

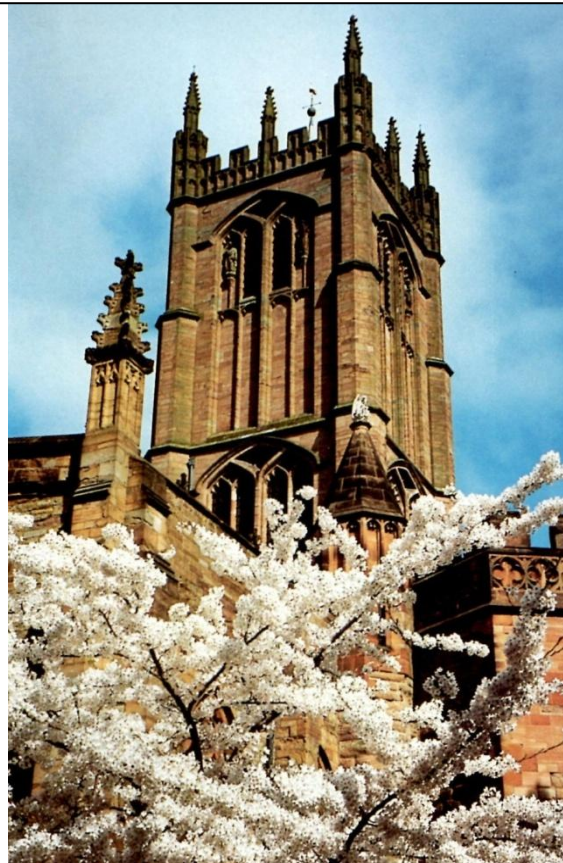
# Housman Society Newsletter

No. 45

March 2017

## Contents

From the Secretary's Desk	p. 1
A Shropshire Lad in Bromsgrove, Jim Page	p. 2
Forthcoming Events	p. 3
Housman Evening at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, Serena Trowbridge	p. 3
Bromsgrove Summer School 2017	p. 4
'With affection': newly discovered letters from A.E. Housman, Edgar Vincent	p. 4
'Dust and ashes': Housman's letters to his godson Gerald Jackson, Linda Hart	p. 8
'A.E. Housman; A Single Life' by Martin Blockside, Andrew Maund	p. 10
From the Treasurer	p. 10
Housman Book Exchange	p. 11



A cherry tree at Ludlow, the venue for the Housman Society AGM, 29 April 2017

## From the Secretary's Desk

If a week is a long time in politics the last month has certainly been significant for the Society and it is rather fortunate that the changes to our Events Programme have slightly delayed the publication of the *Newsletter*. Had I been writing in mid-January I would have been sharing renewed anxiety about the future with news of the retirement of both our Treasurer and of our Merchandise Officer, to add to the continuing search for a new Chairman. Peter Sisley returned to Committee membership three years ago having previously served as Treasurer for several years prior to 2006. He now wishes to step down from his Committee role though he will continue to operate the Book Exchange, which has provided such a valued service to the Society's bibliophiles over some 14 years. Sonia French took on the administration of Merchandise Sales four years ago in order to lighten the load on our then Chairman, Jim Page. Unfortunately, owing to health problems over recent months, she no longer feels able to continue in a role into which she has put much time and care.

The feelings of despair engendered in your somewhat beleaguered Secretary have, I am pleased to say, been lightened by very much better news in more recent weeks. We have a volunteer to take over as Treasurer in the person of Richard Aust O.B.E., who already serves as treasurer to the Bromsgrove Society. His background is in Special Education and before retirement in 2009 he was for more than 20 years the Head of a large Special School. Richard will be the Committee's nominee for the

Treasurer vacancy at the forthcoming AGM. I am also confident that by the time of the April meeting in Ludlow the Committee will be able to confirm its nomination to fill our all-important Chairmanship vacancy. It would not be appropriate to give details in advance of discussions due to take place in mid-March, but I can reveal that a long-standing member with a significant business and charity sector profile has expressed willingness to take on the leadership role. Suddenly the future is looking much brighter, though we are still lacking a Membership Secretary and a Merchandise Officer and offers of help would be warmly received.

Accompanying this issue is the usual Booking Form for the 2017 Events Programme and it would be particularly helpful to have an early indication of numbers for the AGM so that I can pass on your lunch bookings for the Charlton Arms. I hope the move to April, and combining the AGM with the Ludlow Commemoration, will encourage greater participation. My discussions with the Ludlow Town Council have resulted in the Mayor's acceptance of our invitation to join the Society for lunch and afterwards at St Laurence's so that our annual Commemoration is now back on the Civic Calendar. .

Looking further ahead both to the Bromsgrove Summer School and our planned visit to Cambridge, expressions of interest without commitment at this stage will enable me to send details of both events nearer the time. I hope we can repeat the success of last year's summer visit and certainly the arrival of the Jackson letters at Trinity College has already generated much interest. Less successful have been negotiations for this year's Housman Lecture. While I am delighted that Edgar Vincent, a contributor to this issue (*see page 4*), has accepted our invitation to deliver the 2017 lecture, we could not agree detailed arrangements with Hay and I am currently negotiating with the organisers of the Cheltenham Literary Festival to stage the lecture there in October to coincide with the publication of Edgar's new biography of A.E. Housman. I hope to have more information in time for the AGM.

All of which prompts the thought that more regular communication with members in this digital age should be easy, but in taking over the role of Secretary I have found that we have current e-mail addresses for less than half of our total membership. I would therefore ask those who have e-mail addresses (and it must be more than half!) to use the Booking Form to bring our records up to date, even if not registering interest in any particular events. Alternatively, of course, an e-mail response would do the job. I shall look forward to a deluge of returned forms!

Max Hunt

## **A Shropshire Lad in Bromsgrove**

Dave Coulson, a Worcestershire 'lad' living in Catshill, included in his February recital at St John's Parish Church the Butterworth setting of *A Shropshire Lad*. This was one of the excellent series of Saturday morning coffee concerts in which mostly local amateur musicians have an opportunity to show their skills before a good sized audience. But singing in a cold church at 10.30am provides many challenges for the singer and Dave Coulson must be commended for giving such a convincing interpretation of the Butterworth cycle. Diction was excellent and allowed those not familiar with the texts to appreciate the composer's ability to match the simplicity and directness of Housman's verse. The opening song, 'Loveliest of trees', with its affecting falling opening phrase conveys the young man's regret at the fleetingness of life in the thought of only fifty springs left in which to see the cherry tree in bloom. There is strong irony here in that A.E.H was long past his twentieth year when he wrote the poem, and Butterworth had only a few years of life left when he composed it. Simple lyricism continued in 'When I was one and twenty' and 'Think no more, lads' before the cycle ends with 'Is my team ploughing', a masterpiece to stand beside the best of German lieder. It found Dave Coulson ready for the challenge and his two voices for the ploughman and his dead friend were beautifully gauged and the final phrase 'Never ask me whose' left us with an emotional chill to match the physical one of the Parish Church. Steve Cowperthwaite, who masterminds this series, was the adroit partner who made us forget for the most part that his instrument was electronic.

Jim Page

## **Forthcoming Events**

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 12.30pm

By the statue in Bromsgrove High Street

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

The annual ceremony by the statue will be followed by a buffet lunch in the Council House, by kind invitation of the Chairman of the District Council. Guest of the Day will be Simon Carter, Director of the Avoncroft Museum.

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 11.00am

The Charlton Arms, Ludlow.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

with an address by Peter Sisley: "Chansons d'Outre-tombe".

To be followed by lunch at 1.00 pm..

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 2.30pm

St Laurence's Ludlow

### **LUDLOW COMMEMORATION**

with guest Councillor Paul Draper, Mayor of Ludlow.

19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> May 2017

St Laurence's church

### **LUDLOW ENGLISH SONG WEEKEND**

Contact Aileen Morrison, administrator.

11<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Bromsgrove School

### **BROMSGROVE SUMMER SCHOOL**

"AE Housman, Man of Letters".

Gregory Leadbetter and Julian Hunt

Saturday 22nd July, 2.00 pm (with earlier lunch to be arranged).

Trinity College Cambridge

### **LIBRARY VISIT**

An opportunity to view the recently acquired Jackson letters within the College archive.

## **An A.E. Housman Evening at the Birmingham and Midland Institute**

The Birmingham Midland Institute's Poetry Centre is organised in conjunction with the School of English at Birmingham City University, and offers a home for poetry and poets in Birmingham. The city is home to many poets and poetry enthusiasts, and the Centre aims to enhance and encourage this, providing a space where performances, discussions, workshops and writing can take place, as well as access to poetry books and other publications (incidentally, including a wide selection of books about A.E. Housman).

We have held several very successful events so far, including an Open Mic night, and most recently an evening in celebration of Housman on 3 February. The first part of the evening was a lecture by Julian Hunt on Housman's life and work, entitled 'A Worcestershire Lad', which was very much enjoyed by all present. The second half of the evening consisted of readings by academic staff from BCU (Dr Serena Trowbridge, Dr Gregory Leadbetter, Dr Derek Littlewood, Dr Thomas Knowles), graduate students (Joanna Packwood, Charlotte Newman) and Dr Connie Wan from the BMI, and it

was a wonderful experience to hear the poetry read aloud. We plan to have further poetry reading sessions, including another Housman event.

Our next event is a reading by Alison Brackenbury (31 March 2017). You can find out more on our blog: <https://poetryatbmi.wordpress.com/> or contact Serena Trowbridge at [serena.trowbridge@bcu.c.uk](mailto:serena.trowbridge@bcu.c.uk).

Serena Trowbridge

## **Bromsgrove Summer School 11-13 July 2017**

This year will be the seventh in which the Bromsgrove Society has run a Summer School, celebrating the history and literature of Bromsgrove and district. This year there will be courses on Worcestershire Churches (Tim Bridges), Worcestershire Maps (Richard Oliver), Belbroughton Mills (Sarah Bradley), Bromsgrove's Great Houses (Julian Hunt) and Bromsgrove on the Eve of the Second World War (Pat Tansell). Courses are held at Bromsgrove School and the registration fee includes an excellent lunch and an afternoon visit to a local landmark. As in previous years, there will be Housman element. This year Gregory Leadbetter, Director of the Creative Writing Course at Birmingham City University, will join Julian Hunt in leading a course entitled 'A.E. Housman, Man of Letters'. Gregory and Julian will look at the poet's life through his published letters and will include evidence from the Housman – Jackson letters recently acquired by Trinity College, Cambridge.

For further details, contact the organiser, Julian Hunt [julianmhunt@btinternet.com](mailto:julianmhunt@btinternet.com) (Tel. 01296-714634), or for the full Bromsgrove Summer School programme, contact Chris Nesbitt, Secretary, the Bromsgrove Society, 31 Barley Mow Lane, Catshill, Bromsgrove B61 0LU (Tel. 01527 877227)

## **'With affection': newly discovered letters from A.E. Housman**

All biographers need an occasional stroke of luck, the frequently unacknowledged serendipities of research, and I have experienced two in the course of my work on a biography of A.E. Housman. Both concern letters that have not been accessible to earlier biographers and are not included in *The Letters of A.E. Housman*, edited by Archie Burnett (2007), which brought together every known letter of Housman's - then amounting to 2,327. First, Richard Freeman made available to me eighteen letters in his possession written by Housman between 1911 and 1933 to the economist Herbert Foxwell. (Freeman was for some years Chief Economist at ICI, and had revised the entry on Foxwell in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.) Then Andrew Jackson, the son of Housman's god-son Gerald Jackson, showed me fifteen letters written to Gerald between 1925 and 1936. (Earlier this year Trinity College, Cambridge, acquired fourteen of these letters, along with a further thirty-nine to Gerald.)

Housman began as a star in the family firmament. He won a scholarship to St John's College, Oxford, took a First in Classical Moderations, and then achieved the seemingly impossible - complete failure in Greats. He was obliged to make a humiliating return to Oxford to sit for a Pass Degree. Prospects of an academic career vanished overnight but in his spare time from a post in the Patent Office he built a reputation by publishing textual criticism of Latin and Greek manuscripts in learned journals. Twelve years of effort and twenty-five papers later, this former academic failure was elected Professor of Latin at University College London, and in 1911 Professor of Latin at Cambridge. Self-direction was Housman's forte: he always knew what he wanted to do with his life. His motivation

may also have been fuelled by the trauma of his mother's death when eleven, his recent academic failure and his homosexuality.

His letters to Foxwell were perfectly preserved in Richard Freeman's archive, each in its small envelope addressed in Housman's statuesquely beautiful hand. Housman met Foxwell when he was appointed Professor of Latin at University College London where Foxwell was Professor of Political Economy. When Housman went to Cambridge, where Foxwell lived, their friendship continued. Housman's letters show that they dined together once or twice a year over a period of twenty-two years; they are friendly and relaxed invitations to dinners or feasts at Trinity, and acceptances of invitations to dinner at St John's, where Foxwell was a fellow. They evidence a close and empathetic friendship. "It will delight me to dine with you at your feast on the 6th. The Evangelist, I must remind you, was too tough to be martyred, and throve on boiling oil; and I expect to receive some of his healthy vigour from his commemorative feast." On Foxwell's birthday, he wrote, "I give myself the pleasure of sending you my best congratulations on your attaining the age of 80, and I think I may quite properly wish you many happy returns of the day to such a juvenile octogenarian".

The significance of the Foxwell letters is not so much in their content as in the seeming incongruity of a long-standing friendship between these two men. As an unmarried man Foxwell had an astonishingly active love life, specializing in aspiring actresses, picked up outside London theatres, or alternatively, girls in service. It is hard to believe that Housman was attracted by Foxwell's academic work on banking, bimetallism, imperial preference and tariff reform, or by his interest in Karl Marx. Most likely it was Foxwell's sparkling and extrovert personality and their mutual enjoyment of witty repartee that cemented the friendship, which was one of behavioural opposites, not unlike Housman's with Grant Richards and William Rothenstein. Spice may have been added by the odd racy story, very much part of Housman's repertoire - and, given the breadth of Foxwell's worldly experience, probably part of his too.

Homosexuality made Housman's life, outwardly, an emotional desert - the price he paid for the prejudices of society and religion, and his own reticent and repressed nature. The precise nature of the attachment he formed at Oxford to a fellow undergraduate, Moses Jackson, remains unclear, but it was sufficiently powerful to last a lifetime, generate the poems of *A Shropshire Lad*, and be capable of a rare metamorphosis: Housman was not only god father to the Jacksons' fourth son, but became a family friend and benefactor, helping Moses to buy a farm in Canada. Three of Jackson's sons, Rupert, Hector and Oscar, who fought with the Canadian forces during the First World War, visited Housman in Cambridge. After Moses died in 1923 Housman continued to enjoy the respect and affection of the whole Jackson family. In the fifteen letters from Housman to his godson there is ample evidence of this unbroken relationship. The additional letters acquired by Trinity add another dimension: here is a sequence of letters in which Housman speaks authentically and from the heart.

His first letter to Gerald was written in November 1925 after Gerald had outlined his future plans. Housman's response was supportive and generous. "If you find yourself at all straitened for money at the university I hope you will apply to me. A little often makes all the difference between comfort and discomfort." In May 1927 Gerald told him of his intention to take a research degree and possibly go to Cambridge; Housman was welcoming but practical. "Of course I should be glad to see you here, but it is no good asking my opinion and advice which are valueless, as I stick to my job and know hardly anything about research studies here." In a letter of February 1928, Housman mentions Gerald's mother Rosa, who had evidently expressed worries about the likely curtailment of Gerald's Rhodesian fieldwork, and frequently his other brothers. By November 1930 Gerald occupied room 3 on staircase B of New Court, pending his formal admission to Trinity. Housman was punctilious: "When once you are admitted it will not be possible for me to ask you to the High Table, so will you come and dine with me in Hall on Monday, the first day I have free: and I will ask Winstanley [the Senior Tutor] to put off your fall in the social scale until afterwards".

Housman wrote on average seven times a year between 1929 and 1935, but as many as ten times in 1933. His letters invariably begin, "My dear Gerald" and end "Your affectionate god

father A.E. Housman"; they are always relaxed and tactfully paternalistic. He insisted on being kept up to date with Gerald's financial needs and told him that he intended leaving him £300 in his will. Anticipating protest from Gerald about having had a bill from Imperial College (where he had studied for his doctorate) settled, Housman wrote in January 1931: "It may annoy you to hear that your College bill for last term is paid; but do not stick your heels in the ground and be nasty. If you could have any idea of what my feeling for your father was and still is you would not grudge me the pleasure". This is conclusive evidence, if any were needed, of the enduring nature of Housman's attachment to Moses Jackson.

Housman became almost motherly in his anxiety that Gerald should not work himself too hard, should not go "starving yourself or depriving yourself of proper amusement". Counselling Gerald about career options in the dire economic circumstances of 1935, he wrote "I think it would be a pity to break off your medical education unless a really good offer in the mining world came along". He periodically commented on the inadequacies of Gerald's language but never in a hurtful or ironic way, describing Gerald's address to the Geological Society as "Like the English army at Bannockburn: gay yet fearful to behold".

During the final months of his life Housman's capabilities fluctuated. A letter written from a nursing home on January 5, 1936, was in pencil, barely legible, somewhat disjointed, addressed by his friend and colleague A.S.F. Gow, and sent to St Thomas's Hospital where Gerald was now pursuing his medical course:

"I am so much better that I can answer civilly letters like yours. Hitherto my indigestion and nausea have been too disabling. I shall try to send you a cheque for £450, which if I mistake the regular amount [sic] and which I beg you to accept if so without demur, as I can quite well sustain it. My head has somehow got confused between your family and my nephews".

Within a month he was his usual self, lucid and coherent. His final two letters to Gerald are revelatory. Housman had hatched a plot with Gerald to recognize his appreciation for the efforts of the nursing home staff. In a letter of January 17, he sent him a cheque for two pounds to purchase gifts for the nurses from Fortnum & Mason. These were to be sent via the Deputy Matron. On January 31 he gave Gerald (then in Switzerland) news of how his efforts had been received: "The nurses went into ecstasies over the sweets and over admiration of your taste, for I told them I had left the choice to you. Harrods provender was also good". These two letters are a testament to Housman's capacity to be ordinary, human and lovable. I already respected and admired him; now I come to like him.

Edgar Vincent

*Thanks to Richard Freeman, Andrew Jackson and the Jackson family, Sarah Baxter and Nicolas Bell for their help. Also to Kwansei University, Kobe, Japan, owners of the Foxwell letters, the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, owners of the Jackson letters, and the Society of Authors acting on behalf of the Housman estate for their kind permissions to reproduce extracts from the letters.*

This article is reproduced with the kind agreement of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Housman's letter to Gerald Jackson of 17 January 1936 is reproduced by permission of the Society of Authors and the Master & Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.

in the actual delivery, but crossing the court was a labour and indeed so is almost any physical action.

I think your idea of a holiday before the examination is very likely a good one.

Your affectionate godfather  
A. E. Housman.

kind and attentive, I send the nurses a present of something to eat, such as strawberries in season, or boxes of chocolates. Will you expend the enclosed cheque for £2.0.0 in purchasing and having sent from them a selection of sweetmeats (crystallised fruits or anything which you think will be relished, and perhaps not exactly what is most

Trinity College  
Cambridge

17 Jan. 1936

My dear Gerald,

Acquainted as you are with Foxton and Ineson and families with the female medical soul you are just the man to execute this job. After a stay in the Evelyn Nursing Home, where they are always extraordinarily

commonly to be found in Cambridge, - though do not be particular about that, as they are all fond of chocolate) addressed to the Deputy Master and enclosing the enclosed letter from me?

Thanks for all your enquiries during my illness. I was obliged to neglect all correspondence and am only now beginning to write. I gave my first lecture this morning, and had no difficulty

One of A.E. Housman's last letters to his godson, Gerald Jackson, 17 January 1936

## **‘Dust and ashes’: Housman’s letters to his godson Gerald Jackson**

by Linda Hart

In 1676 Sir Christopher Wren designed a library for Trinity College, Cambridge; it finally opened its doors to students in 1695. I turned up 321 years later, in September 2016, in order to read 53 letters from A.E. Housman to his godson Dr Gerald Jackson.\* Dr Nicolas Bell, Fellow and Librarian of Trinity, gave me a warm welcome. He had made sure the letters were waiting for me on one of the tables for external readers at the far end of Wren’s enormous but beautifully proportioned room.

As I walked the entire length of the Library towards the larger-than-life-size statue of Lord Byron, looking down on me were the many marble busts of Trinity notables as well as the famous Grinling Gibbons wood carvings. No wonder I felt a *frisson* of excitement. The fact that I was about to read 53 unpublished letters by Housman made it even more exciting.

But if I am honest, my slow walk down the length of Wren’s Library was more exciting than my arrival at the designated table. All of the letters were in a very ordinary and very grey manila folder with a fold-over flap – the sort of folder I use at home for bank statements and insurance policies. The Housman-Jackson folder is only one-inch thick, give or take a few millimetres. I began with a careful but quick thumb-through of the entire collection, and realised how carefully the Jackson family -- Gerald in the first instance, his three sons afterwards -- had preserved the letters, almost all of which are with their original envelopes.

The letters almost always begin ‘My dear Gerald’ and end ‘Your affectionate godfather A.E. Housman’. They cover the years 1927 to 1936, when Gerald (in his late 20s and early 30s) was carrying out research as a geologist in Central Africa; then writing up his fieldwork while at Imperial College, London and Trinity College, Cambridge; and then attending medical school at St Thomas’s Hospital, London.

Housman shows concern for Gerald’s studies and career plans (geology *vs* medicine); shares news about Gerald’s three brothers; and discusses Gerald’s possible visits to Trinity for a meal or an overnight stay. Housman did for Gerald what my father used to do for me: send press clippings about subjects of special interest. So it was nice to see that Housman enclosed two long newspaper articles about the copper mines in Northern Rhodesia in his letter to Gerald of 10 February 1931. But Housman doesn’t give much away about his own life or feelings. The snippets about his travels and his health, his work and food, were interesting but made me want more.

He gives Gerald brief accounts of holidays abroad and of travels in England. On 19 May 1927 he tells Gerald that ‘Most of June I shall spend with old friends in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. I expect to go on a motoring tour in Burgundy.’ When he returns from a fortnight’s holiday in Paris he writes (15 July 1930) to tell Gerald where he has been and that while in Paris he did ‘a good deal of motoring in the neighbourhood’.

On 4 August 1928 Housman says that he will be visiting his godfather who is 89 and losing his memory; Gerald is therefore warned to ‘be prepared for my mental decay in 20 years’ time.’ Housman – either misremembering or having been misinformed – subsequently makes his godfather out to be a year younger, but the type of joke remains the same: ‘My godfather has died at the age of 88, so you must expect to lose me in 18 years’ time.’ (2 May 1929)

Gerald received his PhD in the depths of the Great Depression when there was no work for a geologist. He began studying medicine, thinking he would be more likely to find employment. On 27 February 1933, writing to Gerald at St Thomas’ Medical School, Housman says ‘I am sorry that the Cambridge men at St Thomas’s are “very bisexual”, but perhaps that is only your handwriting.’ The following month he complains that writing the Leslie Stephen lecture is proving to be ‘great toil and



trouble'. But he sends Gerald tickets for reserved places in Senate House so that he can come hear the lecture.

On 14 October 1933 Housman tells Gerald to 'take care not to overwork yourself and cram in more than you can manage.' It won't surprise Housman Society members that his godfatherly advice extended to the use of the English language. 'Don't say "I will have to work" when you mean "I shall".' But he complimented Gerald as well: 'Thanks for sending me your able and convincing monograph, full of beautiful new words, both long and short, of which my favourite is ong.' (17 June 1932) In this same letter he explains that recently aeroplanes have improved: pilots can now fly through clouds 'without losing their way, so that one is not in constant danger of hitting trees and knocking off tall people's hats.'

He doesn't hide his pessimistic view of life from Gerald. On 13 September 1934 he says that 'My chief ambition all my life has been to be invited to the Colchester Oyster Feast. This has come to pass this year, but my lecture at Cambridge will prevent me from going. Let this be a lesson to my godson that earthly hopes are dust and ashes.' But he had enjoyed oysters as usual to ring in the new year, and reported to Gerald (18 January 1934) that 'the 52 oysters I consumed on December 31 did me good.'

Housman is very generous, sending Gerald a cheque every January 'to see you through the year.' In January 1935, for example: 'I send you enclosed a cheque for £450 for this next year, which I hope will be happy and occupied with interesting work.' When Gerald expresses concern about being the recipient of such largesse, Housman tells him that he wants to and can afford to send the money. He also tells Gerald that he intends to leave him £300 in his will.

Some droll Housman humour surfaces now and again. For example, on 10 June 1933: 'I feel that I ought to apologise for answering your letter by return of post: it annoys me when people do it to me.' I sent a slightly tweaked version of this to a friend recently, when replying immediately to his email, and am told that it raised a smile.

From 1933 onwards Housman makes more and more comments about his poor health. For example, on 13 September 1933: 'I was attacked by a violent inflammation of the throat which I believe is a form of influenza, and which leaves its victims very weak and exhausted.' On 3 March 1934 Housman congratulates Gerald on becoming a doctor: 'I hope that when you come to [seeing] the patients you will find that what you have been learning about their insides is all true.'

Towards the end of his life, Housman himself became a patient, spending time in and out of a Cambridge nursing home. The correspondence ends with two letters to Gerald that show us a different side of Housman. The first asks Gerald to buy some sweets from Fortnum & Mason and to send them as gifts to the nurses who had looked after him (a cheque for £2 was enclosed); the second letter tells Gerald that 'The nurses went into ecstasies over the sweets and over admiration of your taste, for I told them I had left the choice to you.'

Walking around Cambridge after reading these letters, a possibly unworthy thought kept coming to mind. Gerald was Moses' offspring; Moses had died in 1922; was Gerald now a substitute for Moses? Did Housman wish he were writing to Moses instead of to Gerald? That's not a kind thought, because Housman's concern for Gerald's future prospects and an interest in his current well-being seem very genuine. Perhaps the idea behind my unworthy thought is better expressed this way: did he wish he were writing to Moses *as well as* to Gerald?

---

\*Gerald (1900-78) was the youngest of Moses Jackson's four sons. Having successfully completed his thesis on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, he was awarded his D.Sc. in 1932. In the previous *Housman Society Newsletter* (no. 44, pp 15-17) I wrote about Trinity College's purchase of these letters last year. The Housman Society is planning a visit to Trinity College this summer for members who want to see these letters and other Housman items.

## **Book Review: ‘A. E. Housman; A Single Life’ by Martin Blocksidge**

(Sussex Academic Press, 2016)

Martin Blocksidge’s recent biography of AEH sets out, as its title suggests, to debunk the widely held idea that Housman’s two areas of intellectual activity – that of classical scholar and of poet – find their roots in a flawed or divided personality. As one would expect of the work of a renowned biographer, former Head of English, Director of Studies and President of the English Association, it is thoroughly researched and referenced, seamlessly combines biography and literary criticism and is eminently readable. Through extensive reference to the letters and other sources, it also gives a delightful sense of AEH as loyal and generous to those who knew him, well-liked by them in return, witty and delighted by the absurd, a hedonist and a bon vivant, as well as being one of the most formidable scholars of his age and one of the most popular of English poets.

The title of the work also demonstrates three aspects of Housman’s life that make up this singular figure of English Literature and Classical Scholarship. It is a ‘single’ life not only in terms of the ascetic bachelor academic, but also in an unshakable devotion throughout his adult life to one other and finally as a highly distinguished figure in the academic and literary world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Blocksidge brings all three of these elements together with a lightness of touch and a felicity of expression that makes reading the text a particular pleasure. Eight detailed chapters chart the stages of AEH’s life and each is introduced by a chapter heading that quotes him and reflects the general focus and effect of that specific period. Woven into the biography is a sensitive analysis of the poetry, which connects with and further illuminates the relationships and experiences that inspired it. At the same time, the author includes throughout a description and analysis of both AEH’s literary and his scholastic methods which is both comprehensive and, at the same time, accessible to the general reader.

To my taste, the at times prurient focus in the penultimate chapter on what might be referred to as the darker side of AEH’s middle and later years, in his regular visits to Italy and France in particular, is a little unnecessary; this includes an exploration of the notorious “10 in 15 days” list to which Richard Perceval Graves was the first to refer in his biography. However, Blocksidge is rather more tempered in his approach than the “sensationalistic scenario” as he himself describes Perceval Graves’ account of this aspect of AEH’s life. Of course, Perceval Graves’ biography is nevertheless universally acknowledged as an excellent work and I personally feel that ‘A Single Life’ is at least its equal. Like ‘The Scholar Poet’, it includes an excellent bibliography and a most thorough index and, while the notes are not as full as in Perceval Graves, they still provide useful reference for the scholar. More importantly this is an engaging, accessible and thorough biography, which more than achieves its aim of presenting the complex but single personality of AEH with admirable clarity, commitment and authority, and is highly recommended.

Andrew Maund

“A. E. Housman: A Single Life” by Martin Blocksidge is published by Sussex Academic Press ([www.sussex-academic.com](http://www.sussex-academic.com)) ISBN 978-1-84519-761-2

### **From the Treasurer**

When I returned to the Housman Society Committee in 2014 it was to try and help steady the ship in the period up to and beyond the retirement of Jim Page who had chaired the Society for almost thirty years. I think that I have probably succeeded in that modest ambition and, initially at least, I imagined that I might stay on for a few years but over the last twelve months I have come to realise that I am not as young as I was and, last August, I informed the Committee that I would be retiring from the position of Treasurer and my other co-opted duties and from the Committee at the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

My health, I believe, is in reasonable shape but my fitness levels are poor and my energy levels are low and I have reached the conclusion that, although I have a great regard for this Society, I can't keep finding the resolve to keep pushing myself as in previous years. But I am pleased to say that we have found a volunteer to take over as Treasurer and it looks as if a new Chairman will be installed in the foreseeable future and, I am sure, the Society will go forward from strength to strength.

And thus I depart to the backbenches but I have agreed that I would be happy to address the Society on my favourite subject if requested in the future and I have agreed to give a talk entitled 'Chansons d'Outre- tombe' at this year's Ludlow Commemoration. Keen Housman enthusiasts will immediately recognise from where I have purloined this title. And I have also agreed to continue running the Society Book Exchange for as long as the membership finds it of interest. I have already advised the Committee that the Grim Reaper has claimed almost a dozen keen Housman collectors over the last fourteen years and they are not being replaced on a pro-rata basis and thus the Book Exchange sales are not as buoyant as in days of old. But, as I have said, the Book Exchange facility will continue for as long as it proves needed.

Peter Sisley

## **The Housman Society Book Exchange**

The Book Exchange has acquired a splendid Housman collection which is being advertised for the first time on these pages and offers some truly rare and special volumes for the membership. And, in an attempt to do justice to this acquisition, I am pleased to say that the Editor of the Newsletter has allowed me more space than usual to advertise our wares.

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

## **SALES LIST - FEBRUARY 2017**

Postage and Packing are additional to the prices quoted.

BAYLEY (John). HOUSMAN'S POEMS. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992. First edition. 202 pages. A critical appraisal of Housman's Poetry. Fine in a similar dust jacket. £40

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

BRINK (C.O.). ENGLISH CLASSICAL SCHOLARSHIP. James Clarke & Co. Ltd., Cambridge, 1985. First edition. 8vo. 243 pages. Reflections on Bentley, Porson and Housman by a successor Kennedy Professor of Latin. Fine in a very good dust jacket. £20

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE LIBRARY. THE NAME AND NATURE OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Bryn Mawr College Library, Pennsylvania, 1986. First edition. 4to. 54 pages. With an introduction by Seymour Adelman. The catalogue of the amazing Housman collection donated to the College by Adelman. A superb work. In fine condition. £25

BURNETT (Archie) [editor]. THE LETTERS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2007. 8vo. First edition. Two volumes in slipcase. 8vo. Volume 1 - 1872-1926. liv. 643 pages. Volume 2 -

1927-1936. 585 pages. Over 2200 letters are here listed and the notes and commentary are simply superb. A remarkable production. In fine condition. £145

CARTER (John), SPARROW (John) and WHITE (William). A.E. HOUSMAN – A BIBLIOGRAPHY. St. Paul's Bibliographies, Godalming, 1982. 8vo. 94 pages. An updated, revised and considerably enlarged version of the 1952 first edition. Fine. £25

CLUCAS (Humphrey). THROUGH TIME AND PLACE TO ROAM. University of Salzburg, 1995. First edition. 8vo. 67 pages. Softcover. Nine essays on Housman. Very good indeed. £10

DIGGLE (J) and GOODYEAR (F.R.D.). THE CLASSICAL PAPERS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. VOLUME I 1882 -1897, VOLUME II 1897 -1914, VOLUME III 1915 - 1936. Cambridge University Press, 1972. First edition. 8vo. Three Volumes totalling 1318 pages. Fine in near fine dust jackets. A beautiful set of books. £200

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

HAMILTON (Robert). HOUSMAN THE POET. Sydney Lee, Exeter, 1953. First edition. 8vo. 74 pages. Paper covers. One of the earliest books to concentrate on an evaluation of Housman's poetry. Scarce. Very good. £35

HAWKINS (Maude M.). A.E. HOUSMAN: MAN BEHIND A MASK. Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1958. First edition (not published in the U.K.). 292 pages. The author's writing style and tendency to assumption has resulted in this book being regarded as an unreliable biography but Hawkins did spend much time with Laurence Housman in the book's preparation. Very good in a very good dust jacket. £20

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

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. John Lane, The Bodley Head, New York, 1897. The First American edition. 12mo. 96pp. Paper boards on parchment back. One of about 150 (Grant Richards says 162) copies sent to the US out of the first London edition of 500 copies. Carter and Sparrow label B. Soiling to boards and rubbing to extremities. Corners bumped. Soiling and small loss to spine label. Previous ownership signature to title page. Internally some browning to pages but a very good tight copy. A hand-written paper label giving the book title and author has been affixed to the front cover and is the major defect. Without the stated imperfections this book would be offered at a four-figure sum. An opportunity to own a piece of history at modest cost. £400

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Grant Richards, London, 1898. 12mo. 96 pages plus advertisements at rear. Sage green buckram. The first Grant Richards edition. As long ago as 1940 Carter and Sparrow described this edition of 500 copies as "now a scarce book". Previous owner's signature to first free endpaper. Head and tail of spine a little worn, corners bumped. Very good. £150

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Grant Richards, London, 1898. Another copy. Very good covers and very clean internally but pages beginning to separate from spine on pages 48-49. Very good. £100

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Grant Richards, London, 1904. 117 pages. Orange cloth pocket edition, top edge gilt. From the Smaller Classics Series, the title of which upset Housman so much. Front cover starting to separate but the book is square and strong. Very Good. Scarce. £50

HOUSMAN (A.E.). D. IVNII IVVENALIS SATVRAE. E. Grant Richards, London, 1905. First edition. 36 page preface followed by 146 pages of text. Original boards showing some wear and missing the paper spine label. Spine in fragile state. Internally very clean. An extremely rare volume. Good. £100

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. A clean fresh copy. Very scarce. Very good indeed. £50

HOUSMAN (A.E.). LAST POEMS. Grant Richards Limited, London, 1922. First edition. 79 pages. Blue cloth missing the dust jacket. The true first edition with the missing punctuation on page 52 which so annoyed Housman and led to his accusation that bibliophiles were "an idiotic class". Some discolouration to boards and suffers internally from intrusive foxing. Signed by Housman on the half-title page. £350

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. ANNAEI BELLI CIVILIS LIBRI DECEM. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1927. Second (corrected) impression. 8vo. xxxv. 342pp. Blue cloth. Contains extensive professorial pencil annotations. Very good. £40

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

HOUSMAN (A.E.). M. MANILII ASTRONOMICA. EDITIO MINOR. Cambridge University Press, 1932. 8vo. First edition. 8vo. xiv. 181pp. Blue cloth missing the dust jacket. A sharp and clean copy. Very good. £50.

HOUSMAN (A.E.). MORE POEMS. Jonathan Cape, London, 1936. The limited edition. Number 300 of 379 copies. 8vo. 71 pages. Quarter leather, marbled endpapers, top edge gilt. Contains a manuscript facsimile of *Tarry, delight, so seldom met*, not included in the trade edition. Corners a trifle bumped. Very good, missing the elusive dust jacket. £65

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. George Harrap, London, 1940. 8vo. 99 pages. Brown cloth with the elusive dust jacket depicting 'The Recruit'. The first edition with the delightful woodcuts by Agnes Miller Parker. Scarce in this condition with dust jacket. Very good. £50

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. George Harrap, London, 1940. Proof Copy. 8vo. 99pp. With the evocative wood engravings by Agnes Miller Parker. Brown paper covers endorsed 'Advance Proof Copy. Unrevised and Confidential'. An interesting and unusual survivor. £40

HOUSMAN (A.E.). A SHROPSHIRE LAD. Mount Vernon, Peter Paper Press, no date (but 1948). 12mo. 73pp. Green and blue patterned boards in slipcase. Very good.

*together with*

HOUSMAN (A.E.). FRAGMENT OF A GREEK TRAGEDY. No publishers imprint but Peter Pauper Press, Mount Vernon. 12mo. 8 pages. Paper covers. A supplement to the publisher's edition of *A Shropshire Lad*. Very good. £25 the pair

HOUSMAN (A.E.). *A SHROPSHIRE LAD*. The Heritage Press, New York, 1951. With colour decorations by Edward A. Wilson and including a most interesting appendix of bibliographical material by Carl J. Webber. Hardback in slipcase. Very good. £15

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

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

HOUSMAN (A.E.). *A SHROPSHIRE LAD*. The Ashford Press, Shedfield, 1988. First edition. Folio. The trade edition of Piers Browne's sumptuous Shorthorn Press edition of *A Shropshire Lad*. An ideal gift. Very good in the slipcase. £15

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. Fine but for the book-plate of Housman collector P.B.Morris. £50.

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

HOUSMAN (Laurence) [contributes]. *ENCOUNTER MAGAZINE. VOLUME XXIX No.4*. Continental Publishers, London, 1967. 8vo. 96pp. Paper covers. On pages 33-41 is printed for the first time *A.E. Housman's 'De Amicitia'*, annotated by John Carter. Very good indeed. £20

HOUSMAN (Laurence). *ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN'S "DE AMICITIA"*. The Little Rabbit Book Company, London, 1976. First edition. 8vo. 39pp. Laurence Housman's account of one aspect of his brother's life, written soon after Alfred's death and deposited at the British Museum in 1942, with the injunction that it remained sealed for twenty-five years. First published in *Encounter Magazine* in 1967, this unauthorised volume remains the only edition of the text in book form. A beautifully produced publication. One of 200 numbered copies. In fine condition. £75

HOUSMAN SOCIETY JOURNALS. *A FULL SET. 1974 – 2016*. The Society has managed to locate another full set of HSJ's and is pleased to offer them to the membership at a fraction of the cost that would be charged on the open market. Forty-two issues. The condition varies from Very Good to Mint. £180

HOUSMAN SOCIETY JOURNAL. *VOLUME ONE*. 8vo. 56 pages. Blue card covers. London, Turner and Devereux, 1974. Volume One of the Society Journal includes articles by F.W. Bateson, B.F. Fisher IV, A.S.F. Gow, Joe Hunt, Norman Marlow, Enoch Powell, John Sparrow, Graham Speake and L.P. Wilkinson. Mint. £20

HOUSMAN SOCIETY JOURNAL. *VOLUME TWO*. 8vo. 63 pages. Blue card covers. London, Turner and Devereux, 1975. Volume Two of the Society Journal includes articles by G.B.A. Fletcher, A.S.F. Gow, Molly Holden, Joe Hunt, Henry Maas, John Bayley and F.C. Horwood. Mint. £20

JEBB (Keith). *A.E. HOUSMAN*. Seren Books, Bridgend, 1992. First edition. 8vo. 147 pages. Green cloth in dust jacket. A short biography of Housman. Fine in a similar dust jacket. £15

MAAS (Henry). THE LETTERS OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1971. First edition. 8vo. 458 pages. Red cloth with dust jacket. Very good indeed. £20

MARLOW (Norman). A.E. HOUSMAN. SCHOLAR AND POET. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958. First edition. 8vo. 192 pages. Hard back. The first full-length study of Housman's poetry. Very good indeed in the elusive dust jacket. £30

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

NAIDITCH (P.G.). A.E. HOUSMAN AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE. THE ELECTION OF 1892. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1988. First edition. 261 pages. Soft covers. Another copy. In very good condition. £50

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

PAGE (Norman). A.E. HOUSMAN – A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY. Schoken Books, New York, 1983. First edition. 8vo. 236 pages. Yellow cloth in dust jacket. A beautifully written biography. Fine. £20

PLATT (Arthur). NINE ESSAYS. Cambridge at the University Press, 1927. First edition. 220 pages. Red cloth. Housman not only supplied the seven page preface but also managed the progress of the book through the press. Very good indeed but missing the dust jacket as usual. £35

PUGH (John). BROMSGROVE AND THE HOUSMANS. The Housman Society, Bromsgrove, 1974. 178 pages plus 84 pages of appendix. First edition One of the 100 numbered copies signed by the author and with a signed dedication on the first free endpaper. Mint in mint dust jacket.

*together with*

PUGH (John). INDEX TO BROMSGROVE AND THE HOUSMANS. The Housman Society, Bromsgrove, 1984. 13 pages. First edition. Soft covers. In mint condition. £75 the pair.

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

ROBINSON (Oliver). THE POETRY OF A.E. HOUSMAN. A CRITICAL ESSAY. Boston, Bruce Humphries inc., 1950. First edition. 8vo. 71 pages. Oatmeal cloth, missing the dust jacket. The first standard analysis of Housman's verse contains a very useful bibliography. Inscribed and dedicated by the author. Very good. Scarce. £50

SHAW (Robin). HOUSMAN'S PLACES. The Housman Society, Bromsgrove, 1995. The Limited Edition Hardback. With the *Housman Places* bookplate of John Pugh, joint-founder of the Society. Signed by the author. An essential volume for those embarking upon a Housman pilgrimage. In mint condition. £30

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

SYMONS (Katharine). MEMORIES OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Grant Mellhuish, Bath, September 1936. 8 pages. Paper covers. Pamphlet written by Housman's sister (from the magazine of King Edward's School, Bath). Contains the first appearance of seven of Housman's comic verses. Staples rusted as usual otherwise very good. £20

SYMONS (Katharine). MORE MEMORIES OF A.E. HOUSMAN. Grant Mellhuish, Bath, December 1936. 4 pages. Paper covers. Another pamphlet written by Housman's sister and much scarcer than its predecessor. It includes 'The Force of Habit' and 'Heliogabalus'. Near fine. £30

SYMONS (Katharine E.), POLLARD (A.W.), HOUSMAN (Laurence), CHAMBERS (R.W.), KER (Alan), GOW (A.S.F.), SPARROW (John) and SYMONS (N.V.H.). ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN. Bromsgrove School, 1936. First edition. 4to. 65 pages. The true first edition. Number 211 of 250 copies. Card covers with deckled edges. The Housman Memorial Supplement of the 'Bromsgrovian'. Externally very good indeed and internally fine; almost certainly never read. An excellent example of a notoriously fragile publication. £50

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. Near fine in a very good dust jacket. £20

WITHERS (Percy). A BURIED LIFE. Jonathan Cape, London, 1940. First edition. 133 pages. Blue cloth missing the dust jacket. Withers first met Housman in 1917 at Cambridge and this book records their association over the next twenty years. Very Good. £35

WITHERS (Percy). A BURIED LIFE. Jonathan Cape, London, 1940. First edition. 133 pages. Blue cloth missing the dust jacket. Another copy. Inscribed by the author and dated August 1940. Very good. £50

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

#### AND FINALLY

The Society holds copies of many Housman books which are never advertised in the Newsletter, many in the £5-£10 price bracket. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of this listing please email Peter Sisley at [sisley.ladywood@talk21.com](mailto:sisley.ladywood@talk21.com)

<p>The Housman Society <i>Newsletter</i> is published by the Housman Society, Abberley Cottage, 7 Dowles Road, Bewdlwy, DY12 2EJ. The next Newsletter will be circulated in September 2017 and contributions should be sent to the Editor at <a href="mailto:julianmhunt@btinternet.com">julianmhunt@btinternet.com</a> by the end of July.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------