

Editorial

How modestly we have allowed the fact that the Henry Williamson Society has been in existence for ten whole years to slip past. This was possibly overtly inherent in the 'Whither the Society' debate at the Spring Meeting, but as far as I am aware no-one has proclaimed the ten year achievement as such.

The Inaugural Meeting was held in Barnstaple on the 3rd May 1980 and the first number of the Society's *Journal* was issued in July of that year. It is interesting to re-read it. In his 'Note' your President directs particular thanks to George and Mary Heath for 'their vision and action in bringing this Society into being'. Ten years on we must surely reiterate our gratitude ten thousand fold. Can any of us now imagine life without our Society?

Twenty people attended the Inaugural Meeting and became Founder Members. Eight of those people were elected to become Committee officers (plus Will Harris who became Editor of the *Journal* but whose name wasn't on the committee list at that stage), and a handful of those members have served continuously since that initial meeting; Mary Heath, who has just regretfully resigned from her post as Membership Secretary; our Vice-Chairman George Heath; Tim Osborne who organises publicity; Will himself who edited the first ten issues of the *Journal* and worked hard to get it established, and after a period of low profile, is now our Chairman; and, of course, our indefatigable Secretary John Homan, who quietly puts in hundreds of hours on the Society's behalf. I was co-opted as an ex-officio member on behalf of the Literary Estate, progressing to the Editorial Committee for Issue No. 9 and becoming Editor for issue No. 11.

The Society has already achieved much. Interest in the life and work of Henry Williamson is increasing. And this spring the Society took a big step forward in carrying out its stated aims by staging an exhibition at the Lynton Arts Festival. The decision to be involved in the Lynton Festival was taken at a committee meeting last November, and as it would not have been possible to present a professional looking display without spending money, a sum was made available. The task of staging it fell on me.

Because the Festival was concerned particularly with interpretation of Exmoor, I titled the exhibition 'Tarka's Creator — A Son of Exmoor'. Ten biographical panels gave an outline of the various phases of HW's life and were accompanied by about 50 photographs from the Literary Estate Archive. A further panel tells of the existence and work of the Society.

A copy of each book that HW wrote was displayed along with a short written précis so that those unfamiliar with his work could gain at least an impression of his tremendous output, and *Tarka* was given special treatment by displaying several different editions and some additional material.

Our audience at the Festival was not large but all who came in seemed very interested, impressed, and above all, amazed to discover that HW had written so many books.

Immediately on leaving the Festival venue, a visit was made to the Countryside Centre situated in Braunton Car Park. This splendid new venture for interpreting the surrounding area is housed in a building constructed from material from ruined lincays off the marshes. On enquiry about the possibility of future display the Manager suggested that we put it up there and then! So the biographical panels and a selection of the photographs were on display there from mid-May until early July, WHEN, by request of the Museum Services of North Devon, the total exhibition was transferred to the new Barnstaple Museum, refurbished from the old Atheneum Club, a most appropriate venue, where it can be seen until mid-October (hopefully over our AGM weekend).

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