

NEWSLETTER NUMBER SEVEN

Welcome to the Summer 2003 edition of the Newsletter - and once again thank you to all contributors. We would like to welcome our new Chairman, Stephen Mottram, who introduces himself in these pages. Another change to be announced is that Peter Tolhurst has taken over from Rosalie Parker as editor of the Journal. On behalf of the Society, the Committee would like to thank both Ros and Ray Russell for the quality and style with which they have produced the first three issues of the Journal. It is a difficult task to set the tone and content of a new publication, and they have served the Society well.

Plans have now been finalised for the Suffolk weekend at the end of September, at which we hope to see as many members as possible. (Details are to be found below.) This Newsletter also Sylvia Townsend Warner's character study of Nancy Cunard, whom she came to know during the 1930s; two uncollected letters; and a plan sketched by Sylvia in 1930 of Miss Green's cottage in Chaldon Herring, complete with her list of proposed furnishings.

Judith Stinton

SUBSCRIPTIONS: a reminder

If you haven't yet paid for 2003, please send your subscription to Judith Bond, 26 Portwey Close, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 8RF. UK members £10, overseas members \$20. Cheques should be made payable to the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the third AGM of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society, held at the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, on Saturday May 3, 2003 at 10am.

Present: Stephen Mottram, Eileen Johnson, Judith Bond, Judith Stinton, Peter Tolhurst, Morine Krissdottir, Janet Pollock, Winifred Johnson, Rosemary Sykes, Graham Pechey, Annie Rhodes, Roger Peers, Richard Searle.

1. Apologies: Richard Burleigh and Janet Montefiore.
2. The Minutes of the Second AGM held on March 23 2002 were approved.
3. Matters arising: Item 5. Eileen pointed out that in fact a computer was purchased in the summer of last year.
 - 3(a) Election of Chairman. Stephen Mottram had previously agreed to allow his nomination to be presented to today's meeting. The motion was proposed by Judith Stinton, seconded by Judith Bond, and agreed by the members present. Stephen was duly elected Chairman, and presided over the meeting from that point.
4. Treasurer's report: Judith Bond presented the balance sheet for 2002-3. Unexpected profits had come this year from the sale of back numbers of the Journal. The balance of £946.12, slightly down from last year's, seems healthy enough, though Judith pointed out the continuing high cost of the Journal production. Peter Tolhurst has agreed to take over the Journal from Ray and Ros Russell, and hopes to maintain their high standard. Discussion on the production of both Journal and Newsletter raised the following suggestions:
 - i) Having non-laminated covers for the Journal. Action: Peter.
 - ii) Reducing the colours used on the cover to black and white. Action: Peter.
 - iii) The use of a local (i.e. Dorset) printer, which would, if nothing else, reduce postage costs. Action: Judith S.
 - iv) Acquiring a desktop publishing package of our own, certainly as far as newsletters are concerned.
 - v) A plea was made for larger type for the Newsletter. Action: Judith S.
5. Membership Officer's Report. Judith Bond presented the current list of members to the meeting. Membership stands at a pleasing 84. It is hoped that more members might be recruited this weekend.
6. Programme for the year. Eileen outlined the proposed Suffolk trip on the last weekend of September (26th to 28th). Peter then enlarged on the details: to include Long Melford and Lavenham; Snape, to see the Craske collection, and if it can be arranged, a visit to meet Ronald Blythe. Action: Peter and Eileen to firm up details for the July Newsletter.
7. Election of the Committee. All members of the Committee having signified their readiness to stand for re-election, it was proposed by Rosemary Sykes, seconded by Annie Rhodes and agreed nem.con. that the Committee be re-elected.
8. Constitution. The Committee had already met to consider the Constitution, adopted on a temporary basis at the inaugural meeting in January 2000, and had made some changes. Copies of this proposed new constitution were presented to the members present, who agreed to its

adoption. A copy will be sent to Susanna Pinney for perusal. Action: Eileen.

All Society members will then be invited to vote for its adoption.

A discussion ensued regarding point 5.3 (copyright), a suggestion being made that Miss Pinney might be approached about waiving copyright fees for both Journal and Newsletters. Peter to contact her regarding this request. Action: Peter.

9. Any Other Business.

i) A suggestion was made that the Society might become a Charity. However, Stephen felt that at the moment the Society was too small to merit the extra work involved, and that any small savings could vanish in legal costs. He agreed to approach the Charity Commissioners for advice on the matter. Action: Stephen.

ii) The possibility of setting up an interactive website was raised. Judith Bond offered to find out precisely what would be involved in such a move, particularly costs. Action: Judith B.

iii) Richard Searle suggested that the Secretary (and any other members of the Committee who would like to) might circulate among local reading groups, as a way of introducing Sylvia to a wider audience. This idea will be followed up by Eileen. Action: Eileen.

iv) Thanks were extended to members of the Committee for their hard work for the Society, and to the DNHAS for kindly allowing the use of the schoolroom for the meeting.

v) Members were then invited by Morine Krissdottir to view the STW/VA Room if they so wished.

Meeting closed at 11am.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER WEEKEND: May 3rd and 4th

Members who were lucky enough to be able to attend this weekend had a truly wonderful time. Even the weather smiled on us.

After the AGM on Saturday morning, most of us re-assembled at The Sailor's Return in Chaldon Herring to stoke up for an Epic Walk along the cliff path. Up the chalky track from the village we went, taking it reasonably slowly (because of Ploughman's Lunches, etc...) until we reached the cliffs.

Larks were singing all around us, gorgeous weather, Portland looking like a magic island, the glittering sea - all combined to make it a golden day. Now and again we stopped (unkind folk would say 'collapsed') and Stephen Mottram, our new Chairman, read extracts from Sylvia's writings.

At the end of the walk we really did collapse - and in great comfort too - because Annie Rhodes kindly invited us back for tea at the Hut Dairy where she was staying. Later in the evening we returned to the Hut Dairy for quiche and salad and a glass of wine. There was a lot of lively conversation - as befits members of the STW Society! - and a particularly lovely treat was to listen to an evocative recording of Sylvia reading her poem 'Gloriana Dying'. It was strange to be sitting there, in the quietness of a Chaldon twilight, close to the site of 24 West Chaldon, and to hear that extraordinarily cultured voice speaking, through the persona of Elizabeth I in her old age.

On Sunday morning we gathered in the churchyard at Chaldon around the grave of Sylvia and Valentine and then listened to some more readings from Sylvia's writings: touching, funny, whimsical; nothing too formal or serious. In the evening there took place the 'Celebration of Sylvia' in St Nicholas Church, Chaldon. The concert had been compiled by Marian Machen and friends to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Sylvia's death, and comprised a wonderful programme of songs, all linked in some way with Sylvia. The Chydyok Singers sang music by Percy Buck, Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, Orlando Gibbons and others - and one enchanting 'Welcoming Ode to Miss Catherine Davis', written and composed by Sylvia. It was nice to see Miss Catherine Davis herself in the audience, hearing the song in public for the first time - after many years! Joan Griffiths and Clive Hayward gave a rich, varied and dramatic selection from the diaries, letters and stories, and the concert ended with a marvellously triumphant song, 'My spirit sang all day' by Finzi. This was encored - and rightly so. Wine was served, and it was lovely to hear the church full of talking and laughter and music.

Yes, I think Sylvia would have approved.

Win Johnson



(Opposite, below.) Members in Chaldon churchyard. From the left: Win Johnson, Judith Bond, Eileen Johnson, Stehen Mottram, Frances Price, Gail Vines, Annie Rhodes, Judith Stinton, Rosemary Sykes and Graham Pechey. (Photograph: Peter Tolhurst)

SUFFOLK WEEKEND, September 26th to 28th

Based in Aldeburgh. For accommodation, contact Aldeburgh Tourist Information: 01728 453637.

Friday 26th, 7.30pm. Gather for a meal in Aldeburgh. (Restaurant to be decided. Contact Eileen Johnson: 01305 266028 nearer the date.)

Saturday 27th, 10am. Red House, Aldeburgh, to see the collection of John Craske paintings in the Britten-Pears Library. Then on to Snape Maltings to see the Craske paintings in their collection.

Lunch in Aldeburgh, followed by an afternoon visit to see Ronald Blythe, author of *Akenfield*, and friend of Sylvia Townsend Warner.

Sunday 28th Trip to Long Melford and Lavenham to explore places associated with Sylvia Townsend Warner. Departure after lunch.

Last year's September trip was very enjoyable. Do join us for this one if you can. Please let Eileen know if you plan to come.

*The most persuasive argument is there,
In the cool and reasonable air;
That which is clear, translucent, that which flows
Soft as a river, telling as it goes
Of the tall hills it came from, of the sea
To which it travels, of the invisible sea.*

*And like some inland creatures, we who dwell
Beside the flowing air, hearing it tell
Of unknown past and future, of its birth
Far from us, of its bourne beyond the earth,
Accept the strange persuasion; wonderingly
Move on ourselves towards the invisible sea.*

Valentine Ackland (first published in *Aylesford Review*, Winter 1962-63)

STEPHEN MOTTRAM WRITES:

It was good to be asked if I would become Society chairman, and I was elected to that position at the AGM. Although I now live in Devon I lived in Dorset for some years and am familiar with the county. My home address is included at the front of the Newsletter and I can be contacted most evenings on the telephone between 7 and 9pm.

My main aim as Chairman is to ensure that members know what is going on in the Society - what the Society is doing and what it is trying to achieve - and to encourage members to make contact with me and with my colleagues should you wish to do that. This is your Society and I would very much like to think that, as far as possible, the Society organises the sort of events you would like to attend, and prints the sort of articles you would like to read. Please feel free to offer your own contributions.

The Society's tentative constitution was published in Newsletter Four and I hope that members will agree to some amendments (see below), the principal one being that the Society promote the writings of Sylvia Townsend Warner and her circle. Sylvia and Valentine knew a great many people and I hope we will be able to encompass the lives and works of those people. Obviously, the Society must concentrate on Sylvia and Valentine, but their friends were important to them and I think they should be important to us.

One proposal put forward at the recent AGM was that the Society should investigate charity status. I now have some information from the Charity Commissioners, but if any members have any views on this I would be grateful if you would let me know.

The Newsletter shows the names and addresses of the officers of the Society (inside the front cover) and I will always encourage you to write to us with suggestions or if we can help. On a personal level I am grateful to these people for all the hard work they put into the Society; simply, without their work the Society could not exist. Equally, the Society cannot exist without you, the members and we welcome any information you can send us.

Stephen Mottram

On behalf of the STW Society, the Committee would like to thank the Society's Patron, Janet Pollock, for the generous gift of £500 towards Society funds. The Committee are considering spending the money on setting up a website - there will be more information on this in the next Newsletter.

CONSTITUTION OF THE SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER SOCIETY

1. *Objectives*

The Society is formed to promote a wider readership and better understanding of the writings of Sylvia Townsend Warner and her circle.

2. *Membership*

- 2.1 Membership of the Society is open to all persons interested in furthering the objectives of the Society, on payment of the annual subscription fee.
- 2.2 Annual subscriptions are due on 1st January each year.
- 2.3 A member who fails to pay within three months of the due date will be so notified by the Treasurer and will receive no further Society publications until payment is made.
- 2.4 Every member shall receive a copy of the constitution.
- 2.5 The Committee reserves the right to refuse membership to any individual if that is its agreed opinion.
- 2.6 The Committee has the right to accord Honorary Membership to any person who in their opinion so deserves. Honorary Membership is for life or for such a period determined by the Committee.

3. *Administration*

- 3.1 The general conduct of the affairs of the Society is the responsibility of, and determined by, the Committee. All roles of the Committee shall be honorary in nature.
- 3.2 The Committee shall be composed of five members, of which three constitute a quorum.
- 3.3 The following duties of the Society shall be allocated and divided between the Committee members:
 - (a) Chair of the Society
 - (b) Secretary of the Society
 - (c) Treasurer of the Society
 - (d) Membership Secretary of the Society
 - (e) Responsibility for advertising, promotion of events etc.
 - (f) Responsibility for the publication of the Society's Journal.
 - (g) Responsibility for other Society publications
- 3.4 Certain agreed functions may be delegated by the Committee to those members expressing an interest in such matters. They may be

brought on to the Committee on a temporary basis to give help and/or advice if the members are in agreement.

3.5 The responsibilities of the Committee are as follows:

- (a) Controlling the management, policies and financial affairs of the Society.
- (b) Ensuring that the objectives of the Society are maintained.
- (c) Publicising the work of the Society in accordance with agreed criteria.
- (d) Maintaining and increasing the membership of the Society.
- (e) Arranging and conducting the Annual General Meeting and other agreed functions. All members to receive adequate advance warning of the dates and venues of such events.
- (f) Ensuring that an appropriate annual audit of the Society's finances is carried out prior to the AGM, and duly presented by the Treasurer at the AGM.
- (g) Determining the annual subscription rate.
- (h) Receiving donations and bequests.
- (i) Meeting at least twice each year to discuss Society affairs.

In all matters relating to the Society, the Committee has absolute authority to act as it sees fit between the AGMs of the Society. All actions taken are to be reported at the next AGM.

3.6 The term of office of any Committee member shall not exceed three years, when new elections must be held. Committee members whose term of office has expired may register for re-election.

3.7 The copyright holder of Sylvia Townsend Warner is entitled to appoint a person to attend Committee meetings as a non-voting, honorary member.

4. *The Annual General Meetings*

4.1 Notice of the AGM shall be sent to every member, together with the agenda and any necessary voting papers.

4.2 The agenda must as a minimum include:

- (a) A presentation of reports on membership, finance and the activities of the Committee.
- (b) The election where required of the Committee members
- (c) Allowance for discussion and comments from the floor.
- (d) The appointment of a person responsible for auditing.

4.3 The Chair of the Society is the chair of the AGM.

4.4 Voting shall be by a show of hands, a simple majority being sufficient for a decision. The casting vote if tied is held by the Chair.

4.5 Resolutions for discussion at the AGM must be received in writing at least one month before the meeting, and must include the proposer and seconder.

4.6 An Extraordinary General Meeting may be convened at six weeks' notice, either at the wish of the Committee, or by not less than 25 ordinary members.

5. *Publications*

5.1 Society publications should contain a balance between all aspects of the life and writings of Sylvia Townsend Warner and her circle.

5.2 There shall be three Society publications a year.

5.3 The Society will seek to obtain as favourable terms as possible with the copyright holder for the use of copyright material in the Society publications.

6. *Amendments to the Constitution*

6.1 These shall be made only through the conducting of a mail ballot by the Committee of all the members of the Society, with the approval of two-thirds of the members who vote.

6.2 A mail ballot cannot be used to effect the termination of the Society. This can only be carried out by a two-thirds majority vote at the AGM.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER'S FICTION

Essays of approximately 5000 words are invited on any aspect of Sylvia Townsend Warner's fiction. Essays may consider the relationship of her non-fiction to her fiction. Essays are to be published as a second volume of *Underratings* series on underrated British and Irish novelists. The first volume on Ronald Firbank's fiction will be published by the Edwin Mellen Press in 2003.

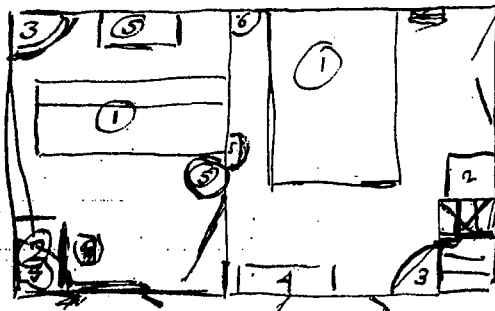
Send 500 word abstracts by 1 August 2003 to the editors: Gill Davies (davies@edgehill.ac.uk), David Malcolm (angmd@univ.gda.pl) and John Simons (Simj@edgehill.ac.uk). Please include a brief professional cv with the abstract. The deadline for completed contributions is 31 December 2003.

Miss Green.
Valentine's room.

- ① 3 foot bed.
- 2 her satinwood dresser.
- 3 corner washstand. — & paint
- 4 mahogany jerry cupboard. (ward)
- 5 stuffed stool (small chest)
- Blue curtains. (mirror?)
- washed bedspread. (towel horse?)
- yellow rug.
- blue rug rug.
- (to get. Bedroom china, a hanging cupboard, w.p.b. bath. clothes-basket.

Red room.

- 1 4 ft bed.
- 2 little chest-of.
- 3 Chippendale washstand.
- 4 mahogany dressing table. red curtains
- 5 papier-mache chair red bedspread.
- 6 corner jerry cupboard.
- japanese rug.
- staircase.
- to get (w.p.b. frame mirror)



- * chest of drawers.
- * 2 Bed chairs.
- writing table
- stool.
- * mirror.
- lamp table.
- horse hair sofa
- hutchair chair.
- canoe easy chair.
- rocking chair.
- dining-table.
- frescan rug.
- grey rug.

Silph room.

terminal (has 2 kitchen)

(to get w.p.b. coal scuttle. ~~staircase~~)

NANCY CUNARD by Sylvia Townsend Warner

A contribution to *Authors Take Sides* was my first link with Nancy Cunard. We had some correspondence about Spain, but we did not meet till the winter of 1942-43, when Morris Gilbert's work brought him on a visit to Dorset and she came with him. They, Valentine Ackland and I met for lunch at a hotel in Dorchester. Slender, long-legged, walking with a neat, slightly tripping gait, like a water-wagtail's, she came in carrying with elegance a large onion. At that date every scrap of paper was needed for making Heads of Departments; it was ordinary for purchases to be unwrapped. But Nancy carried her onion with a difference. That same evening she and Morris dined with us. As they were leaving, she slid the heavy African ivory bracelets off her wrists and asked us to look after them. They would be safer in a Dorset village than in London. She looked sadly at her wrists when they were off. She would have felt much less denuded if she had stripped off her clothes.

Possibly the bracelets drew her back, for she came for several weekends that winter. She prided herself on travelling light. Nothing was forgotten, nothing was crumpled, everything was fitted into the smallest possible compass: a tartan haversack, supplemented perhaps by a Dick Whittington spotted handkerchief. Settled in, she began to preen: a button was made fast, a lining re-stitched; the bracelets were fetched and devoutly polished; after that, she would polish her nails or do a little washing. On a desert

island, in a jail cell, she would have kept herself spruce, well-kept, clean as a cat. Her temper was notorious, her life was wilful and erratic - and she was compellingly respect-worthy. Loyal, industrious, thorough, she had the qualities that make the sublimely good servant - a good servant in French, at that, for she was *courageuse*: an indomitable worker. She had another domestic merit: she was punctual. I have cooked many meals for Nancy and never known her late for one of them. Whatever she had been doing, however absorbing it had been, she would be ready - brushed and combed and creditable; and sitting upright and slightly formalised, she would converse agreeably, as a guest should. This frosting of social convention made her peculiarly entertaining, since it co-existed with a wide range of violent opinions and violent language. Even when she was drunk, it persisted, through *allargando* into solemnity and owliness. "Nancy, you're tight." "Only a little, darling" - flawlessly enunciated. And when an explosion of feeling broke through this habitual *bel canto*, the effect was formidable.

Yes, she was formidable. But, as it happened, I was not afraid of Nancy and we never fell out. Each of us sometimes found the other exasperating; but we saw eye to eye about Spain. It was that which cemented us. Her engagement with Spain, her implacable loyalty to what the democracies had allowed to become a lost cause, made her take a rather *de haut en bas* view of Britain's protracted series of Finest Hours. When she talked of life in London, it was muddle and officialdom she complained at, not danger and privation. Air-raids were no more than what we had asked for when we turned a deaf ear to *Arms for Spain* and a wall-eye on Guernica. The only air-raid I remember her referring to was one when incendiary bombs set fire to dumps of domestic fuel stored in Hyde Park. Among these was a dump of those singularly incombustible pellets called Boulet Bernod. "Actually burning," she said with enthusiasm. "What a strange sight!"

She had an eye to notice such details - it was part of the good servant side of her character, as was her power to nail a personality in a phrase. I asked her - she was then working for the Free French - what General de Gaulle was like. In a flash she replied: "Froid, sec et cassant."

This dash and dexterity in the spoken word flowered from the pains she took in writing. Her French translations of the *Poems for France* anthology were arrived at after countless expedients and discardings and considerations and consultings. I remember a postscript, the handwriting enlarged by triumph. "Darling! Got it at last, *de croupir longuement*." This was poetry, and she was a poet. But she would be as self-exacting over

something she was unconcerned by. Once, when she was staying with us, she brought down a commissioned translation of an article about French painters. It was quite unimportant, it was plain sailing, until a painter of marine subjects involved a technical term in rigging. Dictionaries were fetched, and failed. Sea-going authors were looked through, in case one of them came up with the term she needed. Telephone calls were made. The passage was really not of the slightest importance, but she must have spent over an hour on it. And reading through the final version, her face assumed the particular grimace of such moments: wary, censorious, bleak.

For though the application might be the same, the mood was totally different. her concern with poetry was carnal and passionate: she pursued the word, the phrase, with the patience of a weasel, the concentration of a falcon: when a poem happened to cost her no trouble, she was as pleased as if she'd stolen it out of the church collection. The other achievements were a matter of technical self-respect, to be classed with the packing and the polishing, the type-setting performed with un-inked fingers, the *serpette* slashing with authority among the brambles round her yellow house at Lamothe.

Early in 1944 she came to Dorset in search of a lodging where Norman Douglas would be warmed, well-fed, out of bombs' way and within reach of female attentions. I felt a heartless relief when this project fell through: it seemed to me that if anyone needed the female attentions, etc., it was Nancy. She was thin as a wraith and had a tormenting neuritis in her shoulder. This did not prevent her from walking with great speed and energy over the downs, nor from coming back with such loads of flints in her coat-pockets that silhouetted on a skyline her slender person gave the impression that panniers had been fastened on a cheetah. During the next hour or so, Nancy would be in the bathroom, working on the flints with a nailbrush. Then a towel would be spread over her bed and the flints laid out - to be admired, examined, graded: some for more polishing, others to be rejected. This capacity for magpie delighting was one of her prettiest charms. She used to collect beads (and sewed little bags exactly to contain them), shells, small nonsenses. When Valentine, at a rather later date, gave her nineteen mother-of-pearl "fish" counters, she recorded it in:

A NINETEEN OF PISCES

Nineteen little fishes
(Never been so clean)

Roach and dace
And tench and plaice
And dab and brill and bream.
Skate and hake
And flounder's mate
And spreckleback in stream.
Herring, grayling,
Whiting, spratling,
All together for an outing...
Cod and polk and carp and trout,
And that's *nineteen* - no odd man out -
All in a horn - not on a dish -
19's *my* number: I'm a Fish.

and signed it, with circumstantial exactitude: N. At 2 a.m. Dec 11, 1953.

From the downs where Nancy collected flints we could see an unusual amount of traffic on the roads: camions and muffled vehicles of odd shapes. Everyone knew that something was going on and creditably few remarked on it. In March of 1944 a frontier was enforced along the South Coast. Non-residents must go outside it, residents must remain within. Once again, Nancy packed with her practised hand; and moved into Somerset. This disconcerted many plans, and she was in no condition to make out alone in a strange neighbourhood. But when we met - and meet we did, for there was a conveniently situated little railway station on the borderline - her *bel canto* was unaffected. Shivering with cold, shrugging the pain in her shoulder, she walked up and down the platform beside me as though we were doing it for pleasure.

I remember this when, many years later, I saw her good manners shining against a blacker adversity.

*Pas de carence de vie ici, nenni -
Mais tant de paroles perdues pour dire "attendre".*

So ends one of the poems in the group called *In Time of Waiting* which she wrote when she went back to Spain in 1959. They are poems of great force and anguish. Her patience cracked, her bodyguard of practical virtues deserted her, she behaved outrageously. On her return to England she was certified as insane and shut up.

The day we went to see her, the sun shone effusively on her place of detention. We were directed along a series of corridors to a door where we were to ring for admission. We rang, and heard a key turn in the lock; the door was locked after us, and we were directed to a more social corridor where we were put to wait at one of a row of tables (flowers on it, of course) while an attendant went off with keys under her apron to tell Miss Cunard of our arrival. When she came towards us, she was so unchanged I could not believe it was she.

She was neither harshened nor subdued. She was pleased to see us exactly as she would have been if we had met outside. Her affection rang true. In the hygienic limbo she made us feel welcome, familiar and unconstrained. It was only when she began to talk of plans for when she was let out that I realised, with shock, that something had died in her; and thought, her objective has died in her. Whatever it was, she kept it to herself. "It would have been funny," she had once written to me, from Port Vendres, where she was waiting, uncertain where to go next, "my life. How enormously much of it A-LONE."

(From *Nancy Cunard; Brave Poet, Indomitable Rebel*, edited by H. Ford and published in New York by the Chilton Book Co., 1968.)

TWO UNPUBLISHED LETTERS by Sylvia Townsend Warner

New member Barry Pike has kindly lent the following two letters in his possession, both written by Sylvia Townsend Warner, the first to 'Paul' (one of her father's ex-pupils?) and the second to Joan Sturges.

1, Grove Hill
Harrow on the Hill
18.1.1917

Dear Paul,

Yesterday I saw Hugh Allen, and I told him that I had a friend going to Oxford, and would he be kind to him if he came across him? I also mentioned that you were going to Balliol, and warned him that you were slightly mad [deleted] - well, well, not as others are. Allen is choragus of Oxford, and hangs out at New College; he is quite a good sort, and I hope you will see something of him.

He's artist enough to be in the secret conspiracy that we wot of, although when he first meets you he will probably talk about his flocks and herds.

He keeps three sows, innumerable young pigs and six goats - not at New College though - and is rather overcome with the thought.

If you meet him, go up and tell him that you are the young person I told him about, and I know he will be kindly.

The flower on my mantelpiece looks at me with its boot-buttony eye, and reminds me to send you its esteem and regard. It is a fleur incomprise, and now you are gone there will be few to grasp the inner meaning of it.

Best wishes for Oxford.

Yours ever

Sylvia T. Warner

24 West Chaldon, Dorchester, Dorset
16.ix.1936

Dear Joan Sturges,

I have been meaning to write to you along with this book, which is why you did not get a copy the moment it came out.

Now this will be a short and semi-farewelling letter, since I am leaving for Barcelona at the end of this week. Office work for the Red Cross there, Valentine Ackland with me. We only got the news this morning, and there is a terrific uproar of doing, I am divided between parting words to my Peace Council and drying off my crop of onions. I may say I have every hope of returning to enjoy them, later on. I am no minstrel boy in my departure, and hope most briskly to bring back a comparatively [sic] whole skin.

I doubt if I shall be able to get more than a picture postcard to you to let you know how I get on. Civil Wars, to the surprise of everyone in this country it seems, do upset post-offices. But I hope you will find enough of me in this book to be some reminder to you of our pleasant correspondence.

If, by any chance, you should feel that you would like to try Milton Abbas or something like it, write, mentioning me, to Mrs R.C. Ackland, Winterton Norfolk. She is a very compassionate and nice woman, and might be able to find you some place where the particular restriction that makes Milton Abbey inconvenient might not apply. Though I don't think I have been much support to you, yet I don't like feeling that I am removing even that without giving you the name of some one who might be useful at need. I wish with all my heart that you were in better health, and pity you with all my heart too.