



# NEWSLETTER

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## Thought-provoking 'Name & Nature' lecture from Richard Perceval Graves

**Andrew Maund reports on this year's Housman Lecture at Hay Festival of Literature, given by Richard Perceval Graves to a sold out Elmley Foundation Dream Stage on Tuesday 1st June.**

Members of the Society approached this year's Housman Lecture at Hay with more than usually high expectations. Not only was our speaker this year the highly acclaimed author of *A. E. Housman: The Scholar Poet*, which many hold to be the most comprehensive biography, but he had also delivered a tour-de-force at the Society Weekend the previous autumn, providing for many the intellectual highlight of that event. We were not to be disappointed by this next offering.

It was to be, we were told, a lecture in nine parts. Our speaker began with a reference to 1933, when Housman delivered the original and highly controversial *Name and Nature of Poetry* lecture to a full audience at the Senate House in Cambridge. Bearing in mind the fact that the work of very few poets outlives their creator, Perceval Graves felt it was particularly appropriate that the enduring work of A.E.H. should be celebrated each year at the Hay Festival. His starting point in this year's celebration was a reminder of why A.E.H. had caused such controversy, with his assertion that poetry's function was not to transmit thought but to transfuse emotion, which many of the contemporary audience saw as a confirmation of their own prejudice against the new poetry of the twenties and thirties. This emotional nature of poetry, along with the immediate response from the reader, which is physical rather than intellectual, is captured in the well-known reference to his morning's shave and our speaker read that reference with a delightfully witty sense of its author. The ability to inform and to entertain with such a mix of thought-provoking and stimulating academic discussion alongside entertaining readings of the prose writings and inspiring and moving readings of poetry were to be the hallmarks of the lecture and the essence of its delight.

Perceval Graves then took a brief moment to confirm his



own credentials to speak – with reference to *The Scholar Poet* – and recalled some of the luminaries who had delivered previous Housman Lectures at Hay. Applying Aristotle's advice from the *Politics* that to appreciate the ability of professional musicians one must have learned just enough about playing music oneself, he referred to his own upbringing, immersed in rhythm and rhyme by his family, and his own writing of poetry; most of this was published in school magazines, where, in his opinion, it deserved to remain! However, besides writing the biography of Housman, he had also written those of Richard Hughes, John Cowper Powys and of his late uncle, Robert Graves.

Our speaker then moved to discuss the Name of Poetry. This, he asserted, had been besmirched by the action of Literary Critics, but he recalled Wordsworth's definition of poetry as, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings...emotions recollected in tranquillity," and Coleridge's "best words in the best order", emphasising that both were men of discrimination, when that word suggested positive rather than negative intentions. He then recalled a holiday argument with a young man who worked in a major London gallery and whom Perceval Graves gave the sobriquet "Tate". Tate had insisted that an artist is anyone who says he is an artist, opposing Graves' assertion that an artist is one whose work is appreciated by discriminating onlookers. To prove the idiocy of Tate's idea, Graves had then declared himself an artist, before piling terrace furniture in haphazard fashion as an "oeuvre" – an early foretaste of the unmade beds, pickled animals and diamond-studded skulls of such modern acclaim. There is a need, in criticism as well as morality, to maintain absolute values. As such, all true poetry, according to our speaker, has an enduring quality and, even if not appreciated fully when it is written, should speak to us across the years. As an example, he referred to the work of Wilfred

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Owen, once again demonstrating his felicity with verse as he read, *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, and reminding us that Owen's work was first recognised by fellow poets, as is so often the fact; in this case, by Sassoon and Graves.

Our speaker then pointed out that it would be quite irrational to hold an inherent prejudice against modern poetry, since all poetry must perforce be "modern" before it can become "timeless" – in this context, he quoted the work of two poets from his boyhood's constant literary companions, the Faber Books of Modern and Twentieth Century Verse: Eliot's *Journey of the Magi* and Hughes' *Thrushes*.



He also read a little of the work of Michael Donaghy and Peter Reading, both his near-contemporaries, as well as Don Paterson (which "..... has its weak moments on the page but sounds wonderful when read aloud.....") and Greta Stoddart.

In the fifth section of his lecture, "Poets, Poetry and Verse", he considered the general rules that poets are born, not made, and that one man's poetry is another's verse and a third reader's doggerel – with some poets (Betjeman was mentioned as one example) occupying a hinterland between these areas. One useful development of this idea was that, while verse can be written to order, poetry cannot.

The sixth part of the lecture, subtitled "Early Poetic Education" had, our speaker admitted, started as a "self-indulgent ramble". We were reminded that many of us were compelled at school to learn poems by heart, providing us with life-long treasures from Blake, Byron, Coleridge, de la Mare or Chesterton. This particular English teacher has taken to heart his sincere request to reintroduce the rote learning of poetry; parents and grandparents were encouraged to use the rhythm of such great poetry as Tennyson's "*Lotus Eaters*" for its soporific effects. Having sown these seeds, he then asserted that this whole section had in the end been scrapped – how fortunate we were then, that he was clearly working from an earlier draft of his notes!

In the seventh section, he drew comparisons between religion and poetry – celebrating the eternal values of beauty, truth and love as well as consoling us in "the dark and cloudy day". Poetry, like religion, gives a glimpse of the world beyond the experience of our everyday lives, beyond a strictly material world. This point was driven home with extracts from Swinburne and Tennyson, once again beautifully read.

The eighth section of the lecture explored at fascinating length

Robert Graves' view of the Nature of Poetry. This began with a evocation of the forty-eight year old poet's vision that the obvious material world is only a small part of a greater reality, more spiritual than material but nevertheless filled with numerous creative and destructive forces to which men, in an attempt to establish their rightful place, give the names of gods and goddesses.

Drawing on his background of study of the Classical and Ancient worlds, Graves then wrote *The Golden Fleece*, revealing his choice of the cult of the Triple Goddess, a living reality but with power "circumscribed by the condition of her worshippers", just as the artist is recognised only after the appreciation of his discriminating audience. Graves drew together this Triple Goddess with the Muse or source of poetic inspiration, through the pervading influence of primitive moon-worship, explored at length in the work originally titled *The Roebuck in the Thicket* that became *The White Goddess*. The intoxicating power of the muse upon the poet was recognised in such works as Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. Nevertheless, the worship of the feminine, of the goddess, retained a natural balance with the world which humankind had replaced with that of male gods and a resulting terrible, destructive power. That theme of the relations of the male and female force, of man and woman, was properly "the main theme of poetry".

**Sold Out**

Event 195 – Green Dragons Den 1

Event HF42 – Easy Peasy Cookery School

Event HF121 – Guitar Effects Workshop

Event 200 – Richard Perceval Graves

In his final section, Perceval Graves returned to Housman, considering his place in 2010. Alfred Housman was, in his opinion, a man truly inspired. He has always stood high in the opinion of other poets, of intellectuals and of so many who simply appreciate poetry. His personal grief at ill-starred love, which left him determined never to be vulnerable again, was also transfused into his enduring poetry, most particularly in *Last Poems*. It was with an impassioned and moving reading of *Last Poems XL* that our speaker brought his wide-ranging and thought-provoking lecture to an end, exploring the many tunes that the enchantress plays to us all of "heartless, witless nature".

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# 25th Anniversary of the Unveiling of A.E.H.'s Statue in Bromsgrove

*The Commemoration of A.E. Housman's birth in Bromsgrove's High Street on 26th March was another lively occasion at which Philip Bowen, Second Master at Bromsgrove School, was the Guest of the Day.*

In welcoming the guests Chairman Jim Page told another large gathering that it was exactly 25 years since the Duke of Westminster unveiled the statue as the heart of the plan to pedestrianise the High Street. He said it had not been easy raising the £25,000 needed but, under the auspices of the Council, a Trust, led by his predecessor John Pugh, was formed and the money was eventually raised. One of those present was Enoch Powell and the moment the statue was unveiled he whispered to his neighbour, "That's not the Housman I knew". The Chairman continued:



*Chris Scurrrell (Chairman of Bromsgrove DC), Simon Cupitt (Bailiff), Jim Page & Philip Bowen*

I am not quite old enough to have known A.E. Housman personally, but from the photographs I have seen perhaps it does not quite catch the strength of the man. Anyway regardless of how good a likeness it is, its presence has been an asset to the town in providing a focal point as successive Councils have battled to keep the High Street alive. As our visitors will see we now have market traders here every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday and this is the moment to congratulate one of these traders, our splendid fish man, Vic, who this year celebrated his 29th year of bringing fresh fish to Bromsgrove from Humberside.



So Vic's 29 years of coming to Bromsgrove is my second anniversary. The third is our Arts Centre, Artrix, which in a month's time is celebrating its fifth

birthday. Some people do not realise just what an active arts community Bromsgrove has and the building of Artrix, after some 30 years of lobbying, has not only been a great asset to the town but a real success story. You cannot run such an arts centre these days without subsidy and I think we would all like to congratulate the Council on not wavering in its support of it over the first five years. During our Society Weekend last October we held a top class concert of song settings of Housman there and it was extremely rewarding to see an audience that had come from far and wide appreciating this wonderful facility.

In welcoming Philip Bowen as Guest of the Day, Jim Page commented on how important the link with Housman and the school was. Housman won a scholarship in 1870 and as a result of his excellent classical education there, went on to win a scholarship to St John's College Oxford. He continued:

But Housman had sisters and did they get the same chance? No, of course not. One of them, Clemence, went London with her brother Laurence when 18 and became involved in the suffragette movement, even going to prison in the process. And this is the moment to welcome as our guests today two of the prospective candidates for the forthcoming parliamentary election, because it is so easy to take democracy for granted and forget the battles that these suffragettes fought. We published a book about Clemence's life last year and it tells a fascinating story. Do borrow a copy from the library or buy one at the lunch!

Philip Bowen read three well chosen Housman poems and paid tribute to the good work that the Society did in keeping the name of Housman alive. Lunch followed in Housman Hall and afterwards Elizabeth Harris, from North Bromsgrove High School, the winner of last year's Senior Poetry Reading Competition, read Housman's *The True Lover* and concluded with a hilarious rendering of Spike Milligan's *ABC*.

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# Lucretius, or not Lucretius – That was the Question

**David Butterfield, who takes over as Editor of the Society's Journal this year, was a very welcome visitor at the Society's AGM, held at 80 New Road on 3rd March 2010. Linda Hart summarises his lecture.**

David Butterfield received an enthusiastic welcome from the two dozen members attending the society's AGM in March, and that was before he had even begun his lecture. This was because David had just taken on the hugely important task of editing the Housman Society Journal. But another reason for the warm welcome is that David appears to be (and as we learned from his talk actually is) several decades younger than most members.

If the society is going to continue to thrive it will need new young members like him.

David is the W.H.D. Rouse Research Fellow at Christ's College, Cambridge, and he addressed the AGM on the subject of 'Housman from a Classicist's Perspective'. He began with a personal account of how he first encountered Housman as a poet at Lancaster Royal Grammar School in the 1990s. However, it was not until university that he became aware of A.E.H. the classicist. It was brave of him to reveal that it was almost a year before he realized that the two very different Housmans he had encountered – first, in *A Shropshire Lad* and then in the *apparatus criticus* of Latin and Greek texts – were in fact the same man. I was reminded of the opening scene in Tom Stoppard's play, *The Invention of Love*, in which the ferryman Charon, about to row A.E.H. across the Styx, is concerned that his second passenger has not turned up. He explains to Housman that he has instructions to meet "a poet and a scholar". "I think that must be me," Housman responds.

David acknowledged that as far as the Society went, he was in a small minority: most members were interested in Housman because of his poetry, whereas David was primarily interested in him because of his contribution to Classical scholarship. In turning from his own life to Housman's, David raised an interesting question that has probably never occurred to those of us who come to Housman because of the poetry: why did he choose to devote most of his scholarly life to Manilius when, at first glance, Lucretius would have been a much more logical and sensible choice for him?

Little is known about the Roman poet Lucretius (c.96-c.55BC), who wrote a long poem titled *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of Things*, which consists of over 7,000 stanzas). Its aim was to teach fellow Romans about the doctrines of Epicureanism and convert them to this controversial school. The Epicurean philosophical system was based primarily upon the laws of



David Butterfield with Derek Shorthouse and Jeremy Bourne

physics, most especially the view that everything that exists is made out of atoms. Since humans are simply a physical union of atoms, the dissolution of that structure at death brings an end of existence. From this it follows that life is the only span of existence an individual has, and we should therefore maximise our own pleasures during that period; there is no Afterlife to long for or fear.

The hedonism propounded by Epicurus and his followers regarded true pleasure as the complete removal of pain – not today's notion of the pleasures associated with food or sex. Epicureans were also controversial in the field of theology, for although they accepted that the various Gods of the Pantheon existed, they regarded worship and sacrifice as entirely irrelevant and futile because the Gods did not interfere in the affairs of the human world. Epicureanism was thus not an especially popular religion in Classical Rome but Lucretius was fervent in his desire to spread its doctrines more widely.

Many teachings of the Epicureans would have appealed to Housman, along with the idea (clearly embraced by Lucretius) that truth and knowledge were beautiful and valuable in themselves, not as a means to an end. So why, asked David, did A.E.H. not engage more with Lucretius and his *De rerum natura*? Instead, Housman spent 30 years working on Manilius – not only a much inferior poet to Lucretius but also an adherent of Stoicism, whose views would have been less congenial to Housman.

A possible answer might lie in the scholarly accomplishments of the more recent past regarding Lucretius and Manilius. David speculated that because Karl Lachmann and Hugh Munro, respectively the greatest German and British Latinists of the nineteenth century, had recently (1850-73) produced major works on Lucretius, a mixture of respect and *aporia* (doubt, timidity) held Housman back. Despite their faults, the works of Lachmann and Munro were so ground-breaking that to produce a full-scale commentary on Lucretius would have been to go head-to-head against two of the editions and commentaries Housman respected the most. Similarly, such great advances were made by these two in the field of textual criticism, that the prospects for Housman's own input in this area were very significantly diminished, perhaps so much so that he looked for another subject.



## Housman's First Love?

*Jim Armstrong reports on Linda Hart's lecture given in The Assembly Rooms, Ludlow, after the Commemoration ceremony at St Laurence's.*

Housman worked at the most scientific end of the field of Classics. Much like a scientist, he was continually searching for the truth. In editing the *Astronomica* of Manilius the only question for Housman was: what exactly did he write before the text became corrupt? With Housman there was no explication or analysis of the text beyond what impinged upon establishing the correct reading; he wrote nothing about its literary value. "The exercise was hardcore textual criticism for him," said David, "although this involved a remarkable amount of astronomical and astrological knowledge."

We were most interested to learn that David plans in his career to follow in Housman's footsteps by devoting himself to textual criticism. Given the enthusiasm that he had just displayed when talking about Lucretius, it was no surprise to learn that *De rerum natura* is the work he intends to focus on.

David's talk received enthusiastic and prolonged applause from the Housman Society members present. In one fell swoop, he had gone from being an unknown outsider to an admired and approachable insider.

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– Watson, Page, Graves, Richards – observations and opinions from memoirs by Alfred's brother Laurence, his Cambridge friend Dr. Percy Withers, and others, letters by family, friends, and Housman himself, heavily inscribed visitors' books from Woodchester House, Woodchester census returns and municipal records in Ingelheim, Germany (Sophie's birthplace), and even photographs of the house in Germany where Sophie was living at the age of 77, when Housman had his publisher send her a copy of his *Last Poems*. The only thing missing are letters from Housman to Sophie – none has surfaced and none is ever likely to.

No review can do justice to the fascinating story that emerges from Linda Hart's lecture, nor to the persuasiveness of her accumulated factual evidence, her logical reasoning, and her modestly offered hypothesis: "I want to conjecture that after Sophie Becker he [Housman] fell in love not so much with Moses Jackson, but with loving someone from whom he had to hide his feelings. He had learned, when coping with his mother's death and with his feelings for Sophie, to repress his will, and that became his *modus operandi*."

*James Armstrong is Professor Emeritus of English at Fullerton College in southern California. He has published two college textbooks, many articles on Robert Frost and Henry David Thoreau, a novel and a biography.*

A "dark lady," whether of Shakespeare's sonnets or elsewhere, seldom has a name, but Linda Hart tells us that A. E. Housman's probable first love was an older woman, witty, charming, and compassionate, about whom we know quite a bit – or at least we do now, since Linda's lecture to the Housman Society in April entitled "Sophie Becker – Housman's Dark Lady?"

Linda's lecture was distinguished by its remarkable investigative scholarship, its imaginative empathy for its subjects, and its simultaneous modesty and daring. But beyond these qualities, I think what may have most impressed many of her listeners, and won them over, was her passionate devotion to her investigations and the energy and persistence with which she pursued them. The thesis that she humbly advances is that the widely accepted notion of Housman's "lifelong and hopeless devotion to Moses Jackson" may need to be reconsidered in light of evidence that Housman's other, and first, and also lifelong love was for a German woman 14 years older than he, whom he met when she was governess to the children of the Wise family, the Housman family's long-time friends at Woodchester House in Gloucestershire.



During numerous visits to Woodchester, the young Alfred Housman probably learned some German from Sophie Becker, including a taste for the poems of Heinrich Heine, observed or shared in the family's "theatrical performances" in which Sophie took part. Later on he would ask the Wises for news of her, and she would send him gifts (a pair of socks she knitted when he was at Oxford).

The traumatic event that Linda believes may have forged the lifelong bond of Alfred's gratitude, admiration, and even sexual desire toward Sophie was the death of his mother at home in Bromsgrove while he was visiting at Woodchester in March of 1871, when he was just 12 years old. Alfred was ordered by a letter from home to stay at Woodchester for a week, thereby missing his mother's funeral. The grief, the desolation and isolation he must have experienced, Linda is convinced, was assuaged by the kind ministrations of the 26-year-old Sophie to the young and vulnerable visitor in the household.

The evidence with which Linda buttresses her theory of Housman's first love is astonishing in its breadth and depth. It includes details from all the familiar Housman biographies

*continued in the adjacent column*

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# Ave Atque Vale

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

by Andrew R.N. Jackson

In 1887 A.E. Housman's closest friend, Moses Jackson, left England to take up a position as principal of the newly formed D.J. Sind Science College in Karachi, India, a move that broke A.E.H.'s heart. A.E.H. had become increasingly attracted to the athletic and charismatic Moses, since they had met at Oxford as undergraduates. That attraction grew steadily over the following eight years, to become a one-sided longing that finally became unbearable to A.E.H., causing him to storm out of the accommodation that he shared with Moses and his brother, Adalbert and find an escape from his lonely misery in writing *A Shropshire Lad*. A.E.H. expressed his feelings of loss and abandonment on Moses' departure for India in *Additional Poems*, published after his death.

He would not stay for me; and who can wonder?  
He would not stay for me to stand and gaze.  
I shook his hand and tore my heart in sunder  
And went with half my life about my ways.

The finality of his loss became apparent two years later when Moses returned on leave from India to marry Rosa Julia Chambers, a young widow and the daughter of his London landlord.

For the next 20 years, A.E.H. saw Moses only on the rare occasions when he visited England on leave. Time and occasional letters between the two helped partially to heal the friendship although, perhaps to avoid giving A.E.H. false hope, Moses seemed to deliberately keep A.E.H. at arm's length.

In 1910 Moses resigned from the Indian Colonial Service and returned to England. A.E.H., by that time about to take up the Chair of Latin at Cambridge, must have been ecstatic at the return of his friend and did everything in his power to assist Moses in his search for a suitable post, both at universities and in civil administrations, but to no avail.

About a year after his return, Moses, disillusioned by his failure to find a suitable position, decided to strike out on his own. He moved with Rosa and three of his four sons to British Columbia, Canada; his eldest son remained in England, studying medicine at Cambridge. Moses bought a piece of forested land east of Vancouver, partly financed by a loan from Housman. With the help of his sons, he carved out a dairy farm from the forests but, hit by a series of events beyond his control, the venture became a losing battle almost from the start. Soon after he took possession of the farm, Canada slipped into a severe economic recession. A bad drought set back the farm in 1914 and immediately afterwards the First World War erupted causing the cost of fertilizer to

skyrocket. Three of Moses' four sons volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force and were sent to the Western Front; his youngest son, my father, was just 14 at the time and too young to enlist, and he remained the sole help on the farm. With large numbers of men away in Europe, the dairy industry was hard hit. The accumulated strain started to take its toll on Moses' health and he developed anaemia, probably a symptom of the early stages of the stomach cancer that was eventually to kill him.



*The Jackson family in Godalming circa 1907. From left to right: Gerald, Moses, Rupert, Rosa, Hector, Oscar*

Against all odds, all three of the Jackson sons survived the trench warfare; but within months of returning, the eldest son in Canada, Hector, was killed when he was hit by a drunken taxi driver while cycling home one night from a symphony performance in Vancouver. Moses was devastated by his death and his latent stomach cancer took firm hold.

By the middle of 1922, it was obvious that Moses was declining fast. A.E.H., who had kept in touch through letters during the 11 years since Moses moved to Canada, was moved to compile *Last Poems*, his second and final compilation of poetry during his lifetime. Many of the poems contain oblique references to his love for Moses. He rushed to have it published and sent a copy to Moses with a covering letter, written in an artificially cheerful style, which included the following passage.

Of this new book there were printed 4,000 copies for a first edition, which were all ordered by the booksellers before publication, so there is already a 2nd edition in the press. It is now 11 o'clock in the morning, and I hear that the Cambridge shops are sold out. Please to realize therefore,

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with fear and respect, that I am an eminent bloke; though I would much rather have followed you around the world and blacked your boots ..... The eminent poet would willingly have exchanged his fame and position for the chance of following his correspondent, in the humblest capacity, to the farthest corners of the earth.

Moses received the copy of *Last Poems* in November 1922, but was admitted to hospital in Vancouver immediately afterwards. He replied to Housman from his hospital bed, writing with a shaky hand and using a blunt hospital-supplied pencil. In spite of his unsure hand, Moses' mind was obviously still sharp and he unmercifully applied the rapier wit that the two friends used in their correspondence.

Bed 4, Ward T,  
General Hospital,  
Vancouver, B.C.  
23 Nov., 1922

My dear old Hous,

I got your letter and your egregious poems at home about a fortnight ago. I thought of heaping sarcasms on your brain products, as usual, but some of the pieces are good enough to redeem the rest. The *Times* critique was good, and its selections sensible, but the *Observer*, which the faithful Ward sent me, was still better. I hoped to see the *Spectator*, but it has not been sent along. The *Morning Post* is about the only other paper to count. The old woman's *D. Telegraph* and the screamingly radical press, with bosh-writers like that A.G. Gardiner, don't count.

You certainly know how to end the book. But who is going to labour at collecting your Juvenilia from the "Round Table" & elsewhere, and to exploit acute inaccuracies about them in the not far distant future? That thing that you published in some aesthetic magazine seems to me, in its disregard of all politeness towards possibilities in the unknown future, seems to me [*sic*] to contain nearly half the philosophy of your two books. You will be surprised at my remembering them so nearly, if I am not quite word-perfect.

#### Atque et Vale

Goodnight. Ensured release,  
Imperishable peace,  
Have these for yours  
While earth's foundations stand,  
And sky and sea and land  
And Heaven endures.

When Earth's foundations flee  
Nor sky, nor land, nor sea  
At all is found  
Content you, let them burn,  
It is not your concern.  
Sleep on, sleep sound!

It wants the poet to punctuate it. It deserved a place in the Shropshire Lad! It was the condensation of so much

meaning into a few words – furiously unorthodox though it might be, that struck me.

Your "Mercenary Army" bit is as skilful as anything in the book. It was a good deal quoted out here during the War.

Here it is the 30th. No haggis, No whiskey. No nuthink.

The great Ward informs me that your sales had gone up to 17,000 at the time of writing. Your ' 'Tis little luck that I have had' can have no reference personal to the poet.

I have also seen your portrait in 'Punch'. Ridiculous as it may appear, there is just a faint indication of the shape of your head, and just a hint of an expression that I have seen on your mug once in a way. I suppose your boots are supposed to harmonise with the bucolic heroes you often immortalize, sleeping off their beer in lovely muck.

1 Dec. I am going on fairly well in this hospital, but I will come out of it pretty soon now, well or ill, and finances won't run to these expenses. It is funny to be "land-poor", with severe depression in agricultural values. I have practically all that I originally paid £3,000 for in cash – land and stock etc. with lots of improvements, yet cannot sell or even borrow £200 from a bank. The boys all hang together well, but it is an outrage for an older generation to weaken the younger.

We shan't go on at Applegarth as hitherto. The missus dislikes it. I dislike anything else. I will sell the whole or part, or put on a temporary mortgage or something. What I want is a partner, honest and fond of farming. We could easily make the place produce more than it has ever done. There must be lots who would do, if only I knew them.

Land sells worse now than ever. Most of the returned soldiers have gone out of their little lots, and relinquished their land to Govt., with the results that we land-owners have Govt. as dealers in ahead of us. Doubtless land will get up again in time, and then everyone will tumble in to buy. The correct thing to do is to wait, if one can. If I were a capitalist I would buy now. The disgusting thing is the way I have let you and Ward down. I will return what I can, when anything comes in, but things shape up for my dying a hopeless bankrupt. Probably the sooner the better as I shall never return to my old self, and at the moment am just a burden to everybody. I apologise in dust and ashes.

I haven't your last letter here, but remember an extraordinary exhibition about blacking boots! My most presentable boots are brown, requiring no blacking Lazy old chap. At home I wear boots of



Moses Jackson as Principal of the Dayaram Jethmal Sind Science College in Karachi circa 1900

canvas & rubber composition, known as snagproof, as your choice is for an absolute sinecure. But it would be fine to see you here, though no chance of the old amenities. No 15-mile walks to a good pub to consume old ribs of beef 10" thick, pickled walnuts, and a quart of bitter, with a good tub of cream, & rich cheese to finish. None of that in this beastly land, with their infernal prohibition.

G.W. Ellis stayed with us for some time a year ago. He had farmed in Alberta. He is rather a slacker, but well up in St. John's recollections, so we could talk about many things.

Oscar, Bachelor of Applied Science, is now assaying in the big smelter at Trail, B.C. Gerald ran a motor boat up the coast as an Assistant Fire Ranger for the Forest Dept. in the Summer Vacation. He did so well that they promise him a better job for next summer, but he thinks he will go as a "mucker" or labourer in the Britannia Mine, just for experience. He is going strong at the Univ. That institution has grown wonderfully.

I have seen the *Spectator* review of your emanations. The second paragraph seems to the point, some others less so. The last part of this musical thing from the *Sunday Times* seems largely rot. I did not see the review by Gosse the week before. If you read all the commentaries you must be pretty busy.

I hope your publisher will shoo the Americans off. While lying on my back here I have been exasperated to see how they publish well-known English books, curtailed with only a Yankee publisher's name on the title page, and make their ignorant readers think the author is A.Yank. I dislike the arrogant brutes.

Gerald will be up presently & will post this. So here is to continued luck. Printing "Jones of Jesus", "Tennyson in the Moated Grange" etc. may bring you in a fresh fortune at the right time. "First Poems".

Goodbye.

Yours very truly

M.J.J. Jackson

This was the last letter written by Moses to A.E.H.

At a later stage, A.E.H. carefully retraced in ink some of the faintly penciled portions of the letter, preserving his friend's handwriting.

*Part 2 of this article will cover A.E.H.'s letter in reply to Moses.*



## What's the Point of Counties?

A press release from the Royal Mail has decreed that postal addresses may soon no longer have county names on them, and county names are to be deleted from its postal database, which is called the Postcode Address File and lists every address in the UK. It is used by businesses and public bodies.

This announcement brought howls of dismay from those living in the country. City dwellers, however, were not so upset and greeted it as a "sensible move" meaning that one or two fewer lines would be needed on the address.

The debate centred on whether our link to counties was steadily being eroded and, if so, does it matter? For many an allegiance to a county cricket team was of vital importance, for others it was the loss of the English tradition of identifying oneself through a county that matters to those that live there within its boundaries.

The BBC's on-line News Magazine was quick to take up the story and quoted lines from Housman's *Bredon Hill*:

Here of a Sunday morning  
My love and I would lie,  
And see the coloured counties,  
And hear the larks so high

saying that for many the words from Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* poem epitomised Englishness. Apply Royal Mail sensibilities to the Housman poem and the title might change from *A Shropshire Lad* to the rather less romantic An SY8 Lad - SY8 being the postcode for Ludlow - home to Housman's grave.

## Terence

Terence, take a pinch of snuff,  
Coke's a stuff that's not for burning.  
Addled brains are bad enough  
Let alone addictive yearning.

Take a vacuous wheezing puff;  
Feel your queasy stomach churning.  
Aspirin, when feeling rough  
Quells the nausea returning.

Frozen bird was always tough;  
Better than cirrhotic liver.  
Terence, this is sinful stuff.  
Kick the habit altogether!

*John H Burman  
February 2010*



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## Geoffrey Hill wins Oxford Poetry Professorship

After months of controversy over other candidates, in July Geoffrey Hill won by an overwhelming majority the vote to become Oxford Professor of Poetry.

He was born in Bromsgrove and many of his poems hark back to those roots:

And here – and there too – I  
wish greatly to believe; that Bromsgrove  
was, and is, Goldengrove; that the Orchards  
of Syon stand as I once glimpsed them.



He was educated at Bromsgrove County High School (now North Bromsgrove High School), went on to Keble College, Oxford and through his career held academic posts at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and Boston University in America. He is now based in Cambridge and he has published more than a dozen books of poetry.

We are proud to have published a selection of his poems in our anthology, *Three Bromsgrove Poets*, which is still available from the Society at £7.50.

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### LP XXXVII

John Onions has written raising an intriguing suggestion of the inspiration behind A.E.H.'s *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries*:

“A little query came in my head recently about *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries*: Housman, we know, wrote it in September 1917, but it was only one of a number of public tributes in the autumn of 1917 to the original BEF. There was widespread press coverage on 31 October (when Housman's poem appeared in *The Times*) and a great commemorative celebration on 15th December at the Albert Hall. 31st October was the anniversary of the battle of Gheluvelt, the turning point of First Ypres. As was widely known, it was the Worcester regiment that made the decisive intervention that day. My query therefore is:

Was Housman consciously celebrating his own county's real Worcestershire Lads in the spirit of the fictional Shropshire ones? Presumably this is an unanswerable speculative question, but in case anyone knows any relevant details, I'd be fascinated to know.”

Responses via the Editor please.

## Miscellanea

● **The Ludlow Civic Society** programme includes a lecture by Clive Richardson, to be held on 9th March 2011, on “Till Ludlow Tower Shall Fall – Ludlow's Part in the First World War.” Clive Richardson is a historian, author and secretary of the Ludlow Historical Society. Non-members are welcome to attend for £3.00.

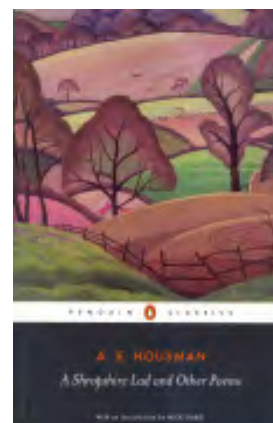
● Mansell David's one-man show, “**Take Desire Away**”, which was performed at the James Joyce Theatre in Dublin recently, received excellent reviews, one saying “..... Housman is an underrated prose writer, who wrote very wry, very funny and quite caustic letters ..... this succeeds partly because of the brilliant performance – partly because it's very polished and it's very effective and it's a very accomplished performance - but also because it strikes the balance between the various personality traits and the various skills that he had as both a poetry writer and a prose writer.”

● **John R. Williamson** writes to say that as a composer who has set most of Housman's shorter poems he considers one of his best to be *A Shropshire Lad VII*, ‘When smoke stood up from Ludlow’, which he has titled *The Ploughman*. It is currently being published by Brandon Music Ltd and appears on the disc ‘24 Housman Songs’ produced by Dunelm label some years ago.

● Hot on the heels of Mark Stone's Complete **Butterworth Songbook** comes a CD from Roderick Williams (who gave members a memorable recital of Housman settings at the Society Weekend in 2009) which contains similar repertoire. This issue comes from Naxos and is also first class – being excellent value at £5.99.

● **The Friends of Hughley Church** are delighted to tell us that they have received donations of £500 from the Allchurches Trust and £5,000 from the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust towards their refurbishment and renovation project. These donations trigger the Part 2 allocation from English Heritage and after a site meeting of representatives of the PCC, Friends of Hughley Church, Hook Mason (the project managing architects) English Heritage and the contractor, it was decided that work could begin. It is scheduled for completion on 17th December.

● Penguin Books has published a **revised edition of *Collected Poems*** under their Penguin Classics series. Priced at £8.99 it has a new cover and an introduction by Nick Laird. The edition has been revised by Archie Burnett and includes updated notes on the text and indexes of first lines and titles. The cover is *The Pattern of Winter* by Ethelbert White.



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# The Housman Society Book Exchange

In 1920 Joseph Thorp, acting as an agent for Claud Lovat Fraser, approached Grant Richards, Housman's publisher, with a proposal that an illustrated edition of *A Shropshire Lad* be produced. Housman allowed the attempt but rejected the illustrations with the words "To transpose into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century a book which begins with Queen Victoria's jubilee is the act of a rhinoceros. I should look a fool if I allowed the book to appear with these decorations".

And that might have been the end of the story but in 1924 The First Edition Club published the illustrations under the title of *Sixty Three Unpublished Designs* in a limited edition of 500 numbered copies. The illustrations appeared without Housman's poems but they were numbered in the same order as *A Shropshire Lad* so that anyone holding a copy of the illustrations in one hand and the poems in the other could follow the sequence. Still, Housman's copyright had not been infringed, so all was well. A little over seventy years later David Wishart of the Hayloft Press finally brought together the poems and the illustrations in a beautiful limited edition of *A Shropshire Lad* as Lovat Fraser, if not Housman, had intended. This book contains a wonderful Introduction by Kelsey Thornton which gives the full story of the marriage of the poems and the illustrations. The Book Exchange is pleased to offer both of these books for sale and is offering a special 20% discount as an incentive for anyone purchasing the pair.

Also in this issue are various other Housman rarities including The Green Horn Press limited edition of *A Morning with the Royal Family*, a copy of the *Order of Service for Housman's Funeral* and the Kegan Paul 1896 first edition of *A Shropshire Lad*.

I have mentioned before on these pages that only a small selection of Society stock can be shown on these pages but a number of members have pressed me into producing a more extensive listing which the Committee have agreed to print as an additional enclosure to the Newsletter posting. Please note that all material in the supplementary listing is priced to be post-free in the U.K. and a suitable allowance will be made on overseas orders.

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

## SALES LIST – SEPTEMBER 2010

Postage and Packing are additional to the prices quoted.

**BELL (Alan) [editor]. FIFTEEN LETTERS TO WALTER ASHBURNER.** The Tragara Press, Edinburgh, 1976. First edition. 24 pages. Blue paper wrappers. Ashburner was an academic lawyer, a Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford, a book collector and, like Housman, a gourmet. These letters were not featured in Maas. One of 125 numbered copies. Fine. £50

**CARTER (John). A.E. HOUSMAN. SELECTED PROSE.** Cambridge at the University Press, 1961. First edition. 12mo. 204 pages. Black cloth. Fine with a very good dust jacket. £30

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

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

**FRASER (Claud Lovat). SIXTY-THREE UNPUBLISHED DESIGNS.** The First Edition Club, London, No date (but 1924). First edition. 16mo. Unpaginated. One of 500 numbered copies. Cloth backed pattern boards in a design by Fraser. Very good. Please see the introductory text for the background information to this volume and note the *Shropshire Lad* offer. £80

**GOW (A.S.F.) A.E. Housman – A Sketch.** Macmillan, New York, 1936. First Edition. 8vo. 137 pages. A delightful sketch of Housman by a fellow professor, together with a comprehensive list of his writings and indexes to his classical papers. Bookplate otherwise near fine in similar jacket. £30

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

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

**HOLDEN (Alan) and BIRCH (Roy). A.E. HOUSMAN. A REASSESSMENT.** MacMillan, London, 2000. 8vo. 225 pages. Black cloth with dust jacket. A dozen essays on Housman have been brought together in this book, which although recently published is very difficult to acquire on the second-hand market. Bookplate otherwise fine. £50

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD.** Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co. Ltd., London, 1896. 12mo. 96 pages. Original parchment backed boards with paper spine label. The first edition. Carter and Sparrow 'A' label which is missing

about 50% of the words *Shropshire Lad*. Spine sunned and minor rubbing and bumping to edges. Minor browning to covers. Internally very good indeed with no signatures, markings or bookplates. One of about 350 copies issued in the English first edition. Overall very good. A rare opportunity to obtain a little piece of history at a reasonable cost. £1200

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD.** Thomas B Mosher, Portland, Maine, 1906. 12mo. 91 pages. The first Mosher edition printed on Van Gelder paper in an edition of 925 copies. Near fine but for bookplate in a damaged slipcase. £50

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD.** Mitchell Kennerley, New York, 1914. 32mo. Red cloth, top edge gilt. Printed in England and furnished with a cancel title page. Scarce. A clean fresh copy. Very good indeed. £50

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). THE NAME AND NATURE OF POETRY.** Cambridge University Press. 1933. First edition. 51 pages. Brown cloth. The text of the Leslie Stephen lecture which was delivered at Cambridge on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1933. Bookplate. Very good indeed. £30

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). SIX POEMS.** City of Birmingham School of Printing, 1937. 17 pages. Beige paper covers. Arranged and printed under the direction of Leonard Jay at the School and containing three wood engravings. Very rare. With a neat bookplate, otherwise near fine. £50

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD.** George G. Harrap & Co., London, 1940. 8vo. 99 pages. Brown canvas cloth, spine stamped 1940 with the scarce dust jacket. The first edition with the delightful woodcuts by Agnes Miller Parker. Very scarce in this condition. An excellent copy. £65

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A MORNING WITH THE ROYAL FAMILY.** The Green Horn Press. Los Angeles, 1941. 8vo. 18 pages. Decorated hardback with paper spine label. Written by Housman for family entertainment in the late 1870's it was printed, without permission, in the *Bromsgrovian* in 1882. It is here published in book form for the first time. Illustrated by Frederick Childs in a limited edition of 125 copies. Very scarce. Very good. £100

**HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD.** The Chantry Press, Leominster, 1991. 8vo. Unpaginated. Quarter leather. With an introduction by Norman Page and illustrations by Alison Dunworth. Number 17 of 50 copies. Bookplate but otherwise fine. £50.

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

**HOUSMAN (Henry). ANO; AND OTHER POEMS.** W.J. Smith, Brighton, 1900. 16mo. 206 pages. Green cloth. Poems by the younger brother of Lucy Housman, stepmother to A.E.H.. Very good indeed. A remarkable survival. £20

**HYDER (Clyde Kenneth). A CONCORDANCE TO THE POEMS OF A.E. HOUSMAN.** Peter Smith, Gloucester. Massachusetts, 1966. 133 pages. Brown Cloth. An essential tool. Ex Reference Library copy with library marking on base of spine and small plate on cover but with none of the pockets and other indignities inflicted by the lending libraries. Very good. £40

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

**RICKS (Christopher). A.E. HOUSMAN. COLLECTED POEMS AND SELECTED PROSE.** Allen Lane, London, 1988. First edition. 8vo. 528 pages. Black cloth with dust jacket. Bookplate otherwise near fine. £20

**ROBERTSON (Stephen). THE SHROPSHIRE RACKET.** Sheed and Ward, London, 1937. First edition. 12mo. 76 pages. Brown cloth. Housman parodies, illustrated by Thomas Derrick. Very good condition but missing the dust jacket. £20

**SYMONS (Katharine E.), POLLARD (A.W.), HOUSMAN (Laurence), CHAMBERS (R.W.), KER (Alan), GOW (A.S.F.), SPARROW (John) and SYMONS (N.V.H.). ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN.** Bromsgrove School, 1936. Limited to 500 copies. 4to. 60 pages. Green cloth. Contains a bookplate but is otherwise fine. £40

**TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE. ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN, FELLOW, KENNEDY PROFESSOR OF LATIN.** This leaflet carries the Order of Service for Housman's funeral on the first page, the second and fourth are blank; on the third are printed for the first time the three stanzas beginning *O thou that from thy mansion* which became *More Poems XLV/II* under the title *For My Funeral*. One of 300 copies, dated 4<sup>th</sup> May 1936. Contains the misprint *Ecclesiasticus*, "it was appropriately ironical that misprints should have pursued Housman to the grave" [Carter and Sparrow]. Very good indeed. Very rare. £95

**WATSON (George L.). A.E. HOUSMAN – A DIVIDED LIFE.** Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1957. First edition. 235 pages. The first attempt at a comprehensive biography. Bookplate otherwise near fine in a very good dust jacket. £25

## WANTS LIST

The Housman Society Newsletters recommenced in February 1998 with issue number 7 after a gap of 19 years. Does anyone have issues 1 to 6? A sad and hopeless collector is prepared to spend real money on these flimsy bygones.

And we still have a number of members trying to complete broken runs of Housman Society Journals. The early years are particularly elusive.

Please contact Peter Sisley if you can help.

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# Fine Production of *The Invention of Love* at Cambridge

***The coincidence of having productions of *The Invention of Love* by undergraduates at both Oxford and Cambridge during the same week in February was unbelievable! The production at the ADC Theatre by the Alcock Players (based at Jesus College, Cambridge) is reviewed by David Butterfield.***

Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* is a play that sparkles on the page, a secure medium whereby one can revel in the work's intricate wit and effortlessly brilliant dialogue. On stage, by contrast, a cast must toil hard and with studied unity to recreate that same intellectual and emotional thrill for the audience. There thus stands a significant hurdle for productions of the play to surmount, one that remains high for a student production such as this, even with the obvious advantage of the appropriate age and status of the cast. The present reviewer is delighted to say that, in this case, the overall result was impressive, and significantly outshone its one predecessor (Christ's College, 2005) in the city. Simply put, although some of the cast choices were slightly misjudged, the acting, delivery and setting were expertly handled and served to produce a pleasurable and involving performance.



## Intellectual Fervour



The director, Jacob Shephard (Jesus College), announced in the opening note to the programme that he is a “great admirer” of Housman, whom he regards as “an unexpectedly fascinating subject”. This respect for the play's subject was reflected in Shephard's careful casting and mature directing. The two Housmans were excellent choices: Oskar McCarthy (Caius) showed something of the intellectual fervour that

Housman indubitably displayed among his coterie of friends in his Oxford days, and his delivery of lines was as good as faultless; Joshua Stamp-Simon (Selwyn), who played Old Housman, succeeded in conveying the poignant wisdom of this character's musings, although at times showed an improbable amount of zest and *joie de vivre* for the world-weary scholar. Both deserve credit for near-perfect delivery of Latin and Greek phrases and quotations, despite their lack of experience in the classical languages, which precision helped preserve much of the sharpness of Stoppard's script. An unfortunate shortcoming was the complete lack of on-

stage chemistry between Young Housman and Jackson (Jason Forbes, Jesus): the exchanges between the two never showed sign of moving beyond rehearsed formalities, and the emotional importance that Jackson held for Housman in the Oxford and London years was not in evidence when they broached conversation. Nevertheless, Forbes showed all the hallmarks of Jackson's practical realism, starkly contrasting with the more passionate effusions of his Johnian colleagues. The only truly inappropriate casting was that of Oscar Wilde, which was played, by Amrou Al-Kadhi (Corpus Christi), to a gross and unashamedly anachronistic degree of flamboyance. The supporting performances from the rest of the cast were not particularly arresting but duly served to keep the audience's attention on the primary figures; two exceptions deserving of note were Laurie Coldwell (Trinity Hall), who captured the imperious nature of Jowett and the impudence of Labouchere to a tee, and Victoria Ball (St John's), who managed to portray the difficult and awkward side of Postgate, although her Katherine failed to convey the full poignancy of that character.

## Minimalist Production

The staging was comparatively minimalist: a simple Oxonian backdrop, a small boat, a few cramped bookcases and a table, with very little clutter elsewhere. The lighting was likewise simple and direct, which, when combined with the limited movement of the cast, lent additional *gravitas* to the proceedings. The slim programme was attractively produced and contained an admirable amount of information about the cast. A pedant such as Housman, however, might have objected to his clutching a book on the front cover that could not have been printed in the 1870s/80s and have spent the interval correcting various grammatical errors buried within the text.

For those few members of the audience who lacked interest in Housman, late-19th century Oxford, the Aesthetic Movement or Stoppard's dialogue, the consciously pared-down purity of the whole production may have caused their attention to wane as the evening wore on. But the loss would have been theirs alone, and a considerable one: for those who delight in this play's complexity, Shephard and his cast offered forth a fine production worthy of genuine approbation.

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## Sir Tom's Christmas Present

***Before the Oxford production of 'The Invention of Love' last February Daniel Rolle interviewed Tom Stoppard for Oxford's Cherwell Magazine. Their conversation can be read on pages 14 and 15.***

What would you give Tom Stoppard for Christmas? A previously undiscovered Shakespeare manuscript? Unlikely. A time machine? Obscure. Jumpers, perhaps? He's probably got enough of these. In fact, this year it may have been futile to search high and low for the world's greatest present for, perhaps, the greatest contemporary British playwright. Because while you were searching for an alternative to socks and a random assortment of jellied fruits, the cast and crew of *The Invention of Love* trumped the most valiant of efforts.

'It was my best Christmas present,' says Stoppard, regarding the news that his 'favourite play', the play Stoppard 'enjoyed writing more than any other', would be coming to its place of origin, Oxford. Possibly too hard to beat, then. Stoppard is a charming man, and incredibly modest. Our conversation begins with his mistaking me for a journalist from the *Oxford Mail*. He seems slightly perturbed, if not flustered. I quickly reassure him that I am not a hack fresh out of the City Journalism course, and, in fact, an amateur posing as a journalist, a writer from *Cherwell*. This settles him: he has, after all, interviewed for this very paper, not two years ago. That it was the only interview he granted whilst in Oxford speaks a thousand words. Stoppard is passionate about undergraduate life; as much comes out of the play itself. Stoppard has already met the director of *The Invention of Love*, Roger Granville, for coffee. One might think that directing Stoppard's favourite play, a play that is so literarily rich, so steeped in its place of origin, in the history of its characters, would be a daunting task. *The Invention of Love* has been described as Stoppard's most literary play, even his most difficult play. Stoppard has only the best things to say about Granville: 'I think what one wants most of all is that the director is somebody who just loves the play and has responded to it, and so I'm very pleased about that.... it's not a play which is widely done, [so] I'm really thrilled that somebody's doing it'.

This is as good a write up as I've ever heard for a play. *The Invention of Love* is a play for Oxford today. Set in 1880s Oxford, the Oxford of Wilde, an 'Oxford in the Golden Age', as it is referred to in the last lines of the play, *The Invention of Love* centres around the life and loves of A.E. Housman, a scholar and a poet, who, whilst at St. John's, falls in love with his friend and must suffer the silence of the 'love that dare not speak its name' – namely, his latent homosexuality. The play becomes part discussion of the place homosexuality had to play in the later nineteenth century, part a beautiful insight into fin-de-siècle Oxford, with characters such as Ruskin, Pater, and even Oscar Wilde forming a rich historical backdrop to what is, in Stoppard's words, a story 'about a man who falls in love when he's an undergraduate, and essentially remains enthralled by an impossible unrequited love for the rest of his life'. Why would *The Invention of Love* be Stoppard's favourite play? Due to its numerous classical allusions, some reviewers have called the play 'esoteric'; the *New York Magazine* rather caustically noted that 'Stoppard has lately managed to be too

clever by three quarters'. In fact, to demystify the play's many historical and academic references, the New York production team provided the audiences with a thirty-page booklet on the political and artistic history of the late-Victorian period. In both cases, the play seems to have been misunderstood. Stoppard picks up on this; he 'would be sorry to think of it, or ..... be sorry if people thought it was a difficult play, because part of the fun is to take something which sounds difficult like Latin scholarship, and make it intelligible and interesting ..... I think theatre is a recreation'.

*The Invention of Love* is first and foremost a play about the emotions, rather than the intellect: this is to suggest, as Stoppard notes, that 'the play was widely liked not just in London, but in New York, and that wouldn't have been so had it not been the case that the play was working as a love story, in the broadest sense'. Oxford is the best place for a play about both Latin and love. It is also extremely pertinent that the play be put in modern Oxford; a play set over one hundred years ago still speaks great truths about the Oxford experience today. What I took from the play was an essential dichotomy between Oxford as a place of great scholarship, and a place threatened by modernization. At the beginning of the play, one of the characters notes 'Great reform made us into a cramming shop. The railway brings in the fools and takes them away with their tickets punched for the world outside'. Is this not precisely the experience of Oxford today? For many, it's less about Oxford students as Classics scholars, more a question of Oxford students as potential management consultants.

If this is Tom Stoppard's 'most esoteric play', this need not be taken disparagingly; on the contrary, it proposes an enjoyment of the moment we are presently occupying. It is for this reason that perhaps the best line of the play is the last one: 'How lucky to find myself standing on this empty shore, with the indifferent waters at my feet'. Surely this is the most pertinent perspective one could possibly have about an Oxford education? In the play, it is precisely Oxford which is the centrepiece of the action. Stoppard reflects, 'Housman expresses sympathy for Wilde when he says you've lived at the wrong time, you should have lived in Megara when one could publish poetry to the boy one loved, and so on ..... Wilde rejects this attempt to sympathize with him; he says ..... on the contrary, this world, this England, at this time, where he, as it were, exhibited his values and people paid attention to him.' *The Invention of Love* promises great things. That Stoppard is 'really thrilled that somebody's doing it', that it made his Christmas, is but one reason. Stoppard's favourite play, perhaps his most personal play, must be met with an embrace for the current moment – for this Oxford, at this time. From this perspective, the 'indifferent waters' of *The Invention of Love* look inviting indeed.

*Reproduced by kind permission of Daniel Rolle and "Cherwell".*

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# Daniel Rolle interviews Tom Stoppard for Cherwell Magazine

**DR:** What does it mean for you to have *The Invention of Love* put on in Oxford, in this way?

**TS:** It was my best Christmas present.

**DR:** That's brilliant – it is a play set in Oxford...

**TS:** Well it's largely because I'm fond of the play, and I think I enjoyed writing it more than any other play.

**DR:** Why was that?

**TS:** Well I think it's because Housman combines in subject matter and in tone of voice two areas which, first of all, fascinate me and suit me as a writer. A play about a Latin scholar which gets into the Latin is now what's called a bit of a challenge, and I suppose that Oxford is one of the places where that subject matter is being seen and listened to in exactly the right context. But I should add firstly that it was quite clear in practice that the play works on an emotional level rather than an intellectual level, which is to say that the play was widely liked not just in London, but in New York also, and that wouldn't have been so had it not been that they play was working as, in the broadest sense, a love story. And, leaving aside the sexual orientation and so forth, I identify with it quite strongly; I enjoyed writing it and I loved the practical work of helping to rehearse it and put it on. And in both cases – in both London and New York – you know, it was a happy experience, and I suppose for reasons that are fairly obvious, it's not a play that is most people's, most producers' favourite! And I was absolutely delighted to find that a production was being mooted at Oxford and I felt that the play had fallen into the right hands. And so I'm really pleased about it.

**DR:** I picked up on two things you said – the first of which was that it was an emotional play rather than an intellectual play. When the play was put on in New York, a reviewer said that the play was so obscure that even the title didn't refer to love, but to a love poem! I thought this was completely missing the point – the play is a love story, that it's set in Oxford is large part of that.

**TS:** It's about a man who falls in love when he's an undergraduate and essentially remains enthralled by an impossible unrequited love for the rest of his life.

**DR:** You also said that the play wasn't some people's favourite and that it was quite a difficult play; it is a difficult play but I think that it's very pertinent that it be put on in Oxford,



because I think it still speaks truths about the Oxford experience today. And that's something with you now. What I got from the play was this dichotomy between Oxford as a place of great scholarship, "Oxford in the Golden Age", as it's referred to in the last lines of the play, and this threat of industrialization, the train from London to Birmingham. There's a great bit at the beginning of the play: Pattison says, "Great reform made us into a cramming shop. The railway brings in the fools and takes them away with their tickets punched for the world outside. It's less about Oxford students as Classics scholars, more about, especially

today, Oxford students as potential management consultants. I'm referring specifically to experiences I've recently had, in my final year, applying for jobs. My favourite line of the play is the last one – 'How lucky to find myself standing on this empty shore, with the indifferent waters at my feet.

**TS:** Well it certainly does strike that kind of chord. There are people who would say, with some justice, that it wouldn't be healthy for Oxford or any other university to insulate itself from what we might call 'the real world', in inverted commas and so forth. But I have to explain to you that plays don't get written, at least in my case, with some kind of thesis in advance. It's not that the play carries out an author's thesis – one is simply going along with the play on the level of human character; and in the case of a play based on historical characters, one is also moving along, as it were, on a historical narrative. I think that what you've just referred to, the industrial age invading Oxford, or Oxford existing to punch the tickets for people who are then going to make their way in a very different kind of world .... I couldn't dissent from what you've said, but it would be wrong to suppose that that was what I was after, that that was the point I was after making. Really and truly, every play needs a point of origin, a spark which tells the writer that there's a play here – and in my case, there were no ramifications involved, other than the simple core of the matter which was that the classical and the romantic were here combined in one life, and in a way the two halves were fighting each other in some sense. Or, if you like, the scholar and the poet were taking turns to live a single life.

**DR:** At the beginning of the play A.E.H. is described as both a scholar and poet and the reaction is something like – "what, at the same time?"

**TS:** Yes, at the same time, I would resist, because, you know,

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that's what writers are like, I would resist the idea that anybody would consciously write what you call 'a difficult play'; plays are not supposed to be difficult – certainly there are different kinds of audiences which suit plays better or worse. Even that is a thought which I rather resist; I like the thought instead that one tries to write well, and plays are good, bad or indifferent, and the good ones cut across all the categories, as the bad ones cut across all the categories, and I would rather spend the evening at a great production of a French farce than an indifferent production of Hamlet. It's all to do with how good theatre can be when it tries to be – I'm talking about the theatre as a whole, I'm talking about everything from light cues to the actor's soliloquy. So, to me, I'd be sorry to think of it, or I'd be sorry if people thought it was a difficult play, because part of the fun is to take something which sounds difficult like Latin scholarship, and make it intelligible and interesting, and, one hopes, fun – because I think theatre is a recreation.

**DR:** Of course. Some of the criticism I've read seems to suggest that people forget that *The Invention of Love* is a comedy as well.

**TS:** Well I hope so, certainly, my experience of the play in production is that the audience laughs quite a lot – sometimes more than you'd expect, or indeed, more than I'd expect. I like jokes.

**DR:** Yes – I've seen the production in rehearsal, and Roger [Granville, the director] has really brought that out. And actually the cast has got some brilliant names in it, especially with characters like Labouchere, who is played by a big guy with a booming voice; Roger is playing on this side massively. You've met Roger, he's exceptionally theatrical.

**TS:** I think what one wants most of all is that the director is somebody who just loves the play and has responded to it, and so I'm very pleased about that. It seems to me that it is you who have the hardest job!

**DR:** Yes, well we're doing very well! Roger's very optimistic and wants to sell out every night; I'm certainly going with that!

**TS:** It's the only attitude to have.

**DR:** Exactly. I'd like to bring us back to the play, and ask you how you made the character of Oscar Wilde really very interesting. Apart from Housman who is of course the protagonist, and his story is the story of the play to an extent, Wilde is very much in the wings, he's a continual presence on and off stage. Housman in the age of Wilde: what's the relationship between the two?

**TS:** Well, everything's about character. Wilde was audacious and flamboyant about everything, including his sexuality; Housman was cautious and much more under the sway of the morality of the time, and full of ..... well I don't know, it's quite presumptuous to say what Housman was full of – how

do I know? ..... but my sense of it is that he was full of caution, anxiety, agony I would say too. And, again, it wasn't that I set out to make a thesis of the contrast, it's just that one tries to be true to the characters one is writing, and that's what you end up with. Wilde, who was not apologetic about the course he'd taken, or chosen, and there's a moment when Housman expresses sympathy for Wilde when he says you've lived at the wrong time, you should have lived in Megara when one could publish poetry to the boy one loved, and so on, and Wilde rejects this attempt to sympathize with him; he says, you know, on the contrary, this world, this England, at this time, where he, as it were, exhibited his values and people paid attention to him.

**DR:** "Better a fallen rocket than never a burst of light".

**TS:** That's right. Housman was frightened by the burst of light, and paid for it. Again, it's presumptuous to talk about Housman as though one knew what was going on inside of him, but to all the evidence, he remained faithful to that first flame of passion, and he knew it was hopeless. And I suppose he may have even had to transcend the world's opinion of him, of the love that dare not speak its name; he transcended himself. Listen: I'm blabbering on like this as though I had all these intentions! One writes line by line, one tries not to make it boring, frankly, but I had a wonderful time doing the necessary reading – reading Pater and Ruskin and trying to weave my way through Housman's classical papers and so on, and I think of it as being the most enjoyable research, I suppose you should call it, that I've ever undertaken, I mean I had to stop reading because I was running out of time.

**DR:** Sounds like me and my dissertation! You had to research the Oxford lifestyle, too, the characters of Jowett and so forth .....

**TS:** Yes, but it was also about trying to figure out what Housman actually did as a classical scholar; I said goodbye to Latin and Greek when I was in the Sixth Form, which was a long time ago! It got me back into Latin, to some extent, I benefited personally from having written the play, and I met some very nice Latinists in the process.

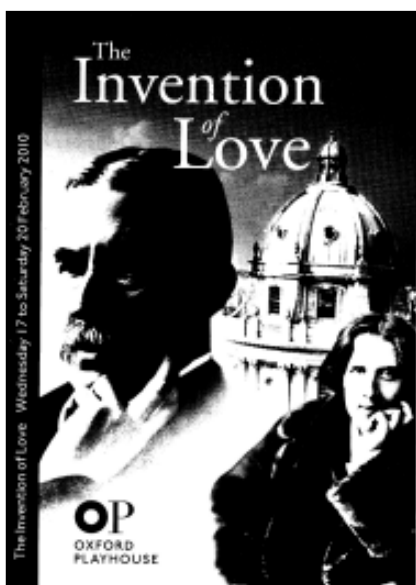
**DR:** It is a play which does have this classical bent, it's a very literary play. However, as you've suggested, and I completely agree with you, this itself is not to suggest that it should be a difficult play, or that it should be necessarily elitist. In fact the real message is that it's less a play about Latin scholars than it's about undergraduates at Oxford.....

**TS:** Undergraduate life, and so on – absolutely. By the way, I did see the play done in German once, but it's not a play which is widely done, and I'm really thrilled that somebody's doing it.

*Reproduced by kind permission of Daniel Rolle, Tom Stoppard and 'Chernwell'.*

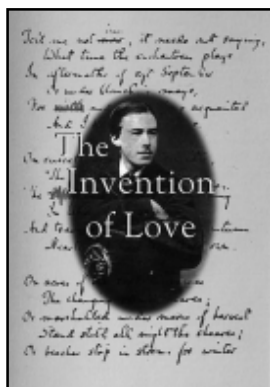
## The Invention of Love at Oxford

What a feast Tom Stoppard's play *The Invention of Love* is and how brave of Oxford University Drama Society to tackle such a long complex play with so many characters and so many scene changes. Did they succeed in conveying the classical scholar, the poet, and the Victorian mores, which surrounded A.E.H.? Roger Granville the director was



fortunate in having two outstanding actors to play the older and younger Housman. Matthew Osman as the older Housman looked like the Dodd portrait and gave the classical professor the gravitas the part demanded. Joseph Robertson as the younger Housman grew into the part from innocent student to the bewildered love lorn poet.

The scene between the older and younger Housman was particularly moving. The scene between Chamberlain and Housman was similarly charged with emotion but the scene with Moses Jackson, played by Jonathan Webb was quite heart breaking and ended with a very fine rendition of 'He would not stay for me' by Joseph Robertson. The rest of the cast supported the two main roles with great elan and managed to convey old age with a variety of beards and moustaches. I liked Thomas Woodward as Chamberlain and Andrew McCormack's Oscar Wilde was a fine cameo performance. The set was in several layers and had many swathes of drapes. Rather too many for my liking but other members of the Housman Society approved of the classical allusions.



The cover of the American edition

It was good to see some of the cast after the performance and realise how young they really are and how much time they had devoted to not only learning the lines and rehearsals but also reading around the subject. And Tom Stoppard had been to see them perform too. Lucky them and lucky us that our poet has been celebrated by one of our finest dramatists!

Kate Shaw

## A.E.H. in Manhattan

This autumn the Society is sponsoring an event at Poets House in New York and we are fortunate that Professors Archie Burnett and Christopher Ricks are both speaking.

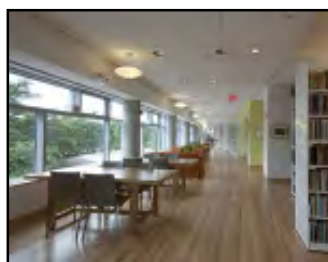


When Robin and Kate Shaw visited Poets' House in May at the invitation of Maggie Balistreri, their librarian, they were very impressed. It is in Battery Park, Lower Manhattan, and stands in a wonderfully landscaped area overlooking the Hudson River. It is a national poetry library and literary centre. It welcomes everyone who

reads or writes poetry and has 50,000 books. It runs programmes of readings, panels, lectures, writing workshops and walking tours. The staff were very welcoming and on their tour Kate and Robin were pleased to find not just A.E.H.'s poetry in their library but Geoffrey Hill and Molly Holden, our other Bromsgrove poets. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a Housman event there, they thought – and Poets' House thought so too.



They got together with Stephen Motika, Poets' House programme coordinator and were delighted when Christopher Ricks and Archie Burnett were happy to make themselves available.



The event is on **Wednesday, 27 October at 7.00**. Archie Burnett will talk about the relation between Housman's biography and poetry and will also draw on the work of Philip Larkin. Christopher Ricks' talk has the intriguing title 'No more poetical than anagrams'.

If you want to know more about the event contact Robin by e-mail at [robin@shaw-line.com](mailto:robin@shaw-line.com) or for more about Poets' House visit their web site [www.poetshouse.org](http://www.poetshouse.org)





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# Obituaries

## Oh Mr. Porter !

'The main problem for you is whether I will still be alive', Peter Porter mused at the Hay Festival when I asked him in 2000 to judge the 2001/2002 Housman Poetry Competition, writes Kate Shaw. He died ten years later. Peter recommended Gwyneth Lewis to be his co-judge and she was, literally, all at sea (on a voyage round the world) when we announced the winners at Ludlow in 2002.

During the proceedings Peter modestly told me he had just been awarded the Queen's medal for Poetry. He was presented with the medal over a quiet tea with the Queen and the then poet laureate, Andrew Motion, who had put forward his name. So we were able to celebrate John Latham winning the Housman prize and Peter Porter's prestigious honour.

Peter wrote the following for the forward to the anthology we published of the winning poems based on the theme 'Highways':

'An aspect of Poetry Competitions not often commented upon is the sheer unexpectedness of the poems submitted. Even when a topic is prescribed, the fact that people from all parts of the land and almost all professions and persuasions send poems in means quirks and quiddities as well as orthodoxies and certainties come before a judge's eye. Such was certainly the case this time. Take the winning poem 'Construction on the Queen's Highway,' the sheer oddity of the material fuses with a powerful traditional vision to satisfy and startle the reader at the one time. Elsewhere among the prize-winners we are shown scattered parts of Balkan refugees along Italian roads; we also enter the world of balaclava helmets, ordnance survey maps and flight paths. What is real is made metaphorical, and what springs from abstract emotion is given local habitation and a name. The level of technical accomplishment is frequently high. We the judges were entertained.'

Peter Porter was a distinguished poet and honoured us and the other poets by giving generously of his time to judge our competition and be present at Ludlow.

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## Carol Efrati

We are sorry to record the death of Carol Efrati, who was an enthusiastic member of the Society for many years and wrote extensively in the Journal between the years of 1996 and 2001. Her book *The Road of Danger, Guilt, and Shame: the lonely way of A.E. Housman*, was published in 2002 and is a study of Housman's poetry, in which she expounds theories about homosexual parables in the light verse as well as discussing the more overtly gay lyrics. She demonstrates the depths of even the most pellucid poems, considering the poetry in the light the individual poems shed on each other, as well as that provided by Housman's other writings and his life.

## W. Keats Sparrow, Ph.D.

A long-time member of the Housman Society, W. Keats Sparrow of Greenville, North Carolina, USA, died at home unexpectedly at age 67 on November 11, 2009. He is survived by his wife Elizabeth, daughter Nicole, and granddaughter Ashley.

Keats' fascination with the poetry of A. E. Housman began during his English literature studies as an undergraduate and graduate student at East Carolina University, where he later spent his early teaching career as an English professor and for the last 15 years of his career as Dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, retiring in 2006. Keats earned his doctorate in English at the University of Kentucky and wrote his dissertation on the poetry of A. E. Housman.

Always well prepared in every aspect of his life, including his death, Keats had requested that Housman's *For My Funeral* be included in his memorial service, held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville. The words were set to the tune of "Brief life is here our portion." He also had designed bronze grave markers for our shared tombstone, with mine including Housman's

None will part us, none undo  
The knot that makes one flesh of two.

Keats and I especially enjoyed attending the Housman conference in Ludlow in 1996 and exploring the countryside often mentioned in his poetry.

Elizabeth Sparrow



During the celebrations to mark the fifth anniversary of Bromsgrove's Arts Centre, Artrix, a student from North East Worcestershire College, which uses Artrix as a teaching space during the daytime, created much frisson by appearing as a statue of A.E. Housman.

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## Housman's last Resting Place

**Linda Hart reviews a new book about St Laurence's Church, Ludlow. Every year the Society holds a commemoration event in the churchyard, where A.E. Housman's ashes are buried.**

*St Laurence's Church, Ludlow*, by three Ludlow historians, traces the story of the church as a building, dating back to Norman times, but also as a place where individuals worked and worshipped, were baptised and buried. This is a scholarly work that makes excellent use of original source material, but like a well-written biography it also contains anecdotes and character sketches, as well as historical background that links local events to national ones.



Shakespeare would have Jaques, from *As You Like It*, summarise the book with a 'seven ages of St Laurence's' speech, starting with the dominance of the wealthy, powerful and prestigious Palmers' Guild in medieval times. Then there was the 'great rebuilding' of the 15th century that gave the church its striking English

Perpendicular style and 135-foot tower that dominates the town to this day. Later still the post-Reformation church adjusted to Protestant worship and settled down to Anglicanism. In the 18th century a secular authority, Ludlow Borough Corporation, became increasingly involved in running church affairs, while the 19th century saw threats to the church from growing nonconformity. The post-war Welfare State reduced the church's role and importance in the community. Today's increasing decline in religious belief and worship threatens St Laurence's, which is costly to run and maintain.

Twenty-six coloured plates greatly enhance this attractively produced book, which has many black-and-white illustrations throughout the text. My only disappointment is that the authors shed no light on Housman's ashes being buried in the churchyard in July 1936. Is there anything in the church records about this, or any correspondence between family members and the church authorities that sheds light on why they chose Ludlow and not Bromsgrove?

*St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The parish church and people, 1199-2009* by David Lloyd, Margaret Clark and Chris Potter, Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire (paperback, 264 pages, 26 colour plates, index, notes, five appendices), £12.95.

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## Gurney's 'Ludlow and Teme'

Finzi Friends' Weekend of English Song was held in Ludlow in the early days of June and the Society supported this by sponsoring a workshop on Gurney's *Ludlow and Teme* which was followed by a complete performance. This was a most successful event and Kate Kennedy's penetrating analyses of poetry and musical settings were well paced, lucid and thoroughly absorbing. Her comparison of the Gurney and Butterworth versions of *Ludlow Fair*, for example, was particularly enlightening. Her articulation was impeccable (aided by first class amplification) and the performance of the complete cycle, by tenor Ben Johnson, pianist Simon Lepper and the Carducci Quartet, was excellent.



Gurney's work has long been in the shadow of Vaughan Williams' setting of Housman's *On Wenlock Edge* but with performances like this, and those Andrew Kennedy has given in recent years, at last the true quality of Gurney's work is being recognised.



*Elizabeth Watts in rehearsal in Ludlow's Parish Church*

Another setting of Housman was heard in the recital by Elizabeth Watts in St Laurence's on the Friday evening when Vaughan Williams' rarely heard *Along the Field* for voice and violin (Matthew Denton) was given. This was a remarkable performance as not only was the cycle sung with the greatest sensitivity, beauty of tone and crystal clear words, but it was sung from memory – a remarkable feat for a singer who was called up at relatively short notice to cover a cancellation.

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# Sale of the Jackson Letters

*In a sale at Sotheby's in New York on 18th June three lots of letters Housman wrote to members of the Jackson family went up for sale. The text of the 23rd November letter from Moses to A.E.H. is printed in Andrew Jackson's article on pages 7 & 8. The descriptions below are taken from the sale catalogue.*

**Lot 41. Housman, A.E. 9 autograph letters signed ("A. E. Housman"),** 47 pages (7 x 4½ in.; 177 x 115 mm), Trinity College, Cambridge (except one from Woodridings, Pinner, Middlesex), 12 June 1911 - 22 December 1932, to Moses Jackson (the last two to his widow Rosa Jackson); horizontal folds, condition generally good, but with foxing to the two letters to Mrs. Jackson. 6 autograph envelopes; condition varies – **Moses Jackson.** Autograph letter signed ("M. J. J. Jackson"). 10 pages (8x5 in.; 203 x 127 mm), Bed 4, Ward T, General Hospital, Vancouver, 23 November 1922, to A. E. Housman; horizontal folds, small tear at right side of top folds. Autograph envelope; in pieces.

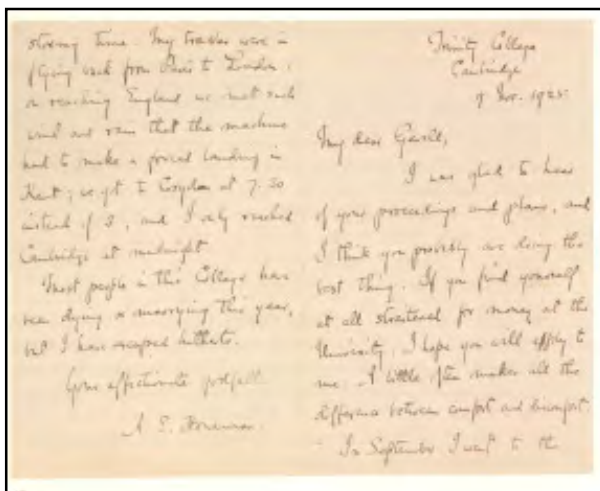
Estimate \$30,000-\$50,000. Sold for \$25,000.

**Lot 42. Housman, A. E. 3 autograph letters signed ("A. E. Housman"),** 11 pages (7 x 4½ in.; 177 x 115 mm), Trinity College, Cambridge, 9 November 1925 - 9 October 1934, to his godson Gerald Jackson; horizontal folds. Autograph envelopes; torn.

A.E. HOUSMAN TO HIS GODSON, MOSES JACKSON'S SON, GERALD. In the first letter, written to Gerald in Vancouver, Housman tells of a recent visit to the Pyrenees. "I had a French friend with me, one of those delightful people who enjoy making arrangements, taking rooms, using telephones, and all the things that I hate, so I had no troubles. But like most Frenchmen he would not walk, and required a pony or donkey if the way was rough or steep ...." The other two letters are written in 1934-35 when Gerald was attending medical school in London. "The King and Queen only spend an hour in Cambridge. I therefore do not think it would be worth your while to come ...."

Estimate \$5,000-7,000 - Sold for \$4,000.

**Lot 43 Houseman, A. E. (sic), A Shropshire Lad. London:** Kegan Paul. Trench. Trubner. 1896. 8vo (6 x 4¼ in.; 174 x 108 mm, *uncut*). Title printed in red and black, half-title. Publisher's art vellum over buff boards, printed paper spine label; foxed and lightly soiled; extremities rubbed – Last Poems. *London:* Grant Richards. 1922 8vo (7¼ x 4 in.: 184 x 120 mm). Publisher's blue buckram gilt, original dust-jacket (chipped).



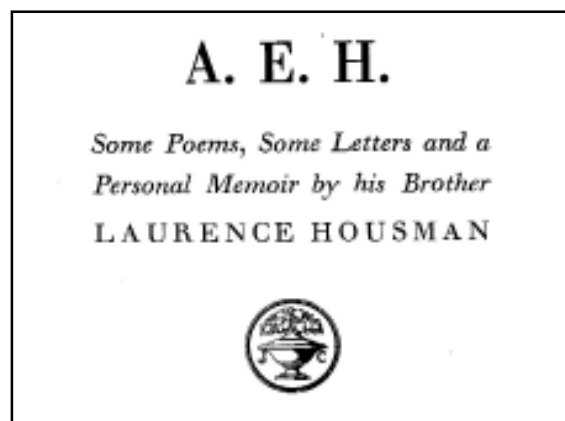
Together 2 volumes. Uniform half blue morocco slipcases, chemises.

**FIRST EDITIONS - A SHROPSHIRE LAD - ONE OF 500 COPIES.** Reference; *Lad:* Carter & Sparrow 11; Hayward 305 Estimate \$5,000-7,000. Sold for \$3,500.

*(This item was not sold on behalf of the Descendants of Moses and Gerald Jackson)*

**Lot 44. Housman, A. E. A fine group comprising one photograph and 6 books** from the collection of Housman's godson, Gerald Jackson; Carte-de-visite photograph of A. E. Housman, affixed to a wooden frame. This photograph was taken to India by Moses Jackson, when he moved to India, nd; rubbed, extremities worn down – **A. E. Housman.** *A Shropshire Lad. London, 1950.* INSCRIBED BY HOUSMAN, "G. C. A. Jackson from A. E. Housman - Last Poems. *London. 1950.* INSCRIBED BY HOUSMAN. "G. C. A. Jackson from A. E. Housman" – A. S. F. Gow. A. E. Housman. Offprint from the *Cambridge Review. 8 May 1956.* Signed by Gerald Jackson – **A.S.F. Gow,** A. E. Housman: *A Sketch. Cambridge, 1936.* With 3 typed notes from Gow to Gerald Jackson tipped in – **Laurence Housman.** A.E.H. *Some Poems, Some Letters and a Personal Memoir by his Brother. London, 1937.* INSCRIBED BY HOUSMAN to Gerald Jackson and with a TNS laid in - **Katherine E. Symonds (sic) and others.** Alfred Edward Housman. *New York, 1937.* Inscribed by Symonds (sic) for Gerald Jackson. Condition of books varies; 3 dust jackets.

Estimated \$12,000-18,000. Sold for \$11,000



## Forthcoming Events

Saturday 9th October 2010 7.30pm

The Lion Ballroom, Leominster

MUSE perform their SHROPSHIRE LAD programme. Andrew Bannerman tells the story of A.E.H.'s life through the poetry while Richard Frewer, accompanied by David Price provide the musical input with settings by Vaughan Williams, Ireland, Butterworth and other British composers. Tickets £12.00 (£6 Students) from Gill's Gifts, Buttercross Arcade, Leominster 01568 611566 or on the door.

Wednesday 27 October 2010 7.00pm

Poets' House, Battery Park, Lower Manhattan, New York  
**ARCHIE BURNETT & CHRISTOPHER RICKS ON A.E. HOUSMAN**

Housman scholar Archie Burnett and renowned poetry critic Christopher Ricks take stock of the life and work of A. E. Housman, who, in Christopher Ricks' words, remains a "poet about whom poets write poems". Archie Burnett will talk about the relation between Housman's biography and poetry, and will also draw on the work of Philip Larkin. The title of Christopher Ricks' talk is 'No more Poetical than Anagrams'.

Thursday 11 November 2010 4.30pm

Artrix, Slideslow Drive, Bromsgrove

**SCHOOLS POETRY SPEAKING COMPETITION FINALS**

Competing pupils from Bromsgrove's schools will speak a poem by A.E. Housman and another poem of their own choice. This year there will be a competition for the Middle

school age group and the winners of the preliminary rounds to be held in the schools will read before the Senior Competition. Support from members is very welcome.

Tuesday 1 March 2011 7.30pm

80 New Road, Bromsgrove B60 2LA

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Wine and Refreshments. Details of speaker to be announced.

Friday 25 March 2011 12.30pm

The Statue, High Street, Bromsgrove

**A.E.H. BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION**

Annual ceremony by the statue followed by buffet lunch in the Council House, by kind invitation of the Chairman of the Bromsgrove District Council, Councillor June Griffiths, at which the winners of the Schools Poetry Competition will read. Guest of the day to be announced.

Wednesday 27 April 2011 11.00am

St Laurence's & The Assembly Rooms, Ludlow

**LUDLOW COMMEMORATION**

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

Date to be arranged - June 2011

The Hay Festival of Literature

**THE HOUSMAN LECTURE**

*The Name and Nature of Poetry*

Speaker to be announced.

Followed by supper in the sponsors' marquee to which members are cordially invited.

## 100 Years Ago

### MR. L. HOUSMAN AND THE CENSOR

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir.—Without touching upon the question of the total abolition of the Censorship, about which some difference of opinion may exist, we would strongly urge that the rejection of Mr. Laurence Housman's play, without reason assigned, shows clearly the imperative advisability that the judgment of the Lord Chamberlain, in his capacity as Censor of Plays, should be made subject to appeal.

We are, Sir, yours faithfully,

Rudolf Besier, J. Comyns Carr, R.C. Carton, C. Haddon Chambers, Hubert Henry Davies, A. Conan Doyle, H.V. Esmond, James B. Fagan, W.S. Gilbert, Sydney Grundy, Henry Hamilton, Anthony Hope, Jerome K. Jerome, W.S. Maugham, Louis N. Parker, Cecil Raleigh, Alfred Sutro, I. Zangwill.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir.—As it is impossible for me to overtake and correct all the false excuses for the Censor's recent action which are being invented or imagined at my expense by those who favour a continuation of the present tyranny, may I be allowed very briefly to mention some of the things which my play does not contain?

(1) It contains no reference whatever to the FitzHerbert episode, or to the alleged biga-

### ON THIS DAY

October 3, 1910



*Laurence Housman, author and dramatist, brother of A.E. Housman, crossed swords with the Lord Chamberlain, in his capacity as censor, over plays which Housman wrote about aspects of court life. Housman was supported by such prominent figures as W.S. Gilbert, Somerset Maugham and Arthur Conan Doyle.*

mous nature of George IV's marriage to Caroline; beyond one single sentence of a dozen words, which already stands historically recorded. That sentence I was never asked by the Censor to delete.

(2) It contains no love-making between Queen Caroline and her reputed lover.

(3) It contains no unpleasant details of a Divorce Court character.

(4) It contains no intended application to the present day, beyond an exposition of the unequal treatment which, under the law of this country, is still meted out to women, both in the Divorce Courts and in Parliament.

(5) It contains no attack on religion, on morals, or on the institution of Monarchy.

(6) It contains no detailed reference to the character and conduct of George IV, except in one passage of the first act, and throughout the trial scene in the House of Lords, where the words are taken without addition from the published records of the time.

If, as I suppose, that scene is the main cause of my condemnation, I can only imagine that the Censor, and behind his back, the Lord Chamberlain, knew so little of the subject with which they were dealing that they believed all Brougham's speeches to be my own; and, having first adorned me with that resplendent compliment, therein found justification for the ban which has been laid upon my play.

I have here stated, for the instruction of the misinformed, all such possible points of objection as occur to me which my play does not contain. But — and herein, perhaps, lies the insuperable ground of my offence — it does contain, and deals throughout with, a situation of shame and agony, for which, without any direct word of reference, the conduct and character of George IV, are shown to be immediately responsible.

I am, Sir, etc.  
LAURENCE HOUSMAN  
Kensington, Oct. 1.