York Conference, 8-10 April – there’s still time to book

Conference venue: King’s Manor, York

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A Letter from the Editor

The first Big News is the York Conference in April 2016. John Roe who is masterminding it provides an up-to-date summary. Part of the programme is a visit to Castle Howard. Jeff Manley provides a fascinating consideration of the use that Waugh and AP made of stately homes and other buildings in their novels.

The second Big News is that your Secretary can now add an O to his AP designation. See the write up of the New Year Brunch.

Amidst the champagne and laughter a new member made a valuable point. He submitted that abbreviations for the titles of AP’s works such as VB or HSH are confusing. From now, in all pieces, the full title will be set out the first time that a volume is mentioned. After that the customary abbreviations will be used.

New members continue to join and gratifyingly also contribute to this Newsletter. We have contributions from Steve Hoare and Geoff Eagland. Thanks!

We are experimenting by providing two reviews, from different contributors, of the same book. This is DJ Taylor’s The Prose Factory about the literary life. He refers to AP and his writings. Jeff Manley provides a useful commentary on Taylor’s use of AP’s works. Michael Barber, AP’s biographer, draws attention to Taylor’s omission of Ian Fleming.

This raises the fascinating “spectre” of what a James Bond book by AP would have been like. After all several well-regarded English novelists such as William Boyd, Sebastian Faulks and Kingsley Amis have all written a Bond book. Suggestions for titles and characters please.

Stephen Walker, editor@anthonypowell.org

From the Secretary’s Desk

This is a year of celebrations. It has crept up on us and caught us unawares. The conference, of course, pays homage not just to AP and also William Shakespeare who died 400 years ago on 23 April. There are other AP anniversaries too: at the New Year Brunch we celebrated the 65th anniversary of A Question of Upbringing, and thus the start of Dance, with glasses of champagne thanks to an anonymous sponsor. We should also note that The Soldier’s Art is 50 in September – which coincides nicely with our planned day out in Oxford – and AP’s first novel, Afternoon Men, is 85 in June ...

Casting the literary net wider, it is 50 years since the death of Powell’s friend Evelyn Waugh in April 1966 – making the conference visit to Castle Howard all the more appropriate. As for the Society, our Patron, John Powell, celebrated his 70th birthday, coincidentally on the same day (as Stephen alludes) I became a state-registered geriatric. I feel a certain privilege to be in such august company.

Talking of the conference, there has been some discussion recently about whether we should continue to vary the conference venue, or whether a permanent, static home should be sought. Although a static venue would likely be in/near London, it is unlikely to be either Eton or the Wallace Collection. Of course, there are pros and cons on both sides. But what do you think? Should we try to take the conference to different places or should we look for a settled home? Please let me know what you would prefer.

Meanwhile I look forward to seeing many of you in York.

Keith Marshall
secretary@anthonypowell.org
Brideshead and Castle Howard Revisited

By Jeffrey Manley

In the public mind Castle Howard is Brideshead Castle. This is due more to its choice as a setting in two popular film adaptations [Granada TV, 1981; Miramax, 2008] than to what Waugh wrote. This article compares Waugh’s descriptions of Brideshead Castle to Castle Howard, reviews the filmmakers’ process in selecting it as the setting for the story, and examines how they influenced each other.

AP expressed his opinion in his Journals on Brideshead Revisited and its 1981 TV adaptation but he did not consider how far Waugh intended Castle Howard to be the model for Brideshead Castle. AP also engaged in similar fictional country house “constructions” in Dance. For example, in the cases of Castlemallock, Dogdene, Thrubworth Park and Stourhead Castle, AP gives details of the houses similar to those offered by Waugh for Brideshead Castle that offer hints as to their sources or inspirations.

Critics have noted the similarities between Castle Howard and Brideshead Castle. This goes back before the Granada broadcast to Christopher Sykes’ 1975 biography of Waugh:

The original of Brideshead can doubtfully be traced to many great houses which Evelyn knew, but I fancy that a strong contribution was made by Castle Howard.

Harold Acton wrote in 1982, without giving any source,

It was a pleasure to learn that Castle Howard, in Yorkshire, has been chosen to be Brideshead on television. It was the author’s prototype.

Waugh builds up a picture of Brideshead. The house is described as “baroque” by Charles Ryder who later seems to assume Inigo Jones designed it. Sebastian says it was built in the time of Inigo Jones.

Several features of the house are repeated: the dome, the columns and colonnades, the prominent fountain and the terraced lakes. Beyond the fountain and lakes, there is a temple and an obelisk. It is called a “castle” because the original house on the estate was a castle that was torn down and the materials used to construct the newer house. Finally it has a chapel built as a wedding present from Lord Marchmain to his wife. Sebastian describes it as in the style of “art nouveau” and rather dated. It is set in a valley and approached by a long road, appearing in the distance at a turning.

Many of these features can be attributed to Castle Howard, but they are not unique to it. So how strong is the case for Castle Howard being the model for Brideshead?

1. Castle Howard was built in 1699, after the time of Inigo Jones (1572-1653), and designed by Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor.

2. The most obvious and noticeable exterior features of Castle Howard are its baroque style and dome.

Waugh dwells on the dome, situating Nanny Hawkins’ room within it. In later editions he described the dome as false, designed to be seen from below like the cupolas of Chambord. Its drum was merely an additional story full of segmental rooms.

This additional information seems inapplicable to the drum, or lantern as it is called at Castle Howard, which is
below the cupola and empty except for windows to light the space below.

3. There are no prominent colonnades and flanking pavilions. The only exterior colonnade at Castle Howard is in one corner of the central courtyard in the north facade. It is not one of the first things that you notice.

4. Castle Howard’s fountain is large and prominently situated opposite the south façade above the lakes, as in the book, but is not the sort Waugh had imagined. In the novel, it was brought over from Italy piece-by-piece and reassembled at Brideshead. It is therefore Italian, rather than Italianate or Victorian. The Atlas Fountain at Castle Howard was constructed in the 19th century and first assembled in London for the 1851 Great Exhibition. Afterwards it was moved, piece-by-piece, to Castle Howard where it was reassembled. It is large and prominent but lacks the charm of the novel’s Italian baroque reconstruction. As with the chapel, it is more Victorian than baroque. There is also a temple and an obelisk at Castle Howard.

So, Castle Howard’s outward appearance is similar to Waugh’s description of Brideshead Castle, but not a dead ringer.

The real problem is the chapel. This is similar to that in the book being built at a later period within the house, rather than as a separate structure. Pevsner says that Castle Howard chapel’s decor is “High Victorian”, not art nouveau, as Sebastian claimed. There are Burne-Jones windows and wall paintings of Pre-Raphaelite design but with classical surrounds to fit in with the “giant Corinthian columns”. Waugh’s description of the chapel is obviously Madresfield House in Worcestershire, not Castle Howard.

The Madresfield chapel was an Arts and Crafts design but less Victorian and more Renaissance revival. This is especially true of the frescoes that brighten and colour the walls. They may not qualify as “art nouveau” but are closer to that style than the darkly Victorian Castle Howard chapel. The chapel at Madresfield was also constructed as a wedding present (but from wife to husband).

Brideshead Castle’s location is another problem. In the novel, it is a few hours west of Oxford, in Wiltshire. Charles and Sebastian could drive there and back from Oxford in one day with ample time for a visit. Castle Howard is in the North Riding of Yorkshire, probably a similar distance from York as Brideshead was from Oxford. Again, Brideshead seems more Madresfield than Castle Howard.

Waugh took care in the novel not to create too many allusions to Madresfield as he wished to preserve deniability about the identification of the Flytes and the Lygons, who lived at Madresfield and with whom he was still on friendly terms – at least with Mary and Dorothy.

He succeeded, as Dorothy Lygon having considered the physical description of Brideshead Castle concluded:

> There is no resemblance between the landscape and architecture of Brideshead – set in a stone-wall country – and Madresfield, except for one detail – the art-nouveau decoration of the chapel.

> Madresfield is a moated house of red brick, of mainly Victorian architecture superimposed on an earlier base, while Brideshead is an epitome in stone of the Palladian style he loved so much.

When Waugh wrote _Brideshead_ he had little personal association with Castle
Howard or the Howard family. In his Diaries he records his visit in 1937. But this seems to have been made as a tourist, not as a guest, as he was at Madresfield or Renishaw, home of the Sitwells. There is no record of Waugh signing the Castle Howard guest book before writing Brideshead. The Hon. Simon Howard recalls: “My father never met him but at some stage he came over to look at the house”. Waugh was personally familiar with the outward appearance of Castle Howard but lacked the intimate knowledge he would have had as a guest.

As so often when trying to find the source of a novel’s character or setting, the answer is that the writer made it up and may have, in doing so, borrowed from several sources as well as his own imagination. But Waugh may have realized that the importance he accorded the baroque style of Brideshead Castle as well as the significant features of its prominent dome and fountain tend to remind one more of Castle Howard than other possibilities. None of the houses illustrated in James Lees-Milne’s English Country Houses: Baroque 1685-1715 (1970) has a dome on the main house. Whether Waugh had these features of Castle Howard in mind when he described the structure is hard to say. Nothing in Waugh’s writings suggests that he had that particular building in mind.

Whatever Waugh intended when describing Brideshead Castle, the choice of Castle Howard as the setting in both film versions has left an unshakeable public perception of it as the model for Brideshead. Given that this decision was not dictated by Waugh’s writings, how did the filmmakers reach it? Much material is available including commentaries on video and DVD versions and several TV and radio interviews with actors and crew.

The decision to use Castle Howard as the setting for Brideshead Castle in the Granada film was made by producer Derek Granger and director Michael Lindsay-Hogg. They describe an extensive tour of baroque style country houses. Castle Howard was their last stop. Both agreed without hesitation that it was the best choice. Granger says that he consulted James Lees-Milne in connection with the selection of Castle Howard who, confirmed, that they “couldn’t do better than that”.

The Miramax filmmakers went through a similar process when choosing a setting. The director, Julian Jarrold, started out opposed to filming at Castle Howard, preferring a new identity for their production at another site. But he concluded after looking at other houses that there were so many correct things about Castle Howard. Neither film crew felt that Waugh’s descriptions of Brideshead Castle dictated their choice of Castle Howard or that he specifically intended it as a model. Waugh’s descriptions in the novel were just one of the selection criteria.

In conclusion, one cannot say, conclusively, that Waugh used Castle Howard as the model for Brideshead Castle. He constructed his house in the novel from various elements, just as he, like AP, frequently constructed his characters from acquaintances. Anyone comparing Castle Howard to other baroque residences in England would agree that it comes closest to Waugh’s description in the novel. But it would be a mistake to refer to it as the model (or even a model) that Waugh intended to follow in writing his description.

It is intended to include a longer, referenced, version of this paper in the proceedings of the York Conference 2016. ■
Spring will shortly be approaching and the date for the Anthony Powell conference (8 to 10 April) draws ever nearer. The conference, as you know, will be held this year in the glorious mediaeval city of York. Scaffolding has recently and opportunely come down from the East Front of the Minster, revealing its beautiful restored stonework. The King’s Manor, a lovely medieval building, which will house the conference, is a short step away from the Minster, as you pass through the ancient Bootham Bar, one of the city’s four main mediaeval gates.

The conference itself is in its final shape and the provisional programme is on the website.

We have four keynote speakers: Prof. John Bowen will look at Powell’s ambivalent relation with his Victorian antecedents, Dr Kate Bennett will reassess his attitude towards John Aubrey, Dr Nick Birns will show how friendship, literary and other, is a major influence, and Prof. Didier Girard will look at the macabre influence of the Marquis de Sade (with an eye on Sir Magnus Donners?).

A glance at the programme will show a host of speakers on various themes, certainly including Shakespeare. Brevity unfortunately prevents us from mentioning papers in detail, but it is a rich and varied assembly.

There will be a Proust panel. We will finish on a light-hearted note and invite delegates to suggest passages (e.g. humorous character sketches) they may wish to read. A selection from proposals will be made beforehand. Suggestions to the Hon. Secretary, please.

Then on the Sunday morning delegates will have the opportunity to visit Castle Howard (pictured below).

And if we are lucky the daffodils will still be in bloom on the City walls.

Waiverers should hesitate no longer!
'Tis strange but true; 
for truth is always strange; 
Stranger than fiction; 
If it could be told, 
How much novels would 
gain by the exchange’

[Byron, Don Juan]

There is quite a little cottage industry of books which explore ‘Who Was Who in Fiction’ or similar diversions. Naturally, unless the novelists are prepared to let us into their confidences, this is all mere speculation. The author whose work inspired this Society would, without doubt, have dismissed attempts to uncover the real-life identities of characters in his fiction with a brusque retort of “the writer of fiction is imaginative not a newspaper reporter” or something along those lines. Despite all this, some people are just foolhardy and will persist in looking into such topics.

The possible real-life identity of Kenneth Widmerpool has been exhaustively probed and one fears a serious overload of Papal buns. Well known to Widmerpool was the man first introduced to readers of the Dance sequence at the Huntercombes’ Ball in the late 1920s. But it is only when Nicholas Jenkins encounters him at Thrubworth Park in the mid-1930s that his extraordinary personality is revealed in detail and Erridge (or ‘Erry’) first grips the reader’s attention. Erridge is an aristocrat (the Earl of Warminster) but a most idiosyncratic one. He seems uncomfortable in the role given to him in life and is content, apparently, to live in a tiny portion of Thrubworth waited upon by the rudest manservant in the universe. Powell also tells us that

• Erridge was a man of the Left who dabbled in various causes
• he had spent a period living as a tramp and his appearance and mode of dress, even at Thrubworth, was down-at-heel
• he became the brother-in-law of Nicholas Jenkins
• he died at an early age.

Powell was highly skilled at creating misfits in his fiction. This probably meant that his real-life acquaintances dreaded being identified with such characters, even speculatively. In the case of Erridge, two names constantly crop up as being models. They are Frank Pakenham (Lord Longford) and George Orwell. Both, not surprisingly, are now deceased.

Francis Aungier Pakenham (below) was born in 1905. A Tory early in his life by the late 1920s he had become a Socialist. Pakenham was also a committed Christian who in the early 1940s converted to the Catholic Church where he remained until...
his death. The future Lord Longford held ministerial posts in the Attlee Government of 1945-51 and the Wilson Government of 1964-1970. One cannot imagine Erridge following a similar path. Pakenham was a highly vocal advocate for penal reform who, in later years, became something of a hate figure in some sections of the media by campaigning for the release from prison of Myra Hindley, one of the Moors Murderers. A man of great contradictions, he campaigned for the decriminalisation of homosexuality whilst, later, supporting the Conservative Government’s controversial and notorious ‘Section 28’, which forbade the ‘propagation’ of homosexuality by teachers in schools. He was also a fierce opponent of pornography and worked closely with Mary Whitehouse. He died in 2001.

Eric Arthur Blair was born in 1903 in India. After a period as a police officer in Burma, he came to live in England. Here he adopted the pen name ‘George Orwell’ and wrote prodigiously across a wide range of genres: fiction, documentary reportage, polemic and culture. A Socialist, he was fiercely opposed to the Kremlin regime under Stalin which he searingly depicted in parable form in Animal Farm. A working journalist, his employers included the BBC and The Observer newspaper. He died from tuberculosis in 1950 at, more or less, the age Erridge must have been when he died.

Erridge, plainly, has similarities to both Pakenham and Orwell. So how well did Powell know the two men? The answer is extremely well although neither was as close to Powell as, say, Adrian Daintry or Constant Lambert. Pakenham was an aristocrat and, like Erridge with Jenkins, became Powell’s brother-in-law. Pakenham was a Christian Socialist with a raging social conscience. Erridge certainly was socially aware but there is no evidence that, until near the end of his life, he dabbled in religion. Erridge died in 1946 but Pakenham went on to lead a long life (and, in fact, he slightly out-lived Powell). Erridge spent some time living as ‘a tramp’ and he risked his life in Spain during the Civil War. Pakenham did neither of those things. It’s interesting that Pakenham did, it is alleged, say to Powell that he thought Erridge was based on him but, as he had previously claimed (improbably) that Powell had based Widmerpool on him, Powell was probably justified in retorting “Oh, come on Frank you can’t be all the characters, you know!”

Is Orwell (above) a better fit? He was not an aristocrat, nor was he rich. But he was a non-Stalinist Socialist (Erridge was never a Communist Party member). As with Erridge he went to Spain during the Civil War where he was shot through the throat. He mixed freely with a wide range of left-of-centre characters, so did Erridge. Powell makes play of Erridge’s appearance and clothing ‘a tweed jacket and corduroy trousers’. As does Powell’s reference to Erridge’s hair ‘long on the top of his head, but given a military crop around the sides’. Orwell, however, favoured a neatly cut moustache, whereas Erridge had ‘a straggling beard’. All in all Erridge sounds something of a visual mess
but Orwell (whilst Powell may have thought he was unconventionally dressed) usually wore a shirt and tie and a handkerchief carefully positioned and folded in his jacket lapel pocket. Then Powell did comment somewhat dismissively that Orwell had assumed a distinctly non-Etonian accent.

The passing reference to Erridge having been ‘a tramp’, and wandering around the countryside, has no relevance to Frank Pakenham’s life. But, of course, Orwell could certainly rough it and produced two memorable books to attest to this, *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

The Earl of Warminster was a devotee of the children’s publications *Boy’s Own Paper* and *Chums* well into his adult years. Orwell certainly devoured comics but not always with such rapt admiration as Erridge. In a famous essay, “Boy’s Weeklies”, Orwell castigated Frank Richards (creator of Billy Bunter) for churning out formulaic prose and stereotypical characters. Nevertheless it is telling that both men were still reading comics in their mature years.

Erridge as a political animal was, evidently, much swayed in his opinions by others, whether it be Quiggin, St John Clarke or Lindsay Bagshaw. Orwell, in contrast, was something of a loose cannon who fell out with a succession of fellow left-wingers whether it was the (then) fellow-travelling publisher, Victor Gollancz, or later with the Labour-left weekly *Tribune*, for whom he had been working. In religious matters, Orwell was virulently anti-Catholic Church but Powell makes no reference to Erridge having such views.

What can we conclude? Firstly, Anthony Powell’s fiction, whether *Dance* or his other novels, is clearly set in distinct times and places. The echoes from Powell’s own life are unmistakeable. *Dance* is, in essence, a chronicle of a large part of the twentieth century seen through the eyes and ears of a man whose own experiences are remarkably similar to those of Powell. He is a ‘realistic’ writer not a creator of fantasy in the mode of Terry Pratchett or China Miéville. Everything we know about Anthony Powell suggests that he was a man who listened and observed and (fortunately for us) was able to communicate this in words on paper. Dip into a page from any of his four volumes of memoirs and immediately one is transported to another place and introduced to people one didn’t know but now feels one did. Perhaps that is why the Channel 4 adaptation of *Dance* was such a huge success and made many more Powell enthusiasts.

Any writer is obliged to draw on their own experiences. What else can we know with such intimacy? Anthony Powell was fortunate to have encountered so many outstanding, memorable and, often, highly flawed personalities. As for the characters in his books, yes, they reflect such people. Powell was well aware of this and made the observation that he assumed that George Orwell’s *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* was autobiographical as it depicted an impeneunious bookseller (Orwell had worked in a bookshop and was often short of money). Pakenham and Orwell were both similar to Erridge.

But here is a wonderful thought. Suppose the three of them could have met, say in the saloon bar of The Hero of Acre. Then suppose Powell had been at an adjoining table, with notebook and pen poised. What a magical chapter he could have made of that!
Readers looking to match actual events and characters with Powell’s re-imagined world of *Dance to the Music of Time* will discover a treasure trove of source material and references in the works of the celebrated travel writer and old Etonian, Robert Byron (pictured below).

*Letters Home*, an anthology of Byron’s correspondence with his mother from his arrival at Eton in 1919 to his premature death in 1941, edited by his sister Lucy Butler (John Murray, 1991) describes in some detail the relationships Byron formed at Eton and Oxford. Byron is a prolific letter writer, his prose is both amusing and packed with the kind of detail and immediacy that contrasts to the restrained comedy of *Dance*.

Born in 1904, and a contemporary of Powell, Byron was a boarder in AL Robeson’s Penn House, seemingly a magnet for misfits unable to find secure berth in one of the more prestigious Eton houses.

A close associate of Harold Acton and Henry Yorke, Byron founded the Eton Society of Arts of which Powell was an early member along with Yorke. Indeed, Powell and Byron’s artistic leanings, social links and academic interests – both went up to Oxford the same year to study history – should have been the basis for friendship. It was not. James Knox in his 2003 biography of Byron states: “*Robert … had always found him [AP] ‘rather boring’*”.

This should come as no surprise. Powell, diffident, socially awkward, remained a detached observer. A natural extrovert, precocious talent, and a dandy, Byron was destined to be at the centre of a youthful aristocratic and intellectual network better known as the “Bright Young Things”. Moving effortlessly in top circles, assisted by his family’s connections with the Mitfords, Sitwells and Guinesses, Byron assumed an aristocratic almost foppish manner and was more than usually rebellious.

Byron’s wayward associates provided Powell with the colourful cast of characters surrounding the anodyne Nick Jenkins in le Bas house. Powell acknowledges that the character of Peter Templer is based on one of Byron’s housemates, John Spencer the handsome womanising son of a Surrey stockbroker. Spencer’s good looks and escapades with local girls and London prostitutes provided the perfect template for a fictionalised Templer. It has to be borne in mind that this post-war intake of Etonians were in their mid-teens and entered Eton on the brink of manhood.

So who is the model for Charles Stringham? He is clearly a composite of many individuals Powell would have observed at school and university. A
complex, almost contradictory character, Stringham’s chameleon-like attitudes and behaviours are more plot-driven than most. He has a keen aesthetic appreciation (the Modigliani drawing), he is a fastidious dresser, he has a serious problem with alcohol, he is possessed of an ironic sense of humour, and he is a practical joker who directs his barbs against pretentious dullards like le Bas and also aspiring petty bourgeois, like Widmerpool, whose lack of dress sense he is continually lampooning.

One original for Stringham has to be Byron’s close friend and fellow Penn House boarder Cecil Clonmore the heir to the Earl of Wicklow – a “Hon” and a rebel! A practical joker, Cecil printed an advertisement for a maidservant under the name of Olive Messel thereby involving his friend Oliver Messel in the prank. The advertisement was answered by the mother of one of the pupils and the hilariously subversive correspondence went too far, was eventually discovered and almost led to both pupils being expelled. Charles Stringham’s escapade in tipping off to the local constabulary who arrested house master le Bas as a wanted criminal in a case of mistaken identity is typical of some of Clonmore’s best hoaxes.

Then there is Byron himself whose aristocratic and dandified mannerisms are pure Charles Stringham. Byron, like Stringham, died an untimely death when in 1941 the ship he was travelling in to Egypt was torpedoed and sunk by enemy action.

Byron’s career at Oxford where he went up to Merton College at the same time as Powell was entering Balliol is worthy of closer examination. At Oxford, Byron soon gathered a group of friends by staging an unsuccessful Victorian Revival exhibition based on his impressive collection of shell-work and wax fruit under glass domes. He was a mainstay of the Hypocrites Club, a louche undergraduate drinking den based in a set of rooms above a bicycle shop in St Aldate’s. Powell, Alfred Duggan and another AL Robeson boarder David Talbot Rice were members.

*Letters Home* reveals the youthful Byron at Oxford University as a putative Stringham via a series of scrapes that would have surely caused readers of *Dance* to gasp in disbelief! Byron kept company with a racy set of aristocratic young bloods more intent on hard drinking and reckless dissipation and with substantial trust funds at their disposal.

Since all Powell characters are composites based on observations of a range of individuals, I believe there is a strong case to be made for Alfred Duggan with dashes of Byron himself being the inspiration for Stringham.

Byron himself though launched on a journalistic career via the editorship of Cherwell, having scraped a third (like AP). His Stringham-like exploits included “stealing” the Foreign Secretary (Arthur Ponsonby’s) car and using it to drive Ponsonby’s son and a party of friends back to Balliol after a drunken rout. The police gave chase and Byron took the blame as he was the only one of the party with a valid driving licence. The episode resulted in the lenient punishment of being “gated” by his college for the remainder of the term and set the seal on Byron’s notoriety and popularity. He endeared himself still less with his college when he invited his fellow students to bring a bottle and visit him in his rooms. The invitation read:

*Mr Robert Byron*  
*At Home*  
*Eight o’clock to midnight*  
*For the remainder of the Term.*
On leaving university with a third class degree, Byron embarked on a career as a freelance journalist, art critic – he was an early champion of Byzantine art (together with David Talbot Rice) – and a travel writer whose books _The Station_ and the _Road to Oxiana_, with their colourful and culturally intuitive approach and sheer verve, laid the foundations for the modern genre, inspiring but far excelling authors such as Patrick Leigh Fermor. Byron noted in a letter to his mother dated 24 January 1929,

_Evelyn Waugh_ [another close friend from Oxford days] _referred to me in the Evening Standard as one of the five writers embodying the spirit of my generation._

But such ambition does not sound at all like the foppish world weary Stringham. Byron’s easy manners masked a highly talented and ambitious writer keen to make his mark on the world. Searchers after Stringham must needs look elsewhere. However, Byron’s aristocratic friendship group once again provide abundant clues.

Powellians have always accepted, not least from AP’s memoir _To Keep the Ball Rolling_, that the character of Stringham was partly modelled on Hubert Duggan.

Hubert Duggan’s credentials as Charles Stringham are valid so far as they go. The son of Grace, Lady Curzon by her Irish-Argentinian first husband, and stepson to Lord Curzon, Hubert and his older brother Alfredo (Alfred) were born in Buenos Aires but brought to England in childhood and raised by the Curzons as over-indulged scions of nobility. Both were sent to Eton.

As young men their preference for fox hunting, dandyish clothes, fast women and jazz eclipsed any scholarly pretensions.

Their insouciant refusal to abide by school rules put them at odds with their masters at Eton. Visiting Soho nightclubs in the company of older brother Alfred who had been expelled from Eton a couple of years earlier (an episode alluded to by AP in _Dance_) Hubert adopted a similar hard drinking lifestyle. But it was Hubert’s delicate constitution that led his mother to hire a nurse to remove him from Eton and accompany him to a London hospital, an incident which occurred on Eton’s annual 4 June holiday, causing Hubert to miss a family celebration – a five course luncheon with champagne served by liveried footmen at the White Hart at Eton. This may have been the occasion when he was diagnosed with appendicitis.

Byron records the incident in his _Letters Home_ and AP would have recalled the nurse and the fuss made over Hubert Duggan, perhaps using the incident as the inspiration for Stringham’s strict warder, Tuffy.

But _Letters Home_ offers us a far more likely candidate as the original for Charles Stringham.

Alfred Duggan is a far better bet. Byron’s sister Lucy Butler in her biographical notes in _Letters Home_ observes:

_Alfred Duggan large-nosed and hospitable with his scurrilous stories – during a game of sardines his mother Lady Curzon ‘hid under the bed for half an hour with the Aga Khan to make the party go’. Alfred had a drinking problem so bad that his mother was forced to hire a keeper to accompany him everywhere._

This is where Tuffy makes an appearance.

A close associate of Byron’s at Oxford, Alfred was at Balliol at the same time as
Powell. But rather than attend Sillery-like intellectual salons in dons’ rooms furnished with tea and rock buns, Alf and Byron were out partying. From a letter dated January 1923, Byron writes:

We had a wonderful evening last night. Alfred Duggan, the brother of the one at Eton gave a dinner party, followed by a visit to a sort of Los Angelos (sic) dancehall in the Cowley Road. After seven glasses of champagne, two of port and the paraphernalia of cocktails and liqueurs attendant on these orgies I found myself dancing the Boston twostep with feeling...

Alfred was a dandy, an expert horseman and keen fox hunter, echoing Charles Stringham’s view that university life should be a reflection of the era of Lord Byron (no relation to Robert) “I expect them to keep bull pups and drink brandy”. Alf fully lived up to Stringham’s ideal of the “Byronic” foppish undergraduate, offering to

mount me out with the drag on a racing mare which he can’t hold. (I refused politely).

[Letters Home, February 1923]

It is Alfred who, Stringham-like, quit Oxford because he couldn’t stand the boredom of it all. The parting of the ways was no doubt a considerable weight off the mind of Lord Curzon who as Chancellor of Oxford University was constantly forced to step in and mediate when Alf had once again failed to attend lectures.

After getting sent down from Oxford rather abruptly (an echo of Stringham’s own short-lived career as a scholar) Alfred was sent by his father to join a Natural History Museum expedition to the Galapagos Islands! Byron kept in touch with his friend and when he had returned invited him to join him in his own journeys of discovery. As maturity dawned both men carved out careers – Byron as a travel writer and journalist and Alfred as an historian – and subsequent author of an impressive collection of scholarly titles.

Stringham’s guardian Tuffy has a real life equivalent. Although transformed by Powell into a stern woman for comic effect Alfred’s “keeper” was in fact a man by the name of Hogg.

More research is needed to provide a complete character sketch, however Hogg looms into view when Alfred Duggan accompanies Byron on a journey to the Greek islands. Here Byron is accompanied by a convivial crowd including John Stuart Hay (an antiquities dealer), Bryan Guinness, Mark Ogilvie Grant, John Sutro and David Talbot Rice. This is an extract from one of Byron’s letters home.

British Club, Athens … 6 October 1927 … We leave for Mistra tomorrow – and then go straight to Crete – catching a Lloyd at Kalamata at the bottom of the Peloponnese. We are an enormous party. Alfred, Hay, keeper (Hogg), Bryan, Mark, John, David and me.

[Letters Home, 6 October 1927]

For my money, Stringham is the finest of all of Anthony Powell’s comic creations. Lovingly drawn he is at once sympathetic and engaging. But it is Robert Byron who brings the originals to life and gives readers an insight into an utterly believable character. Clonmore, Byron and Duggan all can lay claim to creating the enduring and sympathetic aristocratic rebel and romantic that so many readers admire in Charles Stringham.
Mr Bynoe [Newsletter 60] is too pessimistic: literature teems with direct practical advice for life.

Recipes, which he does mention, are everywhere. I am particularly fond of one in Donna Tartt’s The Secret History, a work fashionable in the mid-1990s.

*There was roasted lamb, new potatoes, peas with leeks and fennel; a rich almost maddeningly delicious bottle of Chateau Latrou.*

Just the thing for St David’s Day, although my wine choice tends to be cheaper.

Moving to a plane more abstract and general, there is Hilaire Belloc’s famous

*And always keep a-hold of Nurse*
*For fear of finding something worse*

the essence of true conservatism ignored by the trade unionists who revolted against Britain’s last truly conservative prime minister, James Callaghan, in 1979. They found Mrs Thatcher.

It could be objected that this is just verse, not ‘true’ poetry; but the latter can be equally didactic. See Housman:

*When I was one-and-twenty*
*I heard a wise man say,*
*‘Give crowns and pounds and guineas* 
*But not your heart away;* 
*Give pearls away and rubies* 
*But keep your fancy free.’*

Characteristically – and realistically – he recognised that his depressing advice would go unheeded by Youth – at least for a year or so:

*But I was one-and-twenty,*
*No use to talk to me*

This shows AEH in Cassandra mode urging the cauterising of mankind’s most powerful emotion.

An overlapping warning from/for besotted Youth is conveyed in the beautiful eighteenth-century ballad *Bugeilio’r gwenith gwyn* (Watching over the ripening wheat). This is set in my native Glamorgan, indeed near the now obdurately unromantic sprawl of Bridgend, and the alleged protagonists actually existed. But it is a riff on the universal archetype of the poor but devoted and requited lover whose sweetheart’s parents have arranged a loveless marriage to the local rich bounder.

*My lot’s the ripening wheat to tend* 
*Another ’tis will reap it.*

You need the original Welsh for its full force:

*I mi bugeilio’r gwenith gwyn* 
*Arall sydd ei fedi* 

(my emphasis). Note the concentrated bitterness in the terse as Latin second line. (Welsh is not always as succinct; nor are the Welsh.)
The metaphor labours the point. It is hackneyed because it is drawn from an economic activity equally atavistic, universal, and ‘idyllic’: one, unlike romantic love, utterly indispensable.

Moral: never let yourself get into this hapless swain’s situation (in love, business or anything else).

Mr Bynoe’s reference to Firbank’s “filigree confections, feather-light but tough, [written] to amuse” could also describe the most famous practitioner of this genre, Wodehouse. Yet much of his humour springs from the multitude of practical and successful wheezes that Jeeves devises to hook Bertie out of scrapes (although I have never found any of them of use to me personally). But they provoke deeper reflections. Why on earth was someone as clever as Jeeves content to press/lay out the shirts/trousers/collars/spats of a bird-brain like Bertie? Surely he could have done far better for himself, even between the wars? Why do all concerned accept this arrangement as only right and proper? It bespeaks an unreflecting seigneurial sense of entitlement reflecting badly on Britain then. And how much have things changed in Britain now? So outstanding humour, practical expedients, food for thought is all melded together/interdependent in the ‘lightest’ most unpreachy writer you can get.

In Wodehouse any stimulus to social criticism is probably unintentional. Where it is intended, the skilled writer serves it up in a palatable blend. Searing indictments of Life or Society often lie just beneath the surface even in works which seem, like Wodehouse, pure entertainment.

Some surprising books have been regarded as such. Even Animal Farm can be treated as a children’s story (alongside its fellow allegories, the Alice books and Gulliver’s Travels) if you don’t mind giving the little dears nightmares. But all these allegories make the mature reader think: they acutely or bitterly criticise or ridicule Society; and Animal Farm conveys an awful warning on top.

Hence when literature does give ‘advice for life’, it is usually in this negative aspect of warnings awful or otherwise, of rubbing our noses in rebarbative discreditable realities: big questions.

Mr Bynoe complains of not enough direct specific instruction: suggestions practical, empirical for the here and now; although I would dispute this. But this motif which seems so commonsensical also has to be handled carefully, to emerge ‘naturally’ from the theme of the text. Trotting out loads of cheery positive advice on how to live as a free-standing item would come across as fatuously and artificially cheerful as well as boring in literature – except for the recipes, of course.

■
Polly Duport

Thursday 30th September 1971

Mamma can be so selfish. I’d told her that my lead in Miss Julie is the most demanding part I’ve yet acted but she absolutely insisted that I come to that beastly new gallery all afternoon and help push poor papa around. In the end I only agreed because Norman was coming too. I’m glad papa’s selling all those sea pictures though – I never liked them. I think it’s since Carlos was shot that she’s become like this. That and always having had her own way being a dictatrix in South America. Now she just bosses everyone around. Come to think of it, she may have made papa sell. Since his stroke he doesn’t really know what’s what.

We bumped into that dreary writer that papa knows, Nick Jenkins, in the gallery. He and mamma shook hands pretending they barely knew each other but I’m sure they had a fling when they were young. She’s let things slip once or twice over the years and the coincidence of her being very good at Russian billiards and that game forming the backdrop to half his first novel is just too much.

I dined with Gibson. His book of poems, Put The Kettle On (in homage to my name apparently) is due out shortly but I think they’re far too sad. Strikes the wrong note for this new age. I was a bit suspicious that he’d spent the afternoon with Fiona again.

Why does everyone I know have affairs?

*** *** ***

Bob Duport

Thursday 30th September 1971

It’s all Widmerpool’s fault. If he hadn’t made me go to Cairo all those years ago I wouldn’t have contracted gypsy tummy with complications and ended up like this. Shunted everywhere in a bath chair like a November Guy – it’s too humiliating.

Went to the gallery to see my pictures. Jean wants to sell them, don’t know why, but I suppose they’re no use to me now. They were hanging near some giant canvasses full of nude Greek nancies – enough to put anyone off buying them. And Nick Jenkins was there too. Played the casual acquaintance role with Jean but I know he was knocking her off for months before we went to South America. He’s alright though, old Nick, if a bit prim. Forgive and forget. I’m hardly blameless in the ‘playing away’ department, after all.

But Polly’s so different. So serious. Not at all like Jean. Not at all like me either, come to think of it. Mind you, that’s entirely possible. She could be Polly Stripling for all I know. Still, I think of

Polly Duport Diary Award 2015 Winner

Temporary King

By Bernard Stacey

As you will see from the report of the NE USA & New York Group AP Birthday Luncheon on page 25, Bernard Stacey won the Polly Duport Diary Award with his entry “Temporary King”. As interesting comparisons we also bring you Bernard’s diary entries for the same day from Bob Duport and Jean Duport.
her as my own and I’m proud she’s making something of herself. She gave me tickets to her first night in that play she’s in: have to say it bored me rigid and Jean had to keep waking me up, but everyone else said she was terrific in it.

I heard Jean go out again this evening. Probably thought I was asleep. I wonder where she’s gone. Wouldn’t be surprised if she had a couple of Latinos on the go somewhere as she seems homesick for South America.

It’s all bloody Widmerpool’s fault.

*** *** ***

Jean Duport

Thursday 30th September 1971

God, I wish I were back in South America. I am surrounded by the feeble, the ungrateful, and the spineless. At least Carlos had some life in him – well, he did until I arranged for him not to. It was so easy hiring ‘help’ out there. Anyway, it was what he deserved after cheating on me with that secretary of his. So demeaning.

Went to the gallery with Bob today. That smarmy, lily-livered fool of an owner, Barnabas, has only sold one more painting this week and we need the money. I need the money. There wasn’t exactly time to cash up and pack after the Carlos affair.

Bob is increasingly frail. He can’t walk and getting him and his bath chair in and out of a taxi is the devil’s own work so I’d asked Polly to come and help. I despair of that girl. It’s me, me, me.

She’s obsessed with her acting. At first she didn’t even want to come as she “had to get into character for this evening’s performance”. I’ve seen the play – Miss Julie. She plays a sexually repressed rich girl with no imagination who can’t even elope at the end. I’d say she’s been in character all her life. I hope she does marry Gibson: this nun-like existence isn’t healthy and he might just inject a bit of something into her.

To cap it all, we bumped into Nick Jenkins at the gallery. We pretended we hardly knew each other and I’m sure neither Bob nor Polly know of our past. Nick used to be quite good fun – I can’t remember if he was before or after Jimmy Brent – but he’s turned into an insipid creature now. Smiling and sympathising over Bob, though I know he always disliked him. I suppose a lifetime of dusty books and the English diet does that to a man.

Well, Bob’s in bed asleep now, and Polly of course is on stage. It’s too early to retire so I think I might nip out for a pink gin at The Ritz. With luck that absolutely charming new waiter, Ricardo, will be around … ■
In the late seventies I gorged on *A Dance to the Music of Time*. I scoffed the first ten books already published, then hungrily awaited and wolfed down volume eleven. But volume twelve I almost had to force down, like Mr Creosote’s ‘one waffer thin mint’, happily without his explosive reaction. I sat back completely full but satisfied. So satisfied was I that my appetite for comic novel series was spoiled for some time. Simon Raven’s *Alms for Oblivion* series, although spicier than *Dance* and with as many courses, lacked the subtlety of AP’s flavours and textures, and I’ve still not got round to reading *The Man without Qualities*. Only Proust’s *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, discovered at around the same time, matched it. This was for me an age of discovery: Proust; Polish cinema; modern Shakespearean interpretations and the late Beethoven string quartets added new dimensions to my life only surpassed by the then newly launched Tyrolia step-in binding and Shimano’s indexed-sequential gears.

These latter passions, and many new ones, kept me from AP until the late nineties TV adaptation. This was a disappointment. I urged friends unacquainted with *Dance* to tune in. They dropped out. And I knew why. It was like returning to a fondly remembered, favourite restaurant only to discover it had become a chain that had lost its original integrity and authenticity. Billing it as a mini-series signalled its producers’ intentions. Making Nick Jenkins an insipid hero rather than the disinterested narrator diminished the importance of other characters’ relationships, reducing them to a litany of far-fetched co-incidences. Only the wartime episodes had any sense of drama. Neither gratuitous nudity nor a stellar cast could save it. So it won heaps of acting awards: how could it not with Simon Russel-Beale as Widmerpool supported by the likes of Miranda Richardson, Adrian Scarborough, Zoe Wanamaker, Oliver Ford-Davies *et al.* With insight it was never going to work as well as the radio adaptations. It is almost impossible to get the elegance of AP’s prose across on film.

This missing elegance is what had initially so charmed me in the novels themselves: that and the humour, brilliantly phrased sketches of characters inhabiting a self-contained world, as fantastic as Wodehouse’s but strangely real and with its own grotesque aunts – an assumed shared world of certainty in terms of artistic and literary taste, flattering to the reader who gets the allusions, like Tom Stoppard’s scientific and philosophical asides. And what characters! *Dance* is a fantastic bestiary, a Moreau island of hybrids and archetypes whose relationships are as improbable as in any Russian novel and so tribal as to border on the incestuous. And how they sparkle, especially the older characters: Ted Jeavons, Mrs Erdleigh, Uncle Giles and
General Conyers, clearly have AP’s greatest affection. And towering over them all, the mighty Kenneth Widmerpool, symbolic of a changing world that AP sensed but regarded reservedly;

Not the least of the characters’ attractions are their quintessential names. Sir Magnus Donners, Buster Foxe, Milly Andriadis, Chips Lovell, JG Quiggin, Billson, Scorpio Murtlock, Max Pilgrim, X Trapnel. They all have names that deny them any other persona or calling than that which AP gave them, and many, to make a final pleasure, are depicted on Marc Boxer’s cover illustrations with the delicacy of *nouvelle cuisine*. So with his geography: Foppa’s; Hero of Acre; Dogdene; The Ufford are monikered to summon them as completely as any Bradshaw. Also with the books and journals: *Fission; Camel Ride to the Tomb; Death’s-Head Swordsmen; Fields of Amaranth; Dogs Have No Uncles*, and the rest. These show AP to have been the best parodist of the twentieth century. Consider Dr Trelawney’s, ‘The essence of all is the Godhead of the true’, or Max Pilgrim’s ‘Di, Di in her collar and tie’. Perfect!

Such were my memories until recently when, lunching with a friend, his observation that the louche pub that we were in would not be out of place in *Dance* led me to question why I still regularly consumed Proust, Beethoven *et al.*, but AP had fallen from my cultural diet. So I dipped in again, re-read selective passages and found that it still charmed and amused me.

And yet … I perceive in it now a certain unkindness and resentment, that disquiets me. There is a disdain for otherness, as there is for industry and commerce. Nick’s dalliance in Bohemia is for amusement, not enlightenment. Widmerpool is pilloried for his father’s liquid fertiliser business; Sir Magnus Donners is an uncultured arriviste. The only ‘trade’ fit for a gentleman is publishing. In the end, no-one meets with a good end and there is a distinct feeling of *Schadenfreude* in their demises.

It would be wrong to criticise *Dance* (or any work) for what it is not or for what is not in it, but I found myself thinking that Nick’s world whilst ostensibly comprehensive lacks something important, which probably reflects AP’s own world, and that is modernism. AP and his world now seem to me to be solipsistic and self-regarding, but not self-aware. Darwin, Einstein and Bohr might as well not have existed; Joyce, Picasso and Schoenberg wasted their time. Neither Poincaré cousin is mentioned; Weimar is a foreign country. AP’s world is a small old world of dilettantism and amateurism that he is unwilling to admit is diminishing and whose decline he resents and for whose passing he compensates by condescending to the new cultural powers, or by ignoring them altogether. To my mind now, AP and *Dance* present a somewhat gloomy teleology. It is not a bright, timeless world like Wodehouse’s, but a penumbral, doomed world like Melvyn Peake’s Gormenghast. Perhaps that was his intention.

But it would be churlish in this publication to conclude on the negative. Especially since still for me the positive continues to surpass it. So let me finish by applying to all twelve volumes of *Dance* Quiggin’s claim for Sillery’s secret diaries, *Garnered at Sunset*, and confidently assert that, despite my reservations, “They’ll be read as the most notable chronicle of our time”. ■
Dates for Your Diary

STILL TIME TO BOOK

2016 Conference
Anthony Powell,
Shakespeare and Other
Literary Influences
Friday 8 to Sunday 10 April 2016
King’s Manor, York

The conference programme includes two days (Friday & Saturday) of plenary sessions, with four keynote speakers and a range of submitted papers; a conference dinner on Saturday evening; and a Sunday outing to the nearby Castle Howard, backdrop for the filming of Evelyn Waugh’s Brideshead Revisited. Buffet lunch is included on the Friday & Saturday. Friday evening has been deliberately left free for delegates to network, wine, dine and sightsee at their leisure.

King’s Manor, part of the University of York, is a glorious medieval house in the centre of one of the jewel cities of the UK and very close to York Minster. Travel to York couldn’t be easier with trans-continental flights to Manchester and a direct train connection, or a regular fast train service from central London and Edinburgh. York has abundant accommodation to suit all pockets.

Full conference information is in the flyer and booking form enclosed with this Newsletter.

The provisional conference schedule is on the website, and also see John Roe’s update on page 6.

London Group Pub Meets
Saturday 7 May 2016
Saturday 6 August 2016
Saturday 5 November 2016

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.

Summer Saturday Stroll
Soho Nights – The Morning After
Saturday 2 July 2016
1030 for 1100 hrs

Meeting Point & Lunch Venue tba

We are unlikely to be allowed entry to Foppa’s restaurant so early in the day and Umfraville’s nightclub will be long closed. However, Soho is exactly the sort of place one is likely to run into Maclintick, Moreland, Gypsy Jones or Odo Stevens whatever the time of day and there are rumours that Uncle Giles might also occasionally be seen there.

As usual, we will lunch at 1300 hrs (though, for reasons of geography, not at Da Corradi this year).

No need to book for the walk, but if you wish to join the lunch party please let us know so we can book a group table. There is no charge for the walk itself (although donations in the Hon. Secretary’s top hat will be welcomed) and lunch will be pay on the day. Non-members welcome.

Further details from, and bookings to, Ivan Hutnik, ivanhutnik@gmail.com.

Full conference information is in the flyer and booking form enclosed with this Newsletter.

The provisional conference schedule is on the website, and also see John Roe’s update on page 6.

Still time to book
A Day Out in Oxford
AP and His Chums
Saturday 3 September 2016
For this year’s day out member Clive Gwatkin Jenkins is organising a visit to the dreaming spires of Oxford in the footsteps of AP and friends.
The details are not yet finalised so mark the date and watch for the announcement in the next Newsletter.

William Shakespeare
A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Tuesday 6 September 2016
1930 hrs performance
Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre
Join us for an evening at the Globe Theatre to see Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream - a play Powell clearly enjoyed - and celebrate the 400th anniversary of the bard’s death.
We have booked a small number of tickets which will be available to members (first come first served) at their face value of £45.
Before sending money, please contact the Hon. Secretary to ensure tickets are still available.
Tickets and further information from the Hon. Secretary.

Annual General Meeting
The 16th Annual General Meeting of the Anthony Powell Society will be held on Saturday 22 October 2016 at 1400 hrs in the Conference Room of St James’s Church, Piccadilly, London W1.
Full details to follow.

London Group
AP Birthday Lunch
Saturday 3 December 2016
1200 for 1230 hrs
Central London venue tbc
This is a pay on the day event, but please book with the Secretary so we can ensure we have reserved a large enough table!
As always non-members are welcome.
Further information when available from the Hon. Secretary.
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
Contact: Nick Birns
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Great Lakes Group
Area: Chicago area, USA
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Nordic Group
Area: Sweden & Finland
Contact: Regina Rehbinder
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Toronto Group
Area: Toronto, Canada
Contact: Joan Williams
Email: jwilliamsto@hotmail.com

Please contact the 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.

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
editor@anthonypowell.org

We are always especially grateful for reports or notices of Powell-related events and relevant photographs.

Society News & Notices

Membership Updates

New Members
We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:
- Geoff Eagland, London
- Heinz Feldmann, Laer, Germany
- Gareth Goodsir-Cullen, Balmain, Australia
- Michael Haines, St Austell
- Jeff Howe, Canterbury
- Stephen Moss, Surbiton
- Lana Starkey, Durack, Australia
- Veronica Watts, Surrey
- Tom Weston, London
- John Wirenius, Albany, USA

Condulesences
We regret that since the last Newsletter we have learnt of the death of member Mrs Bankim Thanki, London
We send our condolences to her family and friends.

Christmas Prize Competition 2015
This year's competition was to nominate a character from Dance and their favourite novel.
We are delighted to have had a record entry, from which the Editor has chosen two winners:

AJ Tucker for his suggestion that Pamela Flitton's favourite novel would be Truman Capote's In Cold Blood.

Philip Ivory for suggesting Pamela’s favourite novel would be Norman Mailer’s The Naked and the Dead.

Congratulations to both winners, who receive a year's membership of the Society.
Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due annually on 1 April (for rates see back page)

Reminders will be sent out (by email where possible) during March to those whose membership is about to expire

Remember you can save time and money with our 5 years for the price of 4 membership offer

To keep costs down we will be using email wherever possible so please look out for emails from the Society

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

Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, at the usual address

Please help us to keep costs down by renewing promptly

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Society News & Notices

The mechanicals from A Midsummer Night’s Dream caught mid-jig at Shakespeare’s Globe theatre a few years ago
For the 2015 London Birthday Lunch we returned to an old favourite, Da Corradi, in Shepherd Market. It was an elegiac occasion rather like meeting an old flame that nature has not treated kindly.

Da Corradi remains friendly, accommodating, cramped and uncomfortable. But it has also lost its youthful charms in the service and food departments. Resolutely resisting air conditioning the completely full basement soon turned into a sauna. The Rumanian waitress was under pressure, as clearly also was the kitchen, and food appeared at staggered intervals. The record for the longest wait for a main course – two hours – was shared by two members. And DC surpassed itself by running out of tiramisu. What an Italian restaurant? Yes.

Despite this the 20 members enjoyed themselves. The conversation ranged, as always, between the pedantic – what is the difference between “in spite” and “despite” – and the stylistic. Much breath was expended on whether at an occasion to honour AP male neckwear should be worn. Several female members expressed a preference for not seeing grey chest hair and gnarled Adam’s apples. The tie count was in fact up on last year with six ties being displayed out of a possible 15.

Although this did include a soft collar shirt worn with a collar stud and a tie worn with an undone button – something that AP would no doubt have found “common”.

Our members’ favourite sport of identifying modern figures in Dance Local Group News

AP Birthday Lunch – London

By Stephen Walker

produced the delight of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn (below) as JG Quiggin. On the pognographic front there were four beards in attendance which no doubt would have affronted AP.

New members were welcomed including a youthful female academic from Australia who won our hearts by mistaking a bling-attired Society Trustee as a rap artist. He carried off this solecism with his usual aplomb.

Several members firmly stated that they wish to return to the Oxford & Cambridge Club for next year’s lunch. That will be debated but in the absence of a makeover and perhaps radical surgery – Da Corradi like many other denizens of Shepherd Market has to bow to nature’s cruel summons.
An arousing blend of separate arts intoxicated the precisely regulated air of the Grolier Club’s exhibition hall during the closing moments of the 18 December New York AP Birthday luncheon.

Through the sixteen in-wall glass exhibition cases around the long room flowed exquisite bibliographic impressions: eg. from an 8th century Japanese Buddhist scroll; from a gorgeous Doves Press Bible, opened to Genesis 1:1 (the awesome folio page on which the initial I of “In the Beginning” – extends down the entire left margin); and from Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron*.

While, in the centre of the hall, around large circular tables, enthused guests were loudly applauding the finale of the Noel-Poel Players’ re-enactment of the London art gallery scene from *Hearing Secret Harmonies* – the one in which Jenkins stands alone, amid Edgar Deacon paintings, after the departure of Jean, Bob and Polly Duport, and Norman Chandler.

And while, between the cheering audience and the bowing actors, there radiated, from on top a draped votive stand, a monumental, baroquely-filigreed 110th Anthony Powell Birthday cake, its sides adorned with 12 panels, one for each *Dance* novel.

These concurrent delights were compressed into an intense pleasure-peak moment that will likely heat the memories of the Noel-Poelites for light-years to come, supernovas and black holes permitting.

The luncheon began on a challengingly high level of imaginative ambiguity with the sympathetic reading of “Temporary King”, Bernard Stacey’s winning Polly Duport Diary Entry (see page 16), by novelist and Bennington College professor Annabel Davis-Goff. (Later, Annabel read Stacey’s severe conception of what Jean might have written in her diary about the afternoon meeting Jenkins.) Although he has never attended a Grolier Birthday Luncheon, Bernard Stacey has a cult of American admirers. He won Noel-Poel competitive awards in 2013 (Theophrastus Prize) and 2014 (Ovid Heroines Prize for “Dog Days & Dickey”). Also cherished in New York and environs is his X Trapnel *Profiles in String* paperback.

During the luncheon Nick Birns spoke and answered questions about 2016 Society activities, including the York Conference.
After dessert, the Noel Poel Players’ presentation of *Familiar Voices at a Private Showing*, adapted from pages 252-257 of *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, featured three delightful new actors. Playing Bob Duport, manoeuvring petulantly in a wheelchair, was writer and administrator John Wirenius, who clenched audience attention with a nastiness that entirely concealed his native good nature. Entrepreneur-executive Elizabeth Howard gave conviction, attractiveness, and grace to her characterization of Polly Duport. Columbia University Writer Michael Leahy, essaying the challenging role of Jenkins, achieved a Nick so quietly convincing that he may have permanently influenced how some audience members will imagine the *Dance* narrator.

Also in the cast were three much-admired Noel-Poel veterans. In his fourth fine Grolier appearance, favourite Gerald Ruderman was entirely successful in opening the play and setting the scene for the audience in the role of Barnabas Henderson, the gallery owner. As the aged Jean, whose younger spirit she dramatically portrayed in an earlier Grolier production, hostess Arete Warren presented a woman drained by a lifetime of full-living. She deployed a gripping acting style that combined elements of the tragic and the noctambulistic.

In her first – but all hope not her last – “pants-role” portrayal of actor/dancer Norman Chandler, Library of America head Cheryl Hurley created a blend of comic light-heartedness and choreographic timing that gave one the happy sense of witnessing the birth of a star performer.

A larger ‘stage area’, more care for period costuming, and valuable rehearsal coaching and direction from Eileen Kaufman helped the actors to achieve unusually high standards for a Noel-Poel production.

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*The cast of *Familiar Voices at a Private Showing* (l to r): Michael Leahy (Nick Jenkins), Cheryl Hurley (Norman Chandler), Gerald Ruderman (Barnabas Henderson), Elizabeth Howard (Polly Duport), John Wirenius (Bob Duport) and Arete Warren (Jean Duport)*
On 23 January 2016, following last year’s success, we visited Patisserie Valerie in Brompton Road again. This year’s Brunch marked two important birthdays in the Powellian universe. The first is the 65th anniversary of the publication of *A Question of Upbringing* the previous day. The second is the equally significant arrival of one Keith Marshall on this earth.

It was a very jolly, even boisterous, occasion. Partly this was the result of an anonymous benefactor donating bottles of Pat Val’s finest champagne to celebrate the first of the two anniversaries. But the good food — especially the brioche French toast and the full English — also played its part. Given that it was the AP Society that was enjoying brunch the social significance of the different patterns of champagne glasses offered round was much discussed. Apparently the narrower the nose of the glass the more refined it, and therefore the drinker, is.

The atmosphere was heightened by rumours that the manuscript of a 13th volume of *Dance* had been discovered.

Was it a prequel, a final final volume or an inter-volume? Bets were laid and recorded in your editor’s notebook. Reference was made to the previously undiscovered manuscript of *Profiles in String* that was announced to the world at the Society’s conference at Eton in 2013. A sub-committee is being formed to investigate.

More new members were welcomed including one who also being a member of AP’s old college, Balliol, brought the sad news that while Graham Greene was discussed by current undergraduates Powell was not. This reinforced Professor John Roe’s observation that AP was much harder to teach to today’s students than Greene or Waugh. Condemnations that standards were clearly slipping from our day mixed with proclamations that we must all do our bit to spread the AP cause increased arousal levels. Seizing his moment your Secretary handed round his top hat saying that he was “collecting shrapnel for Trapnel”.

All in all a cracking start to the New Year. Not to be missed.
BOOK REVIEW

DJ Taylor

*The Prose Factory: Literary Life in England Since 1918*

Chatto & Windus; £25

We have two reviews of *The Prose Factory*. The first is from Michael Barber.

In 2013 DJ Taylor told the Guardian that he was planning to write

> an enormous book about literary culture in the last century. How books are conceived, written, published, reviewed, sold and read.

This is that book, and mighty impressive it is too. Indeed if you agree with Malcolm Muggeridge that medals ought to be awarded for certain literary chores then Taylor deserves a chestful. Fancy having to wade through *Lord of the Rings*, *Finnegans Wake* and *Orlando*, followed by every issue of *Scrutiny* and *The London Mercury* (hands up those who’ve heard of Sir John Squire, let alone read his magazine).

Taylor didn’t start from scratch. A prolific all-rounder, the author of a life of Orwell and two studies of post-war British fiction, he was already familiar with the terrain, which after a balmy interlude in the Twenties, when Art somehow got mixed up with life, began to feel what Evelyn Waugh called a chill wind from the Fens. Ethics, preached the messianic Dr Leavis, were more important than aesthetics: you should not read a novel for enjoyment alone. His disciples went forth and multiplied, later colonising English departments at universities and schools in Britain and the Commonwealth. Then they in turn were challenged by the Structuralists, described by Taylor as “like the Leavisites but with less comprehensible jargon”. To illustrate the gap between the theory and practice of writing fiction he refers us to David Lodge, whose entertaining novels, he suggests, were ‘undermined’ by critical works of his like *Working with Structuralism*.

Happily Taylor, who is also a novelist, is more interested in personalities than prescripts. In addition to those already mentioned his cast includes Kingsley Amis, Arnold Bennett, Malcolm Bradbury, AS Byatt, Cyril Connolly, TS Eliot, Graham Greene, Philip Larkin, JB Priestley, Iris Murdoch, Simon Raven, CP Snow, Angus Wilson (who once told me that Envy was endemic to the literary world) and Virginia Woolf. Some readers may wonder why Alec Waugh – in his own words, “a very minor writer” – occupies more space than brother Evelyn. I think this is partly because he wrote at great length about being a writer, which he was for over 60 years, and also because he was a favourite with Boots Library subscribers, whose taste Taylor often invokes.

Naturally Taylor also invokes AP. I say ‘Naturally’ because he’s a fan, coyly identified as such in a photo taken at The Chantry and included here. Above this is another photo, taken aboard a cross-Channel ferry, of AP and his Punch colleagues en route to a cricket match in Holland, the last straw, apparently, in his relations with the magazine under its new editor, Bernard Hollowood. I should like to have heard more about this, but it doesn’t feature in the text. Equally puzzling, Taylor sets *At Lady Molly’s*,

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when Jenkins marries Isobel, in the Twenties.

A more serious complaint is the absence of Ian Fleming. If, as the blurb says, this is a book about literary taste, then how can you possibly overlook the creator of James Bond? “A new hero has arisen among us”, said the critic Walter Allen of ‘Lucky Jim’ Dixon. How much more true is this of Bond, a gigantic genie to rank with Sherlock Holmes. By 1953, when Bond sprang fully armed from Fleming’s forehead, people were sick and tired of rationing, regulations and the jobsworths who enforced them. No wonder they fell for a suave, virile tough guy who took no prisoners and demanded nothing but the best. Fleming was also indirectly responsible for the Booker Prize. His decision to sell Booker-McConnell the rights to the Bond novels, a tax dodge, encouraged the boss of Booker, his pal Jock Campbell, to set up an author’s division, some of the profits from which went to fund the prize.

Taylor, I must stress, is properly concerned with the economics of writing. He quotes the question asked of Paul Bailey by a schoolchild: “If that’s all you earn, why do it?”. There is, as Eric Morecombe used to say, no answer to that. Or at any rate no answer that would satisfy people who have never felt compelled to make some sense of their experiences. Grub Street is not paved with gold, and if some writers now have a much higher profile thanks to prizes, literary festivals and the internet, very few of them live by their pen alone. Review copies, which could be flogged for cash at Gastons, the library suppliers off Chancery Lane, were – perhaps still are – one of the few perks. I once found myself in a queue there at the head of which were AJP Taylor and Anthony Burgess, the latter brandishing a cigar and laying down the law about gin.

What is the future for authors in the digital age? Taylor gives a cautious endorsement of Fay Weldon’s argument that they should

“abandon their dignity” and write alternative versions of their work suitable for the e-book audience.

In support of this he quotes Evelyn Waugh, who noted the existence of a link between the words on the page and the instrument that transmits them.

Take, for instance the “boiled-down, staccato prose pioneered by Hemingway”. Surely this had something to do with his habit of composing directly on to a typewriter? But so did AP, and I’ve never heard his prose described as ‘boiled-down’ or ‘staccato’.

But if I don’t always agree with what Taylor says, I am full of admiration for the way he says it. Rarely have I seen so many metaphors deployed to such good effect. Pithy, erudite, evocative and engrossing, this should find a place on the shelves of all those for whom good books are a staple.
Our second review of *The Prose Factory* is from Jeffrey Manley.

DJ Taylor investigates the literary life *ie.* those who write and review books, those who read them, and how far it is possible to earn a living from writing. He concentrates on people, rather than books, and manages his broad remit pretty well.

The book is in three periods: Interwar, WWII/Post-War, and 1970+. Within each period, Taylor considers literary fashions, journals and their editors, the machinery of reviewing, academic oversight, and incomes. He uses the works of authors from each period to comment on or explain their books or those of their contemporaries. He refers to Powell constantly.

Taylor intersperses the pages of names, books, periodicals, movements, fashions, print runs, incomes with short more focused essays which resemble the “middles” that appeared in newspapers and literary magazines. They were between 800 and 1,500 words in length, meditative, sometimes topical, nearly always humorous.

The opening chapter describes the young writers after WWI who have to come to grips with a war in which they were too young to participate but which cast a cloud over their adolescence. Taylor cites Powell to provide an example of this phenomenon:

> When ... Ted Jeavons is identified ... as ‘something left over from the war’, the effect would have been to set off a chain of assumptions in the original reader’s mind, a suspicion that in however indirect a way he, or she, knows the kind of person Jeavons is meant to be.

Examining the Modern Movement, Taylor in a memorable “middle” on the Sitwells says that while they were the movement’s “public face” Eliot was its “high priest, a figure of paralyzing celebrity”. Powell provides an example of his status:

> Fifty years after chancing upon him in a Charlotte Street restaurant in the late 1920s, Powell could still remember the feeling of excitement stimulated by the appearance of ‘a figure whom the Sitwells, Bloomsbury, even Wyndham Lewis treated with respect’... When Powell met him again, nearly 20 years after the Charlotte Street sighting, in the North Devon village where Powell was on post-demob furlough, he noted that the off-duty Eliot, taking tea with friends or drinking cider in the local pub ‘had just a touch of the headmaster, laying aside his dignity for a talk with the more intelligent boys’.

Aldous Huxley also influenced Powell and his contemporaries. As late as 1973, Powell explains how he was “prostrated” by Huxley’s early novels and “thought that it was ‘difficult now to express the prestige attached to Aldous Huxley in the 1920s’”.

For Taylor, Firbank was the most important influence on younger writers and he shows how they adopted his writing style – particularly his “talking heads” dialogues, stripped down prose and allusive plot advancing references. Taylor gives examples from Waugh but could equally well have cited Powell.

Taylor also examines middlebrow literature. In the 1930s one of its chief representatives was Hugh Walpole. He refers to Powell’s “Walpolian” character, St John Clark. In *The Acceptance World*, Nick Jenkins is pleasantly surprised to find...
that Clark has written favourably of one of his novels and assumes it is merely a case of recognition of his merits. Barnby disabuses him and “diagnoses an opportunistic conversion to modernism (‘I fear it is all a part of a larger design’”).

The post-WWI years were not like the post-WWII ones. There was no literary upheaval like the Modern Movement. The late 1940s were, according to Taylor, accurately depicted in Books Do Furnish a Room:

with its chilly evocations of snowbound literary London in the winter of 1946-47 describes a landscape of left-wing publishing firms picking up where they left off, still fighting the battles of the 1930s ... still hastening to publish foreign propaganda novels with titles like The Pistons of Our Locomotives Sing the Songs of Our Workers and having their losses underwritten by the apparatchiks in King Street.

Literary activity picked up in the 1950s. The “Angry Young Men” appeared. Powell established friendships with these younger writers. Taylor mentions Powell’s friendship with Amis in the context of a BBC interview upon publication of The Acceptance World. Amis was the interviewer. The leftish BBC producers expected him to savage the upper class Powell. Taylor cites Amis’s own recollection:

Arriving at the studio Amis and Powell greeted each other by their Christian names: ‘at once the BBC faces fell in disappointment, almost disgust’.

Powell and his generation do not feature much in the 1970+ section. Taylor notes Powell’s work for the Daily Telegraph. These “deeply recherché items” call up one’s gratitude for his editor’s “power of discrimination”. There are also two photos of Powell that are not to be missed. Taylor cites, in a “middle” on the Thatcher government’s relations with the cultural world, Powell’s Journals about two literary receptions which Mrs Thatcher hosted. Powell was much impressed.

The earlier sections of the book, up to the 1960s, particularly his dissection of the 1950s, are better than the final part. Sadly Taylor doesn’t give a more detailed analysis of Dance and Powell’s autobiographical writings. Powell may be the only writer to have written a sustained body of work, much of which was devoted to the literary life, covering the entire period of Taylor’s book. Taylor mentions X Trapnel and St John Clark as examples of a type of writer from a particular period, but something useful and entertaining could have been made of others such as Mark Members, JG Quiggin, Ada Leintwardine and Nick Jenkins himself. They all depended on writing for their livelihoods.

Finally, the book is well produced and edited. I found only one typo: Fosdick, in From a View to a Death, is spelled “Forsdick”. The index is excellent. The generalized endnotes work well, but a bibliography would have been helpful.
Q. Where do I go for a decent glass of gin? And how do I ensure it is correctly mixed?

The other day my dear nephew invited me and Mrs E to his local “gin parlour”. In Kings Cross of all places! Apparently, these gin establishments are all the rage, popping up all over London and the Home Counties like the proverbial rash.

The parlour turned out to be a pretentious basement with faux art-deco gizmos and soft lighting. A crowd of flashy young men and women sat perched on high chairs around the bar guzzling cocktails.

“Here” I said to the waiter, “Give me a gin and It!” Blank stare. “Gin and what?”

“Italian. Vermouth! Comprehendee? No?”

“There’s Tanqueray, Bloom, Bombay Blue Sapphire, Sipsmiths … take your pick. Our craft gin is very popular. It has notes of cinnamon, cloves, and angelica” piped up the whipper-snapper behind the bar, pointing to a gin glass filled to overflowing with what looked like a cucumber salad. Mrs E looked doubtful.

“It’s artisanal, Uncle” hissed my nephew looking embarrassed. “Craft gin, my arse” I harrumphed.

By the end of the evening I sat glowering over a sarsaparilla while the merry Mrs E was imbibing from the cucumber cup and had become the centre of attention. She had got out her Tarot deck and was laying it out on the table before a hushed crowd.

“I see you have Saturn in the twelfth house, and juniper is well aspected in your chart” she winked.

Take it from an old hand, there are rules to drinking and mixing gin. And here they are!

- Steer well clear of anything remotely artisanal. Stick with your uncle’s favourite tipple, G and T and you can’t go far wrong.
- Uncle Giles’ recipe: fill a glass liberally with dry London gin – it must be London gin, mind! Then add a dash of Schweppes’ Indian Tonic Water, a slice of lemon and a couple of ice cubes. That’s the stuff the Empire was built on.
- Gin and It hits the spot. Sweet Vermouth gives it a very palatable taste – very popular with the ladies and Mrs E (not that she isn’t a lady!).
- Pink gin (mixed with angostura bitters). Beloved of the Royal Navy – blue jobs – I call them. Avoid!
- “Gin and Sin”. One measure of gin; one measure of Cinzano Bianco. The local padre swears by it – particularly fortifying after a christening or a marriage.
- Gin and orange: Total muck: least said!
- Don’t forget the lemon. Keep a lemon and a sharp penknife handy when entering strange pubs. My “travels” in Kent took me to a battered caravanserai called the Red Lion at Snargate run by a formidable landlady called Doris. Doris poured me a G and T. The ice went in. Then she handed it to me.

“Here” I said. “Where’s the lemon?”

“We don’t serve food” retorted Doris.
Letters to the Editor

**What’s Become of Waring, Moby Dick and Captain Ahab**

*From Mr Jonathan Kooperstein*

*Newsletter* readers with long memories may recall that in the Summer 2006 issue [Newsletter 23] I reviewed the Grolier Club exhibition of Bill Warren’s AP collection. One book that stood out was a copy of *What’s Become of Waring* inscribed “For Moby Dick from Captain Ahab – Jan 26 1939” and accompanied by a 1985 letter from AP to a previous owner of the book confirming that it was he who had inscribed it, signing himself as “Captain Ahab”, and that “Moby Dick” was Dick Wyndham (1896-1948; land-owner, artist and writer). I also noted that Dick Wyndham was probably the unnamed successful rival for the affections of Enid Firminger whom AP alludes to in *Messengers of Day and Journals 1990-1992*, and, hence, not altogether AP’s favourite person.

Nine years on I can add one or two details to this account. The previous owner of this copy of *What’s Become of Waring* was John Gere (1921-1995), Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and editor, with John Sparrow, of *Geoffrey Madan’s Notebooks* (1981), a book which AP reviewed enthusiastically in the *Daily Telegraph* (reprinted in *Under Review*). The book was offered for sale in Stone Trough Books’ catalogue eight, *From the Library of John Gere: Literature* (1996).

According to AP’s 1985 letter, he gave *What’s Become of Waring* to Wyndham only because the latter had proposed that each of them should give the other his next book. The Warren exhibition label indicates that Dick Wyndham led off the exchange, presumably with his novel *Painter’s Progress* (1938). Both these books were published by Cassells, a possible factor in the exchange that Wyndham proposed and AP agreed to. The prepublication date of the inscription in *What’s Become of Waring* suggests that AP was eager to match Wyndham’s gift and discharge his unsought obligation as quickly as possible.

AP was not alone in referring to Dick Wyndham as “Moby Dick” – though possibly unique in identifying himself as “Captain Ahab” in that context. In *Those Wild Wyndhams* (2014), her biography of the Wyndham sisters (Dick’s aunts), Claudia Renton quotes a letter written in 1936 by Evan Charteris, the younger brother of Hugh Elcho, Dick Wyndham’s uncle by marriage, discussing the adverse effects of Dick Wyndham’s inconsiderate behaviour on the latter’s aunt, Mary Elcho, and referring to him as “Moby Dick”.

But was AP unique in referring to Dick Wyndham as “Moby Dick” to his face, so to speak? Here we arrive at the realms of “understatement and irony – in which all classes of this island converse” [AW] and, in the absence of specific evidence on this point I must defer to the judgement of ears more finely attuned than mine.

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**Newsletter Copy Deadlines**

*Newsletter #63, Summer 2016*

Copy Deadline: 13 May 2016
Publication Date: 3 June 2016

*Newsletter #64, Autumn 2016*

Copy Deadline: 12 August 2016
Publication Date: 2 September 2016
Letters to the Editor

Balchin, Powell, Harpur & Iles

From Mr James Tucker

Robin Bynoe in his article on Nigel Balchin [Newsletter 61] wonders whether I was echoing the title of a Balchin novel, *In the Absence of Mrs Petersen*, in the title of my crime novel *In the Absence of Iles*, written under my pen name, Bill James. Afraid not. I don’t think I had ever heard of the Balchin book. I did read *The Small Back Room* by Balchin when it came out. I haven’t a copy but I believe the opening sentence went something like, “In 19XX my foot hurt a lot so they cut it off”. For a gout sufferer before allopurinol was generally available these were chilling words, but the story was strong and I stuck with it to the end. My book was in a series featuring the two high ranking cops, Harpur and Iles. The novel came in for some stick from critics because Iles was, in fact, very present but Harpur didn’t appear. Iles missed a crucial meeting in the story and was only absent in that sense. I think I got the idea for my title from the way some recipes suggest how to remedy a shortage of an ingredient – “In the absence of caviar, lump fish roe is a near-perfect substitute”.

The drawing of Powell reading the *Army List 1902*, on page 38 of the same *Newsletter* is a miniature version of the picture on the front of *The New Review* v2, no.19. This contains my (fallible) guide to the characters of *Dance*. Powell didn’t want this published because he was working with Hilary Spurling on her much more comprehensive and accurate handbook. It was a tricky decision but we decided to go ahead with the magazine version, later incorporated into my book *The Novels of Anthony Powell*. The illustration on the magazine cover has Powell reading not the *Army List* but *Who’s Who in “A Dance to the Music of Time”*. The background is the dust jackets of most of *Dance*. ■

I thought of Pepys, and the ‘great black maid’; and immediately Widmerpool’s resemblance to the existing portraits of the diarist became apparent. He had the same obdurate, put-upon, bad-tempered expression. Only a full-bottomed wig was required to complete the picture.

At Lady Molly’s
The eponymous author of the blog “Mrs Trefusis takes a Taxi”, wrote on 4 January (http://mrstrefusis.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/book-resolutions-2016.html) about her book resolutions for 2016. First on the list was:

**The Box Set: A Dance to the Music of Time, Anthony Powell**

A Dance to the Music of Time is a captivating, witty, caustic glimpse into the upper reaches of British society beginning sometime after the end of the First World War and ending in the sixties: it’s somewhere between Proust’s *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* and Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga* and, like both, runs into volumes, individually of varying brilliance, but a masterpiece taken as a whole. I read the First Movement last summer – the twelve novels of the cycle are much more easily digested in four parts. Don’t be tempted to set yourself a target of a book a month for twelve months: like good telly box-sets, it’s designed for bingeing on, gobbling as much of its deliciousness as one can manage in a single sitting. It’s not for eking out into smaller portions, not least because one will lose track of the marvellous and numerous characters who wander in and out of the narrative, and whose rediscovery at different points in their lives is one of the many pleasures of this great literary treat.

Writing on the TLS blog on 18 January 2016 (http://timescolumns.typepad.com/stothard/2016/01/a-straw-powell.html), Michael Caines quotes DJ Taylor when interviewed by Jonathan Barnes:

*I have to say, I suppose, that I do think that Anthony Powell is the greatest English novelist of the twentieth century by a country mile. In so far as these things are ever quantifiable he seems to me to get closest to what life is actually like. The number of times I’ve experienced what I call “an Anthony Powell moment”. Some twitch on the thread. You think of somebody in one context and then come across them in another. This happens to me so often as to be almost uncanny. I love his writing. There is quite a popular view of Powell that he’s just a refrigerated old snob who simply wants to write about this exclusive set of toffs and wastrels buggering about in some high-class nightclub. And in fact he’s not like that at all. They’re about social movement.*

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Simple-lifers, utopian socialists, spiritualists, occultists, theoskeptics, quietists, pacifists, futurists, cubists, zealots of all sorts in their approach to life and art... were then [1914] thought of by the unenlightened as scarcely distinguishable from one another...

*The Kindly Ones*
Lord Weidenfeld, who died in January, was at one time married to Barbara Skelton who was in part the character model for Pamela Flitton. Writing of the tributes to Weidenfeld, DJ Taylor [no, we don’t pay him for all these mentions, honest! – Ed] in the Independent, 23 January 2016, comments on diarists:

_The same rule_ [major players of 20th century culture were incorrigible gossips] _applies to a great deal of literary art_. What are _the seven volumes of Proust’s A la recherche du temps perdu other than an exercise in gossip? Or Anthony Powell’s equally compendious A Dance to the Music of Time?_ A diarist is, almost by definition, a gossip. Pepys is never so happy as when filing unsubstantiated third-party reports on colleagues, and much of the material that went to make up Aubrey’s Brief Lives was little more than scuttlebutt. _The great crisis of Thackeray's later life, the “Garrick Club Affair” which estranged him from Charles Dickens and had London in uproar for weeks, grew out of an incautiously dropped remark or two to a friend across a clubland hearthrug._

Reviewing _High Dive_ by Jonathan Lee for _The Atlantic_ (March 2016), Leo Robson has the following comment on Margaret Thatcher and AP’s opinion of her.

_Margaret Thatcher, though a prodigious consumer of economics textbooks and briefing documents, and a frequent spouter of Bible passages, has been widely considered deaf to literature. Even a besotted admirer like the novelist Anthony Powell found it hard to take her reading seriously. After Thatcher told him that Dostoyevsky’s novel _The Possessed_ had helped her understand the pressing problems of the day, he wondered in his journal “when, how, she got round to this. Did she read the novel, see its contemporary relevance herself, or was that pointed out to her by someone? I fear probably the latter”. (His skepticism was well founded: The someone was apparently the journalist Malcolm Muggeridge.)_
Late last year the BBC asked …

*What does the rest of the world see as the greatest British novels? In search of a collective critical assessment, BBC Culture contributor Jane Ciabattari polled 82 book critics, from Australia to Zimbabwe – but none from the UK. This list includes no non-fiction, no plays, no narrative or epic poems (no Paradise Lost or Beowulf), no short story collections (no Morte D’Arthur) – novels only, by British authors (which means no James Joyce).

We were pleased to see *Dance* appear on the list at number 36.


Spotted by Nick Birns.

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Back in *Newsletter* 58 we reported on the death of the Society’s former Trustee, and one of our earliest members, Leatrice Fountain. What we had forgotten is that as well as being the daughter of film director John Gilbert, Leatrice was a child film -actress in her own right.

Nick Birns has spotted Leatrice remembered (albeit briefly) by the Movie Channel in a short piece commemorating movie people who died in 2015.


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Choosing her books of the year for the *Spectator*, 21 November 2015, Hilary Spurling selects:

*My first choice is Rachel Billington’s Glory: A Story of Gallipoli, following three young survivors (and their families at home) through what became the first great British defeat of the first world war. Grim and gripping, difficult to put down. My second is an old favourite reissued this year in paperback, Anthony Powell’s uproarious From a View to a Death, a novel about dysfunctional marriage, still as relevant and funny as the day it came out over 70 years ago. An extraordinary book for a young man in his mid-twenties to write about the marital problems of middle-aged people, ending with the outing of the retired major up at the big house, who likes to relax while smoking his pipe behind locked doors in a flowery Ascot hat and lady’s evening gown.*

Rachel Billington is a daughter of Frank Pakenham, 7th Earl of Longford, and thus a niece of Lady Violet and AP. Rachel Billington’s grandfather (Lady Violet’s father), Thomas Pakenham, 5th Earl of Longford, was killed at Gallipoli in August 1915.
Numerology

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Real Historical Characters in Dance

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<td>18.</td>
<td>Boris Karloff [<em>BDFR</em>, 112, 114]</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Karl Marx [<em>AW</em>, 94 ff]</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Dostoyevsky [<em>TK</em>, 218]</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>Adolf Hitler [<em>KO</em>, 142]</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Queen Victoria [<em>KO</em>, 157-9]</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Laclos [<em>AW</em>, 24]</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Andrew Lang [<em>QU</em>, 40]</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Descartes [<em>VB</em>, 107]</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>General Sikorski [<em>MP</em>, 16]</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Stalin [<em>MP</em>, 52 passim]</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Peter Paul Rubens [<em>BM</em>, 216]</td>
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Crossword

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