spencer but not Alfred Munnings, and, more amusingly, Brigitte Bardot and Marilyn Monroe but not Elizabeth Taylor. Our interest, however, is in literature, and more particularly in Henry Williamson, who would have been pleased to see so many of his friends included: Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence, of course, but also W.H. Hudson and T.E. Lawrence. Francis Thompson, Edward Thomas, and Siegfried Sassoon are remembered, but - sadly - not his beloved Jefferies. Henri Barbusse, although rarely surpassed as a great was writer, is not included, nor are Frederic Manning, R.H. Mottram or H.E. Bates. Henry Williamson, however, is recorded as an English Novelist and Nature Writer, whose most famous works are *Tarka the Otter* and *Salar the Salmon*. Additionally, he is credited with having written many 'conventional' novels, a description hardly appropriate for his classic *The Patriot's Progress*.

Recently we were asked in our Journal, "Will the Real Literary Heritage Please Stand Up?", and I ask the question: "In which league would you place Henry Williamson, and for what achievements?" As the great nature writer he is undoubtedly assured of a place near the top of the second division, yet I am sure that future generations will place him amongst the great novelists of all time.