“A. S. F”: Some Reflections on Sunny Farebrother

by Nicholas Birns

One of the perennially fascinating aspects of Dance is its fascination with dual relationships between people antipathetic to each other but who somehow mysteriously seem to accompany each other through life. Although Jenkins and Widmerpool are of course the man, but a fair one” to the young Jenkins. Some years later when Mr Templer dies, Farebrother (under the initials A.S.F.) writes a personal memoir of the deceased cement magnate, emphasizing “the kind of their relationship is one of the funniest, and is discaled with a pleasingly classical symmetry. This is the relationship between Farebrother and Mr Templer, father of Peter. When first encountered, Farebrother is a business associate of Mr Templer’s and seems an acolyte of his, basking in the great man’s glory much as Truscott and Widmerpool later hope to do with Sir Magnus Donners. He evaluates his former boss as “a hard

From the Secretary’s Desk

We had hoped to publish the proceedings of the Oxford Conference about now. However their preparation is taking much longer than expected and we are well behind schedule with the work. I apologise to conference delegates for the delay – rest assured the proceedings will be published as soon as possible.

Why the delay? Well, for two reasons. Firstly the sheer volume of material to be edited – the Oxford proceedings will be around twice the size of the Eton conference proceedings. And secondly it is a reflection on the ever more hectic lives we all lead these days: all the officers have busy and demanding jobs, families and a range of other interests, as well as their work for the Society.

Just as a flavour of the work which goes on: in the current run up to the Powell Centenary I am presently involved in: completion of the 2003 Conference Proceedings, leading the team organising the Centenary Conference, the Centenary Exhibition and organising events for the London Group … as well as keeping up with members and memberships and the normal duties of the Hon. Secretary. All of this on top of an ever more demanding day job. And most members of the Executive are in a similar situation. But what a wonderful position to be in!

Looking back we’ve come a long, long way beyond. There are two slightly worrying clouds on the horizon however: What do we do when I (or any of the other officers) have to stand down? And how do we grow the Society? In this sense we need to be running as their work for the Society.

And most members of the Executive are in a similar situation. But what a wonderful position to be in!

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Duport, came, it provides significant something about the family from which the narrative, even though, in explaining Farebrother’s relationship with Mr. Farebrother. Jenkins likes him, admires not quite know what to make of him, even, especially on their first meeting, looks up to him. But there is always an element in Farebrother he finds hard to explain, and this is perhaps why Farebrother’s relationship with Mr. Templer remains uncommented upon by the narrator, even though, in explaining something about the family from which Peter Templer, and for that matter, Jean Duport, came, it provides significant background for one of the key plot-strands of Dance.

Is this just a charming minor thread, or does it have greater weight with respect to the overall tableau of Dance? Farebrother is one of the few people to be able to stand up to Widmerpool; he seems, even more than this, to be unfazed by Widmerpool, to be able to take his outrageous strivings in hand. This serenity (which he must have also shown, in a different capacity, in his marriage to Geraldine Weedon) is rare; so many others are either appalled, bowled over, or simply subjugated by Widmerpool. But Farebrother, in a way, has seen too much of the world to react this emotionally.

Farebrother’s world overlaps with that of Widmerpool. Both are interested in business, politics, and the military; both do well in business in the Twenties and see themselves as men of that prosperous era (Farebrother sagely anodizing Widmerpool’s subsequent Communist and countercultural enthusiasms); both do not have much time for anything aesthetic (Farebrother is one of the few benign characters in Dance who have little to do with the arts; compare General Conyers, Farebrother’s predecessor as Geraldine’s husband, in this respect.) The “banality of phrasing” ascribed by Jenkins to Farebrother’s literary style is surely also Widmerpool-esque. But Farebrother somehow escapes the opprobrium attached to Widmerpool. The reader feels, for instance, that his increasing negativity towards Mr. Templer is not, as it would be with Widmerpool, a case of ungratefully discarding a former mentor. Rather, it is a sense of increasing revelation, an increasing movement towards the truth. Farebrother does not seem to want Mr. Templer to be a “devil incarnate”. But he realizes that he was one, or a close facsimile thereof, and this becomes a small filament in the overall revelation of “Truth Unveiled By Time”.

Because of the overt statement in the first book that Farebrother passed out of the narrator’s life for some twenty years, he is one of the few characters in Dance whose repetition rate, as it were, is foreordained; he cannot recur every book as does Widmerpool.

The obituary of Mr. Templer in fact serves as a device to keep Farebrother vaguely on the reader’s horizon. Monsieur Dubuisson’s mention of Farebrother at the Leroy’s house, together with Powell’s disclosure in the January 1989 Journal entry that Dubuisson was originally intended to reappear with the Free French in the Second World War, suggests that perhaps Farebrother’s envisioned reappearance would have been in relation to Dubuisson. But it is remarkable that Farebrother, out of action for seven books, still seems such a vital part of the overall composition.

It is interesting that Farebrother, encountered in the first novel, lives on until the last. He has outlived his primary adversary, Jimmy Stripling, and even, generously and movingly, attendant at his funeral. Substantially older than Nicholas Jenkins – when Jenkins, as a schoolboy, meets him, Farebrother is already established in business, already taken a role of some prominence at the Paris Peace Conference, already been on hobnobbing terms with Venizelos and “Hilarion”, and, of course, achieved a distinguished record in the First World War. Even though Jenkins, in the timeline of the twelve books, has matured from childhood to old age, there are still people older than he around in the twelfth volume – Farebrother, Umfraville, and even a character specifically introduced in the novel, Mr. Gauntlett. Portents, in other words, do not always die; they linger. Of these portentous figures, Farebrother seems the one viewed in the most unequivocally positive light. But we never penetrate to the core of what makes him tick; we are, for instance, far less certain about this than we are about what makes Widmerpool tick.

“Sunny” is not said to merely stand for “Sunderland”, Farebrother’s real name (in fact his middle name, his first initial is A) but for his sunny disposition. Powell’s presentation of Farebrother’s character shows that, even in sunniness, there can be inscrutable mystery.
Leap Year Lunch

2004 being the first Leap Year of the 21st century, members, supporters and guests are invited to a

Leap Year Lunch
at
Spaghetti House
30 St Martin’s Lane, London, WC2
on
Saturday 21st February 2004
at
1230 hrs

The lunch is being organised on a “pay as you go” basis, so you can choose whatever you wish to eat and drink on the day and pay accordingly.

If you will be attending, please return the form opposite to the Hon. Secretary no later than Saturday 14th February. In order to secure your booking a £5 deposit is payable; this will be deducted from your spending on the day.

St Martin’s Lane runs off the NE corner of Trafalgar Square so the restaurant is just a short walk from the National Portrait Galley, of which Powell was a trustee for many years. The 1934 Henry Portrait Galley, of which Powell was a partner only read for enjoyment. The book is very good, but we get a terrible indictment of the human species.

I conclude that he must have been a very slow reader, because, condemned to bed by a cold in the spring of 2003, I dealt with Books Do Furnish a Room, with much enjoyment, in a few hours, in the context of revived interest in Julian Maclaren-Ross, the original of X Trapnel.

though my paperback copy presents a picture of Trapnel on the cover, and the title of the book derives from Bagshaw, the central character of the novel is Pamela Widmerpool, though Kenneth Jenkins and some minor players are exaggerated. There is mild political commentary in the sense that MPs are not taken seriously, and Communism is ridiculed throughout.

Funilly enough, Jenkins is present when Pamela leaves Widmerpool, and when Trapnel threatens Widmerpool, and (more or less) when Pamela leaves Trapnel. This sort of improbability is hard to avoid in a first-person novel.

Pamela is a paranoid schizophrenic, and seriously ill. She hates men and wants to torment them, partly because of her own fearfully low self-regard. Powell has to make her beautiful, or no-one would bother with her. Trapnel is a masochist, and his case is graver than that of George Orwell in the real world. I suggest that Powell saw the potential of Maclaren-Ross, and then used him in a story that he was thinking about anyway. Though the book seems to be centred on him, Bagshaw (could he be based on Cyril Connolly, as well as Malcolm Muggeridge, the editor of Punch?) is not important, and his only job is to introduce Trapnel to Jenkins. Widmerpool, Sillery, Quiggan, Craggs, Gypsy Jones, Ada (an especially ruthless woman) and Bagshaw are entirely selfish. Quiggan and Craggs are not even efficient publishers. Alfred Tolland and Le Bas are senile, and their functions are to introduce scenes, and to give a sense of the passage of time.

Widmerpool is the central character of the cycle. The plot of the story is the humiliation of Widmerpool. Trapnel is a specific sort of character, because he is needed in a specific way: a man to take Pamela away from Widmerpool, and then to release her. Powell was probably depressed when planning the book, and we note that Jenkins is depressed during his post war visit to Oxford. Depression would account for the penetrating, but deeply pessimistic, renderings of individuals. All the characters except Jenkins and some minor players are

Anthony Powell’s Human Zoo
Books Do Furnish a Room
Reconsidered
by Tom Miller

A legal friend once told me that his senior partner only read for enjoyment A Dance to the Music of Time; having finished the cycle, he started it again at the beginning. I conclude that he must have been a very slow reader, because, condemned to bed by a cold in the spring of 2003, I dealt with Books Do Furnish a Room, with much enjoyment, in a few hours, in the context of revived interest in Julian Maclaren-Ross, the original of X Trapnel.

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Roddy Cutts is reasonable, and Jenkins needs him to talk to, but he is only an MP.

The book is very good, but we get a terrible indictment of the human species.
“Welcome to the feast” …

by Noreen Marshall

… as Colonel Widmerpool would no doubt have said at Christmas 1944, surveying the Woolton Pie, with ‘mousetrap’ cheese and home-made water biscuits to follow. No doubt there could have been some Oatmeal soup too, but really that sort of thing is not at all necessary.

Yes, it’s that time of year again and, as usual, the cry is going up from my British friends and colleagues “Not turkey for Christmas again! What can we have for a change?”, and from the American ones who live in the UK “Not turkey for Christmas! We just had it for Thanksgiving”. So I thought I’d take a quick look at AP’s works for some alternative inspiration.

Powell’s Journals record the excellence of the “classic Christmas dinner” of turkey, Christmas pudding etc. created almost every year for the family by Tristram and Virginia Powell. But the Journals also include a number of other details of food enjoyed during the Christmas period, including: Welsh Pie (“turkey instead of chicken, ham, leeks, etc.”) and kedgeree (1987); curvy – the New Year’s Day 1989 entry reads “Made a curry for luncheon just for ourselves, not done for some time, thought I should keep my hand in” – meringues, peaches and Stilton (1989); caviar and Heideseck Monopole Brut (presents from their grandchildren) (1991).

In 1989 AP also mentions a pudding made with ginger nuts and a great deal of cream and brandy which he was given by Lady Harlech, and evidently greatly enjoyed although it was “far from thinning”. This is probably the pudding, so popular in the ’70s and ’80s, made by dipping a couple of dozen ginger nut biscuits in brandy (or other liqueur of choice), sandwiching them together to form a roll, wrapping and chilling for a day and then covering the whole with whipped cream before serving.

Dance, on the other hand, is seldom so specific about the composition of meals. In the 1930s volumes of Dance, the less well-off characters might have enjoyed a “Plain Christmas Dinner” as given in Selfridges New Model Cookery of 1933, which consisted of roast pork and apple sauce, with mashed potatoes and cabbage; plum pudding, mince pies, cheese and dessert.

From the same source comes a rather amazing “Christmas Dinner for Two” (choose your couple!): consommé à la royale; sole à la Mornay; roast duck with rice and nut stuffing, onion sauce, and orange salad; individual plum puddings or pears à la duchesse; devilled prunes; dessert and coffee. For the rice and nut stuffing, Blanch and finely chop 2 oz each of pine kernels and almonds; peel and mince a shallot; fry the nuts and shallot in ½ oz of butter until lightly browned. Pound in a mortar; add 1 beaten egg, 2 oz of boiled rice and a tablespoonful of milk. Mix well and season to taste.

World War II saw such elaborate culinary notions as these soon become irrelevant with the introduction of food rationing. The infamous Woolton Pie (named after Lord Woolton, the Minister for Food) was a difficult idea for many of his fellow Britons to swallow. They were much better at shopping and cooking techniques than many of us today, but were handicapped by their conventional ideas on eating: a ‘proper’ meal had to be hot and (unless you were vegetarian) it must contain meat. Yet the British weekly meat ration for an adult during the war was 4 oz of bacon or ham plus other meat to the value of 1s 2d (6p; roughly £2.50 in today’s money).

Woolton Pie could be made with any vegetables available, but the standard recipe was: Dice and cook 1lb each of cauliflower, carrots, swede and potatoes (or parsnips if using mashed potatoes as topping) in lightly salted water. Strain the vegetables and keep ¼ pint of the vegetable water. Arrange vegetables in a pie dish or casserole. Make a sauce with the liquid from the vegetables, a little vegetable extract and about 1 oz rolled oats or oatmeal; cook until thickened and pour over the vegetables, adding 3-4 chopped spring onions. Top with potato pastry, or mashed potatoes, and a very little grated cheese then heat in the centre of a moderate oven until golden brown. Serve with brown gravy.

The Woolton Pie may have been followed by an eggless Christmas Pudding: Mix together 1 cup of flour, 1 cup of breadcrumbs, 1 cup of sugar, ½ cup of suet, 1 cup of mixed dried fruit, and (optional) 1 teaspoon of mixed spice. Add 1 cup of grated potato, 1 cup of grated raw carrot, and 1 level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda dissolved in 2 tablespoons of hot milk. Mix all the ingredients together and turn into a well-greased pudding basin. Boil or steam the pudding for 4 hours.

Yum, yum?

Letters to the Editor

From Colin Donald

I’ve been interested in Larkin since studying The Whitsun Weddings at school. The first time I heard of Powell was in Larkin At Sixty ed. Anthony Thwaite (1982), a festschrift that contains one of the time lapse photos that Powell refers to in the quoted passage, of Powell, Kingsley Amis, Larkin and (in profile, suffering Larkin’s hand on her neck with folded arms) Hilary Amis, “after lunch in London, 1958”. Powell with slightly lopsided ironic smile, not quite looking into the camera.

By the way, I thought Stephen Holden [in his article on Larkin and Powell in the last Newsletter] missed a trick though in not elaborating, in the context of Powell thinking Larkin “one of the most selfish of men”, the part in the Journals when he describes Larkin being forced to “run up and down the stairs with plates of soup” for his girlfriend Monica Jones, who had shingles. This is a classic Powellian comic tableau, albeit an inverted one.

When I say tableau I am thinking of the offstage episodes in Dance or the memoirs where a person's entire character is invoked in a word-picture, e.g. Mr Deacon falling down the stairs on his way to complain about the state of the toilets in an insalubrious nightclub. Or even more densely packed e.g. St John Clark fawning on a Duchess after being interrupted in a thorough perusal of some Marxist literature in a bookshop, having got an assistant (Members?) to divert the
bookseller as he was too stingy (although stinking rich) to buy it. And for a non-fiction example see also the Orwell babysitting with hunting knife story.

With the Larkin vignette, the comedy comes from the uncharacteristic nature of the scene. Although of course he doesn’t labour the point, you can imagine Powell’s chuckling relish over Larkin’s dislike at having to nurse his adoring and perennially badly treated companion in this way.

From Tom Miller

All readers will have been entertained by your conjuncture of Powell with Philip Larkin. The poet was not a pleasant man, but, in the context, we should remember three things:

1) Larkin was nervous about persons whom he thought were his social superiors, and he was anxious to run them down before they could patronise him. (Powell seems to have been completely free of stupid prejudices of this type.)

2) He was a very heavy drinker, and it is reasonable and charitable to suppose that alcohol perverted his judgement.

3) In letters to Kingsley Amis, Larkin was always prone to show off, and try to be funny. (The relationship between these two men was not always easy.)

I conclude that Larkin had a far greater respect for Powell than he was prepared to admit, and I suspect that Powell understood this.

From Nathaniel Slipper

The new Literary Editor of The Chap magazine, a gentlemen’s quarterly for the 21st century, has the by-line “Lindsay Bagshaw.” Could they be related? I note that in the latest edition of The Chap Mr Bagshaw reviews a memoir by a very Powellite character called Jeremy Scott. During his National Service in the early 1950s he is sent with the Royal Dragoons to Suez, where he claims to spend all his time “sunbathing and reading Anthony Powell.” In a scene that could easily fit into one of Powell’s war novels, his preposterous uniforms (altered by a Turkish tailor in Soho to look more “with-it”) and penniless affectations get him sent to Coventry by his fellow officers. He is told by the adjutant, “This Regiment has a proud and honourable tradition. I want you to know, Scott, that while you are with us nobody wishes to speak to you.” To exact his revenge he deliberately poisons all the officers on a troopship with a hefty lump of Spanish Fly inserted into their coffee urn.

LATE BREAKING NEWS

Doctorate for Another Society Member

As we go to press we hear that Christine Berberich has been awarded her doctorate by the University of York. Her thesis on the image of the English gentleman in 20th Century Literature included a chapter on Anthony Powell. Our warmest congratulations to Christine!

Members Survey

Once again a big thank you to all those members who returned the survey included with the Summer Newsletter. As was noted last time there were some interesting and useful suggestions as well as a few which we know we have already investigated and discarded and some we have already done!

Looking at the suggestions for the development (in the broadest sense) of the Society, the most suggested idea was that we should grow the membership. Well yes, we expected that! Other suggestions included: depositing the Newsletter with the British Library (this is work in progress), an advertising campaign in public libraries, raising an endowment (already under discussion), a student writing competition, and the preparation of a complete annotated edition of Powell’s works. Wow! The last of these would be a huge undertaking – probably a lifetime’s work – but wouldn’t it be wonderful? Will one of our more academic members volunteer to organise and manage it?

Looking at the ideas for developing and retaining membership, we have already committed to look at standing order-type subscription payments (at least for UK members) – an early job for our new Treasurer! Advertising was a frequent suggestion; however the Executive’s collective experience is that this is a waste of money unless one has a huge budget for a prolonged and targeted advertising campaign – but it is never entirely dismissed. Advertising in other literary societies’ newsletters is, however, something we are following up. Other suggestions were that we should have a presence at literary festivals (surely a must in centenary year?), reducing subscriptions (I’m sure we’d all like this), and a “member-get-a-member” scheme.

What was slightly disappointing was the very few members who offered to get involved with running the Society. Many of those who did volunteer have already been contacted, and we will be in touch with the others in the near future.

Centenary Conference ... the most requested speaker was Hilary Spurling.

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Some of the suggestions for centenary events and the centenary conference have been mentioned elsewhere in this and the previous Newsletter. To summarise the thoughts here, the three most requested centenary events were a visit to The Chantry, a biography of Powell, and Powell-related TV/radio programmes. As to the Centenary Conference, the most requested speaker was Hilary Spurling.

As we go to press we hear that Christine Berberich has been awarded her doctorate by the University of York. Her thesis on the image of the English gentleman in 20th Century Literature included a chapter on Anthony Powell. Our warmest congratulations to Christine!
Local Group News

Great Lakes Meeting
8th November 2003

by Steve Pyskoty-Olle

The Great Lakes group held its most recent meeting on a chilly, snowy November 8 at The Red Lion Pub in Chicago, Illinois, USA. (In fact, a few attendees commented on how the scene outside evoked the weather in the opening passage of Dance.) The topic for the day was At Lady Molly’s.

Attending the meeting were Anthony Bruozas, Joanne and Tony Edmonds, Steve Pyskoty-Olle, and Eileen Soderstrom. Greg, our regular barkeep (who bears no resemblance to Smith), attended to our every need.

Among the topics discussed whilst consuming ploughman's lunches, shepherd's pies, and pints of ale and hard cider: Was it low for Nick to reveal to Gen. Conyers Widmerpool's seeking his advice on the appropriateness of premarital relations with Mildred (or was it simply that Nick trusts Conyers like a father, and so felt at ease revealing this to him)? People underestimate Ted Jeavons; his observations about people portray his homosexual characters sympathetically.)

Each of us had a different edition of At Lady Molly's; we admired the various cover art, and investigated a typo found in the Little, Brown hardback and the University of Chicago Press paperback, but not found in the Penguin, Popular Library or Heinemann paperbacks. (Found near the bottom of page 166 in most editions, the typo reads: “He retired from the navy some years ago.”)

Apparently, UCP did not see the need to have a proofreader look over the Dance volumes!

For information on our next meeting, email Steve Pyskoty-Olle at: widmerpool@hotmail.com.

London Group Meeting
1st November 2003

by Stephen Holden

A small group of Society members met up at the Anchor pub in London on Saturday 1st November. Those present were Derek Miles, Stephen Holden, Keith & Noreen Marshall, and Victor Spouge.

The gathering didn’t discuss any particular Powell-related topic but ranged over several. We talked about how Powell’s prose seemed effortless but was actually the product of endless revision. Those of us who had been to last year’s AGM at Eton remembered Michael Lovell’s interest in his family amusing (and wished for a chart with which to delineate all of the characters in the series). Nick seems quite certain that there was nothing physical between Widmerpool and Gypsy Jones (though that doesn’t quiet most of us from speculating on the topic). Was Powell homophobic at all? (We think not, as he portrays his homosexual characters sympathetically.)

Obviously at this stage the details have not been fixed. However the Organising Committee is working on a programme of keynote speakers and delegate papers, as for the previous conferences. We expect to issue a call for papers around mid-2004. Time will be built into the programme for delegates to visit the Wallace Collection’s Anthony Powell centenary exhibition. Consideration is also being given to including an evening reception, a dinner and an event on Sunday 4th December.

In choosing the dates we took into account members’ feedback from the Oxford conference and the recent members’ survey. That said, there was no real consensus on timing; members were evenly divided between weekdays and the weekend; between October, November and early December; but there was a clear vote in favour of a two day event. In consultation with the Wallace Collection, we therefore decided to hold the conference as near Powell’s actual birthday (21st December) – and as close to the end of academic term – as possible without getting too close to Christmas or Thanksgiving. In choosing to hold the conference on a Friday and Saturday we hope to give delegates the opportunity of a long weekend (and a chance to do some Christmas shopping) in London.

We are planning to appoint an hotel booking agency to assist delegates with finding suitable accommodation in London. Watch this space for further details.

Exhibition
Not too much news this time on the exhibition front, except to say that the Society’s Exhibition Committee have started working on a list of possible objects for the exhibition and on an overall conceptual design – work which will take some time. We hope to meet (Continued on page 13)
Meredith’s and Nick Baker’s reading of the various drafts Powell did of his recollections of Brian Howard. What started out as a rather disjointed, savage portrait of Howard was revised down several times into the measured, witty two paragraphs that appear in the published memoirs.

Stephen Holden raised the point about Powell being almost the odd man out among his contemporaries (Waugh, Greene, Peter Fleming, Robert Byron) in never having written a travel book. Keith Marshall countered that Powell had done rather a good deal of travelling (in Europe and to the USA and Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s; and all over the world after the war), but had just never written up his travels as a book. The consensus in the end was that Powell knew what he liked and (a) writing about travel did not appeal; and (b) probably neither did spending months cutting his way through the Amazonian rain forest or plodding across the Gobi on a yak.

We also discussed the pleasures and the pitfalls of book collecting, and the joy to be had in coming across some long-sought book in a completely unexpected location. And also the fact (part cause for complaint, part for celebration) that prices for Powell first editions kept increasing year by year.

The next regular London Group meeting is on Saturday 6th March 2004, 1230 to 1530 hrs, again at the Anchor, Bankside.

Powell ... never having written a travel book.

(Continued from page 11)

with the Wallace Collection’s team again early in the New Year.

Centenary Events
The Centenary Events Committee (Nick Birns, Kevin Jewell and Christine Berberich) are drawing up a list of possible events. Being put into their discussions are all the excellent ideas which were suggested in the Member’s Survey: everything from commemorative postage stamps to a garden party at The Chantry, from blue plaques in London to a rural drive in vintage Vauxhalls.

As mentioned last time, Nick has had some preliminary discussions with Georgetown University (who have the John Monagan archive) and there is news of a possible small exhibition in New York.

More news on all these fronts as it becomes available.
AGM Report
by Noreen Marshall

This year the Society’s AGM took place on Saturday 20 September in the Downstairs (‘Writers’) Bar of the Fitzroy Tavern, Charlotte Street, London.

AGMs always contain a mixture of the mundane and the enjoyable, and the Society’s are no exception. Among the more important, and less mundane, business the meeting received and approved the Society’s Annual Report and Accounts for 2002-3 and, very rightly, ratified former-Senator John S Monagan’s appointment as the Society’s first Vice-President. As requested by the Charity Commissioners, clause G(1)b of the Society’s Constitution was amended to make the intention clearer with the added benefit of allowing us to expand by two the Executive Committee.

The meeting proceeded to the election of the Executive Officers and Executive Committee Members. Patric Dickinson and Kevin Jewell were elected unopposed as our new Chairman and Hon. Treasurer respectively to join Keith Marshall (Hon. Secretary) as the three Executive Officers. The constitutional amendment having been passed all those nominated as Executive Committee members were duly elected.

Following a vote of thanks to Maggie Noach and Ian Young, the outgoing Chairman and Hon. Treasurer, for their sterling work, the formal business of the meeting concluded with the Hon. Secretary answering questions from the floor.

After a coffee break the meeting heard a reprise of two papers from the Oxford conference under the title Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh and Oxford – this year being Evelyn Waugh’s centenary. Patric Dickinson’s Effortless Superiority? Some Social Comparisons between Powell & Waugh and Dr Catherine Hoffman’s Life in Limbo: Jenkins at University were interesting papers and stimulated lengthy discussions which would have lasted well into the evening had there been no time limit on our room booking. What a shame that because of transport disruption Christine Berberich was unfortunately unable to be present to give her paper Two Lost Souls: Powell’s Charles Stringham and Waugh’s Sebastian Flyte.

The full minutes of the AGM are printed in the centre spread of this Newsletter.

... vote of thanks to Maggie Noach and Ian Young ... for their sterling work ...

Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome and should be sent to:

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Email: editor@anthonypowell.org.uk

Dates for Your Diary

Friday 19th December 2003
NE USA Group Celebration of Powell’s 98th Birthday
Venue: The Century Club, New York
Time: 1200 hrs
Details: see page 14

Saturday 21st February 2004
Leap Year Lunch
Venue: Spaghetti House
30 St Martin’s Lane, London, WC2
Time: 1230 hrs
Details: see page 5

Saturday 6th March 2004
London Group Pub Meet
Venue: The Anchor Bankside
34 Park Street, London, SE1 9EF
Time: 1230 to 1530 hrs
Regular informal meet at this historic riverside hostelry

Saturday 3rd July 2004
London Group Pub Meet
Venue: The Anchor Bankside
34 Park Street, London, SE1 9EF
Time: 1230 to 1530 hrs
Regular informal meet at this historic riverside hostelry

Saturday 18th September 2004
Society AGM
Time: 1430 hrs
Date, venue etc. to be confirmed

Fri. 2nd & Sat. 3rd December 2005
Anthony Powell Centenary Conference
Venue: The Wallace Collection
Manchester Square, London, W1
Details to follow

Local Groups

NE USA Group
Area: NY & CT area, USA
Organiser: Leatrice Fountain
Email: leatricefountain@aol.com

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London Group
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Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you wish to make contact with a group and don’t have email.

Newsletter Copy Deadlines for 2003/4

Issue 14, Spring 2004
Copy Deadline: 13 February 2004
Publication Date: 5 March 2004

Issue 15, Summer 2004
Copy Deadline: 14 May 2004
Publication Date: 4 June 2004
Christmas Prize Competition

Following the success of last year’s haiku competition, this year’s challenge is to write the best Powellian limerick.

The limerick is a short verse form of five lines rhyming abba, the a lines having three anapestic metrical feet while the b lines have two. eg.

There was a young fellow named Powell
With a humour exceedingly droll.
To amuse all his friends
He practic’d the bends
And kept a pet frog in a bowl.

The prize is either a DVD of the Channel 4 films of Dance or a year’s free membership of the Society.

Send your entry, name, address & choice of prize, to:
Christmas 2003 Competition
The Anthony Powell Society
76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford Middlesex, UB6 0JW, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 8864 6109
Email: comp@anthonypowell.org.uk

to arrive by noon on 31 January 2004

The winning entry will be the one which most amuses the Newsletter Editor. The winner will be announced in the Spring 2004 Newsletter.

Competition Conditions. The Editor’s decision is final and binding. Entry is open to Anthony Powell Society members and non-members. No purchase necessary. Entries must be original and the work of the person submitting them. Maximum five entries per person. No cash alternative. No correspondence will be entered into. The Anthony Powell Society reserves the right to publish the entries.

Few persons who have ever sat for a portrait can have felt anything but inferior while the process is going on.

Anthony Powell in The Observer, 09 Jan 1983

From Julian Allason

In his Journals (9/9/86) AP refers to the “the old novelist’s trouble (from which Evelyn Waugh suffers) of allowing characters he dislikes no marks at all” as a self-defeating practice.

This set me thinking about which characters AP disliked, and the more I considered it the less certain I became. Some, like Duport and Maclintick, evince a degree of pity; with others – Umfraville perhaps – there is a hint of sneaking admiration. The author seems to have revelled in crafting some of the more apalling characters like Mrs Erdleigh and Pamela, though possibly not Erridge.

And what of Odo?

From Colin Donald

Julian, I was very surprised that you included Dicky Umfraville in such company. AP’s admiration for him seems to me anything but sneaking, in fact I think he embodies everything that was attractive to him about raffish old world style and manners.

I’d go further and propose that he is one of the characters AP liked the most, right up there with Ted Jeavons and General Conyers.

From Andrew Clarke

Agreed. He had panache. You wouldn’t trust him with your daughters, but he would certainly pay his gambling debts, for example. And his response to Guggenbuhl’s tirade about Tretiakoff & Co. is spot on.

‘Any ventriloquists?’

From Julian Allason

Andrew, I’m afraid even the latter virtue is something that Dicky can not be accused of, as Milly Andriadis in the exchange in BM beginning “Oh God its you Dicky, I thought you were dead” counters his ingratiating reminiscence of a night in Havana with “yes, and I still remember the [...]some slang for sizeable amount, could it be pony?] you borrowed off me as well.” Or words to that effect.

From Julian Allason

I used to know the individual considered to be AP’s principal source for Umfraville, and charming though he was you would have thought twice about entrusting your savings let alone your daughter to him. Oddly enough one might have shared a water bottle across the desert with confidence.

The reality is that such characters are often kept afloat only by the old style manners you refer to plus sufficient self-delusion to mask the shame of unremitting selfishness. They usually leave a trail of human debris in their wake. Entertaining certainly, but utterly destructive in reality. AP was, I think,
too wise not to have seen beyond the raffish charm.

From Andrew Clarke
Here, as ever, we must distinguish between the “principal source” and the literary character. Shakespeare’s principal source for Lady Macbeth may have been a pillar of the Kirk, a dependable Guide Leader and a selfless worker for the Dunfermline branch of the Women’s Institute, but this doesn’t seem to come out in the play...

We don’t know whether AP saw behind the raffish charm, because he never actually tells us.

From James Doyle
Neither AP nor Nick Jenkins sees any redeeming feature in Fr Ambrose Dooley, but he’s one of the few examples I can think of for forgetting the rule that all human beings are equally extraordinary. Umfraville I’ve always felt AP and Jenkins both like: for his flair, and the detachment with which he can discuss his own marital (and other) misadventures.

From Julian Allason
Agreed that we can go no further than the text for the character, plus reasonable inferences. In examining the supposed character model, a type who thrived in the oral tradition and are always only telling others’ stories; Dicky’s belong to written word and are enriched by his own careful, measured style. Nick admires Dicky’s “great acuteness of observation and relish for life” (VB 149) (as we do Nick’s/Powell’s?). Nick’s storytelling abilities are limited to the written word and are enriched by his telling others’ stories; Dicky’s belong to the oral tradition and are always only about himself, but for all their irreverence demand a surprising degree of attention: “The exaggerated dramatic force employed by Umfraville in presenting his narrative made it hard to know what demeanor best to adopt in listening to the story. Tragedy might at any moment give way to farce, so that the listener had always to keep his wits about him” (VB 153). The precarious balance of tragedy and comedy is of course characteristic of Nick’s/Powell’s narrative as well.

Finally, I can’t resist recalling one of my favorite moments of HSH — Dicky, nearing 80, reporting on his hangover: “Rare for me these days. One of those doses – and his predicaments, like Dicky’s engagement to Lady Frederica Budd: “The first thought, that the

From Laurie Frost
Some notes on Umfraville: He is one of only four characters who appears or is mentioned in each of Dance’s 12 volumes (others: Widmerpool, Stringham, Sir Magnus Donners) and the only one of these four still alive in 1971. His verbal style – “the suggestion of madness in the way he shot out his sentences … a warning that no proper mechanism existed for operating normal controls” (AW 155) – fascinates Nick and is of course quite the opposite of Nick’s own careful, measured style. Nick admires Dicky’s “great acuteness of observation and relish for life” (VB 149) (as we do Nick’s/Powell’s?). Nick’s storytelling abilities are limited to the written word and are enriched by his telling others’ stories; Dicky’s belong to the oral tradition and are always only about himself, but for all their irreverence demand a surprising degree of attention: “The exaggerated dramatic force employed by Umfraville in presenting his narrative made it hard to know what demeanor best to adopt in listening to the story. Tragedy might at any moment give way to farce, so that the listener had always to keep his wits about him” (VB 153). The precarious balance of tragedy and comedy is of course characteristic of Nick’s/Powell’s narrative as well.

From Laurie Frost
Honestly, I can’t remember why I looked into this 20 years ago when I was writing my dissertation (published as Reminiscent Scrutinies), but I remember my surprise at Magnus & Umfraville making all 12 books, but not others, esp. Jean, Templer, Giles, or maybe Trelawney.

The four (Widmerpool, Stringham, Umfraville, Magnus) are an interesting quartet. Dicky’s an amusing storyteller, but has no interest in others’ lives. Magnus is a rotten storyteller (he speaks in only 2 books) but a great observer. Stringham is both a good storyteller and keen watcher, and Widmerpool is completely lacking in empathy and a rotten conversationalist whose insincerity and soullessness are shown in his appropriation of others’ verbal styles.

From David Christie
I was reading the final chapters of Patrick White’s Riders in the Chariot when it occurred to me how rare it is for characters in a novel to signal so clearly, as do Mrs Jolley and Mrs Flack, that their creator hates them in some deep visceral sense. I think that the implied author of the Dance dislikes Umfraville, is contemptuous of Erridge, perhaps a little afraid of Quiggin, and somewhat awed by Sir Magnus. As a minority of one I
have never believed in Widmerpool, ontologically speaking, as being a single entity but in any case do not sense any hatred of him. This leaves us with the lovely Pamela. Arrgh! Yes, well then ... I am not sure. What do people think?

From Julian Allason
Incidentally I am with David in sensing some distinctly mixed feelings about Umfraville on Nick’s part. And that is despite having known and liked the generally agreed character model, the adventurer Patrick Tritton (who kept a pack of Irish hounds on his small estate in Mexico and hunted jackrabbit to the amazement of the peons). One can well see that he might have grated on the AP's personal life.

From Peter Kislinger
If the “implied author” dislikes Umfraville, the implied author certainly deserves credit for giving Umfraville so many good lines nonetheless.

I think it was Shaw who said he was always giving the best lines in a drama to the characters most obnoxious to him.

From David Christie
Ah Ha! Now we are getting to it. Whatever likes or dislikes we think we perceive on Nick’s part, since he is simply a character, these attributes are no more than part of the construct and are of interest only within the fictional world of the novel. Sometimes however we get a little cheeky and think that within that world we can see the puppet master himself.

Julian is taking data about AP from outside the Dance (the Journals) and matching it with data on Umfraville, also derived from outside the Dance (personal knowledge of the original) and sensing that, perhaps unconsciously, AP’s opinion of the original may be shading his portrait of Umfraville as seen through Nick’s eyes. In my example I used Patrick White’s two old ladies and I thought that the venom expressed could have indicated a gut feeling of hatred of some real life person that seeped into his fictional portrait, over and above the necessities of plot/story. My question is whether the portrayal of Pamela – which stays with me after I have closed the book – is too chilly to be no more than a well-drawn sketch of a fictional entity. In reading of Pamela, are we coming a little close to the bone so to speak … perhaps touching AP’s personal life?

From Michael Henle
I’m not sure who the implied author is but I agree that the fictional author Nick is perhaps a little afraid of Quiggin or at any rate has a kind of rivalry with him and is definitely awed by Sir Magnus. Rather than contemptuous, I think Nick is condescending towards Erridge. Contempt would imply condescension but not conversely, and Nick has too much respect for Erridge as an individual, although a difficult individual, to be contemptuous of him. As for Umfraville, I think Nick quite likes him although he finds some of his behaviour tedious.

Tolerance and respect for the uniqueness of each individual is an important theme of Dance. The only character Nick actually dislikes, apart from some of his fellow officers at times, is Duport, particularly when he meets him before the war at Albert’s hotel. Even Duport gains Nick’s respect and perhaps even affection later.

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### A to Z Christmas Quiz

**Set by Mr Blackhead**

The questions and answers all concern writers and writing (real or imagined) mentioned in *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Answers in the next issue.

1. A. By Apollinaire, one of the few books on Moreland’s shelves.
2. B. A travel book by Mark Members.
3. C. Proust’s “Balbec”.
4. D. Erridge’s gauntness recalls this novel character’s looks.
5. E. “____ banal de tous les vieux garçons” – lines from Baudelaire quoted by Moreland to Stourwater Castle.
6. F. By GW Henty, one of the few books ever read by Farebrother.
7. G. Novel borrowed by Quiggin from Jenkins at university.
8. H. Moreland’s proposed title for an autobiographical work.
10. J. Either this writer or Robert Louis Stevenson told Le Bas his verse was frightfully bad.
11. K. Title of a lecture delivered by Mark Members at the university immediately after World War II.
12. L. Author of *A Hero of Our Time*.
14. N. Jenkins reads The Castle of Fratta by this author in Temporary Kings.
15. O. Trapnel’s copy of this Russian novel is worn to shreds.
16. P. To Jenkins, Widmerpool resembles this writer without his wig.
17. Q. Publishers of Fission.
18. R. Author of these lines quoted by Moreland: “Chanson de la plus haut tour”.
19. S. Title of the only book Uncle Giles is ever seen reading.
22. V. Author of the lines that give the title to *Hearing Secret Harmonies*.
23. W. Mr Deacon’s spiritual father.
24. X. Trapnel’s first name.
25. Y. Lines from Jonson quoted by Moreland: “Put me to ____ foxes, milking of he-goats.”
26. Z. Sir Basil ____, financier and munitions manufacturer, mentioned in Max Pilgrim’s *Tess of Le Touquet*. 