

Chairman's Notes

It gives me great pleasure to write in this number of the Journal, not only because it is my first opportunity as incoming Chairman to address the Society at large, but also because 1987 is the Diamond Jubilee of the first publication of *Tarka the Otter* in 1927 - the event which led Henry Williamson to the Hawthornden Prize and early fame.

An Acknowledgement

I shall return to the latter topic shortly, but first I must place on record an acknowledgement of the debt we owe to John Glanfield, my predecessor in office. As the founder Chairman, his wise and energetic guidance of the Society's affairs behind the scenes was matched most admirably by the cheerful dignity, the calm eloquence and the masterly tact which he brought to public occasions. I believe his example must stand as a model, and on your behalf, I offer John our deepest gratitude for his hard work over the years. It is to be hoped that the business and domestic pressures which obliged him not to seek re-election will at least allow him regular and frequent attendance in the well-merited position of Honorary Life Member.

Committee Work

At this point, I must mention the very diverse and successful work undertaken by your Committee. I am extremely glad of their support, and I know that you will all understand how important are their individual tasks to the smooth running of the Society. I am delighted that the 'team' as constituted at the last Annual General Meeting is to remain intact for the foreseeable future, but there will be the inevitable occasion when a change must occur or extra help is needed.

To this end, I am keen that we should develop a second string of understudies. Deep in the Society there must be many who have particular talents or interests and who may feel able to assist. The smallest offer will be most welcome; if you can see your way clear, then either I or our General Secretary, John Homan, would be delighted to hear from you.

Now let me turn to another topic:

Staying in touch

It is apparently a well-established statistic that only about one sixth of the membership in a Society such as ours is active in the sense of attending meetings. This means that quite a large proportion never meet each other. Now this may be due to all manner of reasons: some are happy to remain at a distance lending their support through their subscriptions alone; others may be limited by geography, domestic circumstances or conflicting obligations and of course we are all aware that the pound sterling does not always stretch as far as we might wish.

I believe that we might go some way towards improving matters if members would be prepared, on an occasional or on a regular basis, to hold gatherings in their own local areas. An informal approach to fellow members, friends and acquaintances within a suitable radius - we all have a Society list - may prove to be just the answer. Small events such as suppers, lunches, picnics or outings held in private houses, pubs or wherever may not only allow members to be brought up to date, but may even assist our recruitment of new blood.

Of course, if notices were placed in the Journal, and if, perhaps, short accounts were produced for the following edition, the habit may well catch on!

Tarka

And so to our big year. As you will perhaps already know, we aim to arrange a larger programme around the Annual General Meeting at Georgeham, and included in the possibilities are the new Tarka Trail in the Two Rivers area, a reception at which there will be an exhibition of memorabilia and, if we can obtain the cooperation of publishers and others, a display of relevant books and other documents. The usual illustrated talks and traditional activities are of course included and as Journal No.14 (Autumn 1986) explains, there is to be a "Tarka Special" as Issue No.16 in Autumn 1987.

May I end by thanking you all for your support and by wishing you a happy and successful year.

HENRY'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATED IN THE WALLOPS!

Ten Wessex Williamsonites drank to Henry's memory on the eve of his 92nd birthday. The Five Bells at Nether Wallop dished up 'Boeuf en daube Bapaume' and 'Gateau Mont Kimmel' reinforced by oceans of wine. Coffee and stickies at Chateau Ox meant that everyone went home very late indeed. D*sm*nd Ff*rd* won the most acclaim for his owl disguise and nearly choked on the mousse.

(Reuter/UP1)

Tim Morley

As the young Henry often walked down Piccadilly after a party at the Cafe Royal he would have appreciated reading his name on a large poster in Hatchards window last Christmas.

The famous book shop were in fact quoting from Sir Michael Horden's introduction to "The Painted Stream" by Robin Armstrong. Sir Michael had suggested that this beautifully produced book on the life of a River Warden was "a splendid quite unputdownable book - one to place on the shelf with Arthur Ransome and Henry Williamson".

F.O.S.