

NEWSLETTER

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David Edgar gives a brilliantly crafted lecture at the Hay Festival

Andrew Maund reports on David Edgar's 'Name and Nature of Poetry' lecture given at this year's Hay Festival of Literature on 28th May.

This year's 'Name and Nature of Poetry' lecture at Hay was delivered by the highly acclaimed British playwright, David Edgar. A packed and expectant Oxford Moot marquee was captivated from his first words and delighted by a brilliantly crafted and structured lecture.

Edgar began by recalling a recent visit to the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, at which he had been invited, he thought, to speak about Brecht. It was only when he arrived that he realised that the lecture was to be, in fact, about translating Brecht. Describing himself as a "shameful monolingualist" and a speaker of "restaurant foreign language", this placed him in a difficult position as he delivered the lecture through the medium of the language of despairing gesture.

This amusing introduction was indicative of the witty and self-deprecating style, typical of the truly talented, which infused the lecture that followed. Having finally given in to the "patient pressure" that our chairman, Jim Page, had applied to secure his agreement to speak, it was only recently that Edgar re-read the relevant e-mails and realised the true magnitude of the task that lay before him. He had written poetry as a boy (who hadn't), he continued to read poetry and to read about poetry – for example, recently Glyn Maxwell's fine work, "On Poetry" – but it would be a triumph of British over-statement, he suggested, to say anything about poetry himself, particularly when one regarded the original Housman lecture. He would, instead, be speaking about the poetry of plays – not the poetry in his own plays.

The lecture that followed proved a most thought-provoking exploration of the mechanism and construction of the dramatic genre and a comparison with the way that poetry works. Throughout lecture, Edgar was supported by two readers, Ian Billings and Stephanie Dale, both accomplished performers, practitioners and writers themselves. They began



with the first words that Romeo and Juliet speak directly to one another, which form, of course, a perfect Shakespearean sonnet; this is truly a magnificent dramatic and poetic presentation of the idea of love at first sight.

Edgar referred to his work at the University of Birmingham, particularly the MA in Playwriting Studies programme, which began twenty-five years ago in 1989. Much of the conceptual understanding of the course is to be found in his recent book, originally to be entitled "A Local Habitation" but in fact published as "How Plays Work" – once again, the self-deprecation of our lecturer described this as an appropriately mundane title for a book about "the writerly form closest to carpentry", as he described playwriting. Having read the book after the lecture,

your correspondent can confirm that it is an accessible but fascinating text which explores the craft of writing plays through the eyes of a master.

The Defining Element of Poetry

Our speaker then explored the defining element of poetry, the line-break; it was through the line-break that contrast and tension was introduced. This "streaky-bacon" method was also used in the prose writing of Dickens and allowed for contrast and juxtaposition. The basic unit of the play is also the line, but presented by living actors; here Edgar stressed the importance of silence in plays, a silence which, he reminded us, was in every line break of poetry too. Quoting Peter Brook, he considered two further dramatic devices which were also true of poetry: concentration, that is reducing the chaos to what is of interest, and pattern. In the latter case, rules of proportion and pattern are hard-wired into us and operate between media, being links between, for example, architecture, dance and music.

Our next example, once again wonderfully performed by the two readers, was the “screen scene” from “A School for Scandal”. Edgar explored the music of the scene, considering, for example, the short alternating lines that build the tension before the screen is finally thrown down and Lady Teazle is revealed. This is followed by an antithetical couplet, repeating her name, an “aria” by the innocent characters, two broken line speeches by Joseph, in which he is prompted by another and finally a single line of Lady Teazle’s which contrasts with the bombast that comes before.

A similar pattern was found in an extract from “Ice-Cream” by Carole Churchill to confirm that the long speech followed by a single “drop” line was a distinctive and highly effective dramatic rhythm. One piece of advice offered to novelists as they made their first attempt at playwriting was to make



David Edgar answers questions after the lecture with Ian Billings and Stephanie Dale

the long speeches longer and the short speeches shorter.

Another dominant element of theatre was that of artifice; the redundant is removed, the absence of phatic speech allowing us to focus on the rhythm and structure of the writing. Another extract from Carole Churchill’s writing followed, this time from “Top Girls”, exploring the use of repetition drawing attention to the rhythm of the scene, which could also be seen in the antiphonal exchange over tea between Cecilia and Gwendolyn in “The Importance of Being Earnest”. The repetition of sentences with the same structure is the dramatic equivalent of rhyme and the reversal of order in which the two rivals for Ernest’s hand speak has the structural quality of a tango.

Brian Friel’s Extraordinary Play

The next examples came from Brian Friel’s extraordinary play, “Translations”, focussing first of all on the public meeting scene, elements of which, within the dramatic construct, are spoken in English and translated into Gaelic but are, for the audience’s benefit, in fact all spoken in English. The ‘translations’ reveal a sanitising of the true import of the imperialistic British purpose of ‘standardising’ the place-names in this rural corner of

Southern Ireland. As the audience we understand both what is supposed to be happening and also what is actually happening. But we know already that this happens; we recognise these forms of speech from the real world.

Poems also use familiar forms; “Grace”, by Sarah Woods, was shown to have many similarities to the example already quoted from Churchill’s “Ice-Cream”. Jaq’s speech from that play showed a professional promiscuity in the “CV” described; in “Grace”, the form is of a “to-do” list, with its random switching between the profound and the mundane. Poets set up and repeat phrases which give new and unexpected meanings; in the second extract from “Translations”, the love scene between Yolland and Maire, we are reminded that, while the two young people hardly know one another and cannot understand each other’s words, in fact the repetitions and reversals, changes of tempo, rhythms, rule of three and drop line all confirm that they are in fact truly in love – just as Romeo and Juliet’s sonnet does. From rural Ireland we then moved to the Boar’s Head Tavern and the wonderful conscious theatricality of Falstaff and Prince Hal taking it in turn to play the king. Hal’s final crushing drop line, condemning Falstaff with, “I do, I will,” shatters the artifice.

‘I am not as young as I was.....’

Poetry glories in its inspiration and free expression, its compression and literary handicraft. Playmaking (Edgar’s term) battles against the constraints that the limitations of the form impose upon it, revealing the patterns and connections that we miss in everyday life. To be truly effective, poems must act upon us in a way that resembles a human encounter and this is what drama actually does. But it can explore encounters that cannot actually take place. In Stoppard’s “The Invention of Love”, an appropriate example for Edgar to take as his last, an old man meets a young man in Oxford; that they are both Housman is revealed in Stoppard’s brilliant line, “I’m not as young as I was, whereas you are.”

Poetry and playwriting are not at the opposite ends of the writerly spectrum; the best thing about the arts is the constraints against which they struggle: ballet telling its story without words, drama getting inside the head of its characters. Plays are to be read as well as performed and the silences, like those at the line break in poetry, are part of the structuring of plays. The concentration of plays focuses our attention on what is important – what is happening during the silence. Pinter developed a notation for silence; Churchill went further and explored the mechanics of overlapping speech. In each case the notation on the page draws attention to the effect.

It was a true intellectual privilege to enjoy this captivating lecture, delivered and received with such ease and yet at such a profound and conceptual level, in which our lecturer passed on an understanding of the connections between the literary forms and could explain so powerfully how both poetry and plays work.

Bromsgrove Commemoration

With Bromsgrove High Street being renovated the A.E.H. birthday Commemoration was held at the John Adams Memorial and it turned out to be a great opportunity for guests to see the fine renovated memorial. Julian Hunt was the Guest of the Day and he relished the opportunity to recount the story of how John Adams came to Bromsgrove. For many present it was the first sight of the memorial and they certainly had not heard how John Adams was apprenticed to a Leicester hosier and sent to Bromsgrove because, unlike in Leicester, there were no industrial disturbances there. He was to manage the spinning frames in Bromsgrove's former cotton mill, which was to employ 150 men, women and children.



Julian Hunt (extreme right) tells the story of John Adams coming to Bromsgrove

John Adams of course lived at Perry Hall, which now, as Housman Hall, is part of Bromsgrove School, but as the building is having major work done on it, lunch could not be held there. It was just as appropriate that we should gather in the School's Old Chapel, where A.E.H would have worshipped as a boy.



After lunch the winner of the Society's Poetry Reading Competition Cup, 12 year old Ethan King from Catshill Middle School, repeated his tour de force at the Poetry Competition the week before by reciting from memory Dwight Latham and Moe Jaffe's long complicated and funny *I am my own Grandpa*.

With it being Chris Edwards' last year as Bromsgrove School's Head the Chairman took the opportunity of thanking him for all the support the School had given to the Society during his time as Head and presented him with a copy of Gareth Thomas' photographic *A Shropshire Lad*.

'While Ludlow tower shall stand...'

Members of the Society wearing builders' helmets must have been a first - but that is what we saw at this year's Ludlow Commemoration on 30th April, for after the traditional ceremony by the plaque on the north wall we were given a tour explaining the Vision Project for St Laurence's. The basics of this were outlined in last September's Newsletter and, after a tour of the church and an explanation of the plan to bring items with a Housman connection together by



Shaun Ward by one of the restored pinnacles

the north door of the church, we donned hard hats and under the expert guidance of Shaun Ward, the leader of the project, were taken on to the roof to see the work in progress there. He explained that the most urgent work has been completed but the costs continue to escalate.

Cost of Scaffolding



Society members surveying the scene

Scaffolding is one of the biggest expenses but funding 112 sheets of lead, 20 pinnacles and 5 hood mouldings is very costly. A whole pinnacle costs around £10,000 and individual stones and a sheet of

lead each cost £1,000, taking into account the cost of labour.

After this unique tour members assembled at the Millennium Green Café for a delicious and congenial lunch.

Middle School pupil wins Poetry Speaking Competition

Two brilliantly dramatic readings by Ethan King from Catshill Middle School not only won the Middle School section of the Housman Schools Poetry Speaking Competition, held at Artrix on 20 March, but also The Housman Cup, which is presented to the 'best overall reader' on the day. Ethan's Housman poem was the dramatic 'Shot! So quick, so clean an ending?' where his understanding and delivery showed a maturity way beyond his years. His other poem, Dwight Latham and Moe Jaffe's 'I am my own Grandpa', was a tour de force of both memory and delivery that tipped the scales in his favour over stiff competition from more mature pupils.



Pavel Poloskin, a Russian student at Bromsgrove School, toasts A.E.H.

Emily Collie (Bromsgrove School), the winner of the cup last year, was the Sixth Form winner with thoughtful and perceptive interpretations of 'Bredon Hill' and Denise Levertov's 'What were they like'. Eden Peppercorn (North High School), who made impressive use of the dramatic pause, was the Senior winner with Housman's 'Illic Jacet' and Stacie Ferrante's 'Pandora'. Pavel Poloskin impressed with his 'Because I liked you better' and when one realised that he was a Russian studying at Bromsgrove School it showed just what impact this competition has for spreading the word about Housman far beyond the English speaking world.

With Kate Shaw having retired from being the organiser the Society had engaged T.C. Peppercorn, the Education Officer at Artrix, to run it and she had held a number of successful workshops in schools prior to the Competition. Hilary Stookey, in whose father's memory the cup was given, presented the prizes and the Chairman of the judging panel, Bryan Maybee, thanked all the participants, from ten local schools, commending them for the variety of the poems chosen and the enthusiasm of their performances.

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Hilary Stookey presents the Housman Cup to Ethan King

Books titled after Housman

Following on from pieces in the last two Newsletters readers have sent in more book titles.

Blue Remembered Hills by Rosemary Sutcliffe was published 1992 and the author describes how her immobility as a child suffering from a rare form of arthritis developed her powers of observation and her ability to enter into a life of the landscape and the people about her.

Blue Remembered Hills by Showell Styles. Frank Showell Styles (1908-2005) was a Welsh writer and mountaineer born in Four Oaks, Birmingham and was educated at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School,

Abdon Burf by Simon Evans (1932). Simon Evans (1895-1940) was a postman with the GPO for most of his short life. He also developed a reputation in the 1930s as a writer and broadcaster on country life, particularly in and around rural South Shropshire.

Shoulder the Sky by Ann Perry, who is a prolific author, born in Blackheath in 1938. She was sent to the Bahamas at the age of eight after suffering a series of serious illnesses. She then moved to New Zealand but only started writing when living in Hexham, after her return to England.

Further titles include *On the Idle Hill of Summer* by Philip Baker. and *Quietest under the Sun* by Jack Wood

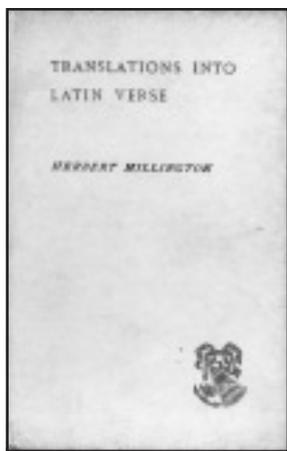
Gabriel & Linda at Malvern

Behind the Lines: A World War One Anthology is a performance of poetry and prose that tells the story of what people thought at home at the start of the war, and what the soldiers knew at The Front as the war went into its second, third and fourth years. **Gabriel Woolf and Linda Hart** will read from the works of soldier poets such as Wilfred Owen, Ivor Gurney and Isaac Rosenberg. The enthusiasm for the war expressed by Julian Grenfell and Rupert Brooke will be contrasted with the bitterness of Siegfried Sassoon and the wry humour of e.e. cummings. Linda will read works by many women poets who have not received the recognition they deserve. Two poems by Housman are included, which Gabriel will of course be reading. There will be some humour too, when they read from two wartime publications, *The Wipers Times* and *The John Bull*. The performance is at the Autumn in Malvern Festival, and takes place at Malvern Theatres Cinema at 2.00 on **Sunday 26 October**. Details of this and other Festival events are at www.malvern-festival.co.uk. Tickets can be booked from the Malvern Theatres box office on 01684 892277.

'My Old Pupil and Distinguished Friend'

In sorting his family books recently the Chairman came upon Herbert Millington's 'Translations into Latin Verse' (published in 1889) in which the author mentions the debt he owes to his 'distinguished friend, Mr. A.E. Housman', in the Preface – which is reproduced below.

I must confess that I have no adequate motive for the publication of the following verses, unless it be the fond hope that those who may have found some pleasure and profit in the hours spent with me as their composition master in the past, may care to recognize, in a permanent form, the handiwork of one who tried so hard to make them feel the beauty and delicate charm of Latin verse.



I must also confess that I am conscious how far most of – and indeed all – my renderings fall short of that perfection which is the peculiar charm of such composition. But in not a few instances the passages rendered have not been of my own choosing, but have been set to candidates for university and college scholarships at Oxford; and I have been impelled to render them, as best I could, rather with the view of practically demonstrating to my pupils that a

tolerably idiomatic rendering was possible, than in the hope that I could offer a faultless version. Nothing is more remarkable, indeed, in this age of the neglect of the Latin Muse, than the extreme difficulty of the passages usually set at Oxford for translation into Latin verse; and one feels tempted to ask whether they are invariably set by practical composers, or whether the object of the modern examiner is to give Latin verses their *coup de grace*. I would venture to hope the latter hypothesis is not true; for I can speak from a long experience when I state that no portion of our work here at Bromsgrove has been more fruitful of intellectual results than the one hour a week to which an ever widening curriculum has confined the lesson in Latin verse. Not a few of my pupils owe to that one weekly hour the first thrills of that passionate love for the classical languages and literature which have been the making of their intellectual fortune.

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the debt I owe to my old pupil and distinguished friend, Mr. A.E. Housman, for his valuable criticism of these verses, which have been submitted to him before publication. His keen eye and sound learning have detected not a few blemishes which might have disfigured these pages. If I have not in every case deferred to his judgment, he will, I know, forgive the prejudices of his old chief; and I trust that any pleasure he may derive from re-perusing my lines will not be altogether marred by the antiquated system of orthography which I have adhered to, in spite of his better judgment.

De Vries Parody

Radio 4's 'Poetry Please' on Sunday 11 May had food as its theme, writes Linda Hart, so I was not expecting to hear any Housman. To my surprise, there was the next best thing – a parody of Housman. And what a funny parody it is. Titled 'Loveliest of Pies,' it is by the American writer Peter De Vries (1910-1993). Having grown up with *The New Yorker* magazine, where De Vries was on the staff from 1944 to 1987, his writing is not new to me; but this Housman parody certainly was. So in case others do not know it

Loveliest of Pies

Loveliest of pies, the cherry now
Completes a fine repast;
'Tis not the first I've ordered, lads,
But it will be the last.

For soon they'll slit my trouser-legs
And shave my head, and then
They'll sit me in the chair from which
I'll never rise again.

The lengthy error known as Life
Began in a single cell,
And that is where for luckless lads
It sometimes ends as well.

And so it's down the row I go
With my eternal curse.
And that's what comes of reading
Pessimistic verse.

Peter De Vries wrote poetry and short stories, as well as twenty-three novels (some made into films). D.G. Myers described him as "one of America's greatest comic novelists" (*Commentary*, September 27, 2011). 'Loveliest of Pies' is in *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*, but the text above comes from his 1949 novel *The Tents of Wickedness* (page 121). Myers described this novel as "a masterpiece of parody in which Emily Dickinson and Dylan Thomas (to say nothing of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Proust, Dreiser, Joyce, and Kafka) get what is coming to them."



Folio Edition of 'A Shropshire Lad'

This new edition features the wood engravings by Agnes Miller Parker created for the classic 1940 edition. To quote Ian Rogerson, 'The art of wood engraving is to release light from the block. Agnes Miller Parker's skill with the burin was of such an order that her blocks, when printed, positively radiate light. She could infuse the most mundane subject with sparkle and, at times, achieved such a level of coruscation in her illustration that verbal description becomes virtually meaningless'. Published price: £24.95.

The Paris Slip of Paper

An Appeal from Society Secretary, Peter Sisley

Just a week or so after being installed as Secretary of the Housman Society I received a most interesting email from a Society member concerning the article *Housman Abroad* by David McKie in *HSJ* 39. My correspondent was unhappy with the conclusion of the article – that the slip of paper that has baffled Housman enthusiasts for so long related to Housman's dreams, and enquired as to my thoughts in this matter.

My response ran along the lines that I agreed with him. I had thoroughly enjoyed reading David McKie's article but I too was unconvinced by his conclusion. David could, of course, be correct but I was not persuaded. Perhaps, I ventured, this is a problem without a solution.

I well recall reading R.P. Graves' *The Scholar-Poet* back in 1979 and rejecting the assertion therein that the list related

to male prostitutes used by Housman on the trip and the numbers related to the price that he paid for their services. I believe that P.G. Naiditch adequately demolished Graves' theory in his article *A.E. Housman in Paris* in *HSJ* 12. My interest in the matter was reawakened about ten years ago when I acquired correspondence emanating from Martin Higham, former owner of the slip of paper, relating to how it had come into his possession. And the story runs contrary to what we had previously been told. Although he informed Graves that the slip of paper was found in a book following the dispersal of Housman's library in 1936, Martin Higham states that he had now discovered that various Housman books and papers, including the slip of paper, were given to his father T.F. Higham, Fellow of Trinity College Oxford, by Sir Basil Blackwell in 1970. The slip of paper had, presumably, laid undisturbed in those books and papers for over thirty years, their interest and possible significance unrecognised.

But I had to admit to my correspondent that, although I had mused at length over the problems presented by the slip of paper, and had certain ideas, I had not ventured into the unfamiliar territory the research demanded to test those thoughts. He, however, was made of sterner stuff and, a couple of days later emailed me with some thoughts which he has now given permission to set in this article.

A great deal has already been written about the three cards which Mr R.P. Graves uncovered in his researches for his biography of A.E.

Monday	9	Max
Tuesday	9	Boxeur
Wednesday	0	
Thursday	3	Marin 1
Friday	9	Yanac
Saturday	0	
Sunday	3	Nicois
Monday	0	
Tuesday	9	Marin 2
Wednesday	0	
Thursday	3	negre
Friday	10	danseur
Sat.	0	
Sun.	3	danseur
Tue.	10	danseur

10 in 15 days

Housman. Cards 1 and 2 refer to restaurants in or near Paris, and Mr Graves thought that the entries on the third card referred to male prostitutes. More recently, in an article in the Society Journal for 2013 Mr McKie suggested instead that they may be a list of Housman's dreams of music hall figures.

I would like to suggest that the jottings on the card 3 may, like those on the first two cards, also refer to restaurants which Housman visited, or was thinking of visiting on his trip to Paris.

In his book "Housman 1897-1936", p.262, Grant Richards tells us that on 10th June 1932 Housman sent him "a report on five restaurants." One of the five entries in that report says "Marins. Nothing out of the way." Card 3 contains the words "Marin 1" and "Marin 2", each against a day of the week, with the number 3 by the first and 9 by the second.

It seems possible that the entry in the report to Grant Richards is plural, and refers to two Marin restaurants, of which there are still several in Paris, and that the card refers to Housman's visits to them, the numbers being his rating of them.

If so, perhaps the other words on card 3 also refer to restaurants. The other words are Max, Boxeur, Nicois, Danseur (and danseur 2), and negre.

I don't know enough about the Paris restaurants of the time to say how these might fit, as it were, but could not Max mean Maxim's, the well-known art nouveau restaurant in the rue Royale? And "negre" could surely refer to Le Negre de Toulouse. (Le Negre de Toulouse was a restaurant famous for its literary associations. Ernest Hemingway was a frequent customer there at one time and he wrote in a letter at the end of the Second World War that "We liberated Libbs and then we liberated the Negre de Toulouse.")

Nicois could refer either to a restaurant of that name (there is one called Le Petit Nicois in Paris today, although it is not old, I believe) or perhaps to a restaurant serving nicois cuisine.

It is more difficult to suggest what Boxeur and Danseur might refer to, but there is today a long-established restaurant called Chez Walczak in Paris which is sometimes known as the Restaurant Boxeur. (This is because its walls are covered with pictures depicting the family which runs it and its sporting past that began with the grandfather, Yaneck Walczak the boxer, who once fought the more famous Marcel Cerdan.

Although Chez Walczak has a long history I think it may not go back to the 1930s but could there not have been other Restaurant Boxeurs in Paris's past?).

I do not know what restaurants the "danseurs" might refer to but I suppose they may be a couple of restaurants where there was dancing or which were frequented by dancers.

These thoughts do not give anything approaching a definitive interpretation of the words on card 3 but bearing in mind that the other two cards were to do with restaurants, they seem to me to be as plausible as the other suggestions that have so far been made. Perhaps someone more knowledgeable than I about 1930's Paris will say whether there is any more to this suggestion.

My response to this hypothesis was generally encouraging but I had noticed that a couple of points did not ring true. For example, on Monday 30th May 1932 Housman lunched at The Continental and dined at the Ecu de France leaving no room for Max being a restaurant, and, if the numbers relate to points, I have always been suspicious that someone as severe as Housman would not be awarding 9's and 10's as regularly as we see on the slip of paper. And why do we only see 3's, 9's and 10's on the score sheet? And why does a zero appear when there is no name listed? I would expect to see either a dash or no entry at all. But a zero appears in every instance. As an aside I believe that the answer to these questions is critical to solving our problem.

My correspondent accepted that perhaps his theory did not completely hold up but, within twenty-four hours, submitted the following:

On the continent lotteries were more common than they were here until ours was introduced. They are all over the news-stands in Italy and France for example.

In France, the official Government lottery had been withdrawn some years before Housman's visit and was not re-launched until 1933, i.e., the year after this visit. However, it seems likely – and all this is only guesswork at this stage – that smaller scale lottery tickets were widely sold at news-stands etc in the absence of the popular official one, (and may even have been sold by small boys permitted to come round to diners in the restaurants in the evenings. I have had this experience in Italy.)

The possibility has been forming in my mind that on his first full day in Paris, namely Sunday May 29th, Housman may have purchased a lottery ticket. When he got back to his hotel he may have made one of his characteristic aide memoir cards on which he intended to keep a record of his lottery results. On this perhaps he wrote "Monday" in readiness for the result next day. He may have written the other days of his holiday in a list beneath it at the time or he may have added them as he went along. Either way, he misjudged the space available a little, or forgot at first that he would get the last lottery result on the morning of his departure, Tuesday 14th June, hence the cramming in of the last entry on card 3. That didn't matter: it was only a somewhat scribbled personal jotting of his lottery results for the period of his

visit on a piece of card.

Anyway, on the Monday he found he had won 9 francs and wrote it in. If he bought another ticket that evening, he would have found out whether he had won anything the next morning, namely Tuesday. He had won 9 francs again, which was duly entered. Nothing the next day so he wrote "0". And so on until, by the end of his holiday he had won on 10 occasions out of 15. Quite good going, and he wrote the summary up the side of the card, "10 in 15 days."

What about Max, Boxeur, Marin, Danseur, Nicois, and negre?

I don't know for certain, but might it not be that the lottery wins were somehow related to the music hall figures that David McKie identified? For example, perhaps you had a certain number or series of numbers that next day was revealed to give you a Boxeur which that day was worth a prize of 9 francs.

If there is anything in this idea, it would explain why card 2 runs from Sunday to Sunday while card 3 runs from Monday to Monday. It would explain the zero entries too. The "10 in 15 days" would also make sense and if the prizes in this modest lottery system were 3, 6 and 9 francs, except for the maximum 10 franc payout at the end, the range of numbers would be explained too.

Would Housman have bought lottery tickets? I think he would. He liked popular culture such as the music halls, he had an attractive lighter side to his personality and he wanted to "connect" with the Parisian culture he had gone to experience.

What do you think? It is better than male prostitutes or a list of dreams with scores, in my opinion.

Well, I'm now handing the matter over to you, the Membership. What do you think? Can you supply any information that could help this idea to float? Or anything that would sink it?

Of course it may be that this little problem of the Paris Scrap of Paper is insoluble but, before we put it back in the drawer, can I ask you to contribute your own thoughts to a possible interpretation of Housman's list? I'm not requesting a full-blown detailed theory, excellent though that would be, but I am asking for any observations that might be relevant, any pertinent scraps of knowledge that you might possess, any interesting thoughts that you might have that could perhaps be the key to the solution of this problem. Within this Society I believe that we have a better chance than most of reaching a conclusion as to its possible meaning and I hope that with a decent response from Housman enthusiasts it may be possible to weave various diverse threads of information into a plausible conclusion.

I can be contacted on info@housman-society.co.uk or any of the contact points on the Book Exchange pages.

Why Read Housman?

Darrell Sutton gives some more thoughts on A. E. Housman's poetry and letters.

Some readers of this newsletter may wonder, 'is there any *value* to reading Housman's letters?' This is a question with which I have been confronted often. It has been posed to me in a variety of different ways. For myself the answer seems to be straightforward, quite a simple one; but my reaction will be based on my own adventures. Collected letters place an author under a magnifying glass, and act as dependable records of a writer's private pursuits. The exploitation of their resources requires hard work. For that reason the answer to the question depends on what a reader means by 'value,' and what he or she deems to be profitable reasons for taking the time to read the letters in the first place.



Darrell Sutton

Housman's correspondence is important in several ways, and one is obliged by the facts to be scrupulous in the handling of their details. But to put the above question differently, if one were to inquire of me whether or not added benefit will be received from looking over his letters, then my answer would be a resounding, yes. I would wonder though, if the inquirer is on an academic quest or an recreational venture? The true value of the quest itself is realized by one's own inquisitiveness, and is also inherent in one's motive, intention and desires.

Please permit me to explain. It was a happy day for me when I chanced upon the recently published 2013 edition of *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* (1873-1947) in a nearby college library. Several rumours existed regarding her visit to Housman in England during the period in which she was a noted writer and he was a Professor of Latin at the University College of London. It was said that she had presented him with a gold laurel wreath; and that Housman was rude to her and her companions.

This tale traversed America from Red Cloud, Nebraska to the far corners of the United States. It was put to rest when she began to dispute the literary records indicating so. To read through her letters and take note of the extensive but private correspondence, which not only denied the allegation of the gift of a wreath, but refuted one more deplorable legend regarding Housman's ill conduct, relieved me of bearing an unneeded burden of falsehood. Therefore my point is simple, letters have their particular uses.

As for the volumes of Housman's letters, available are three volumes: *The Letters of A.E. Housman* (1971) by H. Maas and *The Letters of A.E. Housman* (2007) by A. Burnett. Maas' one volume publication represents only a small selection of

more than 800 items of the existing material; whereas, Burnett's critical edition in two volumes purports to contain all 2,237 of the extant letters.¹ Both are user-friendly, but serve dissimilar functions. An even more industrious endeavor for the student might be to seek to examine the original documents. Housman's letters are scattered about in several archives. And the study of [his] handwriting, though it is an eccentric form of microscopic scholarship, might be of interest to you.

Letters provide vivid self-portraits. The reading of the letters leads me to conclude that Housman could have agreed with F.R. Leavis' (1895-1978) claim that "it is disastrous to let a country's educational arrangements be

determined, or even affected, by the assumption that a high intellectual standard can be attained by more than a small minority."² It may sound elitist, but the tone of the assertion does not detract from the quality of Leavis' judgment. The letters betray the ejection of any devotion to the peculiar sacrifice of Jesus; and with irreverence Housman censured several of his correspondents' literary efforts. If there is any popular use for the science of graphology³ a few specimens of Housman's uninviting handwriting would suffice for the yielding of evidences of his character also. Far from calligraphic his letter formation is ordinary; not unique, but clearly wrought to be understood.

I have found Housman's letters to be helpful on several fronts. Letters also act indirectly as mini-diaries. As such, they are a form of private property. I know more about Housman the individual than I could otherwise.

Consider the below lines written during his boyhood.

Eriphyle (within): O, I am smitten with a hatchet's jaw:
And that in deed and not in word alone.

Chorus: I thought I heard a sound within the house
Unlike the voice of one that jumps for joy.

Eri: He splits my skull, not in a friendly way,
Once more; he purposes to kill me dead.

Cho: I would not be reputed rash, but yet
I doubt if all be gay within the house.

Eri: O! O! Another stroke! That makes the third.
He stabs me to the heart against my wish.

Cho: If that be so, thy state of health is poor;
But thine arithmetic is quite correct.

Youthful hearts and minds usually are not fixated on such ideas. In one's formative years death rarely is a major factor. But there was little about Housman that was usual. His intimate confidants likely observed the development of his personality with glee and trepidation. I doubt that it is an error to conclude that the average academic does not write private letters or brief tracts with a view to their future publication. And there is nothing in the composition of Housman's letters that leads me to believe he expected these ever to see the light of day, even if the possibility exists that he may have been aware that some of them would have been scanned by readers to whom they were not addressed. If this is the case, his private notations or remarks to family and friends give a particularly studious reader access to opinions to which he or she would not have the liberty to engage otherwise.⁴

As far as the letters go their appeal is not all mesmeric. There is no remarkable attraction to them for me at all. As a letter writer I do believe he is a respectable prose stylist, but his style is bereft of that comforting eloquence one often finds in other able Victorian writers. He possessed a keen command of the proper use of English syntax. Never could he bore a reader with his writing, but his literary expression in his letters is not on the literary level or of the type found in the letters George Gordon [Lord] Byron (1788-1824) or of one such as Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., (1841-1935): Holmes' printed thoughts led the reader on a scenic journey. His fair-minded examinations of others' views, and his replies to his respondents will be read several times over before one grows weary of reading them all.

Housman, on the other hand, composed letters with a refined tunnel vision, focusing on specific issues.⁵ He drove the reader directly through to thoughtful destinations with little regard, if any, for picturesque parades of wording.⁶ Except, there are a few letters of his that are strewn with dry humour, others which detail his sobering journeys within England and around Europe. These pieces routinely read like travelogues filled with his careful inspections and full of witty interpretation. On all these occasions he never ceases to entertain with his eye for detail.

He plainly writes with a flair for right word usage. An unusually accurate hand guided his pen, and a critically enlightened mind informed his hand. Each of his letters, from early life to old age, whether to family members or friend or to someone unknown to him, reveals an unpretentious gentleman with both feet on the ground who is intensely learned, but still interested in the hodgepodge events within various family circles, e.g., see his youthful letters to relatives, i.e. Laurence; his numerous letters to Grant Richards regarding work on his critical editions;⁷ his few questions to colleagues concerning specific texts and his replies to various queries on Graeco-Roman matters. Housman worked within a very narrow province. Naturally his letters reveal this provincial wisdom.

Of more interest to the learner may be his readings of other

persons' poems and his reactions to them. He carried on his own private practice of literary criticism; though he deplored any idea that he was in fact a poetry critic. On the contrary, I suspect he welcomed each opportunity to which he was presented to pour his ridicule into print. He had been a recreational literary critic from an early age. He wrote occasional poems too during his youth⁸ and a number of letters through the years reflect his disgust with, and his appreciation of, various lines of verse sent his way. Thus the value and use of his letters is a subjective matter, and it is best to leave that judgment to the individual researcher. For the examiner should understand better than anyone else what it is exactly he or she seeks to gain from reading him.

Even still, were it not for the letters how would anyone know that he did not regard his volume of poetry, *A Shropshire Lad*, with the same high regard of which it was spoken by others. When writers inquire of me about specific, uncritical acceptances of oral traditions, my response tends toward the negative because oral traditions should not be received so quickly. And when Housman admonishes Charles Wilson in a letter dated May 18 1927 with these words, "*when you call it the greatest literary effort of the century you forget that its century was the 19th, which can boast of many greater literary efforts,*"⁹ we must take note!

To tender some more personal statements, the facts are these: I read his letters because they are part of the entire oeuvre and therefore lead us to a better understanding of the man and the scholar: they are necessary to understanding him in that broader genre of study labelled the History of Classical Scholarship. Housman's learning, although it is wholly unrelated to the historical roots of a good humanistic tradition,¹⁰ nevertheless represents the best of modern attempts in the non-fictive chronicle of classical philology and exegesis. Moreover his letters permit me to judge his interpretations of modern English poetry and his assessments of ancient Roman verse. I am also interested to identify the breadth and extent of his societal connexions: to know with whom he frequently or occasionally corresponded, of the nature of those relationships and also to see if contemporary arguments, relevant to Housman studies, are valid or invalid.

These considerations aside there are also the chronological uses of this material. The letters allow me to view his character development and the evolution of his scholarship, to follow his trains of thought through the years. In terms of chronography this elevates their importance for biographical matters, and is the one reason, I think, most literary studies of Housman are so poorly wrought. Thematic studies can be expertly done, but these tend to drift with modern currents of interpretation, controlled by persons whose muses inspire confidence in oddly assembled revisions. All those pesky historical events tend to occur chronologically so why demur to the use of annalistic methods?

As far as studies of his poetic side, still I am constrained by

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

the evidences to believe the literary factor is overplayed: to an extent that when a novice reads the many kinds of interpretative studies written of Housman, only later to read his unembellished letters, the visible character-clashes noticeable within contradicting arenas of interpretation, in the main lead to major frustrations. These are well-nigh impossible to overcome.

The pathways of human life are beset with several twists and turns. Changes in a writer's personal lifestyle, behaviour and predicaments are inevitable. However, most of these metamorphoses remain concealed, that is until his or her cache of letters is exposed.

NOTES

1. Although I am unable to recall where, I am certain I read that at least one unpublished letter has turned up since Burnett's publication.

2. See *The Critic as Anti-Philosopher* (1998 rep.: Ivan R. Dee), pp.160-161.

3. The study of handwriting: i.e. size of letters, spacing between, significance of angles and slants et cetera.

4. See his letter to his brother Laurence, dated 9 June 1910. Housman offers his straightforward, indeed unenthusiastic remarks regarding the issue of women's suffrage there in England; he would prefer to see the experiment initiated in a "less precious country" like America, in Burnett's *Letters I*, p.251.

5. An excellent example of his is found in his letter to A.C. Pearson, dated 12 October 1924. Having received a gift copy of Pearson's newly published Oxford Classical Text *Sophoclis Fabulae* (1924) Housman reacts stating, "To what you say in your note I must reply that if your judgment is not worth more than mine you ought not to be editing Sophocles nor sitting in the Greek chair" in Burnett's *Letters I*, p.574.

6. I am reminded of John Marshall's (1755-1835) letter of advice to his grandson on writing. In which he states: "...clearness and precision are most essential qualities. The man who by seeking embellishment hazards confusion, is greatly mistaken in what constitutes good writing. The meaning ought never to be mistaken. Indeed the readers should never be obliged to seek for it. The writer should always express himself so clearly as to make it impossible to misunderstand him. He should be comprehended without effort. The first step towards writing and speaking clearly is to think clearly. Let the subject be perfectly understood, and a man will soon find words to convey his meaning to others." See *John Marshall and the Constitution: Chronicles of America, part 16* (1919) by E.S. Corwin, pp.212-213, published by Yale University Press.

7. E.G. his letter to Grant Richards, dated 28 August 1911.

8. See his poem to Lucy Housman, dated 22 April 1875 in Burnett *Letters I*, pp.8-12. See also *op. cit.*, fn. 2, p.7.

9. See Burnett's *Letters II*, p.26.

10. By a good humanistic tradition, I am referring to the type of work carried on by individuals such as Rudolf Pfeiffer (1889-1979), Werner Jaeger (1888-1961) and Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949) who worked from atop a Christian basis and whose ideas at times were infused by Christian perspectives as they studied events and persons and writings of classical antiquity.

Miscellanea

● On page 234 of Juliet Nicolson's *The Perfect Summer* (an account of the summer of 1911) she quotes a letter from Winston Churchill written in late August to Lord Grey his Cabinet colleague and Foreign Secretary: 'I could not think of anything else but the peril of war..... there was only one field of interest illuminated in my mind. Sitting on the hilltop in the smiling country which stretches around Mells (in Somerset), the lines I have copied kept running through my mind.'

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.

● On page 15 there is an account of Jill Liddington's sponsored walk that traced the route that **Laurence Housman** took in 1903. She had devised this sponsored walk to raise money for the educational international charity 'Book Aid'. Members are encouraged to donate through <www.justgiving.com/Jill-Liddington3> or by a cheque made payable to 'Book Aid' via Elizabeth Oakley, 64 Rednal Hill Lane, Birmingham B45 9LJ.

● Humphrey Clucas's lute song setting of A.E. Housman's '**Breathe, my lute, beneath my fingers**' has been recorded in a version for voice and piano by James Bowman (counter-tenor) and Malcolm Archer. The CD, entitled 'Thus Angels Sing', is on the Convivium label, number CR 019. The song is published by Recital Music.

● Apologies to Humphrey Clucas for two **errors** that crept into his piece on page 13 of the February Newsletter: 'Lords' should have been 'Lord's', and 'laurels' should have been 'lauriers'.

● A book has been published about **Alec Miller** (1879-1961), the sculptor who carved the portrait head in wood of Laurence Housman, which is currently on display in the Museum of the Guild of Handicraft Trust in Chipping Campden, though owned by the National Portrait Gallery. *Alec Miller: Carver Guildsman Sculptor* by Graham Peel. ISBN 9780992739102 - £17.00.

● A fascinating new book has been published by Merlin Unwin Books – the firm that publishes the photographic *A Shropshire Lad* by Gareth Thomas – entitled **A Most Rare Vision** and it contains pictures of Shropshire from the air.. The book came about through a most unlikely friendship between the author Mark Sisson, a professional wildlife photographer who lives in Shropshire, and a retired vicar with a passion for aviation! Hardback, 160 pages with 131 colour photos. ISBN 9781906122669. Price £14.99.

A.E.H. as a 'War Poet'

As part of the 2014 Much Wenlock Poetry Festival Gladys Mary Coles' lecture on 'Three Shropshire War Poets' gave a large audience a fascinating insight into the similarities between these very different poets – A.E.H., Wilfred Owen and Mary Webb. Jim Page reports.

In explaining why Mary Webb and Housman can be classed as 'War Poets' Gladys Mary Coles explained that in her view a war poet does not necessarily have to be a soldier, rather one who writes about war and its effects on both the civilian population and those involved in making war. She reminded us the First World War used to be called the Great War and its effect on the whole of society, as it progressed from a mood of idealism to one of disillusion caused the greatest trauma imaginable. Those who fought were literate and so many from all ranks wrote diaries, letters and even poetry that these records have provided such a rich archive that their experiences have become part of our psyche.



Gladys Mary Coles

In looking for similarities between the three poets she felt it interesting to note that all were born in March within ten days of each other, all had strong associations with Shropshire, and that all three were the eldest in their families. They were all well educated and from middle class families.

At the outbreak of war A.E.H. was 56 and a professor at Cambridge, Wilfred Owen was 19 and working in the south of France as a tutor to a wealthy family. Mary Webb, who suffered from a thyroid disorder, was 33 and had just settled in her new home in Pontisbury where, possibly feeling that she could not cope with the horrors of nursing the wounded, she concentrated on helping the war effort by selling the produce of her garden in the market at as low a price as possible. Her second novel 'Gone to Earth' was published in 1917.

When turning to the poetry Dr Coles told us that at the start of the war Housman's fame was already established by 'A Shropshire Lad' and its themes of nostalgia and the progress of young men towards death had an emotional appeal to Victorian sensibility. Three poems (read by Sam Gray) were chosen to illustrate this: 'Into my heart an air that kills', 'The Recruit' and finally 'Is my team ploughing' where love is entwined with death.

It was illuminating to hear that Wilfred Owen had marked poems in his copy of 'A Shropshire Lad' and Dr Coles felt Housman's influence on him was considerable,

especially in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' which she considered one of the greatest poems in the English language. 'Disabled', 'The Send Off' and 'Spring Offensive' followed – all read to great effect by Sam Gray.

We then moved on to the quieter voice of Mary Webb, who had three brothers who survived the conflict, though the youngest had his jaw blown off and endured 35 operations in attempts to repair the damage. Mary Webb's poetry was little known at the time but through Gladys Mary's reading of 'Autumn 1914', 'The Lad out There' and 'Viriconium' she illustrated the sincere nature of her writing.

In conclusion Sam Gray read 'On Wenlock Edge' in which Housman sums up an unpying acceptance of the troubles of life by setting them in a long historical perspective.

Housman Books from Bromsgrove Library

It was forty years ago in the early days of the Housman Society that an arrangement was made with Bromsgrove Public Library to house some of the Society's collection of books by and about Alfred, Laurence and Clemence Housman. The Library is shortly moving to new premises but it is sad to hear that in order to meet the needs of a twenty-first century library there will be less room for books in the new building than in the old. The Society has therefore had to collect eight sizeable boxes of their books from the library.

Now although these books have always been owned by the Society successive librarians have felt compelled to subject these books to the standard practices of their trade and they

now bear the usual scars and disfigurements of the typical library book. They are therefore no longer what could be described as 'collectable' but they do still comply with the bookseller's description of 'a reading copy'. The Society has decided to offer the A.E.H. books to the membership at very modest prices and the L.H. and C.H. books free to any interested party.

The limitations of space in this newsletter do not permit a listing here of the available books which may be gained by contacting Peter Sisley on <info@housman-society.co.uk> or any of the contact points on the Book Exchange pages.

The Housman Society Book Exchange

Elsewhere in this newsletter is a short alert to the fact that the Society is disposing of a quantity of ex-library books on AEH, Laurence and Clemence and any interested party is invited to contact me for details. While these books are unlikely to be of interest to the keen band of Book-Exchangers I thought that I would take this opportunity to make a listing of some of the more modestly priced Book Exchange stock that, because of pressure of space in these pages, rarely gets advertised. Please get in touch if you would like a copy of either listing and I will email or post a copy according to your wishes.

In the Sales List below is a good selection of desirable material but I would draw your attention to one particular item. A Society member has sent in a full set of Housman's Manilius first editions to be offered for sale but I must state that the condition of the set is not great. Volumes 1 and 5 although retaining most of the spine label have lost much of the spine and are in danger of breaking up. The other three volumes could be described as being in good and good-plus condition. All volumes are in the original boards and internally, apart from some grubby end papers, are in very good condition. This, in my opinion, is a set crying out for a quality rebinding - fine leather would be my preference. The asking price for this extremely rare set is sufficiently modest to enable anyone willing to take on this task to be rewarded with a scarce and absolutely beautiful addition to their bookshelves.

As always the items offered for sale on these pages 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 - SEPTEMBER 2014

Postage and Packing are additional to the prices quoted.

BELL (Alan) [editor]. FIFTEEN LETTERS TO WALTER ASHBURNER. The Tragara Press, Edinburgh, 1976. First edition. 8vo. 24 pages. Blue paper wrappers. Ashburner was an academic lawyer, a Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford, a book collector and, like Housman, a gourmet. These letters were not featured in Maas. Number 73 of 125 copies. In fine condition. £60

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. Small spot to front cover therefore almost very good. £40

FRASER (Claud Lovat). SIXTY-THREE UNPUBLISHED DESIGNS. The First Edition Club, London, No date (but 1924). First edition. 16mo. Unpaginated. These designs' intended for an illustrated edition of A Shropshire Lad, were rejected by Housman [I should look a fool if I allowed the book to appear with these decorations]. Holbrook Jackson relates the story in full in his introduction. One of 500 numbered copies. Cloth backed pattern boards in a design by Fraser. Very good but for intrusive dedication.

together with

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 copies. Fine. £80 the pair

HABER (Tom Burns). THE MANUSCRIPT POEMS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1955. First American edition. 8vo. 146 pages. Brown cloth missing the dust jacket. The first published attempt at unravelling the notebook fragments. Scarce. Very good. £25.

HOLDEN (Alan) and BIRCH (Roy). A.E. HOUSMAN. A REASSESSMENT. MacMillan, London, 2000. 8vo. 225 pages. Black cloth with dust jacket. A dozen essays on Housman have been brought together in this book, which although recently published is very difficult to acquire on the second-hand market. Fine. £30

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. MANILLII ASTRONOMICON. Five Volumes. Grant Richards, London, 1903, Grant Richards Limited, London, 1912, 1916, and 1920, The Richards Press Limited, London, 1930. 8vo. First editions. Volume One has Housman's 75 page preface followed by 103 pages of text and index. Volume Two (31) 123pp, Volume Three (28) 72pp, Volume Four (17) 130pp, Volume Five (46) 199pp. Original blue boards. Please see introduction for condition report. Incredibly rare and offered at an attractive price. £425

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. £100

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. George Harrap, London, 1940. 8vo. 99 pages. Brown cloth missing the dust jacket. The first edition with the delightful woodcuts by Agnes Miller Parker. £20

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. The College Press, Marlborough, 1954. 12mo. Unpaginated. Quarter leather. Number 19 of a stated forty copies [actually thirty copies - see article in Newsletter no. 30, September 2009]. With an introduction by Laurence Housman. One of the rarest of all Shropshire Lads. Minor bumping to head and tail of spine and a little nibbling to boards. Very clean and tight. Internally fine. Very Good. £150

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A MORNING WITH THE ROYAL FAMILY. Privately printed at Christmas 1955. 12mo. 16 pages. Cream Paper covers. Very good. £20

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Woodstock Books, Oxford, 1994. 12mo. 96 pages. A facsimile of the Kegan Paul 1896 edition. With an introduction by R.K.R. Thornton and the bookplate of P.B. Morris. Fine. £25

HOUSMAN (A.E.). BIRCH (R) [editor]. UNKIND TO UNICORNS. Silent Books, Cambridge, 1995. First edition. 47 pages. Brown cloth. Illustrated by David Harris and with an introduction by Norman Page. The hardback limited edition of 150 copies. Fine. £30

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.

together with

HOUSMAN (Laurence) [contributes]. ENCOUNTER MAGAZINE. VOLUME XXIX No.4. Continental Publishers, London, 1967. 8vo. 96pp. Paper covers. On pages 33-41 is printed for the first time *A.E. Housman's 'De Amicitia'*, annotated by John Carter. Very good indeed. £85 the pair

HOUSMAN SOCIETY JOURNALS. A FULL SET. 1974 – 2013. The Society is pleased to offer a full set of Journals to the membership at a fraction of the cost that would be charged on the open market. Thirty-Nine issues. The condition varies from Very Good to Mint. £180

HYDER (Clyde Kenneth). A CONCORDANCE TO THE POEMS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Peter Smith, Gloucester. Massachusetts, 1966. 133 pages. Brown Cloth. An essential reference tool. Near fine. £60

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

MARLOW (Norman). A.E. HOUSMAN. SCHOLAR AND POET. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1958. First edition. 192 pages. Cream cloth. The first full-length study of Housman's poetry. Very good but missing the dust jacket. £25

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

NAIDITCH (P.G.). PROBLEMS IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Krown & Spellman, Beverly Hills, 1995. First edition. 8vo. 244 pages. Blue cloth. No dust jacket – as issued. Seventy notes, articles and reviews on Housman. In mint condition. £35

PAGE (Norman). A.E. HOUSMAN – A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY. Schocken Books, New York, 1983. First American Edition. 8vo. 236 pages. Cloth with the pictorial dust jacket. A beautifully written biography. Fine. £15

PLATT (Arthur). NINE ESSAYS. Cambridge at the University Press, 1927. First edition. 220 pages. Red cloth. Housman not only supplied the seven page preface but also managed the progress of the book through the press. Very good indeed, but, as usual, missing the dust jacket. With the bookplate of noted Housman collector P.B. Morris. £30

POLLARD (A.W.) [Editor] ODES FROM THE GREEK DRAMATISTS. David Stott, London, 1890. 208 pages. First edition. Parchment boards with gold medallion on front cover [almost certainly the earlier –CSW]. Contains three specially written translations by Housman – his first appearance in book form. Very good. £120

ROME (G.E.). TRAVAILS WITH A SKELETON. THE LITERARY REMAINS OF ALFRED CODLIN. 16 pages. Paper covers. Housman parodies. The introduction invites the reader to decipher, if he can, the message contained within. Outpost Publications, Walton-on-Thames, 1975. Fine. £15

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. Very good. £20

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. £20

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. Card covers with deckled edges which have suffered slight bumping. 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

TAKEUCHI (Y) [editor]. THE EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE TO THE POEMS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Shohaksusha Publishing Co., Tokyo, 1971. First edition. 157 pages. Three quarter cloth. An essential reference tool. Near fine in the very good original printed slipcase. Very rare. £70

WITHERS (Percy). A BURIED LIFE. Jonathan Cape, London, 1940. First edition. 133 pages. Blue cloth missing the dust jacket. Withers first met Housman in 1917 at Cambridge and this book records their association over the next twenty years. This book, rare in its own right, contains a manuscript dedication by the author. Very Good. £60

ZEITLIN & VER BRUGGE. A.E. HOUSMAN. WINTER CATALOGUE 1983. Zeitlin & Ver Brugge, Los Angeles, 1983. 4to. Unpaginated. Card covers. This catalogue of 203 items is packed with interest for Housman enthusiasts. Near fine in its original protective envelope. £25

WANTS LIST

The Road of Danger, Guilt and Shame. The Lonely Way of A.E. Housman by Carol Efrati. £50 offered for a copy in at least very good condition.

Any interesting Housman material..

Please contact Peter Sisley if you can help.

Housman Verse Prize

Daniel Williams, Bromsgrove School's representative on the Society's committee, writes: When Bromsgrove School's Housman Verse Prize opened this year, 'Immortality' was the title of the e-mail. Not because that was the topic to write on but because that was the prize awaiting the winning entry. Immortality in the Bromsgrovian, immortality in the Housman Society's journals and now immortality on the English Honours board in the Humanities Block...

Poetry tells a story and records a moment that often the poet who wrote it wasn't aware of capturing. A journey through previous winners of this competition in the archives of the *Bromsgrovian* magazine across three centuries tells a story of the school, in a unique and honest way that can't be fabricated. It tells a story of war and politics; of bullies and burnt porridge. It tells the story of those who lived here and the time in which they lived. A true appreciation of the impact of these things can only really be appreciated with hindsight – last year's winner, *Human Debris*, is testament to that.

With social media and 24 hour news these days we are much more aware of what's going on in the world and to try and encourage reflection of the students' global awareness the topic for this year's entries was **Revolution**. There were more entries than ever before and the standard was incredibly high.

Freddy Ferguson (L6) considered how:

The people have freedom when they shout in the square,
Until the lucky get megaphones
And the others get reduced to prayer...
...No Man worth a million times another,
Put the money aside and still he's just your brother,

Sophie Bruce (U6) reflected on recent social change:

There's a social revolution coming, peace soars like a
dove!
All can be married no matter who they love.

In the words of Carren Wong's (L6) 'Hollow Eyed Angels':

We see, we hope, we die

While Alice Ruben (L6) called for calm and reason:

By passion, haste and rage she is blinded.
Words are unheard, when one acts too strongly.

And Jenny Moore (U6) looked a little closer to home...

Arm yourselves.
Not with A A* A
But with strength and with peace
We'll clear our own way.
Not with isms or stigma
With brains and our say.

It's impossible to quote from all of the outstanding poems received: each will be displayed in Humanities over the coming weeks. But Declan Amphlett's (U6) winning entry *Revolution's Bicycle* packed a punch through its irony and wit and the way that the ideas from the global to the personal, past to present, are weaved together to tell a story of *this* time and achieve its own immortality.

Revolution's Bicycle

by

Declan Amphlett

The Wheels of Change are turning - fast. They spin
As Unrest's bicycle shakes off its rust.
The winds of protest at its back, and thin
Black tyres which burn their mark in dust.

And who is owner of the "Wheels of Change"?
The revolution's absolute top fan?
The most oppressed, of course, in all the range:
A white, straight, educated, bourgeois man.

He hates "the system", preaches Marx and co.,
Bewails materialism and "the man",
Yet drinks at Starbucks (like an average Joe),
An unwitting part of their consumer plan.

Oh but he cares! He does - his Twitter feed
Is full of statements showing his support.
He's got a Che Guevara shirt - he reads,
This activism isn't just a sport.

But. He posts nothings, he saves pointless files,
Has empty, vapid blogs to make him seem
Involved when he's so many thousand miles
Away - to him the trouble's nothing but a dream.

He doesn't know who Che Guevara is!
And when an oil crisis strikes, afar,
There's not a single chance he will not miss
To tell the world about his hybrid car.

They say to "be the change you wish to see",
But seeing can be difficult for some.
Especially if your eyes are glued to screens -
The world reduced to the press of a thumb.

This revolution of the modern age:
The infant workers on the lowest wage,
The bicycle falls, the wheels, the spokes, the seat -
They scream, they cry - you sit, you blog, you tweet.

News of Vice Presidents

Chris Edwards retired from being Head of Bromsgrove School at the end of the Summer Term after ten years in the post and is moving to be Head of the United World College of South



East Asia in Singapore from September 2014 – a college which has the reputation of being the world's largest school, currently with 4,909 students of 76 nationalities. During his time at Bromsgrove he saw the school through a golden phase of development, which included the purchase of Perry Hall (now Housman Hall) for use as a Sixth Form boarding house. His farewell speech at the end of the summer term broke all conventions and can be seen and heard on YouTube under

'Bromsgrove School Commemoration Day 2014'. We wish him every success in his new post.

Peter McCague, who starts this term as Chris Edwards' replacement comes from New Zealand where he was Head of Kristin School in Auckland for fourteen years, a private co-educational school located in Albany on the North Shore. Kristin is an IB World School with approximately 1505 students. He has readily agreed to become a Vice President of the Society and will be the Guest of the Day at the Bromsgrove Commemoration.



Benjamin Fisher became Professor Emeritus of English, at the University of Mississippi, in July 2011, and since then has spent some time recuperating from several surgeries, but is fine once again. Although he continues to write the annual review of scholarship pertaining to 1890s British writers and other artists, his energies have been required, more and more, in non-academic areas. He has been awarded recognition in recent years for outstanding teaching and scholarship; in 2012 his *Edgar Allan Poe and His Own Times* (U. Iowa) was given the Patrick F. Quinn Award, sponsored by the Poe Studies Association.

With a 21-year-old travelling back and forth from China, now tutoring in Chinese on the University of Mississippi campus (she will graduate in May 2015), and a 13-year-old daughter much involved in school activities, and, for a time, an older sister in Delaware who needed assistance, Ben's time and energies have been diverted from scholarly projects. He did publish a critique of Charlotte Riddell's 'Gothicism' not long since, and he continues his work on an edition of Ella D'Arcy's letters. He maintains a strong, if at this time inactive interest in whatever concerns the Housman Society.

L.H. Biographical Walk

It is well documented that A.E. Housman found walking a congenial, relaxing activity which gave rise on occasions to poetic inspiration, writes Elio Elizabeth Oakley, but it is less well known that his younger brother Laurence enjoyed the freedom of walking as an antidote to the increasing speed of early 20th century lifestyles, the motor car being chief culprit. The weather during the nine-day Laurence Housman Anniversary Walk between Bromsgrove and London in July could not have been better. Sun, high cloud and light breeze provided ideal conditions to admire at leisure some of the beautiful countryside through which Laurence himself had passed in 1903. By coincidence, as our walk began in



Bob & Liz Oakley, Margaret Evans, Jill Liddington and Julian Hunt pause for a photo on the path that runs parallel to the Lickey Incline

Bromsgrove there was a biographical element to it. Through Finstall and Tardebigge, familiar to Laurence as a boy, we continued to Chipping Campden, home to the young Laurence's artistic friends Janet and C.R. Ashbee. From here Laurence's route has to be guessed but it ended in Kensington, his home for 20 years with sister Clemence when they were both deeply involved with the Women's Suffrage Movement. Our finish was the Scarsdale Arms opposite the Housmans' home which was a vibrant centre for Women's Suffrage activities either indoors or in the garden atelier. We found both walking and company a sheer delight and we felt that Laurence also would have done so. It seemed fitting, given the radical politics that suffused the Kensington of Laurence's time, that on the last day, near to the tube station outside which Clemence had rattled her tin for contributions to the funds of the Women's Social and Political Union, part of Kensington High Street was closed to traffic because of a big rally moving down from Whitehall. We felt that after wishing us good-bye at the Scarsdale Arms Laurence would have hurried off to investigate, pleased to see democracy still in action.

The Society's warmest thanks go to Jill Liddington (who walked every one of the 80 miles) for her inspiration in devising this sponsored walk to raise money for the international charity Book Aid. **Please donate** through <www.justgiving.com/Jill-Liddington3> or by a cheque made to Book Aid via Elizabeth Oakley, 64 Rednal Hill Lane, Birmingham B45 9LJ.

Forthcoming Events

Thursday 23 October 2014, 6.30pm

University of Surrey Austin Pearce Building, Guildford

A.E. HOUSMAN - Lyric Power

Barbara Hardy gives the 2014 Morag Morris Poetry Lecture. Booking on 01483 686876.

Tuesday 3 March 2015, 7.30pm

80 New Road, Bromsgrove B60 2LA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting will be followed by wine and refreshments. The evening concludes with a talk from Elizabeth Oakley on Laurence Housman's relationship with his more famous brother.

Wednesday 18 March 2015, 4.30-6.30pm (date tbc)

Artrix, Slideslow Drive (off A38), Bromsgrove B60 1AX

SCHOOLS POETRY SPEAKING COMPETITION FINALS

Competing pupils from Bromsgrove's schools will speak a poem by A.E. Housman and another of their own choice. There are categories for Sixth Formers, Seniors and for the Middle School age group. The winner of the Housman Cup will read at the Bromsgrove Commemoration on 26 March.

Thursday 26 March 2015, 12.30pm

By the Statue in Bromsgrove High Street

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 Bromsgrove District Council, Councillor Ruck. The Guest of the Day will be Peter McCague, the new Headmaster of Bromsgrove School.

Thursday 30 April 2015, 11.00am

St Laurence's, Ludlow

LUDLOW COMMEMORATION

The ceremony by the plaque on the north wall will be followed by a talk to be arranged. This will be preceded by coffee in St Laurence's and followed by lunch in a location to be confirmed.

26/27 May 2015, Date tbc

The Hay Festival of Literature

THE HOUSMAN LECTURE

The Name and Nature of Poetry

Speaker to be announced

Tuesday 7 July 2015

Lecture Theatre, Bromsgrove School,

THE LIFE and WORKS of LAURENCE HOUSMAN

Julian Hunt and Andrew Maund will give presentations as part of Bromsgrove Summer School in the morning and there will be a visit to Housman Hall in the afternoon.

Saturday 18 July 2015

Street, Somerset - various venues

LAURENCE HOUSMAN - 150th Celebration

A day of celebration in conjunction with the Street Society which will include the unveiling of a blue plaque on Laurence's home, Longmeadow.

Newsletter Setter Needed

The Society is looking for a computer-literate member to set the Newsletter. This is a rewarding task which, with today's technology, can be carried out from anywhere in the UK. The Society will be prepared, if required, to buy the necessary software to suit the volunteer's needs. Offers to our Secretary Peter Sisley by e-mail <sisley.ladywood@talk21.com>. The Newsletter is printed by Lonsdale Print Solutions in Wellingborough and sent to them over the wires as a PDF.

'A Bromsgrove Lad'

As part of the 2014 Bromsgrove Festival the Society put on an evening in Artrix's Studio in July that gave a portrait of A.E. Housman through his poetry, letters and folksong settings. Singer Polly Bolton was joined by her two musicians John Shepherd (piano) and Steve Dunachie (violin and piano), whose settings of Housman's poetry in the Shropshire Lad Centenary year had made such a valuable addition to the repertoire.

Hearing them sung as an integral part of the Housman story was a moving experience, especially when set beside the sensitive reading of the poetry by Housman Cup winner Emily Collie. The links to the poetry and songs were nicely relevant, and the script was read with relaxed professionalism by Michael Collie.

A full house listened with rapt attention throughout and the evening concluded with 'Into my heart an air that kills' in both spoken and musical versions, which made for a poignant conclusion to a very satisfying evening.

A.E.H. on the Move



As part of the scheme to regenerate Bromsgrove High Street the Housman statue was moved from its position to a more central location. Details of the move will be featured in the February Newsletter

Published by The Housman Society, 80 New Road, Bromsgrove. The next Newsletter will be circulated in February 2015 and contributions should be sent to the Editor at the address given on page 1 by 1st February 2015.