

Obituaries

Mrs. Ruth Hedges: It is with regret that we were advised of the death earlier this year of Mrs. Hedges of Bridport, Dorset, who had joined the Society in May 1990.

Alan Hancox: December 6th 1920 – January 29th 1992

I have been asked to write a tribute to Alan Hancox, bookselling *guru* of the Cotswolds, who died on January 29th 1992, aged 71. Those readers who met him in his delightful secondhand bookshop on Cheltenham's Promenade will remember the tall, corduroy-dressed figure, his dark-tanned complexion framed by exotic and leonine flowing, white locks — his deep and attractive voice a counterpoint to the strains of Bruckner or Britten echoing uncompromisingly around his shop.

Although Alan issued catalogues (less so during the years of his failing health), he preferred to concentrate his energies upon his actual bookshop. Centrally established in the Georgian Cotswold spa it was the regular haunt of many browsers, collectors, dealers and acquaintances and respected around the country as an excellent shop. The shelves seemed constantly topped-up with new and teasingly priced books, the sort of stock that reflected Alan's own taste and culture: there was little room for rubbish or makeweight. And to this beguiling atmosphere he added his music: once from a simple gramophone and a healthy selection of LPs, later from a state-of-the-art stereo and an even larger clutch of CDs.

I first met him in 1967 when I drove my Mother and Father on holiday to the Welsh Borders, calling in at Cheltenham *en route* to visit Mr Hancox' bookshop — of which I had heard good reports.

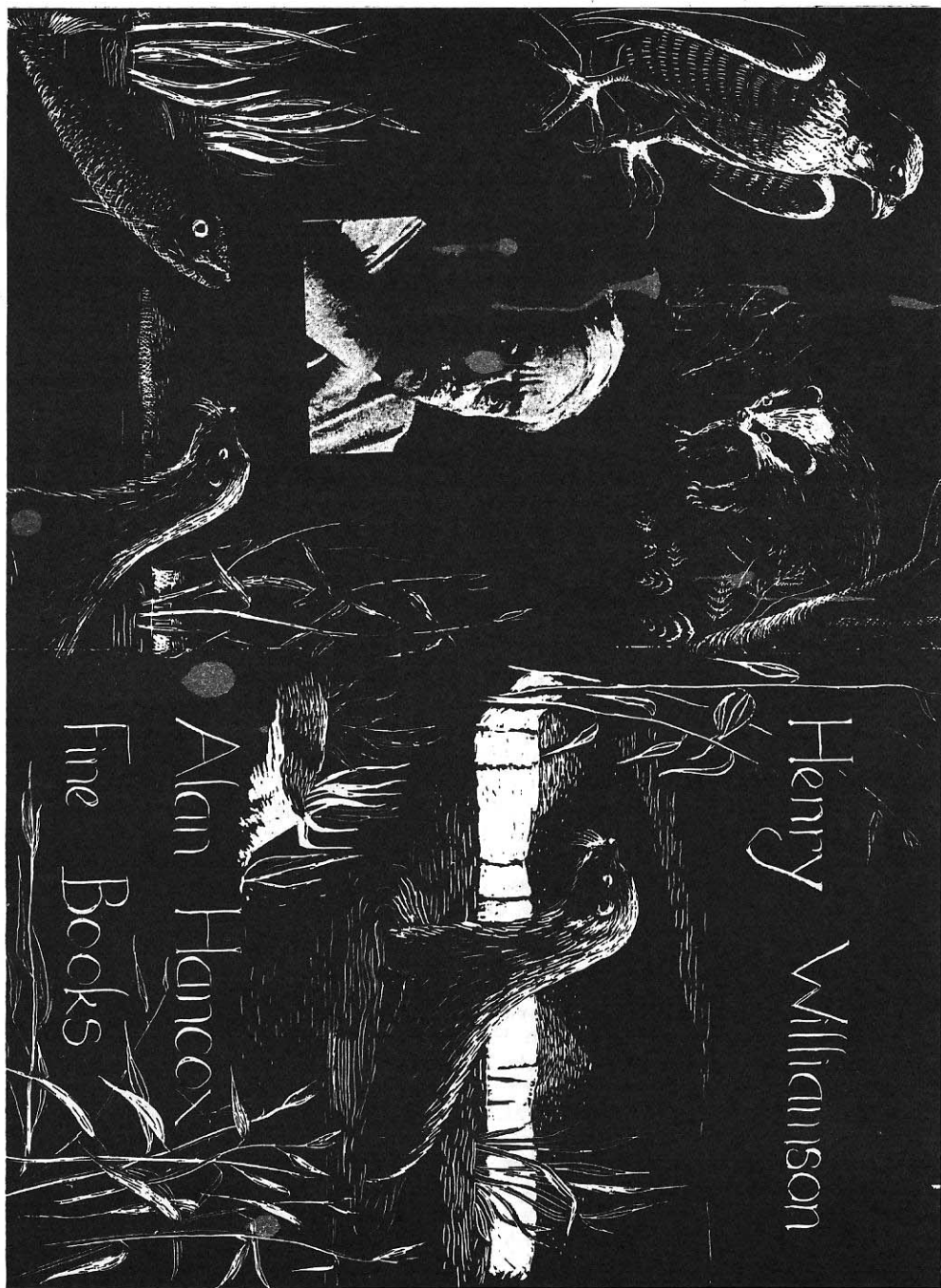
I shall never forget his kindness and avuncular goodwill and courtesy to myself and my parents: and, he too never forgot that first visit. Chatting together over his counter twenty-five years later we fondly recollected it together. It was a precursor of many subsequent visits and much good fellowship and friendly rivalry.

In 1973 Alan, his wife Shelagh and myself collaborated to produce a special catalogue of the Henry Williamson collection he had formed. He was particularly fond of his special collections (the bookseller's great indulgence, combining the pleasures of the collector with the arts of the dealer) and over the years he issued various specialist lists. His 1965 T.S. Elliot catalogue and the Edward Thomas catalogue seven years later are especially noteworthy. Other collections were gathered together and sold privately. One could always be certain that however enticing were the books in Alan's shop, those tucked away at home were very much more so.

Probably Alan will be remembered as much for his work directing the Cheltenham Festival of literature, a task that delighted him and brought out all his remarkable energies and enthusiasm. His position as bookselling *guru* had made him numerous friends in literary circles. Always the first to champion a new poet, novelist and small private press, or to encourage the reputation of established friends, he found himself able to call upon numerous favours and reciprocal friendships and the Festival went from strength to strength.

Alan was appointed MBE in the New Year's Honours List but died in January before he could accept it, aged 71 and having combatted kidney failure for years. A lover of books and literature, of walking and mountains, he was a gentle and generous fellow, and I — for one — will never forget him.

Stephen Francis Clarke



Henry Williamson

Alan Hancey
Fine Books

Jeffrey Hamm: September 15th 1915 — May 4th 1992

Jeffrey Hamm died in May of this year and was a respected member of The Henry Williamson Society. In a letter to this *Journal* of September 1990, he said, 'I am a member of The Henry Williamson Society as an admirer of Henry's works. I do not seek to introduce my politics'.

He had met Henry Williamson on a number of occasions, mostly when Henry was contributing to Mosley's magazine *The European* in the 1950s (anticipating Robert Maxwell's newspaper by more than thirty years). Hamm was business manager of the company responsible for the magazine and thus met many of its contributors including Roy Campbell, Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington.

Jeffrey Hamm was born at Ebbw Vale on September 15, 1915 and was educated at West Monmouth School and went on to teach at various locations, including King's School, Harrow.

In 1934 he was attracted to the British fascist movement and in 1937 visited Germany where he was impressed by Nazi achievements, as Henry had been on his visit two years earlier. When war broke out, Hamm was opposed to it and took a teaching post in the Falkland Islands. After the fall of France in May 1940, the long arms of Special Branch arrested him under Defence Regulation 18B at his cottage fifty miles from Port Stanley on the grounds of promoting fascist views to the islanders. After four months of being held on a hulk in Port Stanley harbour, Hamm was transferred to Leuwkop camp in South Africa where the majority were German internees. He was released in April 1941, returned to England and joined the Royal Armoured Corps, though he was dismissed before the war ended. Interestingly, he was received into the Catholic Church in 1944.

In 1946 he directed his political activities into the founding of the British League of Ex-Servicemen and women, based in the East End of London, which later developed into the new Union Movement, of which Mosley became leader in 1948 and Hamm its Secretary in 1956 ...

His soap-box meetings in the East End perpetuated the Movement's anti-semitism but in the Fifties the invective was directed to the newly-arrived West Indian immigrants, which culminated in the Notting Hill riots of 1958.

Ham organised Mosley's disastrous attempt to win North Kensington in the 1959 Election and stood himself for Middlesbrough in a 1962 by-election where he was almost ignored. He had better success four years later when he stood for Birmingham Handsworth in the General Election where his candidacy helped to reduce Sir Edward Boyle's majority.

By this time the National Front and its various splinter-groups became the main source of anti-immigration feeling and the Union Movement dropped its electoral ambitions. Hamm and Mosley were totally opposed to the National Front and although Mosley was of interest to the media right up until he died in 1981, Hamm was not heard of again until his autobiography, *Action Replay*, was published in 1983 by Howard Baker Ltd (reviewed in this *Journal*, October 1983). He remained active in publishing and was a director of Sanctuary Press (publishers of *Action* incorporating *Union*) until his death.

He had no regrets: 'If I were on my deathbed I would not say that I had wasted my life, but that I had had a hard life, but an interesting and exciting one. I had tried, I had 'had a go'. As a passage from *Faust*, a favourite of Mosley, has it:

*Whoever strives
Can be redeemed*

Peter K Robins