

*The Espalter, Time Impartuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Barwood, 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', Ellenor Berkeley, A Moral Ending, The Salvation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Swans, 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 Espalter, Time Impartuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Barwood, 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', Ellenor Berkeley, A Moral Ending, The Salvation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Swans, 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 Espalter, Time Impartuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Barwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's*

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

*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', Ellenor Berkeley, A Moral Ending, The Salvation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Swans, 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 Espalter, Time Impartuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Barwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After The Death*

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society

Chris Eileen Johnson  
2 Victoria Lane,  
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1LH  
01305 267023

Hon. Secretary: Lynn Mutt  
26 Dorchester Road, Pimpton,  
Dorset DT2 9ND

Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Judith Bond  
33 Portway Close, Weymouth,  
Dorset DT4 3RF

Newsletter Editor: Judith Stinton  
21 Carkeock Road, Maiden Newton,  
Dorset DT2 0AG

Events Organiser: Richard Searle  
8 Furber Paddock, Stanton,  
Dorset DT2 9TR  
01305 269204

Journal Editor: Helen Sutherland,  
57 Hildaam Street (O2)  
Govan Hill, Glasgow  
G42 7HR  
H.Sutherland@edc.gla.ac.uk

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The Society's own website is online at

<http://www.townsendwarner.com>

NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY SIX

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter for 2013, which contains details of the annual STW weekend, an event which this year will take place at the end of June in Dorchester. The Newsletter includes three unpublished poems by Sylvia Townsend Warner, and her review of three books published in 1944, discovered by Judith Bond and Jay Barksdale respectively. There is, too, a reminder about the fund-raising book on Toller Fratrum church, a building much loved by Sylvia and Valentine, now struggling to stay open.

I regret to have to report that one of our members, Pat Brown, has died. The owner of a bookshop in the Cotswolds, she has been a loyal member of the Society from the beginning. We are sorry to lose her.

*Judith Stinton*

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER WEEKEND

June 28, 29 and 30

Friday June 28

**7.30pm.** Meal at No 6 North Square. Please let Richard Searle (01305 269204) know if you are coming.

Saturday June 29

**10.15am.** AGM in the library of Dorset County Museum.

**11am 'Miscellaneous Pieces'.** Members are invited to read some of their favourite extracts from any of STW's writings.

**12.30pm** Lunch at Café Paninis, 11 Weymouth Avenue, Dorchester. Again, please let Richard know if you are coming.

**2.30pm** Meet at Dagger's Gate on the Lulworth road for a literary walk of about three miles to Lulworth Cove and back, led by Stephen Mottram. Followed by tea in one of the cafés above the sea.

**7.00pm** By popular demand, Jenny Wildblood will cook a meal based on STW's own recipes in her writings. Meet at Eileen Johnson's

house, 2 Vicarage Lane, Fordington, Dorchester. Cost of the meal is £5 per person.

**Sunday June 30**

**11am** Meet at the Old Vicarage (or 'Sin' as it was otherwise known) in Chaldon Herring for a tour of the garden, with readings. Followed by a tour of the churchyard ('Death'), visiting the graves of villagers who are referred to in Sylvia's diaries and other writings. Led by Judith Stinton.

**12.30pm** Sunday lunch in The Sailor's Return. (Don't forget to let Richard know if you are coming.)

**THREE POEMS BY SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER**  
**FROM THE SATURDAY REVIEW**  
**1929-1930**

**FOUR WHITE PIGEONS**

*My brother died young,  
My lovely sisters died  
Young too, but I abide  
These solid shades among.*

*He o'er this roof-tree, they  
O'er that, now take their fling,  
Or preen a supple wing  
In voluntary stay;*

*But like a spectre I  
Haunt my own dark, my own  
Whiteness start at, and am grown  
Afraid, now, to fly.*

Published in *The Saturday Review*, 5 July 1930

**MORE JOY**

*Not a lamb —  
Though lambs are pretty, too,*

*With short fleece curled and crisp as rime —  
Do I choose this time.*

*I must have  
More joy on my green downs,  
A wilder foot, a gayer will  
To be wanton still;*

*So, having sought  
My territory through  
To find where most fixed joy lay hid,  
I bear home a kid.*

*In these eyes  
Burns more transparent peace  
Than ever blessed the anxious brows  
Of the virtuous,*

*And this heart brings  
Me back the sole unflawed  
Image of that world innocent,  
Of my first intent.*

Published in *The Saturday Review*, 21 December 1929

**IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT**

*How shall my God be justified  
In his own strict sight  
For leading me from nothingness  
Into created light?*

*How from all souls made perfect win  
Assent that, had he slacked  
To shape me, his innumerable  
A unit would have lacked?*

*Will he say, Since I reared a weed  
Her also I devised  
By whose corroborating gaze  
My weed was recognized;*

*Or, Having aimed a falling star  
Her in good time I made,  
And waked for grief one night, that it  
Might not ungreeted fade;*

*Or, To extreme old age preserved,  
Her, friendless and infirm,  
I by long paths led to lie down  
To feed a doubting worm?  
What word, way, deed, dream, done or endured,  
Lost or gained, will he find  
Sylvia to authenticate  
Among all mankind?*

*Will he who all dimensions holds  
My grave or petty cite,  
Constant or fleeting, to persuade  
The attentive infinite*

*That in the mood of making me  
He did not do amiss—  
Will he a vow long-labored urge,  
Or some most casual kiss?*

Published in *The Saturday Review*, 23 August 1930

### **WITH THE HUNTED**

Peter Tolhurst's selection from Sylvia Townsend Warner's prose, published last year, has been well-received, notably by Claire Harman in the *TLS* and by Elspeth Barker in December's *Literary Review*. The latter article is reproduced below.

#### **'Led Away by Paper'**

Sylvia Townsend Warner declined to write an autobiography on the grounds that she was 'too imaginative'. She liked to make a

distinction between her self as a person and as an artist; the Sylvia self existed quite apart from her books, 'no more to me than the woman reflected in the mirror opposite'. Toward the end of this splendid volume of miscellaneous pieces we are offered glimpses of this self in conversation and interviews. 'In appearance she is tall and pale, and she moves her arms in a way that subtly suggests wings.'

The interviewer remarks on her great personal charm: 'she keeps her listener constantly on the alert and never by any chance gives him what he is prepared for'. Her editor at the *New Yorker*, which published 150 of her stories over 50 years, was overwhelmed by her and didn't want her to move out of his sight. 'Ever.'

Her readers will find these qualities – wit and generosity and compelling erudition – in her writings; the Sylvia self and the artistic self do seem to be one. In her 82<sup>nd</sup> year, in conversation with Michael Schmidt, she announced, 'I am, what is that odd thing, a musicologist.' Her only formal education was with Percy Buck, music master at Harrow, where her father was a housemaster and taught history. She composed, played piano and violin, and served in her early twenties on the editorial committee of the Tudor Church Music project, transposing and editing scripts of early music discovered in cathedral repositories. Otherwise she was self-educated, albeit it in a scholarly and literary household. She and her father, having settled comfortably on a gigantic rocking horse, would read together the border ballads, or the Romantic poets. She had been a bad influence at kindergarten. 'I made the children laugh and play.' She was removed. With passionate deviousness she reveals that the Tudor Music project brought her to write, when she had nothing better to do of an evening; she simply wanted to use up the intensely desirable reams of discarded white photographic paper. 'I was led away by paper.' This companionable journey resulted in four volumes of poetry, a biography of T H White, seven novels, and the *New Yorker* stories. She embarked on a 17-year affair with Buck, had flings with other men and was alarmed to discover that she was 'fatally attractive to elderly clerics'. At last she settled in Dorset with her true love, the poet Valentine Ackland. There they lived and died. In between times they travelled hither and thither, notably to Spain during the Civil War and to America. They were communists, Sapphics, outspoken female writers who had many loved and valued writer friends but eschewed all literary coteries. During her lifetime Warner was not always well-known, perhaps because she was indifferent to critical opinion, and

because she wrote with great diversity; she could be scholarly, elegaic, minutely descriptive and extremely funny, all in the same piece. And although she believed she was inconsistent, she came to glory in inconsistency, remembering Walt Whitman's admission that he possessed a million voices.

This selection celebrates Warner's many voices. It is roughly divided by subject matter that overflows joyously into other areas, a range that is never discordant and accommodates tragedy and loving observation, the oddities of casual speech, architecture, a few thoughts about the role of cats, and always human inconsistency. She describes the writer T F Powys thus: 'While drinking tea or admiring the snowdrops in the churchyard, it would be difficult to speak of oneself as a man of blood and rapine but he could equally well have done so.' He planted onions under a weeping ash 'to give it something to weep for'. Out in a howling gale, he turned to Sylvia and said 'with great earnestness, almost urgency: "Tell me about your aunts".' Scattered through essays on writers, weeds and Gilbert White's tortoise, on landscapes and the 'Uses of Poetry', are sharp, delicate perceptions: 'At the sight of disease we grow cold hearted with fear'; 'Every writer should own a dog'; 'A flow of conversation and an unhelpful nature: these are my requirements...from the good guest'; 'Most people would rather wait for their rights than fight for their rights.' Nothing would seem beyond her descriptive powers, seen from the beginning in the wondrous 'Bathrooms Remembered', and equally apparent in her essay on Katherine Mansfield and her intensely moving account of John Craske, the fisherman and artist. As well as being infinitely quotable, she has a marvellous eye for quotations from other authors. Her essay on Gilbert White opens with his own words: 'Young Hirundines cluster on the trees. Harvest bugs bite the ladies.' She remembers a line composed by the great translator Arthur Waley when he was nine years old: 'Long lines of banners, horses, men, move across the plain.' Warner adds: 'It is as though it were waiting for its Chinese original.' So precise, so perfect. The essays on Spain are equally fastidious and vivid. She describes workers and reapers and cooks, especially Ascunción, 'shaped so exactly like a bear', who would pass a wet Sunday 'by tearing about the basement in her combinations and a scarlet sash, pretending to be a bull-fighter' or 'nimbling on all fours' about the kitchen, but 'like all Communists, serious at heart'. Such delights are counterpointed by searing accounts of lives cut short, bereavement, sudden unresisted

deaths, the crazed conditions of civil war, the disposal of fascist furniture, and the fates of children, cats and canaries.

Besides Warner's own Elysian prose, which includes a very brief blueprint on how to write fiction, ignoring the need to be convincing and natural, her sheer delight in the quotidian and the numinous quite overwhelms. And the collection begins with a truly helpful introduction. While every writer should own a dog, every reader should own this book.

Before they settled in Dorset, Warner and Ackland spent time in East Anglia, where Sylvia exulted in the marshes 'socketted into the universe, and passionately quiescent'. Should you now venture along the Norfolk coast, let's say, from Cromer, you might come upon an admirable bus wearing what the bus people call 'the livery of the Coasthopper'. It is a Norfolk Green number 312. Its name is Sylvia Townsend Warner.

There are some who compare Sylvia to Virginia Woolf; I can see no need for this. The top of Parnassus is flat. But is there a bus named after Virginia Woolf?

#### **Looking for the Goshawk: a letter from Conor Jameson**

I am making contact with you to let you know about my next book that will be published in April, called *Looking for the Goshawk*. It is about the bird, primarily, but in the course of describing its natural history I explore T H White's interest in the species, and make reference to Sylvia Townsend Warner's biography of White. I thought this may be of interest.. My first book, *Silent Spring Revisited*, was published in May, by Bloomsbury. <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Silent-Spring-Revisited-Conor-Jameson/dp/1408157608>

I am also initiating a tribute to White to mark the 50th anniversary of his death, in January 2014. I have been in touch with his rights holders about this, and the agent and manager of Julie Andrews, who befriended White at the end of his life, and who speaks highly - while candidly - of him in her biography. You would be welcome to join in with any commemoration that might be arranged. *Conor Jameson*

## TOLLER FRATRUM

### *The Church of St Basil & its Parish*

'For a thousand years and more a great deal of living has gone on here. This excellent history of the hamlet by Judith Stinton shows why there were once more roads and footpaths running in this direction.'

Alexandra Harris, author of *Romantic Moderns*

This tiny hamlet in West Dorset has a most interesting history, spanning from the Bronze Age, through Roman Times and the Middle Ages, to the present day. There was a church here in Saxon times, followed by a period in the hands of the Knights Hospitallers who had possession of the lands here until the Dissolution of the Monasteries. St Basil's has been the Parish Church of Toller Fratrum for centuries, and this fascinating book reveals something of the intriguing story which is emerging, both of the church and the hamlet.

All proceeds from the sale of this book will go to support the work of 'The Friends of St Basil, Toller Fratrum' which is a registered charity, set up in 1999 for the upkeep of the church and to keep it open for worship by future generations.

We are appealing for advance orders for the book, or donations, as the needs of this charity are especially pressing now that the Diocese of Salisbury has decided to close the church for regular public worship.

44 page paperback, with illustrations and photographs throughout.

Price £5 (plus £1.80 P&P)

Please make cheques payable to 'The Friends of St Basil, Toller Fratrum' and send to: Mrs I Mitchell, Chilfrome Cottage, Chilfrome, Dorset DT2 0HA

### 'Two Islands and a Continent'

Review by Sylvia Townsend Warner in *Our Time*, August 1944, of three books of short stories: *The Barber's Trade*

*Union* (sic) by Mulk Raj Anand; *Crab Apple Jelly* by Frank O'Connor; and *A Haunted House* by Virginia Woolf.

Reading "The Barber's Trades Union" I found myself being overcome by an almost "John Company" excitement at the wealth of its material, and the possibilities of literature in a continent so rich in varieties of breed and culture and climate, so abundant in injustice and anomaly, capable of such violent contrasts and such delicate filigrees, full of flowers, functionaries, princes, confectioners, tigers, money-lenders, hornets, marriage-brokers, religions: a continent like Nekrasov's Russia.

*Poor and abundant, mighty and down-trodden.* One is accustomed to the thought of how much has been taken from India. *The Barber's Trades Union* put a new idea into my head: that India has not given the world a hundredth part of what she might give. Where is the Indian Balzac, the Indian Tchekhov, the Indian Jane Austen (purdah, of course)?

Meanwhile, here is *The Barber's Trades Union*, a collection of short stories by Mulk Raj Anand (whose novels have done something to clothe that desert of empty shelves labelled: Fiction, Indian, 1800 to Present-Day). They are mostly the stories of small people, provincials. Khan Azam Khan, the decayed aristocrat, wearing a Tiger Moustache, and selling his last possessions to ensure that a corresponding Tiger Moustache should not disgracefully appear on the upper lip of the local money-lender; an Army Clerk, the bestower of Koh-i-noor pencils, whose position offers him up as on an altar to the wrath of Colonel Pottinger, and who armours his hapless incompetent personal dignity by keeping his resignation in a drawer; a married couple, who go on a pilgrimage to the junction of Ganga and Jamuna, symbol of a successful conjugality—

*Beaming with warm smiles, they stood with joined hands before the agent of God, waiting for the union of their two minds which they felt sure was approaching steadily as the ceremonial became more and more intricate. Suddenly, however, the high priest made a sign as if he was testing a silver rupee on the thumb and forefinger of his right hand; a lawyer, successful,*

educated, a Municipal Commissioner tormented by the recollection of a row with a railway porter: "You see, he was being impudent and impertinent, and I might have fallen, the way he pulled me, as I had one foot on the foot-rest. Then I lost my temper, and, turning round, gave him a kick so that he fell back weeping. I am sorry I did that, but sincerely, what could anyone else have done?"

*Latif paused as if he had finished his narrative, and he looked at me at once guiltily and as if he wanted to enlist my sympathy for his righteousness and honesty.*

Stories of small people, stories of a society where to escape from oppression entails becoming in turn an oppressor, *The Barber's Trades Union* is a book of tragic themes. Such themes can easily become special pleading, the ruin of narrative. Mulk Raj Anand writes of his people with an impartial embracing clarity like Indian sunlight. He conveys the richness (to a European, the almost appalling richness) of his material, and yet retains the economy of art. The inherent tragedy of his themes does not narrow him into a stereotyped compassion, his sympathies include a humane and singularly graceful sense of the ridiculous. I wish that all the earnest people, English and American, who debate the problems of India, might read *The Barber's Trades Union*. They would learn a great deal; most important of all, and an aspect of problems most fatally often forgotten by the earnest, that their problem is a problem of human beings.

*Crab Apple Jelly* is the title chosen by Frank O'Connor for his book of short stories. The crab apple is a fruit so astringent that in making it into a jelly one is apt to put too much sugar in; and then, unless one boils it very exactly, the true crab flavour is lost. This culinary information is forced on me by a suspicion that Frank O'Connor is in danger of making the same mistake.

*For a moment I forgot that he was only an adorable, cranky, unreliable old gasbag of a man who had just been out boozing with Owney Mac in Rordan's disreputable pub on the quays. He looked like a king: a Richard or a Lear.*

But when an old man looks like a Richard or a Lear the word *adorable* does not come to mind; the process of catharsis, applicable both to jellies and to fiction, boils out such condescending notions. In several of these stories I detect a superabundance of sugar, a rather maudlin geniality, a pot-house "tout comprendre et tout pardonner." It will be a pity if this frame of mind grows on Frank O'Connor, for where he eschews these sugary dispensations his stories have vigour and authentic flavour. *The Mad Lomnaseys*, in particular, is a spirited and convincing treatment of the inconsequentialities between character and action. But there are other fruits to be gathered as well as the crab apple. I myself would give all the rest of this book for the one story called *Uprooted*. It tells how two brothers, one a clerk in Dublin who had "come up from the country to do wonders," the other a young priest, pay a week-end visit to the peasant home that reared them, see the delight and innocence of their childhood persisting in their drunken randy old father, realise the birthright they have forfeited.

*His mother, the coloured shawl about her head, was blowing the fire. The bedroom door was open and he could see his father in his shirt-sleeves kneeling beside the bed, his face raised reverently towards a holy picture, his braces hanging down behind. He unbolted the half door, went through the garden and out on to the road. There was a magical light on everything. A boy on a horse rose suddenly against the sky, a startling picture. Through the apple-green light over Carriganassa ran long streaks of crimson, so still they might have been enamelled. Magic, magic, magic! He saw it as in a children's picture-book with all its colours intolerably bright: something he had outgrown and could never return to, while the world he aspired to was as remote and intangible as it had seemed even in the despair of youth.*

A lamentable blurb to *Crab Apple Jelly* says "the witty light-hearted talk never fails to hint at the hidden heart-break." *Uprooted* is not among the stories the blurb picks out for mention. And this shows discernment. The talk is not witty, the heart-break is as plain as a death-wound, there is not a nudge throughout the the narrative. And since the smile on the lip and the tear in the eye have bedevilled too much Irish writing

already it is to be hoped that Frank O'Connor will snap out of it, and do more things like *Uprooted*.

*A Haunted House* is a collection of Virginia Woolf's short stories – or sketches: neither word quite applies. Six are reprinted from the early *Monday or Tuesday*, six from magazines; six are unpublished, and to some extent unfinished. But the anatomists, the people who can teach writing in twelve lessons, must be warned at once: there is nothing to be learned from this volume. The sketch is as secretive as the finished canvas, the early work as mature as the work of later date, the late as fresh in handling as the early. Naturally, it is possible to distinguish degrees of achievement among these stories (or perhaps to know what one likes). It is possible to surmise where the writer has found her material less manageable; one can say: Here her attention wavered, here she fell out of love. But this teaches one no more than what one ought to know already: that the creative writer is subject to vicissitude, that the pen is a chancier implement than the sewing-machine. The style, the method, that made Virginia Woolf a nonpareil, is as much a secret by the last page of this volume as it was on the title page of her first publication.

Demanding the utmost from herself, she demands a reciprocal utmost from her readers. She demands to be read with pleasure...an austere and taxing demand: interest, approval, curiosity, sympathy, disapproval, dislike: all these are easier to keep up with than pleasure. But with Virginia Woolf it must be pleasure or nothing. Cease to be pleased...the colours decompose, the structure falls apart, nothing is left but a debris of words, chosen fastidiously and at random. As in her own sketch, *The Mark on the Wall*, the centre of a world has turned into a snail and gone away.

Anand the Indian and O'Connor the Irishman both write in the language of a foreign race. Virginia Woolf grew up in the heart of the English cultural tradition and was in her lifetime one of its representatives. *A Haunted House* is full of echoes of our literature, turns of phrase, tones of voice, not imitative but hereditary. One story, called *Solid Objects*, tells of a young man who found a piece of green glass in the sea-sand, and admired

it, and carried it home. It was useful as a letter-weight; for he was a young man with a future, and a number of invitation cards. But the letter-weight at one end of his mantleself was presently supplemented by a meteorite, by a star-shaped fragment of richly-coloured china, and these too he had picked up and carried home because they pleased him. The pursuit of solid objects swallowed up the pursuit of objects less solid, such as careers, riches, invitations to constructive dinner-parties. He had found. He was lost. This story, which might quite unite the shades of Bunyan and Landor in a common appreciation, is as English as you please. It is totally un-British. The Englishwoman, no less than the Indian and the Irishman, is critical, unconvinced, irreconcilable, imperfectly subjected, and ready to throw, and able to throw, solid objects at the Great White Reach-Me-Down on which the Sun Never Sets. How dangerously subversive, and how much endangered, the English cultural tradition of which she was a representative was, she could see for herself, when in early 1941, a little before her death, *The Times* made its distinguished attack on the Intellectuals, and loosed such a yelping of rancour and malevolence as we, in 1944, and the fifth year of the war against facism, should be very foolish to forget.

*Sylvia Townsend Warner*

### *How fare my ash-trees now?*

The old water-meadows in Maiden Newton are fringed with ash-trees, tall and stately, if untidy in their habits. Come the autumn, they can shed all their leaves during a single day, in rustling drifts which cover the grass.

Every year hundreds of seedlings try their luck; each one has a kink in its tail, making extraction difficult. Those which escape detection grow rapidly: they will be higher than a house in twenty years.

There are ash-trees at Sylvia and Valentine's house down the river in Frome Vauchurch, as there were too at Miss Green's cottage in Chaldon. In the unhappy year of 1949, the couple



visited the bombed-out site of the cottage and stood in the wild remains of the garden. 'The noises were the same' Sylvia noted in her journal, 'the sighing ash-trees, the swishing grass'. Her poem, 'How fare my ash-trees now?' seems to be recalling this visit. It could also serve as a gentle lament for all the ash-trees of England, threatened as they are now by deadly disease.

*How fare my ash-trees now?  
Do my fruit-trees bear?  
The gnarled apple and the stately pear –  
How do they grow, and I not there, not there?*

*Neither more nor less  
Than when you walked below.  
Apple and pear tree fruit, and ash-trees grow,  
And the ripe fruit falls, and the leaves begin to snow.*

*Yes, I remember well  
The plunge of apple and pear,  
The whirled whisper of ash-trees flocking down air –  
But is it all as when I was there, was there?*

*Yes and no.  
Nettles and weeds grow tall  
Muffle each fruit fall:  
Unsought-for lie apple and pear, and rot one and all.*

For the lovers as for the trees it's an precarious survival: one which may not endure.

**Judith Stinton**

#### **SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER SOCIETY**

Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012 at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester.

Present : members of the Committee and 14 other members.

#### **1. Apologies:**

Tess Ormrod, Win Johnson, Richard Burleigh and Annie Rhodes.

2. Minutes of the 2011 AGM were approved and signed.

#### **3. Matters arising**

Jenny Wildblood said that the Facebook site was now up and running. She stressed that it was an organisational site, not a personal one. Judith B. said that the University of Exeter had made progress in its efforts to map where information on STW is stored. Ailsa Granne reported that the proposed event on STW at Kings College London had been postponed indefinitely. Ren Draya supplied, as promised at the 2011 AGM, a list of Dissertations on STW.

#### **4. Elections**

No candidates having put themselves forward for election; the Committee as formed stands for the following three years.

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

Judith Bond discussed the 2011-2012 Balance Sheet, available to members present.

Sales of journals and newsletters have held up well again. This year, £210 came from the sealed auction of the "Lolly Willows" portrait, kindly donated by Claire Harman.

The cost of postage is an ongoing problem.

Karina Taubert maintaining the Society website saves a great deal of money.

The Society helped Peter Tolhurst with £500 towards the publication costs of his latest book on STW, "With the Hunted", which was launched successfully this weekend in Dorchester.

The balance of funds carried forward to next year is £4398.69, an increase of £450 on last year. Stephen Mottram has again audited the Society's accounts and the Society is grateful for this service.

Judith ended by reminding us that the Society has underwritten the Warner Symposium by £350. Other expenses to appear on next year's balance sheet will also include the expenses for this afternoon's concert, and the donation to the F.O.R.C.E. Charity in memory of Mary Jacobs.

#### **6. Membership Report**

Membership stands at 143. 7 new members joined this year and 3 members have not renewed.

#### **7. The Journal**

Helen Sutherland reported that costs for publishing the Journal continue to rise and she wondered whether we should contemplate using a smaller format for it: A5 size was suggested.

A discussion on the subject of the Journal produced the following:

a) That since students are used to getting their information online, it would make sense to be able to provide the Journal electronically ; there might be problems of copyright, but generally there is a relaxation of such restrictions now.

Peter Swaab offered help from UCL, Helen said that the Edinburgh University Press might also assist.

b) That many students take what material they need for theses or PhDs from anywhere they can for their personal use.

c) While no firm decisions were made at this meeting, there is pressing need to consider the way forward as regards the Journal. Members were keen to retain a hard copy of the journal.

Jay Barksdale requested that a correction slip regarding the mis-applied notational example in Richard Searle's article in the 2011 edition of the Journal be inserted in the 2012 edition.

#### 6. The Website.

Karina Taubert, not able to be at the AGM, sent a report whose principal points were: Use of the website has grown: 20,000 hits this year, which constitutes a doubling since its inception on 2006. Interest in STW came from all over the world, even including places such as Montenegro and Bulgaria.

The Biographical Section was the most popular and Karina believes that more detail needs to be added here. She suggested details of the houses that STW and VA had lived in could be included, together with maps showing their locations. In addition, possibly the publication of some of STW's work on line would be advantageous now.

Helen said that she has scanned earlier Journals; all were now available on PDF, and will talk to Karina on the way forward.

It was suggested that our website could be linked to local tourist websites as well as that of the Museum.

Jay Barksdale reported that Peter Judd is editing and publishing a work based on the correspondence between Elizabeth Wade White, STW & VA. Jan Montefiore suggested that Chatto & Windus should be approached initially as they were STW's publisher in her lifetime. If necessary, Jan would be prepared to approach Jenny Uglow and Random House for help.

#### AOB

Judith Stinton reported that the church at Toller Fratrum will soon close. There is a short history of the church by Judith, published by Little Toller Books. Proceeds from the sales of this book will go towards the maintenance of the church.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.30am

#### First Words

September 27, 1982

Deep in the treasure of Sylvia Townsend Warner's letters. Camille is cliché. The image is a purse, but a purse of adolescent sheen and inimitable size, not vast but deep, such direct talk from her to me, or any other reader. "I can tell you for your comfort that the only house I can never be dislodged from was our lovely Frankfurt Manor, where we lived for two years and then were forced to be sensible about. I can still turn its door handles and remember where the squeak came in the passages." That is how I feel about 1453 [Lexington Avenue]. I have never left it. I trudge up the slightly swaying, yelping stairs. I sit in the chair next to the long parlor's fireplace, in the comforting dark, the full weight of the house above me, comforting me while the Lexington Avenue subway clatters and rumbles under the house.

from *The Grand Surprise: the Journals of Leo Lemmon*, Knopf, 2007