

Secretary's Notes

We are Worried!

I am not using the Royal 'We'; your committee is worried. My plea, printed in the last Journal, for **Committee Volunteers**, seems to have fallen on deaf ears – except for one member who came forward with an offer of part-time help.

In the past year one vacant office, that of Membership Secretary was filled by Pat Murphy at short notice and after an urgent appeal from myself. We were, and are, most grateful to Pat who has filled the post most effectively.

Publicity, with the loss of Tim Osborne, brought no outside volunteers. Our Editor, Anne Williamson, has now taken on this office alongside her other duties, and Mary Heath has come out of her well-earned retirement to assist with Publicity in the important South West area.

The office of Events Secretary remains unfilled despite a year's notice from Bob Tierney and the detailed Notice he prepared and which went out to all members with the last Journal.

This is serious. A Spring Meeting for 1991 will only be possible because various committee members have volunteered to pitch in and put the event on between them. What will happen about the 1991 Annual General Meeting remains to be seen. Perhaps members no longer want Meetings?

I am indeed sorry to raise this obviously unpopular subject once again, but unless this negative trend is reversed it seems possible that the present committee can only look forward to a continually increasing workload as its members fall out for various reasons, until such time as there is no one left to cope with those offices without which the Society cannot continue to function.

This has become a splendid Society through much hard work by your committee and with your financial backing. It *should* continue to gain in growth and stature and achieve yet more in its purpose of bringing Henry Williamson's name to the front rank of twentieth century English writers that he deserves.

Are *you* willing to see all this jeopardised for the want of a little effort?

SEE THE ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POST OF EVENTS SECRETARY ON PAGE 50

News from Devon

The *Tarka Project* (as some of you will know) has achieved its first aim, that of adopting 'Tarka Country' – the Land of the Two Rivers, as the theme for its main aims of–

(a) protecting and enriching the wildlife, natural beauty and special character of North Devon;

(b) encouraging public enjoyment and appreciation and understanding of the area.

The Project Officer, Nicola Oliver, now has an assistant, and a Tarka Country Action Programme was initiated during 1990. The first major work of the Project has been, and is, to complete the 'Tarka Trail'. This is a massive task, but is progressing well along the various 'sections' of Exmoor, the North Devon Coast, the Two Rivers Estuary, Bideford to Meeth, and Dartmoor.

In the conservation field sponsorship from S.W. Water plc and Intervet UK has allowed the full-time employment of an Otter Conservation Officer whose work will cover practical conservation on the Taw and Torridge. The otter population there seems to be increasing, and still on the otter theme, a successful evening class course, 'Conservation in Tarka Country', was run last autumn.

The promotion of tourism away from the coast was also part of the Project. However, members worried by this may be reassured to know that the strategy is to support *small scale* 'green tourism', e.g. small scale enterprises such as farm trails, modest (farm) camp sites, with the emphasis on helping farmers and landowners wishing to supplement dwindling farm incomes by embarking on such ventures. The advantage here will be that all projects can be monitored through the Project, thus forestalling any large scale commercial exploitation.

Two leaflets have been issued, *Tarka Country*, by the West Country Tourist Board, a six-sheet fold-out, and *The Tarka Trail*, by the Devon County Council. This is also a fold-out, but of twelve sheets. Both are free from Tourist Information centres in north Devon.

Braunton Countryside Centre

This excellent centre, manned by volunteers, was opened in 1989, and received no less than 21,000 visitors between May–October of that year. Part of the excellent Society display, that had been put on for last year's Lynton Festival transferred to the Centre, before going on to Barnstaple, and it is planned that (hopefully) a small permanent display can be mounted at the Centre from 1991. This would put Henry's name before thousands of people annually.

The Richard Jefferies Society

The Society enjoyed its Fortieth Anniversary in 1990 – Henry Williamson was of course President for ten years – and to mark the occasion published an evocative book, *The Wessex Landscape of Richard Jefferies* by Antony Clare-Lees (80p, 29pp, full colour ill., £12.95 inc. post). [Order from The Galleybird Press, Robin Hill, Yarlington, Nr Wincanton, Somerset.]

This may seem a little pricey for quite a slim work, but it is large format and beautifully done. Also published was a leaflet describing the history of the Society, and this is available free (with membership details) from the Membership Secretary, 20 Farleigh Crescent, Swindon SN3 1JY.

The Margaret Clarke Memorial

The initiation of this Memorial was described in Journal No. 22, and will consist of an annual award to be given for the article adjudged to have been the best published in the preceding year's Journals. There will be periodic prizes awarded to the member considered to have best furthered the Society's aims, or who has carried out the most useful or relevant research in any one year.

An adjudicating panel was elected at the last Annual General Meeting, and comprises: Stephen Clarke, Margaret's son, and long-time devotee of Henry's works; Brian Sanders, who has spent a lifetime involved with the Theatre (his first job was with Sir Donald Wolfit's touring company), and the spoken – and written – word. For many years he has been an adjudicator at Literary Competitions and Festivals. Bob Tierney, our late Events Secretary, and known to many members, will also serve with our Editor, Anne Williamson, whose experience in the literary world is formidable.

The panel will select the first award from the Journals issued in 1990. Nominations from members will be gratefully accepted and carefully considered. The winner will be announced and presentation made at the next A.G.M. The panel are to consider further how best to administer the periodic awards.

Norfolk – Spring 1991

Full details of this meeting are enclosed with the mailing of this Journal, and it replaces that

discussed in Devon last October, for a visit to Aylesford, which unfortunately did not prove feasible.

However, our visits to Norfolk have always proved popular, and it is particularly appropriate that we should visit there in 1991 which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Story of a Norfolk Farm*, one of Henry's best known and best loved books.

Published in February 1941, it was an immediate success – in spite of the shadow that hung over Henry's name at that time – with end-papers embellished by birds-eye view maps done by C.F. Tunncliffe, and Henry's own photographs. Two further impressions appeared in the same year, and a pictureless Readers Union edition came out the following year. A further impression was issued in 1943, and two more – the 5th and sixth – in 1944, another in 1947 and one more in 1948.

There the book remained until 1985 when the publisher Clive Holloway 'phoned me to ask what I thought of the book. In the view of Ian Niall – who had written C.F. Tunncliffe's biography, *Portrait of a Country Artist*, which contained a rather contentious chapter on the Williamson–Tunncliffe relationship – it was by far Williamson's best work, at least such was his view given to Holloway who was working with him on another Tunncliffe book. I naturally responded that I thought it was a very good book as obviously had many others who had bought it in the 1940s. With the growing interest in organic food, conservation and a general 'greenness' it seemed a good time to consider a new edition. As a judicious follow-up I sent a copy of the book, with publishing history, to Clive Holloway who was fortunately moved to follow up in the proper quarters for permission to publish, and thus a handsome new edition appeared in 1986:

The Story of a Norfolk Farm, The New Illustrated Edition, 1986.

With an Introduction by Richard Williamson.

Wood engravings by Christopher Wormell.

406pp. Clive Holloway Books, 48 Baldry Gardens, London SW16 3 DJ. £9.95

A feature of this new edition is the wood engravings done by Christopher Wormell (an appropriate link with the Williamson–Tunncliffe association), who at that time was struggling to make his name in an art that had suffered many years neglect. Self-taught, Wormell is always ready to defer to the old master Thomas Bewick and, although living in London, he has a great love and feeling for the countryside. His work is evocative of the old rural world, perhaps a little idealised, but certainly of one that no longer exists except as a poignant memory.

If you are thinking of going to Norfolk for the first time, and if you have not read the book, I would urge you to beg, borrow, or best, to buy a copy certainly of the 'new' edition if possible, or even with a copy of an earlier impression as well if you are an avid collector.

Annual General Meeting 1991

This will be held in North Devon as usual, at The Devon Beach Hotel, Woolacombe, over the weekend of **11th–13th October**.

Dates of Meetings – Advance Notice

For various reasons a few members find that the amount of notice given of meetings dates is insufficient. The dates are normally fixed at each A.G.M. and as a rule the SPRING MEETING will fall at the end of either the FIRST FULL WEEK, OR SECOND WEEK OF MAY, although of course venues change from year to year. The A.G.M. will also fall on similar weekends in OCTOBER and is, of course, always in Devon. However, if you require firm dates write to ME after each A.G.M. (s.a.e. please), and I will send you details.

JOHN HOMAN

EVENTS SECRETARY

(Applications are invited to fill this post)

Requirement: To organise the Society's two regular annual weekend events, and occasional extra event, e.g. Battlefields Tour.

General Organisation: Book agreed dates with a nominated hotel/other venue (occasionally a NEW hotel may have to be found). Agree accommodation costs, cost of the usual Saturday night dinner, any stipulated tea/coffee to be included, plus cost of other meals, e.g. Friday night dinner, if offered. Make other arrangements such as occasional coach hire. Determine if any deposits are required either from the Society or from members when booking.

Programme of Events: Action any committee decisions concerning the theme of a weekend, gain necessary permissions on occasion, e.g. to visit Old Hall Farm in Norfolk, arrange boat trip on Two Rivers Estuary, etc.

Unless arrangements have already been made, contact suggested/potential speakers, and, where necessary, agree professional fees, other potential expenses such as accommodation/travel, clearing such if necessary with Finance sub-committee. Make arrangements for items such as displays either by members or from outside, e.g. Vincent Trust (otters). If to be included during a weekend, arrange for Society copies of videos/tapes to be on hand and that viewing/listening facilities are available at hotel.

Co-ordination/Dissemination: Co-ordinate the above to conform to draft proposals made in committee, produce itinerary and programme for approval by Chairman/Secretary/Treasurer, including Registration Fee cost for members attending which is based on Saturday Dinner cost plus all known overheads that the *Society* will have to pay, divided by an average of members attending (60). Produce programme letter, hotel booking form, registration form to be sent to Mailing Manager for printing and issue to members. These papers to be ready for printing by February and August annually.

Expenses: May be claimed for all postages etc. incurred (Society stationery is provided) or other costs such as travel necessary to fulfil the office. There is a need to attend the (at present) annual committee meeting, normally held late November, where travel etc. is reimbursed.

Assistance: The WHOLE committee work as a team and will always be available to help out in any ways necessary.

Contact: Please contact either Will Harris, Chairman, Phone 081-686 4808, John Homan, Secretary, Phone 0469 32109, or write to the addresses inside each Journal cover.

This isn't as onerous as it looks on paper – the basics are on file. Why not join up with someone and work as a pair (or even trio): more fun!