

How John Cowper gave a heathen send off to *Owen Glendower*

[...]

SO I SET OUT on *Xmas Eve morning* leaving a note for Phyllis not to worry if I were late for breakfast and telling our Betty (who is like a daughter to Phyllis and me and guards us from all ill, as she also does all her own family — our Ladies at N°5 — *and* the turbulent audience of kids at Corwen *Cinema!* where save for the *operator* she's often left in sole authority & control & has to decide what to do if the lights go out or anything goes wrong!) and I started at ten minutes to nine — 8.50am — and walked with terrific speed with pen & paper in pocket & also a *rough copy* of my end of Owen which ends with a flight of Crows: *no!* a couple of aged Ravens croaking and croaking as it seems to Meredith (“Maredudd” in Welsh) *Meredith ap Owen Glyn Dwr* his only surviving son — croaking I say as it seems to Meredith as he leaves his father's body to be burnt on the top of our Corwen “*Mynydd-y-Gaer*” who is wondering if his Father's spirit survives his burnt flesh and *sprinkled ashes* — the Welsh words “Nis Gwn! Nis Gwn! Nis Gwn! Nis Gwn! — I don't know! I don't know! I don't know! I don't know! “ and they vanish like dots in the sky eastward over the Berwyns still croaking “*nis goon!*” — *towards Mathrafal!* And so I make “*Mathrafal*” the last word!

Well I got to the foot of *the Gaer* in just half an hour, namely at 9.20 — and then I took my time — and it took me just half an hour climbing up it, and then I settled myself in one of those hollow places among the stones and just as I'd written about the ravens & the words “towards Mathrafal” a red & great finger of the rising sun *behind me* came over my shoulder & made a bit of *quartz* (you know that *white stuff* in our slate-rock here?) blaze like a huge Diamond! So any way *that* was a good omen: & could not have happened in Valle Crucis Chapter House because I should have been *there* by candle-light about 4 when twilight begins!

[...]

JCP to Gerard Casey, 7 January 1940, *The Powys Journal*, 1995

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[...]

I have given up pro-tem my chief pleasures in life,—reading with a crib the *Odyssey* and puzzling out Welsh without a crib,[...] only 'til the 18th, Thursday the 18th. And this is the day I've chosen (if only I finish correcting the type in time) to post and mail this lengthy book to its publisher. For now I'll copy the words for you, if you can do the sums, to tell me what it comes to altogether. I mean how many words ‘Owen Glendower’ contains. [...] I began it in the Valle Crucis Chapter House on April 24th, Eve of St. Mark 1937 and ended it on *Mynydd-y-Gaer* on December 24th 1939. So it took three years, the longest I've ever taken to write aught.

[...]

JCP to Nicholas Ross, 14 January, 1940, *Letters to Nicholas Ross*