



# NEWSLETTER

February 2013

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## Society's Vision rewarded in a Memorable 'Contexts and Perspectives' Weekend

*The sixty members and guests who attended either the whole or part of the October weekend were full of praise for all aspects of the event and there was not one session that did not live up to expectations – indeed many exceeded them. Housman Hall once more proved an excellent venue and Bromsgrove School's catering team supplied quality meals throughout.*

As the first item of the programme on the Saturday morning of the Bromsgrove weekend, we were promised a view of **Housman's life in a 26 stop journey** that would, in turns, be erudite and entertaining, serious and stimulating, *writes Andrew Maund*. It was no surprise to anyone who had heard Linda Hart speak before or read any of her scholarship that that was exactly what the item proved to be. Linda covered everything from A is for "A Shropshire Lad" to Z is for "Zoological Housman" via the familiar theme from the poetry of D for "Death" (although the significance of other deaths was made clear), the inevitable J for "Jackson, Moses" – leaving M for "Manilius", the scholar poet's life work – a short technical treatise with Q for "Quatrains" and a focus on U for "UCL" (which, we were to learn in a later lecture, was the location for some of A.E.H.'s happiest times), to name but four.

Many of the audience had, perhaps, tried to second guess what some of the letters might be going to represent before seeing them in the published programme, but Linda's thoroughly researched and consummately well-balanced and well-structured presentation was full of surprises and delights. Even for those fully versed in Housman's biography, there were new discoveries to be made and, as with any distillation of a subject into a structured form, the 26 letter mnemonic will serve as a prompt for all of the key aspects of A.E.H.'s life and works.

There was a danger in producing such a brief essence of the man that things could be left out, but the obvious thought and care with which Linda had prepared the piece meant



*David Butterfield, Julian Hunt, Wendy Cope, Nicholas Shrimpton and Linda Hart outside Housman Hall*

that this was not the case and the conviction with which it was delivered made it compelling for the audience. As such it was a most delightful and appropriate opening to the lectures and other activities of Saturday and Sunday, with their theme of *The Housmans of Bromsgrove: Contexts and Perspectives*.

Those unable to be present at the weekend might like to see the entire list, although the wit and whimsy with which some were chosen might be tantalising without the text: A Shropshire Lad; Bredon Hill; Countryside; Death; Emotion; Family; God; Homosexual; Insults & Invective; Jackson, Moses; Knowledge; Love; Manilius; Name & Nature of Poetry; O and Oh; Pollard, Alfred; Quatrains; Richards, Grant; Shropshire; Textual Criticism; UCL; Vocabulary; Wilde; Xaminations; Youth; Zoological Housman.

**A 20 page hard copy A5 booklet of Linda Hart's 'A to Z of A.E.H.' is available from the Chairman (80 New Road, Bromsgrove B60 2LA) in exchange for a book of six 2nd class stamps.**

### SUBSCRIPTION INCREASE

**Please act NOW on the papers enclosed!**

The subscription rates for the Society have remained constant for many years but now with all costs rising we regret that we have to ask for an increase, so that from 1st May 2013 the subscription will be £15 for single membership and £17.50 for double.

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## 'Last Poems' Readathon

The autumn Housman Weekend had a special place on the programme devoted to *Last Poems*, the final collection which Housman himself brought to publication, in 1922, writes *Ann Fitzgerald*. It took the form of a 'readathon' giving Society members the chance to hear the collection as a whole, and not only hear, but read the poems aloud, sitting in a friendly circle and taking a poem each.

The effect was to throw into relief the overall tone of the collection, made even more poignant by the short, introductory talk given by Committee member, and Head of English at King's School, Worcester, Andrew Maund.

He admitted that of the four published volumes of Housman's poetry, *Last Poems* is the one that touches him most deeply, and commented on the fact that, though well received at the time, it has subsequently attracted less attention than *A Shropshire Lad*, published a quarter of a century earlier in 1896. He wondered what had prompted Housman, so many years later, by then in his sixties, to draw together a further collection of poems for publication.

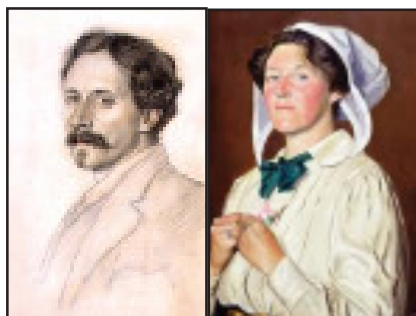
What Housman's publisher, Grant Richards described as "the sad, haunting, tragic air uplifted to ecstasy by beauty", seems to have been wrenched out of Housman by the grief of loss: the death of his younger brother in the Boer War, and news of the terminal illness of his deeply loved friend Moses Jackson for whom he had "given the heart out of the bosom" since they were undergraduates together at Oxford.

The collection certainly seems to focus on sources of mourning with wistful memories of vanished, youthful days; of the likelihood of death for young men going to war, and the wastefulness of that scything; the deep comradeship of soldiers in arms and the inevitability of his own death as he feels old age approaching.

However, Andrew Maund invited us to think beyond the personal to see that in *Last Poems* Housman's achievement has been "to harmonise the sadness of the universe", and like Ariel to send "to air the ditty", to connect with whom it will.

### Affectionate Celebration of Laurence's Friendship with Janet Ashbee

*Dear Mrs Ashbee* is a happy combination of careful research and inspired guess work, writes *Ann Fitzgerald*. Asked by Jeremy Bourne to write an article for the Housman Society Journal about Laurence Housman's relations with Chipping Campden where his friend C.R. Ashbee had brought his Guild of Handicrafts in 1902,



C.R. and Janet Ashbee

Celia and Bob Jones spent a considerable number of hours in King's College Cambridge reading the voluminous correspondence between Laurence and Janet Ashbee. Although Janet's letters do not survive, Celia was able to use journals and other primary sources to create a lively theatrical piece for two characters, Laurence and Janet, in which both read their letters to the other. By a skilful selection of excerpts from Laurence's letters the 40 year friendship is traced from its formal beginnings to a delightfully witty and affectionate celebration. Celia as Janet Ashbee and Pamela Marsh as Laurence made these contrasting characters vividly present to their audience who responded appreciatively to the wit and humour of the dialogue.

### Victorian Pessimism

In exploring the question 'Is Housman a Pessimist?' Dr. Nicholas Shrimpton took us on a high-speed journey through conflicting philosophical theories and their influence on poets and novelists of the 18th and 19th centuries, writes *Elizabeth Oakley*.

If this sounds a gruelling tour for those of us not versed in the works of Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer, it was made accessible through Dr. Shrimpton's clear road map, and touches of, often ironic, humour.



Dr Nicholas Shrimpton

He attributed the bleak 'pessimistic' outlook on the world of Victorian thinkers and writers to a reaction against the 'benignly progressive' beliefs of the 18th century enlightenment. These often found expression in the work of the Romantics, such as Blake, who saw Nature as an outward sign of the Paradise which lay beyond 'this fallen world', or Shelley's claim that 'the painted veil is torn aside'

to reveal the 'lustre' beyond.

The sense of this inevitable forward and upward movement of mankind can be found in the philosophy of Leibnitz, in the paean of exultation with which Thomas Paine greeted the outbreak of the French Revolution: 'Good was it in that dawn to be alive...', or Rousseau's image of man throwing off his chains. However, there were sceptical voices here too, as in Voltaire's satire on Leibnitz, *Candide*, in which he pilloried the complacent view that it was 'the best of all possible worlds'.

In 1803, Thomas Malthus published an extended edition of his *Essay on the Principles of Population* in which he envisaged the inevitable decline in man's quality of life as the growth in population outstripped the resources to sustain it. In 1819, Schopenhauer asserted the primacy of the 'Will' propelling man through life's struggle and Darwin too reflected that the

rapid increase in population 'necessarily leads to the struggle for existence'.

By the 1870s, claimed Dr. Shrimpton, there was much evidence of writers' pessimism, "No rose without a thorn had been replaced by many thorns without a rose".

He referred to writers such as Hardy, who in *Jude The Obscure* has Sue agreeing that, 'in life, all is trouble, suffering and adversity', while the novels of George Gissing, *Born in Exile*, and *The Odd Women* offered realistic portraits of poverty and misery. Dr. Shrimpton even found strands of pessimism in the poems of E. Nesbitt, (better remembered for her children's novels), and again spots a reflection of the 'perfect pessimist' in Oscar Wilde's lightest and most cheerful play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He quotes Wilde as saying that pessimism was the most influential philosophy of the times.

So, does *A Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896, show Housman to be following a current, (fashionable?) Schopenhaurian pessimism, asks Dr. Shrimpton, or was he rather simply registering a sadness arising from his individual, emotional response to events in his own life? There were certainly a number of well-known experiences to cause an overlay of sadness on his writing: the early death of his mother; his passionate, but unrequited love for Moses Jackson; a humiliating academic failure in his Finals examination at Oxford; then between the publication of *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems* (1922) came a further grief in the death of a younger brother in the Boer War.



*Jim Page, Janice Boswell and Julian Hunt in close conversation at the dinner*

Dr. Shrimpton reminded us of Bertrand Russell's contention that philosophical belief is 'a matter of temperament rather than reason', suggesting that in his poetry Housman was not exploring or promoting any philosophical tenet but simply sharing an emotional response to his own life experience. Quoting the opening of a parody on Housman by Ezra Pound, 'Woeful is this human lot...' Dr. Shrimpton reminded us of Pound's reluctance to categorise Housman's poetry as having a central philosophy, saying: 'Housman's message is purely individual'. Perhaps we should be reluctant to categorise him, too.

### **An Absorbing Session from Wendy Cope**

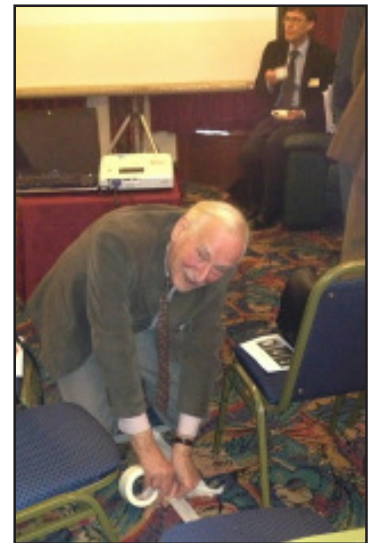
*Kate Shaw writes:* Wendy Cope was introduced to A.E.H.'s poems by Adrian Henri and discovered later that A.E.H. had a sense of humour when she read Christopher Ricks' *Collected Poems and Selected Prose* thus providing inspiration for her poem 'Another Unfortunate Choice' which begins 'I think I am in love with AE Housman'.

She has a friend who recites Housman poems to his baby daughter. The baby stops crying but the reader starts weeping!

Before she read her favourite Housman poems she entertained us with her witty acerbic poems from her latest anthology *Family Values* and also from her *Two Cures For Love*. She usually performs alone but recently wrote a series of poems for the Endellion String Quartet; she was the narrator and had the nerve-wracking experience of having to count when to come in! She sprinkled her poems with witty asides.

Amongst her choice of Housman poems there were the usual suspects; 'They say my verse is sad', 'Crossing alone the nighted ferry', 'Because I liked you better', 'Loveliest of trees' [which she heard Enoch Powell recite and move himself to tears], 'When I was one and twenty', 'White in the moon the long road lies', 'Into my heart' - which everyone thinks is by Denis Potter after he named his play 'Blue Remembered Hills'. Her very favourite poem [also mine]; 'From far from eve from morning'.

She also chose the less well known; 'Could man be drunk forever', 'If truth in hearts that perish', 'Tarry, delight, so seldom met', 'Twice a week the winter thorough' and she commented on the archaic use of the word 'thorough'. An absorbing afternoon treat from our unique humorous poet.



*The Chairman, who is not known for his concern over Health and Safety matters, attends to a trip hazard!*

### **Wonderful Variety in after-dinner Parodies**

Nine pm. The end of a splendid dinner with 'Barbue Housman' once more on the menu. And then up gets Elizabeth Oakley, accompanied by Andrew Maund, Frances Page and Kate Shaw, to round off a day of delights with 'Parodies, Light Verse and Worse'. Interspersed with Elizabeth's light-hearted introductions, we heard contributions by the readers themselves, and by John Cartwright, Roy Payne, Sir Brian Young, Linda Hart, Celia Jones, Simon Curtis, Clive Woodcock and Richard Malone. Sir Brian's contribution was a wistful memorial to a friend who died in World War Two in a naval battle - 'Lie still, you best of comrades...' Others were more humorous. Elizabeth's *After Wenlock Edge* bemoaned the credit crunch and its effects, comparing it to social evils of Housman's time in Bromsgrove, while John Cartwright's *To an Athlete lying in too long* had shades of *To an Athlete dying young*, *Reveille*, and *Terence this is stupid stuff*.



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Roy Payne provided a wonderful variety of contributions: a lament for the arrival of the supermarkets in Ludlow, a series of seven limericks, and a fine tribute to the late David Lloyd, sage and historian of Ludlow. In Linda Hart's *Summertime on May Hill*, the ardour of the amorous swain was much curtailed by a well-placed kick from a May Hill pony, whereas her One-and-Twenty-year-old in the parody of *ASL XIII* was deprived of his savings by a banker, before he was Two-and-Twenty. Richard Malone's two entries consisted first of an *Epitaph on an Army of Pensioners*, and then of a lament spoken by A.E.H. himself as he tried to do himself in by climbing the many stairs of Whewell Court.

These entries were a delight, and the entrants are much to be congratulated. So also were the readings and presentation of the four merry guides. The winners of the parody competition were: first Richard Malone (reproduced on page 10). Runners-up: John Cartwright, Linda Hart and Roy Payne, to each of whom Jim Page presented a bottle of wine.

### Counterfactual History in A.E.H. at Cambridge

David Butterfield's talk on A.E.H. at Cambridge began by tracing his career along the path that took him to Cambridge in 1911, writes *Robin Sham*, and at the outset he gave us two intriguing thoughts.

First he invited us to consider a counterfactual history. Suppose A.E.H. had gone from school to Cambridge instead of Oxford. Classics at Cambridge with its traditions established by Bentley and Porson would have focussed on textual criticism – Housman's real interest. He would have engaged with the set course. He would not have had the trauma of failing his degree. He would have quickly established himself as a distinguish classicist. Without that trauma and without meeting Moses Jackson he might not have written *A Shropshire Lad*. And so on.

Secondly he speculated on the possibility that the examiners at Oxford failed Housman as an act of clemency. Rather than awarding him a poor degree and thus marring his record – better to give him no degree at all.

Leaving us to ponder on these, he went on to give a full account of the last third of A.E.H.'s life, peppered with insights and anecdotes, both factual and apocryphal. How A.E.H. lived in the same rooms in Whewell's Court for all but the last few months of his life, a solitary existence in which he would not be disturbed when working and where he could slip out unseen in the afternoon to go on long walks. David's narrative explored some of the contrasts in A.E.H.'s character. The silent unapproachable man who was also a renowned after dinner speaker. The dry, sad man who generously gave money to the Exchequer to help the war effort, and bailed out his publisher and friend, Grant Richards, when his business was in trouble. A man who led a Spartan life in his rooms but was a discriminating gourmand and lover of fine wines. He told us of Housman's light teaching load, and his meticulously timed lectures. delivered without audience contact. To our delight David read us a short lecture as Housman would have done.

And he told of the last years, when with a wealth of classical publications behind him, Housman completed his scholastic monument in 1930, the fifth and last volume of *Manilius*. Housman was declining in health when in 1933 he agreed to give the Leslie Stephens Lecture. It was a great trial to him but 'The Name and Nature of Poetry' made a large, and disturbing, impact in literary circles. And finally we heard how Housman died in 1936, his heart failing, in the Evelyn Nursing Home. It had been a full, informative and entertaining account.

### The Housmans' Route to Bromsgrove

When one hears a talk with such a restrained title one doesn't expect to react with excitement, but Julian Hunt's delivery, with so many stories ending with the words "he was made bankrupt of course" had us all sitting on the edge of our seats wondering what was going to come next. The talk was a highlight of the weekend, writes *Jennie McGregor-Smith*.

Julian began by explaining how his father Joe Hunt had helped John Pugh with the research for *Bromsgrove and the Housmans* (1974). John Pugh thought that the Housmans' first introduction to Bromsgrove was in 1818, but Julian demonstrated that William Housman, John Adams' nephew, had already known Bromsgrove for 20 years.

The importance of Leicester man John Adams to the industrial development of Bromsgrove after 1790 is only now becoming understood, and is another story, but his sister, Jane, married the Rev. Robert Housman, a radical Church of England minister in Leicester. Their three sons, John, William and Thomas, all born in Leicester in the 1790s, came under the wing of John Adams. All three boys were meant to benefit from the will of Charlotte Baker, a relative of John Adams, who died in Bath in 1818. She left half of her considerable wealth to Jane Housman and her family, contingent on the life interest of two spinster friends. At least two of the Housman boys borrowed against their 'great expectations', but the younger of the two spinsters lived a further 30 years. Charlotte Baker's money did not come through until 1854.

Julian traced the careers of each of the Housman nephews. John, who was sent to Bromsgrove School, became a woolstapler and manufacturer of extract of indigo in the town; his dye factory was in a building next to Perry Hall where a picturesque ruin survives to this day. He went bankrupt twice, in 1820 and in 1838, and died in Liverpool in 1875. The second son, William, born in 1793, became a solicitor, handling John Adams's affairs in London. He was a party to the conveyance of Perry Hall to John Adams in 1819. William Housman was a serial bankrupt, first in London in 1821, then in Salisbury in 1837 and finally in Brighton in 1851. John Pugh, in *Bromsgrove and the Housmans*, followed the Housman family tradition that William Housman had left his family and run off to America with an actress. Julian explained that in reality he had embezzled the funds of a Brighton schoolmaster and fled the country rather than end up in gaol.

The third son, Thomas, born in 1795, was by contrast thoroughly respectable. He became a C of E minister and built the church at Catshill in 1838. His son, Edward, became a solicitor in Bromsgrove, handling John Adams's local affairs. After Adams's death in 1858, Edward Housman moved into Perry Hall, mortgaging the house in his own name, despite the fact that it belonged to the trustees of Adams's will. In 1875, the local businessman who had a mortgage on Perry Hall foreclosed. Edward Housman got a friend to buy the house back at the auction, thus putting himself in the highly dubious position of both vendor and purchaser.

Edward Housman's son, A.E. Housman, was a pupil at Bromsgrove School when the family home was auctioned above their heads. Julian suggested that the young man must have been deeply affected by all these financial scandals. Was it any wonder that he failed to get a degree at Oxford whilst his family was still squabbling over John Adams's estate?

### Unique evening of Poetry, Picture and Song

The weekend had started on the Friday evening, *writes Jim Page*, in Bromsgrove's local arts centre with a complete performance of *A Shropshire Lad* by James Rutherford and Simon Lepper. Twenty-four of the poems were sung (the majority by the neglected C.W. Orr) and the rest read, and this was the greatest of successes. The quality of James Rutherford's interpretations of both the sung and read poems was superb and the projection on to a very large screen at the back of the stage of Gareth Thomas's atmospheric photographs added an extra dimension to a unique evening of poetry, song and picture that to my knowledge has never been



*'When smoke stood up from Ludlow' - photo by Gareth Thomas*

produced before. The recital had been preceded by a stimulating talk before supper in Housman Hall from Valerie Langfield in which she analysed what makes a successful setting and in so doing introduced us to her discovery of Arthur Farwell (1872-1952), a composer who had set Housman to music two years before Somervell's earliest setting. Three poems were taken and three different settings by composers as varied as Duke, Baksa, Somervell, Horder, Hamilton and Bliss, some specially recorded. Altogether an excellent talk which was very well researched and delivered with panache.

## High Standards in Schools Poetry Reading Competition

The standard achieved by pupils from seven of Bromsgrove schools in the finals of the Housman Society's annual Poetry Reading Competition was undoubtedly the best yet. Artrix hosted the competition on 15th November and Civic Head Janice Boswell, in giving away the prizes, was glowing in her praise of all participants. George Freeman (North Bromsgrove High School) won the Sixth Form Prize with a brilliantly assured performance of Housman's *Grenadier* and Spoz's "I can't Rap", but it was not enough to win him the Housman Cup which was awarded to Emily Collie (Bromsgrove School) for her moving interpretation of Housman's "The laws of God, the laws of man".



*Emily Collie, winner of the Housman Cup, with Bryan Maybee and Civic Head Janice Boswell*

It was good to have entries from five Bromsgrove Middle Schools and the winner was Lucy Ring (Parkside) with Casey May Reeves (Alvechurch C of E) the runner-up. Kate Shaw once more the organiser but as she was away for the actual competition Bryan Maybee took over the administration for the day. Once more we are grateful to members of the Society for acting as judges – Ann FitzGerald, Sonia French, Bernard Hall-Mancey, Andrew Maund, Bryan Maybee, Elizabeth Oakley and Valerie Richardson.



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## Obituaries

*A number of members have died in the last six months and below we record some things we knew about them.*

**Derek Shorthouse** (1932-2012) died in November last and his funeral was held at the fine Church of the Holy Innocents Highnam, which Hubert Parry's father designed and built. Derek spent most of his life as a company secretary moving from Wolverhampton to Walsall to Oxford (where he had five years as Bursar of Oriel College) to Stafford and finally to Gloucestershire. He belonged to many societies – literary, library, archaeological and automobile – and was a great supporter of the Society, always coming to Annual General Meetings to ask challenging questions of the Treasurer. He was an active Conservative in local government and he was also Chairman of the Gloucester branch. In the last months of his life religion became a dominant force and eventually he called for a Roman Catholic priest to discuss his '80 year journey with God'. The date was fixed for his reception into the Roman Catholic faith but he died before it came. He leaves two daughters, two sons and many grandchildren.



**Richard Eyre** (1929 - 2012) was ordained in 1957 and began his ministry as a curate at St Mark's, Portsmouth. He followed this by being a tutor at Chichester Theological College and Chaplain of Eastbourne College. He was pastoral Dean of Exeter from 1981 to 1995 and as the congregation grew he moved the main Sunday service into the nave and encouraged the arts. He established a music trust and introduced a girls' choir. He was a member of the General Synod and a supporter of the ordination of woman priests.

**Josephine Hearne** was a Bromsgrove member of the Society and with husband Karl was a regular supporter of local events. Her untimely death occurred in January from heart failure. Because of her family's involvement in the Titanic tragedy in she wrote in 1998 an article 'The Titanic's Connection with Bromsgrove and the West Midlands' for the Bromsgrove Society's *Rousler* and last year gave a talk on the subject. She was involved in the church and charitable work. Our sympathies go to her two daughters, Charmian and Juliet and husband Karl.

**Richard Lewis**, who was a teacher, author, poet and artist was born in Shropshire in 1922 and was educated at Ludlow Grammar School. He was in the RAF during the war and spent his time in India as a wireless operator. He lived in Nunney in Somerset for the rest of his life and wrote a short history of the village, and never lost his affection for A.E.H. and Shropshire.

Other members to have died recently include **J. Gracey** (Epping), **Dr. D.N. Griffiths** (Lincoln), **Dr. PC Haeffner** (Banbury), **Jean Mckenzie** (Manchester) and **Mr. D Ridgway** (Colchester).

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## Housman Poems in Bonhams Sale

*Roy Davids' unrivalled collection of over 500 lots is to be sold at Bonhams over two days on 10 April and 8 May 2013. The Housman Letters as detailed below come up on 10th April.*

"There's never been a poetry sale like this and there'll never be another one!" says Roy Davids, the poet, scholar and collector who has spent over 40 years assembling his collection.

**Lot 227 – Housman. Autograph manuscript of his humorous poem 'Purple William or The Liar's Doom'.** 20 lines in five four-line stanzas, 1 page, large lined folio. Estimate: £1,500-2,000.

The hideous hue which William is  
Was not originally his:  
So long as William told the truth  
He was a usual-coloured youth...

This poem, so reminiscent of Belloc's *Cautionary Verse*, was published by both Pugh and Ricks.

**Lot 228 – Housman. Autograph drafts of his poems 'Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries' and 'Oh were he and I together'.** Both written and revised in pencil, the text of the second partly faint. 2 pages, octavo, in a modern dark blue full-morocco leather folding box, lettered in gilt, not dated [but c. 1917]. Estimate: £20,000-25,000.

Bonhams say; "These are the most important poetical manuscripts by Housman to have come on the market in the last forty years at least. Such complete manuscripts as have been sold are mostly fair copies of his humorous and light verse.

**'Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries'.** Title and 8 lines in two four-line stanzas, with numerous revisions and deletions preserving reconsidered readings, with three further rather faintly written lines in pencil at the foot of the page, headed [page] '93'. It is generally accepted that the 'The Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries' has its origin in a German taunt aimed at the 'Old Contemptibles' of 1914. It was first published in *The Times* on 31 October 1927 in conjunction with an article in remembrance of the British Expeditionary soldiers killed at Ypres in October 1914.

**'Oh were he and I together'.** 12 lines in three four-line stanzas, with revisions and deletions preserving reconsidered readings, faint and difficult to read without a back-lit magnifying glass and perhaps partly erased by Laurence Housman according to his brother's instructions, with revisions and deletions especially in the second (and clearest) stanza.

The contact at Bonhams is <simon.roberts@bonhams.com>



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## ‘A Lord of Language’

*Linda Hart is impressed by a new book about A.E.H. and his poetry.*

There are several things that struck me immediately about *A.E. Housman: Spoken and Unspoken Love* by Henry Maas (Greenwich Exchange, £7.99 paperback, £9.99 hardback)

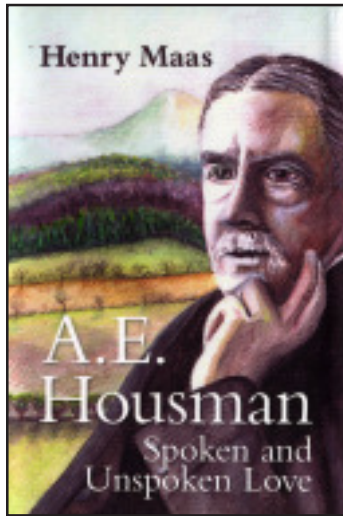
First, how short it is – only 61 pages. Second, the striking cover – not to my taste at first, but now I like the way Housman looks alert, thoughtful, but slightly perplexed at finding himself “in a world I never made.” Third, the familiar name of the author. My copy of Mr Maas’s 1971 book, *The Letters of A. E. Housman*, is well-thumbed. (I see, in a bookseller’s hand on the flyleaf, the words “1st ed £40”. This was the only edition of Housman’s letters until Archie Burnett’s came along 36 years later, so book dealers could ask a high price.) Fourth, the outspokenness of the sub-title: *Spoken and Unspoken Love*. It’s certainly more forthright than the sub-titles of Watson (*A Divided Life*) and Hawkins (*Man Behind a Mask*). Fifth, the absence of footnotes, endnotes and an index. The unusually short bibliography lists only five books about Housman (by A.S.F. Gow, Laurence Housman, Percy Withers, Grant Richards and Richard Perceval Graves) and lists no articles from any journals (including our own).

This is not, then, a scholarly biography. Nor is it a book of literary criticism. It is a bit of both, in which the life and the poetry are successfully and succinctly interwoven. Mr Maas provides the telling biographical detail just where it is necessary, and inserts a line, stanza or entire poem in the perfect place to illustrate a point. By assuming that the reader is a Housman enthusiast, or at least aware of the basic Housman storyline, Mr Maas often manages to cover a good deal of ground in a few well-chosen words.

Although this is a short book, I’ve learned some things that I didn’t know. For example: Housman’s dedication of Manilius volume I to Moses Jackson was even more shocking to Classicists than I had realised, because such dedications were traditionally in the third person but Housman referred to “my comrade.” Or the fact that 1922 was such a good year for literature – Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Hardy’s *Late Lyrics and Earlier* were all published in that year, as well as Housman’s *Last Poems*.

Mr Maas is also thought-provoking. For example, his idea that *MP VI* (“I to my perils of cheat and charmer ....”) is really a song even though it is not labelled as one; it was “the closest Housman came to writing words as though intended for music.” By the way, Mr Maas thinks more highly of *More Poems* than do most critics: for him the volume “contains as many of Housman’s best poems as either *A Shropshire Lad* or *Last Poems*.”

Reading Mr Maas’s detailed analysis and interpretation of a dozen or so poems brings pleasure and enlightenment. See in particular how his comments on *ASL XII* (“When I watch the living meet ....”) will enhance your enjoyment and



understanding. Some readers may find his occasional references to a trochee, dactyl, enjambment, diphthongal vowel and feminine ending a barrier to understanding. If so, it is easy enough these days to find an explanation on the internet.

Here are some examples of his cogent comments on the poems: On *ASL II* (“Loveliest of trees ....”): “Housman writes one unexpected and memorable phrase after another.” On *MP XV* (“Tarry, delight, so seldom met ....”): “All is understatement here. We are a thousand miles, in poetic art as well as geography, from the blundering drunks at Ludlow.” On *MP XXXVI* (“Here dead lie we ....”): “It is a poem that may stand as

Housman’s memorial. The classical form, the irony, the understatement, the honour paid to courage, the pity for men cheated of life’s few pleasures: these are all marks of the poet and the man alike.”

Concerning *ASL XXX, XXXII and XXXIII* – the most personal poems in the volume, about Housman’s devotion to Moses Jackson – I like Mr Maas’s conjecture that “Perhaps he took some pleasure in the thought that he could hint freely in his poems but still keep everything that mattered in his heart.”

I agree with Mr Maas that “most of [Housman’s] work ... cannot be enjoyed aright without careful attention.” I hope that in future the Housman Society Newsletter and/or Journal will give the poems such “careful attention” by publishing articles of analysis and explication. Perhaps Mr Maas will write some for us.

I have one disagreement with him. I think he misjudges Moses Jackson’s feelings when he states that he was “revolted by the mere notion” that a man could love another man. It is arguable that Moses realised he could love Housman, so he married the first eligible woman he met and arranged to work and live abroad for the rest of his life.

Mr Maas admires much about Housman, but if I had to guess what he admires most it is Housman’s brilliant use of the English language. Time and again he notes something exceedingly clever Housman has done with words – or even just one word. Or even just the placing of a comma! On the last page Mr Maas tells us that there can be few living writers with “half his knowledge” of every aspect of the effective use of English. The book ends with the assertion that “There have been fine poets, some great poets, since Housman, but few with so good a claim to be honoured as a lord of language.”

In summary: The book is a pleasure to read. Mr Maas, in very readable and elegant prose, covers all the key biographical points succinctly but without distortion, and explicates several poems with interesting and detailed analysis. No reader could ask for more.

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# The Housman Society Book Exchange

The first edition of Housman's *Last Poems* was published on the 19th October 1922 in an edition of 4000 copies and is, therefore, not a rare book. A nice copy of this edition in a dust-jacket is being offered on the listing below for £50 but the Society also has copies of exactly the same book in very decent condition which can be acquired for a fiver.

The difference in asking price is justified solely by desirability, which, in turn is supplied simply by the presence of the dust jacket. I estimate that over the last ninety years about 90% of these books have lost their dust jackets, and I suppose that 90% of the jackets that survive are in varying permutations of torn, soiled, rubbed, worn, stained, chipped or disintegrating. Our £50 book costs ten times the price of its rival but is one-hundred times rarer, and thus it is always this book that is snapped up by the bibliophile.

And I have mentioned many times over the years that, given the restrictions of space in this Newsletter, it is only the 'collector's editions' that get advertised.

Not that Housman would have warmed to this line of reasoning. His opinion on bibliophiles is well known [an idiotic class] and he required nothing more from a book than 'correctness and legibility'. And so, in an attempt to follow Housman's lead (and reduce the weight of Society stock on my bookshelves) I have created a list of previously unadvertised stock which I will send to any Society member upon request, either by email or by post.

In the Sales List below we have an excellent variety of Housman material and at prices far below those advertised in the rare-book market (one US dealer is currently advertising a similar jacketed first edition *Last Poems* at \$500). Both the poet and the classical scholar are included in this listing and I draw your attention to the block of biographies which have recently been acquired from the same source and are in quite splendid condition.

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 or facsimile 01299 841582 or e-mail at sisley.ladywood@talk21.com

## SALES LIST – FEBRUARY 2013

Postage and Packing are additional to the prices quoted.

**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. Minor fading to covers otherwise very good. £15

**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. Fine. £25

**CLEMENS (Cyril). AN EVENING WITH A.E. HOUSMAN.** International Mark Twain Society, Webster Groves, Missouri, 1937. First edition. 12mo. 19 pages. Card covers. An account of the meeting between Housman and Clemens at Cambridge in the summer of 1930 and which was planned to be a chapter in a never completed biography. Signed by Clemens. Very good. £40

**FRASER (Claud Lovat). SIXTY-THREE UNPUBLISHED DESIGNS.** The First Edition Club, London, No date (but 1924). First edition. 16mo. Unpaginated. Number 426 of 500 copies. Cloth backed pattern boards in a design by Fraser. With an introduction by Holbrook Jackson. Illustrations for a never published edition of *A Shropshire Lad* (but see the entry for the Hayloft Press in this listing). Covers a little bumped, straining to gutter at illustration 35 and with a gift inscription to endpaper. Scarce and offered at a modest price. Very good minus. £45

**GRAVES (Richard Perceval). A.E. HOUSMAN ; THE SCHOLAR-POET.** Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1979. First Edition, 304 pages. Brown boards in excellent dust jacket. The first comprehensive biography. Fine £20

**GRAVES (Richard Perceval). A.E. HOUSMAN ; THE SCHOLAR-POET.** Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1979. First Edition, 304 pages. Brown boards in excellent dust jacket. The first comprehensive biography. Fine £20

**HABER (Tom Burns). THIRTY HOUSMAN LETTERS TO WITTER BYNNER.** Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1957. First edition. 8vo. Preface plus 36 pages. Beautiful decorative boards. Bynner was Poetry Editor of *McClures Magazine* which published extracts from *A Shropshire Lad* in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. One of 700 copies. Fine. £45

**HABER (Tom Burns). THE MAKING OF A SHROPSHIRE LAD. A MANUSCRIPT VARORIOM.** Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1966. First edition. 8vo. 204pp. Black cloth in cream dust jacket. Haber returns to the manuscript fragments. Fine in a fine dust jacket. A beautiful book. £45

**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.). LAST POEMS.** Grant Richards Limited, London, 1922. First edition. 79 pages. Blue cloth in the cream dust jacket. The true first edition with the missing punctuation on page 52 which so annoyed Housman and led to his accusation



that bibliophiles were "an idiotic class". Very good in the very good and scarce dust jacket showing minimal wear. £50

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD [and] LAST POEMS.** The Alcuin Press, Chipping Campden, 1929. Two volumes. 8vo. 91pp [and] 67pp. Plain light grey boards with linen spines and paper labels. The hand-numbered limited edition of 325 sets printed in black and red inks on heavy watermarked laid paper. This is the only matching edition of his poems ever approved by Housman and is often considered the best presentation of his work. A beautiful set. Very good indeed. £180

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). MORE POEMS.** Jonathan Cape, London, 1936. First edition. 8vo. 71 pages. With an introduction by Laurence Housman. Blue cloth. Very good in a very good but spine-sunned dust jacket. £35

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). MORE POEMS.** Jonathan Cape, London, 1936. The limited edition. Number 300 of 379 copies. 8vo. 71 pages. Quarter leather, marbled endpapers, top edge gilt. Contains a manuscript facsimile of *Tarry, delight, so seldom met*, not included in the trade edition. Corners a trifle bumped. Very good, missing the elusive dust jacket. £50

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). D. IVNII IVVENALIS SATVRAE.** Cambridge University Press, 1938. Third edition. 146 pages. Red cloth. Contains the preface to the 1905 edition together with the preface of the corrected edition. Previous professorial owner's signature. Missing the dust jacket. Some foxing to preliminaries. Very good. £45

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). THE PARALLELOGRAM; THE AMPHISBAENA; THE CROCODILE.** Jake Zeitlin, Los Angeles, 1941. First edition thus. 19mo. vi. 9 pages. With an introduction by William White and a wood engraving by Paul Landacre showing the three subjects of Housman's verse in a complex embrace. The limitation page states a print run of 250 copies but contemporary opinion considered that less than one hundred copies were published. Fine. £100

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

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD.** The Hayloft Press, Birmingham, 1995. Landscape 8vo. 78 pages. With an introduction by Kelsey Thornton and illustrations by Claud Lovat Fraser. These 1920 decorations by Fraser for a proposed edition of *A Shropshire Lad* were rejected by Housman and here appear for the first and only time with the poems for which they were intended. One of 450 numbered copies. Fine. £45

**HOUSMAN (Laurence). ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN'S "DE AMICITIA".** The Little Rabbit Book Company, London, 1976. First edition. 8vo. 39pp. Laurence Housman's account of one aspect of his brother's life, written soon after Alfred's death and deposited at the British Museum in 1942, with the injunction that it remained sealed for twenty-five years. First published in *Encounter Magazine* in 1967, this unauthorised volume remains the only edition of the

text in book form. A beautifully produced publication. One of 200 numbered copies. In fine condition. £75

**MAAS (Henry). THE LETTERS OF A.E. HOUSMAN.** Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1971. First edition. 8vo. 458 pages. Red cloth with dust jacket. Very good indeed. £30

**NAIDITCH (P.G.). A.E. HOUSMAN AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE. THE ELECTION OF 1892.** E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1988. First edition. 261 pages. Soft covers. A monumental work. Essential reading and now very scarce. A fine copy. £60

**PAGE (Norman). A.E. HOUSMAN – A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY.** MacMillan, London, 1983. First edition. 8vo. 236 pages. Yellow cloth in dust jacket. A beautifully written biography. In fine condition. £20

**RICHARDS (Grant). HOUSMAN 1897-1936.** Oxford University Press, London, 1942. Second edition. 8vo. 493 pages. Red cloth. In addition to Richard's reminiscences there is an excellent set of appendices by other hands. Very good in similar dust jacket. £25

**ROBERTSON (Stephen). THE SHROPSHIRE RACKET.** Sheed and Ward, London, 1937. First edition. 12mo. 76 pages. Brown cloth. Housman parodies, illustrated by Thomas Derrick. Very good condition in similar dust jacket. £15

**SHAW (Robin). HOUSMAN'S PLACES.** The Housman Society, Bromsgrove, 1995. The Limited Edition Hardback. With the *Housman Places* bookplate of John Pugh, joint-founder of the Society. Signed by the author. In mint condition. £20

**SKUTSCH (Otto). ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN 1859- 1936.** The University of London, The Athlone Press, 1960. First edition. 14pp. Blue paper wrappers. The text of an address delivered at University College to celebrate the anniversary of Housman's birth. Fine. £15

**SYMONS (Katharine). MEMORIES OF A.E. HOUSMAN.** Grant Mellhuish, Bath, 1936. 8 pages. Paper covers. Pamphlet written by Housman's sister extracted from the magazine of King Edward's School. Bath. Contains the first appearance of seven of Housman's comic verses. Staples rusted as usual otherwise very good. Very scarce. £25

**WATSON (George L.). A.E. HOUSMAN – A DIVIDED LIFE.** Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1957. First edition. 235 pages. The first attempt at a comprehensive biography. Fine. £25

**WITHERS (Percy). A BURIED LIFE.** Jonathan Cape, London, 1940. First edition. 8vo. 133 pages. Blue cloth with dust jacket. Withers first met Housman in 1917 at Cambridge and this book is a record of their association over the next twenty years. A notoriously difficult book to acquire. Very good in a very good dust jacket. £50

#### WANTS LIST

Similar material to that listed above may be sold through these pages at a 10% commission rate for Society funds.

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## Parody Competition Winner

A.E.H.

by  
**Richard Malone**

The day my mother bore me  
There needed none to say  
That like all foolish fellows,  
I was not born for aye.

The stars, they marred my portion:  
I caused offence (the Fates  
Decreed some cursed blunder),  
And then I ploughed in Greats.

In marl not mine I laboured  
But made it all my art  
To rend the veil of darkness  
By many a venomed dart.

My sheaf of songs of sorrow  
There none was cared to hear,  
And so I paid the piper,  
Some luckless lads to cheer.

My pallet's now in Cambridge,  
The town built well. I trawl  
For ancient wrongs to right them,  
But this gives comfort small.

I climb the stairs each evening  
And pray I'll not survive.  
No god there is that answers  
And still I'm man alive.

## Elizabeth Taylor and 'A Shropshire Lad'

*The Richard Burton Diaries, which were published by Yale University last October, revealed a surprising story about Elizabeth Taylor stealing a copy of A Shropshire Lad in London.*

Elizabeth Taylor once left her husband Richard Burton in a 'cold sweat' after she stole a book from a London shop. She was Hollywood's highest-paid actress at the time when she 'took' a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* while on a visit to Foyles in the Sixties with Burton.

She committed the crime under the noses of star-struck shop staff and photographers too besotted to realise what she was up to. She then smuggled it out in her handbag and gave it to a horrified Burton in the car on the way back to their suite at The Dorchester hotel. He wrote:

'E [Burton's name for Taylor] opened her bag and handed me a book. It was an old edition of *A Shropshire Lad*. With all of those hundreds of people around, to say nothing of store detectives watching for our safety, all of them staring and oohing and aahing over her beauty, she had stolen a book!'

I burst into a cold sweat. I could see the headlines. "Millionaire Couple Steal Book From Foyles." "Book not worth more than five bob, says manager". Christ. I gave her a terrible row but her delight was not to be crushed. It's the first and last thing she ever stole in her life, except, of course, husbands!'

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## Miscellanea

● The Gloucester composer **C.W. Orr** has featured quite often in this Newsletter because he set so much Housman to music and Finzi Friends, in conjunction with Painswick Music Society, are holding a concert in his home town on 4th May at 3.00pm when Mark Stone and Simon Lepper will be giving a recital that includes his 'Seven Songs from A Shropshire Lad' cycle.

● Finzi Friends' **Ludlow Weekend of English Song** begins on 30th May and has an exciting list of artists lined up, including Sir John Tomlinson, The King's Singers, Elizabeth Watts and a host of other well known names. Additional to the leaflet, which is enclosed with this mailing, is the inclusion of Peter Parker in the Saturday discussion session. His forthcoming book, 'Housman Country', will be of greatest interest to members. Other 'Housman' content includes a rare performance of Ivor Gurney's *The Western Playland*, a cycle in which the composer sets eight Housman poems.

● In his autobiography which was published last year **Brian Sewell** tells a story of how in May 1970, at the request of Anthony Blunt, he sold a drawing to Andrew Gow and when he delivered it to him in person in Cambridge, Gow, whom he found 'cold and intimidating', initiated a conversation in which he told Brian Sewell the tale of communism and espionage that was to shock the world when Margaret Thatcher revealed it to Parliament in 1979. *Outsider: Always Almost: Never Quite* by Brian Sewell (Quartet Books).

● Bromsgrove School has announced that work will begin on 11th February on two new boarding facilities at **Housman Hall** when the two extant boarding wings will be demolished. We are assured that the new boarding accommodation will be built to the highest standards.

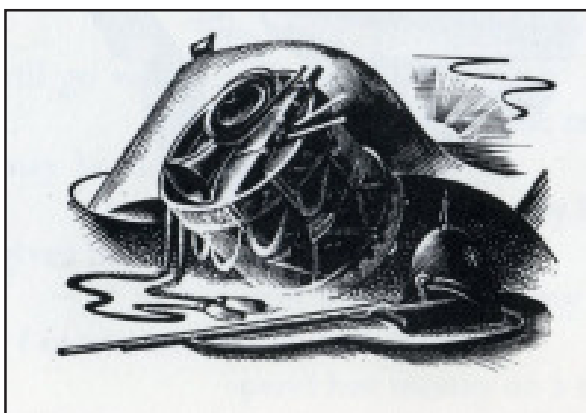
● **The Book Exchange** – a new facility to alert members of the Society to lower-value Housman stock has been created and is described fully on page 10 of this Newsletter.

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# Churchill and Housman

**Linda Hart discovers that even when reading something not remotely connected to A.E. Housman, he pops off the page and surprises her.**

I recently read a book called *The Perfect Summer* by Juliet Nicolson. The sub-title, *Dancing into Shadow in 1911*, hints at the book's theme that World War One was a gathering storm on the horizon during a year when the rich and privileged classes enjoyed themselves as much as ever. The book is a catalogue, expressed through the lives of many noteworthy individuals, of everything politically and socially important that happened in England between May and September of 1911.



Agnes Miller Parker's illustration for 'On the idle hill of summer'

The weather was continuously, spectacularly and unusually hot and sunny. But there were tensions brewing, cracks beneath the surface – as women demanded the vote, trade unionists fought for improved working conditions, the House of Commons refused to be thwarted by the House of Lords. Abroad there were signs of military and naval threats from Germany, including her aggressive actions over Morocco in north Africa.

We learn from Nicolson's book that while everyone else was holidaying in August, Winston Churchill, Home Secretary for the ruling Liberal Party, spent most of the time in London worrying about the crisis in north Africa. However, on 30 August he did take a short break with friends at a manor house in Mells, Somerset. But even away from London he could not stop thinking about the situation in Morocco.

From Mells, says Nicolson, Churchill wrote to the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey that: 'I could not think of anything else but the peril of war .... There was only one field of interest fiercely illuminated in my mind. Sitting on a hilltop in the smiling country which stretches round Mells, the lines I have copied kept running through my mind.'

What lines did the Home Secretary copy out for the Foreign Secretary, just as Housman was leaving his professorship at UCL to start his professorship at Cambridge?

On the idle hill of summer,  
Sleepy with the flow of streams,  
Far I hear the steady drummer  
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder  
On the roads of earth go by,  
Dear to friends and food for powder,  
Soldiers marching, all to die.

These are the first two quatrains of the four-quatrain *ASL XXXV* ('On the idle hill of summer'). I have used the punctuation in Christopher Ricks's *Collected Poems and Selected Prose*. Nicolson's punctuation is different at the end of lines one and four, and she prints the verse as a continuous eight lines instead of two stanzas, and with no indentations in alternate lines. I don't know whether she has accurately transcribed from Churchill's

letter; as the book has no footnotes this would not be easy to trace. However, I don't think this matters hugely.

What interests me much more is whether Churchill knew these lines by heart, had he brought a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* with him to Mells, or did he come across a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* at the manor house he was visiting. All these suggestions are intriguing.

## Churchill's Misquotation

Since I wrote the above, the plot has thickened. I told a Housman Society member and friend of mine, John Cartwright, about the Housman-Churchill link and he googled to see if he could find out more. As a result he discovered that Churchill used these same eight lines from *ASL XXXV* as an epigraph in his book, *The World Crisis 1911-18*. Grant Richards wrote to Housman in March 1931 saying: "Did you know that Churchill has made use of your poem?" Housman replied: "Yes, I was aware of Churchill's misquotation."

Churchill's mistakes were to put "flow of streams" in line 2, instead of "sound of streams", and to put a superfluous comma after "louder" in line 6. All of this can be found on page 238 in Volume Two of Archie Burnett's *Letters of A.E. Housman*. The wonders of the internet took John to that page straight away.

This additional information certainly confirms that Churchill was fond of these lines, and perhaps makes it more likely than not that he knew the words off by heart, i.e. almost by heart.

He didn't feel he had to look inside his edition of *ASL*, despite the fact that an epigraph is a prominent place in which to publish lines of poetry. I would find it rather risky to do that without checking against the original, but Churchill liked taking risks (think Gallipoli).



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## Forthcoming Events

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE OF AGM

Tuesday 12 March 2013, 7.30pm

80 New Road, Bromsgrove B60 2LA

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting will be followed by a talk on the early history of the Society by Max Hunt to mark the Society's 40th anniversary. *Please indicate on the form, or e-mail <jimpage@btinternet.com> if you intend coming.*

Tuesday 26 March 2013, 12.30pm

The Statue, High Street, Bromsgrove

### A.E.H. BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION

The annual ceremony by the statue will be followed by a buffet lunch in the Council House, by kind invitation of the Chairman of the District Council. **Robin Shaw**, whose contribution to the Society over 23 years has been of inestimable value, will be Guest of the Day. *Please indicate on the form if you intend coming.*

Tuesday 30 April 2013, 11.00am

St Laurence's, Ludlow

### LUDLOW COMMEMORATION

The ceremony by the plaque on the north wall will be followed by a tour of Ludlow conducted by Jane Caulcott. The tour will begin at about 11.30 and followed by lunch in the Assembly Rooms. *Please indicate on the form if you intend coming.*

Tuesday 28 May 2013 – early evening, time tbc

The Hay Festival of Literature

### THE HOUSMAN LECTURE

*The Name and Nature of Poetry*

We are delighted to welcome Gillian Clarke, the National Poet of Wales, to give this year's lecture. She is an old friend of the Society's having judged the 1995/96 Poetry Competition. The lecture will be followed by supper – pay on the day – in the sponsors marquee, to which members are cordially invited. *Please fill in the form if you intend coming.*

Saturday 13 July 2013

Bredon Hill

### SUMMER TIME ON BREDON

Bring a picnic lunch (12.30) to eat in the garden of The Coach House, Woollas Hall, at the kind invitation of members Maurice and Beverley Juggins. Afterwards we shall walk up Bredon Hill and members are invited to bring a poem (any author) with a 'summer' theme to read at the top. *Please fill in the form to be sent fuller details and a map nearer the time.*

Wednesday 13 November 2013, 4.30pm

Artrix, Slideslow Drive, Bromsgrove

### SCHOOLS POETRY SPEAKING COMPETITION FINALS

Competing pupils from Bromsgrove's schools will speak a poem by A.E. Housman and another poem of their own choice. There are categories for Sixth Formers, Seniors and for the Middle School age group. Support from members and participants' families welcome. Free entry.

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## Membership Subscriptions

The subscription rates for the Society have remained constant for many years now but costs have been rising – particularly postage which has leapt up and may rise further. Over the years the service we have given to members has improved with increased size of annual journals and regular and substantial Newsletters, as well as occasional publications such as 'Housman and Heine'.

Now, as was mentioned in our September Newsletter, we regret that we have to ask for an increase, and from 1 May the subscription will be £15.00 for a single membership and £17.50 for double. For Overseas members this will be £20.00 for single and £25.00 for double. Appropriate forms are enclosed with this mailing and we would be very grateful if you could follow the instructions on the forms. Our Membership Secretary does a noble job in keeping your subscriptions flowing – please support her by acting now!

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## Ten Years Ago

Newsletter No 17 – February 2003

● The issue was dominated by 'The long-awaited confrontation between Housman and **Germaine Greer**, due to have taken place at the Hay Festival last summer, which was finally held in front of a full house at the Apollo Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London on 11th December, as part of the Orange Word International Writers Season.'

The text of the lecture had been printed in the 2002 Journal and members had been vociferous in their responses. Humphrey Clucas was critical about a verse from Rochester that Germaine Greer had quoted and finished with, '...such infelicities are not found in Housman'.

Linda Hart wrote, 'I have always been suspicious about any analysis that mentions feminine and masculine endings – it's a lot of rubbish that the academicians love to use to baffle the rest of us. If I had time, I'd love to pull her talk apart.'

● '**Housmans', A.E.H.'s birthplace** in Fockbury was up for sale at £680,000. A rumour spread from a journalist that the Society was going to buy it and turn it into a museum. Robin Shaw was interviewed for BBC Hereford and Worcester, and Jim Page appeared on BBC Midlands Today. Finally *The Times* took the story up and devoted half a page to it in which Professor John Pikoulis from Cardiff University purported to answer the question, 'Why Shropshire?'

*Published by The Housman Society, 80 New Road, Bromsgrove. The next Newsletter will be circulated in September 2013 and contributions should be sent to the Editor at the address given on page 1 by 1st September 2013.*