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## *The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society Newsletter Number Sixteen*

*Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After The Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Maze, Some World Far From Ours and 'Stay Corydon, Thou Swain', Elinor Barley, A Moral Ending, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in The Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and The Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, Selected Stories, Somerset, Jane Austen, T.H. White, A Biography, Letters, The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King*

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NEWSLETTER NUMBER SIXTEEN

2008 will be an exciting year for the Society, as it marks the publication of books of verse by Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland. There will be a revised edition of Sylvia's collected poems, including many additions, and a new volume of Valentine's verse.

The launch of the newly revised and expanded edition of Sylvia's poetry will be celebrated by a concert in Oxford at the beginning of May, which will be the highlight of the Society's Spring weekend in that city.

The Society has been successful, too, in its purchase of the Warner/Stonor letters, for which there was an appeal at the end of last year. As time passes, the discovery of previously unknown letters or other manuscript material will become an increasingly rare event, so we were pleased to secure this collection.

More details of all of these happenings can be found in this Newsletter. The Society is thriving – long may it continue to do so!

Thanks go to Judith Bond, Morine Krissdóttir, Stephen Mottram, Richard Searle, Peter Tolhurst and Ruth Williams for their help with this Newsletter.

*Judith Stinton*

**SUBSCRIPTIONS: a reminder**

If you haven't yet paid for 2008, please send your subscription to Judith Bond, 26 Portwey Close, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 8RF. The cost for UK members remains unchanged at £10, while the rate for overseas members is \$25. Cheques should be made payable to the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society.

Autumn Weekend, 2007

On Friday, September 28th members met up at the Fountain Inn, Wells, in the rain - which might have made for a dampening beginning to the weekend. But the food was good and the conversation lively. As the specials board was on the stairs below the room where we were sitting,

anyone who felt in need of exercise could go for a quick glimpse of what was on offer, memorise it and return to intone the menu to the expectant party.

We began our exploration of STW's Somerset on the Saturday morning when we met again in Glastonbury (opposite the Sufi Charity Shop). Ruth Williams had brought some of her book-crawling finds with her (see the last and the current Newsletters) which we all examined - rather riskily - over our coffee. Then we visited the Abbey ruins. Enough is left to give an impression of the great length of the building and of what a presence it must have been. There's a cutting of a cutting from the original thorn tree, sprung from Joseph of Arimathea's Staff, which still flowers twice-yearly. The Abbey kitchen is remarkably intact, with a lantern roof which Sylvia rather underdescribes as 'sturdy'. It is a lofty testament to the importance of food in monastic life.

And in the Society's life. After a wander around the shops, which offer peacock clothes, incense in all shapes and sizes, crystals, Tarot readings and statues of Buddha (if only Sylvia could have seen this transformation of the town), we drove to Priddy for lunch. Above the village we paused at a viewpoint to gaze upon 'the most startling view in Somerset'. This view - though partially obscured by mist - still opened on to a wild and expansive range of hills, settlements and rocks.

We had a dining-room to ourselves in the Victoria pub. Was this deliberate, we wondered? It was at this meal that Jenny Wildblood put forward an idea for a future event: a meal composed entirely of recipes mentioned by Sylvia in her writings. Woodcock, someone objected, might be out of season - but the idea won general approval.

Then we walked around Priddy, a dawdling and unspoilt village, 'held together by a common relationship to a large green with a quantity of small roads going off from it', and with caverns beneath its feet. The church is above and beyond the village, and is not mentioned by STW, who was not of course writing a conventional guidebook.

Sylvia does however mention the church at Wrington, our next port of call, as this is the burying-place of busy philanthropist and pamphleteer Hannah More, to whom Warner devotes a fair amount of space in the guide. The More sisters' tomb (there were five of them) is a hideous slab from which no ghost could possibly escape. There's also a tablet to the family inside the church, while More and John Locke guard each side of the south door. Sylvia wondered what the pair might talk about to pass the time during the long dark evenings - 'neither of them could stomach

an atheist, but such a subject must soon be exhausted'.

The church has other, more predictable but charming attractions, including a stone reredos by Charles Barry and a tiny chained library. While rummaging amongst the generous piles of literature on offer, we discovered an elderly, hand-produced guide which seemed to be the one Sylvia consulted during her travels. Stephen Mottram photographed its typed pages (which he describes below).

Outside the village is Hannah More's house, Barley Wood, where she lived from 1804 to five years before her death in 1833. Like the house of the Ladies of Llangollen, it has grown considerably and is now somewhat ungainly, but is still worth a (sneaky) look.

On the other side of the road is the house's former kitchen garden, which now contains a convenient café in one of its greenhouses - a café with another expansive view.

The delicious evening meal was in the restaurant of the Crown Inn. The neighbouring bar soon became packed with the cheerfully rowdy youth of Wells (practically all of them, it would seem) while we dined in more sedate surroundings.

Sunday was spent in Wells, wandering around the Vicars Close and trying to get into the Cathedral between services. A ginger cat managed rather better, scuttling through the doors while Morning Prayer was in full swing.

The Cathedral's Refectory, one of the eating-places selflessly researched by the Society's committee on a previous occasion, was unexpectedly closed, and so we had instead a picnic, impromptu and *al fresco*, on the Green.

As always on the Sunday of our weekend, there was a slow falling away as members began to make their way homeward. Those who remained had a highly enjoyable exploration of the gardens of the Bishop's Palace, about which the last words should go to Sylvia:

*Where in the world is there a pleasanter strolling-place than the leafy walks that accompany the moat that surrounds the walls that encompass the palace of the Bishop of Bath and Wells? The moat is so broad that it reflects the quivering wall and the treetops rising above it. At one corner there is an inrush of water, a constant liquid voice and stir. Along one wall are espaliered old fruit-trees, and some delightful peonies. Above*

*the wall one sees trees waving, the ruins of the old banqueting house,  
built in a convivial rosy stone, and the grey towers of the cathedral.*

Thanks go to Richard Searle for all his work in organising the trip.

*Judith Stinton*

### **THE UNFORTUNATE AND THE REPLICAS IN THE WRINGTON CHURCH HAND-BOOK, 1949**

In *Somerset*, originally published in 1949, Sylvia Townsend Warner wrote that the handbook to Wrington church tells visitors what to regret as well as what to admire. Remarkably, a type-written copy of this handbook is still available in the church, as we discovered on our visit in September 2007.

The oldest part of the present church is the chancel, dating from the latter part of the fourteenth century. There were structural alterations in 1860 and a hand-book of 1861 described the interior of the church prior to this restoration as 'an unmitigated disappointment' with 'evidences of bad taste and lack of finish everywhere perceptible'. The Victorians had the walls - previously white-limed - plastered and stuccoed; and the 'high and formal' pews were removed and new ones substituted, together with a new pulpit.

By 1949 the Victorians were the bad guys, and the handbook that Sylvia saw had bitten back. It told her that in 1860 'the very unfortunate pulpit was erected and the whole floor space, including the chancel and chapels was overfilled with oak pews which are plain and good, but too large'. Some were removed in 1940 when 'an attempt was made to restore the interior of the church to something approaching its former beauty'.

The stone work of the east window 'is a good example of 14th century design', Sylvia read. 'Unfortunately it is a replica inserted in 1860.' At the north end of the screen (1500-1520) there is a staircase to the loft, but its door is hidden behind the 1860 plaster'. The 1860 organ was 'most unfortunately' removed from the west end and placed in the Lady Chapel in 1881, 'to the detriment of the beauty of the church'. In case the visitor of Sylvia's time had not got the point, all these matters of regret, and others, were listed in a paragraph of 'points not to be noticed'.

The handbook then gave details of how restorations of 1837-40 rescued the church ruined by the Victorians and it told the reader of good things in the church, such as the graceful and beautiful arcade and clerestory of the nave. In the porch, the 'rather terrifying busts of John Locke and Hannah More are really garden ornaments'. Sylvia took quite an interest in Hannah More who in 1949 was 'a classical example of Pie in the Sky philanthropy'. (See also Newsletter fifteen.)

But in 1949 the church tower was 'the crowning beauty of all' and the hand-book then told of people who described it 'as one of the most beautiful towers in the Kingdom' and 'the finest tower of its type in the county and therefore possibly in the whole world'. Today's commentators reflect today's thinking which is sometimes as far removed from that of 1949 as 1860's thinking was in 1949. Thus, Pevsner tells us merely that the tower is 'good' but that the church has an 'extremely pretty turret for the santus bell', something not commented on at all fifty-eight years ago.

The 1949 guide ends with: 'The exterior as a whole is more impressive than the interior. Viewed from almost any point it represents a picture of wonderful grace and beauty.' Well, if in Somerset, go to Wrington and see what Sylvia saw, and decide for yourself.

*Somerset* has been republished in an attractive modern format with 64 photographs, by Black Dog Books 104 Trinity Street Norwich NR2 2BJ at £17.99. *Stephen Mottram*

### **MAY WEEKEND, May 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> 2008**

#### **Friday May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**7.30pm** Meet for an opening meal in Oxford. Please let Richard Searle know if you are coming and for further details. (01305 269204)

#### **Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

##### **Morning:**

**10.30 or 11am** Short tour of the Bodleian Library in Broad Street. Tickets are £3 per head. As numbers are limited, please let Richard know as soon as possible if you wish to join us - and to confirm the time.

**12pm** Lunch at Brown's, 7 Woodstock Road (close to Keble College).



Again, please let Richard know if you're coming.

### Afternoon

**1.15pm. AGM** in the Pusey Room at Keble College, Parks Road, Oxford City Centre (01865 272727)

**2.30pm. Concert**, also in Keble College, of one and a half to two hours duration, featuring the musical life of Sylvia Townsend Warner. Tickets cost £10; concessions £8; children under 16 £5.

The outline programme is as follows:

Introduction by Claire Harman, after which Susan Bell will speak briefly about STW's compositions. The pianist will be Simon Whalley and the singer Rebecca Outram. Some or all of the following will be performed:

### Music:

Sylvia Townsend Warner:

Three Songs from 'Children of Earth'

(words by Thomas Hardy)

Memorial (words from Walt Whitman)

The Lonely Traveller (words by Stephen Tomlin)

Dum Transisset

John Ireland: The Scapegoat, Hymn for a Child, The Soldier's Return (all with words by Sylvia Townsend Warner)

Thomas Weelkes: Alleluia (ed. Sylvia Townsend Warner)

Simon Whalley: New piece to poem(s) by Sylvia Townsend Warner

### Spoken word:

Readings from Sylvia Townsend Warner's new *Collected Poems* and from Valentine Ackland's *Journey from Winter*

Recording of Sylvia Townsend Warner reading 'Gloriana Dying'

Recording of interview with ST Warner by Michael Schmidt and Val Warner (excerpts)

Copies of both new books of poetry will be on sale. After the concert, Claire Harman will show some memorabilia and talk briefly about them to anyone who is interested.

### Evening

We suggest that all members staying for Saturday night gather together

for a meal at one of the many Oxford restaurants.

### Sunday May 4<sup>th</sup>

**10.30am.** Meet outside the Lamb Inn in Sheep Street, Burford for coffee and a walk around the Burford town trail. Burford is twenty miles west of Oxford, just off the A40. The Lamb Inn is next door to the building which was the second home of the *Countryman*, from 1949 to 2003. The magazine was founded by Robertson Scott, whose writings on rural poverty influenced Warner, as she confirms in her essay 'The Way by Which I Have Come' (see STW Journal 2007). Sylvia contributed to the *Countryman* from 1931 until her death.

Burford is a handsome Cotswolds town. its wide main street lined with old buildings and many shops and restaurants – one of which will no doubt make a suitable place for lunch!

Also worth a visit is the vast 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St John the Baptist. Another Dorset literary figure, John Meade Falkner is buried in the churchyard, under what John Betjeman described as 'a giant Swiss roll'.

## PUBLICATION NEWS

### PRESS RELEASE

*Journey from Winter*: Selected Poems of Valentine Ackland

Valentine Ackland is best known as the lover of poet Sylvia Townsend Warner, with whom she collaborated on *Whether a Dove or Seagull* (1934). She was a distinguished poet in her own right, however, and enjoyed popular success during the 1930s. Considered controversial in her times, she was both a lesbian and a communist. Her first poems are highly sensitive accounts of the Dorset landscape, subtly attuned to the rhythms of the sea. She was also an exceptional war poet, writing about the Spanish civil war, life on the home front during the Second World War, and later protests against nuclear weapons. Some of her finest

poems are on the subject of the destruction of the natural world.

*Journey From Winter* presents Valentine Ackland's finest compositions alongside a useful contextual introduction by editor Frances Bingham. This Selected Poems allows her remarkable achievement to be assessed for the full time, re-establishing her importance in the pantheon of twentieth century women's poetry.

### Collected Poems of Sylvia Townsend Warner

The first Collected Poems of Sylvia Townsend Warner (1893-1978) was published by Carcanet in 1982. Since then, more of her work has come to light, including some of the most moving and personal poems she ever wrote. Claire Harman, the original editor and author of the prize-winning biography of the poet, has substantially revised the earlier edition, including over ninety previously uncollected and unpublished poems, with expanded notes, a chronology and an authoritative new introduction.

When Harman's Life was published, it restored Warner, one critic said, to her real place as 'second only to Virginia Woolf among the women writers of our century'. With this collection, the extent of Warner's achievement as a poet can be appreciated.

From reviews of *Collected Poems*:

'This marvellous book has exceeded my expectations, which were very high indeed...it displays admirable craftsmanship, a subtle, musical ear, and immense variety.' - John Mole, South West Review

### JOHN CRASKE

From July 2<sup>nd</sup> to August 3<sup>rd</sup> this year, there will be an exhibition in Salthouse Church, as part of the North Norfolk Arts Festival. Entitled 'SEAhouse, LIGHthouse, SPIRItHouse', it will include embroideries by John Craske as well as work by living artists.

### STONOR LETTERS APPEAL

The appeal for purchase of the Stonor letters was successful and the Society is very grateful to all the people who generously donated. We have almost £100 surplus from the appeal, which will go to any further purchases. The letters will be stored in the STW Archive as property of the Society, and can be viewed in the usual way.

This appeal has left committee members wondering if the Society should have an acquisitions policy, to enable interesting items to be purchased by the Society if items become available from time to time and if Society funds can meet such costs.

A final decision will be taken on 16 June but committee members are anxious to learn the opinions of Society members in this respect and would be grateful to hear from you, through any committee member.

### *Stephen Mottram*

The Townsend Warner-Stonor letters will be published in the 2008 edition of the Society's Journal, with an introduction by Mary Jacobs.

### **'A Batty Old Woman'**

Last year, while working on the new edition of *Somerset*, I was at the photocopier in Jarrolds store in Norwich running off copies of the front cover for publicity purposes when, to my great surprise, a voice behind me exclaimed 'I used to know her'. The voice in question belonged to Hilary Corfield née Bedder whose parents had kept the village shop at Toller Porcorum in Dorset before moving to Maiden Newton to run the newsagents there from 1975 to 1979. During that time Hilary, then a young girl, delivered papers to Frome Vauchurch.

When pressed, Hilary couldn't remember much about Sylvia other than she was 'a batty old woman', a description which may well have pleased Sylvia, then in her 80s. It is reassuring to know that Dorset/Norfolk link is, however tenuously, still alive.

### *Peter Tolhurst*

### WORDS & MUSIC

The following poem was found by member Ruth Williams in *Music and Letters*, vol 1, no 4, October 1920. The author is given as 'Elsie Townsend Warner'.

*All day long  
I'm trysted in yonder  
Meadows to wander*

*And think of a song.*

*I shall take  
Provision of berries  
Black treacle cherries  
And possibly cake.*

*Where the boughs  
Of silver-tongued willows  
Freckle green pillows  
I shall drowse;*

*Or wander blythe  
Through scented acres  
Where haymakers  
Sharpen the scythe.*

*I shall not lack,  
I shall not trouble:  
Through fields of stubble  
I shall come back –*

*When dusk is spread,  
When twilight lingers –  
With purple fingers,  
The song in my head.*

A variant of this poem entitled 'The Happy Day' appears in Sylvia's first poetry collection (and first book) *The Espalier*, 1925 and is dated '1920' in her personal copy of the poems. There are a few small changes from the magazine version, the most obvious ones involving the substitution of some less consciously poetic language. In line 2 'I'm trysted' is altered to the more active 'I purpose'; in line 10 the willows become 'gliding' rather than 'silver-tongued'.

These are improvements, but the poem remains a minor one, and what is most interesting about the piece is the fact of its existence. Was this the first poem of Sylvia's to be published? 'Elsie' Townsend Warner would make a very half-hearted pseudonym. It's more likely that the poem was submitted in manuscript, and Sylvia's forename was misread in transcription. (Her capital 'S' often resembles an 'E'.)

During the 1920s, Sylvia was working on the ten volumes of Tudor Church Music which absorbed much of her time and attention. It seems

fitting that this very early work of poetry should appear in a musical journal, like an foretelling of a change of direction in Warner's creative life.

*Judith Stinton*



### FOR THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE

This letter was written by Valentine Ackland from 24 West Chaldon to fellow-Communist Tom Wintringham at a Richmond, Surrey address in 1935. It was intercepted and copied by MI5. Wintringham was an editor of the *Left Review*, a poet and a friend of Sylvia and Valentine.

Dear Tom,

I believe Hope Muntz of whom I spoke to you, has sent in an article for the Left. If it is impossible, can you find time to write to her about airplanes? She is worth getting. You might think her hopeless, if you met her, but she and her younger sister have served their time in de Havilland's factory, she, I think as a draughtswoman and the younger one as an ordinary mechanic. You will know what an amount of drive is needed to get the job at all – de H. has a great dislike to women workers, and these two were young and totally without experience. But both became indispensable. Hope Muntz has become something of an authority on aircraft (construction, I think) and the younger one on actual manufacturing and on the factory workers and their activities. I haven't got her yet. But Hope is a nibbling fish. I don't know how she writes. Badly as regards polite letters, but I fancy she will be all right on ground she knows. Anyway – she's a technician and if you possibly can spare time to help me land her I think it's worth it. But if you can't, could you let me know?

I've sent her a copy of your book.

I don't know if Sylvia passed on to you my suggestion about T.E.Shaw. Get old G.B.S. to send it on to T.E., then he'll take it. Or so I believe. He comes here sometimes, to see T.F.Powys, but he's certain to jib at reading it if we invoke T.F.P. He's like that, I understand.

But give G.B.S. a chance to write a postcard, and he'll do anything for you.

We picked the last cowslips and sent them to Millie.

I don't believe Martin Lawrence will take my pamphlet. And, as far as I've sent it to them, it's good. I worked on it very hard. But maybe I've given up hope too soon. Their letters give me the sense of padded cell, just as Chatto & Windus did. Herbert Read's idea of a Soviet of writers publishing their own works was indeed a good one. I shall take it on with my duplicator, I think.

I'm getting better on that machine now. By the time we're suppressed I shall be able to do good work. Meanwhile, if you need anything done (and your lovely press can do it!) let me know.

We joined in the Jubilee. Was that wrong? We got further than the thin end of the wedge by doing it, too. I've got the best family in the place borrowing books from me and staying for a conversation. And we've choked the parson out of the place, and already got plans for various village festivities throughout the summer – quite unheard-of successes. And our single reliable labourer here got drunk and called for three cheers for the King – then for the Queen – then for the p.o.w. and then he paused – I called out “Now for Princess Mary!” and they yelled – and he shouted “Now for Old King Edward that's dead!” and they yelled again – and then he capered round the bonfire singing “I am Henery the Eighth, I am” and so we went down the steep hill to scatter in couples over the fields, and after some time to meet in the school and dance until 3 am.

I asked one lad what we were all jubilating for, and he answered, surprisingly, “The Queen, b'aint us?”

But the next bonfire, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, will do the trick. And I am heartened to read that Lenin did not despise the importance of the country workers.

Sylvia has just written a fine poem, and I wrote a moderate one last

week. So on this I shall stop and go to bed.

Valentine

Salute to Lasky – please [Harold Laski, one of the founders of the Left Book Club]

This letter shows just how deeply Sylvia and Valentine were involved with Communism, despite the difficulties of their remote location. The letter is all the more remarkable as Valentine Ackland knew that she and Sylvia were being watched. Two months later, on July 30 1935, she wrote to Sylvia: ‘It entertains me to think that perhaps they are being cunning and, having prised open this letter they are copying bits out, to compare with all the known and suspected codes – for we are famous for having many methods of trying to outwit the Police, and yet we somehow never do – But then again, it may be that you and I are not yet well-known enough, and our letters are only opened when they go to Tom. Still – I hope.’

The conspiratorial tone of the letter to Tom is therefore rather surprising (unless Valentine found playing to the gallery irresistible). The first political recruits in her sights were Hope and Joy Muntz. The Chaldon connection was their sister Elizabeth, sculptor and artist, who lived in the village for about forty years. Hope, whom Valentine regarded as ‘a nibbling fish’, later became an author and scholar, specialising in the Norman Conquest and like her sister is buried in Chaldon churchyard. So Valentine was correct in her assumptions about Hope's writing abilities. She was less interested in Joy, whose skills were practical.

Her next prospect, T.E.Shaw – better known as T.E.Lawrence, author of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* – had already been appointed Director of a proposed Intelligence Directorate, so was unlikely to assist. His private retreat was at nearby Clouds Hill, a gamekeeper's cottage, from which he would ride out on his motorbike to visit Theodore Powys in Chaldon. If anyone could have persuaded him to contribute, it probably would have been the Fabian George Bernard Shaw, who had advised him on the writing of his masterpiece. Even if Lawrence had been agreeable to the proposal, there would have been no opportunity. On May 19, eight days after the date of the letter, he was dead, killed after a crash not far from his cottage.

Not unusually, Valentine is agonising about her own writing. In 1935 she wrote (See Newsletter 15) a series of three essays called ‘Country



Dealings' for *Left Review* on the state of villages in Dorset and Norfolk. She had indeed 'given up hope too soon' as Martin Lawrence of Lawrence & Wishart published an expanded version of them as *Country Conditions* in 1936.

Some of the subjects of her essays would have been present at the year's Jubilee celebrations in Chaldon for George V, who acceded to the throne in 1910. While courting Wintringham's (and Lenin's) approval for joining such a pro-monarchic rite, Valentine felt that they had 'got further than the thin end of the wedge' and had acquired a few sympathisers among the villagers. (And, she claims, they had 'choked the parson' - their old enemy the Revd Cyril Pugh - 'out of the place'. He had let the Vicarage to a pair of women who mistreated the girls who lived there with them.)

Valentine hopes that the next celebratory gathering 'will do the trick'. This could have been the one which she and Sylvia organised, and which Valentine described in a letter to Hope Muntz. It included 'a bonfire on High Chaldon, fireworks, a burning cartwheel tumbled down the hillside...and a dance on the sward, with a barrel of very strong cider'.

Should they have received news of it, MI5 have frowned upon such pagan and anarchic goings-on. (So, too, would the more purist of Party members.) Surveillance of Warner and Ackland went on for a long time. What did the surveyors make of the mounds of information they so painstakingly garnered? Absurd as these activities now seem, they may finally serve some purpose, as a valuable source for more details of Sylvia and Valentine's lives.

*Judith Stinton*



**Minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2007 at Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.**

**Present :** Stephen Mottram, Eileen Johnson, Judith Bond, Judith Stinton, Peter Tolhurst, Dianne Bithrey, Jenny Wildblood, Tess Ormrod, Lynn Mutti, Ruth Williams, Mary Jacobs

1. **Apologies :** Roger Peers, Winifred Johnson

2. **The minutes of the 2006 AGM** were approved and signed.

3. **Matters arising, and Chairman's Report.**

Stephen dealt with the following points:

-Richard Searle is to become a full member of the Committee in place of Peter Tolhurst. Peter finds it very difficult to attend committee meetings, living as he does in Norwich. He continues as editor of the Journal and a co-opted member of the Committee.

- The idea of a 5-year membership subscription had been discussed in committee, and had been for the moment rejected as being too costly to implement.

-The ninetieth birthday celebrations for Janet had been a great success. The party at Judith Stinton's was much enjoyed by all who came, not least by Janet herself.

- detailed the timing of the further events lined up for the weekend.

4. **Membership Officer's Report**

Judith Bond reported that membership now stands at 135, which includes 10 new members who have joined on-line this year, which is pleasing.

5. **Treasurer's Report.**

Judith presented the year's accounts. Our balance at the bank stands at a healthy £2854.55. Journal costs have been the same as last year. Website update costs have this year been £82.

Judith here asked members to be aware of the distinction between the Society's website [www.townsendwarner.com](http://www.townsendwarner.com) and the Archive website at the Museum in Dorchester <http://www.sylviatownsendwarner.com>

Judith then moved to subscriptions. The overseas subscription still stands at \$20 but the low standing of the dollar at the moment translates into £9.90. Because of this and also the increased postal charges in Britain, Judith proposed raising the American subscription to \$25. (Some US members were already sending more than \$20.) This was agreed by the meeting. Advertising again was discussed. Peter agreed to approach the TLS and the London Review of Books for costs.

It was questioned whether it might be cheaper to update the website ourselves. Judith bravely said she would investigate the matter, and report to the committee.

6. **The Somerset Weekend**

This will take place on the weekend of September 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>.

It will coincide (hopefully) with the publication of Peter's revised edition of Sylvia's Somerset book. The text will remain, obviously, but it will have more contemporary photographs and a different design from that of the 1949 edition.

We shall probably travel rather further afield this year – the Quantocks/ Bath/ Wells are possibilities. The committee will fine up the details at the next committee meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

Several suggestions were made about the composition of the two weekends a year:

- a) not have two,
- b) in alternate years have the AGM weekend at another venue, perhaps Norfolk,
- c) move the Chaldon visit to the Saturday of the May weekend, leaving the whole of Sunday for an outing.

These ideas will be discussed further in committee. Generally, though, it was felt to be a good and appropriate thing to retain our firm commitment to the Museum in Dorchester and to continue to have our AGM in the room where Sylvia did her research on T H White.

#### 7. AOB

Judith Bond reported that Jay Barksdale, our New York Library member, had presented us with a very imposing set of disks containing all editions of The New Yorker from the 20s to the present day. Jay has also traced, and made copies of, articles on music written by Sylvia in the 1920s. We discussed the need to decide where such gifts should be stored, and whether we could use them on our website for members to access. A discrete box within the STWVA room would seem appropriate for the actual disks/articles etc.

Finally, Stephen thanked the committee for all their endeavours on Sylvia's behalf during the year.

The meeting ended at 12pm

*"This is not a one-horse town. There are three trains in the station."*

*American Army sergeant to a disgruntled private, who was complaining about their unit being transferred from near London down to Maiden Newton in 1944*