

NEWSLETTER

February 2011

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Combined magic of Ricks and Burnett dazzle New York audience

Kate Shaw reports on "Passwords" at Poets House on 27th October, sponsored by the Housman Society.

Archie Burnett and Christopher Ricks were on sparkling form at Poets House,¹ New York on October 27, 2010. The dynamic duo had entertained us with Housman letters in Oxford in 2009, now they called their talk 'Passwords'. Their combined magic dazzled an audience which included James Fenton, a previous Professor of Poetry at Oxford who had given a lecture on Housman in the 1996



celebrations, and Nick Laird, the poet and novelist who has recently written the introduction to the Penguin Classic edition of Housman's poems. Archie Burnett explored the relation between biography and poetry in his talk while Christopher Ricks explored the anagrams and puns that distinguish the work of A.E.H. and other poets.



Archie Burnett asked whether poets disclose or reveal their own lives in their poems. Do they use their poetry as a window or barrier? He is currently editing the collected works of Philip Larkin and used the poem *Mr Bleaney* to show how Larkin clearly used his own experiences

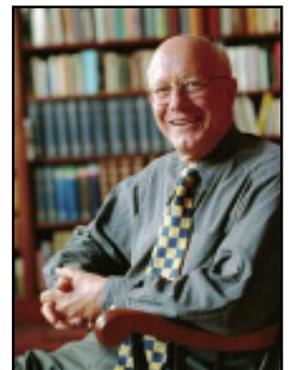
while A.E.H. in his poems is more elusive.

While Archie stipulated there was no evidence that A.E.H. had ever had a physical relationship with anyone there is still a homosexual theme in the poems and they are remarkable for what they do not overtly say. There is a codified language that would have been recognised by A.E.H., Oscar Wilde and their circles in a repressive Victorian milieu. The use of 'lads', 'comrades', 'fellows', 'friends' and 'trouble', meaning

prison for Oscar Wilde, were terms used by other poets as well as A.E.H.

Christopher Ricks read *ASL XLI*, 'In my own shire', to show the utter simplicity of A.E.H.'s poems but then went on to dazzle us with the complexity of the poem with its anagrams and alliteration: lines such as 'The earth because my heart was sore, sorrowed for the son she bore'.

Ricks thinks the literary value of the anagram has been spoilt by crossword puzzles but he pointed out that it has been used by poets as far ranging as Emily Dickinson, Ted Hughes, Pope, Austen Clark, Byron and T.S. Eliot. Words are contracted and expanded, puns discovered by ear or eye. He ended by speculating on whether POETS necessarily know what they are doing!



The talks were followed by questions, which produced further insights from the speakers. Did A.E.H. know Shropshire? Was A.E.H. a critic? Yes – he read to find failure; for instance he read Dickens not so much to enjoy but to criticise and find fault.

Was he preoccupied by death? Yes, but he enjoyed life. Why Manilius? Because of the textual problems he thought

The Housman Society Book Exchange is pleased to offer for sale a copy of the 1896 First Edition *A Shropshire Lad*. Full details can be found on pages 12-13.



Kate Shaw with Steve Crook

he alone could solve. And he did.

A.E.H. was a genius because he had both a converging and diverging mind. He could tackle the detailed textual criticism associated with being a classical scholar and write the poems, which come from the imagination.

At the reception afterwards members of the audience were able to meet members of Poets House¹ board of directors, Lee Briccetti, their administrative director, as well as offer thanks to Archie, Christopher and Poets House¹ program [sic] director, Stephen Motika for arranging such a wonderful evening.

NOTE

1. 'Poets House' uses no apostrophe – Is this poetic license?

A Library of 50,000 Volumes

At the request of Paul Naiditch we sent a number of volumes of the Society's Journal to one of his contacts in the U.S.A who was interested in P.G.N.'s lists of Housman's library. In thanking us for the volumes, and in apologising for not joining the Society he says the following:

'You kindly sent me, at Paul Naiditch's request, the five volumes of The Housman Society Journal containing his account of Housman's library. They arrived last week. Many thanks! I am enjoying the other articles too, especially those on scholarly subjects, e.g. by Colin Leach and Malcolm Davies. If you expect an excuse from me as to why I do not become a member since the contents are obviously so congenial to me, I will say that I already have 50,000 volumes in my house, the last 1,500 of which are stacked on the floor, that I subscribe to 35 journals already, and that I have too many interests and can barely keep up with anything. Time and money! Fortunately, I almost never use the internet, which would drive me over the edge.'

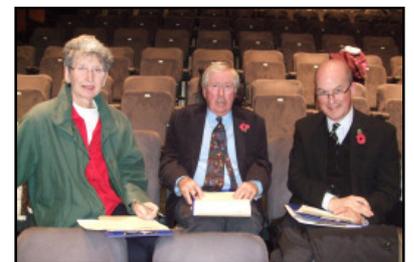
Keenly Contested Schools Poetry Reading

The presence of Pip from *The Archers* (played by Helen Monks) to present the prizes added special interest to the fourth Housman Society Schools Reading Competition held at Artrix on 11th November. Five local Secondary Schools and four Middle Schools participated in a keenly contested competition and once more North Bromsgrove High School produced the winners in both senior sections as well as scooping the newly awarded Housman Cup.



Daniel Edwards, winner of the Housman Cup, with Helen Monks

Chairman of the Judges, Andrew Maund, praised overall winner Daniel Edwards for his choice of poems (Housman's *Grenadier* and John Cooper Clarke's *Nothing*) and for his thoughtful and beautifully delivered readings. In a brilliant reading of *The Naming of Parts* Caroline Hazel (Haybridge High School) clinched the Runner-Up prize. Megan Gilday (North Bromsgrove High School) won the Seniors prize with Housman's *Isle of Portland* and a wittily delivered *I wish I'd looked after me teeth* by Pam Ayres. In the Middle Schools section Henry Spooner (St John's Middle School) was the winner, his apt choice being 'Far in a western brookland' in which Housman describes the mill pools round his Perry Hall (now Housman Hall) home.



Elizabeth Oakley, Bryan Maybee and Andrew Maund were judges for the Sixth Form Competition

Kate Shaw, who has masterminded the Competition, said: "The standard was higher than ever and it is wonderful that more and more schools are taking part". Chairman of the Council, Councillor June Griffiths, rounded up the proceedings by congratulating all the pupils on the excellent standard achieved.

Complete C.W. Orr Songbook

The majority of C.W. Orr's settings are of Housman's poems, and of his total output of 36 songs, the texts of 24 are by A.E.H. Orr's ability to capture the perfect balance between the simplicity of the verse and the darkness of the subtext makes his settings some of the most successful among the many composers who have been attracted to Housman's poetry. Many of his songs are gems and it was significant that Ian Bostridge chose 'Into my heart an air that kills' when he sang at the unveiling of the window to A.E. Housman in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey in 1996.

C.W. Orr was born in Cheltenham and lived for the majority of his life in Painswick. The musical world tends to be divided into two groups: the vast majority of people have never heard of him, and the few that have consider him to be a songwriter of genius. About once a decade throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, attempts had been made to publicise this unusual composer, but sufficient momentum was never gathered, and his work has remained in the shadows to all but a few.



The blue plaque on C.W. Orr's house in Painswick

However Mark Stone, who gave a such a memorable recital of Housman settings at St John's College, Oxford in the 150th anniversary year, has firm plans to make two CDs of Orr's complete output. He will be accompanied by Simon Lepper, one of the top young pianists of the day, and the Housman Society is delighted to be able to support this project, which has a budget of £10,000.



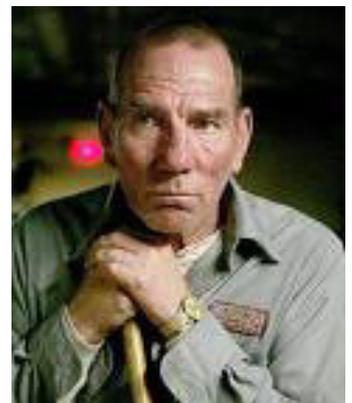
The music for C.W. Orr's 'Isle of Portland'

There is a great opportunity to hear a cycle from C.W. Orr's *A Shropshire Lad* settings at Tardebigge in Jennie McGregor-Smith's Celebrating English Song series on **Sunday 24 July** when Mark Stone and Stephen Barlow will be the recitalists. Also in the programme will be works by Delius and Finzi. There will be a pre-concert talk by Christopher Morley on setting Walt Whitman's poetry as the concert also includes the première of Ronald Corp's settings of the poet. Tickets (£14.00) from 01527 872422.

Pete Postlethwaite Remembered

Not many people reading the obituaries of Pete Postlethwaite, who died recently at the age of 64, knew about his wonderful recording of *A Shropshire Lad*, which he made as a tape for EMI in 1995 in anticipation of the centenary year. In fact no obituary even mentioned it but to lovers of Housman's poetry his gentle delivery in a genuine Shropshire accent gave his interpretation an authority which few other versions could match. Sadly it sold out very quickly and was never re-issued. However it is saved for posterity as there is a copy in the Society archives.

Born in Warrington, Postlethwaite had originally planned to be a priest. He became a teacher but eventually took to the stage, beginning his career at the Everyman theatre in Liverpool, to which he returned in 2008 as the lead in *King Lear*, a role he had always wanted to play. The performance was one of the highlights of Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture.



Pete Postlethwaite's first Shropshire home was at Minton, near Church Stretton, before the family moved to a farm on the outskirts of Bishop's Castle. "I do love Shropshire," he once said, "whenever I get home, my shoulders drop by two inches. The only reason I've been able to do the things I've done is because I have my family and Shropshire to come home to. They've made everything else possible."

In 2009 he appeared in the climate change-themed film *The Age of Stupid*. Having recently installed a wind turbine in his garden, he said he was really impressed by the film and made an impassioned call for action on climate change on its release in *The Sun* newspaper: "The stakes of climate change are very, very high. They're through the roof. How could we willingly know that we're going into extinction..... and let it happen."

He received an Oscar nomination for his performance as Guiseppe Conlon in the 1993 film *In The Name Of The Father*, about the wrongful convictions of the Guildford Four. Other notable films included the 1996 film *Brassed Off*, in which he played the leader of a colliery band in a Yorkshire community devastated by mine closures. The film was a favourite of the former deputy prime minister John Prescott, and became the inspiration for a coalfield regeneration programme.

The Influences on Housman's Poetry

Linda Hart discovers a 'new' book, A.E. Housman: Scholar and Poet, written by Norman Marlow. It was published by Routledge & Kegan Paul (London) in 1958. Why, she wonders, hasn't this excellent book been reprinted and made available to those of us who can never get enough of the man and his poetry?

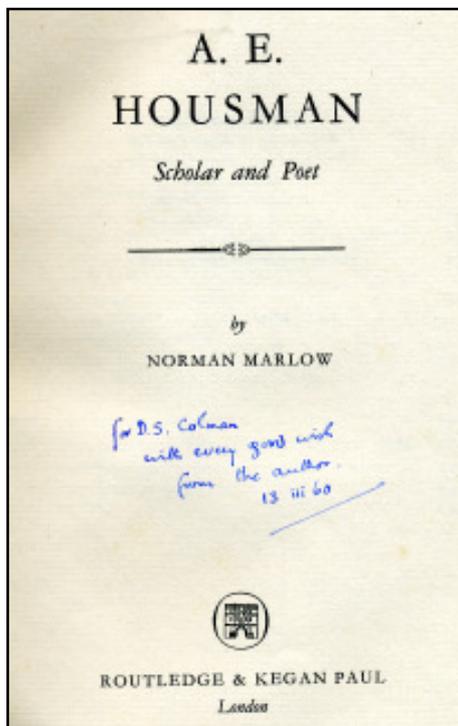
I thought I had read every major study of Housman. After all, there aren't that many. But last year I found a note I had written to myself, probably a few years ago: "Read Norman Marlow on A.E.H." I don't know what inspired me to write this. There are no references to Norman Marlow's book in the biographies by Richard Perceval Graves (1979) and Norman Page (1983). I looked in the much shorter paperback study by Keith Jebb (1992) and found that Marlow's book is listed in the bibliography (but as Jebb's book has neither index nor footnotes I can't tell how much use he made of it).

I checked the Book Exchange entries in several recent Society newsletters but Peter Sisley, to my surprise, had no Marlow. So I went onto Amazon where there were only a few copies, the cheapest being ex Wiltshire County Council library, which I purchased for £10.00 plus postage. I had no idea who Norman Marlow was or what I would be getting (a biography? literary criticism? essays?), though with Routledge & Kegan Paul's reputation for academic respectability I was not unduly worried.

The book is hardback, with a bright orange dust jacket, 192 pages, and the price was 21s. net (presumably quite expensive in 1958). What a pleasure to find footnotes where they belong, at the foot of the page (and not where publishers put them nowadays, at the end of the chapter or even worse at the end of the book.) There is an index but no bibliography.

The jacket blurb says that Mr Marlow lectures in Greek and Latin at the University of Manchester, and made detailed studies of Housman's editions of Manilius, Juvenal and Lucan for an M.A. degree at the University of London. In 1953 he read a paper to the Classical Association on Housman's scholarship, and he has contributed articles on Housman to several learned journals.

As I have no knowledge of the Classics whatsoever, his background might have concerned me. Was I going to be out of my depth? But I then turned to the table of contents, and I liked the clear way Marlow set out exactly what each chapter covers. A short biographical chapter is followed by a chapter on the 'early influences on Housman's poetry'. This is



Jim Page's copy inscribed by the author 'for D.S. Colman with every good wish from the author. 13/iii/60'

followed by 80 pages – almost half the book – on 'literary influences' which are discussed in three chapters, starting with the Greek and Latin poets; going on to Shakespeare, Border Ballads, Folk song, Kipling and Heine; and finally the Bible, Milton, Tennyson, Lang and Rossetti.

I have always felt that Housman biographies don't provide enough analysis of his poetry so I was pleased to see that so much of Marlow's book would focus on it. In addition to the literary influence, there is a chapter titled 'Language and Metre', and a chapter covering the autobiographical element in the poems. This is followed by a chapter on 'Contemporary Criticism of Housman'. The book ends with a short chapter on 'The Nonsense Verse' which I reckon few people would have known much about in 1958 (Christopher Ricks' Penguin edition of A.E.H.'s *Collected Poems* wasn't published until thirty years later).

I like Marlow's style of writing: he knows when to be 'objective' and when to give his own opinion. His prose is straightforward and factual at times, but he makes nice use of metaphor at other times. For example, in the chapter on the autobiographical element in the poems, he writes: "It is characteristic of the hedonist that he cannot keep the bitter tang from the cup he drinks, for the time is short. This sense of urgency is everywhere in *A Shropshire Lad*." In this same chapter, after a short discussion of A.E.H.'s friendship with Moses Jackson, their parting, and the *Shropshire Lad* poems being written, he concludes: "His emotions, expelled by one door, came in by another."

I learned a lot from the chapter on 'Language and Metre', where Marlow says things that I probably knew but didn't realise that I knew until he expressed it. His straightforward, limpid, no-nonsense approach contrasts strikingly with the obscure and opaque commentary that passes as literary criticism today. Some examples: "There was a part of him that refused to expatiate or to be seen indulging in romantic description, and his best effects are with a simple or compound adjective into which he put all his exactness of

continued in the adjacent column

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observation.” Or this: “... he puts a spell on us ...What is the secret of this spell? Largely it is that Housman, like Herodotus according to a modern editor, ‘preserves unimpaired the primitive energy of words.’ Those Saxon monosyllables ... may startle us by their abruptness, but they are never obscure nor do they seem quaint or affected.”

Twentieth-century Psychological Claptrap

Marlow’s sense of humour is most to the fore in the chapter on ‘Contemporary Criticism of Housman’. He is brilliant and amusing at making Cyril Connolly’s criticisms of Housman (e.g. in *The New Statesman*, 23 May 1936) seem idiotic. He then moves on to Conrad Aiken who “aims his shafts at everything within reach” and makes Marlow wonder “Why are such critics not trained to use words to express and not conceal thoughts?” An article in the *Dublin Review* (in 1937) is an example of “twentieth-century psychological claptrap”, and he quotes examples. He then has a go at the comments on Housman by the well-known American literary critic, Cleanth Brooks, and the well-known Scottish literary critic, David Daiches. After quoting other critics on Housman he notes “the folly of exaggeration” that “leads them into comic contradictions” and the many times “when over-statement degenerates into sheer rubbish.”

Chattering Critics

But what have poets had to say about Housman? “If the critics have thus chattered from their little bird-coop, the poets themselves have been very reticent about *A Shropshire Lad*. Partly this is no doubt because they salute a thing that is perfect of its kind, but partly it is the underlying but ever-present hostility with which something new and challenging is always greeted.” The exceptions are Edith Sitwell who, on the subject of Housman, “can indulge in jargon with the worst of the critics.” And Ezra Pound, whose article on Housman in the *Criterion* for January 1934 “has to be read to be believed: the only way in which one could account for its being printed at all is on the theory that a highbrow journal would at that time print any rant that came from so august a source.”

In summary, I can’t better the dust jacket blurb: “This is the first full-length study to be published of the poetry of A.E. Housman.... After giving the student all the data he needs for a thorough appreciation of Housman’s poetry, [Marlow] then analyses the strikingly individual qualities of his style, its combination of Saxon forthrightness with classical precision, its repetitiveness and cunning use of simple metres.”

Can the Housman Society find a publisher to reprint this book, or publish the book itself some day? If not, there are copies of the book in the Worcestershire County Council library system and probably still a few on Amazon.

Housman in Bromsgrove Adult Summer School

In July 2011 the Bromsgrove Society and Bromsgrove School are launching a new venture, the Bromsgrove Summer School. This will comprise six one-day courses for adults exploring the agricultural, industrial, architectural and cultural heritage of the town. The courses will be spread over three days – Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 19th-21st July.

Some of the courses will be held at the former Perry Hall, once the home of the poet A.E. Housman, which is now called Housman Hall and forms part of Bromsgrove School. Other courses will be held in Cookes House, the oldest part of Bromsgrove School, built in 1695. All students will be able to park at Housman Hall and lunch will be served in the large dining room there.

Course 5 – A.E. Housman, the Worcestershire Lad takes place on **Thursday 21st July** when Julian Hunt will be giving a talk entitled **Bromsgrove and the Housmans**, followed by Jeremy Bourne talking about **The Life and Works of A.E. Housman**. These talks will be at Housman Hall and in the afternoon, Jeremy will lead a tour of Bromsgrove School.

Other courses being run are as follows:

Course 1 – The Manor of Bromsgrove. Chris Dyer on the **Medieval Manor of Bromsgrove** and Julian Hunt on the **Enclosure of the Commons and Open Fields of Bromsgrove**. In the afternoon, Jennie McGregor-Smith will be talking about **Hewell Grange**, home of the Lords of the Manor of Bromsgrove.

Course 2 – The Architecture of Bromsgrove. Alan Petford will lecture on the **Architecture of the Parish of Bromsgrove**, followed by one on the **Architecture of Bromsgrove High Street**. In the afternoon, students will have the opportunity to visit Avoncroft Museum.

Course 3 – Bromsgrove from Domesday to the Industrial Revolution. Chris Dyer will lecture on the **Medieval Town of Bromsgrove**. Julian Hunt will talk about **Coaching Inns and the Industrial Revolution in Bromsgrove**. There will be a walk along Bromsgrove High Street.

Course 4 – Worcestershire Church Architecture. Alan Petford will lecture on **Worcestershire Church Architecture**, followed by visits to **Bromsgrove Parish Church and the Congregational Church**.

Course 6 – Documenting Bromsgrove. Jenny Townsend will be analysing **Bromsgrove Wills and Inventories of the 17th Century**. Julian Hunt talks on **Documenting Bromsgrove**. Finally **Bromsgrove Probate Inventories**.

The fee for each one-day course will be £35, inclusive of parking, morning coffee, and cooked lunch at Housman Hall. For further details of the courses, please telephone Julian Hunt 01296 714634.

Ave Atque Vale

Last Letters Between A.E.H. and Moses Jackson – Part Two

by Andrew R.N. Jackson

In Part One of this two-part article we followed the relationship of A.E.H. and his closest friend, Moses Jackson, from 1887 when Moses joined the Indian Civil Service in Karachi and Baroda, through his move to Canada to start a dairy farm in British Columbia. Farming then wore him down until stomach cancer triumphed and brought him dying in Vancouver's General Hospital. Moses wrote his last letter to A.E.H. lying in bed using, in part, a blunt pencil, but retaining his sharp wit and incisive observations while reviewing A.E.H.'s recently published *Last Poems*. He gave a heartfelt apology for being unable to repay the loan from A.E.H. to buy the farm twelve years earlier and ended the letter with the poignant words "Goodbye. Yours very truly, M.J.J. Jackson."

Moses' letter was posted in Vancouver on the 1st or 2nd December, 1922 by his youngest son, Gerald, then 22 years old. It made its slow way across Canada by train, and then by ship over the Atlantic to arrive in Cambridge a month later on 1 January, 1923. A.E.H. was horrified by Moses' fast deterioration and replied three days later with typical generosity, offering the royalties from the English edition of *Last Poems* towards Moses' hospital bills.

Trinity College,
Cambridge
4 Jan. 1923

My Dear Mo,

I got your letter on New Year's Day. As you threaten to leave the hospital well or ill, I suppose I had better direct this to Applegarth, though I understand it is empty now, rather than to bed 4. I was sorry to hear that Mrs Jackson had had a sort of breakdown. Gerald writes to me sometimes, and so does Oscar, which is very good of him, linked as we are by no baptismal ties. They both seem to be doing famously.

I never was more astounded at anything than at your reproducing my contribution to *Waifs and Strays*. I remember your reading it at Miss Patchett's, and how nervous I felt. If I had known you would recollect it 42 years afterward, my emotions would have been too much for me.

On the copies of the new book already sold in England there will be due to me royalties of about £500. As I cannot be bothered with investments, this will go to swell my already swollen balance at the bank unless you will relieve me of it. Why not rise superior to the natural disagreeableness of your character and behave nicely for once in a way to a fellow who thinks more of you than anything in the world? You are largely responsible for my writing poetry, and you ought to take the consequences.

The American edition, which is to be as like the English as possible, was published on Dec. 1 and sold out in four days, but I don't know how many copies it consisted of. I am to have £300 from it in any case, and higher royalties than in England after 3000 copies have been sold.

A female third cousin of mine, whom I have never seen, has burst forth into song on this occasion and sent her poem to my brother. It describes how the devil paid a call in Cambridge on a friend of his (that is me), and explained that as the Rev. Robert Housman (that is my great-grandfather, known as 'the Lancaster evangelist') had saved some souls, he (the devil) wanted me to destroy an equivalent number; and I wrote my poems to oblige him; the result being that the name of Housman is 'tarnished for evermore'. That name, she fondly fancies, had hitherto stood for everything noble; which is news to me, and shows that the poor dear does not know as much about her grandfather as I do. Among other things, he invented a new religion and held forth in a chapel of his own, which he finally emptied by a sermon in which he described Potiphar's wife as an ill-used woman and Joseph as a cold-blooded young fool.

I was in Oxford about a month ago, and saw Watson, very sleek and sleepy. The most noticeable change in the place since our time is that the trees in front of Magdalen school are gone, so that the façade of Magdalen chapel looks right down the High as far as Univ., and the effect is more stately if less rural. The trees in front of St John's are much diminished, and the Broad Walk in Christ Church Meadows is a thing of the past. Our lime avenue at Trinity, now 200 years old, will soon follow it.

Millington of Bromsgrove, who partly educated me, died the other day at 82. He had been suffering (or rather not suffering) from senile decay. Aphasia and loss of memory are probably the stages by which I shall approach my end.

Yours very truly

A.E. Housman.

Moses' stated aim to leave the hospital soon, "well or ill," did not transpire and two weeks later, on January 14, 1923, aged 64, he succumbed to the stomach cancer that had first shown itself as anaemia some six years before. A.E.H.'s last letter to him was still making its laborious way across the Atlantic to Canada, and Moses never had the chance to read it.

When he heard of Moses' death, presumably via telegram, A.E.H. wrote to their mutual friend from Oxford, A.W. Pollard:

Trinity College,
Cambridge
Jan 17 1923

My dear Pollard,

Jackson died peacefully on Sunday night in hospital at Vancouver, where he had gone to be treated for anaemia, with which he had been ailing for some years. I had a letter from him on New Year's Day, which he ended by saying "goodbye". Now I can die myself: I could not have borne to leave him behind me in a world where anything might happen to him.

Yours sincerely,

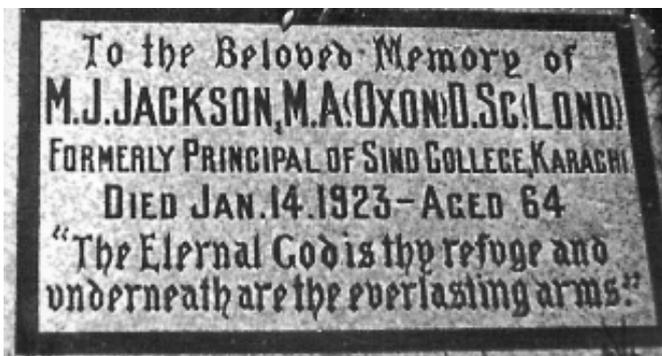
A.E. Housman

Although he had pined for most of his adult life for Moses' company and affection and offered to follow him around the world, A.E.H.'s academic renown and financial security contrasted starkly with Moses "dying a hopeless bankrupt" in his own words. This reversal in fortune since their youthful employment meant that A.E.H. had developed a feeling of responsibility for his friend. While writing to Pollard to inform him of Moses' death, A.E.H. may well have been thinking of words in *Last Poems* that he had penned to memorialise Moses' marriage:

All is quiet, no alarms;
Nothing fear of nightly harms.
Safe you sleep on guarded ground,
And in silent circle round
The thoughts of friends keep watch and ward,
Harnessed angels, hand on sword.

This verse, from the posthumous *More Poems*, was perhaps written soon after Moses' death.

Now to her lap the incestuous earth
The son she bore has ta'en.
And other sons she brings to birth
But not my friend again.



After Moses died, Rosa or Gerald sent A.E.H. a photograph of Moses' gravestone. A.E.H. framed the picture and hung it on the wall of his rooms in Cambridge where it remained, alongside photos of Moses and his brother Adalbert, until A.E.H. died.

'Larry, old chap'

In Andrew Jackson's article in the 2010 Journal he suggested that in Mo's last letter the phrase "Larry, old chap" could be read as "Lazy old chap" (footnote 24, page 53). Linda Hart was the first to enquire about the meaning of the phrase and her correspondence with P.G. Naiditch is reproduced below.

LH to PGN: Do you have any idea about the meaning of 'Larry, old chap' in Moses' final letter to A.E.H. (p. 245 of *A Fine View of the Show*)? If he had said 'Freddy', I would see it as a jokey nickname for Alfred. But 'Larry'?

PGN to LH: I can't explain 'Larry, old chap'. I'd guess that it was a quotation whose context A.E.H. would recognise: perhaps a skit from a music hall.

LH to three retired English lit professor friends: Does the phrase 'Larry, old chap' mean anything to you? It was written in a letter in 1922, to a friend of the letter-writer, and they had been friends since meeting as students in Oxford in 1879. The recipient of the letter was NOT named Lawrence or Larry, I hasten to add. It's said in a friendly way, in the letter. I googled the expression, got a few references to its use in fiction, but I can't find out what it "means". Is it a public school expression? Something from music halls? I know I miss out on a lot of English cultural references, having not spent all of my life here. Any comments gratefully received.

Reply from Suzette Hill (author of a series of comic detective novels): I think this is of 19th cent./Edwardian provenance and was used as a prelude to some 'straight from the shoulder' talk between two men in private. It precedes some frank revelation or observation of a personal nature which might lead to embarrassment – thus the tone is bluffly confidential. Examples: 1. 'Larry, old chap, I think you should know that your wife is sleeping with the milkman.' 2. 'Sorry to have to tell you this, Larry, old chap, but they are talking about you at the club . . .' 3. 'Afraid there's only one thing for it, Larry, old chap. Here's a brandy and a revolver. . . . I think you know what a gentleman must do.'

This conjecture is borne out by a reference in Google which comes from a rather ghastly sounding Victorian novel called *Married or Single* which was possibly well known and parodied at the time.

LH to PGN: It occurred to me that since you and I are both Americans, we are unlikely to know about an expression like 'Larry, old chap.' So I emailed to three friends, all retired professors of English literature, and asked if "Larry, old chap" meant anything. I didn't give them a context, to not influence their replies. One friend has, I think, hit the nail on the head, as follows: [Suzette's idea as above]

PGN to LH: Re 'Larry, old chap': Suzette's explanation is certainly plausible and possible. I think I said it might have come from a music hall skit; we need an allusion to a work known both to MJJ and to AEH; that is not fatal to a novel.

Thoughts on L.T.C. Rolt in his Centenary Year

A paper presented by Tim Coghlan to the Cheltenham Literary Festival October 2010 in association with Prunella Scales and Timothy West.

One of my favourite *Monty Python* sketches appears quite late into the series – in fact Episode Thirty-one. It's *The All-England Summarize Proust Competition* in which the host Terry Jones explains that each contestant has to give a brief summary of Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* in a maximum of fifteen seconds. Jones then draws the back stage curtain to reveal the *Proustometer* which per the stage directions is 'a true enormous, but cheap audience appreciation gauge; it lists the seven books of Proust's masterwork in the form of a thermometer.'



Tim Coghlan at his Braunston Marina

The performances by the contestants are comic disasters, whereupon Jones announces, 'Well ladies and gentlemen, I don't think any of our contestants this evening have succeeded in encapsulating the intricacies of Proust's masterwork, so I'm going to award the first prize to the girl with the biggest tits.' On comes a lightly-clad Carol Cleveland doing her famous wiggle...

Years later in a retro-programme about the series, I saw Carol 'Cleavage' as she was known, being interviewed about her many non-speaking parts including this one. She said that the *Python* team, who wrote their own material had all been to public school and Cambridge, and as a result had had no contact with women other than mothers and sisters. It's perhaps fortunate for Prunella that John Cleese had met Connie Booth before he wrote *Fawlty Towers* or *Sybil* might



Lock 2 Cottage, Braunston

have been cast in a different role. 'I know, I know'...

Anyway, I have a feeling I face the same challenge as the luckless contestants in trying to talk about Tom Rolt's literary output in the short time I have been given. I can already hear the Roltometer ticking away with the thirty plus books, let alone my giving a sensible appreciation of his contribution to the saving our waterways, and the inspiration he gave to so many to become involved in them. So I will confine my thoughts as to why Rolt is important to me.

I bought Braunston Marina in 1988 when this historic boatyard was in a pitiful state. I knew little about canals, which I came to as a seagoing sailor, and almost nothing about their history and how near we came to losing them. A friend at the time who was also a narrow boater gave me a copy of *Narrow Boat* and said I had to read it. The book deeply affected and inspired me as few have ever done. What was most surprising was that as Nurser's Yard, Braunston Marina appeared in the book. The very ground I stood on was sacred.

It changed my thinking as to the way I wanted Braunston Marina to develop. There needed to be a balance between conserving its historic structure and heritage, and putting in place the necessary changes to the marina to make sure it never went bankrupt again. Others must be the judge of what I have done, but someone who has spoken kindly of my endeavours is Sonia Rolt, who invited me to join the platform today, now twenty-two years on, as 'a canal expert'.

I had the privilege of meeting Sonia when she launched her book *A Canal People* at the 1996 Braunston Boat Show – which in my opinion as a collection of miraculously-rescued old canal photographs, is as important a work as *Narrow Boat*.

Over the years since I first met Sonia, I have seen her many times – including her twice opening our now annual Historic Narrowboat Rallies, and even climbing onto the steam narrowboat *President* as a nimble ninety year old.

I have even visited her house, after I took her back from the *Stop The Cuts* protest demonstration we held at Braunston a few years ago, in which she had addressed the throng from Braunston's Butchers Bridge over a Henley style megaphone.

She even allowed me to go up on my own to see Rolt's study in which he wrote most of his books. The room was something of time-warp and I sat nervously down on his chair. When I returned to Sonia in her kitchen across the hall, she told me how Tom used to dread climbing those stairs to start his daily writing and would find any excuse to linger. 'You see he had to write to pay the bills. We had no other income, and I had to look after the two boys.'

* * * * *

I would now like to talk about one of the major influences on Rolt's style of writing which particularly interests me, and that is the poet A.E. Housman. I am a paid up member of the A.E. Housman Society, and can claim to have read at least twice every poem that man wrote, for the simple reason that there are so few of them, and all are at least good in parts. I cannot claim that achievement with any other poet or indeed author. And when I was asked some years ago as the Braunston *gumna* to preside over the non-religious scattering of the ashes of an old Nurser's Yard boatman at Braunston Bottom Lock, I read his *From far, from eve and morning / And yon twelve-winded sky..*' my most favourite poem from his *A Shropshire Lad*.

In his *Landscape with Machines*, the first volume of his autobiographical trilogy, Rolt writes: "I thought the Shropshire landscape like, and yet at the same time strangely unlike, that other country of the Herefordshire Marches further to the south which I had come to know so well as a child. Despite its great natural beauty, however, I felt then – as I still feel – that there is something indefinably melancholy about western Shropshire. Instead of seeming to transcend and lift the heart as did the country of my childhood, it seemed to speak of time passing and to evoke rare memories of old, unhappy, far off things. I had not read Housman at this time, but when I did so, some of his poems seemed to me to be loaded with the burden of profound sadness."

That 'profound sadness' occurs time and time again in Rolt's autobiographical works, *'those blue remembered hills... the land of lost content... The happy highways where I went and cannot come again.'* For me this is Rolt at his very best. Near the end of *Landscape with Canals*, he painfully describes his parting with his wife Angela at Tooley's Boatyard in Banbury, where their adventures had begun those twelve years before: "This was the spring of 1951 when life on *Cressy* was drawing to its expected end. For the sum of £10 Angela bought herself a 'flat-nose' Morris Oxford two-seater coupe. It both looked and sounded pretty down-at-heel, but after suitable treatment by me it became reasonably reliable." (Angela's story begins and ends with an aside-description of her cars at the time!) "When she had stowed her belongings in the dickey, I watched from *Cressy's* deck as she drove away over the wooden drawbridge at the end of Factory Street. I then went below into a boat that suddenly seemed to have become very silent. Twenty years were to pass before I saw Angela again, and for her they were to be years of wandering...."

Only pages later comes the even more painful parting with *Cressy*. "I had to journey on alone to Stone Wharf. The last ten miles and nine locks were into the low sunlight of a perfect spring evening. To say that I felt sad would be a gross understatement, and yet it struck me as only fitting that *Cressy* and I, who had voyaged together for so many years, should now complete our last journey alone." At Stone Wharf a friend came to collect him to drive him back to his mother's house in Gloucestershire. Rolt continues, "Then I shut the cabin doors behind me for the last time. I did not look back as we drove away. From now on I should be living 'on the bank' as the canal boaters put it. I understand that *Cressy* lay at Stone Wharf for some weeks, if not months, before they towed her away to some backwater on the Trent & Mersey where they left her to sink and rot. I have never inquired the precise whereabouts of this watery grave because I did not want to see her again."

But not all of Housman's influence is one of brooding melancholy. In his *Sleep No More* Rolt wrote a collection of ghost and mystery stories. In one called *The Mine*, the opening lines are, "There was a high west wind over the Shropshire March – a boisterous, buffeting wind that swept down the slopes of the Long Mynd and over the Vale of the Severn to send the November leaves whirling through the darkness from the mane of Wenlock Edge." Compare that with Housman:

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

I think Rolt was enjoying himself playing *Spot The Quotation* and having a bit of literary fun! But I missed out my favourite line from that poem, "'Tis the old wind in the old anger", which I often recall to myself when going on an autumnal walk on a blustery day.

* * * * *

I would now like to move across the waters to Ireland and to what is my favourite of Rolt's works, his *Silver & Green*. If I had to take a book to Roy Plumley's *Desert Island*, then this would have to be on my shortlist of five. I had the honour of being presented with a copy of the recently printed Third Impression when I visited the Irish canals for the first time in 1994 on a goodwill visit as guest of the Irish government and the Office of Public Works – their equivalent of British Waterways – at the height of the Troubles, when there was so little contact between Britain and Ireland. That third impression of *Silver & Green* was printed in Ireland, and the flag of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland is made up of silver and green stripes – such is the esteem Rolt is held in over there. All remember that he was the last person to fully navigate the Royal Canal before it closed in 1946 and it is only this September that it has finally been fully reopened

to navigation.

In his foreword, Rolt writes, “This book describes a voyage through the inland waterways of Ireland in 1946. So little was known about these waterways then, that our journey was undertaken in the spirit of discovery, a venture into the unknown.” The book is therefore of considerable historical importance, as well as a wonderful read to anyone who knows and loves Ireland and its waterways. I would just like to read just two of my hundreds of favourite pieces – every page is a delight:



Tom Rolt on Cressy by the Crick Tunnel

The first is on the Upper Shannon: “We made our way back down the river in the late afternoon and turned into Jamestown or, to give it its official title, Albert Lock. The lock was in charge of Michael Bourke. He possessed a great store of conversation and a felicitous turn of phrase which reminded me of Synge’s ‘Playboy’....From fishing the talk drifted I know not how but in typical Irish fashion to Russian expansionist policy (at that time much in the news) and from thence to some barbarous murder which seemed to have left a deep impression on Michael’s mind. Russian policy was easily explained: ‘It’s no religion they have at all’, said he, while his graphic description of the murder was punctuated at intervals by the query: ‘And wasn’t that a terrible thing now?’

“Eventually we bade Michael farewell and moved on through the cut to moor up to the rings of the convenient disused quay situated where the cut rejoins the river just above Jamestown, whither we walked that evening to enjoy an excellent glass of porter.” In 1997 I retraced Rolt’s voyage on the Upper Shannon, and moored at the same spot and walked into Jamestown, which had hardly changed from Rolt’s time, only to find that the pub, which Rolt probably would have used, had closed – ‘And wasn’t that a terrible thing now?’

My other piece is from his voyage down the Grand Canal from the Shannon to Dublin, when he stops at the small canal-side town of Tullamore, famous for its Tullamore Whiskey, in County Offaly, from which my father’s family originate. “Few things have a greater attraction to my eyes than a distant range of hills or mountains. Whether they merge into the blue of the horizon, whether they veil themselves in mist or stand stark in the storm light they entice me to scale them and to discover what country lies beyond their far skyline..... I too know the urge to go ‘always a little further’,

and the particular objective in this case was the ridge of the Slieve Bloom Mountains which seemed to have marched along beside us in tantalizing fashion all the way from Shannon Harbour. They were about eleven miles distant from Tullamore, so we proposed to hire bicycles and visit them if the weather held fair.”

So once again Housman’s *What are those blue remembered hills?* Or that other profound influence on Rolt, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, whom Rolt refers to on quite a few occasions in *Landscape with Canals*, including marking his death in southern France in January, 1939: ‘I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree.... And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow / There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow.’

I would like to move away from his Arcadian waxing lyrical moments to his more practical side, which is the world of today’s canals in which I work. For a long time marinas were despised by the canal purists, and well into my time. The WWII *Idle Woman* Margaret Cornish in her biography *Troubled Waters* wrote, “Even the word ‘marina’ makes me shudder....such an alien concept to my own feelings on the canals – like pinning a cheap piece of jewellery on a tailored tweed suit.”

Rolt is kinder: writing in 1969 in his *Inland Waterways of England*, he states: “Today all is changed. We have rediscovered our waterways and paradoxically, this discovery has coincided with the death of the old indigenous and colourful commercial life of the canals. Whether a modern fibreglass cruiser is a worthy substitute for a commercial ‘narrow boat’ in all the brave splendour of bright paint and polished brass work, or whether a ... marina is an appropriate end of an eighteenth-century range of canal warehouses may be questioned. Those who deplore such changes must take consolation in the fact that at least they are positive and spell life of a new kind. The only alternative was a weed-choked and ruinous death.”

I read that piece as part of my statement at the Public Enquiry in 1994 into our plans to expand Braunston Marina. Rolt is still relevant today.

For my final thought on Rolt, the acid test of any great writer is whether that person’s works survive the test of time. Several of Rolt’s books are still in print and being sold, even though some are now well over sixty years old. With many of them appealing to canal or railway enthusiasts this is perhaps understandable, and we have at least three of his canal books on sale at Braunston Marina at any one time. But even his more general books, such as *Victorian Engineering* still have an appeal to today’s reader simply because they were so well and entertainingly written. Which reminds me of that epigram from Hilaire Belloc:

Of me, when I’m dead,
Let it be said,
“His sins were scarlet,
But his prose was read!”

Thoughts on 'Is my team ploughing'

Mrs Judith Dutton writes with, "a thought about A Shropshire Lad XXVII".

A great many people, from Vaughan Williams downwards, have grumbled at lines 15-16,

"The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal."

I'm not sure that they are right. In lines 7-8, the living man reassures his dead friend that there is 'No change...'. Is he not doing the same in lines 15-16, though less directly? He takes over the dead man's phrase, 'stand up', to reassure him that, though he has fallen, the goal and its keeper are still upright, still doing their job as his horses are.



Perhaps it is implied that the dead man had himself been the goalkeeper. If so, he has been the speaker in *ASL XXVII*:

"Twice a week the winter thorough
Here stood I to keep the goal."

Or maybe I deduce too much; in both poems 'goal' is rhymed with 'soul' – maybe A.E.H. simply found 'goal' a handy rhyme for 'soul'..."

Mrs Dutton sent her thought-provoking idea with a Christmas card, which also contained an acrostic poem of her own with a Christmas message. She added the following to her ideas about ASL XXVII:

On my first attempt to write a verse for your Christmas card, it unfolded itself as follows:

"Are the stars shining
To jewel Christmas Eve?
And do you still remember
How soon I had to leave?"

Aye, lad, bright as diamonds
The stars are shining yet;
Till they turn black forever
Be sure I'll not forget.

(My husband died on December 27th 1994)

How true is the comment with which she follows this moving poem in imitation of Housman:

"A.E.H.'s verse forms don't seem to lend themselves to cheerful verse!"

Miscellanea

- **A Poet's Year** - Gillian Clarke, the National Poet of Wales, who judged the Housman Society Poetry Competition in 1995, created a gem of a programme on Radio 4 recently when she presented a calendar of the year. She and her husband work a hill farm, raise sheep, grow their own fruit and vegetables. She created vivid word pictures of meadow butterflies, red kites above a field, a quince tree unexpectedly golden with fruit, and a walk with grandchildren when they race home under a big black cloud of hail.

- **The Housman Hundred**, which will take place over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, Saturday May 28th to Monday May 30th, has had an unprecedented number of entries and the limit has now been reached. The route, which takes in the scenic uplands of the Welsh Marches, through the 'Blue remembered hills' and 'Land of lost content' is 100 miles to be walked in 48 hours and starts from Moor Park School near Ludlow.

- **Wenlock Poetry Festival** takes place from 29th April to 1st May 2011 and is an annual celebration of the very best in poetry. Held for the first time in 2010 under the patronage of Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and National Poet for Wales Gillian Clarke, the festival will build upon Shropshire's rich poetic heritage to make Much Wenlock a national centre for poetry. To join the mailing list contact info@wenlockpoetryfestival.org

- **Roderick Williams** is giving a recital of settings by Housman and Hardy in St George Hanover Square, London on 17th November as part of the London Song Festival. Music by Finzi, Ireland, Richard Sisson, Bax, Gurney, Moeran and Somervell.

- **Katharine Whitehorn** reveals in 'The Oldie' that she has chosen *Parta Quies* to be read at her funeral.

- The first performance in Ontario of **Butterworth's A Shropshire Lad** cycle was given by James Campbell McInnes who, while in the midst of a successful career in England, emigrated to Canada in 1919. He became a well known teacher and crucial figure in the city's musical life, and well known for his 'Tuesday Nine o'Clocks' where he presented unfamiliar vocal and chamber music. Last month Brett Polegato, a Canadian baritone who sang in Ludlow in the 2004 English Song Weekend, followed in his footsteps and included the Butterworth cycle in his recital in Ontario.

- **The Conservation Trust for St Laurence's**, Ludlow is organising a Conservation Weekend on 21 and 22 May 2011 to contribute to the £27,000 that is urgently needed to conserve the stonework and important monuments in the church. There will be talks, walks, tours of the church, craft demonstrations, floral displays, local food and drink and an auction of carvings. Details from website or 01584 877771.

The Housman Society Book Exchange

“I know Ludlow and Wenlock, but my topographical details – Hughley, Abdon under Clee – are sometimes quite wrong”, said Housman in his 1933 letter to the young Frenchman, Maurice Pollet.

It is certain that Housman’s interest in Shropshire was emotional not geographic, but what is less clear is the actual extent of his knowledge of the area. In Richard Perceval Graves *The Scholar-Poet* we learn that six of the Shropshire poems were written before he had visited the county, later going there ‘to gain local colour’. Housman would also have stored in his wonderfully retentive memory facts that he had been told, or information that he had read – not least in one of the books offered in the current listing.

Murray’s Handbook for Shropshire, Cheshire and Lancashire is the oldest book yet to be offered by the Book Exchange, and the book’s influence on Housman is remarkable, for example: “The Saxon and English Wrekin, in which the name of Vrikon, ‘City of Iconium’, whose ashes smoulder beneath its slopes, is virtually enshrined” converts to “ashes under Uricon” in *ASL XXXI*. The *Handbook* speaks of Shrewsbury “encircled by the Severn on all sides but the North, and locally termed ‘the Island’ ” which inspires “islanded in Severn stream” in *ASL XXVIII*. On leaving Shrewsbury by the Welsh Bridge one joins the ‘Reddie Way’ and in *ASL XXVIII* we find “Bleeds upon the road to Wales”. And, referring to Church Stretton, we read, “The last fair in the year is popularly distinguished by the rather significant name of ‘Dead Man’s Fair’ which Housman deals with in *LP XIX*. Elsewhere we learn that one of the entrances to the Wrekin is named Hell Gate (*LP XXXI*), there is recorded the popular doggerel, *Clunton and Clunbury, Clungunford and Clun*, and it is from this book that Housman obtains the archaic spelling of the River Ony. For the avoidance of doubt I must point out that Housman’s copy of the *Handbook* was the 1879 edition (Shropshire and Cheshire) but here we are offering the 1870 edition (which includes Lancashire). I have, however, checked the two books and it would appear that the text referring to Housman’s Shropshire is identical in both volumes.

In a most varied selection of material we are also offering a first-edition *A Shropshire Lad*, three first-editions of *Manilius* which are offered individually to assist members looking to complete the set, and several interesting Housman catalogues. We welcome enquiries for any books for which you are searching.

As always the items offered for sale are on a first-come, first-served basis irrespective of the means of contact used. All enquiries, please, to Peter Sisley at Ladywood Cottage, Baveney Wood, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire DY14 8HZ on telephone number 01299 841361 (evenings and weekends) or facsimile 01299 841582 or e-mail at sisley.ladywood@talk21.com

SALES LIST – FEBRUARY 2011

Postage and Packing are additional to the prices quoted.

ALDINGTON (Richard). A.E. HOUSMAN & W.B. YEATS. The Peacocks Press, Hurst, Berkshire; 1955. First edition. 8vo. 35 pages. Green cloth, missing the tissue jacket. Limited edition. One of 350 copies. These lectures were originally given in New York in 1938. Very Good. £40

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE LIBRARY. THE NAME AND NATURE OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Bryn Mawr College Library, Pennsylvania, 1986. First edition. 4to. 54 pages. With an introduction by Seymour Adelman. The catalogue of the amazing Housman collection donated to the College by Adelman. A superb work. Fine. £30

BROWNE (Piers). AN ELEGY IN ARCADIA. An Artist’s view of Housman’s Poetry. Ashford Press, Southampton. 1990. Second revised edition. 8vo. 164 pages. Following Browne’s sumptuous limited edition of *A Shropshire Lad* published by The Shorthorn Press in 1986 this book explores the influences on Housman’s work from the perspective of the artist. Signed by the author. Fine, in a very good dust jacket. £15

CARTER (John) and SCOTT (Joseph) CATALOGUE ON AN EXHIBITION ON THE CENTENARY OF HIS BIRTH. University College, London, 1959. First edition. 8vo. 35 pages. Green paper covers. Contains a preface by Carter and a Biographical Introduction by Scott. A rare catalogue. Very good. £50

CARTER (John), SPARROW (John) and WHITE (William). A.E. HOUSMAN – A BIBLIOGRAPHY. St. Paul’s Bibliographies, Godalming, 1982. 8vo. 94 pages. An updated, revised and considerably enlarged version of the 1952 first edition. Very good. £20

COLLAMORE (H.B.). A COLLECTION OF MANUSCRIPTS, LETTERS, PROOFS, FIRST EDITIONS, ETC. FORMED BY H.B. COLLAMORE OF WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT PRESENTED TO THE LILLY LIBRARY INDIANA UNIVERSITY. No publishers imprint, no date, but Lilly Library, 1961. First edition. 8vo. 37 pages. A Catalogue of the donation of Collamore’s Housman Collection to the Library. Includes a footnote by John Carter. The paper covers are somewhat browned and marked. Internally fine. Overall very good. Scarce. £40

GOW (A.S.F.) A.E. Housman – A SKETCH. Cambridge University Press. 1936. First Edition. 8vo. 137 pages. Green cloth missing the dust jacket. A delightful sketch of Housman by a fellow professor, together with a comprehensive list of his writings and indexes to his classical papers. Very good. £10

GRAVES (Richard Perceval). A.E. HOUSMAN ; THE SCHOLAR-POET. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1979. First Edition, 304 pages. The first comprehensive biography. Price clipped, dust jacket, otherwise near fine. Signed by the author. £20

HAWKINS (Maude M.). A.E. HOUSMAN: MAN BEHIND A MASK. Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1958.

First edition (not published in the U.K.). 292 pages. The author's writing style and tendency to assumption has resulted in this book being regarded as an unreliable biography but Hawkins did spend much time with Laurence Housman in the book's preparation. Very good, in a very good dust jacket. £20

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co. Ltd., London, 1896. 12mo. 96 pages. Original parchment backed boards with paper spine label. The first edition. Carter and Sparrow 'A' label missing about 50% of the word *Shropshire*. Spine sunned and minor rubbing and bumping to edges. Minor browning to covers. Internally very good indeed with no signatures, markings or bookplates. One of about 350 copies issued in the English first edition. Overall very good. Free insured postage on this item. £1200

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Grant Richards, London, 1908. The first illustrated edition. 8vo. 126 pages. White decorated buckram, stamped in gilt. Richards persuaded Housman to allow this edition but, after publication, Housman wrote, "I do not care for the new edition. Coloured plates always strike me as vulgar." The illustrations are by William Hyde who also designed the cover and the illustrations for the end-papers. Housman approved of these endpapers though he remarked, "the horses seem to be letting the man do all the ploughing." Bookplate. Very Good. £45

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. MANILII ASTRONOMICON LIBER SECVNDVS. Grant Richards Ltd., London, 1912. First edition. 8vo. 31 pages of introduction followed by 123 pages of text. Original blue boards with paper spine label. Extremely rare. Very good. £150

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. MANILII ASTRONOMICON LIBER QVARTVS. Grant Richards Ltd., London, 1920. First edition. 8vo. 17 pages of introduction followed by 130 pages of text. Original blue boards with paper spine label. Extremely rare. Very good. £150

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. MANILII ASTRONOMICON LIBER QVINTVS. The Richards Press, London, 1930. First edition. 8vo. 46 pages of introduction followed by 199 pages of text. Original blue boards with paper spine label. Extremely rare. Very good. £150

HOUSMAN (A.E.). INTRODUCTORY LECTURE 1892. Cambridge at the University Press, 1937. First trade edition. 42 pages. Blue cloth. With an introductory note by A.S.F. Gow, this is the text of Housman's lecture at University College on 3rd October, 1892. Fine in a very good, spine-sunned dust jacket. £30

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. ANNAEI LVCANI BELLI CIVILIS LIBRI DECEM. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1950. Reprint of the 1927 corrected edition. 8vo. xxxv. 342 pages. Blue cloth. Very good, in very good dust jacket. £45

HOUSMAN (A.E.). THE CONFINES OF CRITICISM. THE CAMBRIDGE INAUGURAL 1911. Cambridge at the University Press, 1969. First edition. 12mo. 54 pages. With notes by John Carter. Green cloth, in the dust jacket. Fine. £25

HOUSMAN (Laurence). A.E.H. SOME POEMS, SOME LETTERS AND A PERSONAL MEMOIR BY HIS

BROTHER. Jonathan Cape, London, 1937. First edition. 8vo. 286 pages. Blue cloth missing the dust jacket. Laurence's memoir of his brother, including the first printing of the additional poems. Occasional minor foxing. Very good. £10

MURRAY (John). MURRAY'S HANDBOOK FOR SHROPSHIRE, CHESHIRE AND LANCASHIRE. John Murray, London, 1870. 12mo. lxxx. 328 pages plus advertisements. The red flexible covers are somewhat worn, as is the original inserted map covering the area. Internally very good. A most interesting insight into the creation of some of Housman's verse. Rare. £35

RICHARDS (Grant). HOUSMAN 1897-1936. Oxford University Press, New York, 1942. The American edition. 8vo. 493 pages. Red cloth missing the dust jacket. In addition to Richard's reminiscences there is an excellent set of appendices by other hands, those by Professor G.B.A. Fletcher being particularly interesting. Very good. £15

ROWE (Antony) [editor]. FOR LUCASTA, WITH RUE. Arrow Press, London, 1967. First edition. 89 pages. An interesting exercise in intertextuality – the influence on one text on the mind of a reader who is grappling with another. Alternate poems in Latin by various authors and in English by A.E. Housman. One of 100 copies. Very good, missing the dust jacket. £30

SYMONS (Katharine E.), POLLARD (A.W.), HOUSMAN (Laurence), CHAMBERS (R.W.), KER (Alan), GOW (A.S.F.), SPARROW (John) and SYMONS (N.V.H.). ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN. Bromsgrove School, 1936. First edition. 4to. 65 pages. The true first edition. Number 211 of 250 copies, none of which were for sale. Card covers with deckled edges. The Housman Memorial supplement of the 'Bromsgrovian'. Externally very good indeed and internally fine; almost certainly never read. An excellent example of a notoriously fragile publication. £60

SYMONS (Katharine E.), POLLARD (A.W.), HOUSMAN (Laurence), CHAMBERS (R.W.), KER (Alan), GOW (A.S.F.), SPARROW (John) and SYMONS (N.V.H.). ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN. Bromsgrove School, 1936. First trade edition. 4to. 60 pages. Green cloth. Limited to 500 copies. With the bookplate of P.B. Morris. £40

ZEITLIN & VER BRUGGE (Compilers). A.E. HOUSMAN. CATALOGUE 265. 4to. Zeitlin & Ver Brugge, Los Angeles, 1983. An indexed catalogue detailing over two hundred items of Housman interest. Most informative. Very good. £30

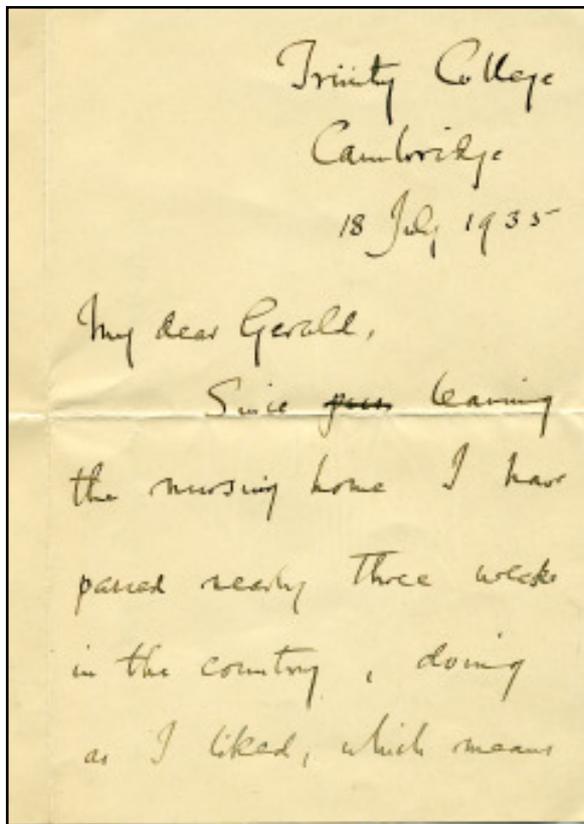
WANTS LIST

The Housman Society Newsletters recommenced in February 1998 with issue number 7 after a gap of 19 years. Does anyone have issues 1 to 6? Name your price.

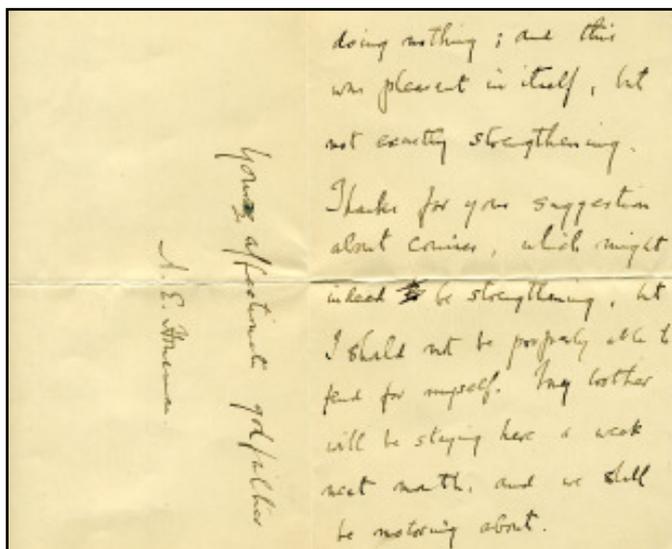
The Road of Danger, Guilt and Shame – by Carol Efrati.

And we still have a number of members trying to complete broken runs of **Housman Society Journals**. The early years are particularly elusive. Please contact Peter Sisley if you can help.

A.E.H.'s 1935 Letter to his Godson



This letter has
been very
generously given
to the Chairman
by Andrew
Jackson



Summer Outing to explore Shelsley

A very enticing Summer Event is being planned for the Society by Treasurer Max Hunt. It will centre on an exploration of the attractions of Shelsley in the Teme Valley. Foremost is the ancient Water Mill, restored by The Shelsley Water Mill Society. There has been a watermill on or near this site since 1308, but the current mill shows three stages of construction spanning 200 years. It was last used to grind animal feed around 1923. The Society has restored the mill to a working condition for use as a visitor attraction and educational resource, as well as providing active conservation of wildlife habitat. It has two pairs of millstones and a geared shaft taking power from the waterwheel into the farm buildings where it drives the original Chaff Cutter and Root Chopper. Everything is in working order and is occasionally used.

The mill is located near the foot of the famous Shelsley Walsh hill-climb course which has a history dating back to 1905, and a gentle stroll up the hill will give us splendid views of the Abberley Hills and Teme Valley. Nearby is the beautiful 12th century St Andrews church and the Court House which dates from the 16th century.

The day will start with lunch at Hundred House Hotel in Great Witley, which is easy to find on the A443 Worcester to Tenbury Wells road. Meet there at 12.15pm where members pay for their own lunch. A donation of £5.00 towards the places we visit is suggested. The date is Sunday 10th July 2011 – book it in your diary – see page 16 for practical details.

'Till Ludlow Tower shall fall'

Till Ludow Tower shall fall, published last November by Richardson and Gray Ltd, tells the story of the lives of all the men on Ludlow's First World War memorial. The author is Clive Richardson, who lives in Ludlow, and has researched the lives of more than 130 local men listed on the 1914-18 memorial. He sets each soldier in the context of the battles in which they fell and also features contemporary news reports and soldiers' letters home.

Clive Richardson, who is secretary of the Ludlow Historical Association, will be lecturing on the subject on 9 March 2011 in Ludlow Assembly Rooms. Non-members are welcome to attend for £3.00.



Bill Griffiths, standing, was killed in action on December 30, 1917. Twins George and Charlie survived the war, as did a fourth brother, Art, although he lost a leg.

**Soldali meo
M. I. Jackson
harum litterarum
contemporari**

**To my dear friend
M. J. Jackson,
a disparager of this
treatise**

In a recent issue of 'The New Criterion' a new translation by A.M. Juster of Housman's Latin verse dedication of M. Manilii Astronomicon Liber Primus (1903) to Moses Jackson is given. Both the original and the translation are reproduced below. The translation is reproduced by kind permission of A.M. Juster and The New Criterion.

Signa pruinosae variantia luce cavernas
noctis et extincto lumina nata die
solo rure vagi lateque tacentibus arvis
surgere nos una vidimus oceano.
Vidimus: illa prius, cum luce carebat uterque,
viderat in latium prona poeta mare,
seque memor terra mortalem matre creatum
intulit aeternis carmina sideribus,
clara nimis post se genitis exempla daturus
ne qui forte deis fidere vellet homo.
nam supero sacrata polo complexaque mundum
sunt tamen indignam carmina passa luem,
et licet ad nostras enarint naufraga terras
scriptoris nomen vix tenuere sui.
non ego mortalem vexantia sidera sortem
aeternosve tuli sollicitare deos,
sed cito casurae tactus virtutis amore
humana volui quaerere nomen ope,
virque virum legi fortemque brevemque sodalem
qui titulus libro vellet inesse meo.
O victure meis dicam periturine chartis,
nomine sed certe vivere digne tuo,
haec tibi ad auroram surgentia signa secuto
hesperia trado munera missa plaga.
En cape: nos populo venit inlatura perempto
ossa solo quae det dissolvenda dies
fataque sortitas non immortalia mentes
et non aeterni vincla sodalicii.

Roaming quiet country in broad, open fields,
We both would watch the constellations play
Their light on vaults of frigid night as stars appeared
Throughout the quenching of the fading day.
We watched. This poet, when we had no light,
Would watch it set upon the Romans' sea
And, ever mindful Mother Earth had made him mortal,
Supplied us timeless stars in poetry
To give clear warning to the people yet to come
So no one had to trust the deities.
These holy songs of Heaven that embrace the cosmos
Were then afflicted with indignities,
And though the wreckage ended up upon our shores,
Their authorship was narrowly retained.
I couldn't bear to beg eternal gods or stars
Afflicting mortals with the preordained,
But, touched by love of virtue that will quickly pass,
I searched for someone with determination;
A man, I chose a man, a brave and fleeting friend
Who in my book should want this dedication.
O you who thrive or fall, I'd say, within these pages,
Though with a name that merits living on:
I send this gift conveyed from western shores to you
Who followed stars ascending at the dawn.
Come now, accept; that day we join the dead is coming,
Which gives the dirt our bones as they decay
With spirits destined not to live eternally
And bonds between dear friends that fade away.

Society's Website Redesigned.

About ten years ago when the Society was thinking it ought to have a website I was staying in a Bed and Breakfast in Sussex and, in conversation with the host, asked who ran their website. His recommendation of Knowledge Computing has proved invaluable as Ian and Caroline Tresman (a husband and wife team who met through the Internet!) have given the Society excellent service since then at a very modest cost. Ian has degrees in Chemistry and a Masters in Computer Science, and he went on to specialise in computer programming. Caroline has had a range of careers in hotel and catering, and the Charity Sector; she is also a Web Publisher and the Founder and Editor of <Homeworking.com>.

The Society's website has just been redesigned and it continues to be clear and easy to navigate. The site is divided into six "pages" and by making the latest Journal and Newsletter available there is much more for the casual reader to look at. Other "pages" include 'About A.E. Housman', 'Books and Greetings Cards', 'Calendar of Events', 'Index to the Journal' (for which we are indebted to P.G.N.) and Andrew Maund's 'Hypertext *A Shropshire Lad*'. The site has today's date on and has had just over 100,000 visits in the last 12 months. Take a look at the latest Newsletter on the site and see how much better the photos look in colour!

Jim Page

Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 1 March 2011, 7.30pm

80 New Road, Bromsgrove B60 2LA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting will be followed by a talk from Elizabeth Oakley entitled: *'Down with the Radicals!': The politics of Edward Housman*. According to his son Laurence, Edward Housman was a 'hot Tory'. What that might actually mean and what evidence exists outside family tradition are questions which this talk will address. Wine and Refreshments. Please indicate if you are coming by filling in the form or e-mailing the Chairman.

Tuesday 8th to Saturday 12th March 2011, 7.30pm

Wednesday & Thursday, 1.30pm, Saturday, 2.30pm

Greenwich Theatre, Crooms Hill, London SE10 8ES

LYSISTRATA by Aristophanes adapted by Laurence Housman performed by Kidbrooke School & Specialist Arts College.

Friday 25 March 2011, 12.30pm

The Statue, High Street, Bromsgrove

A.E.H. BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION

Annual ceremony by the statue followed by buffet lunch in the Council House, by kind invitation of the Chairman of the Bromsgrove District Council, Councillor June Griffiths. Guest of the day will be Sajid Javid, Bromsgrove's new Member of Parliament. Please fill in the form if coming.

Wednesday 27 April 2011, 11.00am

St Laurence's & The Assembly Rooms, Ludlow

LUDLOW COMMEMORATION

The ceremony by the plaque on the north wall will be followed by a talk in Ludlow Assembly Rooms by Paul Griffin on the Marlborough *A Shropshire Lad*. See the September 2009 Newsletter for background to this interesting edition. Followed by lunch. Please indicate on the form if you are coming.

Wednesday 1st June 2011, 5.30pm (time tbc)

The Hay Festival of Literature

THE HOUSMAN LECTURE

The Name and Nature of Poetry

We are delighted to welcome Ruth Padel as our guest. The lecture will be followed by supper in the sponsors' marquee to which members are cordially invited. Please indicate on the enclosed form if you would like complimentary tickets and join the committee afterwards for supper – pay for your own.

Sunday 10th July 2011, 12.15pm

Shelsley Walsh

SUMMER OUTING to Shelsley Water Mill etc

Meet for lunch at Hundred House Hotel in Great Witley (about 5 miles from Shelsley on the A443 Worcester to Tenbury Wells road). After lunch Max Hunt will take us on a tour of the Shelsley, including 12th C church, Hill Climb track, Court House and the ancient Water Mill, restored by The Shelsley Water Mill Society to a working condition for use as a visitor attraction and educational resource. See page 14 for more detail. Please fill in the form for confirmation nearer the time.

Lysistrata translated by Laurence Housman

Rare performances of Laurence Housman's adaptation of the classic Greek anti-war satire *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes will be taking place at the Greenwich Theatre from Tuesday 8th March till Saturday 12th March, with matinees on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Living in a time of change Laurence changed also and breaking out from his conservative upbringing, he became a political activist who, throughout his life, campaigned and helped raise awareness about issues such as peace and feminism. Indeed, as a founding member of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage in 1907, he was one of the only men to be arrested in connection with the suffragette movement. A member of the Peace Pledge Union since its creation in 1934, it was his idea to open a bookshop dealing with pacifism. Housmans, which still trades at Peace House, 5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, opened in 1945, and has been active since then.

Laurence's translation was first performed in 1911 in support of the Suffragette movement and this run of performances is being given by Kidbrooke School and Specialist Arts College in association with Greenwich Theatre. It will be directed by Lucy Cuthbertson. Tickets may be obtained via the Greenwich Theatre website or on 020 8858 7755.

Ruth Padel for Hay Lecture

We are delighted to welcome Ruth Padel as our speaker for this year's *Name and Nature of Poetry* lecture. She is a prize-winning British poet and author, currently Writer in Residence at the Environment Institute, University College London. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Zoological Society of London and a Member of Bombay Natural History Society.



Her remarkable book *Darwin: A Life in Poems* covering Darwin's science, travels, marriage and family life have received wide acclaim. Clair Tomalin said of the book, "Once I started reading I could not put it down till I reached the end; then I turned back for the pleasure of reading it again."