The Anthony Powell Society
Newsletter

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AGM & “Bring & Buy” Book Sale
Saturday 22 October
St James’s Church, Piccadilly,
London W1

Full details on page 24
AGM papers & Annual Report enclosed

London AP Birthday Lunch
Saturday 3 December
Details page 21

(L to R) Stephen Holden, Rob Tresman, Gerald Parsons and Ivan Hutnik pose outside The Wheatsheaf following the Saturday Stroll on 2 July. Note the plaques to George Orwell and Dylan Thomas. Report on page 26.
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #64

A Letter from the Editor

What would AP have made of the transformation of the country’s political landscape? Several pieces in this issue provide some insight.

Brexit happened in large part because many people felt excluded. Our new Prime Minister has promised to tackle inequality and remove barriers to social and occupational progression. Simon Barnes and Geoff Eagland examine social mobility in Dance. Our Social Correspondent reports on a pre-Brexit party at Lady Molly’s and Uncle Giles gives guidance on the EU and tea.

Several readers have asked if they can comment on issues raised in Newsletter. Robin Bynoe explains and encourages use of the APLIST. Leaving aside his unjustified aspersions about your Editor and the suppression of the fact that he is also a lawyer, your Chairman’s call to email is welcome. The scope and enjoyment of this Newsletter can be enhanced by sampling the blogosphere. Given AP’s journal habit he would doubtless have been a blogger and tweeter.

We also cover more traditional Powellian topics with two pieces on Proust by Nick Birns and Michael Henle. Widmerpool appears in his mother’s recently discovered “Commonplace Book” and in Geraint Dearman’s entertaining My First Time.

Finally, a new feature is trialled: Profiles in String will feature your Secretary’s portraits of members’ phisogs. Get the pancake out.

Stephen Walker
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From the Secretary’s Desk

Whenever I sit down to write this column I always do so with no idea what I’m going to say; but then the words flow. This time is no different. What to say? Well, I should probably tell you about the good things happening in the Society.

One piece of good news is that a few months ago a couple of us provided some information and advice to an Edinburgh University student who was writing her final year Eng. Lit. dissertation on AP and Dance. This is part of what we are here to do. It was great to know that there are students out there who value and enjoy AP – and who, in the process, are educating their lecturers. Even more satisfying was that, in a small way, we helped this student get a good degree.

Also good news is that we are currently attracting a goodly number of new and returning members – almost 20 since the last Newsletter (see page 22). In part this is because we have recently offered two-year-plus lapsed members (and supporters) an attractive membership deal; but there is also an upturn in new members we didn’t previously know. All are warmly welcomed to the Society. And long may this continue!

We believe that AP’s collages, in The Chantry boiler room, should be recorded as an art work in their own right. While they themselves cannot be preserved in a museum, our Chairman and the Hon. Archivist are working on a project to have them professionally photographed.

Don’t forget the book sale at the AGM – “Books” Bagshaw would be there.

Keith Marshall
secretary@anthonypowell.org
The Social Climber as Hero

By Simon Barnes

We’re accustomed to think of the social climber in fiction as a fairly grotesque character: broadly comic, a bit pathetic, fundamentally unsympathetic … and that’s why we completely miss the social climber when we run across him as hero. Perhaps that’s because the reader identifies with such heroes. Perhaps that’s because the author does as well.

So let’s look at three major post-war works of fiction: Dance, Brideshead Revisited and Lucky Jim. Each of these works contains a social climber who can be despised, mocked and laughed at: a character who enhances the reader’s self-esteem (and that, Powellian readers should note, is at least as helpful a trick in popular fiction as self-pity).

Each of these three characters is, in a different way, a work of genius. These despicable social climbers are Widmerpool (of course), Rex Motttram and Bertrand Welch. We’ll look at them in a moment; and after we’ve done so I’ll suggest that all three members of this glorious trio conceal the fact that the heroes of these three works are also social climbers to a man. The ultimately failed social-climbing of the first three sets off the gloriously successful social climbing of the heroes: that is to say, Nick Jenkins, Charles Ryder and Jim Dixon.

But before we move on, I’d like to make it pedantically clear that these observations are not intended as destructive criticisms of three great works. I am not attempting any sort of attack on any of them or for that matter, their authors. I’m just enjoying the books.

So let’s look at the social climbers who can be safely despised, starting with Widmerpool. Of course, Widmerpool is far more than a social climber: but social climbing is an aspect of his approach to life, especially in volumes two and four of Dance.

In A Buyer’s Market we find him in tails, fancying himself a standard “spare man” and backbone of the Season. But it’s clear that he’s nowhere near as successful as Archie Gilbert. We learn later that Widmerpool only ever gets an invitation when a hostess is at her wit’s end for a spare man.

Widmerpool has a passion for Barbara Goring, daughter of the peer who used to buy liquid manure from his father – so it’s a passion full of social aspiration, even if it’s not quite Mellors and Lady Chatterley. In At Lady Molly’s he is engaged to a different peer’s daughter, responding favourably to the urbane teasing of Jenkins, banter that acknowledges Widmerpool’s coup in linking himself with the aristocracy.

In Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant we find that Widmerpool has still dizzier aspirations. He’s moving in rather elevated circles – “not exactly royal – that’s hardly the word yet … You understand me?” It seems he’s become an intimate of Mrs Simpson, but alas, the Abdication spoils his hopes of becoming “the Beau Brummel of the new reign”. This marks the end of Widmerpool’s social
aspirations: from that point he seeks other routes to power. There is a hint, no more, that Widmerpool’s disappointments in society and in love play their part in his shift to the left.

But there’s a neat twist to this. Widmerpool is a Lord by volume eleven, so in some ways, he has climbed to the top of the mountain. True, a recently ennobled Labour peer is not going to strike awe in the Duke of Norfolk. And there is certainly an implication that Widmerpool’s peerage is a bit like his famous overcoat: a traditionally ludicrous aspect of everyday life. Widmerpool may think he has won but those who matter know that he hasn’t – neither in snobbish terms nor in the deeper aspects of *Dance* in which art and power are forever opposed.

Rex Mottram in *Brideshead Revisited* is a Canadian-born millionaire who comes to England demanding only the best. Naturally that includes the best wife, so he makes his alliance with Julia, daughter of Lord Marchmain. He is in business, he’s in politics, he’s in society, and he’s staggeringly successful in everything, apart, that is, from everything that really matters. So he can be despised.

His coarseness, vacuity and inability to understand the sort of thing that we find important is what defines him. Even his good qualities – sorting out the mess when Sebastian is arrested for drink-driving – can be comfortably despised. This prepares the way for one of the most snobbish passages in the history of literature when he and Charles go out to dinner in Paris. Charles chooses, Rex pays.

At the end Rex is secretly snubbed for drinking the wrong sort of brandy.

Rex “couldn’t see the point of me” Julia says: but Charles of course does. So Rex is triumphantly cuckolded: a conspiracy of two against the hatefulness of a changing world. Whatever Rex does is bad because he lacks a soul. He’s not one of us: certainly not what St John Clarke would have called “a natural aristocrat”.

In *Lucky Jim* Bertrand proclaims himself an artist, loud, garish and offensive. He snubs Dixon at their first meeting, dismissing his socialist beliefs by crowing about his love of wealthy people who patronise the arts. His girlfriend is a rich man’s niece; he is expecting her uncle, Gore-Urquhart, to give him a job – a sinecure that will give him all the time he needs to paint great works. Bertrand creeps to the rich, shows off and scores points against his equals, and behaves dreadfully to those he considers beneath
him. Naturally that’s mostly Dixon. Bertrand is awful, and to Dixon’s intense relief, it turns out that Bertrand is not much cop as a painter.

Three monsters, then. All social climbers. They’re not entirely defined by their social climbing, but social climbing is an aspect of their monstrosity. Widmerpool is by far the most subtle of the three, being a leading character who appears in a dozen novels. Rex is a brilliant caricature: we are invited to pity him in a way that makes us slightly smug. Bertrand is a glorious hate-figure: “I happen to like the arts, you sam”. (That being his affected and offensive pronunciation of “you see”.)

But these despicable social climbers hide, at least in part, the fact that the heroes of the works in which they appear are also social climbers: characters for whom social climbing is nothing less than a noble quest (noblesse oblige, as Sillery would say). We are invited to rejoice in their social successes: to see them as fair rewards for life’s endeavour.

Like Widmerpool, Jenkins gets engaged to a peer’s daughter. Unlike Widmerpool he marries her: and their lifelong happiness is an obscure rebuke to Widmerpool. Jenkins, like Widmerpool, comes from an unglamorous background, but unlike Widmerpool he succeeds in marrying into the nobility. By the end, he’s set himself up as a country gent with a nice house and enough land to put up a caravan and two horses without worry.

Much of the Dance opposes the values of Jenkins and of Widmerpool. (In the war trilogy we can see the value of Widmerpool even as he becomes increasingly unsympathetic.) Sometimes this comes down to a straight contest between the two men. They compete for the affections of Barbara, for the favours of Gipsy, for the hand of a Hon. There is a faint hint that Jenkins’ social success is a judgment on Widmerpool: and at the last, there is Jenkins in his big house with his lovely well-connected wife, and there is Widmerpool in an overgrown cottage stuffed full of weirdoes, and not even in charge.

There is a whiff of just desserts in this, a hint of smugness. To make too much of this would be grotesque simplification of a complex work of art, but Jenkins’ successful social-climbing does set off the ultimate failure of Widmerpool’s life and values.

Social-climbing is a very different matter in Brideshead. Charles’s passion for an aristocratic family and for the place where they live is portrayed as a yearning for the divine: Et in arcadia ego is the title of Book One. Charles’ bedazzlement with Sebastian, with the great house, with the entire family, and subsequently with Sebastian’s sister Julia reads like a mystic’s longing for union with God. The book is subtitled The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder.

The book is best remembered for its recollections of Arcadian times, so gloriously done that it comes as a shock to realise how few pages they take up. Oxford has the barest outline; the summer at Brideshead Castle is also shown with dazzling economy. “If only it could be like this always”, says Sebastian. “Always summer, always alone, the fruit always ripe and Aloysius in a good temper”. Aloysius being Sebastian’s Teddy, of course.

It’s not social climbing in any straightforward and bestial sense of the term. Charles still yearns for Brideshead and its family after marrying into the aristocracy, taking Celia, the sister of Viscount “Boy” Mulcaster, as his wife.

But she means nothing. It’s Brideshead that Charles longs for and it is to Brideshead that he returns, meeting Julia by glorious chance on his voyage home from America. In another bravura passage, the two come together when a storm has prostrated almost everybody else
on board: two whole people in a world of the sick.

Julia eventually takes Charles to her bed: and this provides one of the oddest moments of a book not without its oddness.

It was as though a deed of conveyance of her narrow loins had been drawn and sealed. I was making my first entry as a freeholder of a property I would enjoy and develop at leisure.

The two go straight to Brideshead Castle, Charles abandoning wife and children without a backward glance. And so Charles takes ownership, as it were, of Brideshead, at least for a while, and we are invited to share his sense of tragedy – of the meaninglessness of all subsequent life – when things go terribly wrong. Truth, religion, meaning, joy and God Himself are all present under the great dome of Brideshead Castle: and to be banished from the place for the second time is banishment from Eden.

This is one of the most heroic social-climbs in literature: and the tragedy is not that Charles finds his achievement empty – not in the least – but that it must end. A war and a rotten unfeeling begrudging world must destroy everything that matters.

Jim Dixon is every bit as successful a social climber as Charles, and as with Charles his social-climbing has elements of a noble quest: for fulfilment, conquest and – above all – revenge. The Bastille of class is well and truly stormed. Dixon starts and finishes much lower than Charles, but he has managed at least as much in terms of vertical ascent.

Jim is out of his depth socially and academically at the university where he is a probationary lecturer. He is dependent on Professor Welch’s goodwill for advancement but he loathes Welch and all he stands for. So he creeps and toadies to Welch while fancying himself a martyr for doing so.

Though a little inclined to play the rough diamond and working-class hero, Dixon is a lower-middle-class boy trying to be an upper-middle-class boy. But he reserves his right to despise the upper-middle classes as he does so: it’s a kind of win-double.

He also despises all forms of high culture (“filthy Mozart”) and believes every attempt to reach it is pretension. He has no interest in history, even though he’s a history lecturer. He got the job because he specialised in medieval history – Welch’s passion – but he only did that because the medieval course was a soft option when he was an undergraduate.

Like his enemy Bertrand, Jim had designs on the well-connected Christine, even though Margaret, his not-quite girlfriend, tells him frankly that she’s out of his class.
He behaves appallingly at the Welch’s arty weekend, sneaking off to the pub, getting pissed, topping up with most of a bottle of sherry on his return and then setting his bedroom on fire. His social-climbing looks set for disaster.

But he succeeds where Bertrand failed, in ingratiating himself with Gore-Urquhart, Christine’s rich and powerful uncle:

I’m the boredom detector. I’m a finely tuned instrument, if only I could get hold of a millionaire I’d be worth a bag of money to him.

And so, after his disastrous public lecture, one of the great comic set-pieces in literature, he finds that he rather than Bertrand has got the Gore-Urquhart job. Then, after his bus-journey to try and catch Christine at the train station, another of the great comic set-pieces in literature, he finds that he’s got the girl as well.

The social climber as hero recreates the ancient Rags to Riches story, in the manner of Cinderella or Jane Eyre or Leicester City FC. It’s an archetypal theme, celebrated in Christopher Booker’s exceptional book *The Seven Basic Plots*. Booker lists among many other examples of Rags to Riches, Joseph and his coat of many colours, King Arthur, the ugly duckling, *Great Expectations*, *Moll Flanders* and Superman: and we can lob in the more recent Harry Potter, escaping from the cupboard under the stairs in Privet Drive to save the world. We can also add the three works under discussion here.

The theme of social climber as hero is open to legitimate political criticism, for it reinforces rather than questions the social structure: after all, there can’t be anything wrong with the system if it produces our hero. Amis himself made the transition from post-war Angry to a self-caricaturing right-wing blowhard. But the theme is deeper than politics: it’s about the victory of the underdog, and we’re all underdogs in an unforgiving world. It’s the dream of X Trapnel

[to be] immune to the ordinary vengeances of life … beat the book, romp home a winner at a million to one.

Rags to Riches remains a universal theme, but in the English novel this is frequently expressed as social climbing. Nick Jenkins marries an earl’s daughter and moves into a house with a drive, Charles Ryder wins, at least for a while, the heart of Brideshead and Jim Dixon has a fancy job in London and a fancy London girlfriend.

Three triumphs. Three heroes. Three social climbers who scale their Everests. Three great novelists who invite readers to share the joy and meaning and power and glory of a successful social ascent.
I’m sure Anthony Powell would have hated the thought of *Dance* as a source of commentary on social mobility, not so much the concept as the term itself, but its assumed teleology of ‘progress’, its modishness, its modernity. I’m with him on the first two of these, if not the third. And yet I hold it to be an effective prism to examine the spectrum of social strata of AP’s and his *Dance*’s world: the characters and their interactions; and their response to the historic tides that wash them in and out. Widmerpool’s inexorable rise and Stringham’s decline and fall are the most obvious examples that we shall come to. Their stories contrast starkly, but there are others more nuanced that show AP’s subtlety and sureness of cultural touch and I shall come to them too. Meanwhile, let us look at what social mobility is and how it operates.

**Naming of parts**

Inequality, if current politicians of any stripe are to be believed, is a grievous sin; it is obligatory to be against it. And like sin it has a wide remit and inconsistent meaning. Social mobility, the supposed means of mitigating or even eradicating inequality, is, on the other hand, lauded by all, but almost equally misconstrued. It has recently come largely to mean adapting schools’ curricula and testing to create, as far as possible, equal access to higher education for pupils, regardless of their economic or social background. With an only slightly broader focus, the House of Lords (without any sense of irony, given its eponymous elitism) established a Social Mobility Committee in 2015 to consider social mobility in the transition from school to work.

Wikipedia takes a less prescriptive stance, defining social mobility as:

The movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people within or between social strata in a society.

I prefer this descriptive approach as it frees up analysis from political evaluation and treats it as a cultural effect amenable to any mediation, in this case, literary.

One characteristic of social mobility is its assumed unidirectionality. It is not exactly a one-way street, as we shall see, but the movement is definitely more upwards than downwards. Why is this? It seems to me that it reflects the trend in society to capital accumulation and complexity. And capital here includes cultural and social capital as well as economic capital, (the three principal constituents of *Social Class in 2016* according to Mike Savage’s recent book).

Once accumulated capital decays slowly, certainly more slowly than it accumulates; things cannot easily be unbuilt and knowledge cannot be unlearned; social networks persist through personal and family connections. And so social mobility is ratched upwards. Scientific knowledge famously stands on earlier shoulders, creating new technology and social complexity by requiring new skills and swelling the ranks of more elevated social strata to manage the complexity: the proletariat recruited from the countryside in the early years of the industrial revolution; the new bourgeoisie that arose to administer the new wealth a little later; the service industry that expanded in the late industrial age to support industry and encourage and entertain its attendant consumer society.

However, social mobility is not a smooth upwards path; the gradient varies; it has plateaux and high gradient periods, but it rarely goes down. The highest gradients in 20th century Britain coincided with
Dance’s period, the Thirties to Sixties when particular events drove increased social mobility: the Great War, World War Two and the 1944 Education Act.

Before looking at how social mobility features in Dance as driven by these general historic trends, it is worth considering how social strata generally figure in Dance.

All the world’s a stage?

The real social world is triangular with deep, wide base layers, a tiny apex and a flexible middle; it is in constant motion as the forces that drive social mobility change its strata and blur their borders. This is not AP’s world as depicted in Dance. Dance’s world does indeed have a rich cast from all social strata, military and civilian: from bombardiers to brigadiers; from parlour-maids to princesses. But a brief assessment of its characters’ social class shows it to be quite different. Only a quarter of the cast is working class, (largely servants of some sort, never productively economically active) more than a third is of the elite (aristocracy, military field rank or equivalent) and over ten percent foreign (often military). The bulk is middle-class, often bohemian, mainly academics, journalists (but not reporters), artists, writers and entertainers. Commerce scarcely figures, save where proprietors’ (such as Sir Magnus Donners) wealth is deployed to sponsor part of the performance. This is hardly a representative sample from which to draw conclusions on social mobility; as another Powell, AP’s contemporary, film director Michael Powell said, “What do they know of England who only the West End know?” And unlike the real world, Dance’s world seems largely static; the social strata are the strata of Dorset’s Jurassic coast and the players are fossils frozen in the strata. Time passes and historic upheavals seem to make little impact on their relative position.

But there are signs. The primogeniture that leads the younger scions of aristocratic landownership to soldiery and clergy is a mild form of downward social mobility. So a minor character like Angus Collins, a step-Tolland, has become an industrial journalist by Dance’s conclusion. Jenkins’ bohemian set have mostly come from a distinctly modest hinterland. Mark Members and JG Quiggin, Maclintick, Hugh Moreland, Bagshaw and X Trapnel are all arrivistes of sorts. Even Dr Trelawney and his avowed disciple Scorpio Murtlock are the products of a background far less grand or exotic than their followers assume. Uncertain periods before and after the Great War have allowed the ambitious and fleet of foot to advance under cover. But soldiery can also lead upwards for some, especially when mass conscription sucks in vast new numbers requiring a dilated command structure: Gwatkin, Edward, Lintot, McFadden, Pumphrey and Odo Stevens would not have been so warmly welcomed in the officers’ mess in more fastidious times.

Like ‘Di, Di in her collar and tie’, AP casts his ‘quizzical eye’ over all their circumstances, largely without judgment. But AP is more than a flâneur. His Dance exemplifies what John Stuart Mill is getting at when he says,

A stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There could be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress.

And regress!

It’s the economy, stupid

Members, Quiggin et al. are all the children of parents ‘in trade’, newly enriched by commercial development in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. They are the beneficiaries of social mobility on an industrial scale. They have used their parentally acquired economic capital to
increase their cultural and social capital. In *Dance* they have become the new establishment.

And then there is Kenneth Widmerpool, AP’s monster created with as much deliberation as Victor Frankenstein, the modern Prometheus, created his monster. Kenneth’s life is carried by the full tidal movement of social mobility. His father’s commercial success in new industry propels Kenneth’s transition to ‘school’, a higher social stratum than that of his parents, where his unique overcoat distinguishes him from his only slightly less arriviste peers. *A fortiori*, liquid fertiliser, his father’s trade, whilst chosen by AP to be humorously contemptible, epitomises how new, urban, industrial processes, in this case chemical engineering, have transformed established practice, encroaching even on rural life. The war presents the ambitious Kenneth opportunities galore to ‘network’ and extend his social capital while the postwar settlement allows his further rise to enter the governing elite. He has surfed two successive waves of social mobility; only his own personal demons prevent his final triumph. As it is, he crashes on the rocks at the hands of Scorpio Murtlock and his acolytes, the only ones young enough to be the beneficiaries of the third wave of social mobility heralded by ‘Rab’ Butler’s 1944 Education Act, which brought in, *inter alia*, grammar schools, and institutionalised meritocracy in higher education so that clever boys from all social classes (sadly, it was almost exclusively boys in the early years) could gain a university education hitherto reserved to the public school educated. The historic tidal forces that lifted Widmerpool arguably then cast him down. As Frankenstein’s monstrous creation himself says,

Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by slight ligaments are we bound to prosperity and ruin.

**War, what is it good for?**

Well it was good for Odo Stevens for one. Stevens is a Brummagem, an unjustifiably unstylish provenance then as now, an apprentice, who, by nothing other than his wits, self-confidence and personal bravery, finds war to be a vocation, and rises to Major, MC and bar. On the way he builds social and cultural capital and enters the upper middle class where he plateaus comfortably.

If it was good for Stevens and Widmerpool, it was far less good for Stringham. By war’s outbreak, his slide into alcoholism has been arrested by Miss Weedon, but knowing a commission is beyond his capabilities, he enlists initially into the ranks of the technically vital but unfashionable Ordnance Corps, before he confirms for himself that his degeneration is near completion and broadcasts it to the world by becoming a lowly Mess Waiter. His death as a POW in Singapore at the even lower level of the mobile laundry, although hardly heroic, is as close as he can get to redemption and atonement for class betrayal.

The war episodes of *Dance* are where social mobility is most vividly drawn, in the real world. The throwing together of men (mainly men) from all strata and their enforced intimacy gave AP’s class a deeper understanding of, and even respect for, hitherto unfamiliar social groups. And, propelled by the services’ exigency, talent like Stevens’ was allowed to blossom. AP’s own wartime service would have broadened his own social circle and although he maintained his customary detachment his understanding and sympathy benefited him and *Dance*.

The Butler Act’s subsequent impact on social mobility in the UK was profound and long lasting. However, only the last three instalments of *Dance* are set in the period when feasibly some of its characters could have taken the advantage. In this quarter of the series, few new
characters who are not related in some way to those we know already make their debut. Some of Scorpio Murtlock’s followers could conceivably be amongst the newly educationally advantaged but Dance’s cohort is not them. This is not AP’s world. It is the earlier historic forces that have driven their successes and failures.

Widmerpool’s and Stevens’ stories show that social mobility is a real transformative force in society. But they also show that it is only a context. Personal qualities are essential to recognise opportunities and to grasp them or let them slip. As is chance: in Dance’s game of snakes and ladders, Stringham’s slide down the snake is about the worst, until Widmerpool’s final demise. But there are others: Uncle Giles is dogged by misfortune; the odious Bob Duport has mixed economic fortunes but retains his social capital; and X Trapnel, with little economic capital to lose, loses his cultural and social capital. Dance observes their individual downwards motion as meticulously as it does other characters’ upwards motion. Dance is Mass Observation of social mobility.

What’s love got to do with it?

It is egregiously trite to observe that society is merely individual people in the collective, and history merely their reaction to events. But as in all things in human affairs, as much as it no doubt troubled Marx, the most powerful historic forces have occasionally to give way to individual human agency, especially human affection.

Love conquers all. Ted Jeavons’ story shows that love is as powerful a means of social mobility on an individual level as any historic or social force. Having risen from an enlisted man to a commission in the Great War, benefitting from the continuous pruning of the Officer Corps of that awful conflict, and gaining for his pains both a MC and chronic ill health, Ted makes a match of Lady Molly Jamieson, who has nursed him as a wartime casualty. Outwardly a mismatch, their mutual affection has a warmth, permanency and depth that overcomes their different backgrounds and is of a quality that mere history cannot disturb. They honour social mobility.

What goes around, comes around

Poussin’s Dance to the Music of Time (to be seen in London’s Wallace Collection), AP’s inspiration for the title of his epic, depicts Poverty, Labour, Wealth and Pleasure circulating endlessly. The implication seems evident, at least to the Art Historian, Richard Beresford:

Through Labour man acquires Wealth, Wealth permits Pleasure, and Pleasure indulged to excess ends in Poverty. And so the dance expresses a perpetual cycle.

This interpretation is at odds with most (mine included) opinions on social mobility as a social phenomenon and, as I hope I have demonstrated, how it is manifested in AP’s Dance. Paradoxically, it probably conforms more closely to AP’s own views, which are at heart quietly conservative. AP acknowledges historic change, including social mobility, but, despite his own upwards move by marriage into the aristocracy, seems wary of it as he does about much of the modern world. Although I doubt if their paths ever crossed, I see him as having a lot in common with John Osborne, another detached observer with conservative views at odds with his own bohemian milieu. In Look Back in Anger, Jimmy Porter’s girlfriend, whose social mobility is decidedly downwards, tries in vain to reconcile Jimmy’s views with her father’s and concludes bleakly, Daddy’s unhappy because everything has changed; Jimmy’s unhappy because nothing has changed.

For AP social mobility is a background to be painted, not challenged, and he has no
sympathy for those that do. He is an observer, and, like Osborne and many conservative bohemians, has little time for politicians. Their motivations, whether reactionary or radical, are not ones he can share, nor even fully understand; his theory of mind does not encompass their minds. His conservatism does not extend to public service except as obligated by major historic events like war: not for him the view of the *Guardian* when it said recently,

Upward social mobility for the lower ranks of society is a splendid aspiration, but it is not one that will be realised until the élite rediscovers its lost sense of *noblesse oblige*.

In the end, social mobility is like the market, gravity, evolution, and all other forces of nature. It comes with the world and us. Marx was wrong: the point is not to change the world but to interpret it, as it changes under its own steam. I suspect AP knew that. ■

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**It’s Worth a Footnote**

*Whitehall from Trafalgar Square, London, 1839. Daguerreotype by M de St Croix.*

This is one of the earliest daguerreotype photographs of England, taken when Frenchman M de St Croix was in London demonstrating Louis Daguerre’s pioneering photographic process during September and December 1839. The statue in the foreground is Le Sueur’s statue of Charles I on horseback (much admired by AP); in the distance is Inigo Jones' Banqueting House. Practically everything else shown in the image has subsequently disappeared. Image © National Media Museum.
A few months ago, a slim ruled notebook with entries in pen and ink entitled “My Diary and Commonplace Book” found its way into my possession. The document was discovered tucked inside a copy of Cooking in Wartime by Ambrose Heath (Faber and Faber, 1942) by an antiquarian bookseller who had bought the book at an auction in Gloucestershire.

Closer examination reveals the author of the “Commonplace Book” as one Mavis Widmerpool. Whether or not she is the mother of Kenneth Widmerpool, I leave you to form your own opinion. As an historic document of wartime austerity on the home front it may serve to shed some light on the domestic and dietary arrangements of the aspiring middle classes. As such, your humble servant lays before you the secrets of the Widmerpudlian kitchen.

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June 4 1940, Rose Cottage, near Stourwater, Glos

How good it is to exchange the nightly terror of German bombing raids on our beloved Capital City and the wail of the air raid siren for the fresh air and bird song of the Cotswolds. How kind it was of Lady Donners to arrange to accommodate me in an empty cottage on her husband’s estate. I am sure that my ever-attentive son Kenneth (who used to work for Sir Magnus before being called upon to serve King and Country as a commissioned officer) had some hand in facilitating this happy arrangement.

Kenneth is not the only person of mark to make significant sacrifices in order to help win this war. I have had to exchange my hygienic gas cooker which was the pride of my Westminster apartment block for a smoky cast iron kitchen range, which Agatha our part-time domestic keeps fired up with Welsh nuts from our coal bunker outside the back door.

June 5 1940, Rose Cottage, near Stourwater, Glos

Kenneth has sent me a telegram saying that the Adjutant General of his regiment has managed to spare him for the weekend and that he and a young lady friend, a Miss Jones, intend to motor down from London and will call on me on Saturday night. Knowing how fond my son is of a square meal, I have decided to bake him a Woolton Pie. Our Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, insists that the vegetable and gravy filling for the pastry pie case offers an acceptable substitute for meat. I have adapted the official recipe to tempt Kenneth’s palate.

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Receipt for Mrs Widmerpool’s “Woolton Pie”

**Ingredients**

**For the Filling**

1 lb of diced potato  
1 lb of cauliflower  
1 lb of diced carrot or any root vegetable  
2 Oxo cubes  
1 tablespoon oatmeal  
1 good handful of chopped parsley  
Salt and pepper

**For the Potato Pastry**

4 oz mashed potato – powdered if no fresh potatoes available  
2 oz lard (Hugon’s Atora)  
1 oz grated “mousetrap” cheese  
8 oz plain sieved flour  
2 tablespoons of Borwick’s baking powder

**Cooking Instructions**

**For the Filling**

Place all the ingredients into a large pot. Add just enough water to cover. Cook over a medium heat for about twenty minutes, stirring from time to time to prevent the vegetables sticking to the pot. Set the pot aside and add chopped parsley and seasoning.
For the Crust
Combine flour, salt and baking powder. Rub lard into the flour mixture before gently mixing in the mashed potato. Add a little water; knead the potato pastry mix and roll it out onto a floured board or your deal kitchen table.

Place the pie filling into a deep pie dish, cover with potato pastry and put in the oven. Bake for 25-30 minutes at 400°F. Serve with Gravy.

Result.

I was delighted to see that my dear Kenneth polished off his Woolton Pie in double quick time, talking all the while between mouthfuls to his friend. The young lady, who it transpires by the by is called “Gypsy”, is an anaemic looking slattern who insists on chain smoking Turkish cigarettes even at the dinner table!

While my noble son observed the dictum “waste not, want not”, using a slice of bread to soak up the gravy, his companion left her pastry piled up on the side of the plate along with the cauliflower. I was seething but managed to confine myself to simply remarking. “So our fresh country air and plain cooking doesn’t agree with you, Miss Jones? I expect you’re more used to dining at the Savoy!”

Kenneth leapt to the young lady’s defence. “Why Woolton Pie is exactly what they do serve at the Savoy nowadays. It was created by its chef de cuisine M. Latry!” Gypsy pulled a face and in defiance of polite manners made her feelings clear by stubbing out her cigarette theatrically on Lord Woolton’s rejected pastry! Kenneth burbled some feeble excuse and the pair fled into the night to a waiting motor car, arguing loudly the while.

Mrs Widmerpool’s Diaries and Cook Book are copyright Stephen Hoare 2016.
It is clear to the reader of Dance who has also read Proust that specific characters are based on their Proustian counterparts. I will argue in turn that this is because Proust has tapped into something close to an ‘archetype’, the kind of person that people growing up in a certain sort of society will inevitably meet in their lives, and play a minor but important role in their odyssey. The Marquis de Norpois, for instance, as an eminent but also limited and establishment-oriented diplomat, participating in the fringes of the artistic world (as evinced by his encouraging Marcel to see Berma in Phèdre), is a clear inspiration for Sir Gavin Walpole-Wilson. Elstir, as a visual artist older than the narrator who appears in the second book as a signal of the narrator’s perceptual awakening, is a clear precedent for Mr Deacon. And Bergotte, as the eminent, much-laurelled novelist who is an exemplar for the tentative artistic self-consciousness of Marcel, is a basis for E – people always forget the E – St John Clarke.

This is in my view not just contrivance on the part of Powell, finding British analogues for the French originals, but a testimony that Proust tapped into something archetypal, that if one lives a certain sort of life – responsive, urban, artistic – one will meet artists and writers and hommes d’affaires that will play these minor, advisory, but in some way revelatory role in your life. I certainly can picture in my mind my own Norpois, my own Elstir, and my own Bergotte.

Powell is not just imitating Proust but recognizing this universality, and putting his own Powellian spin on it. What is obvious in comparison to Proust is that the visual artist is far dodgier; the diplomat just slightly more of a buffoon; the writer quite a bit less of a paragon; that, especially, the artists are not nearly as deeply portrayed or portrayed as deep. Whereas Bergotte and Elstir are portrayed as people who have thought seriously about their art, Jenkins’ elder artist friends or acquaintances are seen as artists manqué. Now, it must be said that Jenkins’ peers and younger contemporaries, such as Trapnel and Moreland, are portrayed, if not with the idealist aura with which Proust endows his artists, certainly as admirable. But Powell’s approach to art, although ruminative and thoughtful, is not as philosophical as Proust’s, although Trapnel and Moreland certainly utter credos and evince practices of craftsmanship.

Powell is responding to Proust, but not just passively imitating him. Certainly Dance was inspired by Proust, but also by the Forsyte Saga and more traditional French examples of the roman fleuve such as those of Duhamel and Martin du Gard and above all Balzac. We may note Balzac is named in the sequence earlier than Proust: one book before. Both are important in the literary genealogy of Dance, not just in terms of recurring character and extended physical worlds but because for Powell reaching out to these writers is reaching out to an idea of Europe.

Although Powell seems, from the evidence of his 1992 journal entries, to have been less than rhapsodic about the European Union in an institutional sense, there is a deep connection to an idea of Europe in his works; indeed, as an American, I have often talked of the links to American literature and culture in Powell’s works, but obviously the links with European, and especially French, culture are much greater.

Powell enjoyed writers like Kingsley Amis and PG Wodehouse who did not seem to
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #64

need this idea of Europe in their writing, but he was very different from them. For Powell, a European and especially French aesthetic connection was crucial, as he makes clear in his introduction to his second book of collected criticism, *Under Review* where he says that the section devoted to Europe “includes, I think justifiably, a good many French names” [*UR*, 3].

Notably, though, Powell’s response to Proust explodes a customary generalization: that French is more lucid than English, English more turgid and complicated. English, it is said, is a sphere; French a mirror. Yet Powell, for all his superb cognizance of what the American critic Lionel Trilling called “the hum and buzz of implication”, is a far more direct writer than Proust (one might ‘blame’ the influence of Hardy, Ruskin, and Wordsworth on Proust for this).

Indeed, it might be said Powell is trying to tug Proust in the direction, not of an English comic muse – though that is present – but the earlier French severity and austerity of Stendhal and Flaubert.

The biggest difference, though, between the two writers is something mostly out of Powell’s control: his long life, forty-three years longer than Proust’s. Whereas Proust’s illness constitutes both the frame and the imperative of the composition of *A la Recherche, Dance* was completed with twenty-five years of its author’s life to spare. Importantly, Powell’s sequence, unlike Proust’s, does not end with war, as Powell was almost ten years younger than Proust at the outbreak of their respective wars. It would have been hard for his sequence to end with war anyway, but Powell’s long lifespan meant the war was further back from the ending. And thus the generalisations that can be made, even if crudely, about both works – that they are about social transition and the decline of the aristocracy in modernity – bear out even less well for Powell than for Proust.

The last three books of *Dance* are in a sense Powell’s’ declaration of artistic and structural independence from Proust. It is no accident that Proust is acknowledged in the ninth volume. The next three take us into a post-war world of late middle and old age, which Proust had, in his masterwork, the tragic knowledge to know he would never see. Powell’s knowledge was different – one of endurance, resilience, and, as he once put it, of living long enough to know how the story would turn out.

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Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.

Marcel Proust

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I am sure you will agree with me, Lady Warminster, in thinking, so far as company is concerned, enough is as bad as a feast, and half a loaf in many ways preferable to the alternative of a whole one or the traditional no bread. How enjoyable, therefore, to be just as we are.

_Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant_
Who Are They?
By Michael Henle

The description below fits a character in Dance and a character in Proust’s A la Recherche.

Description
He doesn’t talk about his father much, but emerges from childhood with a profound attachment to his mother. He has health problems and may be a bit of a hypochondriac. He wants very much to succeed in life and has ambitions which the reader initially suspects are beyond his reach.

In his twenties, he sets himself a series of goals whose achievement he hopes will win him the acceptance he craves. He has a fixed strategy for success that he invariably employs. He works hard towards a goal, pushing himself forward aggressively yet in a carefully planned, sly, and somewhat surreptitious way. He schemes; he suffers humiliations; he faces the possibility of failure; but repeatedly he rises to new heights which, however, invariably disappoint him so that he soon seeks a new objective.

In middle age, he falls in love. He has been involved with women before – with mixed results. He is known, for example, to visit prostitutes. He is something of a voyeur. This particular woman mysteriously succumbs to his advances, though grave doubt is cast whether their relationship is ever consummated. Regardless, he is devoted to her, even becoming dependent on her. He is, perhaps, trying to replace his mother, all the while striving to dominate and control, as he controls his mother. He only partially succeeds. Meanwhile what he learns suggests she has committed a multitude of shocking infidelities. In the end she escapes his clutches only to die soon afterwards. He never recovers from her loss.

Who are they?
Widmerpool, of course, and the narrator M of A la Recherche.

One might object that Widmerpool marries Pamela but M doesn’t marry Albertine. Still, Albertine comes to live with M and he attempts to control her with persistence equal to Widmerpool’s efforts to control Pamela. A second objection might be that Albertine’s infidelities are never proven. But it is equally unclear to what extent Widmerpool knows about Pamela’s infidelities or, whatever he may suspect, whether he accepts them. Widmerpool seems to believe Pamela will always come back to him.

What about the disillusionment? Is Widmerpool truly as disappointed with his success as M demonstrably is with his? Recall General Conyers’ words,

“It seems to me”, said the General, “that he is a typical intuitive extrovert – classical case, almost. Cold-blooded. Keen on a thing for a moment, but never satisfied. Wants to get on to something else.” [LM, 230]

The remaining items – the mother fixation, fixed life strategy, constant striving, scheming for success, probable hypochondria, commerce with prostitutes, presumed impotence, obsession with the great love of his life who dies shortly after she absconds – all apply equally to M and to Widmerpool. Whether deliberately or by happenstance, Widmerpool has ended up with a number of salient qualities of the narrator of A la Recherche.

Widmerpool, as it happens, is paired with another character from Proust’s novel, Charlus.

That association is of function, not personality. Widmerpool and Charlus help unify their respective novels by their frequent reappearance and the way they
fascinate their narrators. That is their function. As people they are profoundly different. Charlus has no need to climb socially; he was born at the top of the heap. Social climbing: that’s where M and Widmerpool excel.

**What does all this tell us?**

It sheds some light on the frustrating process of finding sources for Powell’s characters. Widmerpool participates, to a certain extent, in the traits of two characters from Proust as well as a number of real people with whom he seems to share traits. At the same time, he remains uniquely himself, not true to any of these sources and certainly not merely the sum of an ‘M’ plus a ‘Charlus’.

But anyway, it takes a bit of time to realize that all of the odds and ends milling about round one are the process of living.

*Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant*

With unexpectedly delicate movements of the hands, the Field-Marshal began to explain what had been happening. We were in an area ... immemorially campaigned over. In fact the map was no less than a great slice of history. As the eye travelled northward, it fell on Zutphen, where Sir Philip Sidney had stopped a bullet in that charge against the Albanian cavalry. One wondered why Albanians should be involved in this part of the world at such a time. Presumably they were some auxiliary unit of the Spanish Command, similar to those exotic corps of which one heard rumours in the current war ... The thought of Sidney, a sympathetic figure, distracted attention from the Field-Marshal's talk. One felt him essentially the kind of soldier Vigny had in mind when writing of the man who, like a monk, submitted himself to the military way of life, because he thought it right, rather than because it appealed to him.

*The Military Philosophers*
Bristol. 1982? 1983? My friend J told me about Powell and about Dance. An enthusiast (perhaps he had also listened to the BBC Radio production a few years earlier?) he urged me to read it.

Looming finals precluded much reading for leisure, although I was at that time rather keen on Graham Greene. However, J’s reflections and remarks familiarised me with Dance and the awful concept of “Widmerpool”.

J had a car. Rare in those days for an undergraduate to own such a thing.

Sometime, I suppose the Spring or Summer of 1983, we went to a party. Somewhere in Gloucestershire. North of Cheltenham perhaps. It could even have been further – Herefordshire? A large modern detached house out of the town. “Posh” friends of J.

I don’t remember the party itself, but the following morning, several of the guests – perhaps half a dozen of us – decided to go for a walk.

We walked for maybe an hour or so, in the late morning, around tarmacked lanes, with plenty of greenery and large-gardened houses. Urbe in rus rather than rus in urbe. We might have been in Surrey rather than the Cotswolds. I cannot recall actually going over fences, upon footpaths or through fields.

One of the other walkers was a young man – probably no more than thirty, although to us, at no more than twenty-two, he seemed middle aged. Not too tall, he was wearing a coat. A dark blue macintosh – a Burberry perhaps. Not a trench coat. Too hot for an overcoat. And glasses. Thick, dark, horn-rimmed.

J said “Look – that’s Widmerpool.” Indeed he was. In the flesh. Although I had not read Dance – I had not, I think, even seen Marc’s caricatures – but I knew; it was him.

We giggled. J said “Shush – he might hear us”.

We did not speak to “Widmerpool”, nor did he acknowledge us.

I scoffed at J’s remark, but his assumption seemed to be that all right thinking people were naturally familiar with Dance and therefore Widmerpool, and the man overhearing us, might take the comparison amiss.

I took it as a given therefore, that one must read Dance.

I did not in fact, actually read a page of Powell until 1990. But I had already seen Widmerpool.
**A Day Out in Oxford**  
AP and His Chums  
Saturday 3 September 2016  
Meet: Jesus College  
Time: 1015 for 1030 hrs  
Cost: £25 (payable in advance)

In celebration of AP’s Welsh ancestry we meet at Jesus College for coffee and a short introductory talk. We will then visit Balliol College, AP’s college, returning to Jesus for a buffet lunch at about 1300 hrs.

After lunch we plan to walk by Hertford College, visit Wadham College (home to Maurice Bowra) then Magdalen College (Henry Yorke’s college), ending with afternoon tea.

Non-members welcome.  
Group limited to 20.  
Please book with the Hon. Secretary.

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**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 are available to members (first come first served) at the 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.

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**Annual General Meeting**  
and  
“Bring & Buy” Book Sale  
Saturday 22 October 2016  
St James’s Church  
Piccadilly, London W1  
1400 hrs prompt  
Details on page 24

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**London Group Pub Meets**  
Saturday 5 November 2016  
Saturday 4 February 2017  
Saturday 6 May 2017  
Saturday 5 August 2017  
Saturday 4 November 2017  
The Audley  
41-43 Mount Street, London W1  
1230 to 1530 hrs

A pint, a pie and informal conversation in a Victorian pub AP would have known. Why not bring something AP related to interest us?

Non-members always welcome.  
No need to book but further details from the Hon. Secretary.
Dates for Your Diary

London Group

AP Birthday Lunch
Saturday 3 December 2016
1200 for 1215 hrs
Malabar Junction
107 Great Russell Street
London WC1
This year, something different: we are returning to the venue of our 2014 commemoration lunch for the centenary of WWI and the flashback in The Kindly Ones, the Malabar Junction South Indian restaurant – just 200m from the British Museum and almost opposite the TUC.
This is a pay on the day event, but please book so we ensure we have reserved a large enough table!
To book, or for further details, please contact the Hon. Secretary, secretary@anthonypowell.org.
Non-members welcome.

Hon. Secretary’s New Year Brunch
Saturday 21 January 2017
1000 to 1200 hrs
Central London venue tbc
Do you find the dull days of January depressing or just boring? Whichever it is come along to our now traditional brunch and liven up your winter – you can even work in the sales or a museum afterwards.
This is a pay on the day event, but please book so we can ensure we have reserved a large enough table!
Non-members always welcome.
Bookings and further information when available from the Hon. Secretary.

Malabar Junction, venue for the London Group AP Birthday Lunch on 3 December
Society News & Notices

Membership Updates

New Members
We extend a warm welcome to the following new and returning members:
- Rose Aidin, London
- Cynthia Anderson, Riverside, USA
- Kate Berridge, London
- Tim Birt, London
- David Bomford, London
- Octavia Carr, Carlisle
- NPH Dewes, Pontefract
- James Doyle, Brookline, USA
- Laurie Adams Frost, Asheville, USA
- Prof. Didier Girard, Tours, France
- Carol Grey, Darien, USA
- Karen Handal, Old Greenwich, USA
- Christopher Heywood, Skipton
- Bill Jerdee, Irving, USA
- Howard Llewellyn, Dundee
- Christopher Long, Biddenden
- Edward McGowan, Brooklyn, USA
- Derek Pasquill, London
- Bernard Spilsbury, Clacton-on-Sea
- Yu Tzong-Chen, Taipei, Taiwan

Subscriptions
Subscriptions are due annually on 1 April (for rates see back page)
Reminders will be sent out (by email where possible) during March each year to those whose membership is about to expire
Why not 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

Gerald Parsons reads during Ivan Hutnik’s Summer Stroll on Saturday 2 July (Report on page 26)
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
Email: nicholas.birns@gmail.com

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

Nordic Group
Area: Sweden & Finland
Contact: Regina Rehbinder
Email: reginarehbinder@hotmail.com

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

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

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.

Newsletter Copy Deadlines

Newsletter #65, Winter 2016
Copy Deadline: 7 November 2016
Publication Date: 2 December 2016

Newsletter #66, Spring 2017
Copy Deadline: 10 February 2017
Publication Date: 3 March 2017

Anthony Powell Resides Here
Crawford Doyle Booksellers seeks and sells early editions of Anthony Powell’s works together with those of other distinguished British authors such as Evelyn Waugh, PG Wodehouse, Virginia Woolf, Henry Green and James Lees-Milne.
In addition to rare books, we offer a complete collection of new books in our store near the Metropolitan Museum. Catalogs upon request.
1082 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10028
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Email: CDRarebooks@nyc.rr.com
Member, Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association of America, Inc.
Annual General Meeting
Notice is hereby given that 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

The Annual Report & Accounts and AGM agenda & voting papers are included with this Newsletter. Proxy votes must reach the Hon. Secretary by Monday 17 October 2016.

“Bring and Buy” Book Sale
Instead of a speaker there will be a “Bring and Buy” Book Sale at this year’s AGM – as we did at the 2013 Conference.

The idea is that you bring your surplus books (CDs are OK, too) to be sold, and you buy other books/CDs in the sale. The seller and the Society split the sale price so that everyone benefits.

Book Registration: 1300-1400 hrs
Book Sale: 1330-1400 hrs & 1500-1630 hrs

Please bring along your surplus books/CDs. Powell-related items would be good but anything in decent condition is acceptable. The more interesting the item the more likely it is to sell.

You say how much your book/CD should be sold for. Please be realistic and don’t overprice – we want to sell things! You also say what percentage of the sale price is to go to the Society (we suggest 50% but it’s your choice); you receive the remainder.

We will run the book stall, so all you have to do is bring books/CDs and buy others!

Sales slips will be available on the day, or can be sent to you in advance. You must complete a slip for each item and put it inside the front cover. This slip will be our record of the sale so is essential if you want to be paid!

Afterwards we will work out how much you are owed. You will be paid in the days following the AGM – there will not be time on the day! Unsold books should be taken away promptly after the sale.

Full sale terms & conditions to the left.
Who are these women in flip-flops and fascinators? Just one of the fascinating questions that a record 16 members pondered in The Audley. Even for Mount Street, their dress sense was outré.

Some members were also sartorially innovative with scarlet Nike trainers jostling with pink linen trousers teamed with a dark burgundy T-shirt. All worn by two of the 11 male members present. What would AP have said?

Two Australian members, David and Catherine Barker from Sydney joined us. Powellian connections through work, university and London Hospital colleagues rapidly emerged. They enlivened the discussions and the London members were delighted to see them – as we are always pleased to welcome visiting members.

Erudition, defamation, whimsy were deployed. As the chatter ranged over the appropriateness of the new Home Secretary’s name for a dominatrix, the joy of reading cookery books, Dr Keith’s (as he is known at the Audley) barnet, and how orchestras exact revenge on unpopular conductors, energy and laughter levels rose.

Alcohol released confessions. How many knew that your Chairman had been accused of being a pervert and voyeur? Admittedly only for using a ladies/disabled lavatory when nursing a plastered ankle under his trouser leg. But still. Which trustee spent a summer in Antibes on the same pontoon at the Plage de Keller as Jean-Paul Belmondo and Gwynneth Paltrow?

All this scuttlebutt and scurrility was relieved by serious discussions on the changing nature of curatorship and, naturally, books. The Blitz by Constantine Fitzgibbon was introduced by Noreen Marshall as a source for many novelists of that period. Members commented on how they were only now fully realising how autobiographical Dance is.

Adrian Daintrey made an appearance. One of his water colours – a view of old St Thomas’s Hospital across the River Thames from the Houses of Parliament – was displayed by your Secretary who invited guesses on what he paid for it at auction. A wide range was essayed – one was bang on the money, and won the lucky member a year’s membership (at the Hon. Secretary’s expense!).

The food for thought was much better than the food for eating. The slight improvement in the standard of the fish and chips was countered by a decline in the level of service. Delays, absence of cutlery and profusion of dirty crockery did not create an agreeably louche and amusing ambience. But the conversation did.

PS. In contrast to the proliferation of sandals and un-socked feet, the tie count was down to two. Uncle Giles may need to reissue his advice.

Ivan Hutnik gave the latest of his London walks the title of “The Morning After in Fitzrovia”. This presumably referred to the usual state of the *Dance* characters who frequented the area. Luckily the members of the society who gathered outside Russell Square tube station appeared on the whole bright-eyed and not noticeably hung-over.

Ten of us stood alertly when Ivan called us to order and pointed out – though it was not actually visible – the location of Great Ormond Street where, to number 47, AP and Lady Violet moved early in 1935, shortly after their marriage in December 1934. In *To Keep the Ball Rolling* Powell remarks that he took the flat as the result of an introduction at a sitting of the Society for Psychical Research, and that their flat faced the Children’s Hospital – “a red-brick building of unmatched hideousness”.

In search of greater architectural loveliness we moved on to Russell Square, “Russell” being the family name of the Dukes of Bedford, who developed the area in the 17th and 18th centuries as part of the family’s London landholdings. Their London home was Bedford House, and the square and its surrounding streets were formed from the house’s gardens when the area was developed.

From there we walked to Tavistock Square, where AP lived at number 33 after leaving Shepherd Market in 1929, later moving again to Brunswick Square. (It was in Tavistock Square that on 7 July 2005, a terrorist bomb destroyed a bus, causing many deaths and casualties.)

Our next port of call was Gordon Square, where we paused to look at the remarkable architecture of the Church of Christ the King. The church was built in the Early English Neo-Gothic style by Raphael Brandon between 1850 and 1854 for the Victorian church movement, the Catholic Apostolic Church, also known as “Irvingites” – its web-site is well worth a look. The church’s structure is based on that of Westminster Abbey, though incomplete. Nevertheless it is a large and striking building. Its English Chapel is described as “a gem of architectural delight”.

On the way to our next stop we crossed Gower Street into Torrington Place; then, after turning off Tottenham Court Road, we paused for our first reading, from *The Kindly Ones* [75-8]. This was the passage where Jenkins introduces us to Moreland’s philosophy of life – one remarkably

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*Stephen Holden (in hat) reads from Dance during Ivan’s Summer Stroll*
similar to Constant Lambert’s. Stephen Holden gave us this reading.

On then to Fitzroy Square, where the oldest buildings date from the late 18th century, and there are a number of blue plaques. The one at No. 29 marks the house where George Bernard Shaw, and later Virginia Stephen (Woolf), once lived.

Today’s Fitzroy Street lacks the shabbiness and faintly disreputable air that it bore in Dance, but one can still sense the pale ghosts of Gypsy Jones and Howard Craggs without too much difficulty. Nearby, in Charlotte Street, we looked (sadly, in vain) for the “narrow by-street” where Mr Deacon’s shop was situated. Here we paused for our second reading, again by Stephen, from A Buyer’s Market [162-4].

Bertorelli’s restaurant was once a well-known feature of Charlotte Street, and AP lunched there regularly during the 1960s with Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest and Bernard Levin among others. Regrettably, its place has now been taken by “Wahaca Mexican” which doesn’t have quite the same ambience.

Also in Charlotte Street is the Fitzroy Tavern, currently undergoing restoration. That, too, was much frequented in the 1930s and 1940s by AP, as well as by Dylan Thomas, Julian Maclaren Ross, Augustus John, Nina Hamnett, Constant Lambert and many other notable figures in the arts world. This might well have been the place where AP met Constant Lambert, as he mentions in Messengers of Day that they met fairly regularly: “drinking in pubs, going for walks and attending parties”.

The Fitzroy Tavern owns a painting by Augustus John and some important photographs of its other famous regulars. And the Charlotte Street Hotel nearby has paintings in the drawing room by some of the Bloomsbury generation (whom AP disliked): Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry and Duncan Grant.

We were nearing the end of our walk, but there was still time to look at The Marquis of Granby, to which Julian Maclaren Ross and others would make a quick dash after closing time at The Wheatsheaf. Being in a different borough, it had a later closing time. This was a place “where intellectuals were virtually unknown”.

And so to The Wheatsheaf itself, and our final destination. Opposite this we had our final reading, this time given by Graham Page. This passage from Books Do Furnish a Room [155-160] is where Jenkins goes to meet X Trapnel on his home ground, The Hero of Acre, to discuss his writing and his struggles with life. Julian Maclaren Ross (on whom Trapnel is based) “owned” the seat at the bar nearest to the door, ready for a dash at closing time to get to The Marquis.

For us, it meant a climb up the rickety stairs to the upstairs room with a long table laid out ready for our well-earned lunch.

Huge thanks from us all to Ivan for another meticulously planned and fascinating walk.
Some time ago I was walking companionably through the Lincolnshire countryside with my friend John. Apropos nothing he said

“My uncle drowned in a vat of whisky.”

“Oh,” I replied.

“He beat off all attempts to save him,” John said.

I let this sink in. Then I said, “That’s not true.”

“Of course not.”

I let this sink in too. Then I said, “That is a story that is interesting only if true. If it is true, it has all sorts of aspects, including the juxtaposition of farce with raw human tragedy. If it is not true, however, it is merely an unoriginal joke, which was not worth making.”

Under this rebuff, John understandably fell silent, as did I, but I spent the rest of the walk considering the important implications of this exchange for the novels of Anthony Powell, which are never far from my mind.

Many of Powell’s readers are attracted by the fact that Dance appears to them to be a roman à clef. They treat the novel as an acrostic, which I suppose makes them acrosticians. They believe that characters in the novel can be identified with real people known to Powell, doing things that actually happened. It always seems to me that acrosticians don’t understand either how novels are written or what novels are for; they are like Amazon reviewers who tell you that you should avoid certain books because characters in them are horrid, behave badly or, worse, say things that are racist, sexist or contrary to the consensus among scientists on anthropogenic climate change. They are like people who spit in the street at actors who play bad characters in soaps. They believe that John’s joke has validity – is funny – only if he actually had a relation who died in a vat.

They take comfort from Kingsley Amis’s remark to Philip Larkin:

“It did suddenly strike me how fed up I was about all those real people and real incidents [Powell would] put in his books. I thought you were meant to make things up, you know, like a novelist.

Amis was opposed to acrosticians, but they think that he confirmed that they were right.

Powell was irritatedly trenchant on the subject, probably because he did sail close to the wind occasionally as regards real people. All his characters, he said, were the products of his imagination; of course real people and real events triggered his imagination, but not one to one: each character was made up of a number of real influences, and, most importantly, the real data had to be transformed by the writer’s imagination or the character would not, as he put it, “come off”. But he did sometimes take chances. The allied officers in MP are clearly based on real people without much invention on the writer’s part, as is Colonel Finn. I remember the fury with which I read in the Memoirs that Pennistone was fairly closely based on Alick Dru. I did not want to know about Dru, who was at best a flimsy and unknowable person from the real world. He was someone from Powell’s Waugh-related hinterland, which meant nothing to me except polite interest, whereas Pennistone was a fully realised and entirely knowable person in the world of the novel: one of my favourites.

One example that everyone quotes is Moreland. Powell has written that there is a lot of Constant Lambert in Moreland. People have gone so far as to contend that, because Moreland does or says something
in the novel, Lambert must have done the same in real life. This seems to me to be nonsense, for two reasons. The first is that Moreland is not much like Lambert except in the outlines of their biographies. At its simplest, Moreland is a nice man and Lambert wasn’t. He was good, possibly; often admirable, certainly; but rarely nice. The second is that it ignores the sheer technical joy that Powell clearly took in creating a world – Moreland, his friends and hangers-on – that revolved around something – music – that Powell did not understand or like. I find that exhilarating. I think that he did too.

Other novelists of course have been far less fastidious. They put their friends and enemies into their fiction. Worse, they put in their ex-lovers and their bosses, in order to get their own back. EM Forster, when, as a prissy young man, he was let loose on the Empire, kept a notebook in which he recorded what he regarded as the most egregious sayings of the wicked colonials that he encountered. You can find some of them in the dialogue in *A Passage to India*. They are the bits that resemble sore thumbs sticking out. In short, unless you are an acrostician, there is nothing more dispiriting than reading a work of fiction when the chilling realisation creeps over you that what is being described actually happened – and that that is the only reason that it is there. No novel is improved by such rude intrusions from the outside world.

In my view Powell does process real life through his imagination, the result does “come off” in every case where it matters, and the more biographies we read the more other works of fiction – Waugh’s in particular – unravel into hunks of badly digested autobiography in a way that Powell’s work never will. It is a pity however that he left so many tasty morsels to tempt the acrosticians.

Where does that leave the encounter between my friend John’s imaginary uncle and his vat of imaginary whisky and its implications for the world of Eng. Lit.? I think that we can draw these tentative conclusions of principle:

1. Facts should be judged as facts.
2. Jokes should be judged as jokes.
3. Facts may be funny, but jokes can’t be factual.
4. Jokes, on their own terms, help to explain and change the world.
5. For ‘jokes’ read ‘novels’, throughout.

*Whisky galore*
The house in Belgrave Square which gave the air of being let unfurnished for a month or two was bare save for DJ Maxx P Grimm’s massive sound system punching out its insistent Hip-Hop beat. Mr Deacon, Gypsy Jones, Widmerpool, the Honourable Charles Stringham and I were met on the stairs by the rave’s hostess, the Afro-haired “Empress Missy Miss” (AKA Mrs Milly Andriadis) dressed in a loose fitting silk shift and little else. “Who are these jolly-looking dudes, Chuck, darling?” she purred, waving a spliff.

“Oh just some guys I ran into at the UK Stronger in Europe shindig, Milly. And that’s Nick Jenkins. Nick and I were at school together,” beamed a somewhat stoned Stringham. “You darlings,” said Mrs Andriadis. “It’s going to be a lovely party now. Just so long as you are all voting for Remain you can join us. I will de-friend anyone who says they are voting Brexit from my Facebook site!”

Widmerpool and Gypsy Jones threaded their way among the guests.

“I shall of course be voting Remain as it is the only sane choice facing the British people. We no longer have an Empire but inside Europe we can punch above our weight on the world stage,” asserted the puffed up business consultant.

“I had it straight from the horse’s mouth. My boss Sir Magnus Donners says that he is reviewing where to locate his global operation, the Donners Brebner Corporation. If the UK leaves the European Free Trade Zone then he may be forced to move the entire business to Frankfurt.”

“What a complete self-serving load of utter bollocks,” countered the assertive Miss Jones brandishing a copy of a pamphlet War Never Pays. “It’s f****g obvious to anyone who knows their Marxist praxis that the EU’s plan to raise a European Army will destabilise the Balkans, goading Putin’s Russia into declaring war on Ukraine. The EU is nothing but an unaccountable dictatorship, a German-dominated neo-liberal super-state that supports big business over workers’ rights – and Mr Deacon agrees with me!”

“I wouldn’t be so cocksure, Miss Jones. Last year the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Ever since the EU came into being there has never been a war in Europe.”

Never one to be muzzled, Gypsy shot back. “That’s only because the last time Germany tried anything 30 million people lost their lives and all of Germany’s cities were reduced to rubble. It’s waging economic war this time. I mean look at the way the Germans have ridden roughshod over Greece – the cradle of democracy!”

I left the pair to their argument and wandered over to where DJ Maxx P Grimm was holding court. On the way I bumped into none other than my former tutor at Oxford, Sillery. Usually, by this time of the year Sillers would be spending his Long Vacation abroad in Austria or Italy.

“Well if it isn’t Jenkins! How are you, young man?”

“I’m fine. I’ve got a new job editing film scripts for Gainsborough Pictures. I’m just about making ends meet,” I replied. Then I added. “What is your opinion on Europe, sir?”

“Ah Europe, Nick. The single currency and the borderless travel within Europe is a considerable boon to cosmopolitan socialites such as myself. I’m delaying my customary reading party with a group of
hand-picked undergraduates until I vote in the referendum. In my opinion the UK should have joined the Euro and Schengen a long time ago. But I have ordered all my holiday spending money early to take advantage of the good exchange rate between the pound and the Euro. If the Brexiteers win my travel arrangements will cost a lot more. And an academic’s emoluments don’t stretch so far that I can absorb the cost. Then again, think of all the academic grants the EU dishes out. Travel scholarships, visiting professorships. I’d be lost without the EU’s bottomless trough …”

“Ah, here is the Honourable Charles Stringham if I am not mistaken! How is your mother, Stringham? Does she still remain at Glimber with her new husband, Buster Foxe?”

“Glimber as arranged by Buster is now let to a family of Armenians. Mater and Buster are living in a more modest house in Sunningdale,” my friend replied.

“And how will you be voting on the great constitutional question – Britain’s continuing role in Europe?” pressed Sillery.

“I’m awfully sorry to disappoint but I haven’t really considered it. Tuffy Weedon has been engaging so much of my time lately. That’s when I’m not acting as private secretary to Sir Magnus Donners. But I am considering visiting an old friend of my father’s, Dicky Umfraville out in Kenya. Dicky left school fifteen years earlier than myself. He was sacked, like me! Come to think about it, on sober reflection, I really do think that Dicky and I will be voting for Brexit – just to get up Buster Foxe’s nose!”

Finally, I arrive at a group of hipsters who are gathered around DJ Maxx P Grimm who is performing one of his characteristic raps.

“I comin’ out. I comin’ out o’ de ole Brussels sprout. An MEP is no life fo’ me. All o’ dat’ money but no honey Angela Merkel she ain’t no twerker. An MEP is no life fo’ me …”

A lady in a tiara had at last abandoned the magnum of champagne to her bearded opponent (now accommodated with a younger, though less conspicuous woman), and she was accepting a joint from a Rastafarian. Beyond this couple a gentleman in a gimp hood and bondage gear was being led on a chain by a brassy blonde clad in PVC waspie corset and thigh boots.

“Baby Wentworth! What brings you here on the very eve of our historic Brexit referendum?” I exclaim.

“Oh hi, Nick darling. Have you met my new admirer? Prince Theodoris, this distinguished looking homme d’affaires is Nick Jenkins and he’d like to have a word with you … once you’ve stopped licking my boots!”

“We thought it was a fancy dress party, but then got a bit carried away,” explained his supreme highness Prince Theodoric of Albania. “We like the EU and want to join as soon as possible. In my country we
envy you British your Royal Family, public schools, fried chicken outlets and the National Health Service. Alas I am not permitted to vote in the referendum but Baby here is voting to Remain in the EU.”

“That’s right,” asserted Baby Wentworth breathing heavily. “I want to keep my eastern European nanny, my Polish builders, and all of those charming baristas who serve me my daily latte at Starbucks. You know I have always thought of myself as a European first and foremost. I mean this island is so drab. Those mean little people who live ‘up north’ are just narrow minded plebeians who deserve to be on the dole … I bet they will vote Brexit just to be dog in the manger and spite us.”

I am on the point of leaving this rave when I catch sight of Widmerpool still caught in the spell of Miss Gypsy Jones.

“I can’t stand it here,” Gypsy was saying. “All you posh people you won’t know what will hit you when the masses rise up and have their say. The proletariat versus globalisation. I can’t take any more of your canting lectures. I’m off to the Merrythought Club!”

Widmerpool replied, “I’m coming round to your way of thinking. I’ll order us a taxi toute de suite!”

To think at all objectively about one’s own marriage is impossible, while a balanced view of other people’s marriage is almost equally hard to achieve with so much information available, so little to be believed. Objectivity is not, of course, everything in writing; but, even after one has cast objectivity aside, the difficulties of presenting marriage are inordinate. Its forms are at once so varied, yet so constant, providing a kaleidoscope, the colours of which are always changing, always the same. The moods of a love affair, the contradictions of friendship, the jealousy of business partners, the fellow feeling of opposed commanders in total war, these are all in their way to be charted. Marriage, partaking of such – and a thousand more – dual antagonisms and participations, finally defies definition.

Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant

Profiles in String
His Excellency Mr Stephen Holden
in a realisation by Dr Keith Marshall
Controversy – It’s what the APLIST is for!

By Robin Bynoe

The Society’s Chairman urges us to use our email discussion list to stimulate interaction and even controversy.

The Editor of your Newsletter is a lawyer by training and by inclination. He believes less in the broad eirenical sweep of debate, achieving consensus as it goes, discarding outmoded opinions with a grateful and civilised wave of farewell, than in the spectacle of people disagreeing and taking chunks out of each other.

“Write something controversial,” he will occasionally urge me, and no doubt others too, fingering his green eyeshade distractedly. “We’ll get a lively discussion going.”

Or, “What about so-and-so’s piece? Rubbish, didn’t you think? Write and say so.”

As an approach to journalism this certainly has much to commend it. In the case of the Newsletter, however, it has one big disadvantage: the timing.

Even if one rushes to respond to an article in the next issue it is months before anyone sees it. All passion will by then have faded and the original writer will have probably changed his or her mind anyway; or emigrated elsewhere in the EU under an assumed name; or died.

Meanwhile in another part of the forest we have the APLIST. This is the Society’s email discussion list, which you can find out about on the website (www.anthonypowell.org). Spirited discussions take place on it. Sometimes they are quite rude. My own very first contribution was met with a response that started, ‘Do I have to keep repeating that…’

Many of the stalwarts of the APLIST are members of the Society, but some are not. That is a shame. They should all join. Sticking together is important.

Signing up to the APLIST is very easy. All you have to do is send an email to aplist-subscribe@yahoo groups.com. You needn’t even include any content in the email – though bear in mind that AP would undoubtedly have done so, had he achieved the feat of linking his small portable typewriter to the World Wide Web.

Then, when faced with the tendentious stuff that the Editor serves up with the sole aim of starting a fight, do not simply put up with it. Write to the APLIST at once and point out the error of everyone’s ways. Start a lively discussion.

Keith Marshall, owner of the APLIST comments: APLIST members contribute to the discussions by sending their comments as email messages to the list server at aplist@yahoo groups.com. These comments are then distributed by the server to every list member using email, thus allowing other members to respond (via the server) and discuss. Rinse and repeat.

There is also an online archive of all the posts which may be accessed at https:// groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/aplist/info.

When you email a subscribe request to the APLIST (as Robin describes above) you will be sent a return email asking you to confirm your subscription.

All new APLIST members have their posts moderated until we know they have a bona fide interest in AP. This is to reduce the incidence of spammers joining the group.

Although we would love all APLIST members to join the Society, and, like Robin, I would encourage them to do so, the Society provides the group free-of-charge as part of our education, research and public benefit obligations.
What a house! Coronets on the table napkins, but no kind hearts between the sheets. \[AW, 199\]

Stringham, you may recall, was no fan of his aristocratic in-laws or their country seat, Mountfichet, where he could never find the lavatories,

if there is, indeed, more than one, a matter upon which I cannot speak with certainty. \[AW, 199\]

Stringham may have been drunk, but he had a point. Before the Great War nob like the Bridgnorths had no need of modern plumbing: there were always plenty of skivvies on hand to empty chamber pots and lug around tubs of hot water (chores I don’t recall depicted in Downton Abbey). But after 1919 the supply of willing skivvies dried up and the post war generation to which Stringham belonged, along with much else, the Victorian notion that bathrooms were an unnecessary luxury. There was, it is true, a concerted effort on the part of the titled and territorial classes to put Humpty Dumpty together again, but the Great War had finished the job begun by Lloyd George. As one chatelaine lamented, the war changed their world for ever, shaking all things to their foundations, wasting the treasures of the past, and casting its sinister influence far into the future.

The conflict between ancient and modern, involving social change and architectural development, is an abiding theme in Adrian Tinniswood’s stimulating and beautifully produced study. In one corner, clad in tweeds and plus fours, were the Old Gang, for whom country living meant field sports, formal dinners and a blazing fire all year round (even the most palatial piles could be damp and draughty). In the evening there would be billiards, bridge, jigsaws or charades (hence AP’s belief that a facility for buffoonery was an essential weapon in the arriviste’s armoury). Opposing them were city dwelling plutocrats like Sir Magnus Donners, who motored down to their well-appointed mansions for relaxing week-ends, and the quasi-egalitarian Prince of Wales, who liked everything to be smart, glossy and up to date. At his country bolt hole, Fort Belvedere, he introduced many of the creature comforts he had ‘known and sampled in the New World’: not just ensuite bathrooms – almost unheard of then – but showers and central heating as well.

At this point I ought to say that Tinniswood’s sub-title is a bit misleading. I expected something along the lines of Merlin Waterson’s elegiac retrospective, The Country House Remembered (a fertile source here). In fact it is more like an addendum to Mark Girouard’s Life in the English Country House; there is at least as much about the houses themselves as the people who lived in them. Architecturally speaking the two camps, ancient and modern, were represented respectively by Sir Reginald Blomfield and Oliver Hill. Sir Reginald was old school, a ‘Wrenaissance’ specialist who despised and detested anything that reeked of ‘cosmopolitanism’, for which read alien and probably Jewish. Hill, a friend of Eric Gill, whose fondness for adolescent girls he shared, predicted that a maximum of sunlight and facilities for recreation and exercise such as dancing, swimming and squash, will be large factors to be provided for in the modern house.
The most insolent and extravagant challenge to the quiet good taste expected of a country gentleman was Port Lympne, Sir Philip Sassoon’s sumptuous abode overlooking Romney Marsh. Chips Channon described it as ‘a triumph of beautiful bad taste and Babylonian luxury’. His wife likened it to ‘a Spanish brothel’, which begs the obvious question: How would she have known? Sir Philip was presumed by many to be homosexual, like his cousin the war poet, but Tinniswood says he had ‘no obvious sexual inclination in any direction’, and unlike, say, Somerset Maugham’s villa in Antibes, Port Lympne never became a byword for depravity.

But fingers were certainly pointed at Ashcombe, where Cecil Beaton held court, and Faringdon, Lord Berners’ country seat. They embodied what Tinniswood calls “the ABC of Art, Bohemia and Culture”, a demi-mondaine environment in which adventuresses like Mona in Dance mingled with the sort of equivocal young men that Nancy Mitford’s Uncle Matthew called ‘sewers’.

Equally exceptional, though not in the least outré, was Cliveden, whose atmosphere Tinniswood compares to a grand hotel (its current role). There the Astors entertained celebrities like Chaplin, Shaw and Gandhi, as well as the appeasers known as The Cliveden Set. Drink at Cliveden was rationed because the Astors were teetotal, but unlike at many big pre-war houses there was no shortage of servants, whose quarters were connected to the guest wing by an underground passage. Presiding behind the green baize door was Mr Lee, a butler so imperious that he was sometimes mistaken for Lord Astor. When Bobbie Shaw, Nancy Astor’s gay son by her first marriage, was gaoled for cruising, Mr Lee threatened with dismissal any underling who blabbed.

In conclusion, Tinniswood says that Christopher Hussey, a former editor of Country Life, was told by a war widow that her late husband, on finding a copy of the magazine at the front, had written to say “that it was so lovely to read what one was fighting for”. The poor chap can’t have known how much damage his own side, let alone the Luftwaffe, was doing to the large country houses and estates they’d requisitioned. But the social cost of the war was even greater. The ruling class, who had built those ‘power houses’, no longer ruled. When AP joined up in December 1939 he was not just entering a new life but leaving an old one to which there was no return. Nothing was ever the same again.

What are the English like? Worse answers might be given than “Read Aubrey’s Brief Lives and you will see”.

Anthony Powell; John Aubrey and His Friends
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #64

Uncle Giles’ Corner

A Good Sergeant Major’s Brew

Where were you when you heard the news that the UK voted for Brexit? It was one of those epochal moments like How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix or discovering President John F Kennedy had been shot.

Me? I was in bed with the companion of my bosom, Mrs Erdleigh. The Teasmade had switched itself on and was bubbling away. “There’s nothing like a good cup of tea in the morning to blow out the cobwebs, Mrs E!” You see, she shares my passion for a proper cuppa.

Your favourite Uncle switches on his bedside wireless, tunes in to the Today programme and lo and behold there was some parliamentarian chappy crowing about a “victory for common sense”. Well I’ll be jiggered!

How did I vote? I’m not saying. But I will say this. I heard a rumour that some blighters in Brussels were plotting to slap VAT on English Breakfast Tea with a view to finally outlawing it from “le Continong” altogether. Apparently we all have to switch over to Nespresso (whatever that is). Damned if I will!

Things started going wrong for this country ever since they stopped making Mazawattee Tea and introduced all this woofthah herbal nonsense – Ginseng, Coconut and Verbena, and Lord knows what? Damned unnatural I call it.

When I was attached to the 10th Gurkha Rifles out in Peshawar, our Sergeant’s Mess employed an excellent chai-wallah. He’d keep his samovar polished and ready for action so we could always count on a refreshing cuppa char – even in the midst of battle.

As my young nephew Nicholas will tell you, I never take tea in the afternoon. People who eat tea waste half the afternoon. Never wanted to form the habit. But it’s more of a guideline than a rule.

Now for some practical (PG) tips! That’s a joke by the way.

1. Tea, officers for the drinking of. Here is what RSM Ronald Brittain at Mons Officer Cadet School in Aldershot told us. “Stand up straight you at the back and pay close attention laddy! On the command one! Boil water in kettle. Take your teapot and swill it round with a small quantity of boiling water. Drain. On the command two! Wait for it … Open tea canister, dip teaspoon into tea leaves, place three heaped teaspoons and “one for the pot” into warm teapot, fill to one inch below the lid of pot. On the Command three! Once teapot is loaded, allow to brew for five minutes. Put quantity of milk into cup and two lumps of sugar (optional). Then using a tea strainer pour in the nectarous liquid. Fire at will!”

2. Avoid trendy hotels. They try and fob one off with complimentary sachets of Rooibos, Green Tea or Lemony Snicket.

3. Do go to “greasy spoon” cafes. Ask for a cuppa char in a big mug with the tea bag left in.

4. Hang out with builders. They know a thing or two about tea!

5. For a good Sergeant Major’s brew you can rely on the following: Brooke Bond PG Tips, Taylors of Harrogate, Twining’s English Breakfast or Barry’s Irish Tea.
**Extreme Legibility** is a weblog wherein Peter Cameron “attempts to remember books he’s read before he forgets them”. Back in June 2016 he wrote thus ...

*Venusberg* by Anthony Powell (Little, Brown & Co., no date* [1952, 1965])

A darkly comic and elegantly chilly novel about a young British journalist who travels to a small unnamed Baltic country as a foreign correspondent shortly after WWI. The community he finds himself in consists almost entirely of diplomats (and exiled Russian nobility). He falls in with a rather aimless and indolent lot and begins an affair with a charismatic and wealthy native who is married to a much older stoic professor. Not much happens, but Powell writes with an almost brutal asperity and lack of sentimentality, and the result is refreshing and bracing. There’s a flavour of Evelyn Waugh – the black comedy masking something deeper and darker, and a cool, clear-sightedness and understated flippancy.

Our hero’s name is Lushington; his mistress is Ortrud; his friend at the British Embassy is DaCosta. I enjoyed reading this book very much.

* Interestingly, the book was first published in the United States in 1952 by the Periscope Bookshop and the Holliday Bookshop. The unsold stock was taken over by Little Brown in 1963 after they became Powell’s American publishers. Little Brown reissued the book with a new spine label and price label to the flap in 1965.

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**Channel 4’s Dance Films**

Peter Cobrin writes to remind us that the 1997 Channel 4 TV films of *Dance* are available for viewing online on Channel 4’s “On Demand” service. They can be found at www.channel4.com/programmes/a-dance-to-the-music-of-time/on-demand.

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**Overheard at Sillery’s Tea Party**

“Mageve!! Such a horrid little town full of shops selling nasty art to Russians.”
John D Simon, President of Lehigh University in Pennsylvania writes in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 May 2016:

**What I’m Reading: ‘A Dance to the Music of Time’**

Last October, Mark Edmundson, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, posted the cover of *A Dance to the Music of Time* on Facebook with the statement “Don’t always like it, but can’t stop reading it.” I was intrigued.

In the next six months, I completed all 12 volumes of the series by Anthony Powell. It was an amazing experience.

The series provides a wonderful window into the social history of five decades in London, from the end of World War I through the 1960s, told through the world of creativity – books, paintings, and music. The narrator and main character, Nicholas Jenkins, is a writer.

The story reminded me of the importance of the arts and humanities in our society. It’s an idea often missing in our current national dialogue about higher education.

Students need an education that prepares them for success in professional and civic life. The world needs citizens who possess the creativity, civic learning, communication skills, and critical thinking that the arts and humanities provide, so they can take on the task of solving an increasingly complex set of challenges.
SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

London 2011 Conference Proceedings
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Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music
150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; in the style of Spurling’s Handbook.
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Writing about Anthony Powell
Talks given at the 2004 AGM by George Lilley, Michael Barber and Nick Birns; introduced by Christine Berberich.
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The Master and The Congressman
40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell.
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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Violet Powell; A Stone in the Shade
Fourth & final volume of Lady Violet’s autobiography covering mostly the 1960s. Includes many of Lady Violet’s coloured travel sketches. Hardback.
UK: £24.50, Overseas: £29

Anthony Powell, Caledonia, A Fragment
The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof.
UK: £8, Overseas: £10.50

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American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of Dance at Philips Academy.
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*** SALE! – LAST FEW COPIES ***

Edited by John Saumarez Smith & Jonathan Cooperstein; 2011.
Fascinating letters between Powell and his friend and first American publisher Robert Vanderbilt.
Paperback: UK £8.50, Overseas £12.50
Hardback: UK £18, Overseas £24.50

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society
Back numbers of issues 1, 2 & 3 are available.
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BBC Radio Dramatisation of Dance
Originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 between 1979-82. 26 one-hour episodes. Single CD containing 26 MP3 files. For copyright reasons available to Society members only.
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Set of four colour postcards from photos by John Blaxter of the Powell ancestral lands on the Welsh borders.
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