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This is a Christmas bumper issue but it contains two pieces of sad news. Tony Robinson has died after a long illness. He was a long-standing member of the Society and served as a trustee and Chairman for many years. Keith Marshall's obituary of Tony is on page 4. Our thoughts are with his family.

Secondly as is recorded in the report of the AGM Keith has brought forward his retirement to 2018. This will be a significant event both for the Society and for Keith. The next issue will centre on "Whither the Post-Marshall Society?"

Sadly, Tony was not able to enjoy Hilary Spurling's new life of AP. This issue centres on that book. There are four reviews from members, two American, one Scottish and one English. Michael Barber, whose own life of AP was reviewed by Hilary, and far from sympathetically, gives a professional biographer's view, Nick Birns who has lectured and written extensively about AP gives the academic perspective, Jeff Manley in the longest piece provides a comprehensive and illuminating analysis and Colin Donald who interviewed AP provides an expanded version of his review for the *Glasgow Herald*.

Hilary Spurling gave a talk at the Wallace Collection and your Editor has provided a summary of what she said because, sadly, a transcript will not be available. He also had the privilege and pleasure of interviewing Hilary about her book and a summary of that appears on p 32. Elsewhere there is an illuminating and entertaining squib from Professor Peter Wiseman about "Who was Erridge?" Professor Wiseman can speak with authentic insight about real-life models for fictional characters as he is widely believed to be the model for Professor Dumbledore in his former pupil's Harry Potter series.

A new contributor, Allan Lloyd, tells us about His First Time and his coping strategy for the significant Oxford presence on the Radnorshire Trip, so brilliantly organised and led by John Blaxter. Another member of that trip, Alf Ellis (Oriel) provides a review of the food and drink-subjects close to AP's heart and essential ingredients of any successful outing.
NEWSLETTER 69

A new feature is posts from the APLIST. Several members have posted comments and reviews of Hilary Spurling’s book. A small selection of the best ones is in this issue.

Uncle Giles of course could not be restrained from giving his views on the art of biography. Sadly Mrs Widmerpool remains indisposed.

This issue also contains the solution to all your Christmas present problems with a flyer for the two new Society publications, War Dance and AP on Wine, described at the Wallace by Hilary Spurling as "Really a very pretty book."

Finally Seasonal Thoughts and Best wishes for a Happy New Year full of mince pies and good reading.

Stephen Walker
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FROM THE SECRETARY’S DESK

As you’ll see elsewhere in this issue, I have decided I will retire as the Society’s Secretary and (in our Chairman’s phrase) “Lord High Everything Else” at next year’s AGM.

I have said for some years that I would not stay past my 70th birthday in 2021, but over the last year it has become clear that I need to bring this forward. By the time of the 2018 AGM I will have been in this seat for over 18 years: that is far too long for the good of any individual, and certainly for any organisation.

There are, of course, other factors; not least that I have struggled to keep up through two major knee operations in the last year. Moving on will be hard for us all. For me it will be like retiring from work – quite a wrench! But it is time for all of us to move on.

In the meantime, I wish all the Society’s members and friends a peaceful and joyous Christmas and a fulfilling New Year.

Keith Marshall
secretary@anthonypowell.org
It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Society Trustee, Tony Robinson, on 3 September 2017. Although Tony had struggled with pulmonary fibrosis for several years his death
was completely unexpected; indeed only a few weeks before he had taken part in one of our regular Trustees' conference calls.

Tony was born near Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. The son of an aircraft engineer for the Bristol Aeroplane Company at Filton, he was educated at Bristol Grammar School and Keble College, Oxford, graduating with a degree in Modern History, Economics and Political Science. Having spent most of his working life in local government he escaped from being Director of Corporate Planning at Suffolk County Council in 1996.

Since retirement Tony was for several years Chairman of his local NHS Primary Healthcare Care Trust and pursued interests in Salzwedel and Wesel in Germany, the music of Benjamin Britten, and Bristol buses.

Tony was also a devotee of twentieth-century English literature and an avid Powell fan with a deep knowledge of "the works" and a suitable Powellite anecdote for every occasion. It is no surprise then that he was one of the very earliest members of the embryonic Anthony Powell Society in 2000 and one of the first elected Trustees in 2001. In 2014, when already dependent on supplementary oxygen, he took on the role of Society Chairman, finally standing down in May 2016 only because of his health. It was largely Tony's hard work and expertise which built the Society's application for charitable status, which was granted by the Charity Commission in April 2003.

Tony was a gentleman: quiet and unassuming but always kind, friendly and willing to muck in and help. I, and indeed all the Trustees, are already missing Tony's thoughtful and sensible words of wisdom which so often guided our direction. The Society has much for which to thank Tony and he will be remembered with great affection and appreciation.
**Michael Barber**

Anthony Powell called Hilary Spurling ‘a witch’*, and to judge from his *Journals*, in which she features a lot, he was certainly under her spell: ‘I am always struck talking with Hilary how she is not quite like anyone else, male or female, an exceedingly quick intelligence all her own.’ Spurling was equally smitten. In an affectionate postscript she recalls how *Dance* ‘changed my life’. It was ‘both intoxicating and unsettling’. For years she did her best, with some success, to confound the ‘popular myth’ that Powell was a Blimp. But although Powell identified with the Twenties, that demimondaine epoch when art somehow got mixed up with life, he was born and brought up to be an
Edwardian. It was this hardboiled portion that his detractors, also with some success, were at pains to emphasise.

‘The world,’ said Powell on more than one occasion, ‘is never a very nice place.’ This intimate and sombre biography, in which laughs are at a premium, supports his verdict. Spurling describes his splenetic father, Lieutenant-Colonel Philip Powell, as ‘an abominable parent’ who belittled his son at every opportunity. But because he coughed up ‘quite a bit of the necessary’, his son had to grin and bear it. Powell was frank about his modest earnings from writing, but it may surprise some readers to learn that well into his fifties he relied upon the bank of Dad, receiving a monthly allowance and occasional doles. Only when the old monster died, leaving, like Uncle Giles, an ‘unexpectedly large’ sum, did Powell achieve financial security.

Another surprise, to this reader at any rate, concerns the integrity of the Powells’ marriage. In the absence of evidence to the contrary I assumed that neither partner had ‘stepped aside’. But Spurling reveals that during the war Lady Violet met ‘the love of her life’. We’re not told who he was or what they got up to, only that in the end they separated. Did Powell step aside as well? If he did, and Spurling found out, she’s not telling. She does however link Powell’s discovery of the affair with ‘the paroxysms of jealousy’ suffered by Jenkins in the first half of Dance.

More consuming even than jealousy were the debilitating bouts of depression that Powell endured throughout his life. Often combined with insomnia these chronic metaphysical hangovers left him wishing he were dead. Nowadays he would be prescribed pills and referred to a counsellor. Then, you just kept going and hoped for the best. It was simply a question of guts - ‘like almost everything else in life’.

Spurling deals sympathetically with Powell’s early love life, in particular his passionate, star-crossed affair with a young married woman called Marion Coates, the inspiration for Jenkins’ affair with Jean Templer. Unlike Jean, whom Jenkins concludes was really only interested in money, Marion was a disciple of ‘Sage’ Bernal, the charismatic Marxist visionary. No wonder it didn’t last. Spurling says Powell was ‘invincibly apolitical’, a description that would surely have astonished George Orwell, who said Tony was ‘the only Tory’ he’d ever liked.
Perhaps, on reflection, Spurling was referring to Powell’s fiction. If so, she failsto point out what a handicap this was in the Thirties, when ‘commitment’ was what intelligent young readers required. Written off by many reviewers as at best frivolous, at worst a lackey of the Old Gang, Powell struggled to make himself heard above the clamour for a Popular Front. Would he, one wonders, have conceived the idea of a sequence like Dance had sales of his early novels matched those of Evelyn Waugh, with whom he was sometimes bracketed? We’ll never know. But he did live to see most of the Auden Generation admit they were dupes - or as Quiggin puts it, guilty of ‘over-enthusiasm’.

Powell surprised James Lees-Milne by saying he’d always fancied girls ‘who looked as if they’d slept under a bush for a week’. He was equally indiscriminate in his choice of friends. Often accused of being a snob, he could cite in his defence a raffish galere that included Constant Lambert, Malcolm Muggeridge, George Orwell, Gerald Reitlinger, Adrian Daintrey and John Heygate, none of whom were well-connected or, with the exception of Heygate, well-born. Right at the end of his Journals he notes that ‘sympathetic’ though he found his neighbour, Sir Lees Mayall, a former ambassador who had just died, ‘occasionally one came up against a difference from what, for want of a better term, I call “bohemian” friends.’

Alan Ross was struck by how many of Powell’s friends were promiscuous. Ross, who had form himself, thought Powell took a vicarious delight in their exploits. Frederic Bradnum, who dramatised Dance for radio, endorsed this. Powell, he told me, ‘loved learning about other people’s perversions.’ Alan Michie, who for a time succeeded Roland Gant as Powell’s editor at Heinemann, thought he would have made a superb interrogator. ‘You were so at ease with him that you said much more than you’d intended, particularly about sex.’ Did Powell enjoy gossip? Of course he did. It was a concomitant of the insatiable curiosity he shared with John Aubrey, whose ‘powerful visual imagination’, which Spurling is well-equipped to interpret, he also shared.

If Aubrey was the progenitor of Dance then Malcolm Muggeridge, in his capacity as Heinemann’s literary advisor, was the midwife. Against the recommendation of the reader employed by Powell’s agent, David Higham, he persuaded Heinemann to publish A Question of Upbringing. It was the beginning of a long, but by no means tranquil association. Powell thought very highly of his editor, Roland Gant - ‘a publisher in a million’. He was less impressed by the top brass, and on more than one occasion threatened to
leave, notably in 1961, when it transpired that all the sequence was not, as he
had been promised, in print.

Since anyone reading this must long ago have formed an opinion of *Dance*, I
don’t propose to discuss it here. But what does need stressing is the range of
its appeal, apparent from the very beginning. As Spurling notes, ‘[Powell’s]
reluctance to ratify borders between the comic and the serious went down well
with a new generation of writers emerging in the 1950’s.’ One early admirer
was Kingsley Amis; another, V.S. Naipaul, who surely spoke for a multitude
when he wrote, apropos of the electric embrace between Jenkins and Jean
Templer on the snowy Great West Road, ‘I do not know how you managed to
pack so much into such a short space.’ Sad to relate Naipaul, like Muggeridge,
later changed his mind about *Dance*, panning the last six volumes. Spurling
ascribes Muggeridge’s ‘betrayal’ to envy: he was a failed novelist. Naipaul’s
default she cannot explain.

What I can’t explain is Spurling’s neglect of the *Journals*, surely as addictive in
their way as *Dance*. Over 700 pages long, they comprehend gossip,
commentary, speculation, reminiscence, meditation, anecdote and
autobiography. Spurling quotes a disobliging review by Hugh Thomas, then
moves on. You would never know that they generated the same sort of
interest as Evelyn Waugh’s *Diaries*.

Nor, to change the subject, would you know from reading this the full extent
of the Katyn massacre, estimated in *Dance* at ‘nine or ten thousand’ Polish
officers. Spurling puts the figure at two thousand. It’s now thought to be
twenty-two thousand. She also says Powell and his father served in the
‘Welsh’ regiment and is apparently unaware that *Horizon* closed in December
1949, so that Julian Maclaren-Ross could not have ‘ barged into’ Sonia Orwell’s
office there in 1954.

With a wealth of material at her disposal from the family archives Spurling has
fleshed out the rather spectral figure Powell cuts in his *Memoirs*. But I can’t
be the only reader with unanswered questions. Why, for instance, in her
*Memoirs*, did his wife refer to him as Anthony, when to everyone else who
knew him well he was Tony? Again, Powell said that becoming a father had a
‘profound effect’ on the way he looked at the world, and left it at that. Spurling
is equally uninformative. All we learn about him as a parent is that he never
‘got the hang of family holidays’. I’m also sorry she doesn’t clear up the
mystery of the party, trailed in *Messengers of Day*, that Powell said was ‘greatly to influence’ his life.

Writing about Powell at Balliol, Philip Mason said ‘[He] was already playing to perfection the part for which he casts the narrator in his novels, the almost invisible man, the universal unobtrusive confidant and observer.’ Does this explain why there is so little about him in the diaries, letters and memoirs of his peers? John Heygate caricatured him in a couple of novels. But only in the unexpurgated diaries of Malcolm Muggeridge, for many years his bosom pal, do we see him plain.

Let Muggeridge have the last word. Reviewing *Hearing Secret Harmonies* he made amends for his apostasy, describing *Dance* as ‘a great work’. More pertinently in this context he quoted X. Trapnel’s theory that you learn more about a novelist from his fiction than from biographies or memoirs. ‘Certainly,’ concluded Muggeridge, ‘for those that have eyes to see the life story and character of Powell is unfolded with extraordinary clarity and vividness in Nicholas’s narration.’

*See entry for 2.3.86 on p217 of Powell’s *Journals 1982-86.*
Reading Spurling; Rereading Dance Through Spurling

Nicholas Birns

Hilary Spurling’s new biography of Anthony Powell is an accomplished, marvellously sculpted, and inspirational work. Even more, it is not just a passport to the work of a great novelist but a work with its own admirable sense of construction. Spurling was not just a friend of Powell’s, but, as he said in his Journals when discussing the organisation of his review collection Miscellaneous Verdicts, somebody he considered a contemporary: he justified the inclusion of his review of Spurling’s biography of Ivy Compton-Burnett in the Contemporaries section of the book by saying both Compton-Burnett, who was twenty-one years his senior, and Spurling, thirty-seven years his junior, were both his contemporaries. Not just Spurling’s friendship with Powell but her contemporaneity with him make this a work of nonpareil insight into not just Powell but his milieu. This especially pays off in the way Spurling is not overawed by the trappings of prestige or aristocracy, and can thus see Powell’s house at Eton, Goodhart’s, as an “unpretentious house with a poor reputation and few standards to keep up” (39) or the sons-in law of Lady Jersey (Lady Violet Powell’s grandmother) as “dim Celtic poets” (188), or show Powell’s appreciation of the “seedy chic” (80) of Shepherd Market.

But these supreme advantages can also be disadvantages, not so much in being too emotionally close to their subject—Spurling, like the admittedly somewhat different case of Michael Bloch with respect to James Lees-Milne, is a superbly skilled professional who knows how to avoid parti pris with respect to someone she knew and respected, and does so here—but in the biography not having an angle of vision. This is something Nick Jenkins, as narrator of A Buyer’s Market, feels he lacks in trying to make sense of the aristocratic and bohemian scenes he encounters during the Night of the Three Parties, and so imports, as it were, his Uncle Giles, to see what he might make of it all. Spurling, at least somewhat analogously, uses Powell’s long-time friend Gerald Reitlinger as a raisonneur, foil, and vantage point to gauge Powell from youth.
to old age. Reitlinger was not just a contemporary of Powell’s but shared aesthetic interests, educational differences, and social position with him. Yet Reitlinger’s Jewishness and his not being a creative writer make him different enough from Powell to use as a sounding board and monitor in a way that, like Uncle Giles with respect to the Huntercombe and Andriadis parties, puts the reader in an advantageous position with respect to the scene. Though her major motive in deploying Reitlinger is perspectival, Reitlinger’s early account of the Holocaust, *The Final Solution*, is given an entire page of Spurling’s book, lauded for its “rational and measured” account of “nearly indescribable events” (329). Powell read and reviewed this book, and Spurling says probably no book of the many he reviewed in the late 40s and early 50s gave Powell “a greater jolt” (328) than Reitlinger’s. Given that Christopher Hitchens, in general an admirer of Powell’s, criticized *Dance* for marginalising the Holocaust, Spurling’s deployment of Reitlinger serves as a subtle but supremely effective rebuttal.

Spurling is one of the world’s most accomplished biographers, writing lives of subjects as varied as Pearl Buck and Henri Matisse. Her biography of Powell can be seen as the conclusion of a trilogy of lives of three very different modern British writers, Powell, Compton-Burnett, and Paul Scott. Her short account of Sonia Orwell, *The Girl From The Fiction Department*, is also important to the Powell biography because it features some of the same personalities and settings. Spurling’s book is not just, like Michael Barber’s biography, an able and useful work of reportage, but presents itself as a work of art, written by someone who is herself a masterful literary artist. There is a sensitivity to nuance and tone that comes through repeatedly, from her recognition that, in Lady Violet’s words, that Powell’s plays helped tighten the last few volumes of *Dance*, and for the way Lady Violet’s literary style is equipped with an “unsparing harshness” (378) but is also “beguiling.”

As the authorized biographer, Spurling had access to all sorts of archives and sources that give the reader a full account of Powell’s life. But her own literary skill means that the biography does not just tell us more about Powell, but helps us reread *Dance*. She guides the reader in the extent to which the characters in the sequence have real-life models, arguing that even Moreland is more than just Constant Lambert, and that people as seemingly far away as George Orwell, vis à vis Stringham, and Malcolm Muggeridge, vis à vis Widmerpool, informed these characters—a pairing that thwarts attempts to see Stringham as representing the old aristocracy, and Widmerpool the rising meritocracy. Spurling makes a much finer differentiation by saying Stringham
is always open to life, Widmerpool closed to it. She also reiterates her pioneering observation, first made in her 1977 Handbook, that Stringham and Jenkins are not really friends after the first book ends.

In a manner that yet respects privacy and decorum, Spurling goes more into Powell’s love life than anyone ever has, and we understand that of Nick Jenkins more as a result. We see what Powell meant by saying in his memoirs that, once he met Lady Violet Pakenham, things with other women were broken off sans rancune, and see why putting it that way was the most diplomatic fashion in which to address these circumstances. We see who the originals for Jean Templer and Susan Nunnery (and thereby also Barbara Goring) were. But Spurling makes clear that every character in the sequence is a composite with large elements of what Powell called creative fantasy, and that no character—even those viably based on real people such as Moreland or Pennistone—can ever be reduced to just one original. Spurling, fascinatingly, sees a personal relationship of Lady Violet’s during wartime as “clearly implicated” (33) in the handling of Nick’s relationship with Jean Templer in The Acceptance World, which, in using Lady Violet’s experiences as a basis for Nick’s, reveals there is what Powell called with respect to Proust, “sex transposition,” (Journals 10 July 1990) giving feelings based on that of the experience of one gender to another, as occurring not just in Proust, but also in Powell. Spurling reminds us how war inherently puts a stress on marriage, something Powell brilliantly illuminates in The Soldier’s Art with Priscilla Tolland’s affair with Odo Stevens and her husband Chips Lovell’s stoic but devastating response to it. One also thinks of wartime novels such as Olivia Manning’s Balkan and Levant trilogies, or Elizabeth Bowen’s The Heat of the Day. Wartime places supreme stress on personal relationships but also brings out unexpected tenderness, as in when Nick Jenkins, after the untimely deaths of Priscilla and Lady Molly, kisses his friend Eleanor Walpole-Wilson, “which I had never done before” (SA 165).

When I teach Dance, students ask me why the narrator’s marriage is represented so little. My answer — taken from Powell—is that it is to make the narrator not too obtrusive. Students also ask why the narrator seems so Olympian, disregarding the references by Jenkins to his own melancholy, which Spurling shows had a counterpart in Powell’s. Now I can direct students to this biography as a mode of rendering, in a mutually informative way, what is life’s to life, and what is art’s to art. Spurling shows how literary criticism can profit by, to use Sir William Empson’s phrase, using biography. Spurling enables us to read Dance as a more embodied work, not just a
voyeuristic one. Through scrupulous excavation, she confirms Dance’s fictional autonomy.

Spurling told Stephen Walker, in an interview that also appears in this issue, that one of her goals in writing this biography was to encourage people under thirty-five to read Powell. I think she has succeeded in this goal, in several ways. First of all, her own stature, and the lengthy and prominent notices the book has received in the UK and no doubt will in the US, simply will make younger people aware of Anthony Powell as a major twentieth-century novelist. Secondly, though Powell’s life was so long and full of implication as to fully justify a lengthy, fact-strewn biography, Spurling throughout has chosen fluidity over comprehensiveness. For instance, Spurling mentions Jo Grimond twice, but does not mention his role as mid-century Liberal Party leader, something which she knows, and many of the readers of this Newsletter know, but the average 30-year old in the US and even the UK, will not. But Spurling knows that this generation can always look things up on the Internet, with much the same readiness as Powell himself would look people up in Burke’s, and she places producing a fluid, engrossing narrative that will draw into the work people who have not known it previously. Much of what Spurling says about the sequence’s openness to life in all its channels might remind younger people of a far more intentional novelistic equivalent of social media. Yet Spurling also tells the younger reader things they need to know about the twentieth century. The contemporary intelligentsia, much like George Orwell’s Oceania, which convinces itself it has always been at war with Eastasia, likes to act as if it recognized Soviet oppression from the beginning. But, as Spurling eloquently reminds us, too many intellectuals during the era of Dance’s composition saw the Soviet Union as “essentially well-meaning and forward looking” (400). Without this knowledge, younger people are liable to misunderstand Widmerpool’s character as well as the nature and intent of Powell’s ribbing of the Left. But it will take little historical instruction for younger people to recognize Powell’s championship of Polish refugees in wartime London as showing compassion for the disenfranchised and implying a cosmopolitan, heterodox idea of Europe.

Although no single reader will march in total aesthetic lockstep with Spurling’s every judgment—I myself think The Fisher King is a more substantive work than she does, and I actually like Rodrigo Moynihan’s portrait of Powell—her assessments of Dance are sure and enlightening, and will anchor those readers coming to it for the first time. I particularly appreciate how Spurling is able to laud Powell’s achievement without
knocking down other famous twentieth century writers. Spurling particularly excels in showing how the sequence is at once an unmatched social chronicle of twentieth-century Britain and yet the product of a “hypnotic dreamlike state” (413). Powell’s friend and at least temporary admirer, V S Naipaul, excelled in creating works that thread the gap between nonfiction and the traditional novel, and the generation of my current and recent students very much embrace comparable work by Karl Ove Knausgaard, W G Sebald, Ben Lerner, Elena Ferrante, and Stefan Hertmans. Spurling shows how Powell got the most out of the novel form as he inherited it while also opening it up to new and experimental approaches. This will impress people who appreciate fiction with stylistic flair yet which also depicts with real life, albeit with—as Spurling says of William Pye’s monumental bust of Powell—‘slightly asymmetrical features’ (429). Reading Spurling, and rereading *Dance* through Spurling, is revelatory of both the proximity to life and the powerful creative force of Anthony Powell’s fictional masterwork.

**Anthony Powell: Dancing To The Music of Time**

by Hilary Spurling

*Colin Donald*

PG Wodehouse once wrote a fan letter to Anthony Powell describing how he studied the latter’s technique “under a microscope”. Himself a Swiss watchmaker amongst literary craftsmen, Wodehouse gushed “I still can’t see how you do it.”

In recent years analysis of what PGW called the “stunning artistry” of Powell’s 12-volume sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time* has often been subsumed by a sterile debate about his alleged snobbism and implied artistic conservativism.

Hilary Spurling’s long-awaited book, as good as you would expect from the Whitbread Award-winning biographer of Matisse, encourages hope that we can get beyond all that and into the more fertile consideration of Powell’s place in post-modernist Brit lit and his debt to his European and Russian mentors. In other words, we can get nearer to discovering how Powell “did
it”; the components of his translucent, comic, ironic, classical-meets-gothic technique that has given his novels their radioactive power. As described by Spurling herself, by Michael Frayn, Ian Rankin and others quoted here, this is nothing less than the power to change his readers’ lives.

Those of us whose world view was irreversibly shifted by encountering Powell’s many-roomed fictional mansion have been waiting for Hilary Spurling’s book, not in expectation of great revelations about a well-documented life, but for the same reason we would welcome an unearthed cache of papyri from the architect of the Great Pyramid. Any new information on the construction of a great edifice is to be seized on.

We knew already that his life was not notably more eventful than that of other disciplined artists. After Eton and Oxford, his youth involved scraping a living in publishing, pleasantly suspended between the worlds of bohemian Fitzrovia and what used to be called “society”. Once settled in Somerset, non-writing time is spent entertaining, gardening, and taking Swan Hellenic cruises.

We also knew about the friendships with George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh, along with more faded figures like Constant Lambert, Henry Greene and Gerald Reitlinger. We also knew about his spectacular bust-ups with Graham Greene, Malcolm Muggeridge and Auberon Waugh, though the new detail here is interesting.

New information includes his romantic adventures involving various femmes fatales of the ‘20s and ‘30s, married and unmarried. There is confirmation of the depths of his depressive tendency, inseparable from a gift for comedy, which is deeper than the “melancholy” he anatomises so comprehensively in Dance.

One of the worst bursts followed Powell’s unglamorous but gruelling war service, seems to have followed the revelation that his wife Lady Violet had had a wartime affair with an unnamed man, whom she described to Sonia Orwell as “the love of her life.” Given their closeness and the importance of their literary partnership this barely computes, but such is life.

Hilary Spurling spells out how odd and alienating Powell’s upbringing was, even by the standards of the Edwardian upper middle classes, with a near-pathologically ill-tempered army officer father 14 years younger than his wife.
She hints at how the psychic heavy weather of his peripatetic childhood might have determined the clinical, detached calm that distinguishes Powell’s fictional voice, making him the great comic connoisseur of the infinite strangeness of mankind. It was certainly an odd parental relationship. The novelist’s mother Maud Wells-Dymoke, unmarried at 33, decided to join her future husband, aged 19, in South Africa where he was serving as a subaltern in the Boer War. This would count as a reckless gesture in any age, let alone in 1901. Once married, a neurotic terror of being labelled a “cradle-snatcher” turned her into a recluse, making it a strange solitary life for her only child.

Her husband Philip Powell, a passed-over army officer was himself a victim of seemingly routine Victorian emotional cruelty to children, whose intemperate and spiteful behaviour placed burdens on his offspring almost as onerous as those imposed by the father of Dickens (feckless) or Joyce (drunk). Unlike them he was a miser, bequeathing his son an unexpected fortune, equivalent to £1.5m, relieving the novelist from the money worries that strained the first half of his life and enabling him to complete his fictional marathon.

Unlike, say, Henry James who verbalised at length on how and why he wrote his books, Powell never liked to “descant” on his own work. While his life is now laid out, it appears that he did not confide much, even to his old friend Hilary Spurling, about how he worked his effects. This is not perhaps surprising, as the enduring power of Powell’s art lies in what seethes and bubbles beneath an impenetrable shell of irony. As to how he “did it”, the shell remains intact.

Postscript: I wrote the preceding review for The [Glasgow] Herald. The literary editor, the lovely Rosemary Goring, knowing my readiness to bang on about “The Tony P I knew” was kindly apologetic in confining me to 800 words. Extra inches might indeed have been spent on descriptions of my two visits to The Chantry in Powell’s lifetime, unforgettable encounters where I tried without getting satisfactory answers, to ask some of the questions that Hilary Spurling’s book has settled to my satisfaction. She has also answered many others that I would never have dared ask, for example, how much “dough” (he uses the expression at least once) did he have? And how much of that was earned from his novels? “Details about money are always of interest” Jenkins notes in The Acceptance World, referring to his curiosity about how much Peter Templer’s father had “cut up for”. Powell refers in passing in his memoirs to being in “low water” financially in his younger days, but Mrs Spurling’s researches have shown how close he was at times, if not to the
sordid poverty of his bohemian characters (Trapnel, McLintick et al), then at least to the shabby world of Uncle Giles and the Ufford Hotel. All of which makes Philip Powell’s unlooked for and unexpected legacy, the equivalent of £1.5m in today’s money, a slight touch of the fairy tale, a reward for uncompromising literary virtue if you like. Without it, AP might well not have been able to complete Dance as it now exists, so we are all in his debt.

During one of our interviews, I proposed to AP that, if he accepted Martin Amis’s contention that all writers must have “a wound” of some sort, that his was a tendency to melancholy. Claiming that he had never thought of it like that, he conceded that I might be on to something there. In fact Spurling’s book makes clear how much his early life at least was dogged by low spirits and depression, and more surprisingly, it reveals how much he had to be depressed about. His strange, lonely childhood (although Powell said that childhood was a period that “never consciously obsessed me”), his inability to have a good time or to get a decent degree at Oxford, his father’s tendency to undermine him, his relative poverty in comparison to contemporaries (tell me about it!), the relative success of some of his contemporaries, his wife’s repeated miscarriages and - presumably most devastating - her wartime infidelity.

I remember being slightly shocked by Jenkins’s description of his difficult father in Dance, and assuming that it was largely based on Powell Snr, a fact which this biography confirms for the first time. Without venturing into amateur psycho-analysis I am struck by how both of my intellectual heroes, Anthony Powell and Abraham Lincoln, made their peace with life by psychically rejecting unpredictable, actively hostile or unpleasant fathers to achieve mental poise. That state enabled extraordinarily daring creativity and bulldozer-like stamina in both their cases.

Knowing what we now do about the wear and tear of Powell’s life, and how little of it made its way into his copious memoirs and diaries, leaves one with renewed respect for his ruthless rejection in his largely autobiographical fiction of self-pity, the “essential ingredient of a best-seller” as he called it, often sniffing it out in various more commercially successful contemporaries, including Graham Greene and Somerset Maugham.

After three decades of reading Powell and reading about him, I found Hilary Spurling’s authoritative tying of loose ends immensely satisfying, reducing to a mere handful the things that I still wonder about: one that springs to mind is
why, not being obviously sexist in his attitudes, has AP so little to say about women novelists who contributed so much to the tradition of which he is part. I have mentioned this before in AP discussions, but it’s not because I’m obsessed with gender issues, just curious.

In the acres of criticism, memoirs, diaries and private correspondence now in the public domain, he doesn’t have a word to say about such – to me unignorable – mothers of the highbrow novel in English, Jane Austen, the Brontes and George Eliot. This would be less noticeable if there wasn’t so much about so many of their male contemporaries, many of them lesser figures. I am not suggesting much should be read into this, but If anyone knows or has any theories, please share!

FROM THE AP LIST

From Larry Kart: “Just finished the Spurling biography. She's done a superb job, but I'm curious if anyone else has had the reaction to the book that I've had — one of increasing, almost oppressive, sadness. Just why that should be so I can't yet say. Perhaps, it has to do with the reality of AP’s choleric distant father and his arguably malicious relationship to his son. In one sense AP gets well past that, thanks in part to intuitive understanding and support from Violet, yet one has an odd eerie sense of undertow in various real-life assaults that were visited upon AP — Muggeridge's turncoat review of The Military Philosophers, a similar reversal on the part of Larkin, Auberon Waugh's attack on the memoirs, and, posthumously, Naipaul's eventual wholesale dismissal of Dance — an undertow that seems to be in no sense due to any behavior on AP's part but rather is an unprovoked hostile response to his very existence. But then the same could be said of his father's lack of empathy for his son — as though, at bottom, he found his literal being unacceptable.

Further, even though I did have one direct and quite positive encounter with AP, I think that, probably like more than a few readers, I've almost wishfully allowed my sense of the man to be shaped around my sense of Nicholas Jenkins as narrator and actor, in Dance. And Spurling uninsistently makes it clear (at least to me) that while AP and Jenkins are not at odds, they also were far from one.”
ANTHONY POWELL:
DANCING TO THE MUSIC OF TIME

By Hilary Spurling

Jeffrey Manley

Hilary Spurling has produced her biography of Anthony Powell under an arrangement made between her and AP near the end of his life. He offered to start while he was still alive, making himself available to her for interviews. After giving that a try, she decided she needed to put some distance between them before starting the book. That was probably in the early 1990s, so we have waited over 25 years for the result but, now that we have the book, we can say that it was worth the wait.

This is the first biography to be written with access to the archives of the Powell family. These include extensive personal and professional correspondence as well as other family records, albums and documents. The previous biography by Michael Barber, published in 2004, was written without the benefit of these important unpublished sources. Although Barber’s book is not mentioned in this latest book (except for occasional source references in the endnotes), some idea of how this new, official version differs will be offered, something other reviewers have not, so far as I am aware, attempted.

The book opens with a brief description of AP’s forebears. Since AP provided a detailed description of this topic in the opening volume of his memoirs (so detailed, in fact, that the US publishers moved it into an appendix), Spurling has kept this short and focuses on AP’s parents. The difference in their ages is emphasized. His mother, Maud, was 13 years older than his father, Philip, and predeceased him, causing a problem for both his father who was then 71 and AP who was an only child. Spurling comments frequently on the father’s difficult personality and traces some of the same difficulties to AP’s own behavior. She even goes so far at one point as to discern some desire by his father that AP’s army career suffer from the same limitations as had afflicted his own, as though he were sticking pins into a uniformed voodoo doll. Whether she is simply conveying information supplied by AP or his wife or has come to her own conclusions based on written source material isn’t always
clear on this point, but one does get the impression that Philip Powell was not a person one would choose as a parent.

The chapter covering AP’s early family life and education at Eton and Balliol is based largely on AP’s memoirs. This part of the book is most like his memoirs and the biography by Barber. Spurling is able to provide additional information in a fairly detailed narrative of the frequent family movements required by the vagaries of Army life in WWI and its aftermath that must have made for a particularly difficult childhood. AP’s first permanent mailing address was at Eton and his first settled family residence was in their house in St John’s Wood, London, where they moved while he was a student. Additional details of AP’s schooldays at Eton are available from his school reports by A M Goodhart, his Eton Housemaster. There are also a few schoolboy letters to his mother to draw on. But most of this chapter is based on previously printed material.

Where Spurling’s book begins to sparkle is in the chapters on AP’s London years. These four chapters cover the years 1926-39 and form the core of her book. They describe the experiences on which AP based his five prewar novels and the first half of Dance. Spurling uses correspondence and other archival materials and weaves them together with the published memoirs to produce a seamless and compelling narrative covering these years. Most important are the descriptions of Powell’s love affairs in the more than 10 years prior to his marriage about which AP said little or nothing in his memoirs. These begin with the artist Nina Hamnett, who has been identified by previous scholars as his first lover. There seems to be no surviving correspondence between them and most of the information on this affair comes from printed sources. Spurling thinks Nina inspired the character of Naomi Race in Afternoon Men, although she would seem to have given something to Gipsy Jones as well.

The next entry in this gallery is Enid Firminger whom AP met in the late 1920s. She and her sister Joanne were orphaned and lived in Chelsea. Although deeply attracted to her, AP does not seem to have started anything that would rise to the level of an “affair” between them. She and her sister reappear at later stages of the story, and Spurling credits her with contributing
to AP and Violet Pakenham the character of Susan Nunnery in *Afternoon Men*. Spurling also indicates a point at which she deems AP’s “affair” with Enid to have ended, but what is lacking is any description of when, where or in what form it ever truly commenced, at least on Enid’s part.

After publishing *AM*, AP received a fan letter from Juliet O’Rorke, another artist and also older than AP but, unlike Hamnett, she was married. Their brief affair took place while AP was writing *Venusberg* and was the inspiration for the romance between the hero of that novel, Lushington, and independent-minded and outspoken Ortrud Mavrin, also married and about the same age as Juliet. Juliet reappears briefly in an affair with Malcolm Muggeridge after the war, but AP’s acquaintance with Muggeridge had begun long after his break-up with her.

At roughly this same time, AP became romantically involved with Dorothy Varda, who is fairly well known to Powell’s readers through the researches and writings of Patric Dickinson and Jean Rollason, on which Spurling relies, as well as on her letters to Powell (his side of the correspondence seems to have gone missing). Spurling does a thorough job of describing Varda’s rackety life and the on-and-off affair with AP. She appears thinly disguised as Mrs Mendoza in AP’s fourth novel *Agents and Patients* and, according to Spurling, as Harriet Twining in *AM*.

His last serious affair before meeting Violet was with Marion Coates whom he probably met through her work in the publishing business. She was married to a noted architect who rather neglected her for his work, the best-known example of which was the modernist Isokon apartment block in Belsize Park, North London. Marion had a child with whom she lived in a flat near those apartments. Her affair with AP in 1933-34, according to Spurling, had many similarities to that of Nick Jenkins and Jean Duport and may have affected AP more deeply than his earlier liaisons. According to Spurling (p. 333), the juxtaposition of the affair with Marion and the beginning of his lasting and deeper relationship with Violet may be the reason he wrote of the Nick Jenkins/Jean Duport romance with such emotion. As a writer, AP was able to meld elements of the two affairs together.

As with Juliet and Varda, there is correspondence relating to the affair with Marion to support Spurling’s conclusions. In the case of Marion, the affair came to an end with their mutual understanding that he would marry Violet. In the case of Juliet and Varda, AP ended the former when Juliet began
discussions of divorcing her husband and, in the latter, when (as Spurling surmises) Varda had a one-night stand of which AP disapproved.

AP’s meeting with Violet Pakenham is fairly well documented in his memoirs, although Spurling adds some interesting details relating to his frosty reception from Violet’s sister-in-law, Christine Longford, who was also a novelist and resented being upstaged by a Londoner. The invitation was extended by Elizabeth Pakenham who had married AP’s Oxford friend Frank Pakenham. (Both later became “Longford” after Frank inherited the title but were Pakenhams at the time of the invitation to Ireland.) What AP doesn’t mention in his own version is that he also became acquainted with another writer invited to Pakenham Hall for the occasion. This was Mary Manning who lived in Dublin. Before Violet arrived on the scene, AP had made a move on Mary, and they arranged to meet in Dublin after AP’s longer stay had ended. (Elizabeth had invited him for a fortnight rather than the usual extended weekend so that he would overlap with Pansy and Henry Lamb who were coming later.) He later met Violet after her arrival at Pakenham Hall, while he was posing for a portrait by Henry Lamb, and was immediately smitten. AP didn’t waste the opportunity, however, to keep his assignation with Mary Manning on the way back to England. If Spurling is correct, that may have been AP’s last affair.

The details of AP’s male friendships formed during his early London years are already fairly well known. What Spurling is able to do, using the correspondence files, is add depth and details to the knowledge of friendships with, for example, Gerald Reitlinger, Adrian Daintry, Malcolm Muggeridge and John Heygate. There seems a fairly detailed correspondence with all four over a long period of time, although most of it is incoming, except for Muggeridge for which several letters from AP are cited. On the other hand, there are no letters from AP to Heygate until the 1950s despite frequent letters from Heygate to AP dating back to the 1930s. This is probably due to the loss of much of Heygate’s archive in a flood (as reported by his son Richard) but why letters from the 1950s survive is a mystery, unless AP was retaining copies by then. Perhaps because Constant Lambert was living in London, there was probably less occasion for written communication with him than with these others, and there is little new in Spurling’s descriptions of AP’s friendship with Lambert. Although they didn’t meet until during the war, AP’s relations with Alick Dru continued afterwards and are more thoroughly aired by Spurling than in previous works because they are also supported by correspondence, again mostly incoming.
Henry Yorke was a different matter. AP and Yorke had been friends since prep school days through Eton and Oxford. They fell out in the London years when Yorke succeeded in the conquest of Mary (“Dig”) Biddulph whom AP had fancied in the belief that Yorke (who had introduced them) was more interested in her sister. After Yorke wrote that he was marrying Dig, AP had little more to do with him. There was also the matter of Yorke’s mixing with a socially grander group of friends than AP could afford to keep up with. This may well have contributed to Dig’s preference for Yorke. Violet tried to engineer a reconciliation between AP and Yorke during the war by arranging for AP to stay in Yorke’s flat on arrival for a new assignment in London, but even that failed when the two couldn’t stick each other for more than a few days before AP moved elsewhere.

Another topic Spurling brings to much fuller life is AP’s London career in book publishing. The story of his work at Duckworths is much more interesting than that told by Powell who may have been too embarrassed to reveal all the details. He was paid a very low salary as an apprentice with the idea that his father would buy him a partnership after his training. When Col Powell failed to come up with the money for the partnership, Duckworths made it clear that AP had no future there and cut his pittance by a third. Duckworth’s paid AP £300 per year to begin with and later reduced that to £200 during an office austerity campaign. In addition, he received advances of £25 per book against future royalties that can’t have been much, and his father was paying him an allowance of £150 per year for which little gratitude seems to have been forthcoming. AP in effect may have acted as his own agent and editor on his first novels but he seems to have acquired one by the time he was writing A&P. This was Cyrus Brook at A M Heath, but not much is said about him in Spurling’s narrative.
AP left Duckworths for Warner Brothers and was paid considerably more (£15 per week rising to £20 vs £5 falling to £3 at Duckworths). But again, he did not make it past the end of his trial period. Nor did his attempts to secure work in Hollywood pay off, burning up much of his savings from the stint at Warners. He lived a fairly precarious existence in the 1930s, and Violet apparently brought little income of her own from her work at the *Evening Standard* (although I don’t think Spurling addresses her earnings). While his contemporaries like Evelyn Waugh, Henry Yorke, Cyril Connolly and Graham Greene were doing reasonably well, AP was just scraping by. Spurling makes it quite clear that before the war his earnings were decidedly meagre. On the other hand, as one of the UK reviewers has pointed out (John Carey in the *Sunday Times*), even though there was a struggle to keep the wolf away from the door, there always seemed to be a servant available to open it.

Spurling is also quite good in following AP’s career as a writer. She tracks each book from *Afternoon Men* to the last volume of *Dance* noting when he first conceived it and starting writing, when it went to the printer and when it was published. It is thus possible to know what was going on in his life (as well as the world at large) at these critical times. She offers a brief description of the story and a few references to its critical reception. Although she doesn’t mention print runs (except for *AM*), each of his Duckworths books went through at least two printings, which is some measure of success for novels. AP told George Lilley that *Afternoon Men* sold about 3,000 copies from two printings. The other three achieved slightly less. After he left Duckworths, his agent would have helped to arrange publication of *What’s Become of Waring* by Cassells after they offered an advance of £100. As AP has explained, *WBW* was published in March 1939 at the same time as Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia and disrupted the book distribution system due to the more immediate likelihood of war; the unsold stock was destroyed in the blitz.

Among the best passages from the prewar London chapters are the description of the Powells’ rather austere wedding service (p. 190), Violet’s somewhat ramshackle premarital social life and her unchallenging work on the consumer affairs column at the *Evening Standard*. Also new is the description of how AP got to know the Sitwells through their connections with Duckworths as their publisher. Although they met AP professionally, he became personal and lasting friends of the family and received an early invitation to Renishaw (perhaps a rare concession to the social climbing he found so annoying in his friends). Finally, Spurling’s description of AP’s struggle to gain social acceptance on the fringes of the upper class is revealing.
Although, as previously noted, this was parodied by some reviewers, the fact is that he was usually hard up, in a job with no present and no future, had no family connections or successful siblings to pave the way for or support him, and no chance to inherit any fortune, title or country estate. He had very little going for him but made the best of what he had.

The chapter on AP’s WWII experiences will be familiar to anyone who has read his memoirs or Barber’s biography (or his novels themselves, for that matter, which are largely autobiographical for this period). What Spurling adds, however, are important details from correspondence about his and Violet’s domestic arrangements in this period, which can’t have been easy for either of them. After multiple miscarriages, she gave birth to a baby boy in April 1939. Her movements around southern England and Ireland are extremely complicated in this period but Spurling manages to work them into the context of AP’s own more familiar military postings. She twice lived on the South Downs with different friends in different locations only to have to move from both locations when, first, German bombers and, later, the V1 and V2 rockets flew directly overhead. She also lived for a time in Northern Ireland when AP was stationed there and later in various Oxford locations and in Petersham near Richmond-on-Thames.

Spurling also writes that it was during these movements that Violet met the “love of her life” (333-34). Although this seems quite a startling development, Spurling simply notes it and moves on, explaining that the two lovers broke it off for some reason and went back to their old lives after the war. It seems odd that a biographer doesn’t pursue this, at least to see if the lover had some connection to one or another of the Powells’ large circle of friends. The lover’s name is less important than what sort of person he may have been and how he fit into their circle, if at all. It also causes one to wonder whether there may have been hints at affairs on AP’s part, particularly during their wartime separations, that may not have been pursued as vigorously as might have been the case had she not been acting as the family’s “approved” biographer.

AP’s depressions are mentioned several times by Spurling and seem to run in the family. His father suffered from them as did one of his sons. Whether there was any specific diagnosis for their cause or successful treatment is not explained. The first one noted by Spurling followed the Powells’ return from their unsuccessful trip to Hollywood. At the time, with war looming, AP had no regular job and was surviving on freelance book reviewing. He had a lot to be depressed about. His “awful bag of gloom” as he described it in a letter to
his wife, returned with even greater force after the war. At this point his joblessness and lack of prospects were exacerbated by his discovery of Violet’s wartime affair and the general discomfort from living in damaged accommodations with small children in an inconvenient house spread over five floors. AP does mention seeking medical help for his postwar depression but was told it was a natural consequence of demobilization.

After the war, life in London begins more or less where it broke off in the Powells’ house at Chester Gate that they had acquired in 1937. For a good while the house seemed a repository for friends and acquaintances left over from the war, including the Drus, Malcolm Muggeridge, a Polish retinue and no doubt others. The family eventually took it over as their home and from there AP began work on Dance (after spending what seems an inordinate amount of time on the John Aubrey books). AP placed John Aubrey and his Friends with Eyre & Spottiswood as part of a multi-book contract negotiated with Graham Greene. Greene had promoted AP’s career on previous occasions, from commissioning his Eton essay in The Old School, to a position in the short-lived Night and Day, to book reviews in the Spectator when AP was quite hard up after his return empty-handed from the USA. Their falling out over the Aubrey book is a familiar story but Spurling continues it to explain how E&S ended up publishing the book while AP nevertheless escaped from the obligation to that firm for further books. This freed him to find another publisher for QU with the help of a new agent, David Higham, and guidance from Malcolm Muggeridge.

He survived until 1947 by freelance reviewing. In the Fall of that year he landed a regular gig with TLS, now edited by his friend Alan Pryce-Jones, as fiction editor. That produced regular work and income (£350 per year plus 3 gns. per article) while he struggled with the first volume of Dance. It was about this time that he reconnected with Malcolm Muggeridge when he returned from the USA where he was a foreign correspondent after the war and who was now working at the Daily Telegraph. He read early drafts of QU to Muggeridge and discussed it on endless walks around London where they were sometimes mistaken for brothers.
From about this point onwards, Spurling’s narrative becomes the story of the writing, publication and critical reception of *Dance* interspersed with discussions of the Powells’ lives. After the first volume was published, AP received a small legacy from an aunt that was just enough to enable them to buy a small place in the country within striking distance of London. They managed to cut a deal on a fixer-upper near Frome, Somerset, (taking advantage of a temporary drop in real estate prices after the Soviets tested a nuclear weapon) and moved away from the strain of London life in July 1952 before they had even sold the leasehold on Chester Gate. They had meanwhile had a second child and the second volume of *Dance* had been published.

Spurling describes how the move to The Chantry, as the house was called, altered the rhythm of their lives. They lived according to a schedule in which AP put in a certain (or roughly regular) amount of time each week day to think about, write and edit *Dance* and then directed his attention to yard work or redecorating The Chantry. Trips to London were made on a regular basis to deal with his reviewing assignments and editorial work. When he was working for *Punch*, he spent three days each week in London. The frequency of these trips would be reduced again when he was reviewing for the *Daily Telegraph*. They saw friends from the neighborhood and surrounding territory on weekends and paid reciprocal visits. When Alan Pryce-Jones’ tenure at *TLS* ended in early 1952, this roughly coincided with Malcolm Muggeridge’s takeover and makeover as editor of *Punch*, hiring AP as literary editor the following year. His salary at *Punch* was £1500 per year, a marked improvement over what he earned at *TLS*. Although Spurling makes it sound as if there was a stressful gap in AP’s outside employment and income during this transition (pp. 321-22), in fact he continued writing for *TLS* until the week before he began appearing in *Punch*, according to George Lilley’s bibliography.

The volumes of *Dance* appeared at fairly regular intervals from The Chantry’s veritable production line, with Violet overseeing initial editing and offering comments on plot and writing. Life proceeded far more smoothly in these years, with no major marital shakeups (or at least none are reported). When AP’s father died in December 1959 at the age of 71, he and Violet were surprised to find that, rather than being virtually penniless as he had always proclaimed, he left an estate worth £1.5m in today’s money. Despite his protestations of poverty, he had continued to pay AP an allowance of £30 per month after the war that was applied toward school fees, but he seems to have received little thanks for it, as if somehow it was AP’s due. Why this sort of
support should have been expected in an upper middle class family of rather limited means is never explained, especially when his father had at one point protested (perhaps with some exaggeration) that it was forcing him to dig into his capital. His father’s death roughly coincided with the end of AP’s tenure at *Punch* where Muggeridge had been sacked as editor two years previously. But arrangements were quickly made for AP to contribute a regular book review to the *Daily Telegraph* once every two weeks. By this time, Heinemann were paying advances of £1000 per volume for *Dance* (p. 389) and were very supportive in keeping the previous volumes in print. The legacy from his father, this regular reviewing and his book royalties left them well enough off to treat themselves with fairly frequent conducted cruise trips on Swan Hellenic Lines.

Spurling offers details of the writing schedule for each volume of *Dance* as it appears, now interspersed with the frequent cruises. Major events within their circle of friends such as deaths or debacles (for example, that caused by Malcolm Muggeridge’s March 1964 review in the *Evening Standard* of VB, dismissing the entire series as a failure) are also duly reported. Much of this is familiar material but it is presented in an eminently readable format and never becomes repetitive or boring. She manages to organize the material chronologically and still drives the narrative forward through periods where nothing much is happening. Her description of the blow-up with Penguin over Osbert Lancaster’s cover art (pp. 392-94) is particularly good and contains a few additional details from correspondence not available in AP’s memoirs.

Her narrative ends in 1975 with the completion of *Dance*. Several UK reviewers complained that this was unfair, leaving 25 years of AP’s life yet to describe. But to have continued the narrative through those years of declining productivity and health would have risked just the sort of tedious repetition she had avoided in the narrative up to this point. She provides a 15-page Postscript summarizing AP’s remaining years during which they became friends and she wrote the guide to *Dance*. A few major events are mentioned such as Auberon Waugh’s viciously negative review of *Miscellaneous Verdicts* in the *Sunday Telegraph*, precipitating AP’s resignation as book reviewer from its sister paper. Michael Barber adopted essentially the same solution, devoting about 20 pages to this period (Barber, *Anthony Powell: A Life*, pp. 281-300).
There are other matters that Spurling might have briefly mentioned such as academic or government honours, AP’s flirtation with politics and Margaret Thatcher, radio and TV adaptations and appearances. And it might also be interesting to hear Spurling’s opinion of AP’s memoirs and journals as source material and about the mechanics of their writing and editing—e.g., without a diary, what source did he rely on for much of the detail in the memoirs and how much of the journals did she deem to be unreliable? Did the depressions become worse and more frequent? At what point did his mobility and memory become restricted, etc.? But these are not serious omissions. The book is well-written and stops when it runs out of material sufficient to support a readable and interesting narrative.

The book is well edited and produced and the photographs are nicely arranged (however, a reference to colour photos where mentioned in the text would have been helpful; these colour photos appear to have been orphaned from the rest of the book and are not even mentioned in the Table of Contents or List of Illustrations, although some are included in the permissions on the copyright page). The index and endnotes are excellent and very useful but a bibliography, at least including the sources consulted, would also have been helpful.

One particular item is missing from the photos. Spurling explains that after their marriage, the Powells adopted a practice of AP’s illustrating his letters with a drawing of a dwarf in various guises relating to the subjects or moods of the letters. This was based on Elizabeth Pakenham’s having described AP as a dwarf before his arrival in Ireland where they first met:

*His letters were often illustrated by tiny strip-cartoon images of himself in beard, boots and bobble-hat, plodding grimly through the rain under a dwarf umbrella, or responding excitedly to a loud bang in the street* (p. 226).

These “dwarf drawings” are mentioned several times. The dwarves also appear in letters to the children. Given the inclusion of several illustrations of other drawings taken from letters in the archives, it is a pity a few of these “dwarf drawings” could not also have been similarly reproduced. Perhaps this is a project for some future APS production or will duly appear in a collection of AP’s letters.
One or two paragraphs about AP’s US publishing experience would not have been amiss, along with some idea of what revenues accrued from US publication of his works during the peak years. The US market was probably never a major factor, and there was considerable movement among publishers until things settled down with Little, Brown after it published LM. There must be some correspondence in the archive that could have been used as a source for this subject.

As with anything of this length and detail, a few errors, misprints or questionable judgments slip through and might be modified in future editions:

--On p. 65, in a discussion about Venusberg, it is referred to as AP’s “third novel” and should be “second”; lower down on that page there is a reference to a German lady AP met in Helsinki named as “Frau Lixxie von Schkopp, geboren Hofstetter xu Platzoll.” This may contain multiple errors and should certainly be “zu” and not “xu”. My guess is that the last name should be “Platzoll” and Lixxie and Schkopp both look a bit suspicious. It is sourced from “visiting cards, postcards, photos and newspaper clippings…” (p. 437); so perhaps the triple-barrel name was copied accurately from the source and should be put in quotation marks followed by “(sic)”. It may also simply be a joke; I will confess to have laughed when I read it.

--On p. 86, it states that, at Oxford, AP only knew Evelyn Waugh “by reputation”. This is a bit of an understatement. In fact, although they both describe their Oxford relationship as somewhat distant or not close, they did know each other personally and well enough from membership in the Hypocrites Club and other social gatherings for Waugh to invite AP to “offal dinners” in his rooms at Hertford College. See my article in Proceedings of the 6th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference, London, 2011, pp. 51-52.

--On p. 361 it states, “When Alan Pryce-Jones left his bathing suit behind at a party, it was returned to him at Harry’s Bar.” This is sourced (p. 477) to
Strangers, p. 170 and to a 1958 letter from AP to Violet. AP clearly states in his book that the bathing suit belonged to him and was dropped off by him at the canal entrance to the Palazzo Labia in Venice and left there by mistake when he departed by the landside entrance; it was returned to him at Harry’s Bar by Diana Cooper. AP comments: “I was overjoyed at this kindness (especially since I did not then know Lady Diana), fearing that this venerable and favourite garment had passed out of my life for good.” (Emphasis supplied.) If the letter tells a different story, that should have been noted.

--On page 426, there is a quote about aging: “It’s like being punished for a crime you did not commit,” he said,” meaning AP in context. It was not AP who “said” this, however, but Dickie Umfraville in TK, as is indicated in the endnote. The sentence would more accurately read AP “wrote”.

--On p. 446, note for p. 133, date of NYHT article is 15 February 1953.


**AN INTERVIEW WITH HILARY SPURLING**

Newsletter editor Stephen Walker spoke to Hilary Spurling before her lecture at the Wallace Collection.

“You don’t want a hesitant ferret”- Hilary Spurling laughingly tells me as we chat about her new life of AP in her shabby-chic study in North London with a dark green Jaguar in the drive. We face each other - she on her office chair and me at a lower level on the sofa. In a soft grey roll neck sweater, dark blue jeans and dark red trainers she is the epitome of a successful author. I had been warned that she could be rather chilly and flinty. I am on my guard and best behaviour.

“When writing a biography you have to be totally ruthless. It’s so hard to write a biography of someone that are you are fond of and I was very fond of Tony. So that’s why I haven’t written it until now. It’s taken me all this time to kind of surmount that barrier.” Her reluctance had been "one of those psychological barriers that are invisible but not impalpable and very hard to get over.”
Why do it? Various reasons, she replies. The first was that "AP asked me and I always found it difficult to say 'No' to anything he asked." This contradicts what AP says in his *Journals*. On 10 April 1983 he records that Hilary and John Spurling came to lunch with the object of her doing an interview for *Harpers and Queen*. After the egg mayonnaise, roast beef and cheesecake AP mentions that "There's a project she should write my biography, her own suggestion, though she said should be too embarrassed to ask me any questions." I didn't feel bold enough to bring this contradiction to her attention. Hilary confirms that she had gone down to the Chantry to interview AP at his suggestion in 1994. It had been a complete failure and the only time that she had not enjoyed a visit to the Chantry. Armed with her framework of questions she had stopped after the first two. She was in the later stages of writing her two volume life of Matisse which took 15 years, many of them spent in France talking in a different language and thinking about a different subject. Wrenching your mind round to something new was so difficult and she hadn't been able to concentrate enough on preparing for the interview – "which is something that you have to do in order to know where you want to go or what you want to get out of it." Incidentally Tony had not been keen on her writing about Matisse, "being a Picasso man himself - he didn't make anything of it but he wasn't pleased".

Although Hilary did not want to write AP's biography and made it clear that she would never do so in his lifetime she was happy to assume the role of official biographer. AP found this useful in deflecting other enquiries from would-be biographers by saying that there was already an official biographer.

She also wanted to dispel the pervasive myth that AP was too long, too dull and too right-wing - "he wasn't any of those things", she insisted. When I tell her that Kate Bennett from Magdalen Oxford, who spoke on John Aubrey at the AP Society's 2016 York Conference, had explained that students didn't read AP for those very reasons she exploded, "Well, she obviously hasn't read them. Those books are some of the shortest novels that have ever been written I should think... You only have to pick up a volume of *The Music of Time* and you know it's very short."

But Hilary's main reason was to encourage a new generation of readers to read AP. Sounding miffed but resigned, she said that the Cheltenham Literary Festival had not asked her to talk about the book even though *The Times* had commissioned her to do a lead piece for their coverage of the festival. "AP," she explains, "is something of a turn-off for the literary world", which
surprised me. Warming to her theme she said that she was targeting the generation of 25-35 year olds. If she could persuade them to read AP then "he would be safe for posterity insofar as anyone is reading books in 50 years' time. That is the generation that will decide." She had not written the book for the members of AP Society - they are all parti-pris - but for people who had never read or even heard of AP. She is encouraged by the reviews.

"Do you read the columns or just count the inches", I ask. She laughs, "I could do either actually. I've had pretty long reviews. I don't mean that they were universally favourable. The first was pretty sniffy (John Carey) and the last one (Nicholas Shakespeare) was pretty sniffy." But, she says, "I've been very lucky. I have had marvellous and enthusiastic reviews and I'm very grateful for them. But the older reviewers were noticeably sniffy about Powell, which is the conventional attitude in the book world of people of that generation. My generation. The younger reviewers had absolutely none of that bias. They just take it completely straight. Like what they heard and I hope will go on and read his books."

Hilary had been intrigued about the Nick Shakespeare review, which she thought had been nice about the book but pretty snooty about Powell. She thought it interesting that many years after the row when Tony had resigned from the Telegraph, after 50 years, in a fury, and had refused to go back, that they chose Nick Shakespeare, who as Literary Editor at the time caused the row in the first place, to review her book. She assumed that it was: "playback time, payback time I mean," she laughs, Then displaying the empathy that any decent biographer must have she adds, "Naturally I wasn't too happy about it given the background to the reviewer's story of Powell and indeed mine as I was very much involved in the row but I understand why he took the tone he took."

We switch back to the demands of a biographer, as Powell is the only one of her six subjects that she knew, apart from Sonia Orwell. That name touches a nerve. She had written a short book as a reaction to Orwell's biographers, who she described as having to jump on each other's back and accused of trashing Sonia. Bernard Crick being singled out as a dull and ungifted biographer but a conscientious historian, – not the only glimpse of her less than enthusiastic appreciation of academics. Aroused and animated, she defends Sonia against the allegations that she only married Orwell - who she said "was a great friend of Tony's," for his money. While conceding that Sonia had her demonic side she nails the point that at the time of marriage Orwell had not made any
money. That only came after his death. And although Sonia made a great
deal of money she gave it all away - her emotional generosity was also
extreme. After 2 minutes 21 seconds she finishes with "that's rather a long
answer."

I decide not to mention Pearl S Buck or Ivy Compton-Burnett and instead ask
if she thought that AP had been like her other male subject, Paul Scott, "an
outsider in all things."

"He was a curious case. In one sense he was, especially in that social sense.
Eton is a very strange school...Tony was not a typical Etonian. Eton rather
specialises in atypical pupils so that doesn't say a lot ...Tony's father sent him
to Eton on a whim ... as a way of getting back at his own father. In that sense
Tony was an outsider. But he wasn't made to feel like that at Eton because one
of the specialities of the school, certainly in those days, was to take each child
on its own terms, which is remarkable whatever school can do that.

"At Oxford he didn't feel at home. He didn't like it and he found it boring -
which is often used as a portmanteau word for other emotions that you might
be feeling ... if not excluded he certainly felt that he did not want to belong to
the world that he found at Oxford. So those were three rather miserable years
for him."

No explanation is offered. In an indirect attempt to probe, I say that I loved
my time there. Did she like it? "I loved my time at Oxford. There was one
woman for twelve men. I didn't spend much time in my college (Somerville)
but it was a very agreeable place to be."

She continued, "So in the kind of upper crust society that on the whole went to
Eton he remained an outsider ... he did not come from anywhere, his parents
never had a house or anything of their own ... and after Oxford in London ...
just to have a job in those years was remarkable especially as he didn't have
any money. His father did make an allowance, a small one, but it was nothing
like enough to live on."

I want to know whether she saw AP differently having written his life and ask
her if the AP that she knew was the same AP as she knew after writing his life.
She looks a bit impatient at such a trite question and does not really answer it.
"No, of course not. It's a very complicated and absorbing business writing somebody's biography but it takes a very great deal of energy and concentration. During that period I thought of very little else. So if I didn't end up learning more about him at the end then what was the point? I did know him from a very different angle. Before I knew him as a fan and then as a friend and I did become a friend. I knew the whole family really... for years ...You began by asking me how we met. That was in 1969. I was at The Spectator. ...."

I hadn't asked that but I'm on my best behaviour, so sticking with Paul Scott I refer to AP recording in the Journals that she had told him that she warned Scott's family that if she found anything shocking she would still have to tell. She did find breathtaking things and she told them. Was that the same with AP? No, she had not found anything shocking about AP although she was surprised about the women in his life. When he met Violet he was having affairs with two different women at the same time. They were ditched as AP clearly saw that Violet was something different. It was a whirlwind romance. They were married in just over a month. It was a coup de foudre or thunderbolt as she helpfully translated.

And they clicked. “So....what I'm saying is that it isn't because Violet opened the door for him into another world that he married her. All that came much later. But she did belong to an enormous family, the Pakenhams...whom we all know now, certainly in the literary world we do. And belonged to a very connected world. Violet too had had an extremely...we would say now dysfunctional, childhood. Her father died when she was a very small child and her mother never recovered so she wasn't a mother to her children. So she had a very hard upbringing. Not hard physically. I mean they weren't short of money, I mean they didn't have a lot, but she got very little affection from anybody.

"And that is the hardest thing for a child I think. So like Tony she came from a very dysfunctional family. Dysfunctional in quite a different way. But the breadth and width and the enormity one might say of that family of the Pakenham family, I mean there are Pakenhams everywhere. In every walk of life. In every finger in every pie."

"And for Tony ... that really was a revelation. In due course. And that was the world he found himself living in. And it interested him greatly because he was always intensely interested in people."
So my question: could AP have ever achieved what he did without Violet? is met with an emphatic “No. He would still have been a great writer but not that sort of great writer. It was practically a factory. It was a working routine. The whole routine of the Chantry was built around Tony's books. Violet herself started writing books herself because that was simply what was done at the Chantry. You have to fill the morning... in the afternoon you're working in the garden or you're working on the collage in the basement which I think was very much part of the creative process. It's extraordinary. But then you think of one man who what in a quarter-century producing this novel well 12 novels that make up one work which is slightly longer than War and Peace. You know this is a huge enterprise.

Both Tony and Violet too, she explained, never had a base at all. Both childhoods were peripatetic. Both stayed in rented hotels or Violet was sent off to stay with relations. She never had a house or anywhere that she could exactly call home.

"So I think the Chantry itself, what they made of that extraordinary house - was that both them, neither of whom had roots, wanted to put them down. And when doing that they of course made a routine for themselves which grew richer and denser and more quirky with the years. And it involved exactly the things that they most wanted to do."
"I mean only very intelligent people can do that...completely break off from the world they came from. It wasn't a complete break of course...Violet's family remained friends. That's not the only world they moved in by any means. That was one strand in it. Their basic world was actually the book world. The London book world, which then extended itself and had a little branch in the country. They had, you know, another one for the Waughys. That was a very common pattern in Tony's lifetime. Writers retired in their early-mid 30s, to the country and continued writing so all that was quite standard in the book world. And that was the world they really belonged. It suited them both. And this was the life that they made."

Were they a team? I ask. “Absolutely. They certainly were and in so far as Violet was a collaborator Tony certainly read everything he wrote to her. Or she read it as he wrote it. And she gave him what she called notes which is like what the producer gives the cast. (Laughter). I understand that, I'm married to a writer and I think couples of writers do that. Because it's a professional thing that's being discussed here there are no holds barred and it can indeed be quite ferocious. Sometimes. But it's immensely useful for that very reason.”

I have a personal question. Hilary goes still and poised - what's coming? "Did you ever eat AP's curry?" "Yes," she breathes out, "and it was very good but it was an English curry not an Indian one." As part of her research for the Paul Scott life she followed his footsteps in India and met his friends who were all Indians. She had eaten well and often in Indian homes. Curry there was nothing like the curry available in England. “India is one of the great cuisines of the world like France and it differs depending which part of India you are in. English curry is a sub-division of curry. Restaurant curry is all very homogenous and used to be always served with tea and chips. Now a curry in a Manchester curry-house tastes much like a Bristol one because they all use the same sauces. Plenty of English people came back from the Raj with a taste for curry although they had never made it because they had their own cooks. They could not get the same spices and used different ingredients such as Spam. Although AP never used Spam he was not the sort of man that ground his own spices.”

My news of the AP Society curry evening tickled her as I explain that a redoubtable cook has offered to make us the best curry that we will ever taste only to be disabused and instructed to make an AP Curry. Laughingly she reassured me that it will be perfectly nice but a very English curry of its time.
Playing safe and sticking with Scott and Powell I refer to AP recording in the *Journals* that she commended two male writers for writing about women. That was Scott and AP. What did she mean by that?

"Well a lot of male writers have slightly a blank spot when it comes to women especially perhaps in the past." She sighs. "Hardy of course is very good writing about women...Dickens caricatures everyone so that's not comparable. Jane Austen was a woman. So examples that come to mind, I mean I can't think of others but there are plenty of writers who - if you gave me a while I could give you a list - whose women are nowhere as strong or powerful or as well imagined as fully imagined as the men. That has been very common in English literature. Shakespeare is a perfect exception of course. But he was writing for little boys...young boys were going to play his women parts so he had to write roles for them and he did flesh them out specially even if he does it very lightly they are still absolutely real people."

Did she think that women writers write well about men? "Well I don't think you can generalise. Some do. Rose Tremain does, I should say. There aren't anything like as many women writers as you must have noticed in the course of history really. For some writers there's no difference, I mean they approach people as human beings rather than as sexual creatures. But quite a lot of writers, male writers, certainly in the past before it became an issue, did not pay much attention. Partly of course because women didn't play much part, say in political novels or in historical novels, either. You know that you are slightly falsifying history if you pretend that they did. Women had no role or very little."

Emboldened I ask her if she liked reading about herself in the *Journals*. "I hated it. I absolutely hated it...As a matter of fact I hadn't read the *Journals* because people told me that I appear in them. And it's rather like looking in the mirror. That's something that I don't like doing. (Laughter) I only read the *Journals* when I came to write his life actually. You know it's always a shock to me to catch sight of myself in the mirror and never a pleasant shock either. (Laughter) And it was just like that."

‘He speaks very highly of you, doesn't he,’ I said.

“Well I have no idea. Well I have this weakness, you know. Tony always said that he wasn't interested in himself and he had no picture of himself which as
people say is remarkable from someone who wrote semi-autobiographical novels, a great many of them and, what, four volumes of memoirs and three of journals or the other way round. However it's true in his case and it's something I can understand. I'm not remotely interested in myself. And I particularly don't like...Well it's a shock always to catch sight of...

I asked, 'You mentioned that being a friend of Powell was a barrier to writing his life, but when you started was your job made easier because you knew him and it helped your sift all the material that came your way?'

She re-emphasises that "writing a biography is really a very ruthless process. Totally ruthless it has to be. Because not only do you have to approach your subject objectively which is hard to do if you're fond of them, but if you can't do that then of course you can't write a proper biography. You also cannot have any preconception as to where your researches may take you, your questions, your discoveries and what you will find out. God knows. That is something you can have no control at all and there cannot be roped off or fenced off areas. That's partly why I could not possibly write about anybody still alive. Because naturally out of human feeling there are certain things that you wouldn't care to write about let alone ask them. This wasn't like that as I was planning to write it immediately. He just said why don't you come and ask me some questions and then you will have something there for when you do get round to it. But I couldn't. I couldn't pursue them as a biographer must do. You have to really - it's like putting a ferret down your trousers as they say."

'They do up north,' I confirm.

"Well it is like that and therefore, you know, you cannot have a hesitant ferret. (Laughter.) It just didn't work. I had to say I can't do this properly. And it was because I was too fond of him I suppose, and you know I have had to set that aside. I mean how can I tell whether the book worked. It seems to be doing all right.

"I was about to say when we got onto this digression that I have thought about him. I knew him, I had a, well – is it a clear picture one has of one's friends? Certainly one has a very strong sense of them and what they are like. You may not articulate it to yourself, that's what you have to do when you write about them. You are very well aware of them. They fill a large part of your mental space. And that I had. And that was probably a help. With Paul Scott I hadn't
even read his books when I agreed to write about him. And I did not know anything about him so it took much longer to draw close. Because that’s one thing a biographer must do - one of the many things that a biographer must do. You also have to come as close as you can, as any human being can, to looking at life through the eyes of another human being.

That bit is very much like being an actor I think. You are playing a part. You have to, I mean if you’re going to play King Lear you have got to enter into the part of Lear. There are no doubt all sorts of other stages that you go through in preparing to play the part, like learning the lines. Reading about it and all the rest of it. But that stage is very much present. I don’t think you can become someone else. Of course you can’t but you got to try to and the only way to do it that I have discovered is on the basis of knowledge and thought and concentration and imagination too. So of course I’d read all his books. I knew them extremely well. You have to take whatever avenue is open and explore them. And you must be completely objective of course and quite without bias; that is just a simple demand of any historian. And the biographer is partly historian.

But a biographer is also partly a portrait painter. And the portrait painter has to be able to see his subject or hers objectively from outside as he does but also to some extent if it is going to be a good portrait there has got to be some sense of how the person of the quiditidity the the quiditidity the the quiditidity...oh you know that word-oh I don’t know you pronounce it (Laughter) the essence of that person. And in fact you’ve got to enter into the person by whatever method that you can. So you know there are a good many processes involved at different stages.”

I tell Hilary that I had not realised is how strong a visual interest in the visual arts AP had throughout his life, and skill.

“I’m glad that came across because I thought that perhaps I had under-emphasised that ‘Do you have the same interest?’

“Yes.”

‘Because that explains one of the things that struck me about the book which was that you describe paintings in quite a lot of detail and give, I thought, marvellous descriptions of paintings. Do you do art criticism as well?’
“No. But I have always loved paintings as much as books and looked at them very closely all my life and I’ve always had as many friends who were painters as writers. Most of my friends are probably writers but I’ve almost as many friends who are painters. I wrote a life of Henri Matisse in two volumes. And people kept saying this is amazing you know you have no training you’re not an art historian. I didn’t say, but I thought, Thank God that I don’t have an art historical training. I have a very low opinion of art historians and academics on the whole. And I don’t think that’s the way to learn how to look at paintings. I learned from painters. I mean when a painter stands with you in front of his painting and says you know that a bit of red there you’ve got think about that in relation to this green here. (Laughter) It’s not like that at all. The painters never talk about their work but you know spending a lot of time in artists’ studios and knowing lots of artists and painters because I like their work not the other way around.”

‘And just talking and listening?’

“Yes, of course, you get that language and vocabulary which is a language you can talk.”

I reach my last question. ‘What questions do you think the AP Society members will ask you?’

“I’ve no idea. (Laughter) I shall wait and find out. I don’t know; it is going to be very interesting speaking to a knowledgeable audience for a change because mostly I think the audiences come because they want to find out about Powell not because they know about him so I have no idea about questions from the AP Society.”

So as a member of the Society I ask her if she gets tired of someone by the time she finishes writing their life.

"No. There’s something about being a biographer actually. The older I get the more the more mysterious they seem to be. I mean you can’t ever get the bottom of the human being. And Lord knows I’ve tried. I’ve got as near as I’m capable. That’s why you could have different biographies of the same person because you know they all bring something very different to the table." Hilary brought the perspective of an renowned biographer and close personal friend. No one else is going to be able to do the same. We are very lucky that she overcame the palpable barriers.
Flinty and chilly? Not really – quick, perceptive, with a sense of humour, but coolly appraising like the female Intelligence Officers that I remember from my time in the Civil Service.

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ANTHONY POWELL**

A lecture by Hilary Spurling at the Wallace Collection on 28 October 2017

Hilary Spurling told the company in a packed Goodison lecture theatre she was delighted that she was able to talk to the AP Society in this particular room. She had always liked the empty frames on the walls, which she found so suggestive of *Dance*. Although she had written her book to try and prove persuade people to read AP's works she did not have to do that with the present audience and the talk was more a pretext for the audience’s questions and corrections.

Over the last few weeks she had been doing lots of talks and presentations. This afternoon she would summarise her basic talk and then move on. She had met AP when she invited him to lunch in 1969 when she was the literary editor of *The Spectator*. To her surprise he had accepted but she later realised that was something in it for both of them. AP was about to write *Books Do Furnish a Room* and welcomed an insight into the atmosphere of a working literary magazine, having already been fired by *Punch*. So the lunch was "a kind of godsend to him". From then they became good friends.

This was her first point that as a biographer you have to be ruthless and tell the story as you find it. She had not wanted to write the life but AP had insisted. The fact that she was a close friend explained why she effectively stops the life with the last volume of *Dance* in 1975 and deals with the last 25 years of his life in a personal postscript. She did not want her personal reminiscence to get in the way of her mission which was to accelerate the recognition of AP as a major English writer, dispel the myth that *Dance* was a pageant of snobbery, full of idle rich drones and bores in clubs. She had been cheered by the reception by younger reviewers and readers of the book some
of whom had acknowledged that *Dance* was a masterpiece. The older
reviewers still showed evidence of the grudging jealous resistance to
acknowledge AP’s achievement and innovation.

AP was unique in carrying on the unique English tradition of comedy and
sharp reality. He was entirely aligned to his world. *Dance* was
autobiographical. AP’s author plays a similar role to Nick Jenkins’s role in
*Dance*. Both had escaped from the narrow public-school world into the
louche world of bohemian London. Both are outsiders and men of letters not
action. AP was not judgmental. He was an observer who was fascinated by
people and fully engaged in life. There are similarities with Proust but AP
displays a frightening reality. For example he highlights the calamitous
decades through which he lived by attributing to Uncle Giles: *I like the little
man they’ve got in Germany.* This was frighteningly close to what many
members of the upper class at the time felt towards fascism. On the other AP
was dangerously funny. Kingsley Amis had a party piece in which he showed
how he laughed so much when reading HP that he stopped breathing. Hilary
confessed that on first reading of AP when at Oxford in the 60’s she had found
it boring. And her life at that time, she said, was boring enough. When she
read it later she was entranced and likened it to learning a new language.
Michael Frayn had said to her that reading *Dance* was like discovering a new
civilisation, one that is in London in one’s own life.

She raised two novel points. The first was disabusing the notion that AP and
Evelyn Waugh were enemies. In fact, she said they were lifelong close friends
having met at Oxford. They admired each other’s work. AP was one of the few
literary establishment figures to stand up for Waugh after publication of his
*Diaries*. As young men, on the make in London short of money and long on
ambition, they had walked and talked their way through the capital. During
these walks Waugh sketched out *Decline and Fall.*

The second was the collage in the Chantry boiler room. AP had spent hours
cutting out images and sticking them to the walls. This sometimes involved
serious labour with planks and ladders. She had seen the work as it progressed
although she had that never been allowed into the gents' cubicle in the
basement. Her husband had been allowed to use it. AP said that doing this
collage was” good for the nerves.” She thought that making the collage allowed
him to think of other things and to free up his imagination therefore is part of
the creative process of *Dance*. She was delighted that the Society had
commissioned the photographic record of the collage.
The questions and corrections flooded in. Ranging from in which warehouse were copies of What became of Waring stored when they were bombed during the Second World War to "Who is your favourite character in Dance?" Hilary dealt with the first point with impressive expertise and grasp of minutiae and the second with her self-advertised ruthlessness—"What a hopeless question!" Other questions were dealt with more sympathetically and in particular one about what if anything had surprised her in her researches. What had surprised her, she revealed, was learning about the women in AP’s life, in particular Nina Hamnett. They had all been beautiful and she was glad to have been given the chance of resurrecting the women.

The talk was enthusiastically received and very well delivered. Patric Dickinson acted as MC and said it was an event that the members of the Society had been waiting for from long time and recounted how AP 30 years ago on leaving the memorial service for Francis King had told his agent, Bruce Hunter,: “If you told me someone was bound to write my biography at some point, that would be a frightful prospect – but if you then added that Hilary Spurling would undertake it, I wouldn’t exactly turn in my grave.” Which as Patric said, was assuredly his way of saying he very much wanted Hilary to take it on.

A splendid afternoon. Many thanks to Patric Dickinson for persuading Hilary to come, to Hilary for coming to talk to us and to Jeremy Warren for arranging the superlative venue.

Stephen Walker

**FROM THE APLIST**

Ed Bock writes: NY AP Birthday Grolier Luncheon December 15

WALBERSWICK or DANCE CHARACTERS IMPERILED

is the title of this year’s Noel-Poel Players entertainment. It deals with reactions to Spurling’s biography. Some roles will be secret until the performance. But the players of two combative parts are: Jeff Manley - Smith the Butler : Arete Warren - Gypsy Jones Eileen Kaufman will direct.
There have been (deservedly) numerous press reviews of Hilary Spurling’s new biography of Powell. Many of those below are available online, though some require a subscription. An updated list can be found on the Society’s website.

Spurling has herself written about the biography in the *Times* on 23 September.

John Carey in the *Sunday Times* on 24 September.

Claire Messud in the *Guardian* on 28 September.

Lara Feigel in the *Financial Times* on 29 September.

Philip Hensher in the *Spectator* on 30 September.

Laura Freeman in the October issue of *Standpoint magazine*.

Jeremy Treglown in the October issue of *Literary Review*.

Robert McCrum in the *Observer* on 1 October.

A parody review in *Private Eye* on 6 October.

DJ Taylor in the *Times* on 7 October.

Craig Brown in the *Daily Mail* on 7 October.

Nicholas Shakespeare in the *Daily Telegraph* on 7 October.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett in *New Statesman* on 8 October.

Kieran Fagan in the *Irish Times* on 14 October.

Rachel Billington in *The Tablet* on 19 October.

Ysenda Maxtone Graham in *Daily Mail* on 19 October.

A brief round-up of other reviews in *The Week* on 21 October.

Jane Shilling in *London Evening Standard* on 26 October.

Hilary Spurling herself is interviewed by *London Review Bookshop*.

Selina Hastings in the November issue of *The Oldie*.

Mark Amory chooses the biography as one of his books of the year in the *Spectator* on 11 November.

Colin Donald in *Sunday Herald* on 12 November.

James Marriott chooses it among his Best Literary Non-fiction of 2017 in the *Times* 25 November.


*The Spectator* has posted a podcast of Hilary Spurling by literary critic Sam Leith: [https://audioboom/posts/6473302-Hilary-Spurling-on-Anthony-Powell](https://audioboom/posts/6473302-Hilary-Spurling-on-Anthony-Powell)
Reading Hilary Spurling’s new biography, in particular pp. 371-3 on real-life originals for some Dance characters, I realised I had some first-hand evidence to contribute on that perennial subject. Just over 25 years ago I received a postcard from Anthony Powell with the following message:

The Chantry. 2 July 92
Miss Orchard is only old in the sense that she still believes in Gender Rules:
Abstract nouns in ‘io’ call
Feminina one and all, etc
which, alas, I only just came in for the end of. Thank you very much for the Studien zur klassischen Philologie piece. Erridge is really based on George Orwell, and not really very like my brother-in-law, except for certain points I didn’t know about when E. was conceived eg. Frank, in spite of a mania for exercise, is a hypochondriac in a high class (perhaps the one being the result of the other), various other points too, but not at all a portrait. The whole Zetzel controversy absolutely delighted me (and would have Sillery, tho he wouldn’t have understood a word of it)
Best, AP

Miss Orchard (The Kindly Ones, 2-3, 18, 51, 80, 148) was the original source of Nicholas Jenkins’ classical knowledge. On 5 May 1992 she had written from Fern Cottage, near Aldershot, thanking me for the dedication of my recent book Talking to Virgil (University of Exeter Press, 1992): see Patric Dickinson’s note in Secret Harmonies 2 (October 2007), 64-5. I wrote to AP expressing my appreciation of this attention from such an old lady.

I enclosed with my message a piece I had written for a colloquium on ‘The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?’, held at Austin, Texas, in March 1990. My role was as ‘respondent’ to a paper entitled ‘Roman Romanticism and Other Fables’, in which Jim Zetzel (Columbia) took
issue with my willingness to use some details of Catullus’ poems as evidence for the poet’s own life. In my response I appealed to the novels of David Lodge and Anthony Powell:

Philip Swallow holds a post (Professor of English at ‘Brummidge’) which is David Lodge’s own position, under the thinnest of disguises. Lord Erridge bears exactly the same family relationship to Nick Jenkins, Anthony Powell’s narrator, as Lord Longford – a very real English peer with left-wing sympathies – does to Powell himself.

Since I called my piece ‘Erridge’s Answer’, when the proceedings came out in the series Studien zur klassischen Philologie (vol. 67, ed. Karl Galinsky, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992, 41-64) I thought it would be only polite to send AP a copy. I was glad he enjoyed it, particularly when I discovered how little he enjoyed in the ‘horrible year’ 1992 (Journals 1990-1992, 227). And even though the particular illustration I had used turned out to be a red herring, at least we know now who Erridge was really based on.
From Michael Henle: “What impressed me most while reading Spurling’s bio is the almost obvious revelation of how very very well Powell’s life prepared him for one particular task, namely to write Dance. Not his other books so much, but Dance specifically because there he had the opportunity, due to its length and scope, to pour his whole life into it—in transmogrified form.

Given this axiom, consider the consequence. Since Dance contains the description of so much unhappiness, sadness, tragedy even, and death, these things must also be present in AP’s own life. The tale of Nick’s abortive affair with Jean, which eternally recurs in Dance so poignantly is based, it turns out, on AP own loves, and, somewhat speculatively, his wife’s as well. Gwatkin’s disappointment as an officer is mirrored in Powell’s own army career. The endless succession of relationships broken off or abandoned, the numerous divorces and deaths described in Dance—they are all present in AP’s real life, as Spurling shows us. Here they are in her biography: laid out in seemingly endless succession. Given that we have read about them already in Dance, it should not surprise us to see them in AP’s real life. Yet it does.

Why does reading in biographical form the long succession of difficulties and travail in AP’s life sadden us in a way that reading Dance does not? Because in Dance the overall sadness and depression is presented lightly and with such touches of humor that it is easy to forget the real pain of living. To be sure, the humor of Dance is present in AP’s life but not nearly as strongly in biographical form as novelistic.”

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

Murphy’s Law has struck again! It has been pointed out to me that my article on Powell’s non-Dance dedicatees in Newsletter #68 contains a fundamental error. At the foot of page 17 I refer to Malcolm Muggeridge’s 1960 review of The Valley of Bones. This is, of course, impossible as The Valley of Bones was not published until 1964 and Muggeridge’s review was printed at that time, as confirmed by Powell’s Journal entry for 14 November 1990. My apologies for a really curious typo!

Yours … Keith
Someone is doing Mrs E’s biography. She is childishly pleased, and I sometimes wonder if her serene and sub-specie-aeternitatis worldview (if that is the phrase that am sure I came across once) might have become a bit compromised.

‘What shall we call it? I thought of Just Passing Through, you know, between the realms of eternity by which our lives are bounded.’

‘You can’t,’ I said. ‘It’s the name of some show on the dreaded goggle box. American. You’ll be sued. ‘Mystic Myra’, I would have thought, would be more appropriate.’

She looked askance. She is a stranger to sarcasm.

‘You should have one done,’ she said.

‘There is little in the life of yours truly that would gain from having the light of day let in on it.’

‘All the more reason to organise it before someone else does. Now, who shall do it? A friend, who writes? A family member?’

I winced inwardly. There is someone eminently qualified, but I’m not letting him within a mile of my murky past.

‘I don’t think so, my dear. Don’t move in literary circles: that sort of thing. I’m a military man, when all’s said and done.’

She flung down the Ouija board with which she had been toying. ‘I shall do it,’ she said.

Well, it wasn’t a success. I had never seen her so put out, as she tried to think of searching and professional questions to put to me. ‘I can’t do it. You’ve got me quite flustered. We know each other too well. With you, I can’t scrutinise sub specie aeternitatis.’ (I was right: must have got the phrase from her.)
I was obscurely touched. I topped up her herbal liqueur, along with my own Glenlivet, and took the opportunity to pat her knee.

‘No one wants to hear about an old soldier.’
‘Yes, yes.’
‘Who has fallen on indifferent times.’
‘No, no.’
‘What I thought,’ I said, ‘instead, was a sort of advice column. By me.’
‘Useless as regards the advice, but revealing as to the writer, you mean?’
‘No, no.’
I considered for a moment.
‘Yes, yes.’

**MY FIRST TIME**

*Allan Lloyd*

Unlike many other Powell society members I grew up in a house where reading was not encouraged. My father only ever read Edgar Rice Burroughs’ “Tarzan” books and Zane Gray westerns. My mother read Mills and Boon, and occasionally Catherine Cookson, but she found her “a bit racy”. I was always told to “get my head out of that book”.

In my youth I read a lot of science fiction, and still enjoy the more literary type of SF. Perhaps the reason I started to read pre-war fiction of the upper classes was that growing up in Herefordshire in a farming community, the worlds described by Waugh and Powell were, and are, completely alien too me. I think I would have felt more at home on Mars or Venus than I would have at one of Nick Jenkins’ parties. The closest we got in my youth was when special formal parties were organised by groups of friends in large country-house hotels. Witty Powellian conversation was not the norm, the usual subject being rugby. Farmers do not fit naturally into dinner jackets, and sweat a lot in over-tight cummerbunds. I never once saw Sunny Farebrother at any of them.

I started reading Waugh, Henry Green and some Huxley, and in the search for similar books I borrowed QU from the local library. I didn’t like the over-privileged Eton boys, was sorry for Widmerpool when he was sneered at
because his mother couldn’t afford the correct overcoat, and saw nothing funny about the sadistic trick the boys played on Le Bas. The French section finished me off with its unconvincing Scandinavians and the way Kenneth turned up out of the blue. That was almost the end for me with Powell.

Then, some years later, I was browsing an antique shop in Leominster. On the dusty second hand book shelves I found five of the original Heinemann hardbacks, all but one with dust jackets and in beautiful condition, for £3 each. I loved everything about those books and bought them all. Like most men, I have a compulsion to complete sets. If I own some I have to fill gaps. I was like this with Powell. I filled my set with cheap reading paperbacks and started to collect the hardback originals. Of course, the prices rose. I now have ten of the set, only missing AW and BM. These are now eye-wateringly expensive. I may have to pay more than £3 each for them, but I live in hope. I now have three sets of AP, paperbacks to read in the bath, a beautiful but heavy set of Folio editions to be read in my armchair with plenty of elbow support, and an incomplete set of the originals.

Of course, I now love the books, though I do have reservations about the boys in that first section. I saw Hilary Spurling speak a few years ago and she said that the first volume almost put her off Powell forever as well. What puzzles me is whether AP means us to dislike the boys and feel sorry for Kenneth, and does that explain many of his less savoury characteristics in future life?

So, a dusty antique warehouse made me change my mind about Anthony Powell. And I’m still looking for those two missing books.

**The Master’s Voice**

Long-standing Society member, Stephen Eggins, who has attended all but one of the Society’s conferences, was heartened and encouraged by Nick Birns, who praised the reading spot at the 2016 conference in York by saying that it is always good and always important to hear the author's voice.

Continuing the description of Chips Lovell’s relations. *At Lady Molly’s*, p. 15.
'[Lovell] had that deep appreciation of family relationships and their ramifications that is a gift of its own, like being musical, or having an instinct for the value of horses or jewels. In Lovell's own case, he made good practical use of this grasp, although such a talent not commonly falls to individuals more than usually free from any desire for personal advancement: while equally often lacking in persons rightly regarded by the world as snobbish. Lovell, almost as interested everybody else's family as his own, could describe how the most various people were in fact quite closely related.

'When my first Sleaford uncle died,' said Lovell,' his widow, Molly, married a fellow called Jeavons. Not a bad chap at all, although of rather unglamorous background. He couldn't be described as particularly bright either, in spite of playing quite a good game of snooker. No live wire, in fact. Molly, on the other hand, is full of go.'

'What about her?'

'She was an Ardglass.'

'Any relation of Bijou Ardglass?'

'Sister-in-law, before Jumbo Ardglass divorced Bijou-who was his second wife, of course. Do you know her-probably slept with her? Most of one's friends have.'

'I've only seen her about the place. No other privileges.'

'Of course you wouldn't be rich enough for Bijou,' said Lovell, not unkindly. 'But, as I was saying, Bijou got through what remained of the Ardglass money, which wasn't much and left Jumbo, who'd really had enough himself by that time. Since then, she has been keeping company with a whole string of people-Prince Theodoric -God knows who. However, I believe she still comes to see Molly. Molly is like that. She will put up with anyone.

'But why do you call him, your "first" Sleaford uncle?'

'Because he died, and I still have an uncle of that name-the present one is Geoffrey-the first, John. Uncle Goffrey was too poor to marry until he succeeded. He could only just rub along in one of the cheaper cavalry
regiments. There were two other brothers between him and the title. One was killed in the war, another knocked down by a bus.'

' They don't seem much good at staying alive.'

'The thing about the Sleafords,' said Lovell,' is that they've always been absolutely mad on primogeniture. That's all very well in a way, but they've been so bloody mean to their widows and younger children that they are going to die out. There are a splendid example of upperclass stinginess. Geoffrey got married at once, as people do when they come into a peerage, however dim. Of course, in this case-with Dogdene thrown in-it was something worth having. Unfortunately they've never managed to knock up an heir.'

Lovell went on to describe his' first Sleaford uncle', who seems to have been a bit chilly, serious-minded, competent peer, a great organiser of charitable institutions, we would have done well himself in any walk of life. For a time he had taken up with politics and held office under Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith.

'He resigned at the time of the Marconi scandal,' said Lovell.' He hadn't been making anything on the side himself, but he thought some of his Liberal colleagues had been a bit too liberal in the ethics of their own financial dealings. He was a selfish old man, but he had what is called an exaggerated sense of honour.'

'I think I've seen Isbister's portrait of him.'

'Wearing the robes of the Garter. He took himself pretty seriously. Molly married him from the ballroom. She was only 18. Never seen a man before.'

' When did he die?'

'Spanish' flu in 1919,' said Lovell. 'Molly first met Jeavons when Dogdene was a military hospital in the war. He was rather badly wounded, you know. The extraordinary thing was they didn't start a love affair or anything. If Uncle John hadn't died she would still be-in the words of an Edwardian song my father hums whenever her name is mentioned-"Molly the Marchioness."'

'Where did she re-meet the second husband?'
'At the Motor Show. Went to Olympia in her widow's weeds and saw Jeavons again. He was acting as a polisher on one of the stalls. I can't remember which make, but not a car anyone would be proud to own. That represented just about the height of what he could rise to in civil life. They were married about six months later.'

'How does it go?'

'Very well. Molly never seems to regret the Dogdene days in the least. I can't think what they use that money, because, if I know the Sleafords she didn't get my in the way of jointure-and I doubt if she had a hundred-year of her own in a year. The Ardglass family have been hopelessly insolvent since the Land Act. However she manages to support herself-and Jeavons-somehow. And also get some fun out of life.'

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Saturday 17 October, St James’s Church, Piccadilly.

The AGM was a muted affair this year compared with previous years. Attendance was down both for members and trustees. Full minutes will be circulated with the next Newsletter.

Your Chairman added to the sombre mood with two announcements. The first was the death of Tony Robinson, the previous Chair of the Trustees, who had borne a long illness with courage and humour. The second was that your Secretary was bringing forward his retirement from 2021 to 2018. As Keith explained: 18 years is too long for any secretary and too long for any organisation.

The rest of the business of the day proceeded smoothly. Your Secretary reported that membership had increased from 280 to 300 and that the talk by Alexander Waugh on 6 December was sold out. He thanked George Warren for arranging for it to be held at The Travellers. He floated the idea of at the AGM for next year instead of a talk there should be a Powell Pub Quiz. Start your cramming now.
Your Treasurer spoke to the Accounts and reported that despite a financial year without a conference or a talk the reserves had increased by £3000. He spoke warmly of the generosity afforded by York University in regard to the 2016 Conference.

After conclusion of the formal business there were two talks. One by your Chairman, Robin Bynoe, entitled "AP off-duty, collage and wine" and the other by Hugh Gilbert about his work in making a photographic record of the collage at the Chantry.

Robin explained the thinking behind the two recent publications War Dance and AP on Wine, the trustees' decision to commission Hugh to photograph the collage and the upcoming publication of the AP's collected journalism. The Society's job is to promote AP's works to a wider audience. Encouraging members to share their enthusiasm and erudition is an important way of doing this. This is why the trustees had been so pleased to be able to support Bernard Stacey's manuscript. As well as demystifying the military arcana in Dance it makes an excellent Christmas present. More contributions from members would be welcomed.

Another way for Society to fulfil its mission is by publishing in a more permanent form work produced by AP that has either never been published or only as ephemera. This is why the Society is publishing a further selection of AP's collected journalism. The first is his articles for the Compleat Imbiber. They are a wonderful read. AP was very interested in wine and food. He thought that the three of the great gifts of England to the world were claret, port and sherry. The social relationship between wine of an electric literary and historic associations were more interesting to him than what the wine actually tasted like, although it is clear from his Journals that AP and Lady Violet enjoyed at least one daily bottle of wine, details of which he was often very careful to note.

A particularly excellent piece is on Rosa Lewis and the Cavendish Hotel in Jermyn Street. Readers can compare Waugh's version of it in Vile Bodies with AP's in Agents and Patients. The BBC series The Duchess of Duke Street was based on Rosa with Gemma Jones playing the lead and for whom AP seemed to have developed rather a pash.

Cyril Ray who edited the Compleat Imbiber had very high production values which the Society has tried to emulate. They will do the same with the new
Collection of Journalism and Criticism. Hilary Spurling makes the important point in her new life of AP that any idea that for AP journalism was a side issue, secondary to his day job of producing Dance, is wrong. For much of his life until his father’s legacy his finances were precarious. Journalism was his day job. Robin explained that as a critic he pronounced magisterial judgments for 50 years at the Telegraph. He took the craft of writing very seriously and constantly complained that critics did not understand how writers actually wrote. He of course did, and was far more interested in a writer’s outcomes than his intentions.

The collages are astonishing and form the endpieces for Hilary Spurling’s book. The need to replace ‘the skulking beast’ as Lady Violet christened the boiler in the basement meant that there was a risk that some of the collage would be damage or lost. Hence commissioning Hugh Gilbert to record it.

Hugh then explained with visual aids how he came to do this. He is a professional photographer who specialises in panoramas often using drones. He has been a great fan of digital photography which enables you take 360 degree panoramas. Hugh gave a practical demonstration of a robot taking a panorama using 18 shots. For AP’s basement he took 54. He admitted that it turned out to be a tougher photographic assignment than he expected - coping with distortion through flattening out and vanishing points. But he had found it immensely stimulating and satisfying and complimented the Society on securing a record of it. He graciously made a gift of a print to the Society.

Both talks were short and full of good things which fascinated the audience and sent them off in good cheer in search of books, coffee and early Christmas presents.

**Pub Meeting 28 October 2017**

A departure from the usual. Different venue - not the Audley but the Angel in the Fields in Thayer Street and different time not 12.00 noon but 17.30. Why? you ask. Diary clash- Hilary Spurling’s talk coincided. And it all worked very well.
Delightful West End as opposed to Mayfair hostelry. In a Powellian moment it was identified as the same pub where one Elwin and Susan Taylor did their courting. Does any one do courting these days, we wondered? Probably not was the conclusion - it's all internet dating.

Most of the chat was about the lecture. Very well received but as the Sam Smith's took hold, as well as the Chardonnay and the large G&T's - (is there any other sort ? was the oft heard refrain)- points were raised and fissures probed. All done with great good humour and impressive erudition.

A potential new member making his first visit to a Society event challenged the description of the membership as "agreeable nutters" and said "Agreeable is certainly right.. I would say that none of those I met had more than the touch of eccentricity or focus to be expected in a society devoted to a distinctive writer and some were indistinguishable from normal people." There you have it from one of the country's leading QCs. Here's to the next agreeable and permissibly eccentric gathering.

**SOCIETY TRIP TO RADNORSHIRE ON 9-10 SEPTEMBER 2017**

AP always seemed to be proud of his Welsh ancestry. He was a member after all of the Radnorshire Genealogical Society and contributed articles to its publications. An in-depth review by Clive Gwatkin Jenkins will appear in the next issue of *Secret Harmonies.*

A sturdy band of stalwarts braced themselves for the onslaught of Welsh rain and went in search AP's Welshness. John Blaxter organised this year’s away day centred in Hay-on-Wye to explore the AP heartland of Radnorshire. But there was no rain. John arranged the weather with the same
efficiency that he organised the rest of this trip. Drawing on years of experience in putting together school trips he devised an imaginative and stimulating itinerary.

We took in St Stephen’s Church in old Radnor built on a prehistoric site whose circular churchyard denotes a much earlier church. Then we moved on in the footsteps of royalty - after all AP had been very proud of his CH - and visited The Judges Lodgings in Presteigne. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had visited this brilliantly reconstructed building in 2014 and declared it "truly inspirational". It won Britain's Best Hidden Gem in the Hudson's Heritage awards and caused your Editor's favourite female TV historian the fragrant Lucy Worsley to exclaim when filming for the BBC: "What a stunning place!" As indeed it was. No one could resist sitting in the judge's chair in the reconstructed circular court. Your Chairman cut a particularly imposing and threatening judicial figure.

Thanks to Dave, Sue and John, cups and coffee in cafeterieres were especially laid on. They had probably not been used since the aforesaid Royal visit that is the one by HRH not La Worsley. In the shop encounters were made with members of the aforesaid Radnorshire Genealogical Society. Some remembered AP. Sadly they were not entirely flattering, referring to him as grumpy, prickly and a bit distant. Those of the group who were familiar with his Journals were not entirely surprised.

The highlight of the tour for many was Monaughty. Late 16th century (1565?), this is one of the oldest stone houses in Radnorshire. An imposing example of the sub-mediaeval gentry house in the county built on land acquired by John Price in the Reformation. Remarkably much of the plan form, internal partitions and mullion windows have survived. Much credit this must go to the owners Sophie and Douglas Blain who have restored the house: (Douglas, who had also been instrumental in the preservation of Spitalfields in London) and the garden (Sophie). Douglas too is a member of the RGS but was not able to share reminiscences of AP. Access for visits is not easy and the resourceful Blaxter must have drawn upon his vast reserves of charm and guile getting us in there. We were rewarded by a wonderfully intimate and informative tour with Sophie and outstanding home baking by Judy Charlton who would win the Great British Bake-off if she had time to enter. Her scones and Victoria sponge were ... well... "Truly Inspirational." The gardens had been the first part of the property to be restored and as Sophie explained to us she was helped by Hugh Pope who was an Oxford
dropout and hippie. She confessed "We are not frightfully authentic. It's all about atmosphere." And atmospheric it truly is. Inspirational even.

Gwatkin’s Cider Farm vied for attention with Kilpeck Church—which lives beyond its billing as a supreme example of Norman architecture and is the subject of the short story ‘Sheela-na-Gig’ by British poet, novelist and filmmaker B S Johnson. Diana Thomas, our guide, brought the whole church to life for us.

But man needs more than his soul to be fed. So does woman. Catering was patchy. Those of you who have always wondered what Hay is like outside the Festival, be warned. It's worse. To be sure the thronging literati are absent. But all the pubs, hotels and restaurants are full of people enduring protracted off-hand service and overpriced Pubgrub. Avoid the Blue Boar on a Friday night. Instead try Beer Revolution in Market Street. They are an independent craft beer bottle shop and tap. Food is limited to Cuban wraps, hot dogs and pizzas. On Friday 8 September it seemed like a mirage and turned out to be an oasis.

A specialist food critic was recruited, one Alf Ellis, whose report appears here.

SATURDAY DINNER

The Old Black Lion at Hay at first appeared unprepossessing both outside and in, but an agreeable private room was found for our party. There was a long table with space for a few armchairs around the fireplace, and an open French window for ventilation. At 6.30 John Blaxter took his appropriate place at the head of the table, and astonished the company by presenting three bottles of vintage claret: Belgrave ’00, Agassac ’03, and a Lussac-St-Emilion ’05 (note the dates). Those who had pre-ordered the brisket of beef were particularly pleased, but all shouted acclaim. Staff appeared to take supplementary orders, which were promptly delivered. The service generally was efficient and discreet. The food was quite good and decently presented. Around the table we discussed the places visited earlier in the day, and heard some tales of Owain Glyndŵr, partly in Welsh. Other talk included references to London clubs and recollections of undergraduate years, in which one of us related a scurrilous account of an Oxford don’s disposition to affect the uniform of a bus conductor when off-duty. When the third course was served, John produced yet another bottle of his claret. The conversation turned, perhaps as
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a result, to the subject of objectivity and history. Nothing of this can be recalled. The party broke up soon after 9.30pm

SUNDAY LUNCH
Not all might warm to a country pub/restaurant which was light and spacious, tastefully decorated (even if not with originality), staffed by cheerful and intelligent personnel, and serving straightforward food of high quality simply cooked and presented. Perhaps it would have found little favour with X. Trapnel, but it seemed to satisfy our party. John Blaxter’s organisation was in keeping with this New Look. He had devised a spreadsheet with our names on the vertical, and the menu choices on the horizontal axis; or, quite possibly, the other way round. The time this was to save the kitchen staff later may have been lost while the assembled members searched for their reading spectacles and worked out the appropriate co-ordinates for their menu choices. Two courses had been spoken for. The prospect of a gin-soaked damson crumble for pudding was the immediate choice of some, while others preferred a starter of wood pigeon. Both of these satisfied, as did the main course, for which most ordered sirloin of local beef. This came nicely pink and deliciously tender, although the Yorkshire pudding was not universally welcomed, to the surprise of the others. As we had already begun our journey, albeit marginally, from the land of lost content, it was perhaps not surprising that the topics of conversation turned portentous. The environment! Yes, even Brexit. After the much anticipated pudding, politics gave way to questions about trains and evensong. Members were pushing back their chairs and looking around for their coats. It was time to leave.

Prize for the worst headgear went to Gerald Parsons, who in mitigation revealed that he had been to the same prep school as AP - the New Beacon School in Sevenoaks. And the remark that summed up the APSOC membership was made by the only member of the tour who lived and farmed locally. This was his first trip and he admitted that he had been a bit overawed at Dinner when he realised that he was
surrounded by 7 Oxford graduates and, as he said, these people do not normally move west to Hereford but head back into the metropolis after completing their degrees. "However I did discover that they were mostly actually human."

A great trip brilliantly organised by John Blaxter who must surely be destined for greater things.

Finally please guess the AP related significance of the vintages that John chose for dinner.
**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Hon. Secretary’s New Year Brunch**

**Saturday 13 January 2018 10.00 - 12.00**

Patisserie Valerie
215 Brompton Road, London SW3

Why not join the Hon. Secretary and friends for brunch and chat to relieve the winter tedium. By popular demand we’re returning this year to Patisserie Valerie in South Kensington (almost opposite Brompton Oratory). Afterwards you’ll be conveniently placed for a visit to the V&A or to Harrods sale.

This is a pay on the day event, but please tell the Hon. Secretary if you are coming along so we can ensure we’ve reserved a large enough table. Non-members welcome. Further details when available from the Hon. Secretary, secretary@anthonypowell.org

**London Group 2018 Pub Meets**

Saturday 3 February 2018
Saturday 5 May 2018
Saturday 4 August 2018
Saturday 3 November 2018

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

**Anthony Powell Conference 2018**

*Anthony Powell and the Visual Arts*

Friday 31 August to Sunday 2 September 2018

Merton College, Oxford

Call for Papers and Preliminary Information included with this Newsletter

Further details when available from the Hon. Secretary, secretary@anthonypowell.org
SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTICES

Membership Updates

New Members
We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:
• Julia Camoys Stonor, London
• Lynn Inglis, Birmingham
• Niall Leonard, Belgium
• Charles Orwin, London
• Tim Sanderson, London

Condolences
We regret that since the last Newsletter we have learnt of the death of our Trustee Tony Robinson (obituary, page 4). We send our condolences to all Tony’s family and friends.

Subscription Reminder
Reminders are sent out in March to those whose membership is about expire. Where we have your email address, we will use this to send your reminder as it is much quicker and a lot cheaper. Others will receive their reminder by post.

Why not save time and money with our “5 years for the price of 4” membership offer?
Anyone whose membership has 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.

LOCAL GROUP CONTACTS

London Group
Area: London & SE England
Contact: Keith Marshall
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New York & NE USA Group
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Great Lakes Group
Area: Chicago area, USA
Contact: Joanne Edmonds

Nordic Group
Area: Sweden & Finland
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SOCIETY MERCHANDISE

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

York 2016 Conference Proceedings
UK: £8; Overseas: £14

Venice 2014 Conference Proceedings (including recordings of the papers on a CD) UK: £11; Overseas £16

Eton 2013 Conference Proceedings
UK: £8; Overseas: £14

London 2011 Conference Proceedings
UK: £8; Overseas: £14

Centenary 2005 Conference Proceedings
UK: £11, Overseas: £17

Oxford 2003 Conference Proceedings
UK: £7; Overseas: £13

Eton 2001 Conference Proceedings
UK: £7; Overseas: £10

Anthony Powell on Wine. Six pieces by AP and one by Violet Powell on the pleasures of food and drink, ed. Robin Bynoe. UK: £17; Overseas £23

Bernard Stacey, War Dance, a glossary of the military terms and references in the War trilogy novels
UK: £10; Overseas £14

Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music 150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; in the style of Spurling’s Handbook.
UK: £7; Overseas: £13

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

The Master and The Congressman 40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell.
UK: £4; Overseas: £7
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; Overseas: £32**

Anthony Powell, *Caledonia, A Fragment*
The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof.  
**UK: £8; Overseas: £11**

John Gould; *Dance Class*
American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of *Dance* at Philips Academy.  
**UK: £12; Overseas: £18**

**Paperback: UK £9; Overseas £13**  
**Hardback: UK £18; Overseas £24**

**JOURNAL**

*Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society*
Back numbers of issues 1, 2, 3 & 6/7 are available.  
**UK: £6; Overseas: £9 each**

**AUDIO**

*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.*  
**UK & Overseas: £12 (£6 + £6 donation)**

**SHOPPING BAG**

*Society Shopping/Tote Bag*
Sturdy 10oz cotton bag approx. 38cm square with 10cm gusset. Each bag has *A Buyer’s Market* and Ada Leintwardine book cover designs.  
**UK: £8; Overseas £10** (If you want multiples please email us for a postage quote)
POSTCARDS

Powell Ancestral Lands Postcards
Set of four colour postcards from photos by John Blaxter of the Powell ancestral lands on the Welsh borders. UK: £3; Overseas: £5

Wallace Collection Poussin Postcard
The Wallace Collection’s postcard of Poussin’s A Dance to the Music of Time. Pack of 5.
UK: £3; Overseas: £6

Society Postcard
B&W postcard of Powell with his cat Trelawney. Pack of 5. UK: £3; Overseas: £5

ORDERING

The prices shown are the current members’ prices (revised June 2017) and are inclusive of postage and packing, hence the different UK and overseas prices. Non-members will be charged the UK member’s price shown plus postage & packing at cost.

Please send your order to:
Anthony Powell Society Merchandise,
48 Cecil Road, London, E13 0LR, UK
Email: merchandise@anthonypowell.org

Payment by UK cheque, Mastercard, Visa or PayPal (to secretary@anthonypowell.org). You may also order through the Society’s online shop at www.anthonypowell.org.
Please tick below the membership required:

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<th>UK</th>
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<td>Individual</td>
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<td>Joint*</td>
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<td>Student**</td>
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* Any two persons at the same address.
** Please send a copy of your student card.

[ ] **Buy 5 years membership for the price of 4** (any grade) Gift membership and standing order payment are also available; please ask.

Subscriptions are due on 1 April annually. If joining on or after 1 January, membership includes following subscription year.

Name:
Address:
Postcode: Country:
E-mail:

[ ] I enclose a sterling cheque drawn on a UK bank for £ and payable to **Anthony Powell Society**.

[ ] Please debit my Visa/MasterCard with £

Card No.: Expires: CVC:

[Delete if not required.] **I am a UK taxpayer and I want all donations I’ve made since 6 April 2000 and all donations in the future to be Gift Aid until I notify you otherwise. You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April one year to 5 April the next) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that the Society will reclaim on your donations for that tax year.**

I agree to the Society holding my contact details on computer.
Signed: Date:

Please send the completed form and payment to: **Anthony Powell Society Memberships, 76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK**
Phone: +44 (0) 20 8864 4095 Email: membership@anthonypowell.org