

## Editorial

UNLIKE JOHN GREGORY, who ran, I walked back down the hill to Georgeham. Dusk was settling as I took my leave of the writing-hut. I had been given a lift in a friend's car up the hill, but I preferred to walk down and declined three or four offers made through wound-down windows. I observed little as I walked; but I reflected on the new houses above the village and wondered vaguely who might have come to live in them, and I tried to make mental pictures of Henry's arrival in the village so many years before. Hopeless, of course; and so I thought about my first meeting with him ten or twelve years ago, and being introduced with the words, "Ah, Henry, I wonder if you know...er..." He didn't. On the hill into Georgeham I recalled Henry's tiredness, the impish humour, the sadness; his quiet, authoritative reading. I recalled my first meeting with him through the *Chronicle*, and I thought about the people who have met together through the formation of the Society.

On that November evening in the village hall at Georgeham, the Society met for its first AGM. The village ladies had prepared a splendid meal and we were royally looked after. It was a wonderful evening because the Society, for the first time, had truly gathered together; and Fr Brocard Sewell's talk, bringing H.W. vividly before us, made the evening wholly relevant, and complete.

It was impossible not to feel the shadowy presence of the church as a group of us repaired to the Rock Inn after the meeting. The village was dark and quiet, and in the stillness of the village street I thought again of the hut in the field above Georgeham.

John Gregory's first meeting with Henry Williamson took him to the hut, and his sensitively told story of that first meeting appears in this issue of the Journal. (My first meeting took place in a retired stately-home, but more of that another time, perhaps.) We look forward to reading other accounts of first meetings in subsequent issues. Also in this issue Peter Brandon gives us a penetrating study of Victorian attitudes to the London suburbs and the surrounding countryside, and links with these the essence of H.W.'s political ideas, which Diana Mosley discusses together with her recollections of the man. Richard Williamson outlines the background to the recent handing-over of MSS to Exeter University; and Stephen Francis Clarke provides details of the Brocard Sewell Collection.

Lovers of *Tarkas Jugendzeit, eine Ottergeschichte* read on.

W.H.