

The Housman Society Journal

Volume Forty-Four 2018

Editor: Derek Littlewood



The Housman Society
80 New Road
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire B60 2LA
England

Charity Number 100107

ISSN 0305-926X

Website: <http://www.housman-society.co.uk>

E-mail: info@housman-society.co.uk

The illustration on the cover is from the drawing of A.E. Housman
by Francis Dodd, 1926

Reproduced by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

The Housman Society

Founders	John Pugh and Joe Hunt
President	Sir Christopher Ricks, MA, BLitt., FBA
Vice-Presidents	Prof. Archie Burnett MA, DPhil Peter Clague MA, MBA Prof. Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV Sir Andrew Motion FRSL P.G. Naiditch MA, MLS Jim Page MBE, MA Prof. Norman Page MA, PhD, FRSCan. Sir Tom Stoppard OM, OBE Gerald Symons
Chairman	Peter Waine BSc.
Vice-Chairman	Andrew Maund MA, MPhil
General Secretary	Max Hunt MA, Dip.Ed.
Treasurer	Richard Aust OBE, M.Ed., MSc, Dip.Sp.Ed.
Editor of the Journal	Derek Littlewood BA, MA, PhD
Editor of the Newsletter	Julian Hunt FSA
Committee	Jane Allsopp BMus. Jennie McGregor-Smith Jo Slade BA (Hons) Econ. Pat Tansell

Housman Society Journal

Volume Forty-Four

December 2018

Laurence Housman as Literary Executor of A.E. Housman	Julian Hunt	1
Letters from Laurence and Clemence Housman to Ida Stafford Northcote	Julian Hunt	10
<i>Rutupinaque litora</i> and Lucan vi 67	Andrew Breeze	27
<i>Orcadas</i> and Juvenal ii 161	Andrew Breeze	36
And Thick on Severn Snow the Leaves	Andrew Breeze	46
‘Grasp the Nettle’: Some Thoughts on <i>ASL</i> XVI	Darrell Sutton	59
Review of Edgar Vincent, <i>A. E. Housman: Hero of the Hidden Life</i>	Andrew Maund	69
Biographies of Contributors		76
The Housman Society and Journal		77

Laurence Housman as Literary Executor of A.E. Housman

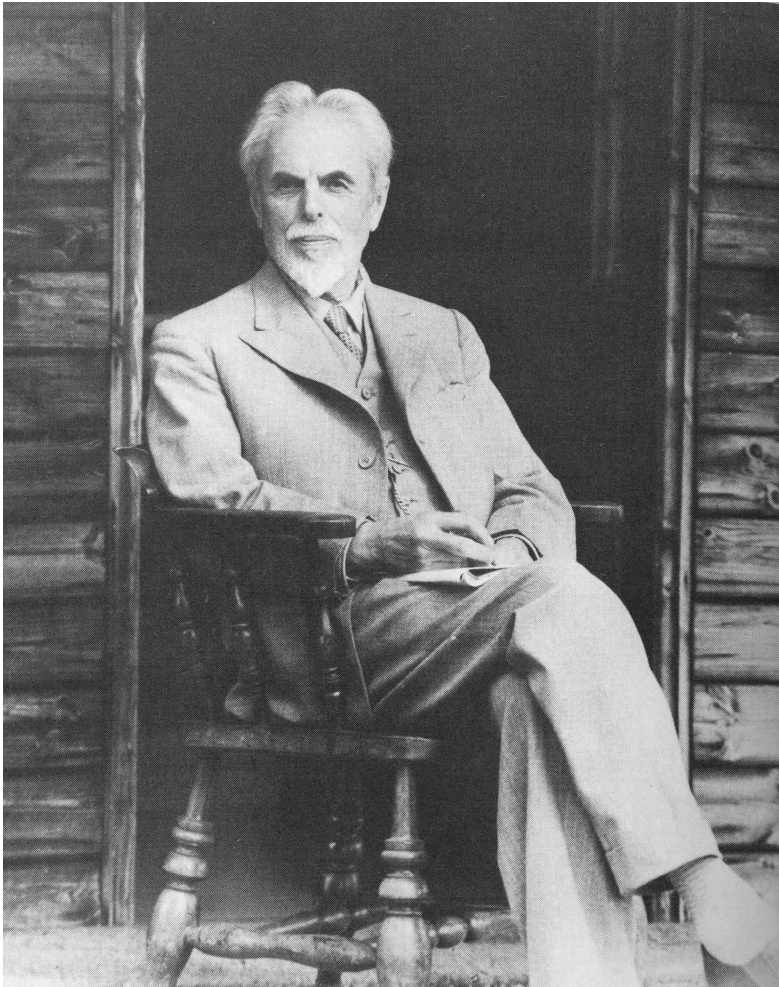
By Julian Hunt

In the *Housman Society Journal*, Vol. 43, 2017, Peter Sisley argues persuasively that A.E. Housman's literary executor, Laurence Housman, badly mishandled his brother's papers and rushed to publish many poems he should have destroyed. Whilst appreciating the scholarship and wit with which Mr Sisley makes his case, I would like to defend Laurence Housman who, I believe, was given an impossible task. A.E.H. had had ample time to make proper provision for the disposal of his own manuscripts and could have chosen a capable literary executor from amongst his circle of friends at Cambridge. Instead he left a mass of books and papers, some of them deeply personal and sensitive, to be sorted by a younger brother who was himself going through the most challenging and exhausting period of his professional life.

I will begin, as does Mr Sisley, with the very extract from the will of A.E. Housman, dated 17 November 1932, which Laurence included in his introduction to A.E.H.'s *More Poems*, published in October 1936.

I direct my said brother Laurence Housman to destroy all my prose manuscript writings in whatever language and I permit him but do not enjoin him to select from my verse manuscript writing and to publish any poems which seem to him to be completed and to be not inferior in quality to the average of my published poems and I direct him to destroy all other poems and fragments of verse.

A.E.H. realised that there were poems amongst his papers which should be published, but he clearly lacked the will to do the job himself. His instructions may have seemed clear to him, but he left his brother to make extremely difficult value judgements. Whilst he stressed that the criterion for publication should be quality, he made no mention of autobiographical poems which, even if they were of high literary merit, would present Laurence with the problem of what to reveal and what to suppress. Even if A.E.H. had doubts about his brother's ability to carry out his wishes, he may have felt that no-one else could be both an arbiter of taste and a reliable judge of what was socially acceptable.



Lawrence Housman 1930

As the two brothers became closer in A.E.H.'s last years, even to the extent of taking holidays together,¹ they must have discussed what was to be done with the books and papers in A.E.H.'s Cambridge study. Laurence, as a prolific novelist and playwright, but an inferior poet, must have urged his brother to publish his manuscript poems, or at least to allow them to be published after his death. A.E.H. must have offered some further thoughts on the issue of publication beyond the brief instructions in his will. Surely he knew that Laurence would have to decide whether or not to publish poems which were clearly about A.E.H.'s great friend Moses Jackson and which might prove upsetting to their sisters Clemence and Katherine.

In the 1920s and 30s, Laurence Housman's reputation as a novelist and dramatist was greatly increased by his tussles with the Lord Chancellor over licences to stage his plays. Laurence had written 30 plays dramatising incidents in the life of Queen Victoria, based on her published letters and diaries. None of these plays could be seen by a paying audience in deference to the Queen's three surviving children. Despite their being rarely performed, and then only to private clubs, the 'Palace Plays' could be read as a warm and entertaining biography of the Queen and a candid view of Victorian ways and manners. In December 1934, Jonathan Cape published a collected edition of the plays entitled *Victoria Regina*, which was such a success on the Christmas market that three reprints were required in 1935 alone. The popularity of *Victoria Regina* brought a flood of invitations for Laurence Housman to speak at literary events. He bought a yellow Daimler and was driven around the country by his chauffeur, Wilfred Wills.²

The theatre director Norman Marshall offered to stage *Victoria Regina* at the Gate Theatre, a quasi-private club in London, beyond the reach of the Lord Chancellor. Pamela Stanley, daughter of the 5th Earl Stanley, was to play Victoria, and a young American actor named Vincent Price took the part of Albert. *Victoria Regina* opened at the Gate Theatre on 2 May 1935 and was given a warm reception. Laurence Housman gave a speech of thanks to the players and the audience.³ An American producer, Gilbert Miller, saw the play and offered to stage it on Broadway. *Victoria Regina* opened at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York, on 26 December 1935, with a leading American actress, Helen Hayes, as Queen Victoria and Vincent Price again as Albert. The production enjoyed widespread critical and popular acclaim, running for 517 performances and was seen by 650,000 people.⁴ Laurence Housman, now aged 70, visited America in February 1936. Questioned why *Victoria Regina* could not be performed on the English stage, Laurence

Housman claimed that he was the most censored man in England.⁵ It was not until December 1936 that the new King Edward VIII lifted the ban on performing plays depicting Queen Victoria. The liberalisation was to begin after 20 June 1937, the 100th anniversary of the Queen's accession. *Victoria Regina* opened at the Lyric Theatre in London on 21 June 1937 with Pamela Stanley again as Queen Victoria. It was a smash hit.

Laurence Housman returned from his triumphal visit to New York on 10 March 1936. On 17 March he was in Hull giving a reading of his 'Palace Plays' to the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society.⁶

1 Laurence Housman to Ida Stafford Northcote, 29 July 1934, Cambridge University Library Add. Mss. 9506/261.

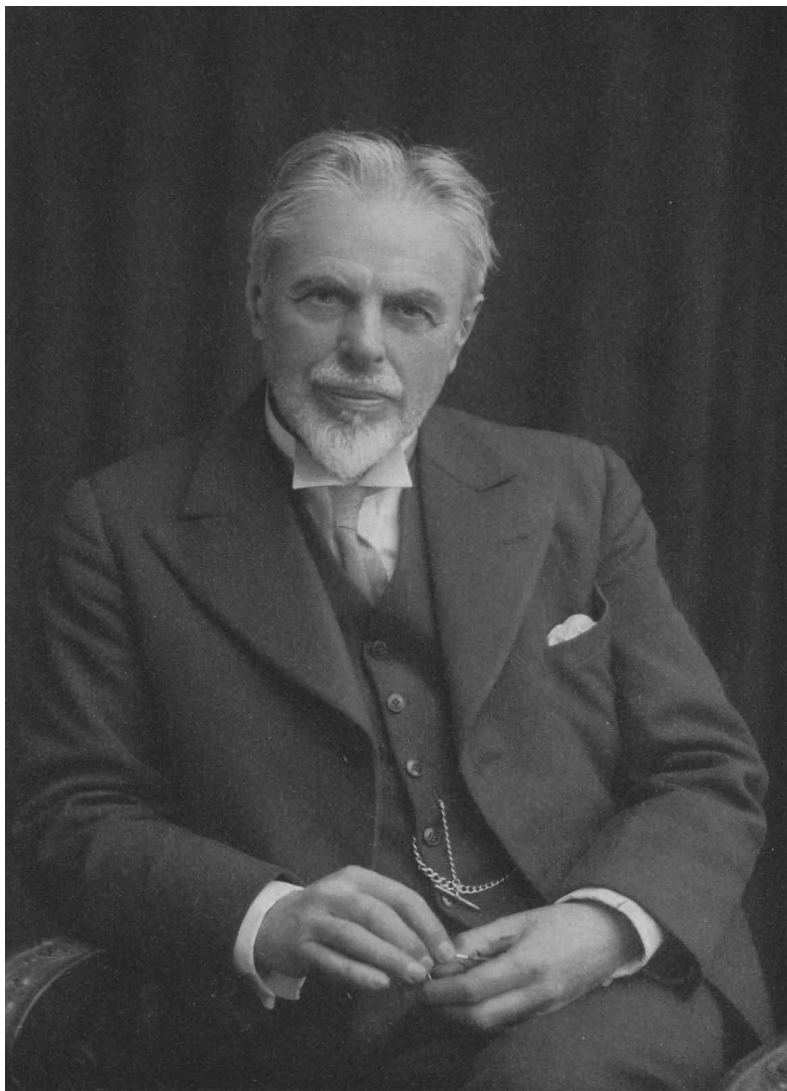
2 Ibid. 26.

3 *The Stage*, 9 May 1935.

4 *Illustrated London News*, 6 November 1937.

5 *The Era*, 26 February 1936.

6 *Hull Daily Mail*, 18 March 1936.



Lawrence Housman 1937

During 1936, he attended several literary festivals and spoke at many peace rallies. He was also busy writing his autobiography and compiling an edition of his own collected poems. His brother A.E. Housman's death at Cambridge on 30 April 1936 therefore came at the busiest and most successful time in Laurence's life. He now had to arrange A.E.H.'s funeral service at Cambridge on 4 May and the subsequent burial of his ashes at Ludlow on 26 July. Laurence's sister and life-long companion, Clemence Housman, realised what a difficult task A.E.H. had left his younger brother. She wrote to her friend Ida Stafford Northcote, 17 May 1936:

Laurence is still at Cambridge and will not return 'till the end of this month. There is so much for him to see to, business with trustees and publishers, and the disposal of books and belongings. He has found some 30 unpublished poems, but he is bound to destroy those he considers below par as well as all unfinished.⁷

7 This letter was clearly removed from a large collection of letters from Laurence and Clemence Housman to Ida Stafford Northcote before they were given to Cambridge University Library, in 1998 (Add. Mss. 9506). The letter is now amongst the collection of Housman Society member Peter Sisley.

Laurence Housman was not without help and advice in his work of tidying up his brother's affairs. He wrote to A.E.H.'s old friend from Oxford, Alfred Pollard:

Trinity College, Cambridge May 20th 1936
My dear Alfred

I have been so snowed under with correspondence & other things to do since our Alfred's death, that my memory is all astray as to certain letters, answered or unanswered ... I got here a few hours after A's death, and have been in his rooms ever since struggling with a mass of papers & letters, over much of which I should have been helpless but for the good services of some of A's College friends. He was quite definitely wishing to die, and his last few weeks were of continual discomfort & occasional pain. In spite of his reserve he made many friends, and I have been surprised to find how many were able to get through the crust. But he mellowed considerably in his last years, & was for the first time on terms almost of intimacy with his own family. He has left to me the disposal of his remaining poems, and I shall be able to make up a third volume for publication this autumn. His ashes are to be buried in Ludlow Churchyard. I leave here next Thursday. I have given a good deal of his Library to his College & the University.⁸

Laurence himself describes the dilemmas he faced in mid 1936 dealing with his brother's papers:

When my brother's papers came into my hands after his death, I was confronted with the fact that he had left me to discover in them certain matters of a very intimate character about himself, of which previously he had never spoken to me, although I had reason to think that he was aware both of my knowledge of what had so deeply affected his life, and of my sympathy for the unhappiness which it had caused him.⁹

In selecting material for a new collection of A.E.H.'s verse entitled *More Poems*, published in October 1936, Laurence included several very personal and poignant poems. *More Poems* No. XXX 'Shake hands, we shall never be friends, all's over'; and XXXI 'Because I liked you better'; are clearly about A.E.H.'s great friend from Oxford, Moses Jackson.

8 H.R. Woodhuysen: *A.E.H. A.W.P. a Classical Friendship*, 2006, p. 29. 9 *Encounter*, October 1967 p. 33-41.

Following the publication of *More Poems*, Laurence Housman wrote again to Alfred Pollard:

Longmeadow Street
Oct: 23rd 1936

My dear Alfred

I always think A.E.H. was deeply in your debt for supplying him with the right title for his first book of poems; for which reason, as well as for other associations, I send you his last, and hope that my editorial efforts won't seem to you to have done his reputation any disservice. It was anxious work. I have suppressed about 12 poems which seemed complete but of doubtful standard. But I am keeping about six of them for second thoughts; and if the general verdict of the critics is that I have not gone below standard, I may eventually add them to later editions, or bring them into my memoir.¹⁰

The memoir to which Laurence refers was of course his biography *A.E.H., some Poems, Some Letters and a Personal Memoir by his Brother*, published by Jonathan Cape in December 1937. By this time Laurence felt bold enough to print 18 more of A.E.H.'s poems, including 'O were he and I together' and 'He would not stay for me; and who can wonder?' which were clearly about Moses Jackson. He also included 'Oh who is that young sinner with the handcuffs on his wrists?' a poem written when Oscar Wilde was imprisoned in Reading Gaol.

Laurence Housman certainly did not take his responsibilities as his brother's literary executor lightly. In 1942 he wrote a long essay on what A.E.H.'s diaries revealed about his obsession with Moses Jackson. He deposited the diaries and the essay in the British Museum with instructions that they were not to be opened until a further 25 years had elapsed. Evidently still troubled by the responsibility his brother had placed upon him, he wrote to Reginald Reynolds, on 12 December 1943, justifying his decisions made in May 1936:

10 H.R. Woodhuysen: *A.E.H. A.W.P. a Classical Friendship*, 2006, p. 38.

The fact remains that A.E.H. did unashamedly leave these papers for inspection. They were very human, and some of them very touching. And the letters have not been destroyed and will or may some day be restored to the light of day when there will be no feelings to be hurt, and when perhaps they may be of some benefit to society as a corrective to social intolerance ... Sometimes I think that Alfred definitely wished me to make the truth known when he was safely tucked away into the non existence which he believed to be man's true end.¹¹

The diaries were duly opened at the British Museum in July 1967, just two weeks before the Sexual Offences Act became law, decriminalising homosexual acts between consenting adults in private. The full text of Laurence Housman's article, entitled *A. E. Housman's "De Amicitia,"* annotated by the book-collector and Housman authority John Carter, was published in the magazine *Encounter* in October of that year. This was the final chapter in the story of Laurence Housman as literary executor of A.E. Housman. Present-day bibliophiles and archivists cringe at Laurence's mutilation of A.E.H.'s notebooks and diaries, but he was expressly instructed by his brother to destroy incomplete and inferior material. Perhaps Laurence did go beyond his brief in publishing his brother's autobiographical poems, but in *More Poems*, *A.E.H. a Memoir* and in the *Encounter* article, he gave the vital evidence needed to understand A.E. Housman's poetry as a whole.

11 Letters to Reginald Reynolds, Bromsgrove Library.

Letters from Laurence and Clemence Housman to Ida Stafford Northcote

By Julian Hunt

In another article in this Journal, I have referred to a collection of letters written by Laurence and Clemence Housman to an old friend from Bromsgrove, Ida Stafford Northcote. The letters, which were given to Cambridge University Library in 1998,¹ contain a wealth of information on Laurence and Clemence, and reveal a good deal about their elder brother A.E. Housman. The collection covers the period from the First World War though to the late 1950s and includes three unpublished letters of A.E. Housman, plus family photographs, book reviews and theatre programmes.

Ida Stafford Northcote was born 27 January 1876, the daughter of Joseph and Ida Clare Boulderson, who came to live in Bromsgrove during the late 1870s. Joseph Boulderson was a retired army captain, having served in the 68th Regiment of Light Infantry. He died at Matlock Cottage, Station Road, Bromsgrove, 11 May 1881 aged 37, and was buried at St Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Bromsgrove.² The Housmans seem to have taken Captain Boulderson's young family under their wing. Ida Boulderson had a younger brother with the unusual Christian name of Shadwell (often abbreviated to 'Shad' in the letters). When Laurence Housman and Somerset Maugham launched a literary compilation entitled *The Venture* in 1903, they included a poem by Shadwell Boulderson. The same publication included a poem by A. E. Housman.

On 2 August 1906, Ida Boulderson was married to Cecil Stafford Northcote at the Brompton Oratory. The couple had several children including Lewis (born 1907), Sybil (born 1910) and Cecil (born after his father's death in 1912). Throughout the period of the correspondence, Ida Stafford Northcote lived at East Hendred, near Wantage, Berkshire.

1 Add. Mss. 9506

2 The gravestone is still legible: Joseph Boulderstone late Captain 68th Light Infantry youngest son of the late Shadwell Morley Boulderson.

She kept over 270 letters from Laurence Housman, 38 from Clemence Housman,³ and three from A.E. Housman himself.⁴ Ida's younger son, Cecil Henry Stafford Northcote (1912-2003), contributed some memories of Alfred, Laurence and Clemence Housman to the *Housman Society Journal*, in 1981.⁵

Laurence Housman usually addresses Ida as 'Muzipal' or 'Moozipoo' and signs himself 'Lollynge.' When Clemence writes to their friend she addresses her as 'Dearest Ida.' One of the earliest letters in the Ida Stafford Northcote collection is written by Laurence from Pembroke Cottages, Kensington, the home of Laurence and Clemence until they moved to New Milton, Hampshire, in 1918. It is undated:

3 Op. cit.. 278-316

4 Ibid. 275-7 A.E. Housman's three letters to Ida Strafford Northcote are not included in *The Letters of A.E. Housman*, edited by Archie Burnett, 2007, and do not appear to have been reproduced elsewhere.

5 Housman Society Journal, Vol. 7, 1981, p. 39.

1 Pembroke Cottages Edwardes Square Kensington

Dear Muzipal

Thank you for the cheque and document.

Clem says will you come and cook any day you like next week, and any time? Only give her a short warning to have her own pots and pastries out of the way. I forwarded a letter from Shad yesterday. His to me was rather in the dumps about his work ...⁶

Another early letter in the collection is from A.E. Housman who is unable to meet Ida's daughter in Cambridge as he is enjoying a holiday in France:

Pavillon Henri IV St Germain en Laye 19 June 1928

Dear Ida,

You will probably have heard from Sybil that I wrote immediately to her to say that unfortunately I shall not be in Cambridge. I should now write to you to say that I am sorry to have missed her.

Yours sincerely

A.E. Housman⁷

Through most of the years of the correspondence, Laurence Housman and his sister are living at Street in Somerset. They moved there from Hampshire in 1924 to be near their great friends Roger and Sarah Clark.

6 Op. cit. 267

7 Ibid. 275.



Longmeadow, Street

Laurence writes regularly to Ida Stafford Northcote about his current writing, his attendance at literary and theatrical events and his work for the peace movement. Laurence occasionally arranges to stay with Ida at East Hendred:

October 9th 1930

Dear Muzipal

I am coming to Oxford for a Peace Meeting on Nov: 12th – I have two other meetings elsewhere on the succeeding days. Shall I come to you for that night or stay with friends in Oxford, and come over and see you for the next day ...⁸

Laurence also invites Ida to stay with him and Clemence at Street. By 1933, he has bought a car and employed Wilfred Wills as his chauffeur. He is therefore able to show her the beauties of Somerset:

July 6th 1933

Clem says when it is cooler she hopes you may be able to come and see us for a few days if you can leave your family any time between this and September ... The old dear is aging, but doesn't like to admit it, and as over-work is her prevailing disease, I have to devise ways of getting her away from it. The car is the main standby; and we are more and more in love with Somerset every year. It was a blessed chance that brought us here ... I have lately finished my last batch of Victorian plays – to be out this autumn – called 'Albert and Victoria': some of them are rather serious, and only one or two of them satirical and biting ...⁹

Wilfred Wills is evidently employed on generous terms and enjoys private use of the car:

August 19th 1933

Wills was pleased with your remembrance of him. He is away on holiday, with the car and has been mildly run into by a road hog – not much damage however.¹⁰

8 Ibid. 6.

9 Ibid. 23.

10 Ibid. 26.

Laurence invariably refers to his sister Clemence's health and occasionally to that of other members of the Housman family, such as his brother Basil, a doctor at Tardebigge, near Bromsgrove:

November 16th 1930

Dear Muzypal

This is from my brother's house at Tardebigge. I go home tomorrow. I find him in bed but quite cheerful and talkative & not looking such a wreck as I had expected. I'm glad I came; he may drift out at any time in the next few months, so I expect this is the last time I shall see him.¹¹

Clemence also refers to Basil Housman in an undated letter to Ida.

Longmeadow Street

Friday

Dearest Ida

The end has come to long suffering. Our dear Basil died yesterday morning, quite peacefully and without pain at the last.¹²

¹¹ Ibid. 10.

¹² Ibid 310. Basil Housman died 1 December 1932.

A.E. Housman's letters to Ida Stafford Northcote lack the warmth of those of Laurence and Clemence. In 1932 he writes to Ida agreeing to sign copies of *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems*.

Trinity College Cambridge
24 May 1933

Dear Ida,

I shall be pleased to autograph the copies of my two books, as you call them (though I have published ten): I have autographed numberless copies, many of them for thoroughly undeserving persons, including even my own pupils, and therefore you must not let Mr Ragson suppose that the signature adds anything appreciable to the value of the article.

The authorship of the noble poem you send, and which I am glad to have, is often enquired after but seems to be unknown: on the other hand, I think that the place where it first appeared is known but I have forgotten it.

I gather that your family is growing up alright.

Yours sincerely

A.E. Housman¹³

Laurence often mentions his elder brother Alfred when writing to Ida:

July 16th 1932

My dear Moozipoo

Alfred is coming to see me some day – not yet fixed – next week, and will stay a week for certain, perhaps a day or two longer.¹⁴

The use of Laurence's chauffeur-driven car must have been an added inducement for Alfred to visit his brother and sister at Street:

¹³ Ibid. 276.

¹⁴ Ibid 17.

August 10th 1934 Clem has been on holiday with Kate at Exmouth, and today to go off to a Summer School at Cambridge. Lately I had a week's motoring with Alfred round about Bromsgrove and into Shropshire. Love from us both Lollynge¹⁵

Some years later, Laurence confides in Ada that a visit from Alfred can be a little trying:

July 29th
My dear Moozipoo

I'm sorry you couldn't get Clem. She goes down to Exmouth today to stay with Kate for a week, and I also am off jaunting for a few days. Alfred was with us for a week & has just left us – rather a strain to entertain as he sits nearly silent & expects to be talked to, & one has to try desperately to find subjects which won't bore him. Talking comes more easily to you than to me; so probably you would have been better for him. But we took him a lot of 'joy-rides' to hill-tops & churches & these pleased him sufficiently to keep him contented, without being talked to all the time.¹⁶

15 Ibid 31.

16 Ibid 261.

A.E. Housman mentions the 1934 motoring holiday with Laurence in a letter to Ida Stafford Northcote. He also refers to Laurence writing an autobiography which was to emerge as *The Unexpected Years*, published in 1937:

Trinity College Cambridge
5 March 1935

Dear Ida,

Mrs Seligman must rest content with the felicity of being a great friend of yours and must not expect me to take tickets for her matinee. I am never in London, and I should most certainly be bored.

I am interested to hear that Lewis is marrying and glad that you are pleased with his choice. I have been deficient in strength and spirits for nearly two years, and do not expect any change for the better. This is only natural as I am close upon the venerable age of 76. You I hope can look forward to a good many years of health and happiness.

I manage to go on a motor tour abroad every year, and last year it was in Alsace and Lorraine, which were worth seeing, and quite new to me. I also paid a visit to Bromsgrove along with Laurence, who is well, and is always busy with something which keeps him amused. He is now writing his reminiscences, which, according to Clemence, are not too indiscreet, so I hope you and I need not be alarmed.

Yours sincerely
A.E. Housman¹⁷

Laurence enjoys telling Ida of his most recent literary and theatrical successes, especially that of *Victoria Regina*, his hit play about the royal family. It had initially, however, to be staged at a private theatre club in London to avoid the attention of the censor. He tells her of his trip to the U.S.A. to see the Broadway production, which was of course outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain.

¹⁷ Ibid 277.

March 4th 1935

Amuse yourself with this bit of recent news: “The Gate Theatre” is proposing to do some of my Victorian Plays – I suppose in calculation of the King’s Jubilee! I wonder how He and the Family will like that? I don’t think they will order a Command Performance, and yet – what more suitable and apropos.¹⁸

August 18th 1935 Since I saw you *Victoria Regina* has signed on for production in New York, with Helen Hayes the leading American star actress as Victoria. So it looks as though my grey hair would go down in dollars (not dolour) to the grave. What a very un-Franciscan finish for the author of the *Little Plays*!¹⁹

April 16th 1936

Dear Muzipal

I can order a copy of *Victoria Regina* to be sent to you direct from the publishers ...

I was so glad to get back from America; it did tire me. But the play was worth seeing. Love from Lollynge.²⁰

Clemence also refers to *Victoria Regina* and to Laurence’s great success:

Longmeadow Street 29 XII 35

A Cardgram has come from Helen Hayes “Happy and Glorious God bless you. Here we are bubbling.” It was sent after the New York performance. A very nice letter came from her on Xmas Day written before the first preliminary at Baltimore. From that and other accounts, failure seemed quite improbable yet we could not but be a bit twitchy before knowing of its reception in New York. It is the biggest stroke of good fortune that has fallen to L.²¹

18 Ibid 35.

19 Ibid 37. Laurence here refers to his *Little Plays of St Francis*, first published in 1922.

20 Ibid 39.

21 Ibid 287.

A.E. Housman died at Cambridge on 30 April 1936, Laurence, Clemence and their sister Kate Symons were the chief mourners at the subsequent memorial service at Trinity College on 4 May. There is great agitation amongst the Housman family that the College authorities did not give a correct list of the mourners to the newspapers. Cyril Stafford Northcote, sometimes known as 'Ben' or 'Benjy,' is omitted altogether. After the service, Laurence remains in Cambridge to fulfil his obligation to act as literary executor. He stays in Alfred's rooms until he has managed to sort out his brother's personal papers. Clemence writes to Ida Stafford Northcote:

Longmeadow Street
May 17th 1936

Dearest Ida,

I am oh so sorry to hear of Benjy's rush and trouble to attend the Memorial Service, and without any recognition forthcoming. Will you give him my loving and grateful acknowledgment of his dear goodness – Kate too said how she was troubled by it – I was with her on Thursday. I now know how that wretched report came about, Jerry was for seeing to having names etc listed properly, but one of the College authorities said rather pompously that they were well accustomed to deal with such matters on these occasions. Leave it to us. Quite late at dinner the question was raised. Who had seen to it? And no-one had. So Denis's name was left out, Jerry's was spelt Simmonds. His godson's was left un-lettered, and there were many omissions. Kate was perturbed, and did what she could, herself writing a fuller report for some weeklies – Bath and Bromsgrove. Laurence is still at Cambridge and will not return 'till the end of this month. There is so much for him to see to, business with trustees and publishers, and the disposal of books and belongings. He has found some 30 unpublished poems, but he is bound to destroy those he considers below par as well as all unfinished.

The final burial of the ashes will be at Ludlow, not in Robert's grave in the Bath cemetery where Kate's, Edward's and mine will in time lie. I think you may be home by now. Best love to you all, to dear Benjy especially – I do so appreciate all he did. Also dear Ida your giving of the biggest thing. Ever your loving, Clemence.²²

22 This was clearly one of the letters kept by Ida Stafford Northcote, but had been separated before the remainder of the collection was given to Cambridge University Library in 1998. It is now in the collection of Housman Society member Peter Sisley. Benjy is possibly a nick-name for Ida's son Cecil.

In June, Clemence explains to Ida why she and Laurence have decided that their brother's ashes should be buried at Ludlow:

Longmeadow Street
June 25th 1936

Dearest Ida

Kate has been asked to write for the Bromsgrovian a paper on Alfred's boyhood, and she hopes to have it ready for the next issue. I don't think you can have heard that his ashes are to be buried at Ludlow. A council cemetery was ruled out and Shrewsbury and Ludlow offered. We decided that Ludlow was the most suitable, and it is the place most often mentioned in A Shropshire Lad. We went over and selected the spot, but the choice was very restricted. The Church is much under repair which necessitated delay and all could not be made ready till next month. The date is not yet date is not yet fixed. Your very loving Clemence²³

Laurence wastes no time in preparing his brother's manuscript poems for the press, using his own publisher, Jonathan Cape. He is also writing a biography of his brother and completing his own reminiscences, also for Cape. He decides to employ a secretary:

Longmeadow Street Somerset
9th September 1936

Dear Muzipal

Cape, the publisher of Alfred's poems says that first editions are fictitious things unless subsequent ones contain alterations. For this reason he is going to have an unlimited first edition and make no indication of the reissues, so you will be quite sure of securing copies yourself.

I have started a secretary, and it saves me so much time and pleases me so much that you must expect from now on to get typewritten letters from me, unless I write to accept your condolences on my own death, or other matters equally painful and private ...

Love to you all Ever yours affectionately Lollynge²⁴

23 Op. cit. 288.

24 Ibid. 43.

Ida orders three copies of *More Poems* for her family:

Longmeadow Street Somerset
24th October 1936

Dear Muzipal

Here are your three large paper copies of *More Poems*. Cape has issued them at a higher price than he foretold, 21/-. I get them at 15/9d, and that is what you owe me, plus postage.

It is a beautiful book, so I hope you will think it is worth the money. Terribly busy, can't write more.

Love from Lollynge²⁵

The Unexpected Years was to be published in January 1937. Laurence promises to send a copy to Ida,

Longmeadow Street Somerset
23rd December 1936

Dear Muzipal

The Reminiscences are now in the press, and will be published early in the new year. What date I do not know. I shall be sending you a copy, because I am sure you will like to have the anecdotes of your mother, even though there will be other things which you will like far less well, and may even dislike, but that cannot be helped. As you know, I am a heretic of the deepest dye, and a somewhat aggressive one at that.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid. 45

²⁶ Ibid. 47.

Laurence has not only been forced to employ a secretary but he has also rented a flat in London:

I have told you, have I not? That for this year, involving so much coming up to town for rehearsals etc, I have taken the half share of a flat in Paddington, which has already been very useful, saving me from weekends in hotels – which I hate.²⁷

Clemence also refers to the flat in London:

Dearest Ida

Laurence has just taken a flat in Paddington, sharing it with a friend. Next year he will be running up to town so often that a pied a terre will answer better than going to hotels, which he dislikes.²⁸

Nearly three years after the launch of *More Poems*, and the inclusion of ‘Additional Poems’ in his brother’s biography, Laurence feels bound to agree to the publication by Jonathan Cape of the *Collected Poems of A.E. Housman*.

August 10th 1939

Cape is going to bring out a Collected Edition of Alfred’s Poems. Alfred didn’t want it done, and I don’t either, but it seems unfair to refuse the publishers during copyright which can’t be prevented when copyright is over, and when author’s fees will no longer have to be paid.²⁹

Laurence continues to write to Ida throughout the war. His income is greatly reduced and by 1953 he has to give up his chauffeur-driven car and his secretary. He writes to Ida about a review of an unidentified book or article on A.E. Housman:

27 Ibid. 50.

28 Ibid. 294.

29 Ibid. 61.

May 16th 1953

My dear Muzipal

Returned with thanks. Rather a wobbly review, with one or two quite foolish things in it. The suggestion that grief for his Father's death in 1894 is almost funny; for he rather disliked him (and the dislike was mutual). It was his mother's death in 1870 which started him on the way, from Deism through Agnosticism to Atheism; which his "Hymn for my Funeral" did not qualify but confirmed, for he added a ribald extra verse (not for publication) making fun of those who shared Mr Martindale's silly notion.³⁰

A month later, Laurence and Clemence are sorely afraid that their dear friend Ida has died. Laurence writes immediately to Ida's son Lewis:

Longmeadow Street

June 29th 1953

Mr dear Lewis

We are much troubled at having heard from a friend of the death of a Mrs Stafford Northcote (in a paper about a fortnight ago). Yet it is only a fortnight ago that I got a letter from her which I answered the next day ... She was the most affectionate and faithful person I have ever known; and was the only friend we had still living whom we had known since she was a small child. We knew and understood each other so well, that I was able to tease her without it giving offence. Indeed she enjoyed it; and my last letter was one of that kind; but of course I should not have written it had I had any idea that she was so close to the fulfilment of her wishes ...³¹

30 Ibid. 180.

31 Ibid. 185.

In fact Laurence and Clemence's friend has seen the death notice of Lewis's spinster aunt, Ida Mary Northcote, who died in Kensington, 10 May 1953, aged 85.

Clemence Housman died 6 December 1955, aged 94. She was cremated at Bristol and her ashes placed under the Housman family monument in Smallcombe Cemetery, Bath. In her will, dated 16 May 1951, she left £100 free of duty to her chauffeur, Wilfred Wills, and another £100 to Mrs Ida Stafford Northcote. Laurence refers to the still unpaid bequest in one of his last letters to Ida the following year:

Longmeadow Street
May 31st 1956

My dear Muzipal

You are the only one of the eleven friends & relations to whom Clem left duty-free bequests, who have offered to return me any of it for my own needs. They tell me that my present income (an annuity from my publishers) is sufficient for my needs, and that it is selfish of me to want more ... Clem and I always shared our incomes & expenses – which enabled us to do rather extravagant things in helping those who most needed it. And the said relations are very jealous of those whom I am now helping – a family of Austrians who had to escape from Hitler to this Country eleven years ago leaving most of their property behind them. Before Clem had her first stroke, she joined me in helping them; after that I had to go on doing it alone, as the cost of Clem's treatment at the Nursing Home cost £60 a month, and I still had to meet all the housekeeping expenses etc. That is why I can no longer afford a motor-car or a chauffeur, or a whole-time gardener; but I am still well-enough to enjoy weeding and clipping and other light work in the garden. But Clem was the real gardener, and I only worked under her orders. My good man Wills (gardener and chauffeur) died six weeks after she did (of cancer of the lungs).³² I still have a very good kind domestic to look after me; so don't be anxious about me.³³ I am able to walk down to the village & back quite easily; but I'm rather deaf and my sight is no longer good.
Love from Lollynge³⁴

32 Wilfred Wills died January 1956 aged 59.

33 Laurence Housman, in a codicil to his will dated 17 July 1956, left £100 to Elizabeth Exon should she be in his employment at the time of his death. 34 Op. Cit., 240.

Laurence Housman made his will on 9 July 1956, but made no mention of his lifelong friend Ida Stafford Northcote. He died at Butleigh Hospital, near Glastonbury, 20 February 1959, aged 93. He was buried at the Quaker graveyard at Street, but there is a plaque in his memory on the Housman monument at Smallcombe Cemetery, Bath. Ida Stafford Northcote outlived both Clemence and Laurence and died at her home in East Hendred, Berkshire, 29 September 1963, aged 87.

Rutupinaque litora and Lucan vi 67

By Andrew Breeze

Rutupiae or Richborough was a Roman port near Sandwich, Kent. The place (which the writer first saw in 1962 or so, on a Sunday School outing led by Miss Ruth Doughty) has much of interest. It is monumental, with walls up to twenty-five feet high; it is mentioned by Lucan and Juvenal. Both poets being edited by A. E. H., a paper on the name of *Rutupiae* perhaps merits a place here, particularly if analysis of the form reflects Housman's gift for objective reasoning.

Rutupiae has long intrigued scholars. John Leland (1503?-52), antiquary to Henry VIII (and Latin poet), concluded that 'Ratesboro, otherwise cawled Richeboro by Sandwich, both ways corruptly, must neades be *Rutupinum*', and then quoted Lucan on *Rutupinaque litora* and Juvenal on oysters *Rutupinove edita fundo*.¹ Yet the meaning of *Rutupiae* has been obscure. The clue was in print a century ago, but its significance has not been fully grasped. We thus summarize previous work on the name as a basis for a new solution.

Adjectival *Rutupinus* in Lucan and Juvenal is an artificial literary derivative of British-Latin *Rutupiae*, found in Ptolomy and other authors. The main difficulty is not the first element (long related to Welsh *rhwd* 'filth; rust'), but the termination. An answer is yet supplied by a basic rule of Celtic philology: that *p* in Brittonic languages (like Welsh or Cornish) developed from Indo-European and Common Celtic *ku*, which in Goedelic languages (like Irish or Manx) gave *c*. While the Welsh for 'head' is *pen*, the Irish is *ceann*, both from reconstructed early Celtic *kuenno*-; the Welsh for 'four' is *pedwar*, the Irish is *ceathair*, from hypothetical original *kuetuor*-; and so on.²

So the *p* of *Rutupiae* is the expected development in British (the Celtic language spoken in Roman Britain) of prehistoric Celtic *ku*. Now for a second rule, also simple. That *p*, when between vowels, became *b* (through what linguists call 'soft mutation') in languages deriving from British, like Welsh or Breton. This is demonstrated by the fate of *p* in Latin words borrowed by British during the Roman occupation, so that Latin *capistrum* gave Middle Breton *cabystr* 'halter', *cupidus* gave Welsh *cybydd* 'miser', and the like. In modern Welsh, British-Latin *-upiae* would (having long lost its termination) therefore have a form in *b*.

If we then turn to grammars and dictionaries for words ending in *b*, the results are promising. Sir John Morris-Jones, besides explaining soft mutation, dealt

with Welsh *cyffelyb* 'similar', *ethryb* 'cause, occasion', *modryb* 'aunt', and *wyneb* 'face', as well as abstract nouns ending in *-deb*, like *undeb* 'unity'; he also cited *rhwd*, defined as 'dung-water' (and related to forms with the sense 'flow', like Greek *rutós* 'flowing' or Irish *sruth* 'stream'). We leave aside *cyffelyb* and *ethryb*, not definitely known to have the reconstructed root *oqu* (as Morris-Jones represented it), which is used of what is seen or appears or resembles. What matters is its occurrence in *modryb* 'aunt' and *wyneb* 'face'. Morris-Jones here proposed the respective etymologies *matraqui*, where the suffix designates one who looks like a *mater* 'mother', and *éni-equ-*, the part of the body which is looked at. Similar is the abstract suffix *-deb*. Welsh *purdeb* 'purity' is the quality resembling what is *pur* 'pure'; *undeb* 'unity', that which resembles *un* 'one'. Morris-Jones further cited the Indo-European root in, for example, Latin *antiquus* 'what seems to be of the past' and so 'ancient'.³ The significance of this root for what is seen or appears is fundamental to this paper. It will explain *Rutupiae*.

Informed on the application of *oqu* or *oku* to things which are looked at or seem, we can say already that *Rutupiae* alludes to what 'resembles' *rutu-*, itself aligned with the unsavoury Welsh noun *rhwd* 'filth' (liquid oozing from a dunghill, for example) or 'rust'. Before coming to implications of that for Richborough, we quote Lucan and Juvenal in full. The first has two passages of interest, the former (in his second book) mentioning Tiber and *Rutuba* or Roia as rivers south of the Apennines:

Dexteriora petens montis declivia Thybrim Unda facit Rutubamque cavum

— or 'Waters running down southern slopes of the uplands created the Tiber and deep-valleyed Roia', with *Rutuba* (in north-west Italy) paralleling *Rutupiae*. The latter passage (in book six) comes from an account of how Pompey remained for a time unaware of Caesar's actions:

... veluti mediae quis tutus in arvis Sicaniae rabidum nescit latrare Pelorum,
Aut, vaga cum Tethys Rutupinaque litora fervent, Unda Caledonios fallit turbata
Britannos.⁴

Pompey was 'like someone safe in fields of mid-Sicily, who knows nothing of breakers crashing to the north-east at Capo di Faro; or like Highlanders of Scotland, who, when the wandering ocean-goddess and Richborough's shores are seething, do not hear the restless wave.'

Juvenal borrowed *Rutupinus* for his fourth satire, depicting a cabinet meeting where Domitian consults his cringing ministers on how to cook a turbot. The poet says of an epicure there:

Circeis nata forent an Lucrinum ad saxum Rutupinove edita fundo Ostrea
callebat primo deprendere morsu,
Et semel aspecti litus dicebat echini.⁵

'He would tell from the first bite whether oysters were from Mount Circeo or a rock on Lake Lucrino or were spawned in the sea-bed at Richborough; glancing at a sea-urchin, he could at once say which coast it was from.'

Two things may be noted. Lucan knew almost nothing of Richborough. Hence his rhetoric on 'boiling seas', even though the place overlooked an anchorage of calm and shallow water, which rarely 'boiled'. Juvenal, in contrast, will have known Richborough well. His use of *fundus* 'sea-bed' (but not *saxum* 'rock') tends to prove it, because Richborough's local geology consists of sands and clays (no chalk). Like his allusions to British war-chariots or short summer nights in the Orkneys, it implies that Juvenal actually visited Britain, passing through Richborough as an army officer and observing (with a soldierly eye) that the coast was not rugged, but gentle.

Now for the meaning of *Rutupiae*. Despite what was set out in 1913 by Morris-Jones, place-name scholars hankered after unsound derivations. Ekwall hesitantly related *Rutu-* to a stem found in Latin *rutrum* 'spade, shovel', and so with a sense 'ditch, trench'; he mentioned too the River Roden 'rushing one' of north-east Shropshire.⁶ The Roman army excelled at digging ditches. Ones at Richborough can still be seen. Yet the name, being British, existed before the Romans arrived; and Ekwall quoted no Celtic form to support his case. As for the Roden, 'rushing one' makes no sense. The Roden, giving its name to the Roman settlement of *Rutuna*, winds unhurriedly via Wem (itself meaning 'marshy ground', as Ekwall noted) across the Midland plain.

Better were observations of R. J. Thomas on the Rhydan, an insignificant brook (SO 417098) north of Raglan, Monmouthshire. Thomas related it to Welsh *rhyd* 'ford' and so 'stream easily forded', or else to *rhwd* and so 'dirty stream'. Knowledge of local rocks and soils would settle the question, but the second alternative is likelier. One infers that from another stream mentioned by Thomas, the Ritec, taken as 'fordable one' or 'dirty one'.⁷

The first must be ruled out. The Ritec is effectively unfordable. Making its sluggish way down to Tenby, Pembrokeshire, it passes through marshland, its lowest part (by Tenby Station) shown on maps as 'The Marshes'. The Ritec in its squelching boglands was the 'dirty one, filthy one' (with a first vowel shortened under stress, as with English *vineyard* against *vine*). Ritec in Dyfed assists with *Rutupiae* in Kent and *Rutuna* in Liguria.

Thomas became editor of the University of Wales dictionary, which is silent on some of Morris-Jones's etymologies, including that connecting *rhwd* with Greek *rutós* 'flowing' and Irish *sruth* 'stream', but does supply a Cornish equivalent for it in the place-name *Polroad* 'pool of filth', as well as the reconstructed British forms *matripi* 'she who is looked upon as a mother' giving *modryb* 'aunt' and earlier *epenikua* 'what is gazed at closely' to give *wyneb* 'face'.⁸ Disconnection of *rhwd* with the Greek and Irish terms will refine meaning. We shall think of *rhwd* as disgusting solids, not as disgusting liquids in motion. Polroad (SX 0578), like the Ritec of Dyfed (and perhaps the Rhydan of Monmouthshire), focuses attention on mud. The place, between Camelford and Wadebridge, is by the River Allen, where a sense 'dirty pool' is apt.

Searching comments on *Rutupiae* were made by Kenneth Jackson (1909-91), a Cambridge classicist who became one of the greatest of Celtic scholars. He thought the form 'difficult'. He yet dismissed Ekwall's link with 'spade' as 'unconvincing' and further rejected Zachrisson's explanation from Welsh *rhyd* 'ford' and so 'place at the fords', because it did not suit the vowel of *Rut-*. Better, he considered, was a connection with *rhwd* 'filth' put forward in 1949 by Sir Ifor Williams. Jackson admitted that a sense 'mud flats' or 'muddy creek' fitted Richborough, but did not explain *-upiae* or, for that matter, the *-uba* of Lucan's Gaulish river-name *Rutuba* 'muddy one'. He thus preferred derivation from reconstructed British *Ro-tupias*, with a prefix *ro-* 'great', as with *Regulbium* 'great headland' or Reculver, seven miles north-west of Richborough.⁹ *Regulbium* is certainly 'great headland' (compare Welsh *gylfin* 'bird's beak; snout' and *gylfinir* 'curlew', bird of a long bill), even if silting and coastal erosion have now effaced the promontory there. Unfortunately, neither Jackson nor anyone else could offer a meaning for *-tup-*. The derivation must fall. As for Welsh *modryb*, the derivation of final *b* was confirmed by Vendryes, who cited an exact cognate in Sanskrit *matrka* (with long vowels and vocalic *r*) 'she who resembles a mother' and so 'grandmother'.¹⁰

At this point, a geological digression. Richborough Hill is made up from sedimentary deposits of the Thanet Beds, here 'composed of fine, glaucolitic, marine sands and fossiliferous sandy clays which are well exposed in the

The first must be ruled out. The Ritec is effectively unfordable. Making its sluggish way down to Tenby, Pembrokeshire, it passes through marshland, its lowest part (by Tenby Station) shown on maps as 'The Marshes'. The Ritec in its squelching boglands was the 'dirty one, filthy one' (with a first vowel shortened under stress, as with English *vineyard* against *vine*). Ritec in Dyfed assists with *Rutupiae* in Kent and *Rutuna* in Liguria.

Thomas became editor of the University of Wales dictionary, which is silent on some of Morris-Jones's etymologies, including that connecting *rhwd* with Greek *rutós* 'flowing' and Irish *sruth* 'stream', but does supply a Cornish equivalent for it in the place-name *Polroad* 'pool of filth', as well as the reconstructed British forms *matripi* 'she who is looked upon as a mother' giving *modryb* 'aunt' and earlier *epenikua* 'what is gazed at closely' to give *wyneb* 'face'.⁸ Disconnection of *rhwd* with the Greek and Irish terms will refine meaning. We shall think of *rhwd* as disgusting solids, not as disgusting liquids in motion. Polroad (SX 0578), like the Ritec of Dyfed (and perhaps the Rhydan of Monmouthshire), focuses attention on mud. The place, between Camelford and Wadebridge, is by the River Allen, where a sense 'dirty pool' is apt.

Searching comments on *Rutupiae* were made by Kenneth Jackson (1909-91), a Cambridge classicist who became one of the greatest of Celtic scholars. He thought the form 'difficult'. He yet dismissed Ekwall's link with 'spade' as 'unconvincing' and further rejected Zachrisson's explanation from Welsh *rhyd* 'ford' and so 'place at the fords', because it did not suit the vowel of *Rut-*. Better, he considered, was a connection with *rhwd* 'filth' put forward in 1949 by Sir Ifor Williams. Jackson admitted that a sense 'mud flats' or 'muddy creek' fitted Richborough, but did not explain *-upiae* or, for that matter, the *-uba* of Lucan's Gaulish river-name *Rutuba* '?muddy one'. He thus preferred derivation from reconstructed British *Ro-tupias*, with a prefix *ro-* 'great', as with *Regulbium* 'great headland' or Reculver, seven miles north-west of Richborough.⁹ *Regulbium* is certainly 'great headland' (compare Welsh *gylfin* 'bird's beak; snout' and *gylfinir* 'curlew', bird of a long bill), even if silting and coastal erosion have now effaced the promontory there. Unfortunately, neither Jackson nor anyone else could offer a meaning for *-tup-*. The derivation must fall. As for Welsh *modryb*, the derivation of final *b* was confirmed by Vendryes, who cited an exact cognate in Sanskrit *matrka* (with long vowels and vocalic *r*) 'she who resembles a mother' and so 'grandmother'.¹⁰

At this point, a geological digression. Richborough Hill is made up from sedimentary deposits of the Thanet Beds, here 'composed of fine, glaucolitic, marine sands and fossiliferous sandy clays which are well exposed in the

cliffs at Pegwell Bay and Reculver', the former three miles north-east of Richborough.¹¹ These deposits appear, as a dark tawny band sandwiched between chalk and cliff-top, in a famous Victorian painting, Dyce's *Pegwell Bay* (in the Tate Gallery).¹² They prompt the question whether, on the basis of Welsh *rhwd* 'filth', but also 'rust', *Rutu-* might denote the red-brown sands and clays of Richborough Hill's slopes (contrasting sharply with the gleaming chalk cliffs of the Isle of Thanet), and not muddy waters. The answer must be 'no' for two reasons. Forms related to *rhwd* are consistently used of streams, not of dry land; while 'rust' is a late and secondary meaning. One may add that rivers are more likely to be called 'filthy one' than 'rusty one'. Geological data still show why the vicinity of Richborough was such a quagmire. Sand and clay were there in abundance.

A return to philology reveals progress, even if at the pace of a glacier. The late Margaret Gelling, citing *Rutupiae* in the defective form 'Ritupis', discussed not its meaning but how it might have given the *Rich-* of modern *Richborough*.¹³ The standard account of *Rutupiae* remains that of Rivet and Smith. Preceding it is one on *Rutunium*, a posting-station listed in the Antonine Itinerary and located on the Roden at Harcourt Mill (ST 5524), Shropshire; despite the Roden's sloth, Rivet and Smith thought its name meant 'swift one'. They failed to connect it with their next entry, where they cited important papers on *Rutupiae* by Eric Hamp of Chicago (the last of them even quoting Welsh *modryb* 'aunt', but with no word on implications for *-piae*). They accepted Hamp's rendering 'muddy (estuary, waters, shallows, or similar)', with a vaguely-mentioned 'Indo-European suffix' both in its *-p-* and in the *b* of Gaulish *Rutuba* (or the Roia, east of the French-Italian border). Hamp suggested that the British-Latin plural 'referred to the branching of the water around the island' of Richborough.¹⁴ But the correct interpretation of *-(u)piae* is surely different.

Forty years since then have seen little advance. There is even regress. One recalls a remark in the introduction to Housman's *Lucan*, on how understanding of texts 'makes no steady and continuous progress, and relapse accompanies advance.' Jackson in 1953 scouted Ekwall's ideas on spades and trenches; in 1980 *Rutupiae* yet figured in a serious book as perhaps 'entrenched place, fortress' on the basis of a non-existent British word meaning 'spade'.¹⁵ Eight years later, in a lesser work, we at least find reference to Celtic *rutu-* and nearby 'muddy streams'.¹⁶ By 1991 'muddy waters or estuary' was even sanctioned by Oxford University; but the placid Shropshire Roden was still absurdly called the 'swift' one.¹⁷

Nor did enlightenment dawn with the turn of the century. Dr Parsons then thought *Rutupiae* in no way 'straightforward' and perhaps not British at all.¹⁸ Professor Villar, in contrast, had a plethora of suggestions on *up-* in its termination. It may be a deformation of what occurs in the first element of Lithuanian *ugnìs* 'fire'. Or it perhaps relates to Lithuanian *ùpé* 'water'. Or else to *Hupanis* in ancient Thrace, the river Uppia in the Tyrol, the village of Ubani (six miles west of Pamplona, Spain), and further toponyms ancient and modern from India, Sicily, Assyria, Asturias, and Poland.¹⁹ Since, however, Professor Villar cannot say what these all mean, he leaves us no wiser on *Rutupiae*. The Cambridge dictionary, despite its rendering 'mud-flats, muddy creeks', similarly has no explanation on the termination. The torpid Roden is therein once more called a 'swift' river.²⁰ Professor Sims-Williams, discussing the Celtic root *rutu-* 'filth', refers to the *Rutuba* or Roia at Ventimiglia on the French-Italian border, as well as Pliny's *portus Rutubis* (textually corrupt?) in what is now Morocco.²¹ So it is agreed that Richborough and Roia alike relate to Welsh *rhwd* 'filth', as does British-Latin *Rutunium* on the Roden, a river traversing Shropshire at snail's pace. But *-piae* is still unaccounted for.²² *Rutupiae* and *Rutuba* (in the inferior variant 'Rotuba') are now located on John Koch's maps of the ancient Celtic world.²³

As we near the present day, it is cheering to find a better explanation of *Rutupiae*, albeit one obscurely phrased and containing a misconception. Dr Falileyev remarks how the 'second component of the river-names *-pia*, *-pio*, is traced to PIE **h2ekʷ-* "ins Auge fassen, erblicken"; cf. OInd *nicya* "unter wohnend".²⁴ This puts into modern dress the Indo-European root analysed by Morris-Jones, now translated 'fix eyes upon, gaze at, behold' and related to Sanskrit *nicya* 'to dwell beneath', a form applied to being a slave or to living in a low situation. Menials are looked down upon by all. (The sense is hardly because slaves go about with downcast eyes.) Falileyev is yet misleading on *-pia* and 'river-names'. We have quoted hypothetical British *matripi* for Welsh *modryb* 'aunt' and older *epenikua* for Welsh *wyneb* 'face'. They have no etymological link with flowing water, so why should *Rutupiae*?

It is time to bring our philological players on stage for the final scene. First, *rhwd*. The Rhyden near Raglan, the Ritec by Tenby, the Roden at Wem, Polroad in north Cornwall, the Roia at Ventimiglia, all confirm a sense 'mud, filth'. The Roia, rising (as the Roya) amongst Alpine scenery in France, makes a precipitate descent to the sea. When the snows melt, it is a torrent; by late summer, a mere trickle, like many rivers in Mediterranean lands. There are two consequences of that. The yearly melt-waters have cut a deep valley almost to the coast, visible to anyone on a train from Ventimiglia to Menton and Monte Carlo. But the annual variation in the Roia's flow leaves ample diluvium. A Celtic name *Rutuba* 'filthy one, muddy one' therefore suits it. Such a derivation accords with the reading *Rutuba* of Lucan in Housman's edition, as against 'Rotuba' found elsewhere. Like streams in Shropshire and Wales, the Roia of the Italian Riviera indicates the first element of *Rutupiae* as meaning 'filth, mud'.

Now for the second element. Welsh *modryb* 'aunt' means one who resembles a mother; Welsh *wyneb* 'face' means a body-part looked at closely; Sanskrit *nicya* 'living in a low situation' included the life of a slave, looked down on by all. On that basis the meaning of *Rutupiae* will be '(place of) dirty waters looked upon, (site of) conspicuous mudbanks'. The name was first used of the turbid creeks snaking around Richborough Hill, or the wastes of sucking mud beside them. It was then applied to the settlement on the hill itself, where residents looked down on extensive sticky wetlands. Richborough Hill is a natural vantage spot. One sees for miles from it, as proved by the trigonometrical point 86 feet above sea level on its south side. Today one surveys roads, meadows, and industrial development. But Romans and Britons saw the arm of the Wantsum Channel separating Thanet from the mainland, with miles of sand and mud, especially at low tide. Unlike Dover (in a deep valley and so open to attack), Richborough was a natural defensive site, possessing water on three sides. On the east the sea was deep enough for ocean-going vessels to dock; to the north and south were tidal flats; on the west side the highway to London passed through a gate and along a low rise. The hill offered prospects of saltings, ooze, inlets, sandbanks, and a main channel producing excellent oysters. Hence the name of *Rutupiae* 'muddy creeks (easily) seen; conspicuous mudflats' re-applied to the settlement from which those miry entities were visible.

Rutupiae was Roman Britain's main port of entry. It is mentioned by poets; it was dignified by an arch faced with marble, ninety feet high and commemorating Britain's conquest by Agricola, father-in-law to Tacitus. The monument's splendours are suggested by its massive concrete base, and fragments (in the nearby museum) of its bronze statues and laudatory inscriptions. Despite that, *Rutupiae*'s name in effect means 'Mud View' or

'Prospect of Filth'. Such are the results of philological enquiry. If not as arresting as some of those offered by A. E. H. on (for example) the seamier aspects of Catullus, they can still surprise us.

1. *The Itinerary of John Leland: Parts VII and VIII*, ed. L. T. Smith (London, 1909), pp. 50, 51.
2. J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales* (London, 1911), 20.
3. John Morris-Jones, *A Welsh Grammar* (Oxford, 1913), 75, 88, 91, 161, 230.
4. *M. Annaei Lucani Belli Civilis Libri Decem*, ed. A. E. Housman (Oxonii, 1926), 46, 153.
5. *D. Iunii Iuvenalis Saturae*, ed. A. E. Housman, 2nd edn (Cantabrigiae, 1931), 29.
6. Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1936), 368, 372, 482.
7. R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1938), 84-5.
8. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950-2002), 728, 1255, 2472, 3107, 3742.
9. K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 661-2.
10. Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien: Lettres M N O P* (Paris, 1960), M-25.
11. R. W. Gallois, *British Regional Geology: The Wealden District*, 4th edn (London, 1965), 47.
12. Geoffrey Grigson, *Britain Observed* (London, 1975), 126-7.
13. Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (London, 1978), 56.

14. A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (Princeton, 1979), 448-50.
15. John Field, *Place-Names of Great Britain and Ireland* (Newton Abbot, 1980), 143.
16. Adrian Room, *Dictionary of Place-Names in the British Isles* (London, 1988), 295-6.
17. A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1991), 271, 274.
18. D. N. Parsons, 'Classifying Ptolemy's English Place-Names', in *Ptolemy: Towards a Linguistic Atlas of the Earliest Celtic Place-Names of Europe*, ed. D. N. Parsons and Patrick Sims-Williams (Aberystwyth, 2000), 169-78.
19. Francisco Villar, *Indoeuropeos y no-indoeuropeos en la Hispania prerromana: Las poblaciones y las lenguas prerromanas de Andalucía, Cataluña y Aragón según la información que nos proporciona la toponimia* (Salamanca, 2000), 157.
20. *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names*, ed. Victor Watts (Cambridge, 2004), 514-15, 505.
21. Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Measuring Celticity from Wales to the Orient', in *New Approaches to Celtic Place-Names in Ptolemy's 'Geography'*, ed. Javier de Hoz, E. R. Luján, and Patrick Sims-Williams (Madrid, 2005), 267-87.
22. Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place-Names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2006), 30, 104.
23. John T. Koch, *An Atlas for Celtic Studies* (Oxford, 2007), maps 15.6, 17.5.
24. Alexander Falileyev, *Dictionary of Continental Celtic Place-Names* (Aberystwyth, 2010), 29, 190.

Orcadas and Juvenal ii 161

By Andrew Breeze

At the close of his second satire, Juvenal contrasts Rome's military might with its sexual decadence:

*arma quidem ultra Litora Iuvernæ promovimus et modo captas Orcadas ac
minima contentos nocte Britannos, Sed quæ nunc populi fiunt victoris in urbe
Non faciunt illi quos vicimus.*

— i.e., although Roman troops have passed the Irish coast, seizing the Orkneys and capturing Britons accustomed to short summer nights, those defeated tribes do not practice what goes on in the capital of their conquerors.

The subject of this paper is not noble Picts and ignoble Romans, but *Orcadas* 'Orkneys'. The reading is straightforward and needed no comment from Housman.¹ Its etymology is another matter. It provokes dispute. Housman's edition having on its title page *editorum in usum*, we accept the principle and use his text as a basis for discussion. If it follows Housmanian methods, it may resolve discord on *Orcadas* and thereby shed light on Orkney's ancient inhabitants. If it does, we pay the sincerest flattery to AEH's memory by imitating him.

Orcades (the usual form elsewhere) has long been related to early Irish *orc* 'pig, piglet' and *Innsi Orc* 'Orkney Islands'.² The Irish have always known the Orkneys as (in modern spelling) *Inse Orc*; there is also a Middle Irish reference to *Muir n-Orc*, the turbulent seas around the islands.³ The evidence was set out by William Watson (1865-1948) of Edinburgh. He quoted *Orcades* (after Diodorus and Ptolemy) with Whitley Stokes's explanation of it as 'Swine Islands' and Alexander Macbain's as 'Whale Islands', preferring the former, which he understood as meaning not that Orkney pigs were good to eat, but that the islanders gave themselves out defiantly as the 'Wild Young Boars', much as their neighbours in *Innsi Cat* or Shetland styled themselves 'Wild Cats'. There is a further implication. The name *Orcades* is traceable to before 300 BCE, when Pytheas of Marseille reached the islands. If it is of Celtic origin, it shows the Orkneys as already occupied by Celts. Watson observed too that the islands appear as *Orc* in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, where they are listed with the Isle of Man and Isle of Wight as territories marking the limits of British sovereignty.⁴

Porcine toponymy has other surprises. Pigs and rivers both rush forwards and root things up. Welsh rivers are thus often called after pigs. In Glamorgan is the Henwys 'old pig'; near Carmarthen the Gwythwch 'wild pig'; in North Wales the Hwch 'sow' (two instances); in many places Mochnant 'pig stream'; and in Powys and Dyfed the Twrch 'boar' (four instances, with equivalents in England).⁵ The boar is also a fierce animal. It can disembowel a man with its tusks. No wonder, then, if Watson's citations of Irish poems and glosses show *orc* used of Irish princes, as noted by Sir Ifor Williams (1881-1965) in editing Welsh heroic poetry.⁶ Nor is that all. It is hard to overestimate the Celtic regard for pigs. They attributed supernatural or magical qualities to them, with their meat as food for banquets in this life and the next.⁷

Kenneth Jackson (1909-91) thus had no difficulty in accepting Watson's explanation of ancient Orcadians as *Orci* 'Young Pigs, Wild Boars', which was 'doubtless a totemistic appellation'.⁸ Vendryes further described Irish *orc* as 'archaïque et poétique' and so a dignified term; its antiquity is indicated elsewhere by Latin *porcus*, English *farrow*, and Lithuanian *pàrszas* 'piglet', all with the same Indo-European origin.⁹ Pork as the food of heroes is mentioned not only in Irish sagas (where confrontations over the *curadmir* or 'champion's portion' might lead to injury or death), but in Strabo's accounts of Continental Celts.¹⁰ The Celticity of the form *orc* 'young pig' is reinforced by its supposed appearance in Gaulish personal names like *Orcio*, *Orcopril*, and *Orcos*.¹¹ Their bearers might feel pride in such appellations, not shame. So much is implied by Welsh bards, who praised fighting men as 'various kinds of savage or wild or stubborn creatures' that included lion, bear, wolf, stag, ox, bull, serpent, eagle, hawk, dragon, and boar, the last term being frequent.¹²

Other toponyms are relevant to the Orkneys. But one must be careful, for modern Welsh *Ynysoedd Erch* 'Orkney Islands' and *Ynysoedd Heledd* 'Shetland Islands' are red herrings.¹³ These forms are concocted, as we shall see. In contrast is the name of Banff, derived from Gaelic *banbh* 'sucking-pig', seemingly used as a hydronym and applied to the River Deveron, because 'the Welsh cognate *banw* occurs as the name of streams'.¹⁴ There is a difference in authenticity. *Banff* 'sucking-pig' is old and genuine. *Ynysoedd Erch* and *Ynysoedd Heledd* are late and artificial (like Welsh *Caer-grawnt* for Cambridge or *Manceinion* for Manchester). They are misapplications of references in early Welsh poetry to *Erch* and *Heledd*, which Rachel Bromwich located not in Scotland but in Shropshire and Cheshire.

Significant as well for Orkney is her mention of *Ynys Weir*, listed with Anglesey and Man as one of Britain's 'Three Chief Adjacent Islands'. She thought (quite illogically) that it was the Isle of Wight, which the Welsh call *Ynys Weith*.¹⁵ Now, *Weith* is the expected development of British-Latin *Vectis* (as Wight was known to the Romans). Yet *Weith* is not the same as *Weir*. *Ynys Weir* will therefore be not Wight, but Orkney. That is why it appears with Anglesey and Man as a 'Chief Adjacent Island'. Exactly why the Welsh knew Orkney as *Ynys Weir*, and not with a form from *Orcades*, is explained below.

The standard account of *Orcades*, as also *Orcas Promontorium* (later known as *Tarvedunum* 'bull fort') or Dunnet Head (near Thurso), is still that of Rivet and Smith. Despite noting possible allusions to whales or sea-monsters (after Latin *orca* 'whale') or to salmon (after Irish *erc*, which is poorly attested), they yet tended to follow Watson and Jackson for 'boars' as designating a people, citing a 1961 paper by the archaeologist Charles Thomas (1928-2016) on other totemistic names for North British tribes. On *Orcas Promontorium* they cast doubt, calling it 'thoroughly suspect as a promontory name' and perhaps adopted merely 'as a term of convenience to describe that part of Britain nearest to the *Orcades* islands'.¹⁶ Yet it may be that some *Orci* lived not on the islands but on the coast of Caithness around Dunnet Head, as neighbours of the *Cornovii*.

Like Rivet and Smith, John Field explained *Orkney* as 'whale islands' or else 'islands of the "Boar" people'.¹⁷ Then came a challenge from Professor Lockwood of Reading, a Germanist (not Celticist). He rejected the traditional interpretations of *Inse Orc* 'Orkney' as 'isles of pigs, isles of boars; isles of the boar-people', preferring a link with a hypothetical Pictish term *ork* 'cape, headland; height', which he thought was perhaps understood as 'whale' by later inhabitants. In any case he regarded the interpretations 'isles of pigs' or 'isles of the boar-people' as unfounded. He likewise thought *Inse Catt* 'wild-cat islands; islands of (people known as) "wild cats"' to be baseless, since it is not translated in Old Norse *Hjatland* 'Shetland'.¹⁸

What he said was not much noticed. Adrian Room repeated previous statements on whales, sea monsters, and pigs, declaring that Irish *orc* can mean 'whale', which is technically right (although denied by Watson) but misleading.¹⁹ Dictionaries of Irish show *orc* 'whale' as a modern form, surely derived from Latin *orca*. It is no support for the notion 'whale islands' proposed by Macbain in 1896.

As for the Celtic cult of the boar, it is set out in an edition of the eleventh-century *Mabinogion* tale of Culhwch and Olwen, the editors citing Anne Ross's full account of the pig as a Celtic sacred beast. They mention as well *orc* 'young pig' as a term for an Irish prince. The tale itself ends with an epic hunt by King Arthur of the boar Twrch Trwyth, evidently 'a divine being in animal form'.²⁰ For the Celts, boars were imposing and formidable beings.

Professor Lockwood then returned to the attack. He made these points. Although *orc* is well-attested in Irish, it has no equivalent in British Celtic. Pictish being a Brittonic language, this seems anomalous. He thus proposed a pre-Celtic etymology for *Orcades*, relating it to *Ork*, *Orka*, and *Orki* found at various places in Orkney and Shetland, and meaning 'headland' or the like; he also cited *Denork* from Fife, which he translated 'fortress (*dùn*) on a hill'. Allusions to swine or boars he dismissed as fanciful or groundless 'speculation'. At the same time, citing Macbain's dictionary, he thought that the 'isles of capes' or Orkneys were then taken as 'isles of whales', because pilot whales visited Orkney's coasts into the nineteenth century. Despite that, he quoted from Watson an Irish annal of 579 on an army of 'Orcs', where the term is used of the people, not their islands. After further scepticism on the ancient name of Shetland, he concluded thus: 'There can surely be little doubt that the Cats, whether in Shetland or on the mainland, are as spurious as the Pigs of Orkney, a matter of some consequence for pre-history.'²¹

What he said can be compared with further comment from Celticists. Professor Gorrochategui of Vitoria mentions an ancient river *Orcia* in north-east Spain, relating it to *orc*-, which he thinks means 'salmon' and so 'salmon river', or else (taking the inferior reading *Orgia*) 'destroyer'.²² *Orcia* was on the River Segre, flowing south to Lérida from near Andorra.²³ It was situated 15 miles downstream from Seo de Urgel, and just north of the Oliana Reservoir.²⁴ Gorrochategui's claims of 'establishment' and 'analysis' notwithstanding, he here analyses little and establishes nothing. The Celts were not given to calling rivers after salmon. What they did in Wales and beyond was name them after pigs. Jackson's comments on *Banff* and *Banw* will be recalled. The Banw 'Young Pig' of Powys now has its own entry, as do namesakes in the Aman of Ammanford in Dyfed and (with a prefix) the Ogwen of Snowdonia; besides them is a Pen-Tyrch 'hill of boars' (nothing to do with rivers) north-west of Cardiff.²⁵ The Celts were farmers and hunters. Unlike most of us today, they knew the feel and smell of living creatures. That is why they called landscape features after animals. Irish *orc* 'salmon' being poorly attested, we may reject Gorrochategui's 'salmon river' for *Orcia*. This ancient Catalan stream was called 'piglet': a female one.

Let us bring pig-names to an end. In the twelfth-century *Four Branches*, after visitors steal magic swine from Dyfed, their owners start a furious chase across Wales, the author naming places on the route such as Mochdref 'pig farm' in Ceredigion and Mochnant 'pig stream' in Powys.²⁶ Dr Falileyev, despite noting *Orcia* as perhaps 'piglet stream', tends to follow Gorrochategui for 'salmon river'.²⁷ As to why the Welsh originally knew the Orkneys as *Ynys Weir* (the reference not being to the Isle of Wight or Lundy, a modern error), there is now an explanation. It is this. Ptolemy gives *Virvedrum Promontorium* as the British-Latin name of Duncansby Head, near John o' Groats. Rivet and Smith understood it as 'very wet cape', which is improbable. A better answer is supplied by Middle Welsh *gwair* 'bend, curve', which would develop from British *vedr-*. *Virvedrum Promontorium* would thus be 'Great-Bend Cape', where the Scottish mainland abruptly turns ninety degrees from north to west. So, therefore, *Ynys Weir* 'Island(s) of (the) Bend' for Orkney, less than seven miles north of Duncansby Head.²⁸

Wight, Man, and Orkney in effect mark Great Britain's limits; hence *Historia Brittonum*'s statement on how the Sovereignty of Britain lay in possession of the three. However, Professor Sims-Williams, who also discusses Irish *orc* 'young pig; hero', still describes *Ynys Weir* as Lundy or Wight, relating the name to Welsh *gwair* 'grass', which makes no sense.²⁹

With a full dossier of instances, we now attend to Professor Lockwood's arguments. There are eight reasons for rejecting his conclusions, as follows.

First, he noted that, although *orc* 'piglet' occurs in Irish, it is unknown in Brittonic. He therefore concluded that we do not have its cognate in *Orcades*. But his reasoning is weak. Old Irish *orc* is cognate with Latin *porcus*, English *farrow*, and Lithuanian *pàrszas* 'boar'. These forms were widespread and common throughout Europe, as Vendryes observed. So it is hazardous to maintain that they should disappear in Brittonic dialects (including Pictish) as early as the first century, when Mela and Pliny refer to them, let alone the fourth century before Christ, if these writers owed the form to Pytheas of Massalia. Toponyms are conservative aspects of language. They preserve archaisms. Oxford is still called Oxford, even though cattle rarely tread its streets and the ford is replaced by a bridge. If Oxford has the ghost of oxen, Orkney will have that of wild boar.

Second, Vendryes noted that Old Irish *orc* is an archaic form, restricted to poetry. If it was no longer part of ordinary language in Irish, which is more conservative than Brittonic languages like Welsh and Cornish, it is not remarkable that its equivalent should have disappeared from the latter.

Third, many Indo-European forms have been lost in Brittonic. There is a convenient instance in *Durobrivae* 'fort-bridges', the British-Latin name of Rochester in Kent and Water Newton in Cambridgeshire. The elements respectively mean 'fort' and 'bridges' in British, but neither of them survived into Welsh or Cornish. Yet no one supposes that *Durobrivae* is not Celtic.

Fourth, Lockwood's notions on *ork* 'cape' are hazardous. Orkney and Shetland were so heavily settled by the Vikings that hardly any pre-Scandinavian place-names are known there. Is it likely that *ork* goes back to ancient times and yet survived intensive occupation by the Northmen, so that it occurs even in minor names? Is it not more likely that the term is Norse, its similarly to *Orkney* being coincidental?

Fifth, if *ork* were an ancient form, as we are told, we should expect to find it elsewhere in Pictland. Professor Lockwood endeavoured to meet this criticism by reference to Denork in Fife. To do that he had to change his translation of 'ork' from 'cape' to 'hill', because Denork is between Cupar and St Andrews (nowhere near the sea), and offer the sense 'fortress on a hill' (meaning the Pictish stronghold near the present-day settlement). But the translation 'fortress of boars' proposed by Watson frees us from all these complications, and is in part confirmed by Pen-Tyrch 'hill of boars' near Taff's Well. If a hill in Glamorgan might be called after boars, so might a Pictish hillfort in Fife. Lockwood is guilty of special pleading.

Sixth, Rivet and Smith cited Charles Thomas's paper of 1961 on other peoples of the North with colourful totemistic appellations. They include the Caereni 'rams' or 'bucks', the Carveti 'stags', the Epidii 'stallions', and the Lugi 'ravens'; with them are perhaps also the Dobunni 'boomers, bitterns' of Gloucestershire and Durotragi (not 'Durotrigi') 'fortress hounds' of Dorset and south Somerset. The Orci 'young pigs, young boars' would be one of their number.

Seventh is the overwhelming evidence for Celtic admiration of pigs. On this we quote a parallel observation from Kenneth Jackson, who as a Cambridge student

of classics must have known AEH in the 1930s (although one would not gather this from Jackson's writings, textual criticism having curiously little interest for him). In a classic paper, Jackson explained the name of Kentigern, patron saint of Glasgow. It is from British *Cunotigernos* 'hound lord', with the same element for 'hound' as in *Cunobelinos* (the 'Cymbeline' of Shakespeare). Jackson added these points: if such a name seems strange to us, we must recall how the Celts esteemed their hunting dogs; the modern 'feeling that "dog" as applied to humans is insulting is probably of Hebrew origin'; for the Celts, however, *cuno*- 'hound' had some of the overtones which 'lion' has now.³⁰ What is true of dogs is true of pigs. Men of Orkney would be proud to call themselves *Orci* 'Young Wild Boars'.

Eighth, Lockwood himself quotes Watson on Irish references to attacks by Orcs, where the form relates to a people, not a territory. It is simpler to relate such a usage to reconstructed *Orci*, a tribe with a warrior aristocracy, than to Lockwood's headlands. Their memory lingered on. There is proof of this on Orkney at the prehistoric mausoleum of Maes Howe. Runes carved there in 1152-3 by Northmen on their way to Jerusalem call the place *Orkhougr* 'mound of (the) Orcs'.³¹ Perhaps the Vikings related it (and treasure plundered from it) to Orkney's pre-Nordic inhabitants. They were in any case hardly thinking of sea-capes.

So there is good reason to regard *Orcades* as relating to *orci* 'young pigs', regarded as vigorous and aggressive creatures. Like the Demetae 'good hewers-down' (of enemies) or Ordovices 'hammer-fighters' of ancient Cambria, the *Orci* proclaimed themselves as fighting men. There is no connection with whales, sea monsters, or capes. The interpretation also enhances understanding of Juvenal, somewhat unexpectedly. He would know from Tacitus of the Caledonian hero Calgacus 'Swordsman' and the British warrior-queen Boudica 'She Who is Victorious'. Once the significance of these and other warlike Celtic forms is grasped, it is easier to appreciate Juvenal's sense of the British as a heroic people, endowed with ferocious integrity: so different from the fifty kinds of sex pest back in Rome.

1. *D. Iunii Iuvenalis Saturae*, ed. A. E. Housman, 2nd edn (Cantabrigiae, 1931), 12-13.
2. *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch*, ed. Ernst Windisch (Leipzig, 1880), 459, 724, 848, 882.
3. E. I. Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum* (Dublin, 1910), 469, 551.
4. W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 28-30, 63, 339.
5. R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1938), 52, 90.
6. *Canu Aneirin*, ed. Ifor Williams (Caerdydd, 1938), 363.
7. T. H. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), 122-3, 377, 538.
8. K. H. Jackson, 'The Pictish Language', in *The Problem of the Picts*. ed. F. T. Wainwright (Edinburgh, 1955), 129-60.
9. Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien: Lettres M N O P* (Paris, 1960), 0-28.
10. K. H. Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition* (Cambridge, 1964), 22-4, 37-8.
11. D. Ellis Evans, *Gaulish Personal Names* (Oxford, 1967), 239 n. 8.
12. K. H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969), 41.
13. H. Meurig Evans and W. O. Thomas, *Y Geiriadur Mawr*, 5th edn (Llandysul, 1971), 461.
14. K. H. Jackson, *The Gaelic Notes in the Book of Deer* (Cambridge, 1972), 80.

15. *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 1978), 80-1, 141, 229, 231.
16. A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (Princeton, 1979), 115, 433-4.
17. John Field, *Place-Names of Great Britain and Ireland* (Newton Abbot, 1980), 129.
18. W. B. Lockwood, 'On the Early History and Origin of the Names Orkney and Shetland', *Namn og Bygd*, lxxviii (1980), 19-35.
19. Adrian Room, *Dictionary of Place-Names in the British Isles* (London, 1988), 264.
20. *Culhwch and Olwen*. ed. Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff, 1992), lxiv-lxx.
21. W. B. Lockwood, 'Remarks on Ir. *Inse Orc*, *Inse Catt*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, xxi (2003), 247-9.
22. Joaquín Gorrochategui, 'Establishment and Analysis of Celtic Toponyms in Aquitania and the Pyrenees', in *New Approaches to Celtic Place-Names in Ptolemy's 'Geography'*, ed. Javier de Hoz, E. R. Luján, and Patrick Sims-Williams (Madrid, 2005), 135-72.
23. Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place-Names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2006), 239.
24. John T. Koch, *An Atlas for Celtic Studies* (Oxford, 2007), map 16.1.
25. H. W. Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandysul, 2007), 16, 22-3, 354, 380.
26. Andrew Breeze, *The Origins of the 'Four Branches of the Mabinogi'* (Leominster, 2009), 108.
27. Alexander Falileyev, *Dictionary of Continental Celtic Place-Names* (Aberystwyth, 2010), 27, 176.

28. Andrew Breeze, 'Durham, Caithness, and *Armes Prydein*', *Northern History*, xlviii (2011), 147-52.
29. Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford, 2011), 40 n. 63, 66.
30. K. H. Jackson, 'The Sources for the Life of St Kentigern', in *Studies in the Early British Church*. ed. N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1958), 273-357.
31. E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1957), 185.

And Thick on Severn Snow the Leaves

By Andrew Breeze

Although the longest river in Britain, the Severn has 'never impressed itself' on English imaginations as the Thames has.¹ The latter is described by Spenser, Herrick, Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, Kipling, T. S. Eliot, and Sir John Betjeman; the Severn is less noticed, despite mention (sometimes brief) by Spenser, Drayton, Milton (of *Comus*), Tennyson, Belloc, Andrew Young, and Ivor Gurney.

So there are only two contenders for laureateship of the Severn: Milton or Housman. Milton is the greater poet. But Housman knew the river better and mentions it more often. One can make a list:

1. And the Nile spills his overflow Beside the Severn's dead
2. Farewell to barn and stack and tree, Farewell to Severn shore
3. High the vanes of Shrewsbury gleam Islanded in Severn stream
4. When Severn down to Buildwas ran Coloured with the death of man
5. In my heart it has not died,
The war that sleeps on Severn side
6. The gale, it plies the sapling double, And thick on Severn snow the leaves
7. On banks of Thames they must not say Severn breeds worse men than they
8. And if my foot returns no more
To Teme nor Corve nor Severn shore
9. Now that other lads than I Strip to bath on Severn shore

— with lines respectively from I, VIII, XXVIII, XXXI, XXXVII, and LV in *A Shropshire Lad*. In later volumes the Severn, as Shropshire's particular river, naturally finds no place. It yet remains a property in Housman's bardic paraphernalia, together with lost content, war, soldiers, hangings, suicide, night, dawn, stars, lads, ploughmen, graveyards, bells, flowers, Easter, sleep, and beer.

In this paper we discuss one aspect of the Severn, rising beyond hills that 'looked to Wales away'. Attested in Greek and Latin as *Sabrina*, its name has been obscure. Fresh analysis may, however, reveal its meaning. Rivers are powerful symbols. They both remain and pass by, with implications for the permanent and the transient; they are barriers, with further banks that are hard to reach. In winter, they may be torrents. In summer, they are gentler and flow more smoothly. They are thus an obvious subject for poets. For Housman, the Severn had further associations, including youth and its pleasures, but also those of a tragic border river where Celt and Saxon long ago fought each other. Using (one hopes) Housmanian rigour, we can perhaps say in addition what *Sabrina* or Severn meant to the Britons whose conquest and enslavement are motifs in *A Shropshire Lad*. Instead of reading *Sabrina* as (after previous commentators) 'Sab-rina' or 'Sabr-ina', which have never yielded much sense, we take it as *Sa-br-ina*, from which a coherent meaning may emerge.

Here is the argument in a nutshell. Sir John Morris-Jones over a century ago set out two similar but unrelated roots in Welsh: reconstructed *bher-* in *cymeraf* 'I take', which is cognate with Latin *fero* and English *bear* 'carry, support'; and hypothetical *bheru-* in *berwi* 'seethe, boil', cognate with Latin *fervere* 'to be boiling hot, glow'. He showed in addition how British *Sabrina* gives Welsh *Hafren*, a change expected for words with initial Indo-European *s*. The same development occurs with Welsh *hafal* 'same' as against Latin *similis*, or *haf* 'summer' against Old High German *sumar*² Welsh *hafal* 'same' and *haf* 'summer' are here crucial. They are the only forms which resemble *Hafren*. They have yet been curiously treated in accounts of *Sabrina*. While *hafal* 'same' has been rejected out of hand, *haf* 'summer' is toyed with by some writers, despite inability to say why the Severn might be a 'summer river'. We propose therefore that *Sa-* relates instead to *haf(al)* 'same' in the sense 'united, together'. As for *berwi* 'boil' and unattested *ber* 'bear', they pose less difficulty. A river in spate seems to boil; at all times it bears liquid from one place to another. We thus derive *Sabrina* from reconstructed *Sa(m)-ber-ina* 'she who brings (waters) together' or *Sa(m)-beru-ina* 'she of (waters) foaming together'. Why the Severn should be so called is dealt with below (as also the significance of *-ina*).

Such is the solution in outline. How does it compare with discussion over the last hundred years? We start with Savick Brook, near Preston, Lancashire. Ekwall took the form as Celtic and cited Gaulish *Sabis* and *Sabatus* as parallels.³

Those three hydronyms may relate to *Sabrina*, or else be red herrings. An easier matter is British *Sabrina* as a goddess. Writing in the year 536, the British historian Gildas (who elsewhere mentions the Severn by name) spoke of 'divine honour' formerly heaped by the Britons on 'mountains, wells, hills, and rivers'.⁴ Whatever the origin of *Sabrina*, the Severn was a sacred stream, like Nile or Ganges.

Returning to Welsh *hafal* 'same', we find its first part paralleled in Irish *sámh* 'yoke; pair, couple; twins', with compound forms *sáimhbheirtheach* 'twin-bearing' and *sáimh-ioldánach* 'skilled equally in all arts', the latter applied in Irish legend to Lugh (a Celtic god whom Caesar identified with Mercury as 'inventor of all the arts').⁵ This Irish cognate supports interpretation of *Sa-* in *Sabrina* as 'joint, united, together'. In the same year Mawer and Stenton cited the name from Tacitus and Ptolemy, but with nothing on meaning.⁶ Ekwall also thought the etymology 'unclear', despite a supposed parallel in Irish *Sabhrann*, the old name of the Lee, flowing past Cork City to the sea. He further mentioned *Seuerne*, a lost river-name in Bedfordshire, and *Savernake*, the latter taken (somewhat curiously) as a hydronym later applied to the forest in Wiltshire.⁷

The normal development of British *s-* to *h-* (with certain exceptions) was thereafter given for *Sabrina*>*Hafren*.⁸ At the same time a study of Welsh hydronyms contained a tentative link (long dismissed) between *Severn*, *Hafren*, and Welsh *hafr* 'billy-goat', as well as (for rivers dry in summer) comments on English *Summertil* 'summer-barren' (Powys, Herefordshire) and *Winterbourne* 'winter stream' (Dorset, Wiltshire).⁹ But the Severn is never dry. To relate *Hafren* to *haf* 'summer' is futile. There is a better clue in the bard Aneirin's praise of Gwrhafal, a seventh-century warrior who with 'swift swordstroke' made corpses of the enemy, and whose name fittingly meant 'one like (*hafal*) a man'. It compares with *hydd hafal* 'like a deer' elsewhere in early Welsh, and Continental Celtic *Samalus*, a personal name.¹⁰ If 'goats' and 'summer' do not explain *Sabrina*, the element *sam-* or *haf(al)* 'together' may.

The English Place-Name Society meanwhile repeated Ekwall for *Savernake* as originally denoting a Wiltshire stream (the Bedwyn?), supposed namesake of the Severn.¹¹ As for association of *Hafren* or Severn with *hafr* 'goat', it was dismissed by Sir Ifor Williams, *hafr* being from the Old English for 'goat' and so having no connection with *Sabrina*>*Hafren*.

Noting *Sab-* in Continental hydronyms, Williams proposed instead a sense 'slow one', quoting Ekwall on Sanskrit *sabar* 'fresh milk; juice; sap'.¹² The process from 'juice' to 'slowness' is not evident. Sir Ifor was guessing. For *Sabrina*, an answer should be sought in Celtic lands, not Asia.

The context of Irish *sámh* 'together, united, joint' in *sáimh-ioldánach* 'skilled equally in all arts' for the god Lugh appears in a ninth-century text on the Battle of Maig Tuired. It has much pre-Christian material, including a passage on Lugh's arrival at Tara. He is talented as smith, champion, harper, poet, historian, sorcerer, and physician, but is still denied entry by the gatekeeper. Tara has many with these skills. Lugh gains admittance only when it is realized that he and he alone can do all these things. No one else is *samildánach* 'possessing many arts together'.¹³ As for *ber* 'to flow, drip', *berw* 'boil', and *hafal* 'like, similar', they have entries in the University of Wales dictionary. Therein noted are the first (or second?) in *aber* 'mouth of river' (hence 'Aberystwyth' by the Ystwyth), *cymer* 'confluence' (=Breton *kember*, as at Quimper in Brittany), *diferu* 'to drip', *gofer* 'rill', and *hydrfer* 'current'. Also with an entry is *-in* as an adjectival suffix in, for example, *gerwin* 'rough, harsh'.¹⁴ The implications for *Sabrina* are clear. Because *ber* 'flow' and *berw* 'boil' are used of moving water, either may explain the element *-br-*. Despite extended discussion of *Sabrina*, Kenneth Jackson was yet silent on its meaning.¹⁵

Now for a problem. It is this. Welsh *cymer* 'confluence' being from hypothetical *kom-bero-*, the second element is either 'to bear, carry; flow, drip' or 'to boil', with standard development in Welsh of *-mb-* to *m*. If, as we argue, *Sabrina* is from *Sa(m)-ber-ina* or *Sa(m)-beru-ina*, why do we not have 'Sambrina' giving 'Hamren' or the like? Evidence from Continental Celtic provides a solution. Ellis Evans observed how the prefix *com-* there 'occurs very frequently as *con-* and *co-*' (also *cob-*), as in the Gaulish personal names *Cobnertus* (=Welsh *cyfnerth* 'strong, resolute') and *Cobrunu* (=Welsh *cyfrin* 'confidant, person entrusted with secrets').

Quite separately, he related *Samala* or the River Somme and *Sambra* or the Sambre (crossing from France into Belgium) to the Gaulish element *Samo-* 'summer', if allowing an alternative connection with Old Irish *sám* 'calm, peaceful, easy'.¹⁶

His account of *com-* is essential. What occurred for *com-* in *Cobnertus* (=Welsh *cyfnerth*) or *Cobrunu* (=Welsh *cyfrin*) might occur for *sam-* in *Sabrina* (=Welsh *Hafren*). If the *m* of early *com-* was modified or lost before a consonant, the *m* in *sam-* could

do likewise. The case is reinforced by *Cobricius*, thought derived from *com-bric-* and amongst personal names assembled by Ellis Evans. If his reconstructed *com-bric-* produced *Cobricius*, hypothetical *Sam-ber(u)-ina* might produce *Sabrina*.

After much dry-as-dust phonology, time for more mythology. It offers glimpses of the Severn as a divine stream. Other British river-names clearly indicate divinity. *Deva* or *Dee* in Cheshire is 'goddess'; *Clota* or *Clyde* is 'cleanser, she who purifies'; *Verbeia* or *Wharfe* (an altar to her survives at Ilkley) is 'great striker, she of powerful blows'; *Dana* or *Don*, further south in Yorkshire, is 'gifted one, female endowed with supernatural power'; *Brigantia* or *Brent* (in Middlesex) is 'she who is exalted'. In Ireland, legends of the river-goddesses Shannon and Boyne reproduce the pattern. The fourth-century temple of Nodons at Lydney, Gloucestershire, situated above the 'wide estuary of the Severn', is thus related to 'aquatic cults'.¹⁷

Returning to words, we find later writers filling in details or showing other approaches to the problem. Dafydd Jenkins (writing patriotically in Welsh) offered revisionism on Jackson's views, observing that preservation of British *s-* in English place-names like *Salisbury* is abnormal.¹⁸ Irish *sam-* 'ensemble, commun' was discussed by Vendryes, who quoted the compounds *sam-shúag* 'armée entière', comprising hosts gathered in one place, and *sam-thodáil* 'libation en comun', a drink-offering made by an assembly.¹⁹ The implications of *sam* for unity or being brought together are evident. On the shrine at Lydney, Rachel Bromwich connected its 'mosaic pavements' with 'the sea and with fishing'.²⁰ If shrines to *Sabrina* the goddess have not yet been discovered inland, downstream she was adored as provider of fish.

In what remains a starting-point for investigators, Rivet and Smith declared of *Sabrina* that 'No clear Celtic etymon is identifiable'; this despite supposed equivalents in Ireland, Belgium, France, and south-west Italy, where they regarded Julius Pokorny's hypothetical root *sab-* 'sap; juice' (with a supposed 'Illyrian connection') as offering a 'reasonable approach' to a solution. More significant is their perception of *-ina* as a regular Celtic suffix, as with *Lindinis* 'at the lakes' or Ilchester, in the south Somerset fens. (Compare above remarks on Welsh *-in*.) They further cited Dafydd Jenkins's paper on *Hafren* and Jackson's riposte to it, but did not realize that the Ravenna Cosmography's 'Lavobrinta', placed next to Wroxeter or *Viroconium* (of Housman's 'ashes under Uricon'), is a corruption of *Fl[umen] Sabrina*.

Besides their account of *Sabrina*, they had a remark on *Sulloniacis* 'at the estates of Sullonius', a Roman settlement two miles north-west of Edgware, Middlesex, the form resembling Gaulish toponyms coined from a personal name plus *-aco-*.²¹

Their point on *-aco-* is decisive for Savernake. Instead of a hydronym applied (somewhat improbably) to a Wiltshire forest, it will be an estate name. Savernake has trees to spare, but no river. Assumption of an original *Sabernacum* 'estate of Sabernus' or even *Sabrinacum* 'estate of Sabrinus' resolves those difficulties. Savernake will be no namesake of the Severn, but perhaps belonged to a Briton called after the Severn. As for *Sabrina*, although Rivet and Smith were honest and workmanlike researchers, neither was a trained Celticist, leading to flaws in their etymologies, where they consistently neglected early Welsh and Irish when explaining British toponyms. Recourse to Sanskrit or Lithuanian or 'Illyrian' was a poor substitute, if natural for Englishmen quoting Continental scholars (few of whom specialize in Insular Celtic). So much is demonstrated by their acceptance of Pokorny's suggestion on Illyrian 'juice' or 'sap', unlikely for a river over two hundred miles long. It was inevitably repudiated, so that John Field came to describe *Severn* as 'of unknown meaning'.²²

The way ahead was indicated by Vendryes, relating the Old Irish stem *ber-* 'bear, carry' to Welsh *aberth* 'sacrifice', *adfer* 'restore', *arfer* 'custom', *cymryd* 'take', and *diffryd* 'guard, defend'. He distinguished Irish *ber-* from the quite different stem of *berbaid* 'it boils, bubbles', which (after Pokorny) he saw in *Berba* 'she who boils' or the River Barrow of Leinster, as also Gaelic *inbhir* 'river-mouth' (Inverness is 'mouth of [the River] Ness') and *tobar* 'well' (Tobermory on the Isle of Mull is 'well of [St] Mary'). He saw the same element in Welsh or Pictish *aber* 'river-mouth' (Aberdare, Aberdeen) or Welsh *cymer* and Breton *kember* 'confluence, watersmeet' (Pontycymer 'bridge of the confluence' in Glamorgan, Quimper in Brittany).²³ Important is his referring of *Berba* or the Barrow (with Gaelic *inbhir* 'river-mouth' and *tobar* 'well', as also Welsh *aber* 'river-mouth' and *cymer* 'confluence') to Welsh *berwi* 'boil' and not the root *ber-* 'carry; flow, drip'. It has implications for *Sabrina*.

Perplexity meanwhile went on its way. Oliver Padel considered the name of Savick Brook in Lancashire as 'of unknown meaning'.²⁴ Room described *Severn* as 'of unknown origin'.²⁵

Mills's phrase is 'of doubtful etymology'.²⁶ Patrick Sims-Williams quoted Eric Hamp on *b* as rare in words deriving from Indo-European, as also his comparison of *Sabrina* with Welsh *saer* 'craftsman'. (But 'Artisan' is no name for a goddess-river.) Sims-Williams observed further how Peter Kitson dismissed Hamp's case, regarding *Sabrina* as pre-Celtic.²⁷ In the English Place-Name Society dictionary, both opinions appear modified (if with little confidence), *sab-* in our hydronyms being taken as pre-Indo-European and meaning 'liquid'. Hence the Sambre of France and Belgium or the Sèvre of the Paris Basin. Even so, it was admitted that *Sabrina* and *Savernake* are of regular Celtic form.²⁸

Now for Dr Graham Isaac, whose etymologies inspire no confidence. His words on *Sabrina* show why. He derives its first element from the hypothetical Indo-European root *sem* 'summer' (giving Welsh *haf* 'summer') and concludes, 'The basic meaning of "Summer River" would presumably have had implications not covered in such a bare gloss. It would be a "river with some special feature in summer", which may well not be accessible to us now.'²⁹ Surreal explanations for philological problems have not ceased with Housman's 'savage footnotes on unjust editions'. Dr Isaac produces them even now. No reason on earth compels us to take *Sabrina* as 'Summer River'. Dr Isaac's interpretation of *Sabrina* is still taken seriously by Professor Sims-Williams.³⁰

John Koch's atlas of Romano-British sites, plotting temples at Wroxeter as well as Lydney Park, is a reminder of where altars to Sabrina may one day be found. In his identification of Forden Caer (near Welshpool) as 'Levobrinta' (*recte*, *Fl[umen] Sabrina*), he is yet deceived by a ghost reading.³¹ Owen and Morgan in the same year referred the Berwyn, a mountain stream east of Tregaron in Ceredigion, to Welsh *berw* 'bubbling, boiling, seething'.³² It is further evidence for this sense in hydronyms. Most recently, Falileyev regards *sabr-* in place-names as a 'doublet' of *Samo-* 'summer', certainly attested in Gaulish personal names (not, however, place-names).³³ We are back again with *Sabrina* 'summer river'. One question is at least answered on survival of *s* in English *Severn*. Peter Schrijver is here cited for the Anglo-Saxons as learning the name not from speakers of British, but of Latin.³⁴ In lowland Britain speakers of Latin were numerous, especially in the Roman army, where German recruits might often hear the name *Sabrina*. Schrijver's conjecture is supported by Latin loans in early Old English such as *fefer* 'fever', from Latin *febris*, with internal *f* representing 'v', just as with Old English spellings of *Severn*.

It is time for conclusions. Forms quoted by Ellis Evans demonstrate early modification or loss of *m* in Celtic names. That permits identification of *Sa-* as *sam*. As for *-br-*, we have seen Welsh *berw* 'boil, seethe' associated with *Berba* or the Barrow, as also *aber* and *cymer* and the Berwyn torrent in the Cambrian Mountains. Loss of original *-u-* is thus no impediment to the etymology. We therefore derive *Sabrina* not from reconstructed *Sa(m)-ber-ina* 'she who brings (waters) together', even if the Severn has many tributaries, but from *Sa(m)-beru-ina* 'she of (waters) foaming together'. There is no connection with *Samala* (the Somme) or *Sambra* (Sambre) or the like. Whatever their origin (indicated by Old Irish *sám* 'calm, peaceful, easy?'), it has nothing to do with *Sabrina*, as *b* and not *m* will imply.

If *Sabrina* is hypothetical *Sa(m)-beru-ina* 'she of (waters) foaming together', why should this be? A reason is soon found. The Severn is famous for the Severn Bore, a tidal surge of waters that boil or seethe together. Like other English rivers (Humber, Trent, Ouse) but more so, its incoming tide (when briefly checked by the downflow) rises up and then runs forwards noisily in a great wave or bore. This curiosity of nature has long been noticed. It struck with awe the cleric and writer Thomas Fuller (1608-61), who called it 'equally terrible with its flashings and noise to the seers and hearers, and oh, how much more then to the feelers thereof', and went on to quote a description of the Severn Bore by Michael Drayton (1563- 1631), including these lines:

And on the angry front, the curlèd foam doth bring
The billows 'gainst the banks, when fiercely it doth fling, Hurls up the slimy ooze, and makes the scaly brood Leap madding to the land, affrighted from the flood

— implying that Drayton witnessed the bore for himself (though one doubts whether he saw fish jump out of the water from sheer terror).³⁵ The tidal surge figures too in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

There twice a day the Severn fills; The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye, And makes a silence in the hills

—where it is presented in a sedate and studious way, befitting a poem of mourning.³⁶ The contrast with Drayton's description, however, makes one wonder if Tennyson ever set eyes on the bore, unlike a third poet, Geoffrey Grigson, who thought it 'a strange, intimidating thing to see', then quoting from Fuller's account.³⁷ Others are more factual. The Severn Bore occurs between Awre and Gloucester (21 miles), but is most impressive on the eight miles below Gloucester. The wave may be six feet high and move at 13 miles an hour. It can be seen some 250 times a year between February to April and August to October, and is spectacular on about one tide in five.³⁸

The phenomenon has long been known to the Welsh. This is proved by the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, with a passage on how the sea floods into the Severn Estuary, so that 'two heaped-up wave crests are built up separately, and fight each other like rams. One goes against each other, and they clash in turn': a wonder which has happened 'from the beginning of the world to the present day'.³⁹ There is further testimony in the twelfth-century *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. Amongst characters there is Teyrnnon Twrf Liant, a (fictional) lord of Lower Gwent. His name's first part, nothing to do with a Celtic god 'Tigernonus' (who is an invention of modern Welsh scholarship), is due to medieval misunderstanding of *Llantarnam* (north of Newport), while the rest of it means 'roar of flood-water' and alludes to the Severn Bore.⁴⁰ The author of the tales, a native of Gwynedd residing in Dyfed, knew the Bore as a wonder of south-east Wales. It offered a colourful and fitting epithet for a local magnate.⁴¹ Famous in Wales of the ninth and twelfth century, the Severn Bore would likewise be familiar to early Britons, worshippers of the goddess *Sabrina*.

If *Sabrina* or *Severn* are here correctly derived from Common Celtic *Sam-beru-ina* 'she of (waters) foaming together', our focus on the pagan Britons will be sharpened. For them, the Severn was a being feared and to be placated. Something of their dread or thrill, still felt by Drayton and Fuller in the seventeenth century, is experienced to this day by the crowds of spectators at Stone Bench or Upper Rea.

Two final comments. First, interpretation of *Sabrina* as the name of a goddess indicates a perennial regard or respect for rivers, especially amongst poets. Homer tells how the Scamander aided the Trojans; Vergil and Horace wrote of Italian mountain torrents. With them are Milton on the Cam, Marvell on the Wharfe (and Humber), Burns on the Afton, Wordsworth on the Duddon, or Eliot on the 'strong brown god' of the Mississippi ('ever, however, implacable, /

Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder / Of what men choose to forget').

A second and more unexpected observation concerns rivers and politics. We quote Housman again:

When Severn down to Buildwas ran Coloured with the death of man

— where the image has a famous precedent:

Et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno

— in book six of Vergil's *Aeneid*, written when rivers were thought to convey omens or portents. This line of Latin verse has had a singular destiny. Everyone knows of 'I seem to see the River Tiber, foaming with much blood' in a speech by Housman's most celebrated pupil.⁴² Whatever one thinks of him, nobody denies the violence of reactions produced by his choice of phrase. It rams home a fundamental point: that rivers are extremely potent symbols, not merely in poetry, but even in the rhetoric of politics.

1 Anon., 'The Severn', in *Places*, ed. Geoffrey Grigson and C. H. Gibbs-Smith (London, 1954), 341.

2 John Morris-Jones, *A Welsh Grammar* (Oxford, 1913), 79, 80, 128, 134.

3 Eilert Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922), 139.

4 W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 435.

5 P. S. Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (Dublin, 1927), 936.

6 Allen Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire* (Cambridge, 1927), 14-15

7 Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1936), 393.

- 8 Henry Lewis and Holger Pedersen, *A Concise Comparative Celtic Grammar* (Göttingen, 1938), 16-17.
- 9 R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1938), 116-18.
- 10 *Canu Aneirin*, ed. Ifor Williams (Caerdydd, 1938), 283, 316.
- 11 J. E. B. Gover, Allen Mawer, and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Wiltshire* (Cambridge, 1939), 15.
- 12 Ifor Williams, *Enwau Lleoedd* (Lerpwl, 1945), 40-1.
- 13 Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Literature* (Chicago, 1948), 59.
- 14 *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950-2002), 273, 275, 759, 1808, 2019.
- 15 K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 517-21, 576.
- 16 Ellis Evans, *Gaulish Personal Names* (Oxford, 1967), 183-6, 252-3.
- 17 Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London, 1967), 21, 22.
- 18 Dafydd Jenkins, 'Sabrina/Severn/Hafren: s-h-', *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xxv (1972-4), 114-16.
- 19 Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien: Lettres R-S* (Paris, 1974), S-19.
- 20 Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 1978), 428.
- 21 A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (Princeton, 1979), 391, 450-1.
- 22 John Field, *Place-Names of Great Britain and Ireland* (Newton Abbot, 1980), 155.

- 23 Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien: Lettre B* (Paris, 1981), 39- 41.
- 24 O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988), 156.
- 25 Adrian Room, *Dictionary of Place-Names in the British Isles* (London, 1988), 183, 318.
- 26 A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1991), 290.
- 27 Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Degrees of Celticity in Ptolemy's Names: Examples from Wales', in *Ptolemy: Towards a Linguistic Atlas of the Earliest Celtic Place-Names of Europe*, ed. D.N. Parsons and Patrick Sims-Williams (Aberystwyth, 2000), 1-14
- 28 *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names*, ed. Victor Watts (Cambridge, 2004), 529, 537-8.
- 29 G. R. Isaac, 'Scotland', in *New Approaches to Celtic Place-Names in Ptolemy's 'Geography'*, ed. Javier de Hoz, E. R. Luján, and Patrick Sims-Williams (Madrid, 2005), 189- 214.
- 30 Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place-Names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2006), 293 n. 40.
- 31 John T. Koch, *An Atlas for Celtic Studies* (Oxford, 2007), maps 15.4, 22.
- 32 Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandysul, 2007), 296.
- 33 Alexander Falileyev, *Dictionary of Continental Celtic Place-Names* (Aberystwyth, 2010), 30.
- 34 Stephen Laker, *British Celtic Influence on English Phonology* (Leiden, 2010), 69.
- 35 Thomas Fuller, *The Worthies of England* (London, 1840), 555.

- 36 *The Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (London, 1894), 252.
- 37 Geoffrey Grigson, *The Shell Country Alphabet* (London, 1966), 129.
- 38 Eric Newby and Diana Petry, *Wonders of Britain* (London, 1968), 54.
- 39 *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. John Morris (London, 1980), 40
40. *The Mabinogion*, tr. Sioned Davies (Oxford, 2007), 231.
41. Andrew Breeze, 'Moor, Court, and River in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*', in *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. A. R. Classen (Berlin, 2012), 295-312.
- 42 David McKie, 'Housman Abroad', *The Housman Society Journal*, XXXIX (2013), 21-78.

‘GRASP THE NETTLE’: Some Thoughts on ASL XVI

By Darrell Sutton

The poem below represents an unexplored genre of humourless lyrics that were invented by Housman. The essay explores notable details of content and form. Treating of nettles, wind, graves and lovers, several themes are interlaced. The poem is a thoughtful and well-composed tribute to ill-fated lovers.

It nods and curtseys and recovers
When the wind blows above,
The nettle on the graves of lovers
That hanged themselves for love.

The nettle nods, the winds blows over,
The man, he does not move,
The lover of the grave, the lover
That hanged himself for love.

A.E. Housman was one of many good poets at work during the 1890s. Several lyricists during that span of time addressed sensitive concepts. Each poet dealt with them in varied ways. Love and death, in particular, were not infrequently featured: as focal points, they recur in poetry of all kinds, and Housman exploited them fully. Poets and other writers were skillful in their application of them as emotive refrains; generations later, diagnosticians of texts are seldom less clever when attempting to explicate what poets may have originally meant. What may be intuited from their poems is subtly expressed and cannot always be placed in a coherent system. At any rate, and despite all the difficulty, critics cannot abstain from plying their trade and searching for the meanings behind the words.

Controlled experiments are necessary in every scientific discipline. In each special field various methods of analysis develop. Professionals, who study behaviour, spend large amounts of time trying to understand the impulses that contribute to human beings' negative and positive

deeds. It is not hard to find a consensus among experts about what technical name should be assigned to specific acts. But it is difficult for them to agree on how to interpret exactly the origins of passions that influence individuals to do certain things. Death, as a topic of discussion, is complicated enough on its own, becoming even more complex when someone is portrayed in print both as the executed and the executor: as hanged man and as hanging judge. Explicating it all is next to impossible. Books aplenty fill shelves in which authors with divergent opinions ponder the issue of self-murder. It is a sad subject. For millennia, numerous people have injured themselves whenever the human pieces in love's puzzling picture seemed unsuited for each other, or when certain relationships could no longer be kept hush- hush. Love, as either a verb or noun, is something that is not easy to do or explain. Notwithstanding its enigmatic effects, Housman tried often and was ably endowed to originate the verses above, as well as to create similar poems: e.g., see *The True Lover*, *ASL* LIII.

Long ago Greeks and Romans believed that the ability to compose poetry was a gift given to persons directly from the gods. If this divine/human transaction among poets was accepted to be true, then this sway upon writers was imagined to have instilled in them a unique kind of noetic inspiration. Small wonder, then, that Homer and Virgil could hold readers' attention. It appears that each one had assistance from another world. Somewhere an amateur critic may be wondering, 'well, how do you profile someone who holds numinous beliefs?' In brief, it is impossible apart from some knowledge of the aforesaid Muses in particular who are viewed by an author as guiding his pen. On the face of it, a poem can evoke psychological facets, but it is not easy to discern if it projects evidence of true-to-life events in an author's life. This claim is affirmed in studies of Victorian poets. Romantic verse conjures up overly sentimental attitudes. But distinguishing fact from fiction is not entirely necessary for understanding poets of that era.

I am unaware if Housman was inspired by a specific Muse, but he claimed once that a little strong drink oft helped his mood when he settled down to compose verse. He still is considered by not a few critics to be a minor poet, very often reckoned among the Romantic lyricists. Select

poems of his regularly appear in anthologies. As is well known, he wrote much about death. One recalls two lines from *ASL XXX*:

But from my grave across my brow Plays no wind of healing now,

Of his titled poems that are centered on the topic of loss of life, some titles are deceptive. Persons engaged in woodwork likely will not find any advice about construction in 'The Carpenter's Son' (*ASL XLVII*). People who are not acquainted with Christian themes may be misled by the heading, for therein the poem narrates nothing on the subject of joinery. In truth, it alludes to Jesus' crucifixion, a death which is explicitly described in the Bible and implicitly made public in this poem. Its verses have all that is lacking in *ASL XVI*: i.e., a character's powerful rhetoric and/or a credible philosophy of life.

I doubt, however, if Housman was possessed altogether of a melancholy spirit. Sober thought is not a bad thing. It may form the basis for mundane literary techniques. If a poem's words mirror a writer's soul, they do so only if and when a person is able to define precisely 'what is a *soul*'. For the most part, Housman used the word indeterminately, as when he said in *ASL XLIII*

The immortal bones obey control Of dying flesh and dying soul.

What he means each time is open to wide-ranging explanation. Few persons were close to him when he was alive; but he was accessible through his poems. Few critics today are able to see beyond his guise and realize his literary persona. This fact is evidenced by descriptions of him. Housman's personality has been investigated thoroughly by means of analyses of his verses, and learned critics have sought to characterize his overly critical temperament and to explain his writing style.

Secondary literature on these matters is profuse. To grasp the nettle of his being, however, one is obliged to read not only his critical reviews of scholarly texts and his personal correspondences, but one must grapple above all with his poems.

Like much of Housman's poetry, *ASL XVI* does not fit neatly into the Romantic genre. Free of satire and lacking an ironic slant, its lines have a grave tone to them to be sure. I place *ASL XL* under this rubric also: What are those blue remembered hills,...

These types usually contain multiple allusions, and are essentially humorless. On this score, Housman molded his own style of composition. I label his poems 'sobaric' in technique – drawn from the Greek word 'σοβαρός', which in its adjectival sense refers to something serious or of a solemn nature. *ASL XLVIII* is a prime example of this form and can bear the brunt of the weight of my claim. Housman's characters tend to be restless souls; the presence of a hero in his grave lyrics was necessary in the same way one was needed in ancient Greek tragedy. Still, the genre of Greek 'tragic' poetry remains less accessible to readers today. Aristotle knew little of its origins. Enough dissimilarity exists in the writings of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides that studies of their choral arrangements provide little enlightenment on tragedy's initial starting points. *ASL XVI* may have had other origins.

Why does Housman write of nettles? Of what value are they to his poem? The nettle plant has a long history: John Lyly included a reference to it in *Euphues*, 1578:

"True it is Philautus that he which toucheth ye nettle tenderly, is soonest stoung."

And Aaron Hill's *Works*, c. 1750, has what may be the first example of its literary use, referring to grasping a nettle:

Tender-handed stroke a nettle, And it stings you, for your pains: Grasp it like a man of mettle, And it soft as silk remains.
Nettles are stuff of legend.

Supposedly they are plants that signal the approach of spring, and are strongly suggestive of swans and magic charms, of love and bereavement. In modern myth, for example, Hans Christian Anderson's (1805-1875) fairy tale, 'The Wild Swans', has a section on stinging nettles. The tale tells of the great lengths to which people will go for familial and illicit love. Love is a topic that never goes out of fashion. Discussions of it are ubiquitous. "Love, which is lust, is the Main of Desire."

So wrote William Ernest Henley (1849-1903) for his 1901 volume *Hawthorn and Lavender*, XXI. And considering how Housman regularly weaves love and death (the grave) into his poems, I think he also would have agreed with Henley's initial verse in that poem, "Love, which is lust, is the Lamp in the Tomb."

Housman's motivation in *ASL* XVI was to illustrate causal effects and their consequences. So love was made the motivating factor; but love, lust and infatuation are intertwined and indistinguishable to one whose heart is excited by intense desires. Nettles and lovers are contrasted: the wind induces movement in the vegetation, while the decedent lies still.

Wagglng and bowing in the breezes, the nettle regains its former position. The lover lies motionless in silence. It is picturesque, one of an image of two natural states: one above and the other below the surface of the soil. Life tends toward animation, while death inclines itself to stillness. Those shifts are the natural order of things.

Like Housman, Ernest Dowson (1867- 1900), too, imposed silence on burial grounds when in 1896 he invented a newer existence, absent of life, for the poem 'In a Breton Cemetery' [*italics mine*]:

"They sleep well here,
These fisher-folk who passed their anxious days In fierce Atlantic ways;
And found not there,
Beneath the long curled wave,
So quiet a grave."

Dowson goes on to describe the spectral call heard from within this pasture land:

“And dear dead people with pale hands “Beckon me to their lands.”

For Dowson, cemetery residents could speak, if necessary. Not so for Housman. The under-grave was a lonely place of hushed silence where, although unnoticed in his verse, larvae advanced to maturity. Atop the ground, nettle plants benefited from nutrients they derived from wastelands and rotting flesh. They grow and overspread all the headstones on account of the abundance of sustenance for them in cemetery spaces. In Housman’s poem, the nettles are lifelike. The flora seems to dance. Their movements are inspired by the music of the wind. The currents of air sing, they bellow and call out, and the plant life that is fastened to the graves is able to hear in the breezes’ vibrant tones the many echoes of approaching storms and changes in the airstreams. The muted movements are expressive: so they bend their stems as a gesture of respect for the wind’s power. Not many poets ever envisioned such symbolism in a cemetery? Housman envisaged so. And he left it to the imagination of the reader to wonder why any human could love gardens of stone enough to want to be given shelter there so quickly through death-by-hanging. In Housman’s poem ‘The Carpenter’s Son’ (*ASL* XLVII), the soon-to-die individual eulogizes himself. Candid and regretful, a somber plea is made to onlookers to ‘Live’.

“Oh, at home had I but stayed...”

He gives witness to a series of bad choices that he made so as to serve as a corrective to bystanders. In any case, what lay ahead of him? - the hangman’s cart of course. This vehicle of transport will bear the ‘crucified one’ and the ‘lover’ to a grave site; but not before Housman added sense and sensibility to the poems’ character, which was unlike the disposition of Jesus in the Gospel which bore the cross/gallows, the very instrument of his own death.

The hangman’s role was to conduct the body from confinement to the site of execution, then to the grave. In that respect, the British hangmen of Housman’s day resembled the ancient Roman executioners whose role was to ensure that the condemned did not survive the gallows. There were screams, there were prayers; and then there was silence. Since the power

of the killed one's voice could not be seized, its timbre was not heard again.

Whatever questions may arise regarding the motives of the lover in *ASL XVI*, Housman provides only one cause, it all happened because of *love*. Background information is slight. There hardly is a person alive who can provide sufficient reason for why people commit suicide. All contributing factors are disturbing. Self-destruction is an acute problem whose symptoms on occasion are imperceptible. It is to be found in ivory towers and in slums. The actions of the human species can be quite odd when they are generated by love. As for perspective, philandering could have been on Housman's mind. It burdens the doers with troublesome thoughts. The outcome frequently is bad.

In another of Housman's poems, a life was terminated, but this one, at the bang of a pistol. See *ASL XLIV*.

Shot? So quick, so clean and ending? ... Oh you had forethought, you could reason,

And saw your road, and where it led,

And early wise and brave in season Put the pistol to your head...

Oh lad, you died as fits a man...

It is debatable whether the poem's language implies the person died in disgrace or not. Many questions remain, but men and women have done stranger things to themselves.

ASL XVI, the nettle poem, is not one of Housman's more popular pieces, and it offers no cure for a wounded heart. Housman was no literary physician, and enthusiasts are ambivalent about the powers of his verse. Readers who find leaves of healing in the published and unpublished pages of his poetry are less than a multitude. As they were then, so are they now. Housman might have thought otherwise on one occasion: a close friend, Moses Jackson, received a copy of *Last Poems* just months prior to his death. Housman thought that the verses might cheer a sad soul. Moses still died; happier hopefully

The poem itself requires deep reflection. The nettles earn our sorrow, the lovers our sympathy. The nettle's restrictions do not prohibit its growth. It embraces the ambiance of the environment. The lover's condition is different: it fosters something degenerative, a deterioration that continues until all that is left is dust. And oh what marvellous dust it was and what wondrous things it did! It lived; it loved and then hanged itself.

The verses of *ASL XVI* alternate between a nine and six syllable rhythm. The quatrains descend in number from plural (i.e., graves, lovers, themselves) to the singular (grave, lover, himself). Reiteration is common: see lines 1 and 5 with the nettle that 'nods'; in 2 and 5 with 'the wind blows' and in 4 and 8 with 'that hanged'... .

The nettle plant is depicted as a single entity in line 1. In line 3 the denotation is enlarged, taking on an expanded sense: a sort of pluralization comes into view that seemingly sanctions a gist which includes the coverage of more than one grave.

Moreover 'The nettle on the graves of lovers' is a phrase that contains enough ambiguity to forestall a single interpretation. Readers might construe first that the nettle (line 3) had hung itself, except line 5 has "themselves"; and it is unlikely the author intended readers to follow that train of thought because that logic cannot link up with the 'unmoved man' focus of lines 6-8. Nettle plants grow, they do not hang themselves; but people do.

There are separate male and female nettle plants. Nettle here is given a feminine sense with 'curtsey', since no one would expect a man to offer that form of greeting. Line 3 holds 'graves' in the genitive construction as real property of 'lovers'. In line 7 the construct is reversed, 'lover' there is owned by the grave. The wind blows 'above' (line 2) and it blows 'over' (line 5). The corpse beneath the soil is impervious to it. When the wind blows over the grave or on top of it, the wind agitates every moveable thing, but 'The man, he does not move.' Indeed before death, when the man was able to move, Housman stated the man was driven by a love of graves.

Note the contrast: the graves of lovers (line 3) and the lover of the grave (line 7). Emphasis is given to the word 'lover' in line 7. And if lover is a reference to someone who is profligate or has romantic liaisons outside of marriage, the picture clears up: for shame, guilt and resentment easily attach themselves to these amorous acts. Leaving aside the possible presence of disordered imaginations in the poet and in the poem, what Housman clearly meant, however, may not be so clear after all.

Appendix on the Oral Reading of *ASL XVI*

Pinpointing speech-sounds is of importance for the appreciation of poetry in an oral presentation. Identifying and classifying modes of verbal communication serve practical purposes, specifically when poets are staging spoken performances. In a rudimentary way, Housman concerned himself with phonetics along with stylistics. Some of these interests appear in his scholarly studies of ancient Greek and Latin passages.

His construction of *ASL XVI* is not haphazardly done. When it is slowly intoned, its verbal patterns are evident. Listeners may take note of the mysterious, riddle-like qualities of the poem's initial lines.

It nods and curtseys and recovers – the verbs move from one to two to three syllables in length. Short poems turn into protracted pieces when alveolar constructs [ds/ts] are present. Note how the final letter 's' (of the first two verbs) takes on a 'z' sound. And when the vowel 'a' (of *and*) follows the 's' in 'nods' and 'curtseys' in line 1, a 'z+ands' sound is produced.

When the wind blows above, - The digraph wh represents only one phoneme in both words of line 2. The first syllable of the first word of this line is a blended sound. But 'blows above' requires sentence stress because of the long 'o' in 'blows'. Again, a 'z' sound resonates where the 'a' vowel follows 's'.

The nettle on the graves of lovers

That hanged themselves for love. – with rough breathing, here the final 't' of 'that' combines with 'h' in 'hanged' in order to double the effect of the 'th' phoneme in 'themselves'. The dental position of the tongue beginning these verses and midway through the use of 'the' speeds up the reading of the first line: when read aloud, the whole of it displays audible linking features. The latter line, like the final line of the poem, is

arranged well with the ‘d’ from ‘hanged’ followed by another dental or ‘h’ sound.

The nettle nods, the wind blows over, - the alveolar and punctuation decelerates the reading; and here a long ‘o’ follows the ‘s’.

The man, he does not move, - with sonorant ‘m’ twice embedded in the first syllable of two words, along with its kin, letter ‘n’, it cannot be read without emphasizing its nasal consonant tones.

The lover of the grave, the lover

That hanged himself for love. – The reader encounters five words that force the tongue to touch the alveolar ridge in line 7. The long ‘a’ of ‘hanged’ is the syllable nucleus.

Book Review by Andrew Maund

A.E.Housman: Hero of the Hidden Life.

A Biography by Edgar Vincent, published by the Boydell Press. (2018)

The soubriquet “a man of letters” is one which, in its most obvious sense, might have less and less relevance in our modern world of technology and social media. Such a description might be applied not specifically to a *Magister Litterarum* in the academic sense (which would, to comment with pedantry of which AEH might approve, in any case by a **Master** of Letters), but, in a looser sense, to one who communicates with family, friends or colleagues through well-crafted written means, thereafter sent through the post, read at leisure by the recipient and, often, kept as a treasured record, memento or talisman. As this form of correspondence offers such a rich mine of information and insight into the lives of the writers, perhaps because of the time taken to commit the words to paper and the knowledge that they may well be kept to be read over and again, we might pause to wonder how biographers of future generations will fare in weaving together the fabric of the lives of their subjects from the ephemeral web of e mails and the transient warp of text messages.

There can be no doubt that AEH was a master as well as a man of letters; in his recently published biography, Edgar Vincent clearly demonstrates his own mastery, principally by writing a most engaging and illuminating account of a life which many Housman enthusiasts might have thought they knew well but in which they will discover many new insights and shifts of focus which make the overall picture sharper – not only in the sense of more distinct but also more poignant. In his skilful use of AEH’s correspondence, both better known and recently discovered, as the raw material to be integrated as the strongest fibres of this extraordinary life story, Vincent also proves his mastery with letters in a much more specific sense. It is in our personal correspondence that we are, at least sometimes, at our most honest and open and that is why this biography is so effective in its revelation and exploration of the hidden life of its title. As such, this is a biography which will appeal to those who already know something, or even think they know

a great deal, of the life but also those who, when they start, know nothing. In his Preface Vincent writes that, through his research, “Housman gained my sympathy, respect, admiration and liking” and this will be true for the readers of the biography too.

A now familiar detail concerning AEH’s final correspondence with Moses Jackson gives an insight into both that hidden life and, metaphorically, Vincent’s method in exploring it.

Writing from his hospital bed in Vancouver in late November 1922, Jackson wrote to “*My dear old Hous.*” to express his gratitude, with a lightly sardonic tone which makes his affection for AEH clear, for the copy of *Last Poems* which his life-long friend had sent him. It was written in pencil and we are told that, sometime after receiving it, AEH painstakingly inked-over the pencil manuscript, not only to preserve the text but also so that his hand should follow the path that Jackson’s had taken in writing the text and that a connection between them should be therefore captured and maintained. While Housman’s own letters are, of course, preserved and, in many cases, published in such as Burnett’s magnificent edition, their essential part in retelling AEH’s life preserves them in a different way in this biography. As they are so effectively used by Vincent, we too have a sense of following the hand that wrote them and the connection is made all the more powerfully for us.

There is perhaps something irresistible about the chance to read other people’s letters; does it appeal to us as slightly risqué or voyeuristic? Are we looking into a more secret, hidden life when we read, metaphorically, over the shoulder of the writer or the recipient, or as if we have steamed open the envelope, taken in the contents for a snatched few minutes and then sealed it again in the hope of not being found out? With this biography we are at our leisure in reading and re-reading the entertaining and enlightening extracts of that same correspondence, so well chosen to explore the thoughts, actions and motivation of its subject so effectively.

One example of Vincent’s attention to detail and exploration of how the letters capture Housman’s essential voice, experience of contemporary society and exploration of his own place in that society will serve as an illustration of his highly effective and engaging method. In Part VII, Paradoxical Housman, he explores the, perhaps unexpected, fascination

that the music hall had for AEH. He begins the section entitled '*Love of the music hall*' thus:

“The music hall was at the height of its vibrancy in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Nothing is known about Housman’s introduction to it but one can see how its sentimentality, the catchiness and patter of many of its songs, the *double entendres*, appealed to this writer of comic and nonsense verse. Being part of an audience that was uninhibited in its pursuit of enjoyment appealed also to a young man whose family and school life had been so sheltered and inhibited...”

Exemplary in his research, he then goes on to quote Matthew Sturgis (from *Passionate Attitudes: The English Decadence of the 1890s*), who explores the motivation of Arthur Symonds in frequenting the music hall:

“He found in the music halls a safety valve for the pressure-cooker of repressed Victorian sexuality. It was, he considered, the one place where there was a perfectly frank, healthy and delightful display of the beauty and strength of the human form...”

While, by inference, the same might be said of AEH, Vincent then qualifies and counters that idea by quoting from a letter of AEH to Walter Ashburner in September 1901, in which he invites him to accompany him to the music hall with the delightfully whimsical tone which is to be found in so many of the letters to family and friends that Vincent quotes throughout the text:

“In order that you may not be lured into any horrors for which you are unprepared, I should explain that, as I do not belong to any club, after dinner we adjourn to a box in the adjacent *Palace* (the most proper of all the music-halls, not meet to be called a music-hall), and that when the *Palace* closes there is no refuge but Bow St. Police station; which is the reason why I put the hour so early.”

While Vincent’s work is an engaging and easy read from first to last partly because it wears its scholarship so lightly, of its academic weight and rigour there can be no doubt. It is particularly well referenced and indexed and the full descriptions of each part in the Contents section also offer both an alternative index to identify each specific stage of the life and, when read from beginning to end, a precis of the life so ably described. Titles such as “Who am I?” (Part VI), “Cambridge – The glittering prize” (Part VIII) and “Academic apotheosis and swansong” (Part XIV) capture the tone of his approach.

They also have an emphatic poetry of their own; to quote in full, for example, the shortest entry:

“Part II: Oxford

*The road to academic failure – Falling
in love with textual criticism –
Housman, Jackson and Pollard”*

While a thorough and intimate use of the letters form one strand of the text, references to the poetry, albeit less frequent, give it a strength by providing a contrary direction. In his disarming epilogue, Vincent writes that the poetry,

“...speaks eloquently of the painful mutability of human relationships, and speaks in a confronting yet comforting way about the inevitability of death, a subject contemporary man seeks generally to avoid.”

Vincent’s own eloquence in expressing the tension within the poetry through the opposition of “confronting yet comforting” is typical of his enchanting written style.

Once again, by quoting one example, the use of references to the poetry in the text can be ably illustrated. In Part XII Last Things, in the section entitled *3 May 1931: Sophie Becker dies*, Vincent explores with considerable sensitivity the influence that Sophie Becker may have had on the young Housman in general and on his poetry in particular. He begins by quoting and then exploring a reference from Grant Richards’ *Housman 1897 – 1936* where Richards disputes Withers’ account of Housman’s “outburst at Souldern” which might be interpreted as emanating from “some form of profound inner conflict” as AEH came to terms with the tension between his feelings for Miss Becker and those for Moses Jackson. Vincent stands back and presents the different points of view with admirable objectivity, before moving forward to modern scholarship with his reference to Linda Hart’s thought-provoking suggestion, quoted in Jeremy Bourne’s ‘Housman and Heine’, that *Oh see how thick the gold cup flowers (ASL V)* may be a poem influenced by Sophie Becker. Hart writes,

“The more I read *ASL V*, the more I think it had to be written by a young man who had known at first -hand about adolescent love for an older woman.”

Vincent then asserts simply, “The first and last stanzas of the poem say it all:” before quoting the relevant stanzas. The sensitivity and understanding of his approach can be seen in his comment on those stanzas which follows:

“This poem implies an alternative and more prosaic, albeit realistic, version of Housman’s relationship with Sophie Becker, and one that requires a straightforward reading of her ‘Dear boy’ and ‘Your affectionate friend’ salutations. This poem is a realistic report of amiable controlled romanticism: parting prompts no expressions of pain.”

This calm, scholarly and common-sense approach to aspects of AEH’s life and works which have been portrayed in far more melodramatic or sensationalised ways by other biographers is a further testament to the value of this biography.

In the Epilogue we also read a powerful expression of the importance of AEH’s understanding of the pain of many aspects of a hidden life which still have an important relevance today.

“When he voices his outrage at the laws of God and Man which deny him the freedom to be as he was made, he speaks to one of today’s most threatening problems
– the still lethal effects of intolerance.”

It is in his use of the word “lethal” that Vincent’s precision with language is once again so clearly exemplified – whether it is the abhorrent public slaughter of the innocent through political or religious bigotry or the tragic private suicide of an individual who, like Housman’s Woolwich gentleman Cadet, could not face the shame of public disgrace; something all the more immediate, intrusive and unavoidable in our modern world when seen in the stark light of world-wide social media.

Housman could only publicly express the pain and injustice so keenly felt in his own life from behind the mask of poetry; in his work, Edgar Vincent throws the full light of understanding onto that life in a carefully crafted, rigorously scholarly and thoroughly engaging biography.

Biographies of Contributors

Andrew Breeze, FSA, FRHistS, PhD, was born in 1954 and has taught at the University of Navarre since 1987. Married with six children, he is the author of *The Mary of the Celts* (2008) and *The Origins of the 'Four Branches of the Mabinogi'* (2009), as well as over seven hundred academic papers and reviews. Email: abreeze@unav.es

Julian Hunt is the younger son of Joseph Hunt, co-founder of the Housman Society. He was educated at King Edward's Five Ways School, Birmingham, and joined the staff of Birmingham Reference Library in 1968. His first book, *Arriving at Dinas Mawddwy*, dealing with the impact of an English landlord on a Welsh village, was published in 1973. In 1976, he became Local Studies Librarian in Oldham, Lancashire. He moved to Buckinghamshire County Library in 1988, and has written *Buckinghamshire's Favourite Churches* for the local Historic Churches Trust and several histories of Buckinghamshire towns. He published his first Worcestershire book, *A History of Halesowen*, in 2004, and is now working on a history of Bromsgrove. Email: mailto:julianmhunt@btinternet.com

Andrew Maund is Head of English at The King's School, Worcester and currently Vice-Chairman of the Society. Email: amaund167@sky.com

Darrell Sutton (D.Min) resides in Red Cloud, Nebraska (USA) where he oversees multiple parishes. He writes poetry and publishes on biblical topics and classical themes. He regularly reviews literature in his academic review-bulletin *The Ds Commentary on Books*. Email: dssemitica@hotmail.com

The Housman Society and Journal

MEMBERSHIP

The Housman Society was founded in 1973, its main purpose being to bring together all those interested in the lives and works of the Housman family and to generate interest in literature and poetry. The subscription year starts on 1st May and the current annual subscriptions are:

Single Membership (UK)	£15.00
Double Membership (UK)	£17.50*
Single Membership - under 23	£5.00
Overseas Single Membership	£20.00
Overseas Double Membership	£25.00*

* Carries voting rights and gives tickets for events at members' rates to both parties, but one set of correspondence and one Journal is sent to one address.

Members are encouraged to pay their annual subscriptions by Banker's Order and sign a Gift Aid declaration. All membership correspondence should be addressed to the Treasurer, Peter Sisley, Ladywood Cottage, Baveney Wood, Cleobury Mortimer DY14 8HZ.

THE JOURNAL The Journal, which is published annually and sent free to members, exists for the publication of critical researches related to the poetry, prose and classical scholarship of A.E. Housman and the works of other members of his family, and for the review of books concerned with the same. It also exists for the publication of documentary evidence relating to the family. The 2019 Journal will be published in December of that year. Articles intended for publication, or books for review, should be sent to **Derek Littlewood, School of English, Birmingham City University, The Curzon Building, 4 Cardigan Street, Birmingham B4 7BD** If possible please send as an attachment to an e-mail, preferably in Microsoft Word, to derek.littlewood@ac.uk. All quotations in articles intended for publication must be cleared for copyright, and

The Journal is on sale to the public at £9.50 in the UK and £10.50 overseas. All these prices include postage and packing, surface mail in the case of overseas orders. For copies please contact Mrs Valerie Richardson, 1 Warwick Hall Gardens, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 2AU.

OVERSEAS REMITTANCES

Payments may be made to The Housman Society by going to the Paypal account using Kate Shaw's email address kate@shaw-line.com

Otherwise payment is possible by £ sterling drafts or money orders, but as exchange costs levied on other currencies are high, £6.00 should be added to all prices quoted before calculating the non-£ sterling equivalent.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Those submitting articles for publication should observe the following conventions:

Articles submitted to the journal are much preferred in digital form (ideally in

Microsoft Word format using Times New Roman font 11 point for the body and double-spaced throughout and ideally as camera-ready copy sized to A5 with narrow margins) and should be sent either as an attachment to the editor's email address or as a file on a CD-Rom to the editor's postal address (as above). If submission is only possible in hard copy, articles must be typed, double-spaced and paginated. Italic, which should be employed for titles of books and articles, and for quotations and words in languages other than English, is indicated in typescript only by underlining. Please use italics in digital files. Quotations from other languages, from whatever source, should be enclosed within single inverted commas; quotations should be enclosed within double inverted commas. Greek quotations may be included in articles: if submitted digitally, contributors are asked to state the Greek font they have used; if in hard copy, Greek should be written clearly by hand.

Lines of poetry quoted within a sentence should be indicated by the siglum |: e.g., I to my perils | Of cheat and charmer | Came clad in armour | By stars benign.

Numbers of poems, where appropriate, should be in upper case Roman numerals: e.g., ASL II (not ASL ii). Authors are reminded that the Editor reserves the right to edit and his decision is final.

COPYRIGHT

All material submitted for publication must be fully cleared, and accompanied by copies of the correspondence giving proof of this. These notes may be of help to intending contributors.

1. A.E. Housman

Copyright in the author's poems expired in 2006 but any queries regarding the writings of A.E. Housman should be addressed to his estate which is represented by the Society of Authors, 84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB – www.societyofauthors.org. Works published during Housman's lifetime are now in the public domain in most parts of the world (though some material in this category remains protected in the USA). Other categories of work including all unpublished and certain posthumously published material remains fully protected by copyright, and permission to quote from such material must be sought from the Society of Authors and permissions fees paid if appropriate. Attention is drawn to the ownership of letters. The physical material of a letter by A.E. Housman is owned by the recipient, his/her heirs or anyone to whom the letter may have been sold (e.g. a university or library). Copyright in the content of the letter however belongs to the A.E. Housman estate and the ownership of an unpublished A.E. Housman letter does not confer the right to publish it in whole or part. These notes are intended to give an outline of the situation only. Advice on the copyright status of specific works and general guidance on copyright matters in A.E. Housman's work should be sought from the Society of Authors 020 7370 9808 – [<estates@ societyofauthors.org>](mailto:estates@societyofauthors.org).

2. Clemence Housman

The literary executor until her death in 1984 was Ethel Mannin. The Society still has no information about who is now the lawful owner of the copyright of Clemence Housman.

3. Katharine E. Symons (née Housman)

The copyright of her writing is owned by The Housman Society.

4. Laurence Housman

The copyright of his writing is owned by Random House UK Ltd., 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. Please note that letters to any of the owners of copyright should enclose a stamped addressed envelope or International Reply Coupons if posted from abroad.

THE HOUSMAN SOCIETY JOURNAL 2018

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of The Housman Society. The views expressed in this Journal are the views of the authors and not necessarily those of The Housman Society or the Editor.

THE SOCIETY'S WEBSITE

The Hypertext Housman

The Society's website address usually comes up at the top of the list if "Housman Society" is typed into Google. The actual address is www.housman-society.co.uk and recent Newsletters and Journals are now available to view on the site or download. Andrew Maund's Hypertext

– *A Shropshire Lad* Annotated – is available from the home page by clicking on "The Hypertext Housman" which is in a box under the heading "NEW".