

En Passant

F. G. Shepherd

GEORGEHAM — A LITERARY PILGRIMAGE

It is pleasing to note that the *Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to Great Britain & Ireland* includes Georgeham as a place of literary pilgrimage. The book records Henry Williamson's life in the village, especially during the early years when he was working on *Tarka* and *The Pathway*. It goes on to explain the importance of the writing hut and suggests that *Salar* and *The Chronicle* were written here. Sadly no mention is made of *Life in a Devon Village* which has proved so successful in the Country Classic series, and which so brilliantly recreates village life as it existed in the 1920s.

This omission is however corrected by A.G. Collings in a new guide, *Along the South West Way*, when he writes, 'Just over a mile inland is the village of Georgeham, to which Henry Williamson came in 1921 after three traumatic years in the trenches. Such an idiosyncratic writer was bound to find it difficult to gain acceptance in the close-knit community of a Devon village. However, Williamson succeeded to the extent that his fictionalised account of the village trying to adapt to the post-war world as recounted in *The Village Book* and *The Labouring Life* are in my view the best things he ever wrote.' The writer also explains Williamson's connection with Capstone Place at Ilfracombe.

A CHRONICLE CHARACTER

It is interesting to follow the subsequent careers of Henry's Chronicle characters especially where these can be clearly identified as in the case of Phillip's artist friend Channerson.

In *The Phoenix Generation* we note 'Channerson, whose paintings of the war had won him a fugacious fame — in that, the war forgotten, Channerson was considerably dated by fugacious critics and art dealers.' Later however in response to a question Phillip says — 'I think that your war pictures are already classics, "Channers".'

In real life the artist was Christopher Nevinson, a close friend whose work decorated Henry's writing hut and illustrated the back cover of his novel *A Test to Destruction*. He had been an official war artist and was elected to several important art societies, becoming an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1939. Only his early death at the age of 57 in 1946 prevented his elevation to R.A. His work has recently broken dramatic new ground at Christies where his painting 'Punts on the Thames at Henley' sold for £181,500, six times its estimate.

Well done Channers!

The theme for our AGM this autumn will centre on *THE FLAX OF DREAM*.

Where possible we would like to reflect this theme in the autumn issue of the *Journal*.

So contributions around this subject will be especially welcome.

N.B. Copy date is May 1st.

Please include a short biographical note whenever you send in material.