A Peaceful Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year
to all members & friends of the Society

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From the Secretary’s Desk

Welcome to the 25th Anthony Powell Society Newsletter. I think you’ll agree this is something of a landmark: the Newsletter has been going for 6 years and the Society only slightly longer.

Newsletter issue 1 was very different from this issue. It was hastily created in Microsoft Word; printed on A4 paper; photocopied, stapled and mailed by the editor’s fair hand; and was a mere 8 pages, including the flyer for the Eton conference.

What a difference now when we produce the page mark-up in a proper publishing tool; have a more compact page size; improved design; and professional printing and mailing. What’s more the Newsletter is now generally at least 24 pages – this one, with the inserts, will be 32 pages! And that is in addition to the Society’s newly launched journal: Secret Harmonies.

For all of this we must thank our Editor, Stephen Holden. Without him the Newsletter would not have flourished as it has and the journal would not exist.

Did we ever think we would get here? Well I know we all hoped we would! While we all hoped the Society would grow faster than it has we have achieved a huge amount in the last 6 years: three major conferences and proceedings; a couple of monographs, with more to come; and the launch of the journal. We also made a big contribution to the celebration of Powell’s centenary in 2005. That is a lot for a Society of a few hundred members.

And let’s not forget the huge amount of enjoyment we’ve given to many, many people around the world.

So this Christmas let’s all raise a glass to the Society, to our Editor and of course to our hero, Anthony Powell.

May you all have a peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

The Anthony Powell Society

Registered Charity No. 1096873

The Anthony Powell Society is a charitable literary society devoted to the life and works of the English author Anthony Dymoke Powell, 1905-2000.

Officers & Executive Committee

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* Members of the Executive Committee who are the Society’s trustees. All trustees are resident in England or Wales unless stated.

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Nina Hamnett, the “Queen of Bohemia”, was born on St Valentine’s Day in 1890 in Tenby in South Wales. By coincidence, another artist with whom she was to be acquainted, Augustus John, had been born in the same street in 1878. Like Powell she was an army brat, spending her childhood in a succession of army camps throughout the UK.

From 1906 to 1907 she studied at the Pelham Art School and then at the London School of Art until 1910. One of her tutors (and her favourite teacher) at the latter school was George Lambert, father of Powell’s best friend Constant Lambert. She was also taught by William Nicholson. Her talent as an artist was soon spotted by the likes of John and Sickert, both of whom sketched and painted her several times. (Incidentally, one of Hamnett’s friends from the Slade was called Edward Le Bas, possibly the source of Powell’s use of the name in Dance.)

In 1914 she went to Paris to study at Marie Vassilieff’s academy in Montparnasse. On her first night in Paris she went to the café La Rotonde where the man at the next table introduced himself as “Modigliani, painter and Jew”. They became close friends and Hamnett often modelled for him. In later years she would hoick up her blouse displaying her bust with the boast, “Modi always said I had the best tits”. She also met and befriended the likes of Cocteau, Diaghilev, Picasso and Satie, and encountered the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. They became lovers and he made a sculpture of her dancing naked. Later Nina would introduce herself to people with the comment, “You know me, m’dear – I’m in the V&A with me left tit knocked off!” This was the Laughing Torso sculpture that provided her with the title of her autobiography in 1932.

In Montparnasse she met her husband, the Norwegian artist Roald Kristian, though theirs was a difficult marriage that ended in divorce. During her time in Paris she continued to paint, mainly portraits, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in London and at the Salon d’Automne in Paris. She also worked for Roger Fry’s Omega Workshops producing designs for avant-garde fabrics, clothes, murals, furniture and the like. She also became Fry’s mistress: “the most fascinating, exciting,
tantalising, elusive, beautiful, exasperating creature in the world”.

On her return to London in 1926 she soon became a regular fixture in Fitzrovia, the part of London so named after the Fitzroy Tavern on the corner of Charlotte and Windmill Streets in Soho. She brought with her, according to the music critic Cecil Gray, “a nostalgic breath of the old spirit of Montparnasse”.

She must have met Anthony Powell in 1927 or 1928 when she was 37 or 38 and he 22 or 23. She and Osbert Sitwell were collaborating on a book (published by Duckworth’s) on London’s statues which she was illustrating. She met Powell when she delivered some drawings to Duckworth’s where he worked. Hamnett took an immediate liking to Powell and invited him to her studio to draw him. (A pencil sketch of Powell by Nina Hamnett was shown in the recent Wallace Collection exhibition.) For Powell, according to Hamnett’s biographer, “Nina held out the promise of adventure into an unknown Bohemian world” for someone eager to taste more of London life than the season of deb balls. According to Peter Quennell,

Nina was Anthony Powell’s first grown-up love affair. He was rather pleased with it at the time. She satisfactorily deprived him of his innocence, which is a thing people were anxious to get rid of in those days. He built her up as a romantic femme de trente ans, a Bohemian mistress.

During their relationship Hamnett introduced Powell to a bizarre Firbankian world some of which he reproduces in Agents and Patients (1936). They would often visit little bistro's and restaurants in Soho which featured Russian billiard tables (possibly the inspiration for the scenes in Dance where Jean Templer and Nick Jenkins play billiards). Hamnett took Powell and Constant Lambert to visit the impoverished, opium-smoking Count de Malleisque and his wife, who were staying at the Cavendish Hotel in Jermyn Street accompanied by their Pekinese and a pet monkey who was perpetually trying to defend itself from the unwelcome sexual attentions of the dog. Powell described the scene at the Cavendish in Messengers of Day: the Count

would play the guitar, or do newspaper puzzles (which were to win him some enormous prize), while the company drank Pernod, and a clergyman’s voice intoned church services on the radio.

The Count features in Agents and Patients as the Marquis de la Tour d’Espagne.

In his memoirs Powell writes of Hamnett’s heavy drinking and belligerent manner:

a condition not affecting her gift, but restricting continuous work to a few months at best; human relationships to equally fragmentary associations.
She would always refer to Powell as her “little Etonian”.

Hamnett had always been a heavy drinker but was now losing her ability to cope with the booze. At the same time she began to develop a taste for boxers, sailors and other “rough trade”. When asked why she favoured sailors, she replied, “Because they leave in the morning”.

In 1932 she published her autobiography, *Laughing Torso*, which was a best seller in the UK and USA, but became the subject of a libel case from Aleister Crowley. Crowley (a possible part model for Dr Trelawney in *Dance*) objected to a passage in the book that read:

Crowley had a temple in Cefalu in Sicily. He was supposed to practice Black Magic there, and one day a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. There was a goat also there. This all points to Black Magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.

Hamnett won the libel case but the situation appears to have profoundly affected her for the rest of her life. She was to spend a good part of the next few decades of her life inhabiting the bars of the Fitzroy Tavern and the Wheatsheaf pubs, exchanging anecdotes for drinks. To enter a pub, wrote Constantine Fitzgibbon, “and not to buy Nina a drink was in those days and in that world a solecism that amounted to a social stigma”.

In December 1956 she threw herself off her balcony, or drunkenly slipped, and was impaled on the railings below, dying shortly afterwards.

Nowadays she is remembered too much as only a Fitzrovian legend rather than for the fine painter and designer she was.

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**A Powell Letter**

Dr Jonathan Black, in the course of his research into the painter Edward Wadsworth, has unearthed the following letter from Powell to Wadsworth’s daughter, Barbara, now owned by her youngest son, Alex Hollweg. The letter concerns a typewriter that Powell gave Barbara Wadsworth.

The notepaper is headed:

Gerald Duckworth,
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

Dated: 5 April 1932

“... How will you type? Are you writing a book yourself? The possession of a typewriter is usually a prelude to it ... I have damaged two of the wheels of my car by driving on the pavement along the Great West Road. If I can repair it I shall very much look forward to seeing you again at Maresfield. My misadventures show how dangerous it is to be sober in charge of a car.”

Signed: “yours, Tony”

Dr Black has nearly finished his book on Wadsworth and Photography and it will include a photo of a pipe-smoking Powell at Maresfield in May 1929.

UK Armed Forces Ranks – A Comparison

By Keith Marshall

In the military episodes of *Dance* Powell deals mostly with the UK Army, there being only passing references to the Air Force and the Navy, plus the small number of foreign military personnel (mostly officers) with whom Jenkins has contact. However I am occasionally asked the equivalent of a rank in one of the UK Armed Services with another of the Services. The table opposite is a general view of the rank equivalences. While this is a current comparison it would not have been very different during World War II.

This comparison ignores the specialist roles found within most corps and regiments who, while fitting into the overall rank structure, often have specific names for the ranks or the roles they perform. Specialists who spring to mind include the Physical Training Instructor (PTI; normally an NCO), the Padre (who being a gentleman is always an officer), Medical Officers (qualified doctors, again by definition gentlemen, and probably very senior nursing staff are officers; nursing and ancillary medical staff would be NCOs or other ranks).

Bandsmen (generally NCOs or Privates) are, at least today, generally non-combatants but are called upon to undertake field duties such as ambulance work. And let’s not forget that “an army marches on its stomach” so there is a whole panoply of catering roles, again mostly NCOs and men who would normally be non-combatant, from the lowly Mess Waiter (*vide* Private Stringham) upwards.

In addition the Army traditionally have different names for Private in many corps/ regiments. Examples are Trooper; Sapper (Royal Engineers); Signaller; Craftsman (in REME; Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers); Fusilier; Gunner (Artillery Regiments); *etc*. Similarly some corps/regiments have different names for NCOs; for example, Lance-Bombardier and Bombardier (for Lance-Corporal & Corporal respectively) in the Royal Artillery.

But in true British style things aren’t quite that simple. The Royal Marines (the Royal Navy’s equivalent of the Commandos) follow Army ranks while the Fleet Air Arm (that bit of the Navy which plays at landing planes on moving ships) uses naval ranks. Then to keep in step with NATO convention the ranks of Brigadier up to Field Marshall are often referred to as 1-Star to 5-Star General.

That is the simplified view of a layman with no background in the military. I feel sure those who know much better than I the ways of the British military will deluge me with other examples and exceptions.

Modern UK Army NCO Sleeve Rank Insignia, from L to R: Lance Corporal, Corporal, Sergeant, Warrant Officer Class 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Royal Navy</th>
<th>Royal Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commissioned Officers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Marshal</td>
<td>Admiral of the Fleet</td>
<td>Marshal of the Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Admiral</td>
<td>Air Chief Marshal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-General</td>
<td>Vice-Admiral</td>
<td>Air Marshal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major-General</td>
<td>Rear Admiral</td>
<td>Air Vice Marshal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigadier</td>
<td>Commodore</td>
<td>Air Commodore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Group Captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-Colonel</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>Wing Commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Lieutenant Commander</td>
<td>Squadron Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Flight Lieutenant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Sub-Lieutenant</td>
<td>Flying Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Midshipman</td>
<td>Pilot Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acting Pilot Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Warrant Officer I</td>
<td>Warrant Officer</td>
<td>Warrant Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regimental Sergeant Major</td>
<td>Fleet Chief Petty Officer</td>
<td>Master Aircrew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warrant Officer II</td>
<td>Chief Petty Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Sergeant Major</td>
<td>Chief Artificer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Sergeant</td>
<td>Petty Officer</td>
<td>Chief Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour Sergeant</td>
<td>Artificer</td>
<td>Flight Sergeant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Leading Seaman</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>Able Seaman</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lance-Corporal</td>
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<td>Junior Technician</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leading Aircraftsman</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Ranks</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Seaman</td>
<td>Aircraftsman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Modern UK Army Officers Epaulettes, from L to R: Captain, Major, Colonel, General.*
AN Wilson’s new biography of John Betjeman was in the news recently for rather unexpected reasons. In the book Wilson quotes a letter from a lady Betjeman was supposed to have had an affair with. Bevis Hillier, author of a 3-volume biography of Betjeman, at first denied being the originator of this letter. However, a *Sunday Times* forensics nerd detected that the envelope enclosing the letter (purportedly sent from France) was purchased in Winchester, Hillier’s home town. Hillier finally admitted to being the hoaxer, allegedly because of a hostile review Wilson gave one of his volumes. By coincidence the letter mentions Anthony Powell, but Patric Dickinson has perceptively noted that Betjeman would have called him “Tony” rather than “Anthony”. However, there is a reason for the “Anthony”. The letter reads in full:

Darling Honor,

I loved yesterday. All day, I’ve thought of nothing else. No other love I’ve had means so much. Was it just an aberration on your part, or will you meet me at Mrs Holmes’s again – say on Saturday? I won’t be able to sleep until I have your answer.

Love has given me a miss for so long, and now this miracle has happened. Sex is a part of it, of course, but I have a Romaunt of the Rose feeling about it too. On Saturday we could have lunch at Fortt’s, then go back to Mrs H’s. Never mind if you can’t make it then. I am free on Sunday too or Sunday week. Signal me tomorrow as to whether and when you can come.

Anthony Powell has written to me, and mentions you admiringly. Some of his comments about the Army are v funny. He’s somebody I’d like to know better when the war is over. I find his letters funnier than his books. Tinkerty-tonk, my darling. I pray I’ll hear from you tomorrow. If I don’t I’ll visit your office in a fake beard.

All love, JB

A perceptive journalist noticed that the initial letters of each sentence spelled out the words “AN Wilson is a shit”, hence the “Anthony”. Wilson is reported to have commented on learning of the hoax, “Of course I saw the funny side – I laughed about it a lot when I found out”.

AN Wilson’s biography *Betjeman* is published by Hutchinson at £20.
The Anthony Powell Society inaugurated an annual Widmerpool Award in 2003, for the public figure who most embodies the characteristics of Kenneth Widmerpool.

The award takes the form of an engraved "wrong kind of overcoat", purchased by the Society (at no small expense) from some local flea-market or charity shop.

John Prescott (the UK’s Deputy Prime Minister) follows in a distinguished line of Widmerpoolians. In 2003 the first winner (by several lengths) of the Widmerpool Award was Lord Irvine of Lairg. The citation referred to his “unabashed exercise of the powers and privileges of his office without care of public opinion.”

The 2004 winner was Sir Max Hastings. The nomination was “on the grounds not only of physical traits (thick specks, booming manner) but for petty abuse of power” in using the medium of a review of a new biography of Powell as an excuse for personal score-settling.

The 2005 winner was London’s Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair. His nomination noted a “combination of PC cringe and personal ruthlessness that make him appear by far the closest to Kenneth Widmerpool in character.”

John Prescott’s nomination mentioned “his very public abuse of position which continues, an abuse which encompassed not only adultery with members of his staff and accusations of sexism, but also a scandal involving allegations of accepting favours and gifts from a US developer, Phil Anschutz, in return for smoothing the way for Anschutz’s UK business dealings”. Prescott also qualifies in his “lust for perquisites, and the ultimate futility of his Widmerpudlian will to power.” Lastly, Prescott amply fulfils the role of buffoon, the man who acts like a fool and then cannot understand why everyone is laughing at him.

Among those short-listed in 2006 were:

General Sir Mike Jackson was nominated for being, “a politician in uniform, originally commissioned into the Intelligence Corps (an Intelligence Corps origin being the equivalent to wearing the wrong sort of overcoat).” He was recently spotted being “chummy” with Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair’s ex-spin doctor, causing journalist Piers Morgan to write, “I’d say the British Army is in safer hands with a man [General Sir Richard Dannatt] who takes on a duplicitous Government on behalf of his soldiers – rather than a man who enjoys sipping champagne at celebrity parties with his mates from the Downing Street spin machine.”

London Mayor Ken Livingstone, “for having carved out for himself a completely unjustified position of ultimate power, and being apparently immune from the law for the various ills he has perpetrated – getting into fights, insulting people racially etc. His are not exactly the self-same sins that Widmerpool committed, but the result is the same: ie. riding roughshod over anyone who dares to disagree with him, and constantly springing back up like one of those figures in a shooting gallery”.

Michael Portillo, though “apparently humourless, as ambitious in small things as in large, he keeps turning up in unlikely places.”
**Summarise Dance Competition**
This year we have an extra Christmas competition.

Contestants are asked to summarise the whole of Dance in no more than 150 words.

Maximum 3 entries per person.

The prize is a year’s gold membership of the Society.

Entries, with your name & address, should be sent to:
Summarise Dance Competition
Anthony Powell Society
76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford
Middlesex, UB6 0JW, UK
Fax: +44 20 8864 6109
Email: comp@anthonypowell.org
to arrive by 31 January 2007.

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**In the News**

**From: The Sunday Times Magazine, 3 September 2006**

An interview with Lord Snowdon

“Snowdon begins his usual interview tricks. Instead of answering questions, he likes to test your powers of deduction and laugh at your slowness – a diversionary tactic. ‘Tell me what date that is,’ he smiles, pointing to a picture of a man dressed from centuries ago.
Eighteen hundreds? ‘No, look harder, it’s me, it’s me! It’s me! It’s a montage done by Anthony Powell, who was a great friend.’”

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**Main Christmas Competition**

in the Quiz Supplement centre spread

The winning entry will be the one which most amuses a cabal of the Society’s Trustees.

The winner will be announced in the Spring 2007 Newsletter.

**Competition Conditions**

The judges’ 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 three entries per person. No cash alternative. No correspondence will be entered into. The Anthony Powell Society reserves the right to publish the entries but otherwise copyright remains with the author.

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**From: Private Eye, October 2006**

What You Didn’t get Round to Reading. No 94

Betjeman by AN Wilson

“A frequent visitor to the Dower House was Hon. Rosie Wheatcroft. A devout Anglican and niece of the one-time Punch cartoonist Hector Sibthorpe (Hecko) she is thought to have inspired the character Jessica Prozac in Anthony Powell’s pre-war novel Whatever Happened to Mrs Fothergill? A keen otter-hunter she often accompanied Betjeman to the little church of St Crispin’s, Panesar, where the incumbent was Rev. Benchley Warboys, a one-time Cambridge don who (cont. p94)”
Society Notices

Local Groups

London Group
Area: London & SE England
Contact: Keith Marshall
Email: kcm@cix.co.uk

North East USA Group
Area: NY & CT area, USA
Contact: Leatrice Fountain
Email: leatrice.fountain@gmail.com

Great Lakes Group
Area: Chicago area, USA
Contact: Stephen Pyskoty-Olle
Email: widmerpool@hotmail.com

Swedish Group
Area: Sweden
Contact: Regina Rehbinder
Email: reginarehbinder@hotmail.com

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

Any member wishing to start a local group should contact the Hon. Secretary who can advise on the number of local members.

RIP Maggie Noach

It is with great regret we have to announce that the Society’s former Chairman, Maggie Noach, died unexpectedly after a short illness on Friday 17 November 2006. She was just 57. Her funeral took place on Wednesday 29 November at St Mary Abbots, Kensington; the Society was represented by the Hon. Archivist.

Maggie leaves a husband and a teenage daughter.

Those of us who knew Maggie will remember her with great affection. In the words of Nick Birns “She was charming, funny, and had a sharp sense of the literary scene in both the US and UK. We are lucky that she gave the Society so much of her time and effort.”

Donations in Maggie’s memory to Save the Children Fund.

Our thoughts are with Maggie’s family and the staff of her literary agency.

*** Subscription ***
*** Special Offer ***

5 years for the price of 4
Available to new & existing members all grades of membership
Available to March 2007

*** Subscription ***
*** Special Offer ***

Just Published

Koyama Taichi
The Novels of Anthony Powell
A Critical Study
The Hokuseido Press, Tokyo
ISBN 4 590 01210 3

Taichi tells us that the book will be orderable soon through a bilingual page at Amazon Japan,
www.amazon.co.jp
Society Events

Rhythms of Dance
An illustrated talk by Paul Guinery on the musical references in Dance, with piano accompaniment and selected recordings
Monday 26 February 2007
Main Hall of Swedenborg Society, 20 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1 at 1930 hrs
Paul Guinery is a music announcer and presenter for Radio 3, the BBC’s music and arts channel. He is a linguist and an accomplished pianist and organist with an ARCM in piano performance. Paul has wide musical interests and is a long-time fan of Dance.
Tickets are £10 and include wine and nibbles during the interval. Advance booking essential; tickets from the Hon. Secretary (address on page 2). Payment by cheque, credit card, or online via PayPal to secretary@anthonypowell.org. Non-members welcome.
Entrance to the Swedenborg Society Hall is in Barter Street, off Bloomsbury Way. Closest Tube Stations: Holborn or Tottenham Court Road. Access for those with mobility difficulties must be arranged in advance; please advise us. Limited on-street parking; underground car park in Bloomsbury Square.

The Register

Births

Deaths
Britton. GWM Britton, a member of the Society, died 29 July 2006.
Noach. Maggie Noach, former Chairman of the Anthony Powell Society died unexpectedly after a short illness on Friday 17 November 2006. Funeral on Wednesday 29 November at St Mary Abbots, Kensington.

New Local Groups?
The Society has an increasing number of members in the North of England and in East Anglia. If you are willing to start a local group in either of these areas please contact the Hon. Secretary.

Copy Deadlines
The deadlines for receipt of articles and advertisements for forthcoming issues of Newsletter and Secret Harmonies are:

Newsletter #26, Spring 2007
Copy Deadline: 9 February 2007
Publication Date: 2 March 2007

Newsletter #27, Summer 2007
Copy Deadline: 11 May 2007
Publication Date: 1 June 2007

Secret Harmonies #2, 2007
Copy Deadline: 7 September 2007
Publication Date: 27 October 2007
Saturday 9 December 2006  
NE USA Group Meeting  
Silvermine Tavern, Norwalk, CT  
1230 hrs  
Topic: Moreland and Jenkins  
Details from leatrice.fountain@gmail.com

Tuesday 19 December 2006  
Anthony Powell Birthday Lunch  
Century Association, 7 West 43rd St.,  
New York, USA  
12 noon  
Hosted by the NE USA Group  
Further details from  
wwarren@deweyballantine.com

Saturday 10 February 2007  
London Group Pub Meet  
The Audley, Mount Street, London, W1  
1230 to 1530 hrs  
Quarterly London Group meeting. Good beer, good food, good company & Powell chat in a Victorian pub AP would have known. Members & non-members welcome. Further details from Hon. Secretary.

Monday 26 February 2007  
Rhythms of Dance  
Venue: Swedenborg Society,  
20 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1  
Time: 1930 hrs  
An illustrated talk by Paul Guinery on the musical references in Dance.  
Details opposite.

Saturday 12 May 2007  
London Group Pub Meet  
Details as for 10 February.

Saturday 11 August 2007  
London Group Pub Meet  
Details as for 10 February.

Summer 2007  
Visit to the Nottinghamshire village of Widmerpool  
Date to be arranged; details to follow.

Saturday 8 September 2007  
Fourth Biennial Conference  
University of Bath  
Details to follow; see also below.

Saturday 27 October 2007  
Annual General Meeting  
Details to follow.

2007 Conference

The Fourth Biennial Anthony Powell Conference will be held on Saturday 8 September 2007 at the University of Bath.

This will be a one-day symposium with five or six speakers each of whom will get a longer time to present and lead discussion.

The speakers have not yet been arranged, so there is still time for Society members to submit proposals for a 45 minute session. If you wish to submit a session proposal please contact the Hon. Secretary without delay.

On the Sunday following the conference we hope to be able to offer some optional extra events for those wishing to stay over in Bath. A literary walk round Bath, Sunday lunch and a visit to The Chantry are ideas which are being considered.
Local Group News

London & SE England Group November Pub Meet

By Noreen Marshall

Nine of us gathered at The Audley for the Autumn London pub meet on Saturday 11 November, braving both seasonal cold germs (which caused the reluctant absence of the Hon. Secretary) and numerous road detours which were the result of the annual Lord Mayor’s Show in the City that morning.

Present were Patric Dickinson, Derek Hawes, Neville Keery, Noreen Marshall, Derek Miles, Guy Robinson, Bob Rollason, Victor Spouge and Elwyn Taylor. Quite serendipitously we were also joined by a ghost writer of biographies who was visiting London from Huddersfield and, looking for somewhere to sit, happened upon us and expressed interest in AP, having recently read the whole of Dance.

Other subjects discussed included the forthcoming London Group AP Birthday Lunch; the recent AGM and the visit to the National Theatre to see Simon Russell Beale in Brecht’s Galileo (see opposite); Irish politics; sport; Saturday evening television; and genealogy. We also gave a good airing to literary reputation, particularly with regard to nineteenth century writers; conspiracy theories, notably the assassination of John F Kennedy; and the encouragement of various international conflicts by third parties for military purposes. Individuals discussed included Malcolm Muggeridge, Gilbert Harding and Anthony Burgess, as well as Anthony Powell.

Top left: Gilbert Harding, outspoken panellist, quiz-master and broadcaster, known as “the rudest man in Britain” during late 1940s and 1950s.

Top right: Anthony Burgess, author of A Clockwork Orange.

Bottom: AP’s great friend Malcolm Muggeridge.
Bertolt Brecht, *The Life of Galileo*  
*By Patric Dickinson*

On the evening of 28 October, following the Society’s AGM, a 15-strong party of members and their guests went to see Simon Russell Beale, our newly elected President, taking the title role in Brecht’s *The Life of Galileo* (as adapted by David Hare).

It is above all a play of ideas, but in the National Theatre’s version it is a bustling affair, entirely holding the attention of the audience as scene quickly succeeds scene, with the revolving stage of the Olivier Theatre put to very effective use. The set was particularly memorable, giving the impression of a huge observatory, with the universe on display.

Howard Davies’s vigorous production is played in modern dress. This jarred at first but was rapidly forgotten in the speed of the action, and for the scenes set in Rome the ecclesiastical vestments had a timeless quality that took one effortlessly back to the 17th century.

Despite David Hare’s professed wish to avoid the atmosphere of 1930s Germany in which the play was written, the third act opened with a kitsch song-and-dance number performed in Cabaret-like style, a curious interpolation that added little to the plot and seemed to me purely gimmicky (though some members of the party enjoyed it immensely).

There was a strong supporting cast with that fine actor Oliver Ford Davies in quietly menacing form as the Cardinal Inquisitor, and Andrew Woodall very watchable as the sympathetic Cardinal Barberini who trims his sails when he becomes Pope. But the overall success of the production is due in large measure to the energy and brio with which Beale carries it along. He is a commanding presence throughout as Galileo battles for Reason in the face of religious bigotry.

The only obvious respect in which one might compare Beale’s performance to his role in the television adaptation of *Dance* is the fact that Galileo has to age from 45 to 73 during the course of the play. For those who remember Beale’s Widmerpool metamorphosing from schoolboy to 70 year old it is no surprise that he accomplishes this with consummate ease, sometimes adding a few years almost imperceptibly in the shortest of breaks between scenes.

Happily, the play turned out to contain an unexpected link with Anthony Powell the playwright. In a scene where Galileo points to a small image of the god Priapus, Brecht puts into his character’s mouth some lines from Horace’s *Satires* in which a statue of Priapus is made to speak – which is more or less what happens in Powell’s play *The Garden God*. Indeed, Professor Peter Wiseman in ‘Powell, Priapus and Petronius’ (the paper he gave at the Centenary Conference) suggested that the very same passage in Horace was an influence on Powell’s formulation of Priapus.
From Jeff Manley
I’ve just reread The Soldier’s Art and was reminded how much I enjoy the wartime scene in the Café Royal, surely one of the best in the whole series. I then looked up the Osbert Lancaster cartoon of the same venue and, finally, checked on the internet to see if it’s still there.

Alas, it appears to have been turned into some sort of convention center. There seems to be nothing resembling the restaurant where Jenkins so frequently met his chums. Or am I mistaken about this? Is it buried somewhere in all these function rooms? It’s been many years since I walked past where I think I can recall the Café Royal having been in the 1960s on Lower Regent Street, which looks like the same location for these Hotel Meridien meeting rooms. In those days it looked very much the sort of place a penniless student such as I then was could not afford.

Could some one enlighten me as to what is left of the venue as it existed when Powell was a regular and whether it’s possible to (or still worth a) visit.

From Terry Empson
It is a good many years since I was there, but certainly for a time the Café Royal kept an excellent restaurant with a very good wine list, on the ground floor, quite separate from the conference suites. There was, however, so far as I could see, nothing left of its Bohemian heritage, and the prices were aimed at those with expense accounts. Well worth going to as a guest, but not for its literary echoes.

The restaurant that has always intrigued me is the Trouville, where Nicholas dines with Uncle Giles at the end of A Question of Upbringing – absolutely archetypal of the Soho restaurants that survived into the post-WW2 years. Its table d’hôte menu, which sounds reasonably mouth-watering in the French in which it is written, actually comes down to whitebait; tomato soup; sole with a rather insipid sauce; lamb cutlets in the green goo they apparently like at the Reform Club; ice cream and coffee. Very different writing from the Café Royal wartime scene (for which I share Jeff Manley’s admiration), but quite wonderful in its own way and illustrating Uncle Giles’s ability not just to find sympathetic habitats but to project his personality and create an atmosphere of unease on anyone and anything within his immediate range.

From Stephen Holden
I pop along to the Café Royal occasionally as they have a series of talks on the first Tuesday of the month (given, bizarrely, by the “Last Tuesday Society”) in the Grill Room on the ground floor. Although the décor is magnificent the food and service leave much to be desired – inept, bad-tempered Polish waiters, and tiny portions of reasonable food.

Powell would appreciate the subjects of the talks, I think: Lord Alfred Douglas (given by Bosie’s great-nephew); the Pemberton-Billing trial; Aleister Crowley; the Arabian Nights; Stephen Tennant. He might also appreciate the person who gave the Crowley talk – a Michael Molyneux-Swann, who travelled the world being
tattooed and sports body illustrations from the South Seas, Yakuza Japan, Borneo and East Africa.

From Ellen Jordan

I have begun to speculate on what Powell’s criteria were for using the real names for some of his restaurants, nightclubs etc. and for giving others pseudonyms. In The Soldier’s Art he allows his characters to go to a real place, the Café Royal, but gives the Café de Paris, bombed in March 1941, the pseudonym Madrid. (The novelist Noel Streatfield based a book published in 1942 on the same event, in which the restaurant was called La Porte Verte.) Similarly in The Acceptance World the characters visit the real Ritz, but Powell renames the club they visit Foppa’s. (I think the real name was Vitali’s but I can’t find the place in the memoirs where this is discussed.)

I’ve just come across another instance. In Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant Stringham offers to take Audrey Maclintick to the Bag of Nails. I had always assumed that this was an invented name like the Merrythought where Mr Deacon had his fatal accident. I have just however read a novel by Barbara Comyns set in arty circles in the 1930s where the characters visit the Bag of Nails – and, incidentally, the Café Royal.

From Julian Allason

I suspect it is simply a question of institutional fame. The Café Royal and Ritz were – are – so well known as to enable them to be presented with minimal description. That would not have been true of Foppa’s: although several similar establishments existed they would have been familiar to only a minority of readers, whereas many will have passed through the revolving doors of the Ritz at least once.

The exception, the Café de Madrid, would surely have merited a pseudonym out of respect for those killed in the original. Although the Ritz was hit by two bombs they caused limited damage due to its steel frame, the first such building in London to be so constructed, and the chief casualty was gold leaf. (A later steel framed building was that sheltering the Cabinet War Rooms which never took a hit.)

King Zog was residing in the hotel with the Albanian gold reserves, and spent some of his time rubbing shoulders with junior officers in a nightclub in the basement, the walls of which were shored up with sandbags. The ballroom was also in the basement and seems to have been the setting for the scene in which Pamela accuses Widmerpool of murder. It is now a casino catering for what the Ritz’s historian describes as “a non-British clientele”: he is probably not referring to North Americans – or Australians.
From Jeff Manley
The British media are replete with replays of the Suez crisis of 1956 (as well as the contemporaneous Hungarian revolution). I tried to think whether Powell ever mentioned Suez in his novels of the post-war period but couldn’t recall anything, even though I just reread Hearing Secret Harmonies and Temporary Kings. There is no index entry to Suez, Eden or Gaitskell in the To Keep the Ball Rolling one volume edition (and the indices of the single volume editions are such rubbish you couldn’t rely on them in any event).

Does anyone recall whether any of the characters mentioned in Dance refer to Suez or whether Powell does so in the memoirs, Journals or post Dance novels? If not, does that strike you as odd, given that he does mention other events of similar importance to British history such as the Abdication crisis, the Munich Agreement and perhaps others in the context of the books. I believe there is some mention of the Burgess/Maclean affair in reference to Widmerpool’s own problems. Granted, the books aren’t political in nature but they do cover life in Britain in the period 1914-1970/71 and one would think Suez would get a mention in some context.

From Nick Birns
I can’t recall instantly whether Suez was mentioned, but, as general points:

1) I think if Dance were on the same ‘schedule’ post-war as pre-war that Suez would have been mentioned, but the longer gaps between books mean that the citation of contemporary events is not as thorough as it was in the earlier books. Temporary Kings is largely concerned with the Cold War (in which Hungary was more central than Suez) and, despite what some critics say, “the decline of the British Empire” is not a major theme of Dance.

2) Gaitskell is inferentially mentioned as it would have to be Gaitskell who recommended Widmerpool for a Life Peerage in 1958, even though a Tory PM (Macmillan) was in power.

From Jeff Manley
I take your point about the schedule since when the Abdication and Munich crises were mentioned they were contemporaneous with the events in the novel, whereas Suez was nearly 2 years before the events of Temporary Kings. However, I believe the Burgess/Maclean affair was mentioned after the fact in connection with Widmerpool’s problems with the East Bloc, which now makes me wonder whether Hungary is mentioned. I recall that the publication of Dr Zhivago is mentioned in Temporary Kings which was happening at the same time as the novel. So it is probably, as you say, more the longer gaps in time than the relative importance of the events that accounts for silence on Suez and Hungary.

From Keith Marshall
Why do we have this fetishistic belief that Powell had to mention every world event, important or not? Some things (real people, events, etc.) will suit the author’s purpose; others won’t. The latter will not get a mention. Why should they? We are reading a novel; a piece of fiction; not a factual history.

From Jeff Manley
Well, Suez was rather more important than not. It seems to me perhaps one of the two most important post war events in British history (the Falklands being the other), and he mentioned the similarly important pre-
war events in the background of the earlier novels – so, was he avoiding mention of this one?

I think Nick has the right answer. His last two post war novels are not painted on the same sort of continuous canvas as those up through *Books Do Furnish a Room* and there was no occasion to mention Suez since he wasn’t writing about the period when it took place. So, it’s not so much that he was avoiding it, as that, as Keith says, it wasn’t relevant to the particular times he was writing about.

From Ed Bock
But, Keith, note the positive side here for the Powell cause. Such queries are mostly made about works that have achieved classic status – *e.g.* about Jane Austen omitting Napoleon/Robespierre. Or Versailles lacking plumbing. In that sense, it might run counter to the charter aims of the Anthony Powell Society to discourage them.

Moreover, is it not a legitimate part of free cultural discussion to make observations about what an author did or did not include in a 12-book novel – either because his/her imagination failed to create it or because his/her artistic taste led to its exclusion?

We would not chastise a critic for asking whether, in fact, Akhmatova’s poetry does not mention the telephone. Why discourage speculation about why Powell apparently ignores Noel Coward’s works in *Dance*?

———

From Colin Donald
I am with Ed on this one. *Dance* is a self-consciously historical novel, jam-packed with references to contemporary events, whose inclusion we must assume is carefully considered. No-one assumes that any artist feels obliged to depict everything, but the relationship between history and Powell’s pseudo-history is absolutely fascinating.
Letters to the Editor

Cabinet War Rooms

From Stephen Holden
I was interested to read Julian Allason’s article “Widmerpool’s Lair” (in Newsletter 24) about the Cabinet War Rooms. By coincidence I was in the Cabinet War Rooms recently, looking round the new Churchill Museum. The space for the new museum was once the underground annex of the CWR used by the Joint Intelligence Committee. There’s a map showing the layout of the JIC and who was in which office. “D Capel-Dunn” (a suggested model for Widmerpool) is allocated one office, so it looks as if Widmerpool was down there at some point.

——

Fettiplace

From Steve Loveman
I recently visited Chastleton House in Gloucestershire, owned till the last century by the Jones family. The house has a Fettiplace room, named if I recall correctly after a family with which the Jones’s married.

Could this be the source of Fettiplace-Jones? Has this connection been made before?

——

Julian Allason replies:
How intriguing. It sounds a typical bit of Powell mischief.

The house is little more than an hour’s drive from The Chantry, and its Jacobean collection likely to have been of interest. As a genealogist he would have been aware of its retention by the Jones family for sixteen generations.

The Fettiplaces on the other hand were a great clan, with some two dozen manors held from medieval times in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, who only became extinct in 1806. They were said never to have distinguished themselves in the field, the forum or the senate! I lived on their former estates when a student, and the parish churches are full of them.

An alliance between the two families would have made political sense in the 17th century and social sense in the 18th. Given the existence of the Fettiplace Room (though it is not the great hall) my sense is that Powell was aware of the 17th or 18th century marriage between the two families, but was careful to ensure that there were no living descendants using the joined names, given that Hugh Massingberd described the character as “a cringing politician”.

A study of the names of other minor characters might support the thesis that Powell drew upon his knowledge of genealogy to identify convincing surnames without litigious owners.

——

Comic Stanchions

From Jeff Manley
I am rereading Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant for an entirely different purpose but today found another reference to the cast iron stanchions at the house of Stringham’s mother [described by Jenkins in A Question of Upbringing]. This occurs in the passage where Jenkins attends the party at that house in connection with the première of Moreland’s symphony. This time it’s Moreland who mentions the stanchions: “That’s [the house]”, said Moreland. “With objects like mammoth
ice-cream cornets on either side of the front door for putting out the torches after you have paid off your sedan chair.” So, Powell not only makes the same observation again, he puts it in the mouth of another character and makes it more comic. Quite a feat.

Pale Leitmotifs

From Peter Kislinger
I noticed that the word “pale” crops up half a dozen times in Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant apart from pale hands in the song.

We get “pale lost lilies”, then Members speaks of Moreland’s “pale tunes”; Carolo is “pale and unromantic”; Mrs Maclintick is wearing “a pale pink dress”; three pages later she “looked pale”; and Stringham’s skin is “pale and mottled”.

A kind of leitmotif contributing, in Firbankian fashion, to unity of book, at the same time reminding us that telling is re-recreating rather than employing tape recording naturalism.

Powell in his critical writing is hinting at this “Firbank technique”. The same can of course be observed with other words in other volumes.

Harry Potter

From Robert Beasecker
Some time ago someone pointed out a Powell sighting in JK Rowling’s fifth Harry Potter book (Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix). This was a female wizard named “Professor Trelawny” who had similar physical characteristics to Mrs Erdleigh.

In Rowling’s latest (Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince) I have detected three possible Powell allusions/references:

The first is with a new character, a Professor Slughorn who is responsible for teaching potions. At the beginning of the book he is fond of holding parties for those students whom he thinks can advance his career or standing in the professional magical community, à la Sillery.

The second is a mention, in passing, of a former instructor at the school called “Professor Merrythought.” This is the name of a nightclub that features in Dance’s early volumes.

The last is a brief reference to another wizard called Professor Odo who also had taught at the school some years before.
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