

## Letters

June Emerson asked for comments to her letter in the March issue of the Journal. May I suggest that the writer should have ascertained for herself the facts before so heavily criticising a fellow member of the Society. A great deal of time, research and work went into the creation of these items and they most certainly cannot be termed as 'knick-knacks'. The authentic model of the Hut is complete in every detail and to correct scale, as anyone who has looked closely at them, will, I feel sure, confirm. The bust of Henry is not, in fact, sightless and this, along with the drawing of the three ages of Henry, is the work of an artist and sculptor of some repute who has recently held his own exhibition in a London gallery.

I understand that the intention was to donate any profit, from the (unsolicited) sale of these objects, to the Society's funds.

Regarding the remarks on the 'memorial' on Baggy Point. As I recall, this idea was just part of a general discussion, on many topics, during the late evening and was put forward by several members as a suggestion for some form of recognition and remembrance of Henry—possibly a block of local stone with an inscription—and to be sited somewhere (not specified) along the proposed 'Tarka Trail'.

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[June Emerson has written privately to John Theobald apologising for the apparent rudeness of her letter which was not intentional. Ed.]

I wonder if I may pass on a bit of history which reflects on the Devonian days of Henry Williamson?

I was born in 1916 at Eastbourne, Sussex. My father, Capt. W. Llewellyn-Amos, a professional photographer, was both in the RNAS and the Admiralty during the First World War. Some time after 'demob' in 1918 the family moved to Ilfracombe (myself and my brother aged two years older) and rented a flat over a hand-made Swiss chocolate shop called 'Fizzlers' (their family name) on the promenade. My father at that time

was entering the world of writing— chiefly fiction.

My father and Henry somehow got to know each other and Henry called on us from time to time. I used to listen from my bedroom's open door about Tarka and all sorts of interesting stories about the War and nature—especially rivers around the area.

Quite often Henry would arrive at the Wildersmouth Beach from his cottage at Georgeham with two children, very young boys with dark hair. Henry would throw stones into the sea—'skitting' smooth stones across the surface. Then my father, who hated beaches, would take my mother, brother and self to the parapet edge of the 'prom' and call down, always using the full 'Henry', who, with his great sense of fun always shouted back up 'Hullo, Bill!', knowing my father hated to be called by anything shorter than his full name of William. Very much on his dignity in public was my father and very conscious of his Admiralty rank of Captain.

It was on one of these occasions, I believe it was a celebration of Henry having a book accepted or published, that he presented my brother Ronald and I with a cricket bat each—sent down from Gunn & Moore's Cricket Emporium. The fact that I could hardly lift the bat did not bother him at all; his laughing comment was—'has to play cricket sometime—he'll grow'. My brother, being bigger and older, managed a swipe or two. I still have my bat to this day.

HW occasionally was permitted to buy my brother Ronald and myself those mouthwatering delicacies from Fizzlers. They excelled in nougat and all manner of chocolates and these were displayed on a tray supported by a carved wooden bear, which revolved to catch the eye.

Our family eventually left for London but I still return to Ilfracombe from time to time and stay at the Cliffe Hydro Hotel overlooking the harbour, where as a child I occasionally earned a 'tanner' holding a horse's head on a Sunday, for the carriages that arrived to take old ladies for a ride (about 1928).

I have always been an avid reader and fan of Henry's work.

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*I read with interest the Paul Reed article in the March 1990 issue of the Journal.*

*Thousands of us joined Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union movement for a variety of reasons. In my autobiography Action Replay (reviewed in an early issue of the Journal) I gave my own: the poverty and hunger which surrounded me in my youth in South Wales. Henry Williamson would have been attracted by Mosley's alternative to the shameful neglect of British agriculture by successive British governments.*

*Mosley's speeches were largely devoted to an exposition of his economic policies. They would conclude with an emotional preroration, but it is an insult to a man of Henry's intelligence to suggest that he joined Mosley because of his appeal to the comradeship of the trenches—and nothing else. (I could not follow Paul Reed's argument that Henry joined a fascist movement, but was not a fascist.)*

*The German question played little part in Mosley's writings and speeches until the British government's dangerously absurd guarantee to Poland in 1939. We opposed this and the war not because we were 'pro-German' (which we were not) but because we were pro-British and thought a declaration of war would prove a disaster. In my second book 'The Evil Good Men Do' I modestly suggest that we may have been*

*proved right. In opposing our government's decision to go to war we were following in such distinguished footsteps as those of William Pitt the Elder, Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, Cobden and Bright, Joseph Chamberlain, Gladstone, Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald.*

*The chairman of the Tribunal before which Mosley appeared agreed that he had been detained 'simply and solely' for advocating peace. The fact that some of us were detained (without any charge or trial) for longer periods (eleven months in my case) than Henry made us no more 'guilty' than he was, but was dependent upon the whims of our gaolers.*

*I am a member of the Henry Williamson Society as an admirer of Henry's works. I do not seek to introduce my politics, except in reply to articles such as those of Paul Reed. In another context I could well argue that anyone who supported the Conservative or Labour parties in the 'thirties must have been exceedingly 'naive' or 'an odd-ball'. It is of no service to Henry's memory to portray him as such. Attempts to explain away Henry's politics are becoming 'tiresome' (a favourite Diana Mosley word).*

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**STOP PRESS:**

HENRY WILLIAMSON — TELLER OF DEVON TALES  
A SUMMER EXHIBITION AT  
THE MUSEUM OF NORTH DEVON, THE SQUARE, BARNSTAPLE

This exhibition was officially opened on the 13th July and will be on view until mid-October.

Your President and his wife attended the private view and were very impressed. Our original exhibition material (described elsewhere in this *Journal*) is now enhanced by a beautifully set up otter eating a swan mussel as if on the shillets; plus photographic images of the Devon countryside by James Ravilious (courtesy of the Beaford Centre Archive); information about the otter in Devon today; and a section about the Devon County Council's Tarka Project. All housed in its own private room on the ground floor.