Contents
From the Secretary’s Desk … 2
Eton Conference Report … 3-5
AP & Patrick Leigh Fermor … 6-10
Cheltenham Festival Report … 11-12
Kaggsy’s Ramblings – KO … 13-15
Kaggsy’s Ramblings – VB … 15-17
Dates for Your Diary … 18-19
Society Notices … 19-21
REVIEW: The Windsor Faction … 22-24
REVIEW: Profiles in String … 25-26
Letters to the Editor … 27-30
Cuttings … 31-33
Merchandise & Membership … 34-36
From the Secretary’s Desk

Wow! So much has happened since I sat down to write my last column.

First of all we had a wonderful conference at Eton College in late September. As you’ll see in Clemence Schultze’s report [page 3] the speakers were excellent, the events a delight, the food was super: all in all, Eton did us proud. I don’t yet have all the bills but the conference should break even thanks to a grant from the Derek Hill Foundation (which allowed us to keep prices within bounds) and the generosity of Eton College. We also owe much gratitude to Michael Meredith for his enthusiasm and for unlocking the recesses of the Eton machine. The feedback I’ve received from delegates is that everyone had a great weekend and that this was, as several said, our best conference yet. David Ball who is organising the 2015 conference has a lot to live up to!

Hot on the heels of the conference came the AGM on 19 October with the usual good turnout of members. Unfortunately several of our Trustees were missing – some due to illness; others because the trains picked that day to stop running. Nonetheless all the required business was done; Patric Dickinson was confirmed as a Vice-President for another 5 years; and we welcome Harry Mount (AP’s great-nephew) as a Trustee. AGM minutes in the next Newsletter.

After the business part of the AGM we heard a very interesting talk from the Powells’ grand-daughter, Georgia Powell (aided and abetted by Harry Mount), on the life and the work of Lady Violet. This highlighted both Lady Violet’s encyclopaedic memory – so important to AP in writing Dance – and her stature as a writer in her own right.

By the time you read this the Annual Lecture and Powell Birthday celebrations will be upon us! Following which it remains only for me to wish everyone best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. ■
We knew we were back at school as Keith Marshall tapped the gavel and told us sternly not to sit at the back. It was a science lecture auditorium – at least, so suggested the sinks and gas taps on the podium’s bench – but the luxuriously upholstered seats befitted a comfortable studio theatre. Keith thanked Eton College and Michael Meredith, the Derek Hill Foundation, and the Trustees of the Anthony Powell Society for supporting this, the seventh conference.

Michael Meredith mused on AP as an Old Etonian. The writer was interested in the differences between OEs, and presents no stereotypical Etonians. He was also concerned for the continuing history of alumni, as recorded in the school’s published register. Thanks to his ‘charm offensive’, 500 years’ worth of computerised records will soon go online, free to all for genealogical and historical researches. Patric Dickinson then welcomed us to the second Society conference to be held at Eton.

In his keynote address, DJ Taylor considered the literary politics of the 1930s, with its ideological divide between the Left-inclined and the lingering 1920s aesthetes, and asked where AP had stood. Taste predominated over politics in forming AP’s views: he might be described (like TS Eliot) as a right-wing modernist, and he combined an interest in Bohemia with living a perfectly normal life. The books well reflect contemporary attitudes, ranging from Quiggin’s fellow-travelling, via St John Clarke’s Hugh Walpole-ish keeping up, to Hugo Tolland, who wished he had lived in the 1920s.

Peter Berthoud (self-described as ‘a London obsessive’ who was unavoidably absent due to serious illness) provided an abundance of images of London in AP’s time which were presented by Keith Marshall. These reminded us how much the city has changed, not only through the losses of war but from redevelopment, population shifts, increasing wealth, traffic and tourism. Most evocative were a shabby secondhand shop in Charlotte Street – one of a kind that simply no longer exists – and the actual coffee stall at Hyde Park Corner.

Next came a new-old publication: Bernard Stacey had ventured to think himself into the persona of X Trapnel and to ‘distil the essence of Maida Vale canal water into a book’ [review, page 25]. Bernard sketched what we know of the writer’s life and career, and pointed out the appositeness of his novel’s title to Dadaism, particularly the string collages of Picabia, evoked on the cover. There was a rush to buy copies of the work – and some lucky members acquired one of the few adorned by X’s very own signature.

The evening reception was a delight: pianist and radio presenter Paul Guinery took us from Ted Jeavons’ wartime tunes via the Huntercombes’ ball to the song Sergeant Gwilt sang to Maureen: ‘Arm in Arm – Just You and Me’. Some melodies hovered at the fringes of memory; others were completely new to us. His wonderful playing and voice (which, with needless modesty, he compared to Max Pilgrim’s ‘tremulous quavering’) presented many lost gems: ‘If you’re Going to Piccadilly, Billy, pick a Nice Little One for Me’. He
elucidated some puzzling allusions: ‘Molly the Marchioness’ comes from the 1902 musical ‘A Country Girl’, and a revue by André Charlot at the end of World War I provided ‘Buzz Buzz’ – thus appropriately to be heard on the ‘Braddock alias Thorne’ walk. The occasion was enhanced by the setting: the Election Hall with its beamed ceiling and huge bird’s-eye-view painting of Venice. And among the portraits of Eton notables in the corridor hung one by Colin Spencer of AP.

Saturday’s first session was entitled ‘Aspects of Dance’. Constantine Sandis addressed manifestations of philosophy of action in the work. In a paper which touched briefly on writers from Homer to Wesley to Nietzsche, he identified Chaucer’s poetics of suffering as the opposing pole to Spenser’s of action. In the novel Widmerpool represents the will, with Nick as the figure of passivity and patiency.

Robin Bynoe used painting to illustrate the meaning of naturalism: Frith’s ‘Derby Day’, teeming with detail and ostensibly a representation of an actual event, is in fact just as selective and suggestive as a work by Manet or Renoir. He proposed that, unlike Thackeray and Trollope, AP just did not ‘get’ business, and was unable to represent it. Instead, he drew on specific details (the very small and specialised area of non-ferrous metal dealing) to evoke the business activities – and the power – of Sir Magnus Donners and his associates. While this lack of verisimilitude regarding Donners Brebner was a blemish on the work, it was scarcely a serious one.

During World War II, AP was engaged on John Aubrey and his Friends. Ivan Hutnik regarded this as pivotal in his development as a novelist. Aubrey’s sceptical and yet engaged presence affected the mode in which Dance is composed. AP’s style, narrative voice and perspective are all transformed from the manner of his prewar modernist works. Sentences become long and clausular; only Nick is allowed inner musings. Gossip is at the heart of the work, and claims to insight rely only on what characters say. The multiple perspectives entail an historical and all-embracing view of the present. ‘Dance is a thoroughly modern novel, albeit one with a pre-Enlightenment world view’.

The second keynote speech was given by Patric Dickinson on Varda, a woman well described as ‘strife-torn and causing strife’. It is impossible to summarise all that Patric has discovered about Dorothy Farrer Stewart: we await his account of his researches. A woman of striking beauty, actress, dancer, mannequin (for Chanel, no less), she had aspirations as a writer and translator, and her High Holborn bookshop was a venue for the avant garde in the late 1920s. Her three marriages were all troubled, and she died of an overdose. Often mentioned in memoirs of the period, and appearing too in fiction, she nevertheless remains elusive: comments of ‘peevish’ and ‘dissatisfied’ suggest the difficulties of her personality; her wit, charm and funniness are harder to convey. AP’s allusions to her in his memoirs are discreet, but surviving letters reveal that Varda was the keener of the two on a relationship and perhaps wished to marry him.

Lord Gowrie’s celebratory address began with what he termed ‘the best depiction of Eton in literature’. He stressed the ‘counter-Brideshead-ism’ of the portrayal of school and university, especially the eternities of boredom and melancholy to be endured: no Arcadia here, as Grey Gowrie himself experienced in 1955. A
couple of years later, he met AP for the first time, and thereafter had a standing order at his bookseller for the novels of just two authors: AP and Ian Fleming. He recalled the incongruity of AP’s ‘huntin’, shootin’, fishin’’ mode of speech when applied to books: ‘Extraordinary thing, that feller Turgenev ...’ Dance, for him, is ‘suffused with poetry’, and the work repays many re-readings. It was his own regret that AP’s papers had gone to the British Library instead of Eton College Library; it was his hope that AP’s status as one of Eton’s two great twentieth-century writers would be celebrated by a statue at the College.

In a session on ‘Powell’s People’, Jeff Manley offered multiple perspectives on Eton from the writings of John Heygate and Henry Green, as well as the little-known Julian Henry Hall (The Senior Commoner, 1933). He pointed out the differences in treatment of the school in AP’s essay ‘The Wat’ry Glade’ (1934, reprinted 1984) compared with Infants. Overall, Heygate emerged as a complex character who deserves more attention.

Winston Churchill is not perhaps exactly a Widmerpudlian politician but Nick Birns made out a case for similarities in the opportunism of the two careers, one of the Right, the other of the Left. He saw more resemblance between Churchill and AP (both British patriots, both unparochial, both celebrating the USA), though admitting that they differed in age, celebrity and style. For him, AP’s roman fleuve and Churchill’s war narrative sequence are ‘liberal epics’.

Jonathan Black demonstrated how Venusberg is a composite of Helsingfors and Reval, visited by AP as a young man. Finnish hero Baron Mannerheim impressed as an authentic representative of that nineteenth-century officer class which fascinated AP both in life and literature, and certainly contributed to the portrait of Kuno in the novel. The introduction to an area influenced (but not dominated) by Russian culture was one element in AP’s complex awareness of Russia.

From Baltic to Pacific: the final paper, by Frank Peterson, sketched the Powells’ 1937 visit to Hollywood. A career as a scriptwriter did not eventuate, which AP attributed to his own lack of histrionic ability in putting over a proposal; another factor (mentioned by John Powell in the question session) was the death of AP’s agent. But some cocktails were drunk and some parties were visited in ‘a special two months’.

Patric Dickinson closed the proceedings, and Michael Meredith showed us the impressive Eton College Library, where he had mounted a Powell-related display. The day concluded with an excellent dinner at Bekynton – all the meals and refreshments were most enjoyable.

This guest has nothing but praise for an occasion where surroundings, company and content combined to make a feast indeed.
Fellow Travellers:
Anthony Powell and Patrick Leigh Fermor

By Jeffrey Manley

With the posthumous publication earlier this year of the third and final volume of the narrative of his walk from Hook of Holland to Constantinople, the career of Patrick Leigh Fermor and with it the generation of writers to which he and Anthony Powell belonged has come to a close.


Leigh Fermor was born in 1915, ten years after Powell. But he associated himself with and wrote in the tradition of the writers of Powell’s generation such as Sacheverell Sitwell, Robert Byron, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh who turned their foreign travels into books intended both to amuse and inform their readers.

Powell did not write travel narratives as such, but he did use his foreign travels to provide material for his 1930s novels such as A&P, Venusberg and WBW. Although there’s no record that Powell reviewed any of Leigh Fermor’s books, he would have been aware of them. They would have known each other as members of the Travelers’ Club (which Leigh Fermor joined at the end of the war).

Leigh Fermor recounted the history of his membership application in 2004 when the club held an event celebrating the 60th anniversary of his joining.


Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor

2010/06/10/the-travellers-club-c-r-cockerell-and-a-tale-of-two-foxes/]

My War-time brother-in-arms, Xan Fielding, and I were put up for the Club when we were in our twenties. Arthur EE Reade, our sponsor, was rather older, and a member of long standing when the candidature was set in motion on 1942. We were all three at the time SOE captains dressed up as shepherds, deep in ash and lice, huddling cross-legged over the embers and under the stalactites of a cave in German-occupied Crete. Arthur sealed the envelope putting us up. Obviously it would take some time before it could be handed to the next caique or submarine, longer still to reach Pall Mall. To the south of us, on the other side of the
Mediterranean, Rommel was hastening on to El Alamein. Our candidature might take a while …

Arriving back to be demobbed at the end of our war, I made a bee-line for Pall Mall. (Xan Fielding and I were members now – Arthur Reade’s letter, three years in transit, had worked.) I dashed upstairs, barely touching Talleyrand’s ramp, and into the Library, to gaze up at the battling Amazons and Greeks and Lapiths and centaurs that girdle this marvelous room. It was a great moment.

As is explained in his recent biography [219], Leigh Fermor’s relations with the club could be a bit rocky. For instance, during the period after the war when he was moving around constantly, Leigh Fermor at some point stored his belongings at the club, running up unpaid charges of £100. How the matter was resolved is not recorded. This is from the recently published biography by Artemis Cooper. Although written with Leigh Fermor’s authorization, Cooper doesn’t hesitate to indicate where she may be in disagreement with her subject’s version of things.


Leigh Fermor’s education was somewhat haphazard, with his parents in India much of the time. He never finished school, after being expelled from King’s Canterbury for holding hands with a local greengrocer’s daughter. In lieu of further schooling or university, he was allowed to make the trek to Constantinople in 1933-35. He received an allowance of £1 per week, payable monthly poste restante. It was his diaries and memory of that trip that formed the basis for the three-volume memoir that was just completed. After reaching his destination, he drifted around Greece, Romania and England, spending most of his time with Balasha Cantecuzene, a Romanian aristocrat 16 years his senior whom he had met in Athens. He was in Romania with her when the war started, and he returned to England immediately to sign up.

When he lost a position in the Brigade of Guards due to a prolonged illness, he was accepted in the less prestigious Intelligence Corps on the strength of his knowledge of foreign languages. He was sent to Crete after the British withdrawal to organize the activities of Cretan resistance fighters. He conceived and participated in a successful plan to kidnap a German General and take him to Egypt.

After the war Leigh Fermor hung about in London, also working for a time with the British Council in Athens but not fitting in very well to a desk job. He got his start as a writer through a Greek friend who was commissioned to write a photo book about the Caribbean. Leigh Fermor was signed on to write the text. He had in the meantime found himself a lover in the person of Joan Rayner (née Eyre Monsell), later his wife, who shared his interest in travels and accompanied him on the trip to the Caribbean to collect material for the book. When the commissioning publisher went bust, Leigh Fermor took it to John Murray. They accepted it and published the rest of Leigh Fermor’s work up to and including the final volume of his trip memoir.

One thing Leigh Fermor learned from his travels in the 1930s was how to charm owners of country houses (mainly in Austria, Hungary and Romania) where he was seeking accommodation. One
Powell would probably have considered him a social climber in the same category as Rex Whistler, Evelyn Waugh, John Betjeman, Cecil Beaton and Adrian Daintry [J82-86, 199-209]. According to Powell, these artists all used their talents to attract the attention of, and gain recognition from, persons of a higher social rank than themselves. Leigh Fermor’s father was in the Indian civil service and his mother’s family derived its livelihood from quarries north of Calcutta. He probably acquired some degree of social ambition from his mother, but he doesn’t seem to have been a snob. He cultivated friendships with Sacheverell Sitwell, Deborah Devonshire, Ann Fleming, Diana Cooper and others of what Powell sometimes described as the beau monde. But he was equally keen to maintain his friendships with the Cretan peasants with whom he had fought in the war and often went out of his way to do favors for them even when that might have been inconvenient. He became a member of White’s Club in 1965 (proposed by Andrew Devonshire and Michael Astor) as well as Pratt’s and the Beefsteak, while maintaining his membership in the Travellers.

Powell doesn’t mention Leigh Fermor in his memoirs but does describe an encounter with him in the Journals. This was at a London party given by Evangeline Bruce that the Powells attended. Also present were Nicholas Henderson and Peter Quennell who got into an argument about what it took for a person to “make something” of himself:

That roused Peter, who poured contempt on such an ambitious concept. What does it mean? He glanced around the table: “Of course a retired Ambassador [Henderson] ...
a famous novelist [Powell] …’ His eyes reached Paddy. Definition understandably eluded him, Paddy being in any case quieter than usual … When this difference of opinion as to the Meaning of Life subsided, Paddy and Peter deplored to each other the sort of people becoming members of White’s Club these days. I was glad to have lived to hear this conversation, wonderful Max Beerbohm Young Self and Old Self, Quennell Cartoon, which would certainly have included the ghosts of former White’s members Evelyn Waugh and Cyril Connolly in the background as deceased bohemians who had also made the White’s Club grade. [J82-86, 156]

On another occasion, Powell’s son Tristram told him that David Cheshire and Melvyn Bragg were doing a TV film about Leigh Fermor to which Powell responded, “That should produce a good clash of egos” [J87-89, 98]. He certainly got that right.

Powell’s reference is probably to the South Bank Show segment that is described in Leigh-Fermor’s biography. (Powell’s Journal entry about the discussion with his son is dated 10 April 1988. The South Bank Show programme was transmitted on 22 January 1989.) His biographer mentions that this documentary was commissioned after publication of volume two of Leigh Fermor’s book about his walk to Constantinople, Between the Woods and the Water. She describes this period as “the peak of his fame”. The crew went out to Leigh Fermor’s villa in Kardamyli, Greece to film an interview. Leigh Fermor was usually nervous about being interviewed because he didn’t like being asked how much of what he wrote was based on actual memory of events then over 50 years distant. The experienced interviewer, Melvyn Bragg, went right to that point:

‘One is struck again by detail remembered thirty or forty [sic] years before. However extensive your notes, you can’t have remembered everything …’
‘Yes’, said Paddy.

This was not a helpful answer, so Bragg suggested that in the course of the long walk, books and solitude had built up the ‘muscles’ of his memory. Gratefully clutching at the straw, Paddy replied, ‘Do you know, I’ve never thought of it – I think perhaps they might have – I hope so’.

Then he described the deliberate act of remembering in terms of an old and dusty mosaic, that cannot be seen until water is poured over it …

‘And then one can corroborate it with all sorts of other things like a few old letters, you know, one’s old diaries come in handy, a few things scribbled
Bragg then went on to another touchy topic – the question of how Leigh Fermor was getting on with volume three. Leigh Fermor admitted that the success of the first two was making him “a bit nervy” about the third. But that was an understatement. As his biographer describes it, Leigh Fermor never seriously got down to any sustained work on volume three. What has been published now is in fact something that he wrote in 1963 that started out as an article for Holiday magazine. As it turns out, it’s not as bad as its editors suggest, although it is different from the earlier volumes. It deals mainly with his travels through Bulgaria where he doesn’t have introductions to aristocrats in their country houses. Instead, he makes contacts with students and British expats and diplomats who put him up. He also detours through Romania to visit Bucharest where he does have the usual introductions, affording him opportunities, at least for a few weeks, similar to those enjoyed in his glory days in Budapest and Transylvania described in volume two.

The last portion of the book is largely taken up with his visit to Mount Athos after he left Constantinople. This section was apparently taken directly from his diary and could have used some revision. For example, clichés uncharacteristically creep in which would certainly not have escaped Leigh Fermor’s critical editorial eye. Moreover, unlike his long walk to Constantinople, the trek around Mount Athos (where walking and donkeys are the only form of transportation) has been written of dozens of times before. The portions about Bulgaria and the Bucharest section, however, describe a unique adventure and are, on the whole, up to the standards of the first two books.

However disappointing minor bits of the last volume may be, its publication is a welcome event for Leigh Fermor’s readers. It will relieve their anxiety that they might never know how the story ended. Sadly, it is now clear from his biography that its publication was delayed unnecessarily for 25 years. These pages were already in existence when the first volumes were published, and publication was delayed only to provide Leigh Fermor with the opportunity to improve them systematically. His biographer makes it clear that this was never going to happen.

‘Cohabitation with antipathetic beings is torment,’ said Dr Trelawney. ‘Has that never struck you, my dear friend?’

‘Time and again,’ said Duport, laughing loudly. ‘Perfect hell. I’ve done quite a bit of it in my day. Would you like to hear some of my experiences?’

‘Why should we wish to ruminate on your most secret orgies?’ said Dr Trelawney. ‘What profit for us to muse on your nights in the lupanar, your diabolical couplings with the brides of debauch, more culpable than those phantasms of the incubi that rack the dreams of young girls, or the libidinous gymnastics of the goat-god whose ice-cold sperm fathers monsters on writhing witches in coven?’

The Kindly Ones
I was lucky enough to attend the talk on Dance at Cheltenham last week and have been patiently waiting for some comment [on the APLIST] from someone with more literary ability than I have, but as none seems to be appearing I thought that I would give my impressions of the discussion. I am counting on a fairly unreliable memory, so quotes are only approximate, but I wanted to give a report of a very enjoyable hour of talk about Powell.

The day did not start well, with the start delayed for 15 minutes because the historian Richard Davenport-Hines was entangled in the train system between Gloucester and Cheltenham, but we did have “time added” at the end to compensate. The panel were Hilary Spurling, DJ Taylor and Richard Davenport-Hines (Tariq Ali had been announced but had to withdraw), chaired by the Anthony Powell Society’s Patric Dickinson. I felt the panel was a little unbalanced, with Taylor and Spurling having an obvious rapport, while Davenport-Hines was not a natural speaker and tended to lead the discussion into some very obscure areas. He spent some time comparing Powell to an 18th century Italian writer whose name I failed to catch, who seemed to me to have very marginal connection to Powell.

Patric started the talks with asking each panellist about the first encounter with Powell’s work. I was surprised that both Taylor and Spurling were less than enthusiastic at first. Hilary Spurling said that she read the first few pages of A Question of Upbringing and gave up, not understanding why anyone would want to read about unpleasant Eton boys, and Taylor was put off by Powell’s prose which he first considered “clotted” but later learned to love. Spurling’s first real reading was Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant and she worked her way back from there.

Hilary Spurling is writing a biography of Powell, which she understandably did not want to talk about, but I found her relationship with Powell fascinating. She first met him when she was a young journalist working for the Spectator and a friendship developed from there. She said that he actually bullied her into writing her “Dance Companion”, and she absolutely hated it. It almost destroyed her love of his work, because the area that she was most interested in was the plotting and the complex development of the books and the concentration on the more obscure characters was not really her interest. When she had finished Powell remarked to her that it would have saved him so much time if she had written it before he wrote the books.

This brought up the question of how much Powell re-read the previous books when working on the series. Spurling gave a fascinating picture of how Powell worked. He had a very uncomfortable small folding
chair and table in one of the bedrooms at the Chantry, and a stack of all the previous books on the floor. As work (and the series) progressed the books grew increasingly tatty, and he had an arrangement with his publisher to replace the whole stack when they became unusable. I wonder what happened to those tatty old books, possibly with hand-written notes?

Another interesting talking point was how much of the plot was done at the beginning of the series, such as Stringham’s remark about Widmerpool “being the death of me” foreshadowing his actual death. Spurling said that Powell had told her that the secret of the development of the plot was to build a sufficiently deep drawer full of characters and incidents, into which you could keep dipping. I know he was speaking metaphorically, but what a wonderful picture this conjures up of Powell putting his hand into the drawer and pulling out Widmerpool and Pamela, and having to work out a way to connect them. I wonder how early in the series he did this?

Spurling then made what I thought was the best remark of the afternoon. She said that we all know authors who started writing and did not build a big enough drawer, but kept using it.

There were questions at the end, including a particularly dumb one. “I’m a busy man. I haven’t read any of the books and don’t have time to read all twelve. Which one should I read?” This was dealt with very tactfully and no-one asked why he was there.

I had a very enjoyable afternoon, very capably chaired by Patric, who gave a mention of the Anthony Powell Society at the end, a membership of which I am hoping for this Christmas. On the way back to the car park I followed a group of three people discussing Proust and why they hadn’t read him, which was an unusual bonus to the day. ■
Well, I’m relieved to say that I did manage to get my June Powell read before the end of the month, although the review is a little late – life getting in the way of blogging again! However, this was a thoroughly enjoyable, entertaining and involving read so though late, very welcome!

The Kindly Ones is about the coming of war, and Powell wrong-foots us instantly by whisking us back to a time before the first book in the series A Question of Upbringing, to his life as a boy, living in a country house called Stonehurst. Once we’ve re-adjusted to the new setting (getting into a Powell book is never entirely straightforward!), we meet a whole new set of characters from Nick’s childhood – his parents, nurse and various very entertaining servants including the soldier Bracey, cook Albert and maid Billson. This eternal triangle provides one of the funniest sections of the series so far, when poor Billson has a nervous breakdown and appears naked at dinner. General Conyers, making an appearance in younger form, rescues the situation admirably but things are destined to change as on the same day news reaches Stonehurst of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the First World War is signalled. The title, incidentally, refers to a nickname given to The Furies, presumably in attempt to placate them!

One of the worst things about life is not how nasty the nasty people are. You know that already. It is how nasty the nice people can be.

During this first chapter, we meet the rather wonderful religious quack Dr Trelawney and his followers, and he will recur throughout the book. The second chapter jumps forward to 1938 where we meet once again Moreland and his wife Matilda, now living in the country near Stourwater, Sir Magnus Donners’ country place. Nick goes for a visit to the Morelands and they are taken off for dinner at Stourwater, bizarrely being chauffeured by Templer. The night at Donner’s mansion is also bizarre, ending up with the somewhat risqué-sounding Seven Deadly Sins tableaux. Bearing in mind the constant hints about Donner’s dodgy private life I guess we should not be surprised, but this is all too much for Templer’s highly strung second wife who also has a bit of a nervous breakdown – nerves being something of a recurring theme here.

We then move on to 1939 and one of the main regular characters in the sequence so far, Uncle Giles, makes his final bow. Although Nick claims not to have been close to his uncle, Giles turned up on a regular basis, and it is rather sad to see him go. Poor Nick has to travel off to the seaside, where his departed relative has been staying in a seedy hotel coincidentally run by Albert, the ex-cook. Here he re-encounters Dr Trelawney and Mrs Erdleigh – the constant, wonderful, unexpected juxtapositions of characters are just fabulous! Nick also runs into Bob Duport, who was married to his first love...
Jean Templer, and there are a number of painful and surprising revelations.

One passes through the world knowing few, if any, of the important things about even the people with whom one has been from time to time in the closest intimacy.

By the final chapter war has arrived, although it has not yet brought chaos, more a strange kind of calm. Nick is knocking about a somewhat deserted London, trying to gain access to the army as an officer, and tries to enlist Widmerpool’s help (to no avail). Our Kenneth has become even more insufferable and pompous – he was obviously made for army life and is really becoming more and more unbearable as the books go on! But we are soon steered back to familiar territory, at Lady Molly’s, where a number of characters reappear, there are more revelations and Ted Jeavons’ brother proves to be of great help to Nick.

This volume in the Dance series really shows an author who has complete mastery of his material. The strand and complexities of everyday life are reflected here, with some characters making just cameo appearances (Quiggin and co), while others dominate the story. I was really pleased to see something of Nick’s childhood and family, and some of the sequences in this chapter were a hoot – particularly the appearances of Dr Trelawney (as well as his later manifestations in the novel!)

This is a very atmospheric book – almost elegiac in places – as Jenkins and his circle face up to the forthcoming fighting. The two pre-war periods are contrasted in the early and later parts of the story, and I found it very surprising that Nick was so keen to enlist. Having seen the aftermath of WWI it might be thought that he would be keen to avoid military action, particularly with Isobel expecting a baby, but not so. Powell is fair enough to acknowledge that there is an opposing view, allowing a memorable appearance by Gypsy Jones, campaigning against mobilisation; but his terminology when describing the protestors makes it clear where his loyalties lie.

Of course, this wouldn’t be a Dance novel without Widmerpool. And it’s fascinating to note how as the series develops the reader is able to look back over the characters whom Powell has portrayed so consistently, and see how early characteristics (such as Widmerpool’s driven nature) develop as humans come to maturity. Kenneth is obviously a man who will flourish during the conflict. We see much of Moreland and Matilda, and also the wonderful Erridge!

Erridge, a rebel whose life had been exasperatingly lacking in persecution, had enjoyed independence of parental control, plenty of money, assured social position, early in life. Since leaving school he had been deprived of all the typical grudges within the grasp of most young men. Some of these grudges, it was true, he had later developed with fair success by artificial means, grudges being, in a measure, part and parcel of his political approach.

Powell is as always concerned with chance and destiny and the Dance. It is an apparently random meeting with Jeavons’ brother which will enable Nick to finally get into the army. Powell’s feeling is that there is an external fate which always takes a hand in life; and I often feel these books should be subtitled “the-seemingly-random-but-actually-not-random-at-all
And so to July’s Anthony Powell – *The Valley of Bones*, book 7 in the *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence, and the first volume in my collection titled “Autumn”. It’s perhaps a little scary to realise that Nick is being considered in the autumn of his life while still so young, but I suppose we need to remind ourselves that life expectation has changed somewhat! Or maybe it is just the autumn section of the stories – whatever!

I’ve now begun to expect that the start of any new Powell will throw me straight in at the deep end, into an unfamiliar situation with a set of new characters. However, the beginning of *VB* does this with a vengeance, as Nick is in the army and posted to a regiment who it quickly becomes clear are Welsh! The first two chapters are darkly humorous as we meet Nick’s CO, Gwatkin, prone to quite dramatic mood swings, plus a number of other officers and ordinary soldiers. There is also Bithel, whose (false) reputation precedes him and who turns out to be a bit of a strange alcoholic. The regiment get shipped off to Ireland and there is much fumbling about with orders and military exercises going wrong. Gwatkin proves to be very erratic, and prone to take out his failures on others.

*Romantic ideas about the way life is lived are often to be found in persons themselves fairly coarse-grained. This was to some extent true of Gwatkin. His coarseness of texture took the form of having to find a scapegoat after he himself had been in trouble.*

Before long, Nick becomes the scapegoat on one the troop’s first military exercises, although Gwatkin tries to make it up later.

Nick is then shipped off from Wales to Aldershot to some kind of pointless-sounding training course where he befriends David Pennistone (whom he had run into a long time ago at a party). And then, after the two excellent chapters of Nick in the army, Powell hits us with a cracker of a chapter with the weekend gathering from hell as our hero visits his sister-in-law’s, where Isobel his wife is staying. He’s met with old faces, new faces, characters we’ve only heard mentioned before, sworn enemies, sexual...
undertones – it really has it all and ends with Nick having to go back to camp while Isobel faces labour!

Back in Ireland, Gwatkin is going to pieces, having fallen in love with a local barmaid, and drifting off into dreams at inappropriate moments. Things continue to crumble in the regiment until Gwatkin is replaced and Nick is hauled off to HQ to meet the DAAG (Deputy Assistant Adjutant General apparently!) who turns out to be an old friend.

This is quite a switch in style and material for Powell, as we are dealing with war which is obviously a serious matter. However, this doesn’t stop him taking his usual humorous look at things and I did find myself laughing out loud at several points. He is particularly good on pointing out the boredom and futility of much of army life, and this is evident from the beginning when it is revealed that many of the men in charge in the regiment were once bankers – obviously a profession that well prepared them for fighting! (ahem!). He also captures brilliantly the gulf between the remote, somewhat dippy officers and the lower ranks of the soldiers, particularly in the sequence where the General makes a spot inspection and seems more concerned about the troops’ breakfast habits than anything else:

*The General stood in silence, as if in great distress of mind, holding his long staff at arm’s length from him, while he ground it deep into the earthy surface of the barnhouse floor. He appeared to be trying to contemplate as objectively as possible the concept of being so totally excluded from the human family as to dislike porridge.*

I have to say that I did find myself having recourse to Wikipedia at times, though, to sort out some of the more complex military ranks!

The writing is superb as always, and Powell’s normally labyrinthine sentences are often reduced to shorter, almost staccato phrases in places, reflecting the change in the world around him and the necessity for often quick-fire decisions and actions. In particular, he shows a genius for reproducing dialect, and the lilting, sing-song intonations of the Welsh language are beautifully reflected in the speech of the soldiers.

*Now, see it you must, Gareth … In time of peace, in the mine, you are above me, Gareth, and above Sergeant Pendry. Here, that is not. No longer is it the mine.*

Having visited Wales almost annually for many years, I can testify to the accuracy!

An interesting underlying theme in *VB* was the effect of the war and army life on relationships between men and women, and also the changing attitudes of women. From early on, it seems that it is OK for soldiers, even married ones, to lust after, and liaise with, any women they come across; but when Sgt Pendry’s wife is reported to be having an affair he falls to pieces, and has to go home to try to sort things out. So should she wait faithfully at home while the soldiers take their chances with local girls where they can? Powell’s (and his characters’) attitude to women are ambivalent – some of the soldiers seem happy with a quick shag under a hedge, others envisage much more noble affairs and Nick in places seems to defend the fact that women are being just as promiscuous as men – he is slightly more open-minded than many of his colleagues.
The War caused a large shift in attitudes to women, and indeed of women’s expectations, and this is reflected a little here, though is to be found much more in women’s writing of the period (many of the reprinted Persephone books come to mind).

But always in the background is the knowledge that War is a matter of life and death. There are casualties here – Sgt Pendry is one of them, although not through seeing action, and Nick loses a family member, albeit a remote one. We are aware that there are likely to be more.

The potential biographies of those who die young possess the mystical dignity of a headless statue, the poetry of enigmatic passages in an unfinished or mutilated manuscript, unburdened with contrived or banal ending.

Once again, this is a marvellous piece of writing by Powell. Although much of the book takes place in camps around the country, we are not completely cut off from Nick’s former life and contacts; and in fact, Isobel does have her baby although remotely, at a distance, which is how Powell deals with Nick’s marriage! He brilliantly captures the boredom and banality of the army and as Nick says:

A French writer who’d been a regular officer said the whole point of soldiering was its bloody boring side. The glamour, such as it was, was just a bit of exceptional luck if it came your way.

I’m simultaneously looking forward to and dreading the next book, as I’m not sure what the DAAG has in store for Nick, and I am afraid that there will be more casualties.

(NB – Yes, the appalling Widmerpool does make a fleeting appearance – but I’m not saying where!)

Anthony Powell Lecture
in collaboration with
The Wallace Collection

Anthony Powell and Sculpture
to be given by
Alastair Laing

The Wallace Collection
Manchester Square, London W1
Friday 6 December 2013
1830 hrs

Tickets £14
includes a glass of wine
following the lecture

Tickets from the Hon. Secretary
on 020 8864 4095
secretary@anthonypowell.org
or the usual address on page 2

Art historian Alastair Laing recently retired as Curator of Pictures & Sculpture at the National Trust, having for almost 27 years looked after the many works of art in the Trust’s care. He was responsible for organising the 1995 centenary exhibition In Trust for the Nation at the National Gallery. His particular interest is François Boucher, exhibitions of whose work he helped mount in America and France. He is currently preparing a catalogue raisonné of Boucher’s drawings. In his lecture he will take stock of Anthony Powell’s interest in sculpture as revealed in the pages of Dance, in his memoirs and in his writings on the visual arts.

*****
The Wallace’s restaurant will be open following the lecture for those wishing to dine. Table booking on 020 7563 9505.

London Group
Anthony Powell Birthday Lunch
Saturday 7 December 2013
1200 for 1230 hrs
Da Corradi
20-22 Shepherd Market, London W1
Join us at a small, friendly Italian restaurant which is just round the corner from Powell’s 1920s lodgings.
Afterwards visit the boutiques of Shepherd Market or Heywood Hill bookshop for those Christmas presents.
This is a pay on the day event, but please book with the Hon. Secretary so we ensure we have a large enough table!
Non-members will be welcome.

New York & NE USA Group
Anthony Powell Birthday Lunch
Friday 13 December 2013
Details from Ed Bock, eabock@syr.edu

Secretary’s New Year Brunch
Saturday 18 January 2014
1000 to 1200 hrs
Da Corradi
20-22 Shepherd Market, London W1
Want a late New Year celebration? Or just something to enliven the dull days of winter? Whichever it is why not join the Hon. Secretary for Saturday brunch just round the corner from Powell’s 1920s lodgings.
This is a pay on the day event, but please book with the Hon. Secretary so we ensure we have a large enough table.
Non-members will be welcome.
**Dates for Your Diary**

**London Quarterly Pub Meets**

Saturday 8 February 2014  
Saturday 10 May 2014  
Saturday 9 August 2014  
Saturday 1 November 2014

**The Audley**  
41-43 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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**Obituary**

**Jean Rollason**  
1931-2013

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the sudden recent death of Jean Rollason. Many will remember both Jean and her late husband Bob as stalwart members of the Anthony Powell Society and attendees of its AGMs, Conferences and Pub Meets over the years – indeed, Jean’s last full Saturday was enjoyably spent at the Society’s 2013 Conference in Eton with her younger son John, also a member.

Jean and Bob made their home in the Chilterns, where they were great supporters of the local community and much involved in campaigning for educational standards.

A keen student of the ancient world from her schooldays, when her teachers arranged lessons in ancient Greek specially for her, Jean read Classics at University of London, going on to teach the subject at Wycombe Abbey School. She never lost her great love of the subject and like all good teachers she was also a lifelong learner.

Her other enthusiasms included architecture, politics, travel and all things French; but one of the greatest of them was undoubtedly her tremendous love of books, especially English literature. She was not only a particularly avid reader of Anthony Powell but also of John Betjeman, and was a member of the Council of the Betjeman Society until her death.

Jean will be much missed by a great many people, and our deepest sympathies go to her children Christopher, Jane and John and her other family and friends.

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**Venice Study “Weekend”**  
9-11 October 2014

At long last we are able to offer that much requested Venice event. It will include:

- 2 nights (Thursday & Friday) bed & breakfast accommodation at the Cini Foundation, where AP attended the conference which inspired *TK* (extra nights may be available)
- 3 or 4 speakers
- Visit to the Tiepolo frescoes at Palazzo Labia, inspiration for the Candaules & Gyges ceiling
- Visit to the Arsenale area
- Reception and dinner

The group will be limited to 30. Delegates will be responsible for arranging their own travel to/from Venice and any additional nights.

**Full details and pricing will be announced around Easter 2014 when booking will open.**
Welcome to New Members
We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following who have joined the Society in recent months:
Stuart Chamberlain, Oakham
Andrew Clarke, Gordon, Australia
Gail Cleveland, Independence, USA
Alfred Ellis, Shrewsbury
Susan Green, Stratford upon Avon
John & Leela Hardy, London
Charles Meeres, Norwich
Christopher Nelson, Tuscon, USA
Suzanne Posner, Plymouth
Prof. Constantine Sandis, Oxford
Jason White, Mamaroneck, USA

Local Group Contacts

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

New York & NE USA Group
Area: New York & NE USA
Contacts: Nick Birns
Email: nicbirns@aol.com

Great Lakes Group
Area: Chicago area, USA
Contact: Joanne Edmonds
Email: jedmonds@bsu.edu

Nordic 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.

Subscriptions
Members are reminded that subscriptions are due annually on 1 April (for rates see back page). Reminders 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.

As we will be using email wherever possible, please keep a look-out for emails from the Society.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, address on page 2.

Newsletter Copy Deadlines

Newsletter #54, Spring 2014
Copy Deadline: 14 February 2014
Publication Date: 7 March 2014

Newsletter #55, Summer 2014
Copy Deadline: 16 May 2014
Publication Date: 6 June 2014
**Postcards of Anthony Powell’s Ancestral Lands**

Thanks to member John Blaxter we now have four colour photographic postcards of the Powell ancestral lands in and around Radnorshire. The images are from the many delightful views John showed during his 2012 AGM talk *Anthony Powell’s Ancestral Lands*.

Packs of four cards, with envelopes, are available through the Society shop (see page 35) at £2.50 (UK members), £3.50 (overseas members). Stock is limited, although if there is sufficient demand we may produce a second edition.

At the convenient age of twenty-one Philip Powell (1746-1819) became heir to his uncle or great-uncle by marriage, the Revd Philip Lewis, who left him Tyncoed (The House in the Wood) at Disserth, about twelve miles from Clyro, where it still stands in its clump of trees. The extent of the inheritance is hard to assess, but, in land deals transacted later on, a parcel of about eight or nine hundred acres changed hands, apparently about half the property. [Infants]

From top to bottom:
*The Church of St Meillig, Llowes – looking towards the Powell corner of the churchyard.*
*Crûgeryr: late afternoon in winter, looking west.*
*The Church at St Cewydd, Disserth, Powys.*
*Tyncoed (The House in the Wood) at Disserth.*
Do not be deceived. Whilst the title might presage the latest Robert Ludlam or Len Deighton, *The Windsor Faction* is nothing of the kind. For this is no thriller. DJ Taylor’s latest novel enters the intricate genre of alternate history. Neither should one be intimidated by the sinister cover design of the swastika and eagle dominating a murky silhouette of the London skyline [*UK edition – Ed.*]. There are essential elements in this ‘what-if’ Second World War tale that guides us through an alternate Sliding Doors reality in which the inconvenient interloper and captor of Edward VIII’s heart, Wallis Simpson, had – Diana-like – conveniently died before the outbreak of hostilities, leaving the now unabdicated anti-war king on the throne to help the process of appeasement.

Mr Taylor avoids the most obvious risk of such a tale – namely of having the new fictitious Establishment become a polar opposite – a violently pro-Nazi fascist state – for this is no black-and-white, yes-or-no relocation of the sands of history but more of a subtle journey through varying shades of grey. Emphases are delicately shifted, nuances of outlook gently nudge the course of events along a parallel, but not diametrically opposed, path.

Nonetheless, the subject is not a new one for literature or film alike: one is reminded a little of *The Remains of the Day* and, more recently, the 2009 film *Glorious 39*, although this book has at its core more of the former’s subdued interplay of the characters rather than the overt drama of the latter.

We follow the fortunes of Cynthia, daughter of the solid middle class Kirkpatricks recently returned to England from Ceylon, who works at the newly created literary magazine *Duration*, run by the wealthy and well-connected Peter Wildgoose; we meet Rodney, a seedy young man (not unlike James Ross in Taylor’s previous two novels) who ostensibly works in a Deaconesque antique shop but also runs mysterious errands for the American cypher clerk, Tyler Kent. In each of the three parts of the book we are introduced to Beverley Nichols – a well-connected homosexual journalist and based on the real life figure – through his incisive staccato diary entries as he is enlisted to help the King write his Christmas speech – these entries being by far the most compelling parts of the narrative.

There are several subplots that, it transpires, seem to serve little purpose other than to highlight a particular aspect of a character. For instance, Rodney’s affair with the wife of the proprietor of the antique shop leads nowhere – indeed both characters treat their liaisons with a dismissive carelessness that suggests they know it does not matter. Cynthia’s Belgravia flatmate, Lucy, acquires no role whatever for herself in the book’s events. By contrast, Anthea, second cousin to the Prime Minister and a sort of even more upmarket Tuffy Weedon, is constantly in
evidence but ultimately appears to be there for no other reason than to send Cynthia on her ill-fated mission towards the end.

The story drifts from Ceylon to England and into a cycle of country house parties, clubs and residences in London, and to the offices of Duration. It is however not until the King, aided and advised by Beverley Nichols and to the horror of his aides, delivers his duplicitous pro-peace Christmas speech that events gather pace, as though the ‘in limbo’ lives of the characters in the Phoney War were waiting for a catalyst to galvanise them into pushing the plot forward. Clandestine meetings with the politically uncertain king and the various persons who wish either to help or use him, are arranged but this is the last we see of Edward VIII. There is a tactical mugging by one side, and an attempt is made to steal a book listing all the supporters of the pro-peace and somewhat anti-Semitic Windsor Faction by the other. After this, the plot gears up towards its climax. The lacklustre Cynthia returns to the centre of proceedings and experiences her own personal phoney war in the midst of some action before events reach an unexpectedly explosive conclusion.

It is however rather late in the book that this flurry of espionage-related activity rears its head and, although one is grateful that the seemingly directionless gatherings of different permutations of characters has crystallised into substance, this unexpected jolt from the narrative of the grey monotony of the early days of the war jars a little. Perhaps indeed that was Mr Taylor’s intent. Nevertheless, the concluding scenes, for all the build up, tend to feel more like an episode of a very attenuated Modesty Blaise trying to outwit an exceptionally inept Bond villain and so the denouement, when it comes, neither startles nor shocks.

At the same time as this finale comes the German assault on the Maginot Line and histories realigns themselves. We realise that our journey into speculation is over and has lasted little more than six months during which, subversive mutterings from Fifth Columnists and appeasniks aside, nothing new has happened apart from a tactically ill-advised speech from the King. The Windsor Faction is disbanded – interned or worse – and the machinery of war rumbles on.

Quite aside from Mr Taylor being a dyed-in-the-wool Powellite, another reason for reviewing this book in the pages of the Newsletter is the multiple references that recall Powell and Dance that appear – by
coincidence or design one is never quite sure – mostly during the first half of the novel. Thus, amidst the narrative, one glimpses the memory of a young man having sugar poured over his head at a dance; sees Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* being read incongruously by a character; catches passing mention of the Maida Vale canal and Gainsborough; comes across an anti-war pamphlet called *War Never Pays*; one even reads a chapter titled ‘From a View to a Death’. There is something of the ghost of Trapnel hanging in invisible wreaths around the talented yet down-at-heel, advance-scrounging writer Sylvester Del Mar. Desmond’s desperation to have parties and his bemoaning their scarcity even in wartime has strong echoes of Dickie Umfraville’s similar gripe at Foppa’s. There is even a little sideswipe at Evelyn Waugh for good measure. And all throughout, as though in homage to MacClintick, bobs up again and again what appears to be Mr Taylor’s favourite word – ‘counterpoint’.

For a professionally edited and produced book there are a surprising number of typographical errors, some of which even break the flow and cause one to have to read the relevant sentence again to make sense of the narrative. And even during the Second World War set in an alternate version of history, the Houses of Parliament would not have been situated in Westminster Square.

Whilst there are some flashes of originality and compelling passages, especially in Nichols’ diary, the whole is something of a disappointment. It neither delivers a startling or thought-provoking alternative outcome to the war, nor provides characters that will long linger in the memory, nor yet give an events-packed romp through 1939-40 Britain. The few twists are visible from far off. *Derby Day* this is not.

*The King’s Speech* might have been a better title – but of course that had already been taken.
Dance provides us with many mysteries, with a substantial number of the larger ones seeming to congregate around X Trapnel. And one of those is his lost novel Profiles in String: never finished because of its watery demise in the Maida Vale Canal some 50-odd years ago. That is until now.

Bernard Stacey has undertaken the mammoth task of recreating Trapnel’s novel. As Stacey himself said at the recent Conference, this was no mean feat for there is very little evidence to go on. We know who the author is, that he had written a previous novel Camel Ride to the Tomb, a little about his background, the peripatetic nature of a life spent largely in London, roughly when the book was being written and that he believed in Naturalism. The use of the words “profiles” and “string” perhaps suggest a connection with the Dadaist art of Francis Picabia. Having said that you have outlined most of what there is to know.

Yet, here we have a more than plausible recreation, not just because the style is right but also because the plot is right and the details are right. And unlike Dance, which AN Wilson in last year’s Annual Anthony Powell Lecture described as “anecdote papered over with passe-partout”, Profiles in String does have a discernable plot – although this is far from clear until the unexpected twist at the very end.

As one might expect of a Trapnel novel the story revolves around a slightly seedy pub and an equally slightly seedy group of middlebrow friends – literary and art world hacks and hangers on; often short of a few bob; and often being secretive about their affairs (in all senses of the word). In the words of the cover blurb:

*Set in early 1950s London, we follow the progress of Thelonius Chatham – painter, philosopher and social revolutionary – on his decline and fall from wealthy,*
amiable amateur artist, through the eyes of Soho habitué and writer, Hector O’Farhee.

In short exactly the sort of environment in which Trapnel flourished and in which Powell equally seems to have been at home both before and immediately after the last war.


Whatever genre one likes to assign to the work, it is certainly captivating. It kept me turning the pages and not wanting to put it down – partly through wanting to know what happened next and partly because I couldn’t see what on earth was happening now, or why.

How much of what is here is genuine Trapnel which Stacey has managed to unearth, and how much is the grouting and passe-partout which he has used to fill the cracks only Stacey himself will probably ever know. But the whole rings true as a novel of the late 1940s/early 1950s and as a very plausible piece of Trapnel.

I found this an enjoyable read and I think most Dance fans will too.

Profiles in String by X Trapnel can be ordered from print on demand supplier Lulu at http://bit.ly/17qXgNh for the princely sum of £10, with all royalties going to the Society.

Visiting the current Daumier exhibition in London, member John Blaxter reminds us of the following from VB:

At first it was not easy to discern what lay about us in a Daumier world of threatening, fiercely slanted shadows, in the midst of which two feeble jets of bluish gas, from which the pungent smell came, gave irregular, ever-changing contours to an amorphous mass of foggy cubes and pyramids.

“Daumier: Visions of Paris” is on at the Royal Academy until 26 January 2014.
A Character Model for Farebrother?

From Mr James Scott

After reading John Powell’s “Anthony Powell at MI(L)” in the Society’s Spring 2013 Newsletter (issue 50), I wanted to learn more about Lt-Col Jack Carlisle. At the time, I assumed that AP had modelled Lt-Col Lysander Finn (the head of MI(L) in Dance) after Carlisle, and I was interested in pinpointing what Powell had changed and what he had left intact. However, my research led me to conclude that Carlisle was a model for a different, but equally interesting character – Sunny Farebrother.

Admittedly, I am not the first to come to this conclusion – both Michael Barber and Ellen Jordan came there before me. However, it appears that no one has submitted an argument to the Society for including Carlisle in the Society’s table of character models. I will try to do so below.

First, we have a couple of comparisons between Carlisle as described in Faces in My Time and Farebrother as described in Dance:

1. Faces, 283:

   Jack Carlisle, in his early fifties, tall, slim, good looking, with candid blue eyes that looked straight at you, possessed a charm of manner of which he was himself not at all unaware. He worked immensely hard, found delegation of duties difficult, indulged in a good deal of intrigue, especially as to his own longed-for promotion.

Farebrother would have been in his early fifties when Jenkins encountered him in SA. On that encounter, Farebrother “fixed his very honest blue eyes” on Jenkins (197). And Farebrother, like Carlisle “indulged in a good deal of intrigue”.

2. Faces, 288:

   Carlisle did his job uncommonly well ... At the same time, his obsequiousness to superiors (he would enrage Dru by the grotesque habit of addressing senior civil servants as “sir”) …

MP, 48 (Pennistone – Dru’s counterpart in Dance – is the speaker):

   Farebrother will get right up the arse of anyone he things likely to help him on.

Second, we have a comparison between what John Powell says about Carlisle in “Anthony Powell at MI(L)” and what Jenkins says about Farebrother.

John Powell, 8:

   A message had been transmitted from the Prime Minister (in itself calculated to make Carlisle assume what Dru called ‘his religious face’) to the effect …

Compare with MP, 114:

   Farebrother said the last words in what Pennistone called his religious voice.
And with MP, 124:

He [Odo Stevens] had quite changed his tone of voice from the moment before, at the same time assuming an expression reminiscent of Farebrother’s ‘religious face’.

Third: we have Michael Barber’s argument, which includes some of the above woven together with new material (re. Carlisle’s life before the Second World War):

I wonder what Carlisle made of that ‘downy old bird’ Sunny Farebrother, since it seems to me that they have enough in common for the resemblance to be more than coincidental. Powell says that in peacetime Carlisle was a City banker and businessman who had served with distinction (DSO, MC) with a London Territorial unit in the Great War. This is almost identical to Farebrother’s CV. Powell describes Carlisle as tall, slim, and well preserved for his age, with candid blue eyes’ and immense charm ‘of which he was not at all unaware’. He was hard-working, devious and resilient, but obsequious beyond the call of duty to his superiors. He would also, when appropriate, assume his ‘religious face’. Sound familiar?

[Anthony Powell: A Life, 134]

Indeed, it does “sound familiar”. Offhand, the only difference I can detect between Carlisle and Farebrother is that Carlisle earned a DSO and an MC, while Farebrother earned a DSO and an OBE.

In regard to Powell’s decision not to use Carlisle as a model for Finn, Barber says the following:

… he is at pains to explain that for technical reasons to do with the balance of the novel he based the character of Finn, the Commanding Officer of MIL, on the second-in-command, Major Ker, rather than the actual CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Carlisle. [134]
In a message to APLIST dated 13 November 2006, Ellen Jordan offered a plausible explanation of those “technical reasons”:

*I also find it interesting that AP could use this brief association [with Capel-Dunn] as the inspiration for so significant a character in Dance [Widmerpool]. It seems to me that something similar is true of Sunny Farebrother. My impression is that he embodies a number of the characteristics of the head of MIL, Lt-Colonel Carlisle. AP says there are “several reasons” why he didn’t want to base the character holding this position in Dance on Carlisle.*

The only one he gives is that it would be identified with a real person, but he has no problems in giving his fictional character all the characteristics of the second-in-command Major Ker. He says somewhere (can’t find the place now) that he and Dru used to discuss Carlisle’s character interminably (as indeed they seem to have discussed Capel-Dunn) and it seems to me that the main reason he had to find an alternative model for the head of MIL was because he had already introduced Carlisle into *Dance* in a different role. The photograph of Carlisle in *Faces* looks to me exactly as I visualise Farebrother. Is a photograph of Capel-Dunn available anywhere?” [See below left, the only photograph of which we know – Ed.]

Perhaps it might be appropriate to close with a passage from Barber [134]:

*Of course, there are things about Farebrother that may owe nothing to Carlisle. His parsimony, for instance, and his wish to put women on a pedestal. But all fictional characters are composites and I am sure from the evidence that without Colonel Carlisle there would have been no Sunny Farebrother.*

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**Anthony Powell Resides Here**

**Crawford Doyle Booksellers**
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From Mr Jonathan Kooperstein

In his review of Hugh and Mirabel Cecil’s *In Search of Rex Whistler* in the Autumn Newsletter, Jeffrey Manley discusses the coincidental parallels between Whistler’s life and the character Charles Ryder in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*.

What neither authors nor reviewer mention is that Waugh did base a character in one of his novels on Whistler: the (silent) artist Arthur in the first chapter of *Scoop* (1938). Arthur is “painting ruined castles on the ceiling” of Mrs Stitch’s bedroom (as Whistler had painted grisaille mural decorations in the Gower Street drawing room of Lady Diana Cooper, the model for Mrs Stitch, a few years earlier). Mrs Stitch, who is simultaneously conducting her morning levée from her bed, helpfully provides Arthur with constructive criticism as he paints (“You’re putting too much ivy on the turret, Arthur; the owl won’t show up unless you have him on the bare stone and I’m particularly attached to the owl”).

This comment, as Lady Diana astutely pointed out to Jacqueline McDonnell [*Waugh on Women* (1985), 184], indicates that the literary source for Arthur’s painting is Thomas Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751). (The identification of Arthur with Rex Whistler is also Lady Diana’s.)

It was Richard Bentley’s Gothick illustration for Gray’s *Elegy* (1753), as it was reproduced in Kenneth Clark’s *The Gothic Revival* (1928), that provided Whistler with the starting point for his full-page illustrations to the Cresset Press edition of *Gulliver’s Travels* (1930), a rococo design in which the frame overshadows the incident depicted inside.

In view of this echo on Waugh’s part of Whistler’s attention to the illustration of Gray’s *Elegy*, one has to wonder if Waugh was not more attuned to Whistler’s career than at first seems likely. McDonnell observes that Waugh may have seen Whistler as a rival for Lady Diana’s friendship – and he may also have envied Whistler’s apparent, if misleading, ease of manner, when it came to dealing with life (what AP calls “his overwhelming smoothness”).

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AP gets a mention in a cod account of AS Byatt’s Summer Reading in Private Eye. The Byatt supposed choice is the autobiography of footballer ‘Lee Fredge (with Barry Gherkin)’ whose life, it is claimed, Anthony Powell would have readily understood: a personal myth at once rueful, hieratic and contested.

Spotted by James Tucker. ■

In the latest Wm Reese Co. catalogue (No. 306: Literary Miscellany), the following appears:


For viewing the complete entry (and the entire catalogue for that matter), use the following link to download a pdf version: http://www.williamreesecounty.com/reeseco/images/pdfs/cat306.pdf.

Spotted by Robert Beasecker ■

The Society’s new Trustee, Harry Mount, writing in the Daily Mail, 29 October 2013 about his and UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg’s schooldays at Westminster:

My maths teacher, Michael Hugill, taught statistics by comparing the length of words used by the novelists Anthony Powell and Evelyn Waugh in 100 word extracts from their books.

Spotted by, inter alia, the Hon. Secretary. ■
The narrator of *All That Is*, a novel by James Salter (Knopf, New York, 2013), describes Berggren, the Swedish publisher he meets on a tour of European publishers, with the head of the New York publishing firm where he is an editor, thusly [from chapter 8]:

*The Swedish publisher was an urbane man who had brought Gide, Dreiser, and Anthony Powell to the house, as well as Proust and Genet. He published the Russians, Bunin and Babel, and later the great émigrés. He had been to Russia, it was a terrible place, he said, like a vast prison, a prison where all hope had to be abandoned, and yet the Russians themselves were the most wonderful people he had ever met.*

Spotted by Philip Holm. ■

From Harry Eyres’s column in *Financial Times*, 15 September 2013:

**Goodbye, my good companions**

The clearing of my parents’ home has made me think about the importance, even centrality of books to the house’s life and soul. It may sound trite, but the house, and our lives in it, would not have been the same without books. The force of the statement comes home to me (in a rather unhomely way) as I see what happens when shelves are emptied. The rooms suddenly look diminished, denuded, uncomfortably bare.

Books Do Furnish a Room is the oddly memorable title of one of the volumes in Anthony Powell’s Dance to the Music of Time, a sequence of novels about the goings-on among a group of toffs, literati and others before and after the second world war. The statement (made in the novel by a character called Bagshaw, the editor of a post-war literary journal) has an undertone of surprise: how can books furnish a room, when they have no obviously practical value, in the way that chairs and tables and sofas and curtains do?

I always rather took it for granted that books furnished a room. The only rooms in our house without books were the dining-room and the bathrooms. Otherwise there were books everywhere ...

Spotted by Jeanne Reed. ■
AP rates a mention in Larry Rohter’s review in “Books of the Times” (New York Times, 20 August 2013) of George Orwell: A Life in Letters:

The literary friendships Orwell cultivated may also indicate something about his taste, which was catholic, and his nature, which was tolerant of opinions that diverged from his but not of cant. The aristocratic Anthony Powell, author of the novel cycle A Dance to the Music of Time, and Henry Miller, whose Tropic of Cancer was considered obscene when first published in the 1930’s, inhabit very different literary universes, but Orwell corresponded enthusiastically with both.

Spotted by Jeanne Reed.

Neil McComick reviews a Brian Ferry concert at London’s Royal Albert Hall, Daily Telegraph, 6 November 2013:

In a sleek, floral smoking jacket, Bryan Ferry croons and twirls, raising one arm in a gesture akin to a royal wave while tipping his head in bashful grin … Royal Albert Hall playing host to a 12-piece band of consummate musicians, all decorously attired in dinner jackets and diaphanous dresses, playing music deeply rooted in the past and yet daringly modern in its borderless merging of genres.

Singing Reason Or Rhyme from 2010’s Olympia album, Ferry alighted on a repeated lyrical motif filched from novelist Anthony Powell, by way of 17th Century painter Nicholas Poussin: “Dance to the music of time”. Behind him, trombones, trumpets, clarinets and saxophones weaved in and out of the mesmerising groove set up by a thumping rock drummer and elderly jazz percussionist, as the wild lead guitar of long-haired firebrand Oliver Thompson sent notes scattering over delicate pianos and swimming shimmers of keyboard textures in a giddy, cinematic flush of sound.

Spotted by Brian Back.

Andrea Broomfield wrote in a review:

As I read Stranger’s Child (by Alan Hollinghurst) I was reminded of Anthony Powell’s Dance to the Music of Time and The Glittering Prizes by Frederic Raphael. At times with such novels, plot takes a back seat to characterization and characters’ interior lives, but it is within those interiors that the essence of the art resides, not in drama or conflict or even resolution.

Spotted by Jeanne Reed on 21 August 2013. [Source not provided – Ed.]
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40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell.
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