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From the Secretary’s Desk

Welcome to this 50th edition of Newsletter. That’s an achievement which I never dreamt – in the most literal sense – of our achieving. I genuinely never thought about it, but suddenly here we are.

And how far we have come! Newsletter started off in December 2000 as an eight page A4 news-sheet, photocopied, stapled and mailed by the fair hand of the Editor.

This 50th issue is 40 pages of articles and news which is professionally printed and mailed – although still with the same Editor (Stephen Holden) and in-house production team (me). OK, 40 pages is unusual but we normally run to 32 pages and thus far have never really suffered from a shortage of material. If anything we usually have a the odd article with which to seed the next issue.

With all things in clubs and societies the success is dependent on members. In the case of the Newsletter we’re dependent on you writing articles for us – or alerting us to possible writers and Powell-related news stories and sightings. Keep them coming! The more the merrier – and the more interesting this Newsletter is.

In other news, arrangements for the September conference are progressing well and it is shaping up to be another exciting event. Invited speakers have been lined up and the delegate papers have been selected (authors should have confirmation by the time you read this). The final events programme will be confirmed over the next few weeks. This means that we should be able to release delegate pricing and booking information around the end of April.

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.

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Anthony Powell’s work in WWII at the War Office as an army liaison officer to the Poles, the Czechs, the Belgians, Luxembourg and later the French was in sharp contrast to the shadowy fellow travellers and traitors revealed by the VENONA decrypts as senders of intercepted messages to Moscow, now mostly decoded.

In his lecture entitled ‘BARON, Bletchley Park and Anthony Powell’ at the inaugural biannual conference at Eton College in 2001 Nigel West described some of the most important spy rings detected after the decoding of communications between London, New York and Moscow of Soviet agents between 1940-48. The collection of texts on which Bletchley Park, GCHQ and the US National Security Agency worked together until the 1980s were known as VENONA.

As well as the two major spy rings headed by INTELLIGENSIA (the scientist Prof. JBS Haldane) and NOBILITY (Hon. Ivor Montagu) revealed in the VENONA intercepts, Nigel West was particularly exercised by BARON, whose identity remained a mystery until after WWII, when examination of the VENONA traffic suggested that it was Karel Sedlacek, a senior member of the Czech Intelligence service (headed by General Moravec in London). Sedlacek operated via Switzerland passing information to Russia, and presumably Germany.

Among the texts mentioning BARON to which Nigel West refers is one dated 3 April 1941 which implies contact with allied military intelligence using access to ENIGMA decoded communications. West says

This tantalising clue turns the attention to Sedlacek’s British connections, and focuses on the link between Czech military intelligence, represented by Col Josef Kalla, long serving military attaché in London and his counterpart at MI(L) at the War Office.

In fact my father only joined the War Office in late 1941 months after this particular intercept. At first he did odd jobs connected with liaison with neutrals before joining the Polish section as GO3 with Capt. Alick Dru under the command of Lt-Col Jack Carlisle. Therefore my father’s contact with Czech military HQ only began in May 1943.

Col Kalla, who had been military attaché in London for a few years before the war, is described in Faces as the doyen of the military attachés. However, while taking his leave from my father in 1945, before returning home as the war ended, he had forebodings about his country’s fate as the communists and the Red Army grabbed power. He was imprisoned on his return, dying of a heart attack, probably as a result of his treatment, in 1947. My father noted that some Czech officers were shot out of hand on their return.

This contrasts with the career of Karel Sedlacek, the spy thought to be BARON who, Nigel West suggests, might have had some indefinable connection via Kalla with my father. Neither Sedlacek nor his boss Gen. Moravec is mentioned by my father in Faces. While Kalla, despite
being a loyal supporter of a free
Czechoslovakia and of the Russian war
partnership with the Allies, became a
victim of the Red Army and of the new
regime, Sedlacek was promoted and
appointed Czech military attaché in Berne
after the war.

The real functions and objectives of MI(L)
were skated over by Nigel West (talking
off the cuff) in the discussion after his
lecture. His view was that

MIL's responsibility, particularly in
respect of the Czechs and the Poles
was firstly to liaise with the
government in exile in the UK and to
gather information from those two
intelligence services and to try and
collate it, to match it to what was
known by the other sources. The
reverse process was also taking
place, that MIL's responsibility was to
disseminate information, much of it of
course, in fact the overwhelming part
of it came from ENIGMA intercepts,
the source of which had to be
disguised but the secret intelligence
service had no assets in either
occupied Czechoslovakia or occupied
Poland for much of WWII so they
therefore relied heavily upon
ENIGMA and the conduit for the
official flow of intelligence between
the two official intelligence
communities was Anthony Powell.

The emphasis on ENIGMA is misleading
because it was still largely ‘secret’. MI(L)
was working in the real world of the army
in a capacity of administration on matters
that cropped up day to day.

During his first stint at MI(L) in mid-1942
my father was sent on a week’s tour of
duty in Scotland to make contact with the
British Liaison Headquarters attached to
the Polish Corps there, and see something
of the troops only known on paper.

In an earlier paragraph he writes:

The Poles, high spirited, gallant, ever
unfortunate, were stimulating to work
with. By the time I arrived in the War
Office (in late 1941) there was
already a great uneasiness about the
whereabouts of 15,000 Polish
Officers, deported after the Russian
invasion of Poland to the Soviet
Union, and not identified as among
those Polish units known to have been
transferred to Central Asia.* At this
period it was thought by the London
Poles that the missing officers had
been exiled to distant camps within
the Arctic circle. Their atrocious
massacre at Katyn was to emerge
only later.

It is also worth mentioning details given in
Nigel West’s book Venona of the
bombastic Maj-Gen. Vasili M Zarubin who
operated as a spy out of New York in 1942
-43 under the nom-de-guerre Zubilin with
rank of third secretary. As a former banker
in Moscow who also worked as a diplomat
in China he is named by Nigel West as
being implicated in the massacre of Polish
officers at Kozielsk in the Katyn woods.

I can firmly quote my father as having said
“The point about secrets is that they are
secret”. He writes in Faces

While at the Cabinet Office I was
impressed on the whole by the
relative unimportance of those
‘secrets’, which play so large a part
in novels and journalism, dealing
with official life. One knew several

* These units were eventually administered by
MI(L).
months before its launching, about
the projected invasion of Sicily; a few
other operational matters that were
en train. No doubt certainty on such
matters would have been useful to the
enemy. Nevertheless, what broadly
speaking made up the picture were
the varied statistics dealing with such
subjects as manpower, munitions,
vehicles, oil, above all accurate
information as to Axis morale. These
things were always changing needing
perpetual collation. They were what
mattered.

Plainly being well informed of mutual
intelligence was paramount, but MI(L)’s
true function in 1941-4 was surely to
administer, keep an eye on for security
reasons, deploy and accommodate allied
troops in exile as well as tracking changing
relationships with neutral powers and,
where necessary, solving the problems of
individual soldiers. This was my father’s
work initially for 15 months to Feb 1943
with the Poles; thereafter from May 1943
with Czechoslovakia, Belgium,
Luxembourg and France.

An idea of MI(L)’s office priorities is
contained in AP’s description of (Capt.)
Alick Dru at work looking after the exiled
Polish troops throughout the war:

In the ever varying, sometimes quite
delicate, duties of MIL Dru was
habitually good mannered, taking
immense pains to sort out intricate
and tedious liaison problems, but, not
at all given to military brusquerie, he
was equally free from that English
liking to be thought a good fellow. In
the War Office the vast majority were
efficient and courteous, at worst
grumpily correct. If Dru in matters
that seemed to him of prime
importance came up against
obstruction or blockheadedness in an
officer (or a civil servant), he could be inflexible, use the sort of phraseology that got home. He did not at all mind making people angry.

In the discussion after his lecture Nigel West was asked by a delegate

Doesn’t Powell’s life and his known political ideas conflict with the idea that he might have unknowingly given away such important secrets?

His reply was that he had long since given up being astonished by the kind of people who had wittingly or unwittingly disclosed information. In describing Lt-Col Jack Carlisle commander of the section my father says

"Carlisle did his job uncommonly well working unremittingly, taking decisions (as indeed did majors and captains of the MI directorate) exceeding what might be thought normal to his rank.

How did the section communicate with the various military attachés? My father writes

Correspondence between MIL and the military attachés normally took the form of the DO (demi-official or ‘Old Boy’) letter in which rank was dropped in favour of the simple surname or first name (Do I call him Emil? Do I call him Bronislaw? Carlisle would mutter as he headed and tailed letters brought for signature).

In other words the commanding officer had a firm hand on the flow of information to and from his section.

Allied military attachés (of which there were about 26) and their staff would be in close touch with MI(L) all day long, but some neutrals, for example certain Latin American states who ran to a military attaché, might appear once in several months. Discussing Carlisle’s longing for the red tabs and red cap band of the full colonel my father writes

He was always telling senior officers how ‘rank conscious’ foreigners were. In fact foreign officers always seemed to me to make less heavy weather about rank than in our own army, though in exile they were no doubt to some extent (General de Gaulle always excepted) on their best behaviour.

This is further indication that staff officers and military attachés only exchanged information through recognised channels, while being on friendly terms, so that when serious matters arose both sides knew the form.
A situation with political undertones developed suddenly towards the end of the war involving Belgian irregulars or partisans. The speedy solution might be quoted as a good case history of the merits of close relations between allied armies through attachés.

The Belgian attaché was Major Paul Kronacker. Just old enough to have served in WWI as a Lieutenant in Horse Artillery, he had commanded an artillery battery at the time of the German invasion of Belgium in 1940. Writing about Kronacker, a scientist and businessman, my father says

_In our earlier dealings Kronacker seemed a little inclined to treat army matters as if cornering a commodity on the stock market, but it was not long before he showed himself capable of grasping that not being too serious was the best way of dealing with relatively serious army matters…_

_Kronacker and I got on pretty well. He was not only extremely efficient where routine affairs were concerned, but quite uncircumscribed by a professional point of view, often unjustly disparaged in its own field, but at times an impediment to the problems of armies in exile._

After Brussels had been liberated in late 1944 the personnel of the Belgian resistance became desperate for employment after 4½ years under the Nazis. Numbering about 30,000 (say two divisions) there was a fear that communist elements might use this dissatisfaction to spread revolution. Kronacker, clearly very worried about this situation having just returned from Brussels, explained the problem. The Belgian Government’s solution to the Resistance question was that about 30,000 of this irregular force should be sent to the UK for training. An excellent idea my father thought. But implementation of this would need several higher levels of executive approval followed by a Cabinet decision, all time consuming.

To avoid long delays my father remembered that Kronacker had mentioned meeting the Prime Minister’s powerful personal assistant Major (later Sir) Desmond Morton, a sort of fixer or personal buccaneer to Churchill. In order to cut a few corners my father told Kronacker to ring Morton (‘that’s what he is there for’) ask for an interview, say that it is vital and that the War Office have been informed. He also told Kronacker to ask Morton to consider setting the matter before the Prime Minister himself ‘as soon as possible’. This snatch of dialogue appears in _Faces_:

_“Shall I tell Colonel Carlisle?”_  
_“No – certainly not”._

My father notes

_Carlisle would have been horrified by the notion of approaching Morton, not because in principle he himself objected in the least to back stairs intrigue, but on account of the enormous respect he felt for his superiors in rank._

After a moment’s thought Kronacker decided to contact Major Morton. Before the weekend ensued my father reported to Carlisle, (leaving out Morton), who went to the appropriate Brigadier. After the two conferred with the Director of Military Intelligence a War Office file was put into circulation.
On the following Monday morning my father was called up by Carlisle who was in a state of some excitement. A message had been transmitted direct from the Prime Minister (in itself calculated to make Carlisle assume what Dru called ‘his religious face’) to the effect that movement of the Belgian Resistance force to Great Britain was to take place forthwith, and be treated as a matter of urgent priority. A meeting presided over by the Director of Staff Duties (Major General of the branch deciding, so to speak, which bit of the army does what) was to take place in an hour attended by my father.

“This an extraordinary thing to have happened, Tony,” said Carlisle. “I can’t understand it. Somebody very high up must have spoken the right word”.

At the meeting the DSD announced that 30,000 Belgian troops were to be transported as soon as possible to Northern Ireland, quarters vacated not long before by the US Expeditionary Force. The Belgians were installed in Northern Ireland within a creditably short space of time. They did not at all like their new surroundings among other things complaining about the inadequacy of British Army rations, probably meagre enough compared to what had been available throughout the war on the mainland of Europe. They were much happier when in due course shifted to England where they found better facilities for training. In conclusion my father writes

*Neither Kronacker nor I ever spoke of our initial collusion in the matter, which I used without much change of circumstances in my novel.*

The episode illustrates a favourite dictum of my father which was basically that difficult decisions or tasks are often best carried through with reasonable speed and a minimum of administration, in this instance it was four or five days.

The assertion in Nigel West’s lecture that familiarity with a military attaché, in this case Czech Colonel (later Brigadier-General) Kalla, might show up in an intercepted message from a spy in Czech intelligence decoded years later, is rendered nonsensical by this other example of the Belgian resistance personnel. My father remembered that the Belgian Kronacker had met Major Morton, Churchill’s assistant, and was, as a result, able to advise him and cooperate in a dangerous situation of threatening insurrection. It was the exact opposite of ‘careless talk’ from the famous British posters of the War Years by Fougasse (aka. Cyril Kenneth Bird). ■

*Osbert Lancaster to whom, with his first wife Karen, A Buyer’s Market is dedicated.*
Who Were the Dedicatees of Powell’s Works? I. Dance

By Mike Jay

The 12 volumes of Dance, published between 1951 and 1975, were dedicated by Powell to a disparate array of his family and friends. Here we take a brief look at who they were.

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Tristram Roger Dymoke Powell (b. 1940) Elder son of AP. TV and film director. Given first cine camera when young and encouraged to develop the interest.

Osbert Lancaster (1908-1986) and first wife Karen Elizabeth née Harris (d. 1964) Cartoonist whose work adorned the unfinished Penguin edition of Dance (and pre-war novels), became friends to the Powells after WWII – the Powells used to stay at the Lancaster home near Henley when visiting their sons at Eton. Osbert was the social butterfly “who sipped every flower” while Karen was “highly selective about the social occasions she was prepared to patronise”.

John Marmion Anthony Powell (b. 1946) Younger son of AP. Educated Eton and Cornell, Boston, where Arthur Mizener (qv) taught.

Sir Henry Joseph ‘Harry’ d’Avigdor Goldsmid (2nd baronet) (1909-1976) and wife Rosie née Nicholl (d. 1997) Rosie was one of Violet Powell’s oldest friends since “deb days”. Harry was a British officer, Conservative politician and company director in banking and publishing who greatly assisted AP with details of the financial world in Dance. They hosted the Powells at their home, Somerhill in Kent (now a school) where one could expect culinary excellence and “hospitality on a heroic scale”. Possibly contributes some characteristics to Sir Magnus Donners.


Arthur Mizener (1907-1988) and Rosemary née Paris (d. 1986) American educator and editor. Wrote literary biographies of F Scott Fitzgerald and Ford Madox Ford. Taught English at Cornell, (where John Powell studied) and “stood out alone, like a lighthouse in an undistinguished ocean”. Friends of the Powells on and off for 30 years. They owned a Jaguar in “racing green”.

Roy Broadbent Fuller (1912-1991) Poet, novelist and friend of AP. One of the people AP greatly liked. AP felt Fuller could have become Poet Laureate and wrote “poetry without pomposity”.

Maclaren-Ross thought Fuller a “good poet who also wrote good novels”. Fuller held Marxist views which AP found “a shade absurd tho’ certainly sincere”. A part of Fuller is in HSH’s Delavacquerie.


Sir Rupert Hart-Davis (1907-1999) Publisher, editor and friend of AP. Parentage uncertain and married four times. Corrected AP’s proofs “with precision and severity”. BDFR is one of twenty two books dedicated to Hart-Davis.

Roland Gant (1919-1993) AP’s editor at Heinemann. Friend and publisher. Huge gifts of humour and mimicry. Clubbable. Originally a conscientious objector who eventually had a “notable war career … (which) included digging his own grave but the Germans thought better of shooting him … looked after me and my books with utter devotion”.

George Robert Acworth ‘Bob’ Conquest (b. 1917) Another poet met through Kingsley Amis. Son of an American father and English mother. Conquest gave AP advice on the later volumes of Dance. “One sees in Conquest an English point of view, English individuality, linked with American energy and resilience and taking enormous pains particularly in the concerns of friendship”.

The author is grateful for invaluable assistance from John Powell and Keith Marshall.
Kaggsy’s Bookish Ramblings

1. What’s Become of Waring by Anthony Powell

Book blogger Karen Langley has set herself the task of reading a book of Dance a month during 2013 – in addition to all her other reading – and she has promised to write about the experience volume by volume on her weblog. We are delighted that Karen is allowing us to reprint her posts in the Newsletter, and we’ll be following her journey. As a warm-up in December 2012 she read What’s Become of Waring. So to start off, here’s Karen on Waring.

Yes – I *know* I’m meant to be reading A Dance to the Music of Time by Anthony Powell, and I *know* this isn’t one of the books from the series – but it got a lot of referencing in “Bright Young People” and sounded quite fun, so I figured it might be a good way to get to know Powell’s style (well, that’s my excuse for buying another old Penguin and I’m sticking to it!)

Wikipedia describes the book thus:

What’s Become of Waring is set in large part in the publishing firm of Judkins and Judkins, and informed by Powell’s experiences with both Duckworth and Warner Brothers. Dinner parties and seances abound, featuring unusual and uncomfortable mixtures of guests. Coincidence, often noted as a significant feature of Dance to the Music of Time, here plays a larger role than in any of Powell’s other early fiction.

The novel is narrated by an anonymous publishing firm employee, who is himself working on a book about Stendhal and violence. At a séance, an apparent warning is received that something is wrong with bestselling travel writer, TT Waring. Waring, anticipating Thomas Pynchon in his insistence on privacy and anonymity, is soon confirmed dead. Through various efforts to bring out an official life of Waring, many secrets are slowly revealed, especially concerning Waring’s identity and the sources of his travel literature.

This was Powell’s fifth novel, published in 1939 and was the first to feature a first-person narrator. We first encounter our unnamed guide (shall we call him Tony, just for the hell of it?!) as a disinterested wedding guest, where he runs into an old acquaintance, Eustace Bromwich. He knows Eustace through another mutual friend, Roberta Payne, who flits in and out of the story but is one of the pivotal characters, strongly influencing and affecting the other players in the book. Judkins and Judkins is run by the two brothers Bernard and Hugh, who are very amusingly at permanent loggerheads about the type of book they should publish (and just about everything else too!). We also meet Tiger Hudson, currently with the TA, and persuaded into researching the life of TT Waring; and the Pimley family of Camberley, including daughters Beryl (engaged to Tiger) and Winfred, plus gaga grandfather Captain Plimley who knows more than it seems.
The plot is surprisingly complex, with rapid shifts of location. With its deadpan, matter-of-fact narration, it initially reminded very much of The Rock Pool by Cyril Connolly, which I read recently – and this is interesting, because Connolly and Powell were of course contemporaries and ‘Bright Young People’. However, Waring is by far the better book, much wider in its scope and brilliantly constructed. It is, in fact, a marvel of assembly – there are a large number of characters and plot strands woven together very cleverly which are all drawn together by the author by the end of the book.

‘Tony’ is an impassive observer in many ways, often seemingly to be a still point in the middle of the tale, while a wonderful supporting cast of authors, spiritualists, army men and general hangers-on swirl around him. Somehow it turns out that all of these disparate figures are linked in very unexpected ways and towards the end of the book the coincidences are fast and furious and very funny.

The book is very cleverly written so that the reader often feels he or she can see what’s coming before the narrator. I was trying to analyse this and then found a wonderful piece of description of the effect on the “emilybooks” blog:

> the feat of rendering a gap between what is understood by the narrator and what is understood by the reader. To my mind, this is one of the cleverest things a novelist can do. The writer has to create a blinkered narrator, deliberately limiting their knowledge, while at the same time dropping sufficient hints of the greater truth for the reader to grasp it. It’s a tough balance to get just right – not too obvious, not too obscure.

That nails Powell’s effect beautifully! But it isn’t just a clever-clever piece of literature – it’s humorous and very readable and I found myself enjoying it hugely. The style, once you get used to it, is really easy to read and I got really absorbed in the plot, wanting to know what wonderful surprises were in store next!

‘Tony’ concludes at the end that all most people are looking for is power. Whether this is the message of the book or not is debatable. It’s a lively and entertaining portrait of the publishing world, with the firm of Judkins based on Duckworths, where Powell was working in the 1930s (and helping a lot of his friends get into print). But it also considers the nature of books and their authors, and whether any work can be original and whether this matters to the general reading public. The subject of fictions in life is covered too – the characters deceive themselves and each other on a regular basis, with one crucial protagonist leading a double life. The novel also reflects the strangeness of the 1930s – there are seances, religious cults and a general feeling of unease and uncertainty. Is everything in life coincidence or design? Whichever it is, this novel presents an enjoyable example of the intersections and complex links of modern society.

I ended up loving this book – it’s witty, clever, brilliantly written and compellingly readable. As an introduction to Powell it’s got me well hooked and I’m now very much looking forward to embarking on A Dance to the Music of Time!

So, being of sound mind etc., I decided when planning my January (and 2013) reading that I would set myself the task of reading one volume a month of Anthony Powell’s *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence of 12 novels. Once I had announced this, Laura very kindly pointed me in the direction of a “LibraryThing group” [online at http://www.librarything.com/groups – Ed.] who are doing the very same thing, which is lovely as I don’t feel quite so isolated!

The first book is *A Question of Upbringing*, mine being a slim orange Penguin version of just over 200 pages.

Our narrator for this 12 volume journey is Nick Jenkins, who opens the first book by witnessing a scene of workmen by a brazier which reminds him of the painting “A Dance to the Music of Time” by Poussin. Powell states his case here beautifully so we are clear from the start of his intentions for the sequence of books:

> These classical projections, and something from the fire, suddenly suggested Poussin’s scene in which the Seasons, hand in hand and facing outward, tread in rhythm to the notes of the lyre that the winged and naked greybeard plays. The image of Time brought thoughts of mortality: of human beings, facing outward like the Seasons, moving hand in hand in intricate measure, stepping slowly, methodically sometimes a trifle awkwardly, in evolutions that take recognisable shape: or breaking into seemingly meaningless gyrations, while partners disappear only to reappear again, once more giving pattern to the spectacle: unable to control the melody, unable, perhaps, to control the steps of the dance.

The book is structured in four long chapters, each of which introduce us to people in the life of Nick Jenkins and who are presumably going to turn up in later volumes. We are in the year 1921 and Jenkins is at public school, where he is befriended by older and slightly more experienced boys Charles Stringham and Peter Templer. There is also Widmerpool, a bit of a misfit, who recurs throughout the book, and the unfriendly housemaster Le Bas. Later chapters cover a visit to Templer’s family home, an ‘educational’ holiday in France and Jenkins’ years at University. There is no sense of real continuity here – the chapters are episodic and take a kind of snapshot of a particular era of Jenkins’ youth, so we can get to know his setting and his associates.

A number of characters swim in and out of view – Jenkins’ eccentric Uncle Giles, a man of business Sunny Farebrother, the manipulative Professor Sillery and Jean Templer, with whom Jenkins fancies himself in love. As the boys start to grow into men, their differences become more pronounced – Stringham and Templer’s
friendship basically breaks down, Widmerpool shows himself to be a person of unexpected character, and Jenkins starts to mature a little and understand some of the realities of life.

Of course, it’s a well-known fact that Powell (writing in 1951) based these books on his own life and the reader can’t help seeing Jenkins as Powell himself. (There is a list of the main characters and their historical influences on Wikipedia, which is useful!) Surprisingly little information is let out about Jenkins as the book progresses – he is keen on books, likes reading and writing, has no real direction or plan in life and ends up taking history at University. Wikipedia points out, “Little is told of Jenkins’s personal life beyond his encounters with the great and the bad” and this is true – even in this first book, he seems something of a cipher, simply there to tell us the tale. Powell himself comes across as something of an outsider, an observer rather than a participant, and this is reflected very much in our perception of Nick Jenkins.

But this is not your conventional novel when it comes to character development and we learn much about the people in it obliquely, rather than directly. Powell was connected with the Bright Young People of the 1920s (although somewhat younger than many of them) and there are hints of this milieu in QU, although their antics are never spelled out. But Buster and Mrs Foxe (mother and stepfather of Stringham) are straight out of BYP, with their property in Kenya and implications of living the high life. I found it amusing (and quite telling) when Jenkins loaned Quiggin (another misfit) a copy of Michael Arlen’s The Green Hat, a key text of the BYP – perhaps hinting at what is to come in later volumes? It is as if Jenkins is gradually being drawn into the wider world, that of London, parties and society, more of which will be revealed as his life (and the books) go on.

Human relationships flourish and decay, quickly and silently, so that those concerned scarcely know how brittle, or how inflexible, the ties that bind them have become.

I did find at first that I took a little time to adjust to the writing style of this volume (in the same way as when I read my first Powell, What’s Become of Waring) – it seems a little dry at first but as I kept reading I realised how rich his use of language is. This is very obviously the first book in a planned series, introducing us to the characters who will dance in and out of the narrative, much like people do in our real lives. I enjoyed it more and more as the book went on, and I’m looking forward to seeing who turns up in book two, A Buyer’s Market.


Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #50
Upon escaping the chilly evening, passing through the gorgeous halls of Hertford House’s Wallace Collection and descending to the lecture theatre, it was the familiar faces of Mr and Mrs Hon. Sec. dispensing calendars and Caledonia that greeted the sell-out audience for this year’s Annual Lecture. Scheduled on St Andrew’s Day it was not, as the Vice President explained during his opening remarks, an ironical counterpoint to AP’s antipathy towards Northern Britain but rather as a happy coincidental tribute to the speaker. He continued his introductory eulogy of Andrew (AN) Wilson – novelist, journalist and historian – with references both to his 42 published books as well as his expulsion from the Scout movement, aged eleven, for dissent. Amidst walls hung with empty frames – as though an art theft on a grand scale had recently been perpetrated – Mr Wilson, resplendent in a three-piece chalk stripe and chequered shirt, rose to the occasion.

His talk’s title, he explained, came from Browning’s poem Childe Rolande to the Dark Tower Came (verse XV) and was a concise description of the soldier’s art – itself the title of the middle novel of the war trilogy. The whole verse in fact, he considered to be a microcosm of the Dance sequence.

First he explored Powell as a modernist author. In a talk liberally peppered with enthusiastically received quotations from Dance, he compared Powell to the traditionalists and decried the somewhat leftist view that modernism indicated a preoccupation more with form than substance. Going on to unpick Powell’s views of the military, he focussed on his interest in the exploits of the more colourful Generals rather than those more strategically successful. Nick Jenkins himself is more concerned with his immediate circle of junior officers than with the General Staff, but with two noteworthy exceptions – Generals Liddament and Conyers, both unique in their own foibles but different in their tolerance. Liddament, driven almost to violence upon discovering Nick’s apathy towards Trollope, contrasting sharply with

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**REVIEW**

*Think First, Fight Afterwards*

**Anthony Powell Annual Lecture**

*Given by AN Wilson*

Friday 30 November 2012

Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, London W1

Reviewed by Dr Bernard Stacey, Our Special Correspondent
the older general’s embrace of such diverse interests as psychoanalysis and motoring. To much tittered approval, Mr Wilson read the passage from The Kindly Ones, where General Conyers covers the momentary embarrassment of Bilson’s appearance in the nude and compared it with other instances of nakedness in the series. Jean opening the door to Nick (or perhaps Brent), the infamous Tiepolo ceiling scene mirroring the Widmerpools’ domestic arrangements, and Widmerpool’s final run with Scorp Murtlock were all mentioned as examples.

It was however the somewhat lower ranking officers who gave more flavour to Dance. Gwatkin, the sad lower middle class Welsh bank manager who feels he has discovered his role in life in the army until crushed by the infidelity of an Irish barmaid; Bithel, the amiable homosexual alcoholic who finally in his cups falls foul of the omnipotent Widmerpool; Pennistone, the rather enigmatic military highbrow first encountered to no apparent avail at Milly Andriadis’s Mayfair party, and who works in Intelligence and studies Vigny’s army career. These are the characters who give flesh to the bones of the war. Indeed Mr Wilson felt that A Valley of Bones lost some charm after the departure of the thwarted Gwatkin.

Mr Wilson went on to unravel Powell’s own literary tastes as deduced from references in Dance. He – and hence Nick – eschewed not only Trollope but Tolstoy too, preferring the more oblique, sideways narrative of Lermontov. The universality of approach of War and Peace would be anathema to Nick and his friends. The Dance sequence itself is entirely different from the Tolstoyan ‘cinematic’ approach so that the characters are deduced from anecdotes rather than fitted into situations.

Mr Wilson then addressed the inevitable comparisons with Proust. Powell himself, and others since, have felt that Dance and A La Recherche are as different as Dance and The Forsyte Saga – Galsworthy’s prototype for a much reviled St John Clarke novel. The method of telling a story through the medium of multiple loosely connected anecdotes set Powell’s work apart from Proust’s own structuring of his magnum opus. Much more similarity, he felt, was to be found in Conrad.

Returning to the war trilogy of the Dance, one sees Powell concerned, not obsessively with the upper classes as has been asserted by some, but with the more colourful characters amongst his peers – Gwatkin and Bithel displaying no aristocratic tendencies in their own personal tragedies. As so often it is the small human dramas that make the moment and linger in the mind, even when there might be larger issues at stake.

The central theme of Dance, thought Mr Wilson, was the story of a single boy becoming subsumed into a family. This, to a great extent, mirrored Powell’s own solitary childhood. Neither school nor Oxford had filled this gap – no ‘low door in the wall’ had opened for him there. Nick’s increasing involvement with the Tolland family finally does provide him with a sense of inclusivity but in quite a different way from the Guermantes role in M. Swann’s journey.

The army is the other half of Nick’s life. Significantly he enters a Welsh regiment, for Powell always had a deep fascination with his own roots and lineage as shown by his attempt to engage Gwatkin in a conversation about his own ancestry.
Mr Wilson concluded with an anecdote from Powell that is not in his books. Demonstrating his ear for gossip combined with antiquarian detail he recalled a story about a parson visiting a Norfolk church prior to conducting a funeral, trying on an ancient helmet from a suit of armour (out of curiosity) and then, being unable to remove it, having to conduct the service from within it. Humour and pathos – Dance in a nutshell.

Mr Wilson was happy to take questions. These came at first fitfully, the audience perhaps still awed by the broad sweep of the lecture’s contents, but they soon crackled forth. Was Powell, like Tolstoy, a Romantic author? No, asserted Mr Wilson. Whilst there were perhaps romantic touches in Dance – Stringham discovering Browning as an adult shortly before being sent to his ultimate demise out East – Powell’s treatment of the military contrasted sharply with that of, say, Tolstoy’s Nikolai viewing the horror of war as a personal attack with sweet childlike naivety.

Were Grey Gowrie’s comparisons to Proust ‘flashy’? The silver-haired peer interceded good-naturedly from the front row before Mr Wilson had even the chance to remark that he would not possibly ascribe such qualities to him. Certain elements of style, it was conceded, bore similarity but the overall tone of Dance and In Search of Lost Time differed significantly as we discover much less of Nick’s inner thoughts from his descriptions of incidents than we do, say, of the narrator’s elaborate recollections of Combray.

The lecture, having seamlessly blended the perhaps initially disparate themes of the military Dance novels and Powell’s narrative style, concluded with a question on the provenance of Gwatkin’s name – ascribing, wrongly as it turned out, a doctoral thesis-level knowledge of Welsh genealogy to the speaker – but allowing the Hon. Sec. an opportunity to remind members of John Blaxter’s talk upon just this topic at the previous month’s AGM, thus neatly closing the circle of recent APS events. Then, following some complimentary closing comments from the Vice President, the 130-strong audience filed, with the polite urgency customary on these occasions, winewards.
The Chantry, Nr Frome, Somerset
21 March 1979

Dear Mr Norbutt,

Your letter, dated 8 January, has only reached me today. I can assure you that far the most gratifying side of being a writer is receiving letters of that sort, and I must tell you that yours was one that could not possibly have given me greater pleasure. I rather suffer from reviewers who say that I wrote only about (and for) one class, and nothing pleases me more than hearing that the books are enjoyed by the sort of world you find around you. As a matter of fact that particular complaint is made far less in the US than in this country, but in any case your letter is a complete answer to it.

The question you ask is a very difficult one to answer. We had a famous cricketer in England called Hobbs, who was asked in an interview how he did a certain stroke (no doubt some parallel in baseball is easy enough). Hobbs said, ‘I can’t tell you, because if I did, I shouldn’t be able to play the stroke’. I think writing is like that. You oughtn’t to examine yourself too much, or you cease to be able to do it, but so far as being ‘successful’ is concerned (my sales are very modest compared with real bestsellers) I think you feel very much as you have always felt. It is nice to have the money coming in, and I am very pleased that the sequence is going to be done here on TV in two or three years time (as a lot of work is required), but I’ve never had a moment when I felt ‘Now I’ve made it’, because one’s always interested in the book one’s writing at the moment, and that is taking up all one’s energies, and always as difficult to do as all the rest have been. As to whether a writer’s life is a blessing or damnation, that is something about which I have never been able to make up my mind. There’s certainly a good deal of the latter. A couple of volumes of my memoirs, *Infants of the Spring* and *Messengers of Day*, came out in the US (Holt’s) during the past two or three years and I do say something about writing in the second of these, which might amuse you, though I don’t suggest it would be what you’d want to read to your ‘kids’.

Anyway your letter was very cheering and I’m most grateful for it.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Powell
From James Tucker

I’ve just been reading JM Lewis’s article in the Winter Newsletter, ‘Welsh-speak in The Valley of Bones: a Short Correspondence’. It’s about the accuracy, or not, of the dialogue given Welsh soldiers in that novel. An alternative title for the book might be The Valleys of Jones. I suppose I’m as Welsh as any non-Welsh speaker can be (born here of Welsh-born parents, educated here and living here for most of my life) so what I wrote on this topic in my book The Novels Of Anthony Powell (Macmillan, 1976) might be worth a mention:

These three war volumes bring an additional maturity to Powell’s work, a new scope. I do not say he has altogether caught the tone of ordinary troops, most of them here ex-miners, though the good nature, mocking humour and obliqueness are dead right. As to the quaint, back-to-front dialogue it avoids the worst elements of look-you English invented for How Green was my Fair Country novels, without getting very near to actual valleys talk ... Of a new Mess-mate, the superbly drawn Bithel, Kedward reports “he played rugger for Wales once”. Rugger is an English word and would probably not be used even by a South Walian exposed to the anglicising influence of banks. “He played for Wales once” would be more like it: only if it were some other game would there be a need to specify.

Incidentally, playing for Wales ‘once’ would be as much a backhander as a compliment. ‘One cap wonders’ have only dodgy status. ■

Ethelbert White, The Coffee Stall (wood engraving, 1920s). This could easily be the coffee stall at Hyde Park Corner.
**London Quarterly Pub Meets**
Saturday 11 May 2013
Saturday 10 August 2013
Saturday 2 November 2013

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

Good beer, good pub food and informal conversation in a Victorian pub AP would have known. Why not bring something AP-related to interest us? Non-members always welcome
Further details from the Hon. Secretary

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### Dates for Your Diary

**7th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference 2013**

**Anthony Powell in the 20s & 30s**

Friday 27 to Sunday 29 September 2013

Eton College
Eton, Windsor, UK

We are delighted to announce that the 7th Biennial Conference is to be held at Eton College, Powell’s *alma mater*

**Outline Programme**

- **Plenary Sessions:** Friday afternoon and Saturday
- **Reception & Recital:** Friday evening
- **Dinner:** Saturday evening
- **Events (tbc):** Friday morning & Sunday morning

The plenary sessions will include three invited keynote speakers and nine delegate papers. A reception and recital is being planned for the Friday evening and a dinner for the Saturday evening. We hope there will also be an opportunity to visit the Eton College Library and tour the College.

Provisional conference bookings may be made now with the Hon. Secretary.

We expect to mail out fuller details and booking information around the end of April, when formal bookings will open.

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**Society Notices**

**Subscriptions**

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due annually on 1st April and that rates remain unchanged this year (see back page). Reminder letters are sent during March to those whose membership is about to expire.

Anyone whose membership is expired will be removed from the membership list at the end of June.

Printed reminders are a drain on our resources as they cost, on average, over £1 each. Consequently we will be using email wherever possible, so please keep a look-out for emails from the Society.

Subscriptions and membership enquiries should be sent to the Hon. Secretary at:

**Anthony Powell Society Memberships**
76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK

Email: membership@anthonypowell.org
Phone: +44 (0) 20 8864 4095
Fax: +44 (0) 20 8020 1483

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**Contributions to the Newsletter and journal Secret Harmonies** are always welcome and should be sent to:

*Newsletter & Journal* Editor,
Anthony Powell Society
76 Ennismore Avenue
Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK

Fax: +44 (0)20 8020 1483
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**Toronto Group**
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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.

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**Newsletter Copy Deadlines**

*Newsletter #51, Summer 2013*
Copy Deadline: 17 May 2013
Publication Date: 7 June 2013

*Newsletter #52, Autumn 2013*
Copy Deadline: 16 August 2013
Publication Date: 6 September 2013

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Welcome to New Members

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following who have joined the Society in recent months:

Peter Brunning, London
Peter Clinch, Eastbourne
Lady Antonia Fraser, London
Alan King, Coventry
Clive Gwatkin Jenkins, Oxford
Daniel McCarthy, London
Gwyneth Morgan, London
William R Mount, London
Peter Nicholls, London
Gerald Parsons, London

Correction

We must apologise for the typos which crept into the names of new members Senator Robert Carr (Foreign Minister of Australia) and Gabriel Pretus (Barcelona, Spain) in Newsletter #49. Our thanks to the eagle eyes of Mike Jay for spotting the errors which were missed by multiple proofreaders.

Victor Spouge

It was with great regret that we learnt of the untimely death of member Victor Spouge early in February following a short illness. One of the earliest members of the Society, Victor had been from the beginning a stalwart of the London Group Pub Meets, always with something interesting to say on literature and his current reading. The Hon. Secretary is especially saddened as, quite independently and serendipitously, he worked with Victor several times between 2002 and 2010 on projects for which Victor was the consulting architect. A quiet gentleman, Victor will be greatly missed especially by the London group.

Our condolences are extended to all Victor’s family and friends.

Following on from the item in Newsletter #49 on easyfundraising.org.uk, we can report that this is a highly worthwhile venture for the Society. Since the last Newsletter the very small number of UK members who have signed up for this service have raised over £50 for the Society a large amount of which is also eligible for Gift Aid (repayment of UK Income Tax) which adds around 25% to its value to the Society. And this is all by buying from recognised major online retailers, just as we normally would – no extra money has been spent!

If all UK members who shop online were to use easyfundraising.org.uk then this could became a very useful and significant earner for the Society.

For more information on how the scheme works see www.easyfundraising.org.uk/how-it-works/. You can sign up (and choose the Society as your good cause) at www.easyfundraising.org.uk.
Diners at the crowded long table of the Grolier Club’s sedate Council Room sat absorbed through the very last exit line of WALTZING MATILDA – the Noel-Poel Players enactment of Mrs Foxe’s party for Moreland’s symphony – at the Northeast AP Birthday Luncheon in Manhattan on December 14.

Once again hostess Arete Warren had ingeniously arranged festive place cards with the names of contiguous characters – this year from Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant. Arriving guests picked their fictional identities from male and female urns and moved to find their respective seats at the long Council table.

Waltzing Matilda began (page 152) with the spat between the Maclinticks. This was fiercely, almost alarmingly, enacted by Eileen Kaufman and Nick Birns, Noel-Poel favorites of Waiting for Belkin fame. Annabel Davis-Goff, who drew plaudits for her role as the Director’s Wife in Belkin, this time gave an exquisite, starring portrayal of Matilda’s conversation with Jenkins: it was so quietly, morosely insightful one wished it could have been preserved for the Society’s archives.

Next entered John Gould as Stringham, the first time that character has been portrayed in a Grolier production. Warmly remembered as “The Kipper Man” in Belkin, John began by miming Stringham’s conversation with Buster (page 162). Then he moved to interrupt Mrs Foxe’s mimed conversation with Lord Huntercombe (Arete Warren and Duncan Hannah).

Having absorbed the familiar pain of his mother’s quick dismissal, he veered with a dazed, inquiring smile, along the long table line of alert luncheon guests until he spied Jenkins (Ed Bock). Soon he noticed – in a spotted crimson shawl – Eileen Kaufman’s Mrs Maclintick. No one in the room will forget Eileen’s portrayal of the first shock of that encounter, as Mrs Maclintick’s angry character melted before Stringham’s alcoholic charm: and as – to gathering applause – he smilingly led her out of the Council Room.
Prize Competition “140-character novel” Winners

In recent times authors have taken to writing novels in the 140 character format of Twitter. Contestants were asked to write a novel (real or imaginary) by Anthony Powell in just a single 140 character message.

We were delighted to receive an interestingly eccentric array of entries for this year’s competition. All were excellent and could easily have come out on top, although we had to exclude a small number of entries for exceeding the 140 character limit – it seems some Luddites have not yet caught up with the fact that spaces and punctuation count as characters!

The Hon. Secretary was given the onerous task of choosing a winner! By a short head the accolade goes to the following entry from Dr Bernard Stacey, who wins a year’s membership of the Society:

The General, having spent the morning instructing the Catering Officer in the merits of porridge, addressed the troops: “Afternoon men”.

These three highly commended entries win a pat on the back for their authors:


[Gillian Lazarus]

For some reason, a notion came to me across the irrefragable striations of Time: 140 characters: enough, surely, to fill a dozen volumes.

[Simon Barnes]

Bob Duport, purveyor of sub-prime mortgages, sells Widmerpool a bundle of toxic loans that causes Donners-Brebner to seek a bailout.

[Nigel Leckie]
BOOK REVIEW

DJ Taylor
What You Didn’t Miss: A Book of Literary Parodies as featured in Private Eye
Constable, London, 2012, £10.00, pp. 234
Amazon Kindle, £6.18 (UK), $9.79 (US)

Reviewed by Jeffrey Manley

This is a collection of literary parodies dating back to 1998, most of which first appeared in Private Eye. Whether DJ Taylor wrote all of them is not stated, although he does aver that none were written by his fellow parodist and Private Eye columnist, Craig Brown. One rather suspects that Taylor can claim authorship for all those in the collection but that he deems it unprofessional as a parodist of some standing to do so.

The book begins with an essay by Taylor on the practice of parody in the current day. He recognizes that, with book readership down sharply in today’s digital world, many readers won’t get the joke of literary parodies, but he and others such as Brown plod on regardless, aiming at what they recognize to be a specialized audience.

The book is organized into three primary headings. The first and largest collection is entitled “Great Novelists of Our Time” and is essentially intended to review current books by parodying them, much like Jim Crace’s digested reads in the Guardian, but briefer. These are all arranged alphabetically by the name of the author or subject, with no indication when the book was parodied or the parody itself was published. The parodies are all short (2-4 pages), no doubt in conformity with space limits in the magazine where they first appeared. It helps to enjoy these if you have already read the book in question or at least other reviews of it or other books by the same author, but prior knowledge is not a prerequisite. Taylor may send up the style or subject matter (or both) of the book reviewed and, where appropriate, may take on some personal idiosyncrasy of the writer (especially if he or she claims some celebrity).

To illustrate, I have attempted an example of how this practice might apply to one of Taylor’s own recent novels:

DERBY DAY
DJ Taylor

Mr Happerton stabled Tiberius at Scroop Hall, the Lincolnshire estate of his previous owner near the market town of Sleaford. Those making visits debouched from the railway at that town, which exists to this day, and Mr Happerton had
frequent dealings with its merchants and lawyers. Through various connections in the town, Mr Happerton became vaguely aware of the 4th Marquess of Sleaford, who resided at the nearby estate of Dogdene. Although not heretofore much interested in horses, the Dogdene Sleafords were well known in the neighbourhood as art lovers. Indeed, they were possessed of one painting by the Italian master Veronese.

Now, Happerton was not himself a connoisseur of paintings unless they depicted images of outstanding equine beauty. He had, however, sufficient interest in the Marquess’s painting to know that it could be converted into additional capital to support his nefarious racetrack betting scheme. To effect an introduction, Mr Happerton called on the services of Capt. Powell who had spoken so pleasantly to Mrs. Happerton in the park (although he for no particular reason was thought odious by her cousin Harriet). Capt. Powell knew the Marquess through his acquaintance with the Wells-Dymokes, one of whose children had played so beautifully on the banjo at a recent hunt ball. He was very pleased to carry out Mr Happerton’s wishes because he now had a function in the novel’s plot rather than remaining a mere literary allusion.

After the visit to Dogdene, arranged through the good offices of Capt. Powell, it occurred to Mr Happerton, while recruiting himself peacefully at Scroop Hall, that Mr Pardew might be persuaded to find a way to relieve the Marquess of his masterpiece. Meanwhile, Pardew, who for his part, having begun his role as a technically accomplished thief in the earlier novel Kept, was now becoming confused about his literary function. The author had dragged him from his exile in France into this latest novel to engineer and execute the theft of jewels from a safe located in some buildings on Cornhill in the City. But through some very peculiar and unexplained coincidence these were the same buildings where a Mr Rasmussen accomplishes a similar heist over fifty years later (but in an earlier of the author’s novels). Pardew, while not a literary man, was beginning to wonder whether his fate was to become a character in a series of novels like those written by Mr Trollope and those to be written by Capt. Powell’s namesake in the next century. Was he to reappear in the person of Rasmussen in At the Chime of a City Clock? What would otherwise motivate the author to conceive the occurrence of two such similar adventures in the same place over such a long interval of time? Was he condemned to continue posing these repetitive rhetorical questions until the reader had tired of them (and of him)? [and so on for several hundred enjoyable pages which turn rather rapidly since Taylor manages to construct a cracking story around his myriad of literary allusions...]

The second section contains parodies of poetry. There are fewer of these and they mainly deal with contemporary poets such as Andrew Motion, Paul Muldoon and Craig Raine. Perhaps the best is a parody of Clive James (himself no mean parodist) written in the form of a letter addressed to him on the occasion of the publication of his Collected Verse. Here are the concluding lines:

> My own credentials won’t match up to you – alas
> I never wrote for Ian Hamilton’s Review.
> Oh well. I have to go now Clive, my pen runs idle

> Unlike your own uncurbed extravaganzas
> Unchained by any editorial bridle
> And dancing on from stanza unto endless stanza


As for your talent – well I’ll gladly tender that
There are three Clives – James I, James II and Old Pretender.

The final section (aside from some miscellaneous pieces) is devoted to biography. Here, there are three articles relating to Powell. The first is an entry written as if in Powell’s Journals on the occasion of his death. It is dated March 2000. Powell died on 28 March 2000, so this article may effectively have been his obituary in the Eye, but the date on the article is not necessarily when it appeared in print. It begins:

Woke up to find myself dead, on reflection not a wholly disagreeable state. In fact a certain status conferred: Shakespeare, Kipling, Stendahl.

The second is a posthumous entry dated 21 April 2001 describing Powell’s reaction to receipt of

letter requesting attendance at Eton conference. Subject for discussion apparently oneself. Tho’ long past the age at which one could be expected to derive any satisfaction from such gatherings, decided that it might be bad form to decline.

Upon arrival, found

a somewhat seedy crowd assembled: fans, academics, sprinkling of literary types, etc. Nevertheless, one felt their objectives deserving of encouragement.

This is not the only occasion on which Taylor took the opportunity to send up the first AP Society conference – see also his Introduction to the Proceedings of that Conference. Taylor also recently cited (Guardian, 17 October 2012) Craig Brown’s own Private Eye parody of Powell’s Journals as one of his top ten examples of the genre: “I received a telephone call from a Professor Wildenstein at Princeton University. He wanted to give me a large amount of money. This is the sort of thing Americans do very well”.

The final Powell parody is devoted to Michael Barber’s biography and may have been a cod review written in connection with the book’s publication. (Again, absent the date of publication, one cannot easily place the parodies in chronological context.) Taylor manages to parody both Powell and Barber. For example, he has Barber describe an

interview at [Powell’s] agreeable Somersetshire residence. The entry in his Journals … strikes a characteristic note: ‘Really frightful character called Barber came to talk to me for some publication of which I did not catch the name. Spent the rest of the afternoon reading Debrett being joined by … V’s cousin through
her Delacourt-Delongpole connection, tho’ Debrett typically ambiguous on this point’.

A few pages later, Taylor does an equally comic parody of Paula Byrne’s biography of Evelyn Waugh, for example, placing its relative importance in critical context:

*In fact, aside from the seventeen authorized biographies, the multivolume edition of his letters, the ten-part television series, etc. … scarcely a single book and barely a dozen or so scholarly articles have dwelt in even the most incidental way on the subject of Byrne’s biography.*

Perhaps the most humorous and well-targeted parody is that of Philip Larkin’s *Letters to Monica*. Powell would have appreciated the satire because Larkin and he had a prickly friendship, and he once described Monica, after the couple had visited The Chantry, as “no Helen of Troy”. In the parody, Taylor includes a short poem as from Larkin, such as the poet frequently included in his letters for his lover’s amusement:

*Sodding Vice-Chancellors, don’t you just hate ‘em?*

*Children on fairy cycles – why not sedate ‘em?*

*Send home the niggers, string up the reds
And let us librarians sleep safe in our beds*

In seeking to console her, Larkin offered Monica this advice:

*I shall be glad to have your sympathy, but I think we both feel that the best thing at present is that I shag my secretary and that other woman Mondays to Fridays but come and see you at the weekends. Oh, how unutterably unsatisfactory life is.*

The book makes enjoyable reading but should be read bit by bit and not straight through as one does when reviewing it. The articles were, after all, not written to be read in one go but week by week as they appeared in the magazine. Intermittent readings will avoid any notice of repetitive jokes such as strangulated upper-class names, writers who use short sentences for effect and not realism, back-to-back articles satirizing Graham Swift’s residence in South London *etc.*, which wouldn’t otherwise be annoying.

DJ Taylor will be speaking at the conference in September.
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #50

From Joe Trenn
Why did Nick Jenkins feel the war turned when Russia was attacked rather than when the US entered?

Well if you look at the circumstances of everyday life in 1940 Britain an invasion was imminent and this had been the case over many months. Then almost without warning the monster turned and the threat began to dissipate never to return as seriously. This political and military realignment was perhaps the first truly good news since the conflict began. Tariq Ali and Oliver Stone had an interesting conversation under the auspices of the New York Public Library in January ostensibly to discuss, among other things, Stone’s new American history program being shown on Showtime currently after some delay. Ali made the point that in 1940 capitalism in the US and Britain was under assault from the national socialists of Europe, Germany and Italy and from the communists of the Soviet Union. As an economic system it faced a dire threat. The response to this threat by the US and the UK determined the course of the 20th century. Stone’s view is that the US and UK basically gave half of Europe to Stalin in return for his defeating Hitler with some assistance from themselves. The 90 minute conversation is available online (at http://www.nypl.org/audio/video/opening-night-oliver-stone-and-tariq-ali-history).

While I don’t mean to restart the Marxism conversation I did find this an interesting analysis (Ali’s assault on capitalism bit, Stone’s view was nothing new) of what was happening in Europe in the 30s and 40s. It also meshes perfectly with Nick’s sense of the war’s turning point when the adversaries turn on each other. In this country we believe the war was won by the US, specifically by the Greatest Generation. In order to do this we also provided and accepted assistance to and from the UK and the USSR. This may be the truth but it is not the whole truth and certainly not nothing but the truth. My understanding is that the British feeling regarding the entry of the US into the war was “about time” but certainly no sense that the troubles were over or beginning to be over.

From John Gilks
It’s an interesting question and part of me wonders how much Powell was endowing Nick with hindsight. In 1941 the weight of British military and political opinion was that the the Soviet Union would collapse within weeks. In the event, the Red Army and Airforce inflicted 90% of the casualties that the Wehrmacht suffered during the war and the USSR was, by a very wide margin, the principal cause of Germany’s defeat. And that’s not to down play the USA’s material and industrial contribution on all fronts.

From James Tucker
I remember hearing with joy that Hitler had invaded Russia. I knew we’d probably win the war as a result. I was 11 in 1941, living in Grangetown, Cardiff. There had been one severe air raid on the
city in January, most of which seemed to be aimed at our house. We lived very near the river Taff and on the opposite bank was the Curran`s munitions factory. The city was blacked out, of course, but the bombers could navigate along the river. Half the next street was destroyed. My father judged – probably rightly – that we were more or less a target and therefore whenever the weather looked good enough for another raid we would take two buses across Cardiff to spend the night at his brother`s house in an outer, safe, suburb. I slept on the floor. Although I`d just entered high school, homework became unthinkable, because we`d be spending up to three hours on the buses, or waiting. I went into free-fall academically. One morning I was waiting for the bus outside my uncle`s house when another boy from school turned up and told me Adolf had made his move. We both grinned. Powell might have understood! We didn`t go to my uncle`s again and there were no more raids to speak of on Cardiff. Yes, a turning point. Took a while to catch up educationally, though. Say a decade?

From James Doyle
From this distance it would seem that whatever one thought of the concrete military potential of the USSR in 1941 Hitler`s turning against the USSR prevented German exploitation of potential class fissures with Great Britain as conscription etc. were ramped up.

From Elizabeth Babcock
I always assumed that the news of the invasion of Russia would automatically bring thoughts of Napoleon`s disastrous campaign there. Not just the thought of Russia`s military might, whatever that was, but the massive Russian winter.

From John Gilks
That`s not unreasonable but Germany had comprehensively defeated Russia in 1917, the Red Army had performed astonishingly badly in the Winter War and most of the officer corps had been purged in 1936. Professional opinion rated the Red Army as not much better than useless. There`s no doubt that that was partly a reflection of the very deep conservatism and antipathy to the USSR of the British officer corps but it did have some basis in reason.

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

[Mark Twain]
From Jim Scott
Nicholas Jenkins, undated:

An immediate, overpowering, almost mystic sense of relief took shape within me. I felt suddenly sure everything was going to be all right. This was something quite apart from even the most cursory reflections upon strategic implications involved.

[SA, 227]

Colonel Pedlar, June 1941:

I give the Russians three weeks.

[SA, 227]

Note: In the passage beginning “An immediate, overpowering, almost mystic sense of relief…” Jenkins, decades after the fact, is giving us his recollection of how he felt when he learned that the Germans had invaded Russia. Hence, I mark the passage as “undated”.

As John Gilks suggests, it’s possible that Powell is endowing Nick with a certain amount of hindsight. Alternatively it is possible that Jenkins’s memory of how he felt in June of 1941 has been shaped, at least in part, by subsequent events (ie. what Jenkins sincerely believes he felt may be somewhat different from what he actually felt at that time). Or, perhaps, Jenkins – like James Tucker – did, indeed, sense that the German invasion of Russia would be a turning point in the war.

Personally, I lean toward the view that what Jenkins says pretty accurately reflects what he actually felt. As I understand it, Germany’s attack on Russia was the first major piece of good news that the British had received in a long time. It is quite understandable that Jenkins reaction might have been out of all proportion to what “even the most cursory reflections upon strategic implications” might suggest.

London, Winter 1926.
From the collection of Peter Berthoud who will be speaking at the conference in September.
In The Most Beautiful Walk in the World: A Pedestrian in Paris (HarperCollins, 2011), author John Baxter thinks back to his days living in England:

Even during the week, I walked. I’d often stroll a mile into the center of our village where one all-purpose shop doubled as market and post office. On the way back with a bag of groceries, I’d pause at one of its many pubs for a beer or cut across the fields to visit illustrator and novelist James Broom-Lynne, who never needed much excuse to be distracted. He’d designed all the covers for the twelve-volume series of novels by Anthony Powell called A Dance to the Music of Time, and some of Powell’s amused weariness seemed to have rubbed off.

Spotted by Steve Olle.

In a TLS review by James M Murphy, 30 November 2012 of Robert Caro’s The Years of Lyndon Johnson, volume four: The Passage of Power:

Johnson’s character did not improve in college where, like some back-country Widmerpool, he spared himself no wheedling obsequiousness to obtain favour with the administration and faculty and earned himself the nickname Bull – short for ‘Bullshit’ – from fellow students ... In his climb up the greasy pole thereafter, there seemed no point at which he did not keep his sights on what lay above his grasp.

Spotted by William Denton.

From an article by Allan Massie “The ‘spare bedroom tax’ is mean, oppressive, and a politically daft gift to the Left” in the Daily Telegraph, 26 December 2012:

When Nick Jenkins and Moreland call on the Maclinticks in Anthony Powell’s Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, they are surprised to find that the unhappy and quarrelsome couple have taken in Carolo, the depressed violinist and former child prodigy. “Everyone must be pretty short of cash for Carolo to live with the Maclinticks as a lodger,” Moreland says. Well, of course the novel is set in the Thirties, and the lodger was then a familiar figure, especially in lower-middle-class and working-class households. (In middle-class ones, the lodger’s status might be elevated to that of a “paying guest”.) Some lodgers were transient. Others stayed for years, becoming friends of the family, useful for more than the rent they paid, acting as babysitters or dog-walkers, sometimes marrying the son or daughter of the house.

Spotted by Joan Williams.

Toronto Star columnist Heather Mallick, 10 November 2012, compared Canadian Prime Minister Harper to Widmerpool.

Harper is Widmerpool, he’s Leslie Titmuss, he’s Seth Starkadder cletterin’ the porridge pot and that’s just the start of the cultural references Harper doesn’t get.

Spotted by Joan Williams.
From “The year in books” in *The Age*, 7 December 2012, Chris Womersley discloses:

My reading year was dominated by Anthony Powell’s superb 12-novel epic, *A Dance to the Music of Time* (Arrow). Exceedingly generous, wry and melancholy, it concerns the lives of dozens of English aristocrats from 1920 through to the late 1960s. Easily one of the most satisfying reading experiences of my life and a book I (almost) wish I hadn’t yet discovered, just to experience the pleasure of doing so all over again.

James Wolcott in *Vanity Fair*, 4 February 2013, writing about how Whit Stilman’s film *Metropolitan* best captures the mood of Christmas for him:

In its rotating meet-ups of a very select group, *Metropolitan* is reminiscent of the party novels of English novelists such as Evelyn Waugh (*Vile Bodies*) and Anthony Powell (*Afternoon Men*), a succession of set-pieces thinly tied together with grayish hangovers and severe fallout from the evenings’ dissipations. The soirees in *Metropolitan* don’t have the vigor and debauchery of Waugh’s blowouts because the drinking doesn’t intensify into sloppy furor and shattered glass – its characters aren’t chasing fun with the feral zeal of a foxhunt.

Spotted by Steve Olle.

From an article by Stuart Jeffries “What would George Orwell have made of the world in 2013?” in the *Guardian*, 24 January 2013:

“It’s almost impossible to imagine,” says Orwell’s biographer, the novelist and critic DJ Taylor. “One of his closest friends, the novelist Anthony Powell, suggested in his journals that Orwell’s politics would have drifted rightwards. He would have been anti-CND, in favour of the Falklands war, disapproved of the miners’ strikes. Powell was a high Tory right winger, but he was very close to Orwell and so those possibilities of what he would have been like had he lived on shouldn’t be dismissed.”

From “Literature’s most attractive women” by Simon Khan at [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz) on 8 February 2013:

A character met in a book will never have to be actually lived with. Hence literature is the perfect habitat for the enchanting-cum-infuriating seductress.

First in this category is Pamela Flitton in Anthony Powell’s *A Dance to the Music of Time*.

In 1940s London she behaves appallingly to the Allied officers who are infatuated with her; we see her “surveying the street with her usual look of hatred and despair”. Later Pamela throws her novelist lover’s manuscript into a canal. Other such temptresses include Becky Sharp from William Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* and Manon Lescaut in Abbé Prévost’s eponymous 18th century French novel.
This from a review by Christopher Bray in *Wall Street Journal*, 3 November 2012 of *The Richard Burton Diaries*, edited Chris Williams.

On location for “The Assassination of Trotsky”, Burton found time to nip into downtown Sarajevo’s university bookshop and purchase “two Rex Stouts … and even more delightful four different Anthony Powells. Also two Ngaio Marsh and *The Confidence Man* by Herman Melville.

Spotted by Jonathan Kooperstein.

Alan Bennett in *London Review of Books*, 3 December 2012, commenting on a BBC4 documentary about grammar schools:

As it was put together, the programme tended to confirm Anthony Powell’s thesis that ‘documentaries aren’t based on the evidence but are simply scenarios dreamed up by the director with the facts arranged accordingly’. It is only fair to add that Bennett goes on: ‘I’ve never been particularly concerned about the end of the grammar schools, seeing it as nothing compared with the continuing offence of the public school. On this I’m as big a bore as (rather less worthily) Hockney is on smoking.’

Writing in the *Daily Mail* on 31 January 2013 author Paul Torday, replies to the question “What book … would you take to a desert island?”

Anthony Powell’s masterwork *A Dance to the Music of Time*, which is in 12 volumes. This extended novel portraying life (a mixture of the bohemian and the aristocratic) in the Thirties, Forties and Fifties has so much content it will bear any amount of re-reading.

The plot revolves around the appearance and reappearance of a few central characters, all linked by the narrator, Nick Jenkins. The ghastly Widmerpool is perhaps the most memorable of these. The volumes dealing with the narrator’s experiences in World War II are among the most effective.

Spotted by Prue Raper.

Two very different actors: Richard Burton (top) and Alan Bennett.
The *Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 2013 nominated its “Top 10 vicious literary hatchet jobs” including:

6. **Auberon Waugh on Anthony Powell (1990)**

This piece for the *Telegraph* left Auberon Waugh with blood on his hands. On reading the article, Anthony Powell offered his immediate resignation after 54 years service to the newspaper.

“… in a long career he appears to have known practically no-one …”

Waugh suggests: “Perhaps Powell should have stayed in the Intelligence Corps officers’ mess. That, I feel, is where his heart belongs”.

Editor at the time Max Hastings sought to make amends and commissioned a bust of Powell that still stands in the offices today.

Spotted by Jeff Manley.

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Here is Kitty Empire in the *Observer*, 10 February 2013, reviewing *Bedsit Disco Queen: How I grew up and tried to be a pop star*, the memoir of pop starlet Tracey Thorn.

Her tale rips along, chatty, studded with song lyrics, diary entries, cuttings and snapshots (like the one of the cassette labelled “Massive idea” – the kernel of the track that would become “Protection”). But there is a writerly bent here, too, that befits a woman still half-contemplating a PhD on Anthony Powell’s *A Dance to the Music of Time*.

You can’t fail to smile when someone describing the rivalries between teenage bands says: “If at this point it all sounds a bit Enid Blyton, it was about to get a bit Irvine Welsh”.

Spotted by James Tucker.

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Two very different journalists: Auberon Waugh (top) and Max Hastings.

Singer-songwriter Tracey Thorn.
More DJ Taylor, this time from “Rereading Julian Maclaren-Ross” in the *Guardian*, 7 December 2012:

At some point in the late 1940s Julian Maclaren-Ross invited Anthony Powell and his wife, Lady Violet, to supper at the Café Royal. Startled by the comparative luxury of the venue – Maclaren-Ross was always keener on accepting hospitality than dishing it out – the Powells were reassured to find that their young protégé had recently come into a publisher’s advance. Late on in the proceedings the party was joined by Powell’s old friend John Heygate and his current girlfriend. The girlfriend, who was in a playful mood, amused herself by sending Heygate handwritten messages under the table. Maclaren-Ross, who had the knack of being able to read upside down, deduced that one of them referred to himself. It read: He is too esoteric.

And later in the same article:

There is something deeply ironic in the fact that the first prodigious outpouring of Maclaren-Ross’s talent should have coincided with the outbreak of war, that he should have moved into action, so to speak, in an age expressly calculated to constrain his talents. The effect of the period 1939-45 on the writers caught up in it was never clear-cut. With Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell, it produced a series of novels – many of them written long years after the event – designed to puncture some of the myths by which they imagined the war’s real meaning to have been deliberately obscured.

This from a post “Googling Lampreys” on the *À la blague* weblog, http://alablague.wordpress.com, on 5 January 2013:

I went to Great Secret Miss. Someone let me in. Across the room Amy looked up, saw it was me, and said:

*Oh, good.*

Anthony Powell says, or at any rate has his character Nick Jenkins say

*There is, after all, no pleasure like that given by a woman who really wants to see you.*

Nick is talking about Jean Templar, who has just opened the door of her flat to him quite naked, and Nick’s passion for Jean reverberates through all twelve books of the series. ‘Passion’ is perhaps the right word only for a brief passage in volume three, but there is an itchy preoccupation with her at all other times. In my case, Amy was fully clothed and our relationship is simply one of friendship born of a shared interest in kefir and gossip, although when, as I have recorded, she showed me her pubic hair to assist in a discussion about Diversity I had to go and sit down quietly for a few minutes.

All things considered I was happy that she wanted to see me.

Spotted by Robin Bynoe.
Christmas 2012 Quiz Answers

Fiction within Fiction
1. X Trapnel
2. Quentin Shuckerley
3. Mark Members
4. Evadne Clapham
5. X Trapnel
6. Vernon Gainsborough (alias Guggenbühl)
7. Sillery
8. St John Carke
9. David Pennistone
10. Odo Stevens
11. Widmerpool
12. Mark Members
13. Ada Leintwardine
14. Alaric Kydd
15. Bernard Shernmaker
16. LO Salvidge
17. JG Quiggin
18. Nicholas Jenkins
19. Widmerpool
20. Evadne Clapham
21. Russell Gwinnett
22. St John Clarke
23. Len Pugsley
24. Emily Brightman
25. X Trapnel

Round Britain Quiz
1. JMW Turner
2. Winston Churchill
3. Dickens, Great Expectations
4. George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four
5. The three witches in Macbeth
6. William Blake
7. Boudicca
8. One third
9. Robert Walpole
10. Henry VIII
11. Eeyore
12. Mid-19th century
13. India, Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)
14. Clement Atlee
15. Alfred Lord Tennyson, The Charge of the Light Brigade
16. Alfred the Great
17. Humpty-Dumpty
18. Charles I
19. Lions
20. Merlin
21. Winston Churchill
22. Guy Fawkes
23. RMS Titanic
24. Chimney Sweeps
25. Iron
26. Magna Carta
27. The Globe
28. Florence Nightingale
29. The Armada
30. Fox
31. George V in 1932
32. Turkey
33. Wars of the Roses
34. Macintosh
35. 50 inches (127 cm)
36. Toby
37. The Promenade Concerts
38. Nancy Astor
39. Shilling
40. Knights Templar
41. GK Chesterton
42. Sherlock Holmes

Quote
I am sure you will agree with me ...
St John Clarke at luncheon with Lady Warminster in CCR.

What was Toadstool but should have been Fishcake?
The mobilisation code for the company which Roland Gwatkin omitted to relay to his junior officers.

Crossword Solution

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H G B S
H B A O
C F D E
G O R I N G A R D G L A S S
K E A I H K H
F I N N W A R M I N S T E R
E D G S D
F A R E B R O T H E R
M T O L H
T O K E N H O U S E K E E F
W X I N N H R
S L E A F O R D D O O L E Y
A R P S E U S
M A C F I E B A R N B Y
H A R D
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SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music. A 150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; compiled in the style of Spurling’s Handbook. UK: £7, Overseas: £10.50


Writing about Anthony Powell. The talks given at the 2004 AGM by George Lilley, Michael Barber and Nick Birns; introduced by Christine Berberich. UK: £4, Overseas: £7


OTHER PUBLICATIONS


Anthony Powell, Caledonia, A Fragment. The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof. Now publicly available in its own right for the first time. UK: £8, Overseas: £10.50

John Gould; Dance Class. American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of Dance at Philips Academy. Many fresh and perceptive insights. UK: £11.50, Overseas: £16

Michael Bakewell, Fitzrovia: London’s Bohemia. Published in the National Portrait Gallery “Character Sketches” series. Snapshot biographies of Fitzrovian characters including Powell and many of his friends. UK: £5.50, Overseas: £9.50

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society. Back numbers of issues 1 to 4/5 available. UK: £5.50, Overseas: £8.50 each

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