

Reviews

Spring Days in Devon and other Broadcasts. Henry Williamson. With a Foreword by Valerie Belsey. 136pp and Frontispiece. Card Covers. The Henry Williamson Society, 1992. Standard edition, £7.95. Limited Edition, 50 copies, 1/4 Morocco. £30.

The Society is fortunate in having members who over the years have researched into the more fugitive parts of Henry Williamson's working life. David Hoyle sought out those of his broadcasts that remained on record or tape at the BBC sound archives. This provided the base from which we worked to obtain a license to market them for the benefit and enjoyment of our members and others.

Independently Valerie Belsey was seeking to establish a list of scripts and transcriptions of these broadcasts, and where held. It is from this material that a selection has been made for our pleasure under the title, *Spring Days in Devon*.

Of the selected broadcasts only one of them, 'Recipe for Country Life' — in fact Henry's first broadcast — exists in both media. A further eight pieces take us round and about North Devon, his Shallowford home, and all the places he had grown to know and love so well. To a t.v.-less audience they can hardly have failed to stir the imagination and bring the smell of salt air and warmth of the sun into their homes.

These are followed by a selection of the broadcasts on one local animal, including 'The Otter' and 'The Barn Owl', both of which he writes about with authority and sensitivity. These proved extremely popular with his listeners.

We then turn to Norfolk and broadcasts of 1938; of the decision to buy Old Hall Farm and the true labouring life that followed. The extent of the sheer almost convict labour is clear though not over-played. It is doubtful that anyone would work so today; quarryman, road-mender, ploughman, builder, thresher, drainage expert and more. All this on top of 'learning' how to farm and *then* spending hours at night writing to pay for it all!

The final pieces look back at Devon and the wonder of those early days alone when he was born again after the horrors of Flanders and France. And later again, after the Second War, (1954), forty years on from his first visit as a callow but sensitive youth who all too soon, like a million others, would be called upon to become a man overnight.

For the well balanced selection and attention to detail in production, yet another sincere 'thank-you' to John Gregory as Editor ... More please. John Homan

The Tarka Trail — A Walkers' Guide, With a description of the route by Richard Williamson. Produced by the Tarka Project on behalf of the Devon County Council. Devon Books, 1992, £3.95. (Copies available from Devon Books, 1 Chinon Court, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton, EX16 6SS. Tel: 0884 24 3242, or bookshops in Devon.)

Produced for long-distance walkers, the 180 mile Trail is fully described and accompanied by detailed maps (although good OS maps are also necessary for total comprehension of the route). Each section is accompanied by an appropriate quotation from *Tarka the Otter* (supplied by the HW Literary Estate as a flag to encourage walkers to also read the original) whilst Richard has managed to combine his duty of describing the route with some fine phrases, thus lifting a straightforward guide into literary realms. A slight quirk of editing has placed the Society 'mention' in the middle of the section on Braunton Burrows, but we are there, on p. 66, and hopefully this will lead to some enquiries. AW