

## Secretary's Notes

Time for apologies it would seem:

### Crossed Wires – BBC Broadcasts

I am sure that you read with interest Peter Robins' article 'For the Record' (*Journal* No. 23, pp. 30-1), in which, as the result of research, he listed the radio broadcasts of Henry Williamson still extant in the British Library, National Sound Archive (NSA).

Peter also mentioned the two audio cassettes marketed by the Society under licence from the BBC.

Before you decide to go and listen to the NSA material, I must tell you that all the items listed by Peter are, in fact, one and the same as those recorded on our cassettes, that is, they are *not* new and unpublished recordings.

Since I am the only one on the present editorial sub-committee who was involved in the initial licensing and marketing of the broadcasts, I really should have picked up this anomaly when 'copy' was sent round for appraisal and comment.

### The Story of a Norfolk Farm – Clive Holloway Books

My last Notes also drew attention to the 50th anniversary of the publication of this book in February this year, and I urged members not owning a copy to add one to their collection. In particular I referred to the new Illustrated Edition, published in 1986 by Clive Holloway Books, giving their address.

I am sorry to say that I did not check that the book was still in print, and available from the publisher. In fact, after exhaustive recent enquiry on behalf of members trying to buy copies without success, it seems that this imprint is now defunct, and that in any case the edition was remaindered in 1988.

My apologies to disappointed members. Unless some other publisher can be persuaded to take on a new printing the only hope at present is via the secondhand book trade.

### Weekend Telegraph – Saturday 24 April 1991

Rather a long time ago now I know, but I hope that many members saw this article by Jonathan Sale about the Society? Unfortunately the proposal for the article – one of a short series – only came about after our Spring mailing had been issued, so no advance warning could be given to you.

Following publication I received about one hundred letters and cards ranging from a few lines to many pages and without exception all praising Williamson and his writing. Many wished to know how to join the Society, but equally there were a large number, presumably not 'Society' minded people, who just wanted information of various sorts, not least details of which books were in print, and where they might be obtained. It was rather sad to have to tell these prospective readers that really nothing is in print at present beyond no doubt the umpteenth impression of *Tarka* in Puffin. It was also very clear that there is a great interest in *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* (nothing at all in print), and from these enquiries at least there are no grounds to fear that it is becoming 'dated'. The early novels, 'The London Trilogy' as often, were much praised, as also were the Great War series. Interestingly, some of the later books, including *Gale*, were also much praised which was not so, at least by many critics, when they first appeared.

Perhaps with the maturing of a new generation, whose own parents were not even born until after World War Two, there are now readers who can look objectively and

from outside at some of the more contentious aspects of the last novels? In a way I envy them, these young readers, not only for the shock of coming to these books for the first time, but also for being able to read them uncluttered by the past, free to make their own decisions, and above all discover that their roots and message is as relevant today as when it was first penned. How sad therefore to have to say you cannot go into any bookshop and buy them over the counter.

With the ramifications of the publishing world becoming ever more complicated, with who owns who today but perhaps not tomorrow, and the eagle eye of the accountant overseeing all, it is no easy thing to keep a writer such as HW constantly in print. All we can do is push, urge, assist and generally do all we can to achieve this aim.

### Events in Tarka Country

On 21st May, Tony Speller, MP for North Devon (and friend of the Society) opened the Northern Circuit of the Tarka Trail. This runs for 80 miles from Barnstaple to Exmoor, and back along the North Devon coast. In conjunction with this an otter sculpture, sponsored by Intervet, was unveiled at the start of the walk in Barnstaple.

The following Sunday those taking part in a guided walk around Georgeham were able to visit the Writing Hut at Ox's Cross, where they were welcomed and shown round by Mary and George Heath, and by Henry's daughters, Margaret and Sarah. With some reluctance George was prevailed upon to tell of how the field had been bought with the Hawthornden prize money for *Tarka*. The visit went very well, and this was the first time that the public has had access to the Hut.

The Tarka Project goes from strength to strength and was highly commended in the Green Tourism Category by the English Tourist Board at a presentation at the London Hilton. At another ceremony the Project was Highly Commended in the Conservation Foundation's Ford Conservation Awards, having been nominated by Emma Nicholson, MP for Torridge and West Devon.

During the winter the newly appointed Otter Conservation Officer to the Tarka Project, Mary-Rose Lane, held a successful Press Day with South West Water plc, and Intervet, who jointly have sponsored her post, to stress most strongly the conservation side of the Project. For otters, the aim is not just to retain their status in the Land of the Two Rivers, but to encourage them to expand their range into parts of the county where they are not found at the moment. To assist in achieving these aims a Devon Otter Group has been set up, and expertise will be offered from the NCC, National Rivers Authority, Devon Wildlife Trust, South West Water plc, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Devon County Council, and Exeter University.

This news would surely gladden Henry's heart, for although the otter may be the figurehead in all this, untold other creatures of land and water must also benefit, not least if the waters of the Two Rivers and their Estuary can be made clean again.

### Obituaries

*Anne Phyllis Cadman.* It is with regret that we have heard of the death of his wife from Michael Cadman of Dorchester, Dorset. Although only members of the Society for the past few years, Anne and Michael's interest in Henry and his work went back for many years and they prized their collection that contained copies of nearly all his books. They also corresponded with Henry over a number of years, and a lasting memory was of a visit to him at Ox's Cross in 1962. We join with those who knew Anne in extending our sympathy to Michael in his loss.

*Albert Tatton.* A member since 1988, we heard with regret from his sister, Mrs M.E. Shaw, that Albert died on 4 April 1991.

JOHN HOMAN