In Memoriam
Hugh Massingberd

30 December 1946 to 25 December 2007
Obituaries, pages 3-12

Powell fun for everyone ... on page 27!
From the Secretary’s Desk

All members of the Society have been greatly saddened by the loss of Hugh Massingberd at the unreasonably young age of 60. As Patric Dickinson observes on page 3, Hugh was an active participant in the Society as our first President, and latterly, as his health permitted, as a Vice-President. Hugh was always jolly, amusing and generous.

Hugh’s Love and Art, which followed the Centenary Conference, is mentioned elsewhere. But Hugh had a much greater influence on the Powell centenary celebrations: he was a huge influence on the Wallace’s Powell centenary exhibition, being one of the Society’s team who were instrumental in suggesting (and helping locate) potential objects for inclusion – he seemed to know, and know the whereabouts of, every possible AP artefact that ever existed! Without this encyclopaedic knowledge staging the exhibition would have been significantly more difficult.

With the loss of first Lady Violet Powell and now Hugh we have lost two of the most significant and encyclopaedic windows into Powell’s milieu. What a shame neither managed to document more of their knowledge. Hugh could have written such an excellent biography of Powell.

It has been suggested that as a tribute to Hugh the Society should establish an award or medal of some kind; and, leaving the administrative burden aside, I can see the attraction of the idea. What do other members think? Is this what the Society should be doing? And if so what form should the award take?

Hugh’s loss leaves an enormous void, not just in the Society but in the world of arts and letters as a whole. I feel immensely privileged to have met and worked with him.
Hugh Massingberd Remembered

In his wonderfully self-deprecating memoir *Daydream Believer: Confessions of a Hero Worshipper*, Hugh Massingberd devotes a whole chapter to the man he revered as “the Sage of the Chantry”, describing Anthony Powell as “my chief literary hero since schooldays”. At its close, he refers to the Society’s first conference, held at Eton in 2001.

In the last session, I was to deliver a paper on AD Powell’s preoccupation with genealogy, but an unexpected announcement from the platform virtually deprived me of the power of speech. It seemed that I had been appointed president of the Anthony Powell Society.

And what a great stroke of fortune it was for our fledgling Society to be presided over by a figure who was not only a passionate fan of *Dance* but a close and valued friend of the author, indeed the person chosen to deliver the panegyric at Anthony Powell’s memorial service in 2000. Until the onset of illness in 2004 obliged him to give up the Presidency, Hugh was a very active participant in the Society’s affairs and he remained an enthusiastic supporter to the end.

The stoicism and good humour he displayed in the face of terminal cancer over the last three years were an inspiration to all who encountered him, though perhaps not surprising given the sterling qualities that had long been discernible in him. He was an extraordinarily courteous man and an utterly delightful companion, at turns modest and mischievous. He touched life at many points, and it wasn’t simply the great impact he made as Obituaries Editor of *The Daily Telegraph* that earned him quite so many column inches in the obituary pages when his own time came.

Hugh took the Chesterton route – “to Paradise by way of Kensal Green”. It was standing room only at his funeral, held there on 2 January. AN Wilson gave a fine address, and the great cohort of family, friends and admirers who had assembled in the chapel marched out to the uplifting sound of Jessie Matthews singing ‘Look for the silver lining’.

– Patric Dickinson
Hugh Massingberd, who died on Christmas Day aged 60, always used to insist, during his time as obituaries editor of The Daily Telegraph, that understatement was the key to the form.

It is by no means an infringement of that principle to begin his own obituary with the declaration that those who worked for him – and indeed everyone who came to know him properly – considered him one of the most extraordinary and lovable Englishmen of his time.

He was also one of the most complex. A gentleman to his roots, he was nevertheless delighted to be guyed as “Massivesnob” in Private Eye.

The supreme master of fact, he revelled in daydreams. Shy and diffident, he at the same time exhibited a strong theatrical streak, holding forth masterfully as public speaker or broadcaster.

Above all, the man seemingly content to be taken as a Woosterish bumbler and bon vivant possessed a prodigious capacity for hard work. This professed amateur of journalism – he would type with two fingers – matched any professional in practice. Consistently excellent articles poured forth from him; business was dispatched with military address and efficiency; challenges to his editorial vision were resisted with steely resolve.

No wonder that he was judged an eccentric. The term, however, does no justice to Hugh Massingberd’s gigantic brain. His ability to absorb and retain information was as astonishing as his ability to recall it at will. No one of his generation knew more about England and English life. This was not just a matter of his having edited Burke’s Landed Gentry (Volumes II and III, 1969 and 1972) or the Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage (1970 edition), though sometimes it appeared that he knew those weighty volumes almost by heart.

As remarkable as the depth and accuracy of his knowledge was its range – from country houses to television soap operas, from the works of Anthony Powell to the odds at Wincanton, from the Royal Family to West End musicals.

Unlike so many autodidacts, Massingberd never paraded his encyclopaedic mind; more likely, he would listen politely as some bore regaled him with anecdotes which he already knew. Many left his company completely unaware of the phenomenon they had encountered.

Equally, he never sought a heavyweight reputation as a journalist. On the contrary, he developed an easy and conversational style which drew on the infinite stores of his brain in the lightest and most readable vein.

It was as obituaries editor of The Daily Telegraph from 1986 to 1994 that he found the perfect fulfilment for his gifts. First, though, he had to reinvent the whole concept of the form, substituting for the grave and ceremonious tribute the sparkling celebration of life. Before his arrival at the Telegraph, obituaries had been regarded as an inferior branch of News, and afforded minimal space. As far back as 1969, however, Massingberd had
discerned the immense potential that lay in this disregarded cranny of journalism.

The moment of illumination had come when he went to see Roy Dotrice’s rendering of John Aubrey’s *Brief Lives* at the Criterion Theatre. Picking up a dusty tome, Dotrice/Aubrey read out a dreary entry about a barrister (Recorder of this, Bencher of that, and so on). Suddenly he snapped shut the volume with a “Tchah!” and turned to the audience: “He got more by his prick than his practice.” There and then, Massingberd later wrote, “I determined to dedicate myself to chronicling what people were really like through informal anecdote, description and character sketch.” Laughter, he added, would be by no means out of place.

His ambition took many years to come to fruition. When, in 1979, during the strike at *The Times*, Massingberd sought to convince the *Telegraph’s* editor, Bill Deedes, to venture upon a more expansive obituaries section, he was given to understand that it would be rather poor form to exploit the difficulties of a rival publication. Finally, in 1986, Max Hastings gave Massingberd his opportunity. Immediately, *Telegraph* readers found themselves regaled by such characters as Canon Edward Young, the first chaplain of a striptease club; the last Wali of Swat, who had a fondness for brown Windsor soup; and Judge Melford Stevenson, who considered that “a lot of my colleagues are just constipated Methodists”.

The column also made a speciality of tales of derring-do from the Second World War. The foibles of aristocrats proved another fertile source. The 6th Earl of Carnarvon appeared as a “relentless raconteur and most uncompromisingly direct ladies’ man”. The 9th Earl of St Germans listed his recreations as “hunthin’ the slipper, shootin’ a line, fishin’ for compliments”. The 12th Marquess of Huntly married a nurse 40 years his junior: “I still have my own teeth. Why should I marry some dried up old bag?”

Part of the fun lay in the style which Massingberd evolved to pin down the specimens on display. Liberace, readers were gravely informed, “never married”. Hopeless drunks were “convivial”. Total shits “did not suffer fools gladly”. Financial fraudsters seemed “not to have upheld the highest ethical standards of the City”.

These were Massingberd’s glory years. Shaking off restraint, he eagerly publicised his pride in the column both in print and on wireless and television.

On the desk, he was the perfect boss. The soul of laughter and camaraderie, he allowed colleagues inflated credit when praise was flying, and nobly assumed the
blame for their errors. “Excellent obituary,” he would tell the malefactor. “Just one small thing …” – and some hideous mistake would be apologetically revealed. He preferred to regard all his geese as swans.

In the material sense, too, Massingberd pushed generosity well beyond the bounds of sanity. Invariably strapped for cash, he conducted himself as a grand seigneur. It was literally impossible to buy a ticket or to pay for lunch or dinner when he was present; and those who resisted beyond the bounds of seemliness were liable to discover that Massingberd had squared the waiters beforehand.

Wholly resistant to routine social life, he loved the gossip and jokes of journalism as much as he recoiled from the self-seeking graft of the profession. With like-minded companions, his imagination would take wing, chasing the comic possibilities of a person or a situation into the realms of surrealistic ecstasy.

Indeed, Massingberd preferred to present himself in caricature. His gourmandism, for instance, was treated in 18th century mode, as the heroic exploits of a valiant trencherman. By way of variation, he was once photographed as a Roman emperor, garlanded with sausages. The inevitable consequence of his bingeing proved another triumph of style, as Massingberd, a tall, slim and notably handsome youth with hollowed-out cheeks, transmogrified into an impressively corpulent presence whose moon face lit up with Pickwickian benevolence.

But this man, who delighted so many people, never satisfied himself. Supersensitive, he registered every slight, however effectively his feelings were concealed. Just occasionally hints of vulnerability would slip through the guard, in a waspish review, or an uncharacteristically sharp aside.

As Massingberd made clear in his courageously self-revealing autobiography, *Daydream Believer* (2001), fantasy and hero-worship afforded him far more secure and accessible satisfactions than he found in reason and reality.

In particular the theatre provided inexhaustible delight. His obsession with the stage appeared rather that of an acolyte attending a rite than that of a boulevardier seeking an evening’s entertainment. As a matter of course, the programme would be committed to memory in every detail. When he found a performance that answered to his needs – in general a lushly romantic musical such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, though Alan Bennett’s *Forty Years On* also claimed his intense loyalty as an exercise in comic nostalgia – he would attend scores of times, long after he knew the show off by heart.

Afterwards he loved to hang about the stage-door, too shy to beard the departing actors himself, but eager, if possible, to push forward a companion to obtain autographs, and perhaps to deliver a rehearsed remark. Very occasionally, he would close in to speak for himself. “I just want to say how deeply I have admired you,” he would begin, before proceeding, to the mounting alarm of the victim, to list every performance the thespian had given over the previous 40 years.

Cricketers (especially Surrey’s Monty Lynch and Alistair Brown), journalists (Auberon Waugh) and comedians (Peter Cook and Harry Enfield) were likewise unknowing recipients of his unstinting devotion. If there was a common characteristic among his heroes, it lay in their willingness to take risks and to flout convention.
Among writers, Massingberd loved the works of PG Wodehouse, Anthony Powell and James Lees-Milne, whose interest in the intricacies of class he shared. His genealogical expertise, however, had taught him that the common man plays a leading role in every family.

If Massingberd once characterised his youthful self as a “howling snob”, this fault did not survive his journalistic contacts with the more arrogant and ignorant country-house owners. In fact, no one was ever less snobbish than Massingberd in the corrupting sense of the term; that of disdaining merit outside rank. He had, though, been a thwarted and insecure young man, whose early history inclined him towards a romantic view of aristocracy.

He was born Hugh John Montgomery at Cookham Dean, in Berkshire, on December 30 1946. His father was in the Colonial Service and later worked for the BBC; his mother was a “Leftward-leaning schoolmistress”.

His remoter background, however, was distinctly grand, even if it promised a great deal more than it delivered. The Montgomeries, seated at Blessingbourne in Co. Tyrone, were a Protestant Ascendancy family, albeit exceptionally conscious of the need to right the wrongs suffered by Roman Catholics. In his youth Hugh stayed at the Montgomeries’ pseudo-Elizabethan (actually 1870) pile in the full expectation that one day it would be his.

There was a strong military tradition in the family. Hugh’s paternal grandfather was Major-General Hugh Montgomery, while his great-uncle, the major-general’s younger brother, ended his career as Field Marshal Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, Chief of the Imperial General Staff from 1933 to 1936. The two brothers had married Massingberd sisters, and the field marshal became Montgomery-Massingberd after 1926, when his wife inherited Gunby, a fine red-brick William and Mary house in Lincolnshire.

The Massingberds had owned land at Gunby since 1495. In 1802 a Miss Massingberd married Peregrine Langton, second son of Bennet Langton, a friend of Dr Johnson’s. Bennet Langton had once, with a friend, knocked up the Doctor at 3am. “What, is it you, you dogs!” Johnson shouted: “I’ll have a frisk with you.”

Peregrine Langton’s and Elizabeth Massingberd’s grand-daughter Emily Massingberd (1847-97), a militant feminist and temperance campaigner who favoured male attire, was Hugh’s great-grandmother. She married another Langton, Edmund, whose mother Charlotte was a cousin and sister-in-law of Charles Darwin, and whose grandfather was Josiah Wedgwood, founder of the pottery.
These were connections with the heart of the English intellectual elite; the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, for instance, was a cousin of Hugh’s. Their world, though, was far removed from the rambling, pebble-dashed Edwardian villa in which Hugh grew up at Cookham Dean. The house belonged to his maternal grandfather, a stock jobber named Seal, whose fortune had been much diminished in the Crash of 1929. Seal’s daughter Marsali, Hugh’s mother, had been to Newnham, Cambridge, and developed a clear-eyed view of the English class system that propelled her into teaching. On the other hand she had married, en premières noces, Roger de Winton Kelsall Winlaw, a Cambridge cricket Blue who played for Surrey and captained Bedfordshire before being killed in 1942 while serving with the RAF. They had two boys and a girl.

Hugh was the elder child – there would be a younger sister, Mary – of Marsali Winlaw’s second marriage, to John Montgomery.

He thus grew up at Cookham Dean with hearty, cricket-mad half-brothers. His relative mediocrity as a games-player inspired the first of his fantasy creations, that of Sir John Julian Bruce, Bt, MA, OBE, VC, the great all-rounder – “As England’s opening bowler, I found that wickets fell like apples from a tree” – universally adored for his good looks, modesty and charm. Hugh filled countless exercise books with accounts of his prowess.

Life, however, stubbornly resisted the promptings of art. In the late 1950s, after the death of Hugh’s maternal grandparents, the family was obliged to move downmarket at Cookham Dean, into a suburban bungalow. When Hugh came home from prep school he was so shocked that he tried to run away to the family’s former house.

He had grown up a reclusive and lonely boy, whose best friend was the housekeeper, “Biddo”. She adored him so wholeheartedly that she gave up her annual holiday to take him to the Scarborough cricket festival.

He also enjoyed the cruder, more open life he encountered when staying with his mother’s sister Daisy, who had married a Somerset farmer called Joe Dinham. The Dinham were addicted to steeplechasing, a passion which Hugh soon shared. Henceforth jockeys – especially, in those early days, Terry Biddlecombe – featured prominently among his heroes. Wincanton, which he had first visited with the Dinham, always remained a favourite racecourse.

Over the years he would pull off some lucrative betting coups. Triumph,
however, turned to disaster on one occasion when, having succeeded with compound bets on the first three races, he plunged on the last, with the prospect of a fortune at stake. His horse came to the last in the lead, but failed to clear the fence. Apparently it had been put off by the shock of Hugh’s yellow “trouserings”.

As a teenager, Hugh seemed to add substance to his dreams when he went to stay with his Uncle Peter at Blessingbourne. Peter Montgomery was something of a figure in Ulster, to such a degree that his homosexuality, at that date unknown to Hugh, did not prevent him from becoming Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Tyrone.

Hugh, swept up suddenly into the jollifications of Irish country-house life, became enchanted by the prospect of one day being the master of Blessingbourne. Like Cyril Connolly before him, he found himself an aristocrat in Ireland, and middle-class in England. It was, therefore, a shattering blow to be told in his mid-teens that a cousin who intended to be a farmer would inherit Blessingbourne; this youth, it was judged, would be better qualified than Hugh to return the estate to order after years of benign neglect under Peter Montgomery.

By way of compensation, Hugh was informed that he might one day live at Gunby as a tenant of the National Trust, to which the field marshal and his wife, who were childless, had given the house in 1944.

Meanwhile, Hugh’s life at school brought little joy. As a day boy at Crosfield, the junior branch of the Quaker Leighton Park, and as a boarder at Port Regis in Dorset, he made no real mark, beyond narrowly scraping his cricket colours at Port Regis.

By the time he went to Harrow his fantasies were already set on Eton, which failed to endear him to his comrades on the Hill. “Do you know, Monty,” his housemaster observed, “I don’t think you’re shy at all. You’re just bloody rude.” His form master was no more impressed. “Most of the time,” he wrote, “it seems that Montgomery is somewhere far, far away in his own thoughts.”

Unexpectedly, though, this remote and diffident boy did briefly come into his own when yelling out drill commands in the Corps.

Hugh left Harrow a year early, in 1964. The only promise in his life at this period was his discovery of the satire boom. In no time he had the sketches from *Beyond the Fringe*, which opened at the Fortune Theatre in 1961, off by heart; and he was also an early aficionado of *Private Eye*, first published in the same year. “At last,” wrote his form master after Hugh had written an essay on Satire, “you have found a subject which really interests you.”

In 1963 the field marshal’s widow died, and Hugh and his father adopted the surname Montgomery-Massingberd in order to qualify for the tenancy of Gunby.

“Well now, Master Hughie,” the housekeeper, clearly a clone of Mrs Danvers, told him on his first visit, “coming as you do from the suburbs, I don’t expect you’ve ever stayed in such a large house before, have you?” Hugh displayed a Betjeman-like relish for recording such social humiliations.

He seemed in particularly self-destructive mode at this time, rejecting any notion of Oxford or Cambridge on the grounds that he could bear neither the student radicals nor the Brideshead poseurs with their teddy bears.
“Above all,” he wrote in *Daydream Believer*, “I didn’t want to be young any more: I wanted to be middle-aged, even old – a quiet, comfortable recluse with my books and my pipe dreams.”

And so, masochistically, he chose the Law. Still only 17, he began to commute from Cookham to solicitors in Lincoln’s Inn. By the afternoon on the first day, having been condemned to a windowless cell and instructed to add up the assets of some peeress, he was shaking with silent sobs. Matters improved somewhat, due to the comradeship of a fellow articled clerk who turned out to be something of a blood. Hugh enjoyed entertaining this exquisite at Gunby, where for the first and only time in his life he was able to play the squirearchical role of which he always dreamed.

He lasted three dreary years in the Law, before snapping one afternoon and walking out of the office for good. At much the same time his father decided that he could no longer afford to keep up the tenancy at Gunby.

For the rest of his life Massingberd maintained extremely friendly relations with new tenants, and sometimes stayed at Gunby; nevertheless, another door had slammed.

He had, however, turned the daily commute to Lincoln’s Inn to account by devouring hundreds of books. Now he further extended his horizons by undertaking a Grand Tour with his uncle, Mgr Hugh Montgomery. Under the pressure of travel, their relations proved stormy, not least when the Monsignor presented Hugh to his old friend Giovanni Battista Montini, now Pope Paul VI. “I stuck out my hand in my best English country-house manner,” remembered Massingberd, “before Uncle Hugh thrust me violently to the floor by the neck. ‘Get down!’ he hissed, ‘Kiss St Peter’s ring.’”

Massingberd was now considering the option of taking up a place at Selwyn College, Cambridge, in the autumn of 1968, and that summer attended a crammer at Oxford to gain the necessary qualifications. Fate intervened, however, when he heard about a job as an assistant at *Burke’s Peerage*.

He obtained the post, and for the first time in his life found himself totally focused and committed. Thoughts of Cambridge were dismissed as he applied himself with astounding industry and grasp to the genealogies of the *Landed Gentry*, and then moved on to produce, single-handedly, a new edition of *The Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage*. The standards he set have never been matched since.

Suddenly, in 1971, as a result of an office coup organised by Christine Martinoni,
whom he would marry the next year, Massingberd found himself appointed editor of all the firm’s publications. As he later observed, for the first time in his life fantasy had collided with reality.

He drew up a list of projects, some of which came to fruition: *Burke’s Guide to The Royal Family* (1973); *Presidential Families of the USA* (1975); *Burke’s Irish Family Records* (1976); *Burke’s Family Index* (1976); *Burke’s Royal Families of the World* (two volumes, 1977 and 1980); and *Burke’s Guide to Country Houses* (three volumes, 1978, 1980 and 1981).

He also made the most of the opportunity which his position conferred to meet some of his heroes, such as James Lees-Milne and Anthony Powell, while discovering another object of worship in Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk. (*Lord of the Dance: A Moncreiffe Miscellany*, which Massingberd edited, appeared in 1986.)

There was even an encounter with Earl Mountbatten of Burma, very definitely not a hero, who wanted to enlist the help of Burke’s in changing the name of the Royal Family to Mountbatten-Windsor.

Financial support for Massingberd’s schemes, however, soon withered, although he did not finally resign from Burke’s until 1983.

He now sought to build another career as a freelance writer and columnist. *The Spectator* and *The Field* proved particularly amenable, the latter commissioning a series on “Family Seats” and in 1984 putting him on contract. Within two years he had found fulfilment at the *Telegraph*.

Eventually, however, Massingberd became a victim of his own success. The réclame of his obituaries’ page gave him the opportunity to write other pieces for the paper – a Heritage column on country houses, continuing his work for *The Field*; interviews with stars (in one of which he confessed to a desire to kiss Hugh Laurie); scores of book reviews; and – not conducive to good health – articles as restaurant critic.

The pressure of work was already feverish when, in 1992, he accepted an invitation to add the editorship of the Peterborough column to that of obituaries. This proved a step too far, and even after he had given up the post, he found his confidence drained.

The obsessiveness which had powered his frantic work-load now turned in upon itself, causing Massingberd agonies of self doubt. As if in acknowledgment of his fall, which, in truth, hardly existed outside his own mind, he now reduced his by-line from the efflorescent Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd to plain Hugh Massingberd. Early in 1994 he suffered a near-fatal heart attack. “It was quite salutary, really,” he later reflected. “One felt that nothing mattered beyond kindness, good manners and humour.”

After a quadruple by-pass operation he recovered a measure of health, wrote a superb article on his brush with death, and for two years worked from home as *The Daily Telegraph*’s television critic. Again, though, the insecurities surfaced, and in 1996, as the pressure became intolerable, he wisely resigned the post.

He continued to write both books and book reviews, as authoritative and sparkling as ever. At last, though, he had some spare time to enjoy.

In particular he loved watching cricket at Lord’s and (especially) the Oval, where in 2002 he enjoyed one of the best days of his life, as Alistair Brown hit a record 268 in a one-day game.
Best of all, Massingberd was finally able to turn his theatrical reveries into reality, when, from 2002, his skilfully chosen selection from the writings of James Lees-Milne, *Ancestral Voices*, was played with great success at venues throughout the country.

In 2005 he devised another entertainment, *Love and Art*, based on Anthony Powell’s *A Dance to the Music of Time*. (He was president of the Anthony Powell Society.) When this piece was produced at the Wallace Collection he enjoyed the supreme satisfaction of playing some of the parts himself. In his dreams he had always fantasised about being in the back row of the chorus during a long run of a musical. His performance of Anthony Powell’s characters made it plain that he might have succeeded on stage at a far higher level than that.

What could he not have done? His books alone, something of a sideline notwithstanding their excellence, might have constituted a lifetime’s work for an ordinary mortal.


To the list of the publications which he edited should be added *The Daily Telegraph Record of the Second World War* (1989); *A Guide to the Country Houses of the North-West* (1991); *The Disintegration of a Heritage: Country Houses and their Collections 1979-1992* (1993); and six books of Telegraph obituaries.

After being diagnosed with cancer in 2004 he bore the treatments with courage, resignation and mordant wit.

Hugh Massingberd married first, in 1972 (dissolved 1979), Christine Martinoni; they had a daughter and a son. He married secondly, in 1983, Caroline Ripley.

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The Ufford Discovered

by Paul Whitfield

Certain parts of London are particularly redolent of key events in Dance: Hyde Park Corner, Hay Hill, Charlotte Street, Little Venice, Shepherd Market and so on. Living in Bayswater as I do, it is in this region with its still present, but rapidly vanishing, atmosphere of cosmopolitan seediness, that I still half expect to encounter Uncle Giles emerging from the Ufford. I have often wondered which of the many stucco mansions might have been the model for the Ufford, but concluded that perhaps Powell had, as so often, created a sort of amalgam of several establishments, any number of which used to be present, and one or two of which survive. In my imagination, I had settled on a large building on the corner of Prince’s Gardens and Leinster Square (formerly Calpe House, the club of the Gibraltarians in London) encouraged perhaps by the description in Military Philosophers:

Several blocks that had once housed Victorian judges and merchants now accommodated refugees from Gibraltar, whose tawny skins and brightly coloured shirts and scarves made this once bleak and humdrum quarter of London, with its uncleaned or broken windows and peeling plaster, look like the back streets of a Mediterranean port.

Quite by chance however, while researching other aspects of Bayswater history, I fell on what I am convinced is the real model for the Ufford. Powell’s description in the first pages of The Acceptance World is worth repeating here:

This private hotel in Bayswater, where [Uncle Giles] stayed during comparatively rare visits to London, occupied two corner houses in a latent, almost impenetrable region west of Queen’s Road. Not only the battleship-grey colour, but also something at once angular and top-heavy about the block’s configuration as a whole, suggested a large vessel moored in the street. [...] That was the impression the Ufford gave, riding at anchor on the sluggish Bayswater tides.

Tantalisingly, Powell is very precise in his description, but he throws the reader off the trail by placing the Ufford “west of Queen’s Road”, (Queensway since 1936). In fact, the original was situated on the corner of Leinster Terrace and Craven Hill Gardens, to the east of Queensway. Otherwise, the description fits exactly. There was, at 13-16 Craven Hill Gardens,

\[1\] There are two villages called Ufford. The first is near Stamford, Lincolnshire, about 40 miles as the crow flies from Widmerpool in Nottinghamshire. The other is near Woodbridge, Suffolk.
a very large double-fronted building built in the mid-19th century on land still belonging to the ill-fated Craven family. Bayswater, west of the river Westbourne, which flows into the Serpentine, expanded rapidly at this time, and by the late 1860s was rated as the most fashionable part of London. Whiteley’s department store, the first of its kind, set the seal of respectability on the area, but by the end of the First World War everything had changed, never to recover. Thus it was with 13-16 Craven Hill Gardens, originally four large houses, which by the early 1920s had become an hotel called ‘The Uffington’ with twenty bedrooms accommodating about 45 guests. The gardens of the original houses were preserved, and the fine plane trees are still there.

The building was, judging from surviving photographs, unusually gloomy in appearance and its grimy stucco finish had not, as so often, been replaced by gleaming white paint: presumably it never was. A 1936 advertisement for the **Uffington**

![Uffington Hotel Advertisement](image)

UF F I N G T O N  H O T E L,
LEINSTE R TERRAC E. H YDE P ARK. W.2.
(1 minute Kensington Gardens.)
NOTED FOR COMFORT AND CUISINE.
Hot and cold water. Private Garden. Near Tube and bus routes.
Inclusive terms (4 meals daily) from £3 3s. single. Under supervision Resident Proprietor.

2 So eloquently described in Osbert Lancaster’s memoir of childhood *All Done From Memory*, 1963.

3 Uffington is a village near Wantage known for its elegant White Horse of about 3000 BC carved into the chalk downs.

single”. No wonder parsimonious Uncle Giles remarked that “the old pub suits me”! Although some conflation with other establishments in Powell’s imagination cannot be discounted, it seems likely that the vanished Uffington was, in large part, the Ufford.

In 1939 the leases of the buildings expired and the Uffington Hotel was requisitioned for use as a Civil Service hostel; perhaps it was in this incarnation that it later came to house the wartime Polish establishment? Although it escaped bomb damage during the War, in 1950 *The Times* recorded that the buildings “could be restored without undue difficulty”: perhaps indicating a degree of wear and tear resulting from wild Polish parties? Nonetheless, the Uffington was demolished in 1961 and in its place rose an uncompromisingly modernist building called ‘Corringham’, with 48 maisonettes designed on a reciprocating “scissors pattern” by Kenneth Frampton of Douglas Stephen & Partners. It was listed Grade II in 1998. Across from ‘Corringham’ stands the ultra-fashionable Hempel Hotel. Might this be the site of the De Tabley Hotel to which Uncle Giles “once, at least, defected; only to return in penitence – had he been capable of that inner state – to the Ufford”?
Cryptic Crossword
Compiled by Julian Miller

ACROSS
7. Library pest? (8)
9. Joyous song with no violinist (6)*
10 & 15. Juno parted from married lover (4,6)*
11. Fan of 1, young Michael introduces a Mr Eastwood (10)*
12. Dramatic deity (6)*
14. “A painter, among the best, sir. I believe, but he was not knighted” (8)*
15. See 10*
17. Connection to web-site with English direction (6)
20. Unusually, a brave but small number returned to the Lord (8)*
22. Rhesus-like monkey? (6)
23. Wrongly primed in material covering that’s inappropriate (10)*
24. A model lover said to be dissatisfied (4)*
25. In Copenhagen, TS Eliot coined part title (6)*
26. Old gamekeeper found temporary kings among trees (8)*

DOWN
1. Extra space for composer (8)*
2. The outer covering of his kind (4)
3. Man from Planning Authority possibly not mad (6)*
4. Writer supports national library with hasty note (8)
5. Professional exams with alternative for those disagreeing (10)
6. Hat thrown into lake by church (6)
8. Major appears in tarmac field (6)*
13. Section I put in a hollow within a section (10)
16. Daydreamer imagines Rolls driving First Lady, first (8)
18. Race to end crumbling north-east wing by American academic (8)*
19. Lexicographer knows them (6)
21. Groom initially taken by wife-to-be to crossing place (6)
22. Battleaxe is last out before the queen (6)*
24. Members of note! (4)*

* items are particularly Powell-related. A copy of Spurling’s Handbook is recommended.
**Dates for Your Diary**

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**5th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference 2009**

**Weekend of**
**10-13 September 2009**

**Georgetown University**
**Washington, DC, USA**

Further details, including exact dates, programme, booking arrangements to follow

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**London Group Pub Meets 2008**

**Saturday 10 May**
**Saturday 09 August**
**Saturday 08 November**

The Audley, Mount Street, London, W1
1230 to 1530 hrs

Regular quarterly meeting. Good beer, good food, good company, good conversation in a Victorian pub AP would have known. Members & non-members welcome; further details from Hon. Sec.

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**Annual General Meeting 2008**

**Saturday 25 October**
**Venue tbc**
**1400 hrs**

Followed at 1500 hrs by a talk
Details when available from the Hon. Sec.

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**Evelyn Waugh Conference**

**21-24 May 2008**
**Harry Ransom Research Center**
**University of Texas at Austin**

The Evelyn Waugh Conference will be held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, the University of Texas at Austin, from 21 through 24 May 2008. The center will host a reception on 21 May, mount an exhibition of Waviana from their collection, and provide tours of Waugh’s library. The theme is ‘Waugh in His World’.

For information or to register please contact:

Dr John H Wilson
Department of English
Lock Haven University
Lock Haven
PA 17745
USA
Email: jwilson3@lhup.edu

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Society Notices

Local Groups

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

New England Group
Area: New England, 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 & Finland
Contact: Regina Rehbinder
Email: reginarehbinder@hotmail.com

Toronto Group
Area: Toronto, Canada
Contact: Joan Williams
Email: jwilliamsto@hotmail.com

Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you wish to make contact with a group and don’t have email. If you wish to start a local group the Hon. Secretary can advise on the number of members in your area.

Copy Deadlines

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

Newsletter #31, Summer 2008
Copy Deadline: 9 May 2008
Publication Date: 6 June 2008

Newsletter #32, Autumn 2008
Copy Deadline: 8 August 2008
Publication Date: 5 September 2008

Secret Harmonies #3, 2008
Copy Deadline: 8 September 2008
Publication Date: 24 October 2008

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***

Flyer Inserts
£30 per A4 sheet
£15 per A5 sheet
plus printing costs

***

Small Ads
Free to Society members
Others 10p/word, minimum £3

***

Births, Deaths & Marriages
Free to Society members
Others 25p/word, minimum £5

Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome and should be sent to:
Newsletter Editor, Stephen Holden,
Anthony Powell Society
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Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0JW, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 8864 6109
Email: editor@anthonypowell.org
## Subscriptions

### Subscription Changes – Reminder

In undertaking a periodic review of Society finances and subscriptions the trustees have concluded that it is time to make some adjustments. While an increase in subscriptions is not needed at this time (indeed some members will see a reduction) we need to compensate for the increasing cost of overseas postage. The trustees have therefore agreed the following changes to the membership and subscription structure:

- **The Gold and Founder membership grades are withdrawn from 1 April 2008.** Current Gold members will revert to being Individual members. Existing Founder members will retain their status but pay the Individual rate.
- **To compensate for the above, those few Gold and Founder members who have already pre-paid subscriptions to 2009 and 2010 will have their membership extended by one year, and those paid up beyond 2010 will have their renewal date extended by two years.**
- **In order to more equitably distribute the escalating cost of overseas postage it has been decided to introduce an annual £5 supplement payable by all non-UK members.** This represents around 65% of the additional postage costs incurred mailing the Newsletter and journal overseas as compared with the UK while recognising overseas members have less ready access to Society events. We hope that this will not deter our overseas members.
- **These changes took effect on 1 June 2007 for new members and come into force on 1 January 2008 for existing membership renewals.**
- **It is anticipated that all subscription rates will need to rise by around 10% from 2009, but this will be reviewed again during 2008.**

### Subscription Renewal

Subscriptions are due for renewal on 1 April annually and renewal notices are sent out during March to those members whose subscription is about to expire. **To keep down costs and subscription rates please renew promptly.**

The “5 years for the price of 4” membership offer is to continue indefinitely, subject to annual review by the trustees.

Subscriptions can be paid by Standing Order (UK members only) and recurring credit card transactions for which forms are included with your reminder notice. Payment may also be made in UK funds by cheque, Visa, Mastercard or online using PayPal.

Members who are UK taxpayers are asked to GiftAid their subscription. This enables the Society to reclaim basic rate income tax already paid on the subscription; currently this is worth 28p for every £1 paid to the Society.

Any member whose subscription is not renewed by the end of September will be removed from the membership register.
**New York Lunch**  
*by Nicholas Birns*

On January 26, 2008 several northeast Powell fans assembled for a festive luncheon at the Oyster Bar in Grand Central Station in honour of the all-too-brief visit to New York of the eminent Viennese Powell scholar Peter Kislinger, whose erudition and urbane charm are well known to many Society members. Discussion over oysters (garnished in my case with some of Powell’s much-valued Tabasco sauce), oyster stew, and oyster pan roast ranged over many topics: from Powell’s interest in the Austrian writer Robert Musil, through the evolution of the final twelve-book structure of *Dance*, to Powell’s interest in Marlene Dietrich, which branched out into a discussion of the general literary life of movie stars. Peter also talked with wit, insight, and a dash of Proustian *memoire involuntaire* about his early experiences of reading *Dance*. A merry time was had by all, and we were regretful that Peter was in the NY area for so short a time – I very much wanted him to attend my New School class on Nietzsche the following Monday and thus attempt the Nietzsche-Powell linkage that Powell himself made more than once but has never been fully assayed in scholarship.

Present at the luncheon were: Peter Kislinger (guest of honour), Leatrice Fountain, Jonathan Kooperstein, Nicholas Birns, Jeffrey Manley, William B Warren, John Gould and Ed Bock. Ed arranged and presided over the luncheon with ingenuity, efficiency and flair.

**Powell’s 102nd Birthday Lunch**  
*by Prue Raper*

Fifteen of us gathered on 1 December at the branch of Strada in St Paul’s Churchyard to celebrate Powell’s 102nd birthday – the restaurant chosen because of its excellent views of the cathedral. Sadly our secretary, Keith, was ill and unable to come but Noreen took over admirably in his absence. A limited but well-chosen menu and plenty of wine allowed us all to indulge ourselves, and as usual the conversation ranged round a wide number of topics: family history; cuisines of other countries and cultures; attitudes to ageing, Powell characters and the first Powell lecture by Tariq Ali; what Heralds at the College of Arms do all day; the “lost” rivers of London, notably the Fleet; classical music, including Vaughan Williams; and the perils of being a qualified accountant when it comes to societies requiring treasurers. We also learnt that, contrary to popular lore, there is no family connection between Joanna Trollope and Anthony Trollope.

After lunch, Patric Dickinson led a group of us down Dean’s Court into Carter Lane, passing the Deanery – now the Bishop of London’s residence – and the old St Paul’s Choir School, now a youth hostel. This was to point out the building on the corner of Carter Lane and Addle Hill that masqueraded as the exterior of Foppa’s in the Channel 4 TV version of *Dance*. It is now an upmarket sandwich bar called Degustibus. Patric also pointed out a pub, now closed, at the bottom of Addle Hill which similarly doubled as the Mortimer. A thoroughly satisfactory end to an excellent lunch.

Those present were: Patric Dickinson, Derek Hawes, Michael Helm, Stephen Holden, Noreen Marshall, Derek & Pat Miles, Laura Miller, Sandy Morrison, Prue Raper, Victor Spouge, Elwin & Susan Taylor, Sir Robin & Lady Wendy Williams.
Pearl Binder

By Noreen Marshall

In a break in some research into the difference between pantalettes and pantaloons for a museum publication, I was leafing through my copy of Newsletter 29, when I was startled to read Jonathan Black’s suggestion that Pearl Binder was a possible role model for Gypsy Jones. It was definitely one of those Dance-ish moments: Pearl Binder, the author of *Muffs and Morals* and *The Peacock’s Tail*, books which were at that moment sitting on my desk? The very same. John Powell reminded us in the same Newsletter that “AP did say categorically that both the name Gypsy Jones and her character were invented”, but for readers’ consideration…

Polly Binder was born in Salford in 1904, studied art, and moved to the East End of London in the 1920s. She remained fascinated by the area and its people, and made a number of lithographs later featured in *The Real East End*, co-produced with Thomas Burke (1932). She also wrote a book about Pearly Kings and Queens, *The Pearlies: a Social Record* (1975). In terms of art she was best known as a graphic artist and illustrator, but also designed ceramics, stained glass and stage costume. She seems not to have been overtly politically active, but in the 1930s she contributed to various politically conscious publications such as *Fascists at Olympia* (1934) and *Famous Women Demand [Town] Planning* (1937), and illustrated a 1938 leaflet for the National Union of Domestic Workers. She also travelled widely in Russia and China.

Her husband Frederick Elwyn Jones was born in Llanelli in 1909, and was originally a barrister (after the war he was to take part as a prosecution counsel in the Nuremberg war trials).

Binder and Elwyn Jones married in 1937. That year she was resident artist on *Clothesline*, a television series about fashion history, presented by her friend James Laver of the Victoria and Albert Museum. She caused some consternation among her colleagues because by the end of the series the birth of her first child (writer and historian Jo Elwyn Jones) was imminent. Binder’s sketch of herself, with the electricians betting “2 to 1 it’s twins” was captioned “Polly progressively couldn’t reach her easel”. It’s difficult now to appreciate how radical this was. In the 1930s middle-class women in the UK were usually required to give up their jobs on marriage. To be so visibly pregnant was considered embarrassing, and some women stayed at home altogether in the last month or two before the birth.
Elwyn Jones was a popular Labour MP (for Plaistow, later West Ham South) 1945-74, Attorney General 1964-70, and Lord Chancellor 1974-79. He was knighted and made a Privy Councillor in 1964, and in 1974 was created Baron Elwyn-Jones of Llanelli and Newham. His books included his autobiography *In My Time* [good phrase, that] (1983). He was active in politics to the end of his life, and at the time of his death was involved in the House of Lords debate on the prosecution of suspected Nazi war criminals in the UK.

‘Pearl’ Binder was a *nom de plume*. She was fairly prolific – one senses that she liked to keep busy. The books which she wrote and illustrated include:

- *Muffs and Morals* (1953)
- *The Peacock’s Tail* (1958)
- *Look at Clothes* (1959)
- *Treasure Islands* (1977)
- *The Truth About Cora Pearl* (1986)
- *Dressing Up Dressing Down* (1986)

She also illustrated other writers’ work – everything from Chaucer and Gerard de Nerval to Alan Lomax’s *Harriet and her Harmonium* (1955).

Her books have survived in reasonable numbers, so anyone wanting to buy one to become further acquainted shouldn’t have to search very hard or pay very much. Her costume books are enthusiastic and informed, rather than academic: she was writing at a time when even some serious authorities on the subject were less than rigorous about evidence for their conclusions. She preferred the livelier aspects of costume history, happily writing on topics such as decency and indecency, male corsetry, and the influence of courtesans on fashion.

She died in 1990, Lord Elwyn-Jones having predeceased her by a year. They had lived at 17 Lewes Crescent in the Kemp Town Enclosures in Brighton where an area of the estate gardens just beyond was laid out as a winter garden and named ‘Polly Binder’.

The National Portrait Gallery has various photographic portraits of Lord Elwyn-Jones, and his papers are at Flintshire Record Office. Apart from Binder’s books, examples of her graphic art survive in the collections of the British Museum and the V&A, and her costume designs in Brighton & Hove Museums; her correspondence with James Laver is at Glasgow University Library. With so much information available about this couple, they seem appropriate for further research.
Allason: His Aim Is True

Ringside Seat: the Political and Wartime Memoirs of James Allason
By James Allason
Foreword by Margaret Thatcher
(Timewell Press Limited, 2007, 167pp)

Reviewed by B Douglas Russell

A life lived in rhythm to the music of time

I reflected, not for the first time, how mistaken it is to suppose there exists some ‘ordinary’ world into which it is possible at will to wander. All human beings, driven as they are at different speeds by the same Furies, are at close range equally extraordinary. [Anthony Powell, The Acceptance World]

Memoirs come in a variety of shapes and sizes – and categories. They range from the dunghill to the cathedral, the frustratingly exiguous to the please-pass-the-razor voluminous, the utterly otiose to the absolutely essential.

Some recollections are written with a very specific purpose other than the mere cataloguing of a life: the hope of casting the mediocre or vile in a more favourable light, perhaps, or with the sole aim being the settling of scores. Still others are undertaken as a thinly veiled attempt to excuse the author from some public controversy or catastrophe the responsibility for which posterity has heretofore lain at his or her door. Memoirs have appeared at long last to act as an antidote to the poison of inaccuracies put forward in the guise of truth. Money is often a motivator, though equally so it would seem is delusion. Pressure to write can come from family and friends. Conversely, the desire to write can be for sake of family and friends.

So, why did James Allason write Ringside Seat: the Political and Wartime Memoirs of James Allason? A more apt question may be, why didn’t he write more? It was my first question upon finishing the slim volume (161 pages of actual memoir). The answer was immediate.

Now in his ninety-sixth year, James Allason has seen in no passive way the majority of the twentieth century and the record appears fuller for what he has decided to share. The book’s title is a bit of a misnomer as Baroness Thatcher points out in her foreword.

Rather than occupying a ringside seat, James Allason has more often than not been at the centre of the action, in a veritable hot seat. Fighting the Japanese, arguing with Mountbatten and Wingate, and serving Churchill in the Cabinet War Rooms, James was rarely just a spectator.
Readers will approach Allason’s work from many angles – familial, personal, social, professional, martial, political and whether they know him well, vaguely, as a name on the news or in the papers, or not at all. Regardless of the path that brings one to this work, the reward, the work itself, is both rich and revealing – as far as it goes. Still, Allason is up front with the reader about the volume’s principle subject matter: his military and political careers.

That said, both the military planner and political strategist are in evidence as Allason divulges personal information to his readers on a “need to know” basis. He is like a person with whom one strikes up a friendship on board a cruise. Although many discussions ensue, information and anecdotes are shared, the essence of intimacy and confidence is felt, once parted one could be forgiven if tempted to conclude that, while one has indeed learned much on multiple subjects, one has not learned that much about one’s companion – a conclusion worthy of a caution.

While it is true, I would have preferred to hear more about, say, his family or beliefs, I cannot accurately say he has not been generous with what he has chosen to share. Again, probably owing to his military and political careers, he is a master at concision. Upon reflection, he is highly capable of conveying quite a lot in few words. And sometimes what he doesn’t say speaks volumes. For instance:

The couple were blissfully happy for five years, but in 1913 my mother was carrying her baby upstairs when she tripped at the top of the stairs and fell headlong, ensuring only that she protected me. She was found dead at the foot of the stairs and I was saved.

Overall, the author is an amiable host. My subjective wishes aside, Allason’s memoirs are replete with incident, history, the famous and notorious, triumph, tragedy, humour and poignancy. He credits his audience with intelligence and takes for granted at times a command of subject his readers may not possess – to dual effect: simultaneously, one feels complimented and mildly frustrated. The wisdom of his years and experience are manifest throughout, as is his sense of the comic and ironic. One such incident involves the author, aged six, a lavatory skylight and his position on top of it at his older sister’s behest.

She then instructed me to jump up and down. As a result I descended in a shower of glass upon my aunt, who was seated upon the throne below. It
seemed to me unfair that it was I who was punished.

Another, Brigadier Mike Calvert, who upon learning the US had been credited with his brigade’s taking of the Burmese town of Mogaung from the Japanese, signaled, ‘If the Americans have taken Mogaung, I have taken umbrage’, which had the Americans searching their maps.

Of course one of the attractions of the book is finally hearing what Allason has to say about what has become known as “The Profumo Affair”: something about which the author, who was Jack Profumo’s Parliamentary Private Secretary, and Profumo himself have remained silent; the latter taking his thoughts to the grave. Allason’s account of this dark time in British politics is extremely important and worthy of both scholarly and historical consideration given his ideal placement to interact with the players and personalities involved and take in events leading up to, during and after the “scandal”. Suffice it to say, there will be those who wish he had followed his boss’s example.

Without delving too deeply into the realm of party politics, Allason puts paid to the matinee villain Tory so frequently foisted upon the public, principally because he has consistently put humanity before politics. In fact, it is thanks to his concerted effort over many years that council house tenants in the UK have the right to buy their homes.

Fans of military history and the wartime and military fiction of Anthony Powell, Simon Raven, Paul Scott or Evelyn Waugh will find much to savour in Ringside Seat. Allason’s military career is followed from his education at the Haileybury and Imperial Service College and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, to his retirement from the service in 1954 as a Lieutenant-Colonel, and takes in his service in India, Ceylon, Burma and London. He served in the Royal Artillery, before transferring to the 3rd Carabiniers in 1937. Worthy of the writers above, Allason treats his readers to a panoply of eccentric characters in extraordinary circumstances running the gamut from nearly shooting a village idiot in Kashmir, whom the villagers had said was a bear in an attempt to get compensation, to counseling Churchill in the Cabinet War Rooms, from keeping a baby panther as a pet and playing polo with maharajahs to helping to plan the Berlin airlift.

The time spent in India saw Allason promoted regimental adjutant, then squadron leader, before finding himself posted to the Joint Planning Staff at GHQ in Delhi. From there, he was off to Burma, where he was wounded, before touching down at South-East Asia.
Command in Ceylon. Lord Linlithgow, Louis Mountbatten, Orde Wingate, Gandhi, Peter Fleming, Enoch Powell and Dean Rusk, amongst others, are encountered with mixed results. Wingate brings to mind Waugh’s Ben Ritchie-Hook, only on steroids, as does his demise.

The parallels between Allason, Anthony Powell and Powell’s famous narrator Nicholas Jenkins are inescapable. Though Powell was Allason’s senior by nearly seven years, they have much between them including fathers who were career soldiers. Allason’s and Powell’s military careers eventually led them both to London, where Allason worked in military planning in the Cabinet War Rooms with Bill Cavendish-Bentinck, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and boss to Denis Capel-Dunn, the quintessence who served to spawn Powell’s notorious creation, Kenneth Widmerpool. To this day, both Allason’s and Capel-Dunn’s names appear on the posted list of officers cleared for access to the Map Room in those historic rooms under the Office of Works building in Storey’s Gate. Having lived as approximate contemporaries, both nonagenarians traversed a lot of the same turf and shared many mutual acquaintances, these latter serving as fuel for some of the character models for Powell’s twelve-volume opus: General Sir Mike West/General Liddament; Lord Louis Mountbatten/Buster Foxe the most obvious. Strangely, they never met. It is almost as if they went to the same school, but missed one another by a year.

Nevertheless, the reader familiar with the memoirs of Powell or the same’s A Dance to the Music of Time cycle will find the highly observant, personally temperate vein in Allason’s narrative comfortable.

One of the insipid criticisms of Powell’s Dance cycle is that the way in which characters reappear throughout the series is not true to life. The grousing of the myopic and static it has seemed to me. Ringside Seat firmly underpins that Powell’s approach is unequivocally rooted in the actual, for diverse people met in Allason’s memoirs resurface over its course in varying circumstances, loci and occupations.

To borrow from Monty Python, “And then there’s sport.” Allason is a polo, skiing, and motor racing practitioner and enthusiast. He is a devotee in the most positive sense of the word. His detailed knowledge and reminiscences of the matches, runs and races as well as those with whom he made them are a delight to read. We learn of his polo pony, Razzle, who won polo pony of the year honours in India. The genesis of his love affair with the Swiss ski resort of Davos is shared. Amazingly, Allason continued competing in the Anglo-Swiss MP race until he won the cup at eighty years of age.

It is in the realm of sport and in his writing about the opera and art that the author relaxes a bit and lets go. For me, one of the volume’s most moving moments had to do with the opera.

My last trip overseas was to New York, at the age of ninety and nearly blind. I used a wheelchair at the airports and stayed at a hotel close to the Metropolitan Opera. The purpose was to see Bellini’s Il Pirata, which is staged rarely. It was a magnificent treatment by the Met, including Renee Fleming at the height of her considerable powers. I flew back on the day-flight to Heathrow, and, economical as ever, took the Underground to Sloane Square. Unknown to me, I was shadowed by an official to ensure the poor old
blind man got through. He introduced himself, however, and when he said he had been on the Berlin Airlift, I was able to share my part in organizing it from Whitehall.

After reading Ringside Seat, I found myself profoundly grateful for James Allason and for the men and women like him, who live life fully yet to good purpose. I envied that official and wished I could have thanked the “poor blind man” for the part he has played in service to others and the example he has given of doing so with focus, energy, good grace and drollery.

In closing, a word about the paper and glue. Aesthetically, the book is attractive. Bibliophiles will be pleased with the bright, clean dust jacket, which is graced with a sobering photograph of the Map Room from the Cabinet War Rooms and a stunning portrait of the author. Published by Timewell Press Limited and printed in Malta, the overall quality is outstanding. The matte coated paper stock is elegant and holds the ink, whether for type or photograph, consistently throughout. My eyes found the serif font very readable.

If the book enjoys a second printing, and I hope it does, Timewell should give some attention to the index as there are a number of errors and omissions that could be easily fixed through searching the manuscript by word or name and amending the listings.

Ringside Seat is available to Society members at the special price of £15, including P&P UK & Europe (RRP is £20), from The Blackthorn Group, PO Box 41, Wallingford, OX10 6TD.

Anthony Powell’s posthumous volume of reviews Some Poets, Artists and ‘a Reference for Mellors’ is also published by Timewell Press at £25. Timewell Press’s full list is available at www.timewellpress.com.

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**The Way It Is**

*Neville Keery*

The dance to the music of time:
Is it planned or indeterminate,
Inclining, not necessitating?

The dance to the music of time:
Is it finite or infinite,
Or an admixture?

The dance to the music of time:
Is it tragedy or comedy,
Or something of both?

The dance to the music of time:
Beauty and the beast,
Imagination and will.

We arrive on the floor
Innocent inheritors.
We go out the door
Danced breathless.

References are to *A Dance to the Music of Time*, oil on canvas, Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and to *A Dance to the Music of Time*, a novel in 12 volumes, Anthony Powell (1905-2000).

Powell Fun for Everyone …
A Collage & AP Quotation Book
by Keith Marshall

OK, so here’s some fun for everyone …

We are opening the Society’s Collage & AP Quotation Book for your contributions to these important (and fun) Powell themes.

What do you mean you’re not artistic?! It doesn’t matter! If you have scissors and glue you can make a collage. If you can read you can find a telling Powell quotation. The idea is to have some fun!

Here’s how it works …

1. The “Collage Book” moves through a chain of members.

2. When member A receives the book they contact me for the mailing address of the next member (B) in the chain. (Email preferred, but any other method is OK. This way only I and the chain member preceding you know your mailing address.)

3. I send A the address of member B.

4. Member A completes their piece of collage and/or adds a Powell-related quotation(s) to the book, and signs & dates their entry. (Please write legibly!)

5. A then packs and (air) mails the book to B; and tells me they have done so. (Please don’t delay sending the book on; we need to keep the chain moving!)

6. Steps 1 to 5 repeat until the book is full (or the chain breaks) when the book is returned to me.

7. I will scan the completed book and if possible make the scans available on the Society website; the original book is put in the Society archive.

The book will be a light-weight 40 sheet (80 page) 8vo Moleskine cahier. Each chain member will be allowed a double page spread for their contribution. Consequently we need at least 25 participants to make the chain worthwhile.

To sign up for the chain send me your name, your mailing address and, if available, your email address or fax number.

Your commitment is (a) to contribute a double page spread collage and/or Powell-related quotation(s) and (b) the cost of (air) mailing the book to the next chain member (who may be the other side of the world!).

Participants will be added to the chain in the order in which I receive their names. The book will be sent to the first participant when we have 25 people signed up. Open to all; membership not required!

I will maintain the chain (names only) on the AP website, adding the member’s state/country (not full address etc.) and date only after the book has left them. In this way everyone can see where they are in the chain and where the book is.

I have seen similar things done in other contexts, but this is still a bit of an experiment. Let’s see if it works. But above all let’s have some fun!

Sign up now by contacting me at the address on page 2, or emailing me at kcm@cix.co.uk.
Letters to the Editor

**Australian PM**

*From Trevor Stone*

I am very much struck by the resemblance of our erstwhile PM, John Howard, and his fictional counterpart, Kenneth Widmerpool. Like Kenneth, John Howard is dull, humourless, Machiavellian in intent and action and also rose to the top through sheer bloody-minded ambition, unquestioning vanity, bullying and ruthlessness.

I can only think that now he has been thrown out completely, like Kenneth he thought he was winning at the end, only to also fail and to be revealed at the end as metaphorically naked and alone.

Can I nominate John Howard for your Kenneth Widmerpool award if it is still running?

---

**Powell in Bennett**

*From AC Morrison*

I do not know if your readers will be aware of a lovely and typically sly reference to Anthony Powell in Alan Bennett’s *The Uncommon Reader* (page 75) where the Queen, in the flood of her new-found passion for reading, makes a note in her diary as follows:

I was giving the CH once, I think it was to Anthony Powell, and we were discussing bad behaviour. Notably well behaved himself and even conventional, he remarked that being a writer didn’t excuse one from being a human being. Whereas (one didn’t say this) being Queen does. I have to seem like a human being all the time, but I seldom have to be one. I have people to do that for me.

---

Former Australian Prime Minister, John Howard (above) and Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (right).

He was bald but seemed to be bearing up well.

[Anthony Powell; *Afternoon Men*]
Quiz 1: Nobel Prize for Literature

1. Pearl S Buck, *The Good Earth*
2. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*
3. Wole Soyinka, *The Lion & the Jewel*
4. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
5. Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist*
6. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*
8. Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*
9. Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker*
10. Patrick White, *The Aunt’s Story*
12. TS Eliot, *Four Quartets*
15. Derek Walcott, *Omeros*
16. JM Coetzee, *The Life & Times of Michael K*
17. Saul Bellow, *Herzog*
18. WB Yeats, *The Second Coming*
19. GB Shaw, *Pygmalion*
20. John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*
22. Nadine Gordimer, *The Conservationist*
23. Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
24. William Golding, *The Lord of the Flies*
25. John Steinbeck, *Of Mice & Men*
26. VS Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*

Quiz 2: Identify the Artist

1. ♫ Ralph Vaughan Williams
2. ♬ CS Lewis
3. ♬ George Eliot
4. ♬ Auguste Rodin
5. ♬ Charles Dickens
6. ♬ Ian Rankin
7. ♫ Constant Lambert
8. ♬ Isaac Newton
9. ♬ Vladimir Nabokov
10. ♬ Frans Hals
11. ♬ John Betjeman
12. ♬ Charlotte Bronte
13. ♬ Nicolas Poussin
14. ♬ William Langland

Christmas Quiz Solutions

Quiz 1: Nobel Prize for Literature

1. Pearl S Buck, *The Good Earth*
2. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*
3. Wole Soyinka, *The Lion & the Jewel*
4. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
5. Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist*
6. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*
8. Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*
9. Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker*
10. Patrick White, *The Aunt’s Story*
12. TS Eliot, *Four Quartets*
15. Derek Walcott, *Omeros*
16. JM Coetzee, *The Life & Times of Michael K*
17. Saul Bellow, *Herzog*
18. WB Yeats, *The Second Coming*
19. GB Shaw, *Pygmalion*
20. John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*
22. Nadine Gordimer, *The Conservationist*
23. Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
24. William Golding, *The Lord of the Flies*
25. John Steinbeck, *Of Mice & Men*
26. VS Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*

Christmas Crossword Solution

15. ♬ Terry Pratchett
16. ♬ Giuseppe Verdi
17. ♬ Anthony Powell
18. ♬ John Buchan
19. ♬ The Monkees
20. ♬ Philip Pullman
21. ♬ Karel & Josef Čapek
22. ♬ Carl Orff
23. ♬ Stella Gibbons
24. ♬ Thomas Hardy
25. ♬ Benjamin Britten
26. ♬ MR James
27. ♬ Sir Walter Scott
28. ♬ Hans Holbein
29. ♬ Evelyn Waugh
30. ♬ Kenneth Grahame
31. ♬ JMW Turner
32. ♬ Malcolm Bradbury
33. ♬ EM Forster
34. ♬ Pablo Picasso
35. ♬ William Shakespeare
36. ♬ Stephen Hawking
37. ♬ John Constable
38. ♬ Aristophanes
Society Merchandise

**Centenary Conference Proceedings**
Collected papers from the 2005 centenary conference at The Wallace Collection, London.
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Society Merchandise

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