

## Publicity Report for 1987

*Timothy Osborne*

The year since my last report has been a busy one and I am happy to say a successful one too. The 1987 AGM in North Devon was undoubtedly the most important meeting we have yet had, it being the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Tarka the Otter*. Here was my opportunity to really put us in the public eye. Normally speaking Press Releases are sent out accompanied by a sheaf of paper including details of the Society and the programme of the meeting. For the 'Tarka Weekend', as it came to be known, clearly more had to be done; after all, we had a lot going on including boat trips, eminent speakers, an exhibition, representation by the Devon County Council and the Vincent Wildlife Trust, not to mention a record number of the Williamson family attending. To make proper capital out of this in letter form seemed almost impossible so more persistent telephoning than usual was called for. Obvious as this may seem it is in fact practically quite difficult to make 20–30 calls from a small business with one line and then of course the person you need to speak to is out and when he or she rings back you are and so on! But it paid dividends in the end and the result was coverage in seven newspapers, two TV news films, and several mentions on local radio; and those are the ones I know about. The ITV programme was made on the boat trip and broadcast on that evening but I have not yet been able to track down a recording of this. For the excellence of the 7–8 minute film by the BBC the Society has Martin Tasker to thank. From a rather lukewarm beginning when I first spoke to him his interest increased dramatically to a point of real enthusiasm when I let him in to the Writing Hut and Richard put a 78 rpm record of Tristan and Isolde on the wind-up gramophone. To say the atmosphere was charged would be an understatement. The finished product includes some old footage of Henry walking on the Burrows, readings from *Tarka* and features the Tarka Exhibition held at the Putsborough Sands Hotel; an interview with Loetitia and Richard in the Writing Hut, a shot of Skirr Cottage, and ends on a suitably sad and reflective note with a close-up of Henry's slate headstone. For me it was an enjoyable day spent with the film crew with only one event to mar it. When filming in the Writing Hut, visiting members were asked if they could wait a moment until this was finished. One person was overheard saying to her companion, "Well really, they could have arranged this for some other time." It seems a pity that this slight inconvenience was so misunderstood; after all, such publicity can only benefit the Society and, more importantly, the memory of Henry Williamson himself. I hope that a video of the programme will be available at future meetings.

Caroline White of Tabb House, 7 Church Street, Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8BG, Tel. (0841) 532316, would be very grateful if contributors to *Henry Williamson, The Man, The Writings*, the symposium of essays edited by Brocard Sewell, would forward to her their changes of address, in order that she might from time to time forward their royalties.