

Judy Naylor

Hunter Davies' *Wainwright - The Letters* (pages 354-7) includes letters written to Judy Naylor. Hunter wrote that she had met AW on a number of occasions and that in 2010, then aged ninety-one, had 'moved to a home on the South Coast'. Hunter's research papers did not include any further information as to her precise new address.



I wondered how I might be able to locate her, if indeed she was still able to recount her story. My only lead was her previous address in Bolton, Appleby-in-Westmorland, which she had left some years before. I was in the area at the end of October 2014 and decided to cold-call the old address. I knocked on the door – I was not optimistic of success, but I had nothing to lose. But my long-shot paid off – the lady answering the door, once I had explained my presence, was most helpful. Not only did she give me Judy's new address (without needing to look it up) but told me she knew Judy well and spoke to her from time to time, exchanged Christmas cards and so on, and 'would have known if anything had happened to her'.

The next day I wrote to Judy and was delighted when she telephoned me the next day. She would be very pleased for me to visit her. A few days later, I set off early from my home in Cambridge to Milford on Sea, which looks out to the Needles on the Isle of Wight. I spent a most enjoyable couple of hours with Judy, a sprightly and 96-years-young lady, hearing her story of her association with AW and Betty. I arrived back home late at night – nine train journeys, two bus rides and two car lifts later. It had been quite an adventure, but so worthwhile. The photograph shown above was taken during my visit.

Judy Naylor was a member of a conservation group, Eden Field Club, and in the July of 1981 (the year of the Disabled) she wanted to take a group of disabled people on an outing, but was unsure where

to go. She wrote to AW to seek his advice. He replied, thanking her for her 'interesting letter', adding that it was 'so different from others I receive! ... it poses a problem I must confess I have never even thought about – until now. I do so applaud your kind intention to give a party of the disabled a day in the country – a splendid gesture – and your choices of venue are excellent.' He then went on to comment in detail on the options and ended by inviting Judy to let him know how it all went.

The decision was to go to the Westmorland Borrowdale and Judy wrote to AW to report on a successful event which had been blessed by fine weather. In reply, he sent a handwritten notelet, which Judy showed me. In it he wrote: 'Many of your disabled friends must be restricted in their activities, and you have earned their gratitude by giving them a day to remember. Their smiles of pleasure are your reward.' An exchange of correspondence ensued over the next few years.

In 1983 Judy invited AW to join the group on another such outing, but he declined. He wrote that he would have been glad to attend but would be away at the time. He added: 'I hope to be present on some future occasion. Indeed, I am myself getting to the stage of infirmity that might qualify me for inclusion in the party. Old age, you know!' The following year, a lady phoned Judy enquiring about the walk – could she and her husband come? Judy asked if he could manage the walk involved and was told 'Oh, yes, he can walk quite well.'

The day came and Judy duly set out the chairs and other items for a picnic. Judy saw a tall man and a short lady walking towards her. At first Judy did not know who they were, but to her amazement realised that it was AW and Betty. Rather flustered by the presence of celebrity, Judy quickly told the others there that he was famous, but 'not to fuss him too much, just treat him like anyone else.' Judy recalls him and Betty joining in a walk. She said 'I still feel stupid that I didn't recognize him.' This was her first encounter with Wainwright.

In a handwritten notelet sent in November 1985, AW wrote: 'I remember with pleasure our visit to Borrow Beck last summer and

your generous hospitality. I hope we shall meet again on a similar occasion next year, and again be favoured with a sunny day.'



In the second half of the 1980s, Judy developed a friendship with Betty and AW, and visited them at their Kendal home more than a dozen times. On occasions, they in turn visited her at her home in Bolton, Appleby-in-Westmorland. She and Betty had both been nurses and also had a love of flowers and became good friends.

The photograph shown here was taken by Betty in the garden of AW and Betty's home in Kendal.

There were times when Judy would sit with AW, particularly when he was unwell, while Betty went out to the shops or, as Judy put it: 'to be off-duty for a while'. Betty told Judy that he didn't mind her minding him because she didn't talk too much. In fact, AW seemed to enjoy Judy's company. She knew when to speak and when AW would prefer silence. She remembers taking him cigarettes and a supply of Blue Nun tobacco on his birthday. When AW was in the mood for conversation they would talk about a range of subjects, often disagreeing (for example about the comparative merits of Kent, where Judy was born and brought up, and the Lake District), local history, farming and so on. 'I didn't irritate him, he was never cross or grumpy', she said.

Judy described her relationship with AW as 'brotherly, being part of the family'. She said 'he was gentle, kind, a homely man He was generous, giving me books and chocolates on occasions. He was easy to get on with, we had much in common. I didn't think of him as being important, I wasn't in awe of him – we were companions and friends. I was at ease with AW and Betty, and miss them.'