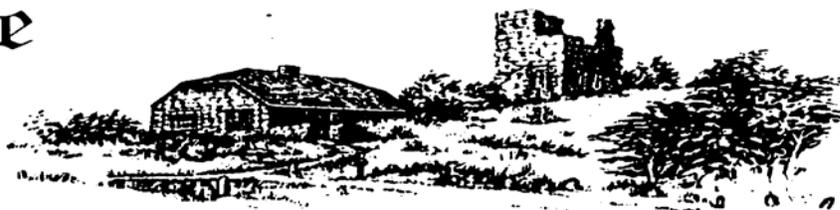


Tor House Newsletter



Winter 2017

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation,
We remain grateful for your outstanding assistance and support by which we continue the legacy of the Poet and attend to the care and upkeep of Tor House. Maintaining a 100 year old stone house, hard by the sea, presents daily challenges.

Our Docents (Tour, Flower, Archive, Bookstore and Special Occasion) are the mainstay of our public outreach. Special THANKS to tour Docent Mary Aldinger who is retiring after 21 years of dedicated service. Always cheerful, Mary generously worked TWO shifts a month and was a star with school groups and special tours. WELL DONE Mary! Mary was feted at the December Docent recognition party along with other remarkable volunteers: Pauline Allen and Diana Reid, who have served for 20 years; Simon Hunt, Jane Sanders and Sherry Shollenbarger, 15 years, and Marina Romani and Alan Stacy, 10 years. We are always desperate for docents—especially tour docents. Consider giving THF a hand by volunteering.

This year we completed several complex maintenance tasks. All exterior wood was painted. Attendant with the painting was repair of damaged wood and corrosion control on exposed nail and screw heads. We did “...leave awhile the paw-marks on the front door where I used to scratch to go out or in” and other historic scars. Next was a complete fumigation of all buildings. Hopefully this treatment will discourage the aggressive Termites. Thankfully, these bugs do not seem to eat rocks. We have added monthly rodent control and removed our wood pile. The garage, foyer and library received a new roof with cedar shakes and copper flashings. New gutter was installed on the north side of the east wing. With all of these projects we paid particular attention to historic preservation. This means we can’t always accept the low bid. With quality work, costs increase.

So, you will not be surprised or disappointed when, as usual, we request your generous financial support. Firstly, your continued Foundation membership is essential and we encourage you to increase your level of membership and/or add a special gift to ease the pressures on our budgets. We thank those who have already gifted THF this year.

How did you initially learn about Tor House? Trip Advisor, Facebook and “Ghosts Adventures(still)” are often mentioned by our guests. That and “...recommended by a friend.” We still have work to do encouraging folks to visit. Your recommendation of a Tor House tour to friends is a great introduction; the poetry and the place will do the rest.

And so on to 2018. Save the dates: Garden Party will be on May 6 and the Fall Festival will likely take place during the first weekend of October. Check the website for final details.

Holiday Greetings from myself and Erin. Your questions, comments and VISITS are always welcome.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Vince Huth, President

Yes, I would like to support the work of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation. Please find enclosed my tax-deductible contribution of _____.

My gift is in honor of [optional] _____.

Name: _____

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Fran Vardamis, Editor of this Newsletter and Tor House Trustee, had the opportunity, last summer, to visit the homes of three British 19th and early 20th century writers. In order of public popularity, and with no partiality, the houses and gardens visited were: Hill Top, the retreat of Jeffers' near-contemporary, Beatrix Potter (1866-1943); Dove Cottage, for some 10 years the home of William Wordsworth (1770-1850), his family and some of his notable friends; Brantwood, the final home of John Ruskin (1819-1900). What follows is a comparison, not so much of the significant literary accomplishments of these quite different authors and intellectuals, but a look at their homes. Though the records show that only Dove Cottage was actually visited by the Jeffers family, they are all worth the detour, when and if the literary and architectural pilgrim is in the Lake Country.

From the Shores of Lake Windermere to Coniston Water

by
Frances D Vardamis

Hill Top, the Home of Beatrix Potter, at Near Sawrey

Beatrix Potter hoped to achieve success as a botanist. In her thirties, she submitted a paper on "The Germination of the Spores of the Agaricineae" to the Linnean Society. Possibly because she was a woman and an amateur, it did not receive the recognition she had anticipated. Her scientific career at a standstill, Potter applied her considerable skills to recreating the imaginary world of her childhood. Thus the genesis of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), the first of 24 children's books inhabited by the fauna and flora of Cumbria. In 1905, with the royalties from her early books, she purchased Hill Top, a 17th century house and working farm. She lived there until her marriage in 1913. In the years that followed, besides writing, she bred sheep and, with the earnings from her books, she bought up property to prevent development. At her death she bequeathed to the National Trust more than 15 farms, including Hill Top. More than any other single individual, Potter is credited with preserving the rural, agricultural nature of the Lake District. Hill Top came with the proviso that it be preserved exactly as she left it, complete with her furniture and china.

Of the three houses discussed here, hers is undoubtedly the most visited by admirers of all ages from all over the world. Faded wallpaper has been reproduced and a stove featured in the books was replaced with a copy, but the original Georgian and Chippendale furniture and the antique doll house are unchanged. Hill Top is a two story cottage, not much larger than Tor House, with small rooms typical of an earlier period. Because of the very limited space there are no formal tours inside the house and timed-tickets are issued at the property (Adults £10.40., Children £5.20 and families £26). Visitors, of all ages, admitted in groups of 20, are free to roam, so long as they do not touch. Ever-vigilant docents are available to answer questions. The gardens are free and a shop and a cafe are open to the public. It seems that Peter Rabbit might have a wider world following than more respected writers. Scholars can find the Potter archives housed at the Armitt Centre in nearby Ambleside. And, at the other extreme, "The World of Beatrix Potter" is on accessible display at Bowness-on-Windermere.



* * * * *

Dove Cottage, Home of William Wordsworth from December 1799 to May 1808, at Grasmere

Dove Cottage opened to the public in 1891. The Jeffers family visited at least twice. Una reported, in a letter dated July 13, 1912, that she "saw the house where Wordsworth lived and visited his grave in the churchyard." In 1929 she and Robin made "a stop at Wordsworth's cottage." Jeffers, in a 1929 letter to Leonard Woolf, specifically, mentions Dove Cottage as one highlight of his trip to England.

Wordsworth influenced Jeffers, yes, but Dove Cottage, too, might have significantly influenced Tor House. Separated by 150 years, the similarities are startling. Though Wordsworth did not spend his entire adult life at Dove Cottage, he did live there during his most productive years. Both homes are modest. In fact, the wonder is how so many people could fit

into Dove Cottage. Besides Wordsworth, his sister, and his wife and their many children (5 were born at Dove Cottage, though only 3 survived), most of the English romantics, and their families, visited. There was Coleridge, of course. And Southey, and Walter Scott and Charles and Mary Lamb. And then there was de Quincy, who moved in with wife, children and his opium habit. It was no wonder that, when his finances improved, Wordsworth abandoned Dove Cottage to his friend and, eventually, settled, in 1813, across the lake in the almost palatial Rydal Mount.

Like Una's original garden, the gardens of Dove Cottage are semi-wild retreats. The furnishings are often Wordsworth's, though Tor House can take pride in having original window glass. The surrounding countryside was a primary influence on the work of the two poets. But it goes further than that. Jeffers said, in 1953, that Una "was in many ways a mediator between me and the world," and he recalled the similarity with Wordsworth's debt to his sister, Dorothy. It was Dorothy who introduced her brother to the locals and told the tales that found a way into his poetry. She, it was, who first came upon the field of daffodils that inspired her brother's poem. Much in Dorothy's letters and her Grasmere Journals sounds uncannily like vintage Una. Wordsworth was an enthusiastic Rambler, but his house, like Tor House, was not deep in the country. In fact, Dove Cottage, at the edge of Grasmere, was directly on the main route from London to England's West Country.

Dove Cottage is open daily for guided tours. Adult tickets are £8.95, and students can visit for £7.25. Children are free when accompanied by a paying adult. The house and adjacent museum, the Jarwood Center, are funded by the apparently well-supported Wordsworth Trust.



Dove Cottage



Wordsworth's quilt

* * * * *

Brantwood, the home of John Ruskin from 1871 to 1900, near Conistone

And finally there is Ruskin's home. The fans, young and old, at Hill Top, are missing. The crowds, near Dove Cottage, in the tourist town of Grasmere, are mostly absent. The Jeffers family seems not to have visited here. But yet, this beautiful home plays a significant role in Tor House. John Ruskin, essayist, and one of the most influential art critics of the late 19th century, lived, and died, here. He was a prominent member of the group that began the Arts & Crafts movement in England, that, in Jeffers time, became the American Arts and Crafts movement, with its emphasis on simple crafts and return to basics. If Jeffers is the father, then Ruskin might deserve to be called the grandfather of Tor House.

Brantwood is open year-round. There are courses for the public and 5 adjacent cottages to rent. The entrance fee to the house and gardens is £8.60. Children, over 5, are free. Though docents are available to answer questions, visitors can, on their own, explore rooms filled with original Ruskin furniture, and hung with paintings of Turner and Ruskin. And then there are the gardens. Utterly glorious, especially in spring when the rhododendrons are in bloom.



Two Men in a Driveway

~for Magnus

“...the heart-breaking beauty
Will remain when there is no heart to break for it.”

~Robinson Jeffers, “Credo”

In the driveway, something said took the men into and outside of themselves. Each thought of all that beauty—the younger, of whale-roads sailed by Vikings, those wave-wandering wind-gleaners in their high-hulled ships who filled the sails of his youthful imaginings, so, when grown, he wandered the wide ship-roads from Pongo Pongo to Hawai’i, from the Galapagos to the Marquesas, Fiji to San Francisco; off the coasts of South Africa and Brazil; in North Atlantic and Caribbean; endless ocean, the night sky a brilliant blanket over dark sea, the sun and moon rising gloriously; and he remembered nights he and his wife sat together for warmth under the cover of the starlit night, their son sleeping below, all the stars seen again for the first time, the rigging and sails singing as the wave-rider shifted in wind and frothing wave-vat, flying fish and dolphins their companions. The older thought of mountains he and his wife had walked—of trekking to Hemkund, Sikh holy lake, where he climbed the 1,000 steps singing the holiest of Jewish prayers, singing

to the Oneness of the universe; he remembered following the cairns on fog-encrusted Mount Washington; the vastness of Milky Way above Mauna Kea; of Mount Kenya above the multitudes of wildlife; he remembered his daughters running down a mountainside in the Swiss Alps, train whistle announcing imminent departure, and his daughters, one dark-haired and dark-eyed, the other blonde and blue-eyed, running down the hill, hair streaming behind them, their laughter and joy filling his heart. At that moment, standing in a driveway, each man also knew that the delicate balance that sustains life will disappear, set in motion by the human presence on earth, and with it human consciousness that sings hymns to this beauty. The oceans and mountains will become nameless once more; new, non-human life-forms will swarm in the oceans and roam the mountains. The heart-breaking beauty will remain when there is no heart to break for it. In that driveway cypress, pines and redwoods towered, like hands raised in benediction over two men, blessing all that was, is, and will be

[The above poem appeared in Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts recent volume of his poetry, *White Fire*, published by Ping-Pong Free Press of Big Sur, CA and available for purchase at the Henry Miller Library or Pilgrim’s Way Bookstore in Carmel]

* * * * *



Norway, Hardangervidda, 2016. Photo by Daniel C. Vardamis

*The Robinson Jeffers Tor House
2018 Prize for Poetry*

*The annual Tor House Prize for Poetry is a living memorial
to American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)*

**\$1,000 for an original, unpublished poem not to exceed three pages in length
\$200 for Honorable Mention**

Final Judge: Richard Blanco

Open to well-crafted poetry in all styles, ranging from experimental work to traditional forms, including short narrative poems. Each poem should be typed on 8 1/2" by 11" paper, and no longer than three pages. On a cover sheet only, include: name, mailing address, telephone number and email; titles of poems; bio optional. Multiple and simultaneous submissions welcome. There is a reading fee of \$10 for the first three poems; \$15 for up to six poems; and \$2.50 for each additional poem. Checks and money orders should be made out to Tor House Foundation.

Postmark deadline for submissions: March 15, 2018

The Prize winner will be announced by May 15. Include an SASE for announcement of the Prize winner. Poems will not be returned. For more information, visit our web site or contact us by email.

**Mail poems, check or money order, and SASE to:
Poetry Prize Coordinator, Tor House Foundation
Box 223240, Carmel, CA 93922**

**The Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation
P.O. Box 2713, Carmel, California 93921
Telephone: (831) 624-1813 Fax (831) 624-3696
www.torhouse.org Email: thf@torhouse.org**

Richard Blanco will be the 22nd distinguished poet to serve as final judge for the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Prize for Poetry. We have been fortunate to have had the following poets serve as final judges in in the past:

2017 Eavan Boland	2016 Edward Hirsch
2015 Marilyn Chin	2014 Wesley McNair
2013 Kim Addonizio	2012 Cornelius Eady
2011 Ellen Bass	2010 Mark Doty
2009 Diane Thiel	2008 Robert Pinsky
2007 Al Young	2006 Dorianne Laux
2005 Naomi Shihab Nye	2004 Billy Collins
2003 Pattiann Rogers	2002 John Haines
2001 Jane Hirshfield	2000 Sherod Santos
1999 Dana Gioia	1998 Donald Hall
1997 Mary Oliver	

The 23rd Robinson Jeffers Association Conference will be held during the weekend of February 23-25, 2018 at the Carmel Woman's Club in Carmel, California. The topic will be "Robinson Jeffers and the Modern Political." For further information, please consult the RJA website at www.robinsonjeffersassociation.org.

FOOTPRINTS

It has been brought to the attention of the Foundation that, during restoration work on the Monterey Conference Center in downtown Monterey, staff discovered that a section of the center has long been named “Jeffers Plaza.” Thus, Jeffers stands tall, along with Stevenson and Steinbeck and other literary luminaries of the Peninsula.

In the article on pages 2 and 3 of this Newsletter, references to the Jeffers family travels can be found in *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers* (edited by James Karman and published by Stanford University Press). Should the reader want to compare the writings of Dorothy Wordsworth and Una Jeffers, both in style and content, the author recommends *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, by Dorothy Wordsworth, published by Oxford University Press. For a study of Wordsworth and his circle, see *Unruly Times* by A. S. Byatt (Vintage, London 1997). Further information on Hill Top, Dove Cottage and Brantwood is available on the web. The editor welcomes essays on other authors’ homes, especially those that are connected with Jeffers’ writing and/or with Tor House. Steepletop, anyone? Or Tao House?

* * * * *

THE LAST WORD FROM JEFFERS

STILL THE MIND SMILES

Still the mind smiles at its own rebellions,
Knowing all the while that civilization and the other evils
That make humanity ridiculous, remain
Beautiful in the whole fabric, excesses that balance each other
Like the paired wings of a flying bird.
Misery and riches, civilization and squalid savagery,
Mass war and the odor of unmanly peace:
Tragic flourishes above and below the normal of life.
In order to value this fretful time
It is necessary to remember our norm, the unaltered passions,
The same-colored wings of imagination,
That the crowd clips, in lonely places new-grown; the unchanged
Lives of herdsmen and mountain farms,
Where men are few, and few tools, a few weapons, and their dawns are beautiful.
From here for normal one sees both ways,
And listens to the splendor of God, the exact poet, the sonorous
Antistrophe of desolation to the strophe multitude.

From *Give Your Heart to the Hawks* (1933) [Hunt II, 310]

The editorial staff welcomes a discussion of this poem or any of the other material in this Newsletter. Please address comments to Newsletter Editor, Tor House Foundation, PO Box 2713, Carmel, CA 93921 or fdv528@comcast.net. Space permitting, letters to the editor will be published in the next issue. All letters will be posted on our web site: www.torhouse.org.



**Robinson Jeffers
Tor House Foundation**
P.O. Box 2713 • CARMEL, CA 93921

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Tor House Office (831) 624-1813 - Fax (831) 624-3696
e-mail: thf@torhouse.org
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Winter 2017

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Mail to: PO Box 2713, Carmel, CA 93921
Consult Website for on-line payment

Your contribution assists in the preservation of the unique home of the poet, Robinson Jeffers, and in community outreach programs.

Membership benefits include:

- ◆ Free tours of Tor House
- ◆ 10% discount on merchandise
- ◆ Advance invitations to coming events
- ◆ Quarterly newsletter

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