

A Message from The Chairman

There are two questions which crop up over and over again among members of the Henry Williamson Society. You can hear them asked as we trudge round the Norfolk Farm or over Baggy Point; as we meet at the dining table or in small groups over coffee; in the hut, on the beach, in the bar. The questions are these:

1. How did you come across Henry Williamson's writing?
2. Which are your favourite books?

For me it was a recommendation and then purchasing of each paperback as it appeared; and, without any hesitation at all, the London novels, the first three of the *Chronicle*. I dare say there are as many varieties of answer as there are members of the Society; and there are a lot of members. And still we grow, steadily increasing our knowledge of Henry and his work, and – I very much hope – steadily increasing our influence among those who don't know, and ought to know, and those who do know and ought to stop making excuses.

It is becoming ever more urgent that our influence increases. It is easy to sound impetuous, pompous, even precious, but we know – we *know* – that Henry Williamson was a magnificent writer, and that countless thousands of people are simply unaware of his achievements. In my view, the London novels alone could secure his reputation. Other members of the Society will offer a different view. But however we came to Henry's writing, and whichever books we choose to champion, there is work to be done.

I am sure we all do it in our various ways already. The chance remark and the earnest discussion day by day play their part. The writers of articles for the Journal, the speakers at meetings, the organisers, the advertisers, play their part. Some of us have more time and energy than others, but we continue play our part. Now, with the centenary of Henry's birth drawing closer, we need to find extra reserves of time and energy. The opportunities afforded by 1995 cannot be missed.

It is good to know that we have a Centenary Working Party, and it and the Committee will be working hard to implement ideas that are offered. Please offer them, and continue to offer them. And please offer your time and energy as generously as you can. It is unsatisfactory that Members of the Committee have to double up their work so that jobs are covered. We still do not have an Events Secretary. Would someone take that on? It does *not* mean organising *everything*. It could very well be a dual role, with one person organising logistics, another securing the visiting speaker. There are ways of easing the administrative load of the Society, and 1995, and the years before and beyond, depend upon it.

When I met with other founder-members of the Society in a hotel room in Barnstaple more than ten years ago, I had no idea what the future of the Society might be, nor what my own future might be. It is now my very good fortune, and signal honour, to be the Society's Chairman. Please allow me to say that I will do my best to serve the interests of the Society, and those of Henry himself. With a strong membership and hard-working committee, we deserve to move with confidence into our second decade. That confidence comes about very largely through the continued support and friendship of the Williamson family; and to all members of both the family and the society, which together make a formidable partnership, I extend my thanks and warmest good wishes.

WILL HARRIS