

Editorial

For the title of his article which explores the background to the Henry Williamson, T.E. Lawrence, Richard Aldington relationship, Professor Crawford quotes a remark by Eric Kennington to B.H. Liddell Hart:

're Williamson's weather-vane soul' (see p. 17)

Prof. Crawford's article shows the increasingly obvious fact that HW found himself caught up on a vicious little storm, a veritable whirl-wind, which blew him hither and thither, at the mercy of conniving winds coming from all sides; and to keep afloat he had to set his sails to the direction of any current blast. And yes, it was his own fault; he should never have sailed into such tricky waters – he who was nervous at the helm of Pinta in 'the estuary of the two rivers', knowing what turbulence could be created by two such strong forces meeting there and creating dangerous tide-pulls.

This episode illustrates how naive HW was in the political world. It began simply, with HW offering to help Richard Aldington; a genuine offer of help between friends. HW had known TEL, Aldington had not. HW was prepared to hand over his first-hand evidence. At the time he did not know what he was lending his hand to. It ended of course, in the most fearful animosity on the part of the establishment. The political history of this country was being questioned. No wonder the 'Lawrence Bureau' were in disarray and closing ranks. There was a great deal to lose. HW's naivety is even more obvious in that he was surprised at the reception he got from Kennington and R. Storrs.

But Prof. Crawford also quotes HW's own words written in a letter to Richard Aldington:

I can run with the hare, sympathise with the hounds, know the huntsman's mind, the whippers-in, the Master's, the Committee's, the rabbits', the foxes', & all the lot, ... a proper whoremaster maybe, but there 'tis – a whoreson collector of varying ideas and opinions and why they are what they are.

And there lies the explanation. What Kennington refers to as HW's 'weather-vane soul' is that very ability to see all objectively, 'as the sun sees, without shadows', and this is what made HW the fine writer he is. It was the perfect principle to apply to his writing; it became a dangerous trait when applied to dealings in life, especially in the political world for which he was not equipped.

Everyone at the spring meeting in Norfolk enjoyed Jean Goodman's talk which introduced a different viewpoint of HW, and as it is our policy to share these talks with all the members whenever possible, it is printed here so that you can all enjoy it. Stephen Francis Clarke provided a copy of HW's review of Munning's book from his personal archive which complements the talk perfectly, giving us a vivid picture of these 'artistic' temperaments, and deepening and enhancing our understanding of HW as man and writer.

The next issue of this Journal will be the special one celebrating the Centenary of HW's birth. May I draw your attention to the notice on page 22. If you have any items that you would particularly like to be included, or any ideas for subjects that you feel would be interesting, I would be very grateful if you would contact me as soon as possible, so that organisation can be put in hand. Some ideas and plans are already underway but there is always room for more to be considered. This is your chance to put forward your views.

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