

Letters

I thought you might like the following snippet: I was amazed and delighted when recently reading Clive Dunn's autobiography *Permission to Speak*, 1986, to come across this passage (in 1928 Clive is a small boy in the sick room of his boarding school): 'tonsillitis . . . allowed me . . . a chance to read *The Water Babies* and what seemed a masterpiece of escapism — *Tarka the Otter*. On reflection, the books of Henry Williamson have become little harbours to run to when the weather got really rough.'

Peter Lewis
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Members may be interested to know that C. F. Tunncliffe's former house at Malltraeth can be stayed at(!).

I have holidayed at Malltraeth since 1984 and if any members with or without children want a quiet, unspoilt, uncommercialised, pre-war type sand-between-the-toes rest with exciting bird-life (on migration routes), then this is it — plus, of course, Owen Evans, butcher of Newborough, Welsh lamb and home-smoked bacon, a bottle of the Buchanan and a deck-ful of Roxy Music.

Myself, I stay at Beach Cottages since Bont Farm went on a long let. The views are the same as Shorelands and self-catering is less regimental — and cheaper.

Did anyone spot the clue in the *Guardian* crossword on August 6th — 25 across — 'Nature writer Beauclerk in relation to Conqueror?' (5,10) — some chap we know?

Following on from June Emerson's piece on Walter Wilkinson I am sure a number of members may have seen the 6-part series made by David Furnham Productions based on Wilkinson's first book *The Peep Show*.

Entitled 'The Puppet Man' it was first shown on Channel 4 in Spring '86 and

re-shown in the Autumn of that year. Whilst Roy Hudd is a little long in the tooth to play Wilkinson he did capture the innocence, the charm and the humour of the original.

The motorcycle incident (without the sidecar) occurred in the third episode 'Journey to Utopia' as did his first booking to perform at a local fête — a double booking, in fact — once from a committee member up a ladder painting his house as Wilkinson marched by with his mobile puppet show — the other from a grand lady who interrupted a show he was giving at Croyde Bay.

In the TV episode Furnham transported the second puppet show booking incident from Croyde to Georgeham and filmed directly outside H.W.'s Skirr Cottage and apparently Furnham didn't realise this — it was just a likely spot for filming.

The grand lady (and her brother) 'were the last of their line' — Chichesters?

The motorcycle used was a Norton(?) borrowed from the Combe Martin Motorcycle Museum. Anybody care to contact them to see if it was H.W.'s?

Arthur Green
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Very many thanks for your letter of 26th May and the good news it contained. I'll certainly write and let you know as soon as the books arrive. Surface mail normally takes about 3 months so the books should arrive just in time for the start of the 1988/89 academic year. The year officially begins on September 15th but teaching does not commence until around the middle of October so that allows a little leeway. [JH reports that he has heard that the books arrived on 22nd October.] I'll be letting the appropriate authorities know within the next few days that Henry Williamson's *Tarka the*

Otter will be the official set book for next year's Third Year BA(Hons) English British Literature class. As the number of students in that year has hovered around the 30 mark for several years, there should not be any difficulty in ensuring that — for the first time for a long time — every student has a copy of the set book.

Would you please convey my warmest thanks and the thanks of all the members of the Department to your President, Richard Williamson, and the members of the Williamson Society who have so generously responded to my appeal.

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The mystery quotation in Journal No. 18 is from *Love and the Loveless* page 156, chapter headed 'Messines Ridge'.

Quite apart from that, may I congratulate you upon your editorship of the Journal?

I always look forward to receiving it. My appreciation of Henry Williamson's work goes back to when I was a messenger boy for an art studio in London in 1948–51.

I always carried a book with me in those days — to pass the time on buses and underground trains. *The Beautiful Years* was the first HW book I read. I bought it in Penguin paperback and devoured it on the Inner Circle Line!

Since that time, over forty years, I have built up a creditable collection of HW works and other items.

I had an interesting correspondence with Arthur Witham until his death. I met him when I visited Shallowford in 1980. I also met George and Mary Heath at Torrington.

I think I'm the farthest flung member of the HW Soc. A minor distinction!

Don Donovan
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In Journal number 17 Dave Stokes asks if any readers know of other areas in Britain than the one near Georgeham that are called No Man's Land?

I seem to remember that there is a small area in Sussex that is so called. I write away from my books and cannot check this; but I believe this Sussex No Man's Land is mentioned in Hilaire Belloc's *The Four Men*. This book is subtitled 'A Farrago', and is an account of a walk through the county of Sussex by four men, each of whom seems to stand for a different aspect of the author's personality.

The book is one of Belloc's best; superior, to my mind, to *The Path to Rome*, and has recently been reprinted, with a preface by A. N. Wilson, in OUP paperbacks.

Brocard Sewell
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Attending an AGM as a self-invited observer reminded me of an old-boys' monastic retreat: one emerged exhausted by the hospitality and uplifted by the homilies. To all those who so warmly welcomed a visitor (now a fledged member) I would like to say thank you, as also for the patience shown by those members of the Society whom I later 'phoned for help and clarification.

Does any learned member know whether Henry Williamson ever referred to the Unknown Warrior, whose body was interred in Westminster Abbey on November 11th 1920? I am researching a work on this event and what led up to it, and would be deeply grateful for any information of any kind.

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