

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

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society Newsletter Number Twenty Nine

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 Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After The Death

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society

Chair: Eileen Johnson
2 Vicarage Lane,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1LH
01305 266028

Hon. Secretary: Lynn Mutti
26 Dorchester Road, Frampton,
Dorset DT2 9ND

Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Judith Bond
26 Portwey Close, Weymouth,
Dorset DT4 8RF

Newsletter Editor: Judith Stinton
21 Cattistock Road, Maiden Newton,
Dorset DT2 0AG
judithstinton@mypostoffice.co.uk

Events Organiser: Richard Searle
8 Furbers Paddock, Stratton,
Dorset DT2 9TR
01305 269204

Journal Editor: Helen Sutherland,
57 Hickman Street (O/2)
Glasgow G42 7HR
Helen.Sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk

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

NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY-NINE

I would like to thank Jay Barksdale, Judith Bond, Morine Krissdóttir and Lynn Mutti for their help with this Newsletter, and also Moya Leighton and Eileen Johnson for their photographs. To all of them, a big thank-you (as we say in Maiden Newton).

On a sadder note, I have to report that Susan Ellis, a member since 2009, has died at her home in Crowborough, East Sussex. She has generously donated some items and photographs to the Sylvia Townsend Warner Archive at Dorset County Museum. Sue requested that STW's poem, 'Go the long way, the long way home' be read at her funeral.

Judith Stinton

Sylvia Townsend Warner Society Committee Elections 2015

In 2015 there will be elections for Committee members, when there will be vacancies for the positions of Newsletter Editor, Membership Secretary and Treasurer as Judith Stinton and Judith Bond are both standing down. Anyone interested in filling these posts should contact our Chairman, Eileen Johnson.

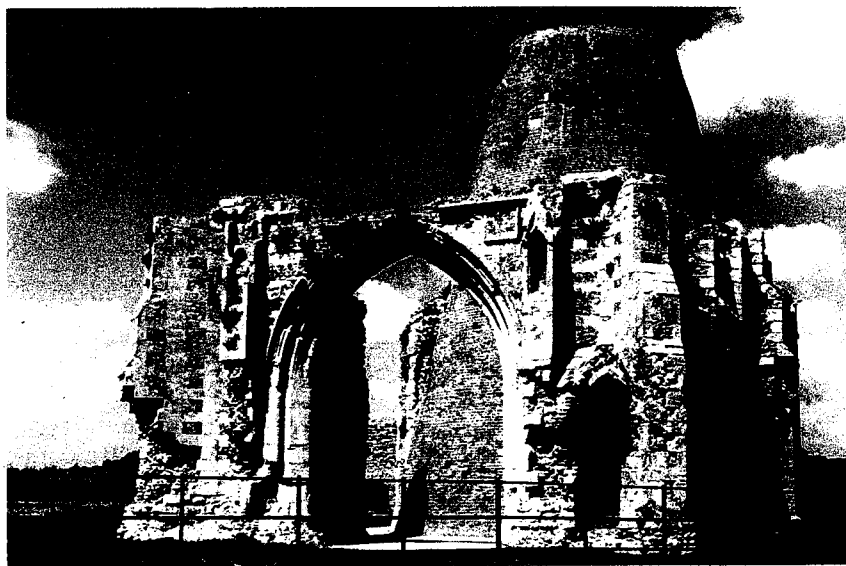
**Sylvia Townsend Warner weekend
June 20 – June 22 2014**

Dorset to Norfolk is not a journey intended by nature, our party decided, after several hours of driving across the country. Other members, though, had travelled much further to join the STW weekend – from Germany (via Cromer), from Glasgow and from America. As on our first Norfolk trip (this was our third) we met on Friday evening for an Italian meal in the lofty expanses of the Forum in Norwich.

We had a good turnout. On Saturday there were 23 people for a packed and lively day. This began at the Old Hall, South Burlingham, home of member Margaret Steward and of Peter Scupham. Margaret serenely offered coffee to all and sundry (including the postman). Peter, himself a poet, read two

poems by STW: 'The Death of Miss Green's Cottage' and the ninth sequence from *Boxwood*, 'People Whom I Never Knew'. This was an unexpected pleasure, and the house was full of further surprises – the books and paintings in a maze of rooms, the mermaid with a saucy merman above the entrance, and Elizabethan murals in one of the attics. These were black and white hunting scenes, with skilful drawings of hounds in a leafy forest.

We drove on in convoy (a haphazard experience) to St Benet's Abbey Gatehouse, where Caroline Davison was our expert guide. St Benet's was the only Abbey to survive the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and the Bishop still comes by boat every year for an annual service. As we walked, sails were flitting across the landscape in low invisible waters. *The Corner That Held Them*, Sylvia's favourite among her novels, describes a nunnery in nearby Oby but, as Caroline explained, the real setting is probably St Benet's. The Gatehouse itself has undergone transformation, as it now unexpectedly incorporates a windmill.



Lunch was at the Fisherman's Return in Winterton, one of the two pubs in the village frequented by Sylvia and Valentine. (The second, the Mariners, has become a private house.) Close by are the remains of Valentine's childhood home, Hill House, rendered unrecognisable by huge bay windows

and now part of a holiday camp. In the grounds is a collection of round huts in pastel shades with thatched and pointed roofs, as if from some African fairy tale.

Warren Farm, Horsey, our next stop, has remained relatively unchanged, though finding itself in a field of caravans. This is where Sylvia and Valentine stayed in October 1949, during the crisis of the Elizabeth Wade White affair. We climbed up onto the dunes behind the house and then slithered down to the sea, where a solitary seal was swimming close to the shore.

At Waxham Tithe Barn we had tea, followed by a tour of the buildings, guided once again by Caroline. The vast barn, the largest in Norfolk, was built in the 1570s using fragments from some of the monasteries which Henry VIII had managed to dissolve.

We spent the evening in the Hill House pub at Happisburgh where Lorna Sage's brother Clive is the landlord. There was a beer festival in full swing, and Elvis serenaded us as we approached the pub, passing a fanciful star-shaped house by Detmold Blow. Hill House may not be there for much longer, as the entire stretch of coast is falling into the sea. Sand martins were nesting precariously in the brittle cliffs over the heaps of broken rock which lined the shore.



The Key of the Field

On Sunday, the weather looked less promising, but soon warmed up. We drove in our convoy to Frankfort Manor, (now known as Sloley Old Hall) where Sylvia and Valentine lived happily in 1933-34. We had been here on our first trip; the manor still had the same friendly and hospitable occupants. We were given coffee, and ate a whole trayful of lavender cakes, made by Dorothy, then were taken for a tour of the house, which she and Steve have carefully restored. (Picture above)

The Shell Museum at Glandford was our next stop, a heady collection of shells of all hues, shapes and sizes, plus shards from Pompeii, agateware and a collection of valentines sent by the Shell company to lady motorists. It was the likely inspiration for the shell collection catalogued by Thomas Kettle in *The Flint Anchor*. And along one wall is a fine tapestry by John Craske, a panorama of the Norfolk coast.

Finally there was lunch. This was at Wiveton Hall café with its brightly painted walls and delicious food, a fitting place to end an enjoyable and memorable weekend.

On behalf of the Society, I'd like to thank Peter Tolhurst, for planning and arranging the trip, and for his informative and entertaining commentary. Thanks too go to Richard Searle, for organising the meals – a vital part of all our weekends!

Judith Stinton

Mary Jacobs Essay Prize

The winner of the Mary Jacobs Essay Prize for 2014 is 'Spellbound? The Secret Message of Lolly Willowses' by Emma Robson who is at Exeter University. The prize is £200, plus publication in the Society's Journal, and a year's free membership of the Society.

Entries are invited for the 2015 prize. Essays should not exceed 4000 words and should be sent to the Journal Editor, Helen Sutherland:
Helen.Sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk

The following passage is the foreword by STW to *The Key of the Field* by T F Powys, which was published by William Jackson as Number 1 of the Furnival Books, in 1930. Powys returned the honour by writing the foreword to Sylvia's *A Moral Ending and Other Stories* which became Number 8 of the Furnival Books in 1931. It was the only foreword he ever wrote.

Foreword

A hasty reader might suppose that in the seven years elapsing between his appearance in T. F. Powys' first published novel, *The Left Leg*, and his reappearance in *The Key of the Field*, Mr. Jar of Madder had lost an uncle in America, invested wisely in the Swedish Match Company, or scratched up a hoard of gold from a tumulus. The "wold Jar" of *The Left Leg* lived in a wooden hut under the hill, visited Madder Rectory by the back door only, and called nothing his own except a necklace of pink beads which he gave away to a little girl. Such acts as these do not, in the common course of things, lead to the possession of Madder Manor House, a lily-pond, fields dressed in such living green that the hearts of men must ache for them, and that final seal and flourish of landed ownership, – an unjust steward.

But this discrepancy will not disturb any one who has taken the trouble to study Mr. Jar's character. All those who know him know he is a little eccentric. One fine summer's afternoon in the last century (so I have been told, and I believe it) a Duke of Norfolk received, and not ungraciously, a tip from a gentleman who was driving a dog-cart and felt disinclined to get down and open a gate for himself. All these great ones are the same; and Mr. Jar, who belongs to a very old family indeed, older than Orion or the Pleiades, must be granted a whim of humility every now and then. At such times he may well have lived in a wooden hut for reasons of health or pleasure, dressed like a tinker because he thought tinker's weeds easy wearing, and chosen the back door path for the sake of that old-fashioned plant, Herb of Grace, growing in a great neglected bush near the rubbish heap.

It would be hard if rank and dignity brought no compensations for the cares which they impose. Yet in these bad times, public opinion – as we

name our envy – will have none of this doctrine, and would keep God in his Heaven and Mr. Jar in his Justice-Room as strictly as it would keep the typist to her Evening Classes. Only the other day I heard Mr. Weston (just such another as Squire Jar) blamed because, when he visited Folly Down, he did not rout about more systematically. At this I could only ask the speaker whether he would have the Ancient of Days behave himself in such a manner as to be indistinguishable from Mr. Otto H. Kahn, L.L.D.?

The creative artist will always elude his analyst, if only for the reason that he has got there first, and is, by the time the analyst arrives, sitting innocently beside the completed work; but as near as analysis may go, it seems to me certain that Powys is aesthetically justified in his use of God by this very emphasis upon aspects of the Godhead which public opinion cannot sanction. Though Mr. Jar should rise even higher, though he should be made a J.P., his dealings, if they are to carry weight with us, must be somewhat different from our expectations. It is in the nature of the Godhead to over-ride our conceptions of it. "We are rational and reasoners," said G. M. Hopkins, "by our false reasoning, as we are moral agents by our sins." Eschewing reason and morality Powys is enabled to give a true picture of life which is not a cross one. He tells us that such as the Trotts will triumph, and that for such as Uncle Tiddy there is no refuge save death; but there is no rancour in his pessimism. So to accept is to absolve: and Squire Jar, for all his queer ways, his sufferance of the unjust steward, his long absentings, is included in that absolution. Granting at last the one harmless wish possible to man – the wish to die – he is made at one with his poor tenant, and is, by the power of art, in that moment a more godlike figure than any lofty Architect of the Universe or prayer-in-the slot Providence could be.

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Sylvia Townsend Warner and Music

Resumé of the lecture given by Society member Dame Gillian Beer at this year's Aldeburgh Festival

In 1977 the Aldeburgh Festival held a celebration of the life and work of Sylvia Townsend Warner. In her later years Warner was a friend of Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten. She had given a collection of pictures by the East Anglian fisherman painter John Craske to the festival and arranged an

exhibition of his work there in 1971. Yet the presence of a Warner tribute within the Festival is intriguing and rare. What was it about the example of her life and work that prompted such an event? And does that life and work have ways of speaking to us now? The programme of the Aldeburgh day gives just a glimpse into the extraordinary range of her writing and the way her creativity fuelled others. It included settings of her poems by John Ireland, Alan Bush and Paul Nordoff. Peter Pears read from her poem collections as well as one of the many short stories she wrote for the *New Yorker*. The programme also included a Virelai and Rondeau for two voices by the fourteenth century composer Guillaume de Machaut, for Warner was a pioneer re-discoverer of early music and during her twenties was already one of the editors of the magisterial ten-volume *Tudor Church Music* with a special skill in transcribing ancient scores.

Sylvia Townsend Warner was a musician, composer and musicologist during the first half of her long life (1893-1978). She was then a poet, novelist, writer of short-stories, translator of Proust, and wonderful diarist and letter writer. How do the two phases connect and interlock? And how do they – indeed, do they? – connect with her commitments as a Communist during the 1930s and 40s and her experience first as the secret lover of her former music master for seventeen years and then as committed lover and partner to Valentine Ackland, born Mary Ackland. Sylvia Townsend Warner was always radical and unexpected, and yet at home in a Dorset village. She lived very thoroughly in the time of her own life, its politics, its tensions and contradictions, and its pleasures. Her singular life is deep embedded in what is held in common. So despite social changes her writing rarely seems dated. It is extraordinarily free, light-winged, and often funny, as clear as a bell and unforeseeable as the future. It is also preoccupied with suffering and privation. Each of her novels, from *Lolly Willowes*, through *Mr. Fortune's Maggot*, *Summer Will Show*, and *After the Death of Don Juan* to *The Corner that Held Them*, is a fresh start in a new direction. And each of them challenges the reader to hear voices that have been silenced. Her writing gives a different cast to Modernism; her short stories provide examples for the present revival of that form. The lecture will discuss how music goes into the grain of her prose, her plotting, her dialogue, and her life.

Gillian Beer

An Epitaph

Sylvia and Valentine's gravestone, carved by Don Potter, was placed in Chaldon churchyard in December 1970, a year after Valentine's death. Sylvia's name and date of birth were already engraved upon it. Sylvia must have chosen the couple's joint epitaph with its solemnly hopeful message, *Non omnis moriar*.

It seems a pity really that Sylvia Townsend Warner didn't write her own epitaph. After all, she was a dab hand at writing them for other (imaginary) people.

Here lies Melissa Mary Thorn
Together with her son stillborn;
Whose loss her husband doth lament.
He has a large estate in Kent.

A small tragedy, an uncaring husband, a turn of wit, come together in four brief lines. And Warner collected other epigraphs too: some of them from the humble country churches around Maiden Newton. One of these churches was at Wraxhall, a hamlet about three miles away – as the crow flies.

The crow's route would be along bridleways, up the bed of a forgotten stream and across two fords, all prone to flooding and deep mud. This pilgrimage will take the travellers to the church where, if they can negotiate the tricky latch, they will find a prime specimen of an epitaph, commemorating local land owner William Lawrence, which was noted by Valentine Ackland in a letter of September 1938 to Elizabeth Wade White.

Valentine misquotes the verses – but then so does Nikolaus Pevsner in his entry on the church in *Buildings of England: Dorset*. The lettering on the curlicued monument is difficult to decipher:

Welcome deare Death let sweetest Sleep here take mee
In thy cool Shade and never more awake mee
Like a rich Curtayn draw thy darkness round
Like a closed Chamber make my Grave profound
In it I'le couch secure no Dreames affrights

A silent Lodger here no Cares dare bite
Making thy Bed seeme hard or long thy night

Let not thy armes Oh Grave yet still infold mee
Alas thinke not thou canst for ever hold mee
Wee'le breake at Length thy marble wombe asunder
Reissue thence and fill the world with wonder
Envy thou'll then to see the Power divine
Nevre digge his Diamond Saints from thy deepest myne
Cleanse cleare and polish them then shall by farre
Each dust of theirs outshine the morning starre.

Close by is a small brass plate to Mrs Lawrence who died in 1672, nine years before her husband. Her inscription is decidedly more off-the-peg:

Goodness in Heauen gave a Birth
In here to Goodness here on Earth
And having Tyme long nth here Blessed
Tooke her to Heauen there to Rest
Goodness in Earth doth now in mourning goe
Because she hath noe Patterne left Below

Another uncaring husband? Such is the ambiguous world of epitaphs.

Judith Stinton

Rooting around the Ridgeway: an Artsreach press release

Two new and unusual reading groups are set to launch in Dorset through Artsreach this autumn. Aimed at exploring the wide range of literature inspired by and written about the South Dorset Ridgeway area, readers will be invited to delve into an exciting list of authors spanning three centuries, ranging from the familiar – William Barnes and Thomas Hardy – to the modern writings of Ian McEwan and Christopher Nicholson. The list dips into the Powys family with writings by John Cowper, Llewelyn and Philippa, and visits works by their friend, Sylvia Townsend Warner, whilst allowing readers to enjoy the beauty of Kenneth Allsop's observations and the gripping fiction of John Meade Falkner. Lesser-known works by authors

such as David Garnett, Emma Tennant and Christopher Priest will also be devoured and discussed.

A series of guest speakers will add to the experience, helping to deliver an insight into some of the more challenging writers. A walk within the South Dorset Ridgeway area to explore the landscape and setting of some of the writings is also planned. Readers will investigate and discuss common themes, look at the relationship between people and the landscape, examine trends and movements in literature and discuss why it is that some authors remain in print, whilst others do not. Readers will also examine how writers have used poetry, prose, fiction (both novels and short stories) in their response to the landscape and gain a great understanding of the South Dorset Ridgeway's inspirational qualities:

These new reading groups are open to anyone who is interested in exploring this landscape and the wide range of literature it has inspired, especially those living in the South Dorset Ridgeway area. No specialist knowledge is needed. The groups will run monthly from October 2014 to March 2015 and again from October 2015 to March 2016.

Registration for these two groups will formally open in July, and for more information about content or practical details, please contact Kerry at Artsreach on 01305 269512. Alternately email info@artsreach.co.uk

Kerry Bartlett

A Garland of Straw

By Sylvia Townsend Warner

A review from *Tomorrow*, November 1943

These are stories and sketches collected from writings over a period of several years. They range from character sketches and reminiscences to long and serious studies, from dips into the purely absurd to dissections of various war temperaments, in England and out of England. Miss Warner writes well, and nobody needs reminding of that. She should be highly valued if only because a true delight in the absurd is rare, considering how much of the absurd there is in the world. In this book we may sample, and share in, this delight.

Some of these stories are no more than incidents that might come casually to mind, funny things you might think to put in a letter. Some others go clear out of the eccentricity they exist to praise or condemn, almost to enter tragedy, and more might dare to do this. "The Level Crossing", which is the last story, is satisfying because it, more than the others, attempts a wholeness, other delight in being bits, however brilliant. But I think in general Miss Warner is careful never to lose herself beyond a point where wit will not bring her back.

Nearly all the stories are about eccentrics. It is safe bet that in real life many of these odd little creatures are puttering about the lanes of England. But Miss Warner's characters are sometimes eccentric in that they are not quite alive, quite in a manner dear to the English heart. This reader could wish at times that her people had a little more life in them, at the sacrifice of eccentricity, however whimsical. There are more ways Miss Warner knows to define a character than by the character's delicious little oddities. A revolutionist who likes Jane Austen does not devastate us; because while he stands before us, aptly talking and holding his book, still, nothing happens to him at all, or, consequently, to us; the story is just the sight of him. The point at stake often seems very light to cause a whole story, points such as a breach of taste in decoration, or a wife's escape from home because of a time-bomb which she welcomes as a chance to slip off and hear Debussy records, which her husband does not fancy as he, a little better than she, prefers sightseeing in St. Paul's. There is irony here; but need there have been anything?

Humour is in all the stories, and in many is a war-bitterness, but the stories might be a little stronger in constitution, to bear both these qualities well and still seem of vital substance in themselves. Miss Warner is damning several kinds of people in this book, but it is rather as if she could not bear to write about them; these stories are all she will say. Her indignation cannot be doubted, and certainly her heart is true that she ultimately speaks from; but the feeling in the reader is that if Miss Warner is too nice to say anything further, we must be too nice to notice anything further; which is of course ridiculous; but there is a feeling of good behaviour intact in the writing of these stories which can be catching.

And then, proving us wrong in generalisations, Miss Warner produces a propaganda piece like "Apprentice" which is super-violent in effect. And if

such a story lacks by nature the virility and power of a Goya *Disaster*, it has nevertheless a kindred briefness, and a brand of humour that shocks like the burn from that same acid. "A Functionary", one of these, is besides all else a fine story. This group is not without a relationship to the other stories; each is a little nightmare, the quaint story turned horror story. "The Red Carnation", however, is very beautiful and quiet.

"Plutarco Roo", "My Shirt Is in Mexico", and "To Cool the Air", easy little pleasantries, are warm and funny, if slight. "Lay a Garland on My Hearse" is a superior travesty on Family and its jollifications and assumptions. And there are several stories of "common people" and these tend to be more human, as indeed common people can be and no blame attached. Action enters the shabby parlours of these stories and conversation takes place which, if less articulate on account of the ignorance involved, is nevertheless more real and moving for being less blossomy in wit, and less futile in direction.

Above all, Miss Warner is an English writer, and if the English fire seems to burn a little bleakly for us sometimes, because it is so well tended, perhaps it is our loss because in our comparative exuberance we expect too much; but I do not think so. Yet, if the absurd is not the medium for indicating the highest truths of character, and if wit, even to the highest degree, is not the exact literary weapon one would choose against such tremendous things as facism and the lies of the world, let us admit the bounds these stories lie in, and then praise them for their special and rewarding excellence. And we should always rejoice in the very grammar of a neat, sound, exact sentence, like every single one of Miss Warner's.

Eudora Welty

Some extracts from the diary of Alyse Gregory

Alyse Gregory had been Managing Editor of the *Dial* until her marriage to Llewelyn Powys in 1924. The couple moved to England and lived in one of the coastguard cottages at The White Nose, above Chaldon Herring. Llewelyn was not a faithful husband, and caused his wife much anguish. He suffered from tuberculosis and often required nursing. He died in Switzerland in 1939. Alyse was a deeply serious and intellectual woman,

who shared with Sylvia a knowledge of French literature. Alyse also corresponded extensively with Valentine Ackland after she and Sylvia moved to Maiden Newton.

November 27 1932. The other evening Sylvia and Valentine had invited me to go to Sherborne to a marionette show and to stay for supper. I made L. [Llewelyn] promise that he would not come down to the village to meet me as it would be so late... With Valentine and Sylvia I talked gaily as we motored over the deserted roads, but I was anxiously thinking of L. alone; and when we had returned to their fireside because the marionettes had not after all come, I could think only that I would surprise him by arriving sooner than he expected. But Sylvia made an omelette and they were so charmingly attentive that I could not leave, and when at last I did rise they told me they had a 'secret', but they had promised my 'husband' not to give him away. And at these words I felt such alarm that I could hardly control my expression – and how strange the word 'husband' sounded in my ears! But it was only that L. had come to see them and told them he would call for me because he did not want me to go home alone in the dark.

Jan. 23 1933. Yesterday L. and I went to the church to the christening of Susie Theodora, Theodore's and Violet's little adopted baby. Sylvia and Valentine were the godmothers, and L. the godfather.

Feb. 14 1933. The room is filled with the scent of hyacinths which Sylvia brought me yesterday.

Feb. 26 1933. Tuesday I drove to Salisbury with Sylvia and Valentine. When I go away for a whole day from L. it is as if I become another person – living in the moment, not so aware of death. Sylvia and Valentine have built their life much as married people build theirs, only it is more sensitively poised – their little love birds, their canary, their vases of spring flowers, V's daggers and pistols, the sentiment they attach to the objects about them. V in her corduroy trousers would resemble a young Etonian student, were it not for the softness of her skin and the rouge on her cheeks [the last six words are crossed out]. I try to live up to what they expect me to be.

May 17 1947. Valentine's letter about M.E.'s [Malcolm Elwin's] biography of L: "It does seem to me that Mr. E. has managed (by a rather touching

ingenuousness) & a generous honesty) to show Llewelyn's quality – the unique quality of being a demi-God, of being shining and dazzling, of being violently warm, as I imagine the old gods were. Not sun-hot, not blistering, but withal violent. Long years ago – perhaps as far back as 1925, when I first saw Llewelyn – I remember walking back from White Nose along that track, down the hill and thinking he was not 'super-human' but pure human, very, very, strong. The thing at its pure strength. And my first meeting with Llewelyn: I must have told you this before? How Theodore told me 'My brother Lleweling [sic] is coming to see me this evening' – and instantly the front door opening and Llewelyn thrusting open the door of the sitting room and putting in his head and calling out 'Theodore! Theodore! You old bugger! The age of consent has been lowered!' I remember Theodore tucking his chin down into his coat and flushing up to his forehead, and Llewelyn, out in the passage then, getting off his overcoat and talking to Violet, and Doris looking very confused... And then Llewelyn came in and sat down and Violet brought in tea and I helped her... I was entranced and I could not make out what it was I felt, but going back to Mrs. Wallis's cottage and sitting over my fire I thought 'It is something I have never seen or met before but something I know and recognise.' And later I thought it must be a long slide backward in time to the demi-Gods (and indeed the Gods). Though of course I had no nonsense of reincarnation in my head. I simply counted for the phenomenon of Llewelyn by recollecting that it had happened before! How odd it was, what an earthquake of a miracle that I should have encountered this family of Powys! How many people who were my age when they first met him must have remembered Llewelyn like this!"

June 10 (?) 1949. Sylvia's letter colours all my thoughts, is with me wherever I go, so rare and distinguished a woman. [This must be STW's letter of June 5 1949 – *Letters* p.112.]

September 12 1949. Sylvia on Friday. I walked along the cliff path to meet her in the soft wind with the cattle lying in heavy serenity. I waited in the shade of a clump of elder trees. Then I saw her figure coming along, very smart, with a too heavy bag, so charmingly responsive, so easy to entertain, her mind ready to turn in any direction, so cultured, a woman of rare distinction. I grew very fond of her and we had some happy moments – having coffee near the summer house, sitting before the fire after supper, walking to L.'s stone, and to look at West Chaldon from Rats Barn. She thinks the good manners of the upper classes are in time adopted by 'the lower class', and that in aristocratic circles in the 19th century people made

extremely long calls, and that the village people continue this. We had a long discussion on manners. She thought just contrary to the usual idea that the Frenchman had a strong sense of duty and the Englishman a similarly strong sense of himself. We didn't have time to argue this. She said my medlar tree looked like a French tapestry 'sombre and artful'. She is a rare and interesting woman and has wit, integrity, and a poetical imagination, and we share so many thoughts in common. She was enchanted by sleeping in the little house [the wooden shelter in which Llewelyn slept]. Music most tranquillizes and transports her and it is the same with me. It was one of the happiest of visits for me, but my heart was heavy for her when we parted, and still is.

June 20 1952. Last night I spent with Sylvia and Valentine and slept in the same enchanted little room looking out upon the river where I had slept – how long ago was it? Then there was a pink hyacinth on the dresser and this time there was a little pewter vase with old fashioned roses. In the garden there was a strawberry shrub, the first I have ever seen since my childhood. I read through Celèste by Benjamin Constant and discussed it with S. She said the secret of his power as a writer was his complete self-absorption. I said I thought it was his detachment and she said it amounted to the same thing. We discussed this and came to an agreement. Delicious salmon with real mayonnaise dressing for dinner, everything in their home so charming, and they so charming to me. I was another person from the one who was last there – a lamentable ghost in the mirror with the stamp of age everywhere upon my face, an unfamiliar, familiar ghost remote from the beating heart – but I saw the moorhen with the chicks in the flowing river and wild roses in their moment of beauty – and in the early morning felt the inexpressible delight of the fresh river air upon my skin.

May 26 1953. On receiving STW's letter of the same date [page 140 of the *Letters*], Alyse copied most of it into her journal [including lines omitted by William Maxwell] and went on to ask: What is meant by continuity? Our lives are made up of events and the thought we give to these events – or the lack of them – speculation and reflection and contemplation and sensation.

December 1953. From Sylvia's letter: "I wish you could hear our owls. Either the moon in the mist has gone to their heads, or our garden is providing them with a new type of intoxicating mouse. I have never heard such roulades, such cadenzas, such mad scenes from Lucia. It is such a haunted antique music: the bird equivalent of bagpipes, for those who like

bagpipes. Almost the last thing Theodore said to me [he had died on November 27th] was that he liked hearing the owls as he lay wakeful. He said it was all his-art, as if it were some intense private luxury that he would only confide to someone he could trust with a secret."

Entracts compiled by **Rosemary Manning**, Alyse's friend and literary executor. A chapter of her memoir *A Corridor of Mirrors* (1987) describes their friendship, 'a relationship', Manning wrote, 'which sustained and enriched me during a crucial ten years of my life'.

(Rosemary Manning also met Sylvia Townsend Warner. She was a little in awe of her. Sylvia was, she said 'very *grande dame*'.)

From *The Countryman*, January 1933

The country tales of Sylvia Townsend Warner in *The Salutation* (Chatto & Windus, 7s.6d.) have spiritual and physical apprehension, sureness, humanity and wit. Their author has a natural habit of non-avoidance. Her readers may see and hear and feel and think as she has done. Neither her rustics nor their homes are edited. Yet she knows when and where to begin her tale and when and where to leave off. In THE COUNTRYMAN office we have a glow in an author who from Idbury heard the church bells of three parishes:

Ring-ringing together –
Chiming so pleasantly,
As if nothing was the matter.