

## Secretary's Notes

### MEMBERS IN ACTION - SPREADING THE WORD

As recorded in our last issue, in February of this year Will Harris gave a public lecture, entitled "As The Sun Sees", at Sutton Library and Arts Centre. By all accounts a most excellent and scholarly presentation aimed first and foremost at the uninitiated. As Ronald Walker reported, it is just this sort of enterprise that can do so much to draw new readers to Williamson's works, and hopefully accrue more members to the Society. Will has agreed to repeat his paper, in slightly modified form, at a future Society meeting.

Also in February, I received a letter from the Secretary of a small but dedicated and serious group, "Friends of the Great War", based in Norfolk, asking if anyone within the Society could speak to them on Henry and his Great War Experiences, and with particular reference to the five sequent novels in *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* which cover this period. The name of founder member Bryan Wake of Norwich immediately came to mind, as an excellent and knowledgeable speaker. I sought Bryan's views and received his generous assent by return, and in mid-April Bryan gave his talk to, I feel sure, a most appreciative audience.

That literary feast the annual Aylesford Review Weekend was held over the first weekend of May at Spode House in Cheshire. For his lecture, *The Spirit of Place in Richard Jefferies and Henry Williamson*, Brian Fullagar received a warm and appreciative reception. Those who know Brian realise how deep is his knowledge and feeling for both these writers, and the affinity he feels for places that both knew well and wrote of with affection. Nonetheless it is a very difficult thing - as many of us know only too well - to transpose feelings into the reality of words that in their selection will convey the essence of the original thought, so that all may understand. That Brian achieved this before an erudite and largely professional audience is a splendid tribute to the devotion put into this paper. Hopefully he may be persuaded to give a repeat at one of our future meetings, or at least a transcript for publication.

### CO-OPTED TO THE COMMITTEE

Several members answered my call in the last issue for back-up or stand-by potential committee members. For sometime past my work as General Secretary has gradually escalated to a point where it has taken more time than I can reasonably spare and to give me a welcome respite, and with 'relief' suggestions from my co-committee members, two new offices have been created and filled by co-option from among new volunteers.

Minutes Secretary. June Emerson, known to many of us, and who gave a splendid musical presentation last May, will fulfil this office.

Events Secretary. Tim Morley will take on the task of organising our bi-annual social weekends and will plunge straight in with putting together proposals for the Spring Meeting of 1986, to be held in Bedfordshire. We hope this will prove to be a viable proposition.

Sincere thanks - especially from myself - go to our new members with the hope that they will enjoy their work in committee.

#### MUSICAL REFERENCES IN THE BOOKS

June Emerson wishes to make a comprehensive listing of all references to or about music that appear in the works of Henry Williamson. This will be quite a formidable task and June would be most grateful to any members prepared to assist her in this task by volunteering to read a specific work, (or works) and making the necessary notes. For details of her exact requirements would potential volunteers please contact June direct at Windmill Farm, Ampleforth, York. Tel. 04393 539.

#### BOOKS

##### RICHARD JEFFERIES

The two most significant 'revelations' in Henry's life - or so he tells us many times - were the Christmas Truce in the trenches in 1914, and the finding in a secondhand bookshop in Folkestone in 1919, of a copy of Jefferies *The Story of My Heart*, which he did not put down for at least an hour after taking it from the shelf. But this was no instant conversion; Henry as a boy had read most of Jefferies' works and had spent almost all his spare time communing with Nature amidst the countryside and wildlife of N.W.Kent. All that, however, had been put aside when the Great War came and was lost, he had thought forever, to that young war-weary soldier until that day in Folkestone, when the thread was rejoined, and thence remained unbroken for the rest of his life.

I will not labour the debt - or similarity in style - owed to Jefferies in Henry's early Essays, country works and novels (and which must have been at least in part the reason for the re-writing of those books once his own style had developed). The reader new to the early Williamson and to Jefferies may easily do this by reading the various new editions of both writers.

In turn the new - or occasional - reader of Jefferies may wish to learn more of the man and his writings and would probably be surprised to learn that the best biography appeared over seventy-five years ago.<sup>1</sup> However, just published is; Richard Jefferies: *A Modern Appraisal* by Edna Manning. (Gaby Goldscheider 29 Temple Road, Windsor, SL4 1HP. £4.95) 155pp; index. 12 ill. in sepia. Introduction by Cyril F. Wright Hon. Sec. of The Richard Jefferies Society.

In his introduction Cyril F. Wright says:

Miss Manning (Vice-President of the Richard Jefferies Society) ... hails Jefferies as a prophet who wrote, not only for his contemporaries, but for us as well. Rightly she has called her book *A Modern Appraisal*, inviting the profound reflection that nuclear power is the expression of Jefferies' "Life Force", and that solar energy is what Jefferies meant by his "Power of the Sun" ... This dedicated book will not only stimulate all those who love literature and social history and who feel a sense of oneness with nature; but it will arouse exciting concepts to challenge the modern mind.

#### TUNNICLIFFE AGAIN

In an earlier issue when reviewing *Tunncliffe's Countryside* (Ed. Ian Niall; Clive Holloway Books) a compendium of Tunncliffe's book illustrations, I noted that for many this would be the only occasion when they might see some of the work done for that scarcest of Tunncliffe's books, *Shorelands Summer Diary* (Collins, 1952). Now at last this long out of print book has been reprinted, and costs perhaps a little over one-tenth of a first edition copy. *Shorelands Summer Diary*, by C.F. Tunncliffe. (Clive Holloway Books: £12.95) Frontispiece, title-page vignette, 185 vignettted scraperboards. 16 full-page colour plates.

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1 *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work*. By Edward Thomas. (London: Hutchinson 1909). A later work is *Richard Jefferies: Man of the Fields* by Samuel J. Looker & Crichton Porteous. (London: Baker, 1965).

The most detailed critical study of Jefferies work is *Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study* by Prof. W.J. Keith (President of the Richard Jefferies Society) (London O.U.P. 1965).

As the title suggests the book covers one summer - from April to September - at *Shorelands* the house on the Cefni estuary at Malltraeth on Anglesey bought in 1947, and home for the remainder of his life. The book contains some of Tunnicliffe's finest bird art. The quality of the reproduction in the first edition was truly splendid and, although I have not yet been able to compare this reprint with an original, it seems to me that as with previous Tunnicliffe work he has reprinted, Clive Holloway has done an excellent job.

#### A CURIOSITY IN OUR LAND

*The Last Otter* by A.R. Lloyd. (Hamlyn Paperback: Arrow Books £1.95) Chapter head illustrations by Douglas Hall. "A haunting fable of marsh-land and river," is the sub-title given to this fictional story of the young dog otter, Lut, sole survivor on the river, and saved as a cub and again later from a pack of farm dogs by a runaway boy, who the otter grudgingly admits as friend.

J.H.

#### HENRY WILLIAMSON - NEW EDITIONS

Further titles in the Macdonald Library hardback edition:

*A Fox Under My Cloak*  
*A Test to Destruction*  
*The Innocent Moon*

*Power of the Dead* )  
*The Phoenix Generation* ) Published July 18, 1985  
*It was the Nightingale* )

*Tarka the Otter* - Webb and Bower - Sept.19 1985 - prob.£12.95

I have to hand the rough proofs of this new edition, to be called *The Illustrated Tarka the Otter*, and even in this form it is possible to see what a beautiful edition it is going to be. It is liberally illustrated with superb photographs by Simon McBride, of actual scenes that appear in the story. Richard and I are particularly pleased to see how Simon has caught the atmosphere for the 'Great Winter' chapter. Richard has written a new introduction. The publishers asked him to produce something that would appeal to the American market, so it is fairly light and chatty.

This introduction is illustrated with family photographs and pages from the manuscript. We feel that this lavish production fully complements the text, and will provide an edition that Henry would be very pleased with.

A.W.

MRS. MARGARET FARRAR

We are very sorry to have to report the death of Mrs. Farrar in June. Mrs. Farrar had been in poor health for some time. Sadly, she died before the publication of the new edition of her son James' book, *The Unreturning Spring* (delayed, we gather, until October) an event to which she was so greatly looking forward, but at least she knew it was in progress, and that must have made her very happy.

Will Harris writes:

Those members of the Society who attended the meeting in Devon last October may recall signing a card which was sent to Mrs. Farrar with our best wishes for a speedy recovery from her illness. It is sad that she never regained her health. She had been frail for several years and suffered from acute deafness. She was lonely, and her memories of James meant everything to her.

I shall never forget her delight at joining with my family for tea round a coal fire. "A real family tea", she said, "something I haven't enjoyed for years. And a whole cake! When did I last see a whole cake waiting to be sliced rather than just slices of different cakes on the same plate?" We tried to arrange another such occasion, but ill-health prevented her.

Margaret Farrar was a gentle and kindly lady, and I am honoured to have known her. Henry Williamson knew what extra-ordinary talent her son possessed, and she was always grateful for what Henry did in bringing James's talents before the public. She continually held his unfulfilled promise close to her heart.