

*The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's 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 Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's 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 Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's 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 Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's*

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

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Sylvia Townsend Warner @ Susanna Pinney

The Society's own website is online at  
<http://www.townsendwarner.com>

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY

### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter for 2010, our tenth birthday issue. This includes the programme for the May weekend, a report on our STW bus journey last September, and two more uncollected articles by Sylvia Townsend Warner. It also, sadly, reports on the death of member Jean Larson.

*Judith Stinton*

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS: a reminder**

If you haven't yet paid for 2010, please send your subscription to Judith Bond, 26 Portwey Close, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 8RF. The cost for UK members still remains unchanged at £10, while the rate for overseas members is \$25. Cheques should be made payable to the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society.

### JEAN LARSON

I am sure that members will be sad to hear that Jean Larson died recently. She was 94. From the early 1950s she was a close friend of Sylvia and Valentine, and became a Catholic shortly before Valentine returned to the Church.

When I got to know her in 1991 she was already infirm, and almost house-bound, but she showed a great deal of sparkiness throughout the years I visited her, and was generous with her memories of Sylvia and Valentine. She will be much missed by her family and friends. One more door to the past has closed.

*Eileen Johnson*

## OMNIBUS EDITION

Sylvia Townsend Warner Society Weekend  
September 11, 12, 13, 2009

### Norwich Cathedral Archive

Yet again it must be said: the sun shone benevolently upon the beautiful and architecturally diverse buildings in the Cathedral Close, and upon the members gathered there for the visit to the archive to view material that would have interested Sylvia during her researches for *Tudor Church Music*.

Nobody from the Cathedral had explained, in the course of email exchanges, that the address given on them was not where the archive was housed. 12 The Close was definitely 'admin' and firmly closed for the weekend. Frantic searching soon discovered where we should have been assembling: a new extension to the area by the Cloister; constructed of green oak and stone and striking enough to have us debating its merits before seeking the Librarian and STW.

Gudrun Warren welcomed us warmly and gave an interesting overview of church music in the Cathedral during the Tudor period. The 16<sup>th</sup> century composer Osbert Parsley, whose work is to be found in volume 10 of *TCM*, was composing music and managing the choir for the Cathedral for 50 years. Strangely, no mention is made in volume 10 to music found at Norwich, although we know from her diaries that Sylvia visited Norwich for the project - all of the music published was sourced from other institutions.

Norwich Cathedral's original Tudor manuscript mss and part-books are now in Cambridge, but several 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century examples were on display, together with other related material: beautiful examples of the early printing of music, fine bindings and engravings within early books.

We stayed longer than we should – given that the Library, usually closed on Saturday, had been opened especially for us - but there was no sense of having out-stayed our welcome. STW and her work on *TCM* was new to Gudren and further exchanges between the Society and the Cathedral Library will continue...another convert?

*Lynn Mutti*

### The Magic Bus

After a walk around the magnificent Cathedral (where, among the other glories, there is a monument to Osbert Parsley) we had lunch in the lofty modern refectory. We had to keep an eye on the time as we were catching a bus - number X29 - otherwise known as the 'Sylvia Townsend Warner' bus.

It was a perfect autumn day, warm and sunny, as we meandered through narrower and narrower lanes towards the coast. This, like Dorset, is brick and flint country, yet very different both in terrain and building techniques. Here and there whole sides of houses were covered in uncut pebbles, round and knobbly.

We drove through Stiffkey, notorious for one of its rectors (eaten by a lion), but now more noted for the tight squeezes of its lanes. Cley, too, was a bottleneck, allowing us time to look at the varieties of the architecture. Then all at once the marshes stretched ahead of us, and we arrived at Salthouse, where Great Eye Folly once stood. In 'Bathrooms Remembered' Sylvia wrote, 'So many of the houses I have lived in have afterwards come to violent ends that I wonder my friends still invite me under their roofs. For this is yet another; it died by the act of God, and a wave was its winding sheet.' In 1953 the house was destroyed in the great storms which swept that coast, and has now vanished without a trace.

We stood, safely out of the sea's way, while Eileen Johnson read from Sylvia's letters to William Maxwell about the Folly. Then on to Holt, where we stopped for tea and the bookshop - or the bookshop and tea, depending on your priorities. There had been much book-crawling that morning in Norwich too, of a gently competitive nature. Second-hand books seemed cheap and plentiful in Norfolk.

(The food was good too, and enjoyed in some very different eating-houses – from La Trattoria Rustica to Macintosh's Canteen.)

On Sunday we went to Blickling Hall. There were books there, too, a barn full of them – and soon full of members as well. The house, which is elegant and compact, possesses some magnificent plasterwork ceilings, and 10,000 more books, sedately caged in the Long Gallery. There was also an exhibition, which told the story of the 'Masque of Anne Boleyn'. Anne,

most famous resident of Blickling, was celebrated in this pageant, performed in 1909, 1925 and 1938 in the grounds of the Hall. Two of the madrigals sung during the performances were by Morley and Weelkes – and edited by E.H. Fellowes. Thus Tudor Church Music began and ended our highly successful weekend.

Thanks to Lynn Mutti, Richard Searle, Judith Bond – and her email – for their work in arranging the weekend.

*Judith Stinton*

### MAY WEEKEND 2010

#### Friday April 30<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm.

Meet for a meal at No 6, North Square, Dorchester. Please let Richard Searle (01305 269204) know if you are coming.

#### Saturday May 1st

AGM in the library of Dorset County Museum at 10am.

**Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2009 in the Library, Dorset County Museum.**

**Present:** Eileen Johnson, Judith Bond, Judith Stinton, Richard Searle, Helen Sutherland Susan Ellis, Michael Seifert, Penny & David Penton, Morine Krissdottir, Jay Barksdale, Lynn Mutti, Dianne Bithrey, Chris Gostick, Ruth Mansfield-Williams, Richard Burleigh,

Judith Stinton proposed that Richard Searle conduct the meeting until item 3 as Stephen Mottram had stood down as Chairman was not present.

**1. Apologies:** Ren Draya, Win Johnson, Lesley Clargo, Roger Peers, Judith Fielding, Graham Pechey, Rosie Sykes, Annie Rhodes, Jenny Wildblood, Tess Ormrod.

**2. Matters Arising:** Eileen Johnson advised that the Society now had an Acquisitions Policy.

#### **3. Election of Officers**

Chairman

Lynn Mutti, Secretary

Helen Sutherland, Journal Editor

Richard Searle announced the nomination for Chairman: Eileen Johnson. Ruth Mansfield-Williams proposed acceptance of the nominations, seconded by Judith Bond. From this point, Eileen Johnson as the newly elected Chairman conducted the meeting.

#### **4. Changes to the Constitution**

Suggested changes to the Constitution were sent to members in January 2009. There were four suggestions to be agreed upon. Twenty eight members returned the form. Reasons for disagreement were not asked for.

- Proposal 1 was passed by all respondents
- Proposal 2: 2 members disagreed
- Proposal 3: 3 members disagreed
- Proposal 4: 5 members disagreed

As the Constitution requires two-thirds of voters in favour, the changes to the Constitution were passed.

Discussion followed as some members present were not happy with the proposals just voted upon. Chris Gostick was in disagreement with items 3 & 4. Judith Bond said that comments had been invited in January 2009 and there had been no objection then. The postal ballot had been voted on and passed by the membership and further discussion was inappropriate now.

Morine Krissdottir said that non-committee members did not know the underlying problems and voted in ignorance: interpretation was very important and divisive. She strongly recommended that the committee looked at the constitution again. Judith Stinton suggested that Chris Gostick write to the committee with his detailed objections and Richard Searle added that his objections needed to be known in the light of the present constitution.

Chris Gostick was happy to do this. Eileen Johnson commented that a simple constitution was best. Morine Krissdottir agreed with this and said that the Constitution should be absolutely clear.

It was agreed that the Committee would consider a review of the Constitution and this was considered a fair conclusion.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer distributed the balance sheet for 2008 – 2009 and declared a healthy balance of £2,732. There was a net loss of members in 2008, but subscriptions in 2009 were healthy with nine new memberships which brought the total to 134. Judith commented on the generosity of members in purchasing specific items.

Richard Searle asked if the stock of STW and VA poetry books had sold:

Judith said that 1 STW & 2 VA books were still awaiting sale.

To keep costs down, email was more widely used and had saved the Society £70 over the past year on postage.

It was reported that £25 had been donated to Idbury Church and £200 to Janet Machen Pollock's chosen charity, to which individual members had also donated.

£90 was saved on the maintenance of the Society website as member Karina Taubert has assumed the role of Webmaster. She has updated the site which members are urged to view.

Judith reported that the cost of printing the journal had remained stable since 2000. The cost of an advertisement in the Times Literary Supplement was £32.40 and supplied only one response. It was considered that the website was more useful for advertising.

Chris Gostick suggested that the membership fee might be raised with regard to inflation. Judith said that the balance was healthy at around £2,000 and it was felt that the fee was adequate at present.

Judith stated that the Society's accounts were neither audited nor overseen but that spread and balance sheets were available.

#### **6. Programme for 2009**

The remainder of the weekend's activities were outlined: After Judith Bond's presentation of STW & VA's 'Nefarious Activities', co-authored with Mary Jacobs, there would be a visit to Lyme Regis, followed on Sunday by a talk on witches in East Chaldon and a visit to Granny Moxon's cottage, courtesy of Penny & David Penton. Lunch at the Sailor's Return in East Chaldon will complete the weekend.

A weekend in Norfolk had been mooted for September: the committee will discuss this at the June meeting.

It was felt that 2008 had been an exceptional year for the Society with a superlative weekend in Oxford and Idbury, and the purchase of the Stonor letters and the Bo Foster papers.

#### **7. AOB**

Morine Krissdottir had four interesting items of news from the archive: Richard Garnett had now deposited all of the remaining correspondence between his father, David, and Sylvia in the archive.

Susanna Pinney, the copyright holder, had given Sylvia's cookery book. In addition, she and Roger Peers had recorded two 90 minute tapes of their memories of Sylvia.

'Faber Finds' were hoping to publish a volume of short stories.

Morine also commented that there was a proposed film of '*Mr Fortune's Maggot*' in French.

Judith Bond proposed a formal vote of thanks to Karina Taubert for her excellent work on the website. Jay Barksdale mentioned that there were discussion groups on Sylvia on Facebook. Judith Bond passed on Karina's suggestion that members write customer reviews on books on the Amazon website as this would engender more 'hits' on Sylvia's name.

Judith also mentioned John Miles's photographs; packs of 4 postcard-sized at £2.50 and A4 prints at £25.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.50am.

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**11am.** Illustrated talk by Morine Krissdottir, 'Sylvia and Valentine: Photos Not Taken'

**1pm** Meal at Hamilton's, Brunswick Terrace, Weymouth. (Disabled parking at junction with Esplanade; main car park by Radipole Lake.) Please let Richard know if you are coming.

Followed by walk around Weymouth's Esplanade and Harbour 'In search of Rosemary Manning'(see below).

(N.B. Second-hand bookshop, Books Afloat, on Park Street, opposite Weymouth station. Treasures have been found here...)

**7.30pm** Meal. To be arranged.

### Sunday May 2<sup>nd</sup>

**10am.** Meet for coffee – and 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary birthday cake – at the house of Judith Stinton (21 Cattistock Road, Maiden Newton, 01200 320778) for walk around Maiden Newton and over the fields to Frome Vauchurch (could be a trifle muddy). View the outside of Sylvia and Valentine's house and garden. Frome Vauchurch Church is nearby, but a service will be in progress. (Both of these places can be reached by car.)

Continue by car to Toller Fratrum, which is very close to Maiden Newton, but seems like another world. It was a place much loved by Sylvia and Valentine, whose names are in the visitors' book.



**1pm** Lunch at the Crown inn, Uploders, near Bridport, which can be reached via Eggardon Hill. Again please let Richard know if you are coming, as places can be limited.

**Rosemary Manning** was a writer who was born in Weymouth in 1911 and was there for the first ten years of her life. Her father was a doctor, her mother, a nurse. The family lived at first in a house on Gloucester Row, on the Esplanade, and then in a harbourside house on Trinity Road. Later she bought a little house on Hope Street, by the Brewery. She always loved Weymouth, and it features strongly in her biographical writings and in one of her books for children, *Dragon in the Harbour*.

Her life was sometimes unhappy. She had to conceal the fact that she was a lesbian because she became a headmistress. Her happiest times (other than her Weymouth childhood) occurred when she was in her seventies, after she had come out and was openly living with another, younger woman. She

knew STW (whom she described as a 'grande dame') and they had a mutual friend in Alyse Gregory, who had been managing editor of the *Dial* in New York, and became the wife of Llewelyn Powys.

### LECTURES at Columbia University, New York

**Richard Howard**

#### **An Exploration of the Works of Sylvia Townsend Warner**

'I have, in the last few years, interspersed my examination of various literary works with a consideration of a single literary maker who was able, was indeed compelled to create not fiction, not poetry, not essays or autobiography, but - as the examples (so far) of D.H. Lawrence and Rudyard Kipling have so notoriously contributed - the making of an entire literature, calling upon forms and figures of immense and even contradictory variety. For next spring I should like to revert once again to one of these inconveniently various makers, this time anything but notorious, rather exemplifying a quiet diversity: An Exploration of the Works: novels, tales, poems, essays, translations, letters, etc., etc. of Sylvia Townsend Warner, whose quiet production occupied a long and exemplary claim on the attentive readers of the Twentieth Century. Of course it will be helpful to read some of these productions against the celebrated achievements of Gertrude Stein or Virginia Woolf, but so copious are the works of Townsend Warner herself that we shall have our work cut out for us merely to consider the rich and engaging variety of this wonderful writer's oeuvre. Perhaps it will constitute, for whatever students I can lure into such a class, a secret virtue to become intimate with her splendid and surprising achievements.'

**Richard Howard**

Claire Harman, who has drawn attention to these lectures, writes that Richard Howard is not so well known over here, but is a revered poet and man of letters in the States, and a formidable influence on the Columbia community and beyond.

## REVIEW

The following review of a new edition of *Summer Will Show* (NYRB Classics, £9.99) appeared in the *Guardian*, 17/10/2009.

'Forget another adaptation of *Emma*: I want to see this on Sunday night telly. Set in 1848 (written in 1936), this novel drips with passion, revolutionary zeal and tragedy. Sophia Willoughby, a young English aristocratic mother, loses her two children to scarlet fever, heads to a Paris in the throes of revolution and falls for her husband's ex-mistress. Through Minna Lemuel, an exotic and quixotic Jewish woman, a diva, a street fighter and idealist who "knew her way around Paris as a mongrel might", Sophia finds a way to escape from a prison of "Sunday Schools, and cold-hearted respectability and hypocrisy". The lack of angst, the lack of questioning their sexuality as they fall in love, joyously, is almost bewildering to a modern reader, but all the more delightful for it. It's a wildly leftist novel of love, war and death; Townsend Warner chucks the lot into her simmering story, but it remains skilfully crafted. Brilliantly entertaining and far ahead of its time, this is clearly way too hot for Sunday night drama to handle.'

*Nicola Barr*

## CONCERT

by the Lawson Trio

took place on Wednesday 10th February 2010  
at 7.45pm

Annabelle Lawson - piano

Fenella Humphreys - violin

Rebecca Knight - cello

**CELEBRATING CHAMBER MUSIC 2000**

with **THE SCHUBERT ENSEMBLE**

**Programme included:**

Piers Hellawell: *The Building of Curves* (1998) (Schubert Ensemble)

Piers Hellawell: *Etruscan Games* (London premiere, Lawson Trio)

David Knotts: *The Long Way Home* (World premiere, Lawson Trio)

## "The Inspired Old Bustard"\*

William Blake, 1757-1827

by Sylvia Townsend Warner

*"If Hayley knows a thing you cannot do"*

(If, mark you. It is characteristic.)

*"That is the very thing he'll set you to."*

Hayley, who wrote the "Triumphs of Temper", all about maddening Serena fancied himself as a Benefactor. So do quite a number of us, but luckily for our comfort of mind inspired bustards are rare birds, and we are not likely to pitch upon them as the objects of our bounty. A country cottage is a tempting cage, and when Hayley chirruped, his bird flew down to Sussex in a most obliging fashion and sang as follows:

*The Bread of sweet thought and the Wine of delight  
Feed the village of Felpham by day and by night;  
And at his door the bless'd hermit does stand,  
Dispensing, unceasing, to all the wide land."*

This song of innocence (and one of the most mis-leading things about bustards is the peculiar artless warble they have when they please to) was composed in the second week of September, a season when, as those who have lived in the country cannot fail to have learned, the dispensations of bless'd hermits take the form of runner beans and vegetable marrows. However unceasing, these dispensations alone would hardly have brought about a rupture between Blake and Hayley; for they would have directed upon Catherine Blake, a wise woman who knew how to keep domestic annoyances out of her husband's way. Unfortunately the hermit dispensed exhortation and good advice. William's prophetic books were very fine; so now would he try his hand at some miniatures?

I cannot quite forego a slight tea-cosy tenderness for Hayley. For one thing, he loved the poet Cowper; for another, he has been, for some time, safe dead. But I am ready to lift up my voice and roar very loudly indeed against the tribe of little Hayleys, who for the last twenty-five years and more have been pilfering the bustard's to line their own nests. I came on a fine specimen the other day - a woman, I *should* say, a lady, with a sweet wistful grin, who was trailing her draperies round the Blake exhibition, and omitting, with a touching gesture of incompetence, to replace the covers over the show-cases of the illuminated books, "Ah, dear Blake!" said she. "Such a wonderful poem, this! Such a favourite of mine! I quoted it in my

little private Anthology of Comfort that I made during the war.”

It cannot be said too firmly or too plainly that Blake’s poetry was never intended for use as private poultices. He whose tears were “an intellectual thing” shed them that they might scorch the brain, and rouse it to thought; he did not shed them for an irrigation system that should rear crops of mustard and cress on mental flannel – mustard and cress that would come in nicely for afternoon tea. Nor did he mean his poems to be seized upon as conveniently undenominational hymns, to be taught to defenceless school-children and sung on Empire Day. When Blake speaks of building Jerusalem he does not refer to the establishment of forced native labour in African colonies. Neither does he refer Welwyn Garden City.

I suppose these Songs of Innocence have, innocently, a deal to answer for. Yet one should have hoped that even sheep might have suspected that though the Lion should lie down with the lamb, he will be a Lion still. Perhaps only black sheep take this cynical view. I have always nursed great hopes of the character of a burglar, who removed from my parent’s house, together with a purse and some jewellery, a copy of the Songs of Innocence.

And of late I have been much cheered by the behaviour of some lambs. Flocks of lambs from the Harrow Road pass down my street on their way to Kensington Gardens, and one afternoon three of them saw fit to climb over the railings which guard my front garden. Perhaps they were after my zizantias. Several respectable persons on the pavement saw this unlawful act, and raised their voices in reproof and admonishment. One respectable person indeed would have come in by the gate and driven the marauders out, if I had not leant from my window and threatened him very briskly with a Prosecution for Trespass. And while the Lambs were at their uncovenanted leaping and skipping, they sang, very loudly and rejoicingly, as though they sang a warsong. But the words they sang were these:

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;  
Bring me my Arrows of desire:  
Bring me my spear: O clouds unfold,  
Bring me my Chariot of fire.

And when I heard these words I knew that the inspired old bustard had escaped the net of the fowler, even the fowler Hayley.

\*Walter Raleigh’s *Letters*

From *Time and Tide*, August 12, 1927, p. 738

### The Domestic Petronius

by Sylvia Townsend Warner

*Time and Tide*, April 1, 1927

[under Miscellany]

“Whether you wish to model a flower in wax; to serve up a relish for breakfast or supper; to supply a delicious *entrée* for the dinner table; to cure a headache; to get married; to bury a relative; to establish acquaintances according to the rules of etiquette...”

These are all very natural aspirations, particularly the last but one. Information on the following subjects too, would be welcome by any proper-minded person, for knowledge is always agreeable, even, or even more so, if there is no need to make

Adulterations, Practical Hints upon.  
Body in Flames, what to do.  
Broccoli, to Pickle.  
Brogues, to Correct.  
Earthenware teapots, why preferred by Aged Cottagers.  
Gloves, Dyeing Purple.  
Hair, Dyeing Green.  
Hair, Restored by Onions.  
Marine Glue  
Poisonous Wine.  
Potichomanie.  
Skylights, ornamental.  
Women, Immoral, as Lodgers.  
Wow-Wow Sauce.

This is but a random nosegay culled from an index of forty-two close-printed columns.

What a work! As erudite as the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, but more practical; as comprehensive as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but far more genial. It is called (but some readers, happy are they that love thee! will know already what I am writing about) *Enquire within upon Everything*; and the title, so superb as a boast, so obliging as an invitation, exactly fits it.

No! On second thoughts, not exactly. It is one of the hardest things in the world to find a representative title, and that of *Enquire within upon Everything*, vast and snug though it may be, is on one important count inadequate. For it suggests only a work of reference. It does not hint at the



refined spiritual aroma wafted from these pages. At first sight such subjects as Marine Glue do not seem very likely vehicles for moral uplift. But they can be made to subserve it, and do. For the scheme of this book includes page-headings, short breathings of higher things; and the reader has only to raise his eyes from learning How to Make British Anchovies to be reminded that Music is *Soul embodied in Sound*, while a recipe for Bug Poison is ennobled by its position immediately under the statement that *Knowledge is the Wing whereby we Fly to Heaven*.

It should be needless to point out that *Enquire Within* is a compilation. No one mind could claim to be an authority on subjects so various as Portable Soup, How to Address the Privy Council, Restoring Leeches, Walking Gracefully, and Marbled Goose. And it is to be hoped that no single life-span could include experience of Bites of Mad Animals, Poisoning by Gamboge, Shoes (Tight), to get on, Scorpions, Drowning, Breach of Promise of Marriage, Loss by Boiling, Cries of Infants, Relaxed Uvula and Religious Doubts. In any case such an existence would lack leisure, and I think inclination, for such lighter pursuits as the Cellarius Waltz, the Management of Guinea Pigs, Writing for the Press, Making Artificial Seawater, Dyeing Feathers Pink, and Kite-flying while Swimming.

*Enquire Within* first appeared in the late eighteen-fifties, a period considered rather grovelling in regard to the taste displayed in interior decoration and applied art. Yet see how the subject of carpets is approached.

"The most truly chaste, rich, and elegant carpets are those where the pattern is formed by one colour only, but arranged in every variety of shade. For instance, we have seen a Brussels carpet entirely red; the pattern formed by shades or tints, varying from the deepest crimson (almost a black), to the palest pink (almost a white). Also one of green only, shaded from the darkest bottle green, in some parts of the figure, to the lightest pea-green in others.

"The Curtains, Sofas, etc., of course, corresponding colours, and the effect of the whole was noble and elegant."

The implication that carpets must be noble and chaste before they can be truly elegant reminds me so strongly of parallel reasonings in *Sesame and Lilies* that I am inclined to believe that this section was contributed by Ruskin himself. If this possibility be granted I should also attribute to Ruskin one, at least, of the short breathings, which runs thus: "A bird's nest is a natural egg-cup." Sometimes I dream that I have found some missing pages of *Modern Painters* where it is argued from this premise that egg-cups should be framed to resemble a natural bird's nest.

From the applied let us turn to the Fine Arts.

"To construct caves of Cinder. — Arrange the cinders in such a manner

as to resemble the intended design; then soak in such parts as require it with brown paper soaked in thin glue until quite pulpy. When nearly dry dust over with sand, powdered brick, slate, and chopped lichen and moss from a pepper-box; touch up the various parts with either oil, water, or varnish colours; and if necessary form your trees of wire covered with brown paper, and moss glued on.

"When a cave is constructed in the way we have pointed out, on a large scale, and the interior sprinkled with powdered fluor spar or glass, the effect is very good by candle light".

"Monuments, ancient or modern, are better constructed of cork. We once constructed a model of the Acropolis of Athens in cork, which was completed in one fifth the time occupied by other materials, and looked much better".

(Perhaps the last assertion is a little trenchant. But as I have not seen either the marble Acropolis or the cork one, I am not in a position to judge.)

"To Model from Living Object. We will imagine that the reader desires to model the features of some friend, and there is some difficulty in the matter on the account of the person operated upon having a natural tendency to distort the features when the liquid plaster is poured upon the face, and some danger of suffocation if the matter is not well managed, we will proceed at once to describe the various stages of operating

"Lay the friend upon his back."

-- No! I cannot go on. It is too painful. Instead I shall proceed at once to Suffocation, Treatment of:

"Rub the surface of the body with the hands enclosed in warm dry worsted socks. To restore breathing, put the pipe of a common bellows into one nostril, carefully closing the other and the mouth. Blow the bellows gently.

"Cautions. 1. — Never rub the body with salt or spirits. 2. Never roll the body on casks. 3. Continue the remedies without ceasing for twelve hours."

There is also a certain degree of etiquette to be observed in cases of fire.

"Should the staircase be burning so as to cut off all communications, endeavour to escape by means of a trap-door in the roof, a ladder leading to which should always be at hand."

"Avoid all hurry and confusion".

How peculiarly sensible that is; and how much pleasanter conflagrations would be if people would only follow these directions!

I hope I may have said enough to show some of the merits of this

work. But I cannot quit it without touching upon the subject of economy. As everyone knows, economy is an essential part of a wise conduct of life; yet there is not subject so commonly made repulsive to us by those who would inculcate it. For instance, there is the story of the lady who overnight would fill her hot water bottle with tea for early morning drinking. Ugh! There are no such squalid recommendations in *Enquire Within*. There, even economy is made to wear a modest, decent temperate look; and what is more, it is kept within reasonable bounds. Thus:

“There is not any real economy in purchasing cheap calico for gentlemen’s night-shirts”.

It is equally true that there is no real economy in employing a poor bare calico style of writing, ungraced and meagre. The reader, I hope, has already noticed several niceties of English in my quotations other than those in that fine passage from Ruskin. Those quotations were chosen, however, for their matter. The paragraph which follows has been chosen for its literary value; although, of course, it is very sensible too.

“No article in dress tarnished so readily as black crape trimmings; and few things injure it more than damp; therefore to preserve its beauty on bonnets, a lady in nice mourning should in her evening walks, at all seasons of the year, take as her companion an old parasol to shade her crape.”

I cannot easily express my admiration of this passage. The first thought perhaps is: “What smooth, harmonious prose!” But its still waters run deep; for observe the depth and complexities of the implications. Poor bereaved lady, she walks out at evening, under the willows maybe, or along the banks of the canal: the places that pale passion loves are usually damp. She walks alone, her sole companion an old parasol, for the dejected creature has not the spirits to buy a new one. Yet amidst her distress she is still refined, still an ornament to society and an example, still “a lady in nice mourning.” I do not see how once could better it.

(With thanks to Jay Barksdale)

## THE POETRY OF SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

The East Coker Poetry Society invites you to an evening of poetry and prose readings from the work of Sylvia Townsend Warner, who lived in Dorset for many years, from the 1920s to her



death in 1978, firstly in East Chaldon and later in Maiden Newton. She was a highly individual author in several genres, writing seven novels, including *Lolly Willowes* and *The Corner That Held Them*; volumes of poetry, including *Opus 7* set in East Chaldon and *Boxwood* in conjunction with the engravings of Reynolds Stone; a very individual travel guide to Somerset; a booklet for the British Council on Jane Austen; translations of Proust and Huguenin; a biography of T. H. White; and hundreds of short stories, many of which were published in *The New Yorker*. She was also an avid diarist and letter-writer, and her love of life and sense of humour are evident on every page. Now is the time to explore the work of this brilliant, original and witty writer.

Come to the readings at the Helyar Arms, East Coker, Yeovil, BA22 9JR at 7.30pm on 6 April 2010 and find out more about this fascinating local author. Admission free.