

Anne Born: 9th July 1924 – 17th July 2011

At the beginning of this month, Malborough church was packed for a memorial service arranged by Anne Born's four children to celebrate the life, work and poetry of their mother. Anne, a long-time resident of Salcombe, was well-known locally: she wrote books about local history and geology, chaired the Literary section of the Devonshire Association, and was a keen member of the Kingsbridge History Society, of which she became Life President. But Anne Born was far more than a local celebrity, and people came from far and wide to pay their last respects to her.

As well as the dozen or so books she wrote herself, Anne was also a prolific and internationally-recognised translator from Scandinavian languages. Through her translations, scores of Scandinavian books became available in English, and she received great acclaim for winning, when already in her eighties, two highly prestigious international translation prizes for her translation of 'Out Stealing Horses' by the Norwegian author, Per Petterson. She travelled to London to receive the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize at the National Portrait Gallery, and then to Dublin Town Hall to receive the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

Above all, Anne was a poet – and this aspect of her life was celebrated at the memorial service when a number of her poems were read by members of the Devon Company of Poets. Collections of her poetry appeared with astonishing frequency from the late 1970s up until her last book in 2008. She tutored many aspiring poets and also played a full and inspiring part in the Company of Poets workshops, eventually launching out to publish some of the work produced by that group of poets.

In this publishing venture she had found yet another area in which her prodigious talents could flourish. She therefore went on to form Oversteps Books, in order to make good poetry more widely available, naming the publishing house after her own beloved home. In the following years she published a couple of dozen poetry books, some by poets who have since received international acclaim.

When Anne's health started to deteriorate in 2008, she persuaded me to take over as Managing Editor of Oversteps Books (www.overstepsbooks.com). This did not mean that she became idle, however, for just a couple of months later she presented me with the manuscript of a collection she had produced with an Australian friend and colleague, Glen Phillips. This was published by Oversteps in 2008 as 'Singing Granites: Poems of Devon and Gondwanaland'. In this book, Anne and Glen celebrate some of the wild places at different ends of the earth, reflecting Anne's life-long love of Dartmoor.

Earlier parts of Anne's long and illustrious life include war-time work teaching Morse code in the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry and academic successes in Copenhagen and Oxford. She was a polymath, a fun and fascinating friend and, for her family, 'a mum to be proud of'.

Alwyn Marriage