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EDITOR'S LETTER



The big news. We have a new Publisher – Alison Walker. After Powellian displays of Will the Trustees finally decided to tackle the publishing backlog and upgrade the Society's publications offering. *Secret Harmonies* has been redesigned and *Issue 6/7*

published. More to come.

The *Newsletter* has a new look designed by David Eldridge of Two Associates. We hope that you like it. We are still feeling our way. All comments good, bad and ugly are welcome.

In this issue we pick up the theme of the September Oxford Day-Out – “*AP and his Chums*.” Intriguingly given AP's predilection for elite institutions he says his time at Oxford was miserable. Three penetrating pieces by Messrs Bynoe, Gwatkin Jenkins and Hoare give clues as why this might be.

Post-Brexit fall out continues in Professor Didier Girard's humorous take on the York Conference. Spoofing continues with a new contributor, Derek Pasquill's riff on the Society's AGM and Bernard Stacey's *Eric and Derrick* parody of the two colonels in *The Soldier's Art*. Uncle Giles continues to advise and Paul Milliken entertainingly recalls the solace *Dance* provided in the Sarawak jungle.

A counter-weight to this levity is provided by Simon Barnes in a brilliant piece on the *Heresy of Fiction*. All in all a plum pudding of an issue.

Sadly, Mrs Widmerpool is unwell but should be recovered by the next issue.

Many thanks for support during 2016 from readers and contributors. Seasonal Thoughts and Greetings.

Stephen Walker
editor@anthonypowell.org

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK



What a good AGM it was! The usual excellent turnout asked thought-provoking and challenging questions – which is as it should be.

Instead of a talk we held a “bring and buy” book sale raising £250 for the Society. Thank you everyone who brought and bought books!

Making their debut at the AGM were the Society's new shopping (tote) bags – details on page 37.

Your Chairman, Robin Bynoe, in his introduction explained that the Society needs more volunteers to take over parts of my workload. I have now gratefully handed my role as the Society's publisher to Alison Walker.

We urgently need a volunteer to organise the next conference. Our target is September 2018 in Oxford or London. Can you help organise this conference? Of course you can, so please get in touch as soon as possible.

Meanwhile my thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Society this year, and especially to Elwin Taylor who has stood down as a Trustee after 10 years. We welcome Colin Donald who has eagerly donned Elwin's trustee's hat.

The very best seasonal greetings to you all.

Keith Marshall
secretary@anthonypowell.org

DROIT DE RÉPONSE

*From a French émigré stranded in an Anthony
Powell Society meeting for the first time.*

Didier Girard

WHEN I returned home from York last April, my anglophilitis had reached such a pitch that I was urgently sent to a private clinic in Gstaadt, which explains the delay which postponed the publication of this overseas telegram to the Society and for which I sincerely apologize. The local psychiatrist, Herr Professor Mühlklapp, orthodox Jungian by training, but a ferociously anti-Freudian analyst, alarmed by the inordinate ratings of my blood tests immediately prescribed a 0-fat, 0-sugar diet, long walks in the nearby forest, excruciatingly nauseating herbal infusions and a mandatory daily session with him in the late afternoon (tea, biscuits, lobster mayonnaise, cucumber sandwiches or scones in any form or shape as well as teapots, knitted cosies, or British silverware were strictly prohibited.).

After registration with a severe tall blonde assistant of unidentified sex, and depositing my valuables in the asylum's safe box (including my precious camera full of Yorkshire snapshots), Dr Mühlklapp sent for me and with no other form of introduction, bluntly asked me to list all my contacts with British individuals, animals, cultural or agricultural products in the past 6 months. Naming the unnameable was not enough. I eventually cracked one *Freitag* and had to confess that I had indeed spent time in Oxford at the Bodleian Library, had a private visit to All Souls Chapel, wept over Shelley's mausoleum at University College, spent a jolly good time with aristocratic friends in Derbyshire, and with working-class lads in Leeds, and yes – I finally spelt it out – I had spent 4 full days in York mixing with numberless members of the Anthony Powell Society. (Let subscribers be reassured; I did not mention any family name and medical records are

anonymous in Switzerland.)

My first big surprise (once the delight of seeing York Minster again, a true history book on England's glorious and dramatically miserable past, was overcome) and after penetrating the irresistible architectural beauties of King's Manor – I do have a sophisticated friend who keeps on making a fool of himself by repeating in Parisian salons that *mais enfin, il n'y a pas d'architecture en Angleterre!*) – was to realize how popular an Anthony Powell meeting is! When compared with other literary societies which usually gather two dozen bored and pedantic retired academics or stray old tweeds, it was a great relief to see how engaging, diverse and numerous the company was. Always a good sign!

I discreetly sat between Keith Marshall whom I recognized immediately as if I had known him forever (the true and loyal Cerberus that any literary society dreams of) and Patric Dickinson who is – why should I not confess it all, the chocolate shrink insisted so much on *lâcher-prise* that I now have to live with it, haven't I? – guilty of suggesting I join the conference this year (something of an *acte manqué* for sure as I had been so often tempted to join in previously) and started to concentrate on what was being said. I learnt a lot on Friday afternoon, especially from charming Colin Donald on very interesting aspects of Shakespeare I had never thought of before and could not resist the humorous wit of Steve Loveman on the virtues (in its classical sense) of adultery as depicted comparatively (and so rightly so) in Powell and Fitzgerald.

British charm and humour is a combination I simply cannot resist, even less so after the break – will anyone tell me why coffee and biscuits in England always send me into raptures? Is it the local water? Is it the conversation and body language that goes with it? Members of the AP Society will not be surprised if I tell them that French academic conferences (or where too many French froggies speak) are often embarrassing and tedious affairs, as French speakers devote at least half of their papers showering theoretical prolegomena over you and half of a shadow of a singular view or idea emerges in the last five minutes when most of the audience is politely dozing off. None of this happened during the York Conference and everyone developed their own thought-provoking (in the true sense) views in a dynamic Powellian manner, which was great for people attending.

So do the contributors to the AP *Newsletter* such as Philippa Fawcett, with her brilliant piece on “L'esprit d'escalier”, who so appropriately defends Anthony Trollope's literary talent in depicting female characters against deprecatory AP's views on the same subject. All this is very healthy, enjoyable and TRULY communicative because it leads to interesting questions and debates in the room and also in the wings. And let's face it, the art of gossip, understatement and wickedness (in other words the gentle art of making enemies) is so much more sophisticated, subtle and irresistibly devious in England than in Italy or France where your enemies shout incredibly nasty remarks about you in their neighbours' ears so that you can hear everything immediately.

At least in a civilized gathering like the AP conference, things are far more voluptuous

and less predictable: enemies melting into friends over the weekend, snappish remarks becoming heartfelt compliments, polite or restrained flattering remarks poisonous daggers. I was soon not too far from pure bliss. But I must confess I feel ashamed if I “hijacked” the Proust Panel discussion, as Michael Henle suggested in his review of the Conference, but I could not restrain myself (another symptom according to Dr Mühlklapp of an Oedipus complex – yes the anti-Freudian used those very words! – that has “turned a blind eye to the pleasure principle,” dixit!): I felt there was some misunderstanding about where to draw the line between Proust and Powell, and thought I should say so with a few quotes from *À la Recherche* and with Nadar’s photographs of Proust’s historical models. And, let’s face it, nobody stopped me!

On the next day, after enjoying the luxuries of the Royal York Hotel and its unforgettable breakfast menu including black pudding (do you seriously think I would go for croissants and baguette in the morning?), I was not prepared for linguistic and musical ravings but this is what happened. I did not hear words on that day but music: I must shamelessly admit that I do not always listen to what people actually say but rather the way they say it: intonation, accent, pauses, tone, texture, pitch ... and Saturday gave me all that.

Kate Bennett’s immaculate accent and perfectly balanced sentences made me swoon (more on her sex-appeal below), then moderator Professor Graham Parry with his baritone voice and incredibly well-marked consonants made me think I was listening to Laurence Olivier, and that was followed by a dramatic performance by Robin Bynoe on sexy commas and other Powellian literary idiosyncrasies which filled my heart with content because I strongly believe nobody writes better English than Powell (except maybe the American Logan Pearsall Smith).

The gala dinner party at the Merchant Taylors’ Hall in the city centre was another unforgettable moment. Hypnotized by the genuine beauty of its old beams and elaborate carpentry, I imagined I was Jean de Dinteville visiting York as melancholy French Ambassador in England in 1533, and one thing leading to another I was soon searching for hidden anamorphoses around me ...

I met many other personalities who brought me back to another level of reality, including elegant ladies with whom I performed my faultless *baise-main* technique but, strangely enough, I felt reticence in some hands (or was it nerves coiling back in their wrists?), which made me think twice. Dinner was solid and superb, truly British, no Frenchified fancy dishes, no *nouvelle cuisine* nonsense. And thank God no buffet, or sit-where-you-wish improvised tables, as is too often the case in comparable social occasions in continental Europe with all sense of civilized hospitality being lost. Tables for 10 were immaculately laid – I will not disclose who my neighbours were, I was so lucky this could be read as another provocation on my part; and a perfect sitting plan worked marvels.

After too many glasses of wine and far too little time to engage in more conversations, I went to the cloakroom to fetch my coat when I bumped into Kate Bennett to whom

I ventured to make *ma déclaration* at this late hour. She demurely thanked me for my nice words, seductively smiled and did not rebuff my invitation to spend more time with her the next day during the Castle Howard expedition, which of course I gleefully took for a sure thing.

Alas, no Kate Bennett was to be seen in the long queue of participants waiting for the excursion bus at 10 o'clock on a sad rainy Sunday morning (well, it was not raining at all that morning but pathetic fallacy is the only literary trope I have at my disposal to sublimate the slough of despond I found myself wallowing in). Is cruelty typically British? Do they have an insight into the extremes to which a *desdichado* Latin lover can be thrown?

I would not have missed Castle Howard for the world. First because my dear friend Michael Bloch came with us, and he was so kind as to console me for the absence of Ms YouknowWhom and second, because this is probably the *locus solus* of all imaginary *loci soli* I had not yet seen in Europe but so much dreamt about.

Then, the building itself appeared by magic; it was almost as powerful as drawing nearer the remnants of Fonthill Abbey 30 years ago, or Critchel House, more recently. Stendhal syndrome was looming; I knew it for sure. After visiting most of the interior splendours with my new friend Stephen Eggins, I could not resist ruining my beautiful brown shoes (acquired a long time ago on the Avenida da Libertade in Lisbon) by setting off on a solitary expedition to the Temple of the Four Winds. Meeting a perfectly gentlemanly bull in the flesh was not a psychoanalytical mirage, I picked wild berries that I gulped down pondering over the shortcomings of the heart and its affections when suddenly a frightful shrill screech drew me towards a nearby pond where I staged the cinematographic parable I attach for the Society members as my creative minimalist contribution to the depiction of a Powellian atmosphere. *Comprenne qui Pourra!* And let me add: *Honni Soit qui Mal y Pense!*

Thank God, the last issue of the AP Society *Newsletter* did not reach me while still in Switzerland. It would certainly have jeopardized Dr Mühlklapp's experimental treatment – *Mais pourquoi tant de haine?* I repeated to myself for three consecutive days and nights. Or was it love and desire? Difficult to know with smart sophisticated Brits. Emotional confusion could have revived my excessive anglophile tendencies.

I found my name on so many pages that I could not conceive I was the *agent provocateur* described in those pages. I could not believe that my mother's tongue (yes I was breastfed by an English nanny from Kimmeridge, Dorset, not from Basingstoke!) had been failing me that much and that years of European linguistic decadence by regular contacts with half a dozen cultures and languages, had impoverished it to such an extent that I could no longer make myself understood, apparently. My point in my keynote speech at York was not at all to unveil some indecent pornographic realities about the contents of Powell's oeuvre or private life, but 1) to explore his artistic link to the 18th century (through references, influences, intertextual borrowings ...), and 2)

to try and understand why the critic Anthony Powell, often (and stupidly) attacked on accounts of his political conservatism and class-consciousness, would understand Sade (and many other libertines) as almost no one else did in post-war England.

For euro-sceptics who are – I am certain – very few among the AP Society, let me add that I did not leave York without insisting many times on the possibility of organizing a perfectly innocent meeting of the Society in the Loire Valley where both Tony Powell and Nicholas Jenkins spent several holidays at a young age. So enthralled by the quality of the proceedings, I suggested the topic “Falling in Love *à l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*”. The idea would be to gather Proustians and Powellians *pêle-mêle* in a few picturesque spots in this region where so many writers have developed their writing skills over the centuries. Besides, subscribers might be interested to know that I have spotted the estate still known today as La Grenadière, a couple of miles north of Tours. Believe it or not, one can wear asparagus trousers and be sincerely dedicated to serious literary and historical issues that are not automatically related to entries in the Great Catalogue of sexual perversions.

Thank God, all's well that ends well. In order to test the medical prowess of Dr Mühlklapp's magic cure, I did cross the Channel again in June to attend the Garter Service at Windsor on Ascot Monday to check whether I could now respond to a massive dose of Britishness with self-control, poise and measure (yes I know I am a bit of an extremist when it comes to testing limits but that, Dr Mühlklapp confessed one rainy afternoon, is something hopeless in my case and better be left as it is or it could trigger very serious neuroses).

The day before, I even went as far as walking up to Shepherd Market, after checking that the windows at Heywood Hill and Trumpers had not changed, to confront more Powell aficionados and test their drinking abilities in a nice pub. They were very different (in my perception of them, I mean) from those I had met in their Northern versions except Keith Marshall who was and will be the incomparable Keith he has always been under any circumstances. The Taylors (Susan and Elwin) looked so glamorously Parisian in London (and so irresistibly Iberian in York) and I had difficulties recognizing Robin Bynoe in black-off-black attire that was so different from the chic green and red suit of the most impeccable cut I can remember, and we talked of William Burroughs, Denton Welch and of a great painter I must avow I knew nothing of: Carel Weight.

The rest is history: on June 23rd, Great Britain cut itself off from Europe and England will become increasingly difficult to visit if not all walled in before any temptation to tread English soil makes itself felt again. As for now, I only eat French baguette, *poule au pot*, *camembert* and garlic, and concentrate on the life and letters of quintessentially French Bernard Frank, but did he not have a British lover at some point called Barbara? Shall the daemons ever let me free? I will ask Graham Page but by overseas telegram only ... My resolution is firm: Crossing the Channel is now something of the past and downright out of the question.

THE HERESY OF FICTION

Simon Barnes

I HAD a sudden urge to turn into X Trapnel. I wanted to be in the pub, pissed and verbose, haranguing Nick Jenkins and Books Bagshaw about novels and how we write them. I wanted to shout down Bagshaw and go spiralling off from Nick's more thoughtful points; I wanted to lay down the law about fiction and the way that writers of fiction put their books together.

This intemperate response was triggered by a review of two more books about Evelyn Waugh, one by Ann Pasternak Slater and one by Philip Eade. (Does Nick's/Powell's theory of self-pity as the most popular quality in fiction explain Waugh's traditionally higher place in the 20th Century hit parade?)

The Pasternak book got a bit of rave. The reviewer made much of the correlations between Waugh's life and Waugh's fiction, the way that Waugh's own experiences are reflected in his fiction, and the extent to which his characters – even the most extravagant apparent caricatures – are based on people he actually met.

And all this is intriguing. In this magazine we often read equally intriguing pieces about Powell's life, his friends and his acquaintances, and speculate privately or openly about their relationship with the *Dance* and other fiction.

So sure, it's *interesting* to consider the similarities and the differences between Constant Lambert and Hugh Moreland, and the extent to which Reginald Manningham Buller or Edward Heath were inspirations for Widmerpool... just is it's interesting to consider how closely Nora Barnacle resembles Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*, and how much influence James Joyce's schizophrenic daughter Lucia had on *Finnegans Wake*.

But then the chest-prodding ranting inner Trapnel broke free, and I wanted to shout to the uninterested saloon bar: "For Christ's sake, aren't we allowed to make anything up?"

Trapnel spoke about the Heresy of Naturalism: "People can't get it right about Naturalism. They think a writer like me writes the sort of books I do because it's easier, or necessary nowadays. You just look around at what's happening and shove it all down. They can't understand that it's not in the least the case. It's just as selective, just as artificial, as if the characters were kings and queens speaking in blank verse."

So let me thump my pint down on the table and expound on the Heresy of Fiction. The heresy is the belief that authors like Waugh, like Powell, like Trapnel and for

that matter like me, don't actually make anything up at all. It's all transmuted from experience. We just shove it all down. All characters have their real-life counter-parts. Sometimes they can even be used twice, like Captain Bromwich (*What's Become of Waring*) and Dicky Umfraville, or Books himself and Fotheringham (*Afternoon Men*). At the very most we allow an author credit for combining two or three people of his acquaintance into a single composite. Everything in fiction has an explanation from life. Every roman has its clef.

I have had three novels published. No one is going to write my biography and trace my characters from the people I have known in my life, or trace the incidents of my life that have been turned into incidents in these novels. There will never be a Simon Barnes Society. But that hasn't made me immune to the Heresy of Fiction. I still get no credit for making things up.

My favourite comment on my first-born, *Rogue Lion Safaris*, was: "I didn't know you could drive." I was enraptured by this. Because I can't drive, never could. Dan Lynch, the narrator of *Rogue Lion*, can drive; his author can't. Glad it all seemed so convincing, but I've never put a Land Cruiser into low-ratio in my life.

My least favourite comment was really rather troubling: "I always knew you'd fucked her." Certainly, Dan and Caro have a fling in the course of the novel: the author didn't. Caro's appearance came from a picture of a jolie-laide (though not one with *beauté de singe*) in a chance-found copy of *Vogue*, the rest of her came from sources that elude me; I have forgotten them if I ever knew. I made her up, you see. And for the rest, should it really come as news to anyone that it's possible for a human being to *imagine* having sex?

An unsympathetic review of my third novel, *Miss Chance*, complained about the passages in which the lead male character is seen as a performance poet, saying that they obviously came from personal experience, which was an added reason to despise them. The biographical truth is that I have never read a poem of mine to an audience in my life. I made it up. I imagined it. I invented something and then I wrote it down. That's how you write novels. I needed the character to have a love of performance, and I needed him to be in a small way a star, so that he could be eclipsed by the far greater talents of the woman he marries. So I made him stand up in front of an audience and recite *The Night of Serial Buttock-Fondling* to an undergraduate audience during the interval at a concert. I never did that myself, thank God. Not that stupid. Or brave.

Yes, sure, I've taken people from real life and put them into novels. George Sorensen, the safari guide in *Rogue Lion Safaris*, is based on my dear and late friend Bob – Baron Robert Stjernstedt – but I toned him down to make him believable. I also made him an ethologist – a student of animal behaviour – rather than an ornithologist. I then made him the author of the definitive work on lion behaviour, *Lions of the Plains*. The book actually exists, but it was written by the real – and great – ethologist George Schaller; and is called *The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predator-Prey Relations*. But George Sorensen isn't George Schaller any more than he's Bob Stjernstedt. The combination was a starting point: after that I made stuff up.

Miss Chance is a what-if novel: what if she hadn't given me the elbow? What if she'd married me instead? But again, that was just the starting-point. I didn't just dredge up memories of the lady in question and shove them all down. I changed her. I made her a successful writer, a fair bit nastier, an awful lot madder and a very great deal more promiscuous.

Before your experience can become a novel, the characters go through a process that's hard to explain and one that non-writers seem reluctant to understand. Sure, they started out as Bob and as Mlle X, but by the time they hit the page, they are George and Morgan. You're not transcribing life down line by line and letter by letter, as Trapnel himself points out when he talks about finding a tape-recording of a tender scene between lovers.

No. You're making it up. And the best part of the process comes when you stop having to work at it. You stop putting words into their mouths and actions into their lives and start, as it were, to take dictation. Not from life but from places that lie deeper than conscious thought.

Let's not get mystical about it. Trapnel would hate that. No sacred mysteries: Trapnel was (or is) tremendously keen to see writing as a job of work, a craft to be discussed and honed and improved. But there comes a point in writing fiction when the characters take on an illusory life in the author's mind. There's a character in Trapnel's destroyed masterpiece *Profiles In String* based on Pamela Widmerpool, but it wasn't a historical record of her life. Perhaps that's why she thought the book unworthy of X. Perhaps her problem was that she was too literal-minded. That's one explanation.

The characters and actions of a novel aren't entirely under the author's conscious control. That's another thing that non-writers never seem to grasp. Your characters have, or seem to have, a will and/or a destiny of their own. I remember telling an author of detective fiction that I envied and admired the skills of plotting and preplanning that such a writer must have. Not a bit of it, she told me. She was in deep difficulties with her current book because she had just realised that the villain couldn't possibly have done it.

That's how fiction works. People you meet, experiences you have, incidents you observe: these come into fiction all right, but they tend to be starting points. Once you start writing them you don't appropriate them, you change them. They become fiction. They become fiction because the author makes them up.

The fascination for an author's raw material is like studying an athlete's training regimen. Training is important, highly significant, and you can't perform without it, but in the end it doesn't matter. It's not what a batsman does in the nets that counts: it's what happens in the match, out in the middle, facing the bowling. In sport we are aware of this important difference: but not, it seems in literature. What matters in a novel is not where the material came from but what the novelist does with it. And that's the process of making things up. It's what novelists do. It's what no one accepts that novelists do.

Never mind. I have, many times in my life, been praised for making things up. One example will suffice. Years ago, I interviewed a surfer, who told me: "The wave has come

to you across thousands miles of ocean and no one will ride it except you. Surf it, and it's gone. You have a relationship with a wave, a complete involvement with it, and then it's broken. You know those insects that mate once and then die? It's like that."

So inevitably somebody asked me: "Great line. Brilliant. I don't suppose he really said that, did he?"

Always, when I'm writing non-fiction, in newspapers and magazines and books, I stick to the plonking pedantic literal truth. The principle is not moral, or at least, not moral in a mustn't-tell-lies way. There is a permanent temptation to twist every tale to fit the banal formats of newspaper stories: heroic policeman, dirty vicar, innocent victim, evil foreigner, cute animal. The truth tends to be more interesting and more complex: and more difficult to write.

But you never get the credit for that. Write the truth – shove it all down – and people believe that you're a writer of fiction. Write fiction and everybody believes it's a literal, plonking, pedantic record of what happened. And that is the Heresy of Fiction. Now buy me another pint and then help me home.

Because I can't drive.

OXFORD DAY OUT: AP AND HIS CHUMS

Stephen Walker

THE Society's annual day out was, as decreed by your Secretary, to Oxford. On 3 September, 15 members – the original numbers suddenly depleted by bad feet, bad ears and bad trains from Paddington-visited sites associated with AP and his Chums.

AP read history at Balliol from 1923-1926 and was a member of the Hypocrites Club until its closure in 1924 by the Proctors at the instigation of the Dean of Balliol, "Sligger" Urquart – one, along with Maurice Bowra, of the ringmasters of AP's circle. Balliol and the Hypocrites were the epicentres of what James Lees-Milne called "that scintillating generation... a mixture of the socially sophisticated and the enviably gifted...notably Twentyish and also alarming." He listed them as Evelyn Waugh, Harold Acton, Peter Quennell, Cyril Connolly and Anthony Powell.

We gathered at Jesus College. The connections with AP being : it is traditionally the Welsh college and AP was always keen on his allegedly Welsh connections; one of the Hypocrites, Graham Pollard the noted bookseller and exposé of the Wise forgeries, was an undergraduate at Jesus as was your Editor. Professor Richard Bosworth welcomed us. After coffee and a perceptive, well-delivered framework talk from Clive Gwatkin Jenkins, also ex-Jesus, we crossed the Broad to Balliol.

Always reassuring to see clichés about Oxford – the home of lost causes – reconfirmed. True to form, we came upon a vociferous gathering outside Balliol protesting against the BREXIT decision and were touched to see placards held high urging us: “Vote No on 23rd June.” Signs of a less than sure grip on chronology perhaps?

Balliol received us royally. James Howarth, the Acting Librarian, showed us round the two libraries and the former Dean’s room. There he had laid on an excellent display of Powelliana. This included gems such as the works that AP handed over to Balliol when he was made an honorary Fellow in 1974 and subsequent acquisitions from both AP himself and commercial sources. All accompanied by James’s expert commentary.

Back to Jesus for lunch. Except for the couple who wanted to recreate the sybaritic times of AP’s generation by lunching at the Randolph on shrimp soufflé and confit de canard with truffled chips.

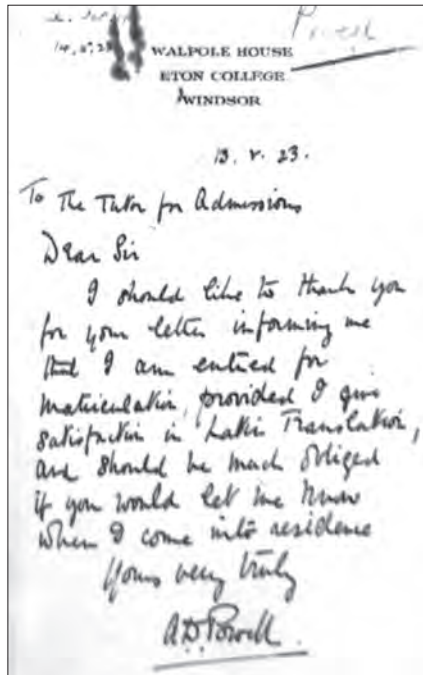
Intense discussions took place over wine and port about Michel Houellebecq, the impact of Mrs Thatcher’s accession on AP’s political thinking – deleterious – and the curious liking of left-wingers such as Christopher Hitchens and Tariq Ali for AP’s work. Your Chairman confirmed that when he had been shoulder to shoulder with Hitchens at demos in Oxford, a copy of *The Acceptance World* was always in his pocket. One member of the group hoped that in the afternoon we would be able to experience the “crushing melancholy of the undergraduate condition” that AP identified in *Books Do Furnish a Room*.

Despite Oxford doing its best to oblige by providing drizzle our merry band stayed unmelancholic as we visited Magdalen – home of Henry Yorke and John Betjeman. Various members posed as Stringham and Jenkins at the gates in Addison’s Walk. The tone was lowered by recollections of the debut of recreational drugs in Oxford in the Sixties. The deer in Magdalen were fed LSD as a jape. They didn’t behave any differently but all their antlers fell out.

Onwards to the site of the original debauchery – 31 St Aldate’s. The Hypocrites Club’s premises are now social housing. We could almost hear the peals of camp delight at the very thought. Stephen Hoare entertained us opposite Auden’s cottage next to where Harold Acton declaimed *The Wasteland* through a loudhailer in Christ Church meadow. In a fully referenced and illuminating talk Stephen sketched the characters and ambience of the Hypocrites Club where the rule was “Gentlemen may prance but not dance”. He reminded us that undergraduates were forbidden to drink in pubs in Oxford and that homosexual activity between men was illegal. So what did people do? They formed a gay drinking club. Waugh, Acton and Powell were members but not

Connolly or Quennell.

We concluded the day with tea at Hertford where your Chairman had occupied as an undergraduate the self same rooms that Waugh had in his second year. Finally, a quick visit to Wadham next door to see where AP and Bowra fell out in mysterious circumstances during the Long Vacation in 1925. A great time was had by all.



Above: AP's letter to Balliol 13 May 1923 about arrangements for coming up.
Right: the view from Balliol Library with the College coat of arms.





*Top left: Robin Bynoe
and Stephen Hoare
Top right: Nick Ashley
and Gerald Parsons
Left: Marshall Hall
and Stephen Eggins*

AP'S OXFORD 1923–1926

Clive Gwatkin Jenkins

OXFORD then was dirtier, begrimed with smoke and soot. The present gleaming appearance of the historic centre is down to *ravalement des façades* well after WW2.

The dominant “Oxford novel” for that time – indeed of all times – is Waugh’s, not Powell’s. *Brideshead Revisited*’s powerful evocation casts its spell nearly a century later over today’s Oxford. It starts off lyrically, even innocently; then the picture darkens/degenerates: drunkenness turns to alcoholism, i.e. self-destruction, ably supported by idleness, homoeroticism and serious overspending; but all still in an enticing aristocratic context: toxic glamour.

Cousin Jasper, however, does not think the Brideshead set was typical of Oxford (rather a group of rich bounders using their money to behave outrageously); and neither did AP. Literal mindedness misleads – it is fiction after all. And the Oxford section of *Brideshead* is a concentrate, cramming into a short time – 14 months at most – incidents and characters whose originals cropped up over several years: much like a present-day “soap”.

Waugh (Hertford 1922–4) did not live the undiluted Brideshead at Oxford. Like most undergraduates he was not rich enough. But, there were elements of *Brideshead* in the mix. AP knew many of the “originals” and was a member of the notorious Hypocrites Club. You could, according to purse and temperament, dip in and out: be a bit *Brideshead* on occasions: special lunches hosted in your rooms, but lunch was usually bread, cheese, half a pint of beer. The traditional landed class, topped by the rare scions of the peerage itself (e.g. *Sebastian, Mulcaster*), plus arriviste plutocracy numbered around 10%.

The centre of gravity of undergraduate life was less bewitching. Over 60% were upper middle class/minor gentry: *Truscott, Cousin Jasper, Collins, Charles Ryder*: (the category of their creators). These examples, even Charles originally, are serious students. The first three think they need and indeed obtain Firsts for their careers. But lesser lights also recognised that they needed a degree of some kind. They were comfortably off but needed to earn their living.

Most undergraduates went to public schools. These first emerge as the recognisable ancestors of what they are today in the 1840/1850s, when in response to demand from a nouvelle riche bourgeoisie they mushroomed, whether transformed from established local grammar schools or purpose-built. A small minority came from the surviving local grammar schools: the rump which had not made the grade; but were still non-

state institutions.

State secondary education finally arrived in 1902 in England, a little earlier in Wales; and – ironically on the model of the public schools fifty years before – engrossed the surviving ancient grammar schools while establishing purpose-built “county” schools to fill the gaps.

These could be robustly meritocratic institutions. Hence by AP’s day the number of state-school students was rising steadily – from 20% to around 33% by 1939. Most were modest middle class, but working-class undergraduates were no longer unknown – *Quiggin* decides he is one – though rare birds. Celebrated genuine examples are A. L. Rowse (1922–5) and Emlyn Williams, (1923–27) both Christ Church. They had to far outstrip academically the run-of-the-mill public-school men to be there at all. If this trio experienced class discrimination, it does not seem to have been the dominant *motif*: they all took a full part in ways divergent and overlapping in university life. Rowse, son of a Cornish tin miner, became a friend of Lord David Cecil, son of the Marquis of Salisbury. Shortly after graduating both became dons.

The more modest your origins, the more you depended on awards/scholarships: nascent public grants were nigglingly few. Alfred Denning, Andover Grammar School, future Master of the Rolls (Magdalen 1916–1919), said that on £160 p.a. from various grants plus limited parental support – he was the fourth son of a small-town draper – “I was able to get through”. This would be about £13,600 today. Rowse from equivalent sources had £200 p.a. (£17,000) twice as much as the wage of his father who on £2 per week could not help him at all. Money to him was a constant worry through his undergraduate days.

So undergraduates from poor families with no intention or possibility of profligacy needed at least as much as or perhaps twice their father’s wage just to support themselves frugally at Oxford. Even upper-middle-class types like Waugh and Peter Quennell (Balliol 1923–5) whose family incomes were reasonable rather than infinite also found their scholarships far from supererogatory.

This puts in perspective AP’s citing of £300–£400 p.a. (£25,000–£34,000) as the usual parental allowance for undergraduates from well heeled-families in 1923. This seems very generous: spoilt-brat territory but Powell claims that even markedly rich families usually stopped at £400 so as not to turn their sons into spoilt brats. A comparison with today’s outlay is essential; inescapable college charges (accommodation and food) are about £8,500 p.a. in 2016, with an estimated £3,500–£5,500 for personal expenditure on top: £12,000–£14,000 in total. Thus even the equivalent of Denning’s £160 (£13,600) would seem generous to today’s.

Public schools engendered “college spirit”, predominantly expressed in the cult of organized games. Those who had most of it were termed “hearties” and its unpleasant by-product was the ragging, sometimes beating up, of undergraduates who were deemed not to exude this sacred immanence: most conspicuously aesthetes but also simply the unathletic, over-studious, or unsociable.

Why should undergraduates wish to continue their school lifestyle with added booze, spurning the wider prospects now opening? Rowdies probably lacked sufficient imagination and stuck with what they knew. Commoners as opposed to scholars like *Cousin Jasper*, *Collins*, *Charles*, *Quiggin*; *Waugh*, *Rowse*, *Williams*, *Quennell*, *Connolly*, need not have been too bright – an immense contrast to today. They had to pass an entrance examination, Responsions, but this was not back-breaking for anyone with modest academic ability who had been flogged – literally – through a decade of the prep/public school curriculum. Oxford was something of a buyer's market between the wars, given the ratio between applications and places available; hence *Private Eye*'s St Cake's School's motto: *Quis paget entrat*. There was no shortage of public-school hearties who preferred games to study and who treated Oxford as an extension of school: college spirit succeeding house spirit. Indeed this had been all the rage since the 1870s, encouraged by schoolmasters and dons, who considered it good sexual sublimation (nonsense) and conducive to fitness, self-discipline, and strong character for empire building (there may be something in that).

But this archetype is “pure”, i.e. extreme: the reality was mixed. Commoners could be quite bright and cultivated; there was no objection to someone who played rugby for the college – thereby giving it his due – maintaining a temperate interest in literature or the arts off the pitch. A modicum of study was acceptable; most people shared the wish to gain a degree. Pompous *Cousin Jasper* claims to have got the balance about right.

Interestingly the *Brideshead* set has both aesthetes and hearties: *Anthony Blanche* and *Boy Mulcaster*. There were many different sorts of aesthetes; by no means all *Anthony Blanche*/Harold Acton-style gay exhibitionists: Quennell certainly was not. He, AP himself, Alfred Duggan, and Evans-Pritchard, (the future anthropologist), exemplify the heterosexual tendency in the Hypocrites Club, which was in any case closed down at the end of AP's first year. Homoeroticism was often a pose, or a phase (Waugh) to be dropped when one went down: like its ostensible opponents, games and college spirit, a hangover from public school.

Nevertheless, Oxford did nothing to encourage even temperate, ethically conducted heterosexuality: undergraduettes were still chaperoned, while AP and Matthew Ponsonby were officially upbraided for having a brief midnight chat outside Balliol with a popular waitress from The George and her friend; simply a pause in all four wending their way to their strictly separate beds.

This reaction reflected the authorities' fear of undergraduate attachments to respectable girls of too low a social class and – *horresco referens!* – consorting with prostitutes, which is why undergraduates were allowed to drink copiously in college but were banned from pubs. Indirectly the University encouraged homoeroticism.

Frustrated heterosexuality, sublimated through organised games and boozing-alcohol was gulped down by undergraduates of most stripes – was the most widespread motif outside the glitterati. Hubert Duggan, who claimed to have lost his virginity in Argentina during his gap year, left Christ Church after only one term (summer 1924)

protesting at the lack of female company and the homosexual poseurs. His elder brother Alfred “solved” the problem by breaking bounds and cavorting with hostesses in London night clubs and Quennell by taking up flamboyantly with an older “separated” lady already notorious in donnish eyes. Such exploits contributed to the premature departure of both.

Balliol was noted for a higher than average academic standard, and college spirit was not oppressive: tolerance predominated. How did AP fit in: unhappy because neither rich nor queer? But neither Waugh, Quennell, nor Betjeman (Magdalen 1925–8) were rich as opposed to being adequately set up. AP’s allowance, £350, seems well up to the average, and his parents were richer than Waugh’s or Quennell’s. Still he might have hankered after a bigger allowance – most students do – and some of his friends – the Duggans/the Lygons – were notably rich. But that is the point: AP was already well connected socially from his school, Eton: much better so than Waugh. He did not need nor use Oxford to enhance that aspect.

Sillery is a salon-holding don: a species now long extinct. *Nick* seems to attend his tea party because he could think of nothing better to do. That is especially salient: *Nick* is certainly not there just to be seen socialising with the right people: not for social climbing anyway. This was superfluous: in purely snobbish social terms he is the superior of all his fellow undergraduates already assembled. The contrast with *Charles*’s first lunch with *Sebastian* where he mixes with the latter’s fellow Etonians, essentially for the first time, could hardly be greater in any respect. *Nick* is an old Etonian and he takes his schoolmate and close friend, the quasi-aristocratic *Stringham*, along with him. If anything, *Stringham*, seconded by *Nick*, provides an opportunity for the rest of the undergraduates to social climb. But in fairness, none of the undergraduates from *Quiggin* to *Stringham* sees that as the salon’s motif. Personal promise/early achievement plus connections with new sources of power seem the key to *Sillery*’s favour. *Quiggin* thinks it is *le dernier cri* to be working class rather than his boring modestly middle-class actuality. Their host and the ambitious *Truscott*, are pragmatic: traditional aristocratic acolytes are also fine if you can get them. It is simply that *Sillery* usually does not: they are already booked up elsewhere.

That tea party is the bulk of the downbeat short shift Oxford gets in *QU*. *Sillery* plays no part in advancing *Nick* and drops out of the saga. A blend of elements of at least three salon-keeping dons, in his string-pulling *Sillery* resembles Bowra the most. So *Sillery*’s prompt exit might reflect AP’s breach with Bowra who, therefore, pulled no strings for him. But it is hard to see either what Bowra could have done or what AP might have needed done for him. He made little mark as an undergraduate, lacking the literary precocity of Quennell, Connolly, Waugh, Yorke, Betjeman or even Rowse. Conversely, he had a job arranged in publishing already acquiring a network in that world, and was formidably well connected. Mature slower development proved a better course than precocity.

The significance of the “breach” seems overdone: it could only have taken place

in what was AP's final vacation anyway, Easter 1926. Michael Barber miscalculates in placing it earlier. Bowra seems solipsistic in bringing up AP for social diversion in the evenings when he was relaxing from his daily duties. AP could find little better to do than pace the streets. Yet Bowra's previous companion that vacation, AP's friend Synnott, whom AP was obviously meant to replace, had stayed up for a while to work for Finals. Perhaps Bowra assumed that AP would fill his days likewise: quite reasonably as Finals were only weeks away. That this did not seem to occur to AP suggests he did not work as hard as he says he did. Rowse at the time and Harold Macmillan, a decade before (1912–14), successfully made up for extramural activities in term-time by reading hard during the vacations. Such application would at least have prevented AP getting bored out of his skull in the tedious spots where his father's postings had dumped him.

Through his Etonian network, AP had an obvious introduction to Oxford, especially for diversion: Alfred Duggan introduced him to the Hypocrites, and Connolly also took him up. He mixed with some of the *Brideshead* "originals"; and met Waugh and Quennell. He is cagey on any dissipation into which he might have fallen. But he did live sensibly as he went down without debt: contrast Waugh – £200 (c.£16,000 today). With the paternal subvention he joined friends in two long long-vac excursions to Eastern/Central Europe. Bowra and Garsington were revelations. He contributed moderately to *Cherwell*. AP was not a prominent figure like Waugh, Acton, Connolly, Quennell, and Betjeman; but it does not seem a bad undergraduate career.

AP was disappointed to get a Third. He did not anticipate doing so. His tutors were largely to blame, especially Bell. But AP had taken to him, and invited him, along with Bowra, to dinner in the final-year lodgings he shared with Yorke. Why then was he often depressed? Sexual frustration perhaps; but most undergraduates had to put up with that. Perhaps as Barber suggests after Eton Oxford offered little that was new or stimulating. For AP's noted non-Etonian contemporaries, who had come up from schools, state or public, which were far more limited or even grim, Oxford could be intoxicating.

Or was AP at 17 years 10 months just too young to reach out confidently? He had obviously found his niche and a circle of friends in the Arts Society at Eton, and liked the Art Master and also his house and its eccentric Housemaster who in his way gave close pastoral care. At Oxford there was no equivalent: he was left largely to make his own way but was too young to do so that effectively. Unlike Waugh AP could not "discover" Etonians, grand or otherwise, as he knew them already and tended to stick with them socially, making Oxford too much a continuation of not an advance on Eton. As for non-Etonian undergraduate luminaries, Waugh, a year AP's senior, was already well-established as a journalist on both *Cherwell* and *Isis*; Quennell had achieved premature fame as a published schoolboy poet and had been commissioned to write a study of Blake. Hence, although well-disposed, they were not struck by the withdrawn AP. He just failed to make his mark, socially, sexually or academically. But he made up for it later.

POWELL, WAUGH AND TWO CONTRASTING ROLE MODELS

Robin Bynoe

GENERATION after generation, young men arrive as undergraduates at Oxford expecting to encounter a melancholy arcadia, champagne, delicately homoerotic fumbblings and of course teddy bears. (It's different for girls.) These expectations are soon dashed. This is all Evelyn Waugh's fault; the first few pages of *Brideshead Revisited* are just too insidious. But similar romantic preconceptions applied when Waugh and Powell arrived there: Waugh in January 1922 and Powell in the autumn of 1923.

Powell slipped easily from Eton into Balliol. That college had been dominated throughout the Nineteenth Century by Benjamin Jowett, the great Oxford sage, who had died only nineteen years earlier. It was largely through Jowett that Balliol had acquired its reputation, still maintained, for effortless academic superiority. Waugh on the other hand was accepted by Hertford College.

Waugh never felt that the setting in which he found himself was quite up to the mark. He was educated at a public school but it was only Lancing: he got into Oxford but it was only Hertford. One wonders how he felt in later life gazing from the doorway of his club, White's, at other clubs which had not encouraged him to apply for membership. Hertford, he says in his autobiography, *A Little Learning*, 'was a respectable but rather



Above: C. R. M. F. Cruttwell

Below: The Quadrangle, Hertford College

dreary little college.' When his scholarship was announced at Lancing it was described – ungrammatically – by his headmaster as 'a very rising college.' Waugh writes (in 1964): 'It has not yet risen to a higher position than it enjoyed in my time.'

Hertford was to become a leading college in terms of academic achievement. It was in the first batch of men's colleges to admit women. It was imaginatively in the forefront of moves to increase the number of students from state schools. But that was far in the future.

Waugh had imagined encountering effortlessly magisterial dons like Jowett. Instead he found that the Dean of his college was CRMF Cruttwell. They disliked each other on sight. Waugh hated the way that when Cruttwell took his pipe out of his mouth a string of noxious saliva hung between it and his lips. It was however a one-sided feud. Cruttwell encouraged Waugh to work harder, drawing attention to his scholarship. Waugh's misdemeanours were such that Cruttwell could have had him sent down, but he didn't. Waugh, however, put it about that Cruttwell could achieve sexual fulfilment only with dogs. He put stuffed dogs in Cruttwell's way and would bark outside his window at night to excite him amorously.

Cruttwell went on to become Principal of the College. Waugh when he began to publish novels always included a minor but unpleasant character called Cruttwell. He did the same with Connellys, named for Cyril. Connelly was pleased, but Cruttwell minded greatly.

Cruttwell continued as Principal until 1938 when he went mad. Here we enter the realm of gossip. It is High Table gossip, the best sort. The story is that after an evening spent necking the College port and insulting the other members of the Senior Common Room he staggered out with the admirable intention of counting the railings that form a circle around the Radcliffe Camera. He failed however to mark the railing with which he started, and when his fellows emerged from their beds the following morning he was still at it. The tally was by then some thousands. He was dispatched to a place of safety.

One is inclined to feel sorry for him but for another bit of gossip. This involves the aftermath of a tiff with a colleague. This man was standing in the Quad when a large piece of masonry fell from the roof, narrowly missing him. Cruttwell's face appeared in the place previously occupied by the masonry. 'Awfully unsafe, these roofs,' he cackled.

In spite of being at an unfashionable college, Waugh threw himself into boisterous activities of the sort notoriously associated with our former Prime Minister and present Foreign Secretary. Powell did not enjoy himself. The difference was probably the absence of women at the university. Waugh was happy to settle for delicately homoerotic fumbblings whereas Powell wasn't. Waugh in his novel transformed the image of the University for ever. Powell grumbled about the 'crushing melancholy of the undergraduate condition,' and kept his love for Eton. Neither fulfilled his academic promise. Powell got a Third. Waugh didn't get a degree at all. Jowett would have been disappointed and shaken his great Victorian locks at both of them.

HYPOCRITES

Stephen Hoare

ON 18 January 1923 Robert Byron went up to Merton College, Oxford. His intake included several fellow Etonians – Harold Acton, Alfred Duggan, David Talbot-Rice and, at the start of Michaelmas term, Anthony Powell.

With all the confidence and brashness of having a ready-made circle of extrovert friends, Byron immediately made a big impression. And the unlikely stage on which his student capers was acted out was a louche undergraduate drinking den situated above a bicycle shop in St Aldate's.

The Hypocrites Club had been founded two years earlier by John "Widow" Lloyd – the exact date is uncertain but Lloyd would have been in his final year when Byron and his contemporaries arrived. Welshman, John Davies Knatchbull Lloyd had acquired his soubriquet from a popular brand of shaving lotion, Widow Lloyd's Euxesis! It was undoubtedly "the best a man could get" in those faraway days of shaving soap and cut-throat razors. The name stuck.

Eschewing dining in hall, Lloyd and his friends pooled their resources to rent the rooms and pay for the part-time services of a cook and a servant-cum-barman. The Hypocrites Club occupied two large rooms and a kitchen all of which were reached by a narrow staircase leading to the upper floors of a medieval house. Plain meals were cooked and served.

Taken from a line of Pindar's Olympian Ode, "Water is Best" the club's founding motto gave rise to its members being called "hypocrites" because strong beer, wine and spirits were the order of the day. As the club's servant dryly put it. "They call themselves an artists' club but all they draw is corks!"

Byron and friends proceeded to liven things up further. For a modest membership fee, the dipsomaniac Alfred Duggan was able to continue drinking after the pubs and bars had closed. Byron became a sort of resident entertainer singing Victorian music hall ditties loudly to a piano accompaniment. For him, the club provided a haven for like-minded "aesthetes".

Then as now Oxford undergraduates could be classified by their leisure pursuits. A large proportion were "hearties", keen on rugger, rowing or any physical pursuit. There was also a hunting set to which Alfred Duggan belonged who rode to hounds. More sensitive souls wishing to engage in intellectual discussion needed to set

themselves apart.

The aesthetes were certainly a more interesting proposition than either the hearties or the hunters and Byron and Powell were attracted by challenging or witty conversation covering art, poetry, literature, and philosophy.

Being an undergraduate at Oxford could appear like a continuation of public school, an overwhelmingly male environment where opportunities to mix with women socially were all but non-existent and where local women were out of bounds and the few women who attended all-female colleges strictly chaperoned.

Part of the identity of being an aesthete was a tacit acceptance of homosexuality. Self-confessed gay Robert Byron was able to give free rein to his romantic inclinations. So did a lot of other men. A group photograph of the guests at a Victorian party hosted by Robert Byron and Widow Lloyd would have set male pulses racing. Young men dressed in a range of feminine apparel from a flower seller, a Madame Pompadour or 20s flapper with Arden Hilliard masquerading as a nun and John Lloyd decked out as a Victorian lady in her crinoline. While Robert Byron is dressed as a Victorian dandy with top hat and cane, AP looking slightly self-conscious came dressed as a hussar.

Writing in his memoirs *Messengers of Day* Powell recalls a homo-erotic mural depicting nude men wrestling although he plays down the notion of the Hypocrites as “a kind of queer club” as “quite absurd”. This verdict is not shared by Evelyn Waugh, who for a short time served as club secretary. He described the atmosphere of the club as one of “uninhibited revelry”. Another secretary Viscount Elmley issued the famous injunction, “Gentlemen may prance but not dance”.

It is hard to resist the notion that the Hypocrites acquired reputation as a place where gay men could let their hair down. Among the gay set were Hugh Lygon, Harold Acton, Mark Ogilvie Grant, Arden Hilliard, John Lloyd, Robert Byron, and Gavin Henderson, “the man who set the Thames on fire”! Many like Evelyn Waugh swung both ways.

An intriguing aside – Gavin Henderson’s oddball reputation was gained at a stag party at a riverside inn at Dorchester on Thames where this outwardly gay man was distraught at the prospect of a marriage arranged by his parents. His friends may have teased him as being a non-entity – someone who was never destined to make his mark in the City (set the Thames on fire). Having got well and truly drunk, Henderson resolved to turn the old adage on its head and suggested his friends fill jerry cans of petrol from a local garage, pour them over the side of the hotel jetty and set fire to the river below. The result an instant inferno, a lifetime ban from the premises, a bill for wanton damage and a reputation that followed him for the rest of his life! Unconsummated, Henderson’s marriage lasted barely three months.

Inevitably the club attracted the attention of college proctors and their bulldogs. At first the authorities turned a blind eye to what was happening out of the public gaze. In March 1924 Byron and Harold Acton had already crossed swords with the university authorities when their planned 1840 Exhibition was banned. This was to have featured an impressive collection of glass domes containing shell work, wax fruit, spun glass

sailing ships and Berlin wool flowers.

The Victorian fancy dress party at the Hypocrites went ahead as a form of protest. In May 1925 the authorities finally acted and ordered that the Hypocrites club be closed down. Shortly afterwards the premises were rented by former Hypocrites member David Plunket Greene who with his brother Richard are described by Robert Byron's biographer James Knox as a "wildly irresponsible pair who had never experienced any form of parental control". Their father the jazz singer Harry Plunket Greene had evidently founded a famous dynasty with David's marriage to wild child Babe. Their hard drinking son Alexander Plunket Greene subsequently met and married Swinging Sixties icon Mary Quant becoming her business partner until his lifestyle took its toll at the age of 57.

After graduating from Oxford and the Hypocrites, John Widow Lloyd became a model of probity and enjoyed a distinguished career in Welsh local government becoming chairman of Historic Buildings Council of Wales. He died in 1978.



Above: Robert Byron

MY FIRST TIME

Paul Milliken

IN 1985 I was preparing to leave for a 3 year posting to a remote town in Sarawak, Borneo. I was single, 30 and my employer (an international oil company – Bob Duport’s world) recommended that I take plenty of reading material. There was no Internet in those days of course and I discovered that the local TV output was limited to say the least. I visited my local bookshop and after explaining my situation the bookseller suggested *Dance*; he of course just happened to have the full 12 volume paperback set in stock.

I had to confess that I had not read any Powell at that point but recalled the occasional mention of *Dance* on Desert Island Discs as the book that the guest would take. So I packed the set and thus began a journey of discovery into the world of AP and his imagination in the rather incongruous setting of the Sarawakian jungle. The local atmosphere still had shades of Somerset Maugham; the claustrophobic togetherness of the small expatriate community meant that I turned to *Dance* every evening with relief. There was sense of escapism but also one of recognition as (like Nick) I had always had an introspective, imaginative sensibility whilst I lived my life in a business world of ‘action’. Over the next 3 years, I read the entire sequence through several times and through visits to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur started to acquire the other AP novels via secondhand bookshops.

What do I recall of that first reading of *Dance*? Well I remember finding AP’s sense of humour as expressed through his characters very congenial. I suspect that the very ‘Englishness’ of the humour helped to alleviate my homesickness. Templer’s famous description of KW as “so wet you could shoot snipe off him” caused a snort that alarmed my native housekeeper. I also found the rhythm of AP’s writing very satisfying; the words could not be hurried and one could linger over them under the ceiling fan that creaked and turned through the heavy humid tropical air.

To my regret I never sent AP any ‘fan mail’. I suspect he would have enjoyed knowing that the differences in our backgrounds – I grew up far from his world of Eton and Oxford – and circumstances were no barrier to my enjoyment and appreciation of his art.

After my 3 years in Borneo I continued my career with Shell and within the company encountered a few other AP addicts some of whom had also found *Dance* a solace amongst the deserts and jungles where God has in his wisdom placed the world's oil deposits. Perhaps surprisingly a theme of *Dance* – the dilemma of reconciling the worlds of 'Thought' and 'Action' – is one that easily resonates amongst executives in business even though outwardly most exhibit the self-admitted 'suburban tastes' of Peter Templer. There is also the pleasure during the languors of pre-dinner drinks at business dinners of playing that always entertaining game : 'Who amongst our colleagues most resembles Widmerpool?'



Uncle Giles' Corner

HOW TO SURVIVE CHRISTMAS

MRS East knocks respectfully. 'You're wanted on the 'blower', she says. 'It's the Ed.'

These days I don't run to a 'blower' of my own.

'I want five hundred words or less,' says the Ed. 'How to survive Christmas.' 'Please,' he adds, with what he can spare of his often-noted charm.

'Bugger Christmas,' I said. 'I am still enjoying the 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' (Keats and Shelley).'

'Planning, Giles, planning,' says the Ed. 'Soon it will be upon us: the season of quizzes and Tom Cruise reruns. The Christmas Issue. Got to be prepared.'

'Obedient to your laws we lie,' I mutter. It is a tag to which M'Tutor was devoted, all those years ago. Something about Spartans.

'Not lies,' barks the Ed, 'the pure unvarnished, please.' And he hangs up.

How do we survive Christmas? This melancholy question becomes more and more insistent as *anno domini* does its stuff. Here are my rules, born, as so often in my life, from bitter experience.

- 1 Don't rely on family. They may have houses with drives. They may have spare bedrooms. But you will not feature in their Christmas plans. Fortunately I have never had brats of my own. (So far as you know, Mrs Erdleigh would exclaim, but she knows – who better? – that she is merely humouring me.)
- 2 Speaking of which, don't rely on soothsayers. Myra has been a firm friend and occasionally, I can confide, intimacy has occurred, but she is impossible at Christmas. She will cock her head. 'Can't you feel the immanence of the Other World? Can't you hear the angels?' I always try to humour the Sex, but enough is enough. 'Sleigh bells, is it, you can hear?' I ask sarcastically. She tosses her curls. Sanity (and access!) often returns after Twelfth Night.
- 3 Don't rely on private hotels, unless you fancy the company of those even more desperate than you are, turkey like cardboard, and – God help us – the communal performance of carols.

You may remember years ago on the 'goggle-box' an 'ad' for some sherry or other. A rather smug middle-class couple would present each other with the same gift on Christmas morning: a bottle of this sherry. It was made clear that this was something of a ritual. Mrs East and I do much the same. Bugger the tree. Bugger the turkey. Bugger the vast difference between Mrs E's and my station in life. Bugger the Tom Cruise reruns. Bugger, even, the Queen (God bless her). We pool our resources with a couple of bottles: not sherry but something a little more 'cask strength' from Mrs Patel in the corner shop. The sound of sleigh bells, infants singing, even angels may intrude, but our oblivion is blessedly total.

HOW AP SURVIVED CHRISTMAS IN 1983

SUNDAY, CHRISTMAS DAY

We lunched at The Stables, where the Stockwells had staying Vicky Feaver (now deserted by her husband), with three daughters and a son, and Julian Jebb. Talked to Julian about Kleist (a competent, if infinitely boring, biography of whom I have for review, there being nothing else over Christmas, in spite of Kleist not being a particularly Yuletide subject). Tristram produced some splendid masks. John had already given me a fine black Carnival mask from the Venetian Exhibition.

(Journals, 1982-1986).

THE WRONG ENTRANCE

Derek Pasquill

WITH half an hour to spend before the Anthony Powell Society held its AGM, I decided to visit some of Piccadilly's finest bookshops. The Royal Academy gift shop was less than satisfying, but never less than obligatory if only to remind myself of the 2013 George Bellows exhibition and the resonance of some of his wintry paintings with *Dance's* opening scene.

At Hatchards I dipped into one of Powell's *Journals* and read about the Margaret Thatcher effigy he received for his eightieth birthday. Wine was consumed; he was exhausted the following day yet managed to continue work. Moving along to the Natural History section, I found some entertainment looking at the plates in a guide to birds of East Asia. And then, finally, at the film section, a brief look through Michael Powell's *A Life in Movies* where I had hoped to find an erotic passage excerpted some time ago in the *London Review of Books*, but it proved elusive.

Waterstones – not much of note apart from an edition of Waugh's *Decline and Fall* that came with two different covers.

At St James's Church I struggled to find the conference hall until a church orderly came to my rescue and led me to the basement unlocking a door somewhere along the route. I was primed for a Powellian moment so had no difficulty in recognising an incarnation of the glum porter who allowed Nick Jenkins to disencumber himself of an embarrassing uncle. That my church orderly was of good cheer only reinforced the impression of being in step with a literary emanation.

The basement held a gathering of those celebrating the work and life of Anthony Powell – here was Wolfgang Iser's reader response theory materialised in the flesh – a network of response-inviting entities that created the text in conjunction with the author. Or, in other words, Iser's words, the text is a game that readers must play in an individual way, while they, in turn, are played by the text: a process that allows a shifting in and out of their selves which is perhaps one definition of literature. Transposition is the name of the game whose rules are created by play. I studied the assembled company closely looking for clues of the aleatory, the enchanted and enchanting moment.

At the AGM's conclusion, I slipped away through a glass door at the back of the hall. Soho, and a tube from Tottenham Court Road returned me home. If ever in East Asia, it would be nice to see an Elegant Bunting.

In dubio, pro vita.

ERIC AND DERRICK

Bernard Stacey

'It was really too bad, Derrick,'
'What was, Eric?'
'Having to send back the corked wine.'
'You sent back corked wine, Eric?'
'Yes, Derrick.'
'Where?'
'We were dining at Rules and a bottle of the Burgundy was corked, Derrick.'
'You complained, Eric?'
'Of course.'
'But it's not the restaurant's fault, Eric.'
'It isn't, Derrick?'
'Of course not, Eric.'
'Whose then?'
'2,4,6-Tricloroanisole.'
'I beg your pardon, Derrick?'
'A chemical made by a fungus that has infested the cork.'
'Really, Derrick. I never knew that.'
'You must try and keep up, Eric.'
'I should, Derrick. I must try harder.'
'It could all be avoided with screw top bottles, Eric.'
'Screw top wine, Derrick? You jest.'
'Certainly, Eric. It's the modern way.'
'Good heavens, Derrick. Whatever next?'
'Funny you should ask that, Eric.'
'Why so, Derrick?'
'I was talking to Major Widmerpool the other day, Eric. Remember him?'
'I certainly do, Derrick. What's he been saying?'
'He has a plan for marketing champagne in ring-pull cans.'
'I can scarcely credit it, Derrick!'
'You must keep up, Eric. It's the modern way.'

✂ CUTTINGS ... CUTTINGS ... ✂

A review of the exhibition of Christopher Wood by Katy Norris at the Pallant House Gallery September 2016

Kit Wood certainly had one of the most colourful, and painfully short, careers of any British artist, and he managed to cram more into his short life than many others who lived out their four score years and ten and beyond. He was patently a very attractive, and gifted, young man, who was thrust into the Parisian *beau monde* in the early twenties as an innocent abroad, and it seems that he cultivated a youthful naivety in the face of this decadent, and predominantly homosexual, society. Anthony Powell wrote, 'He was the only English artist found acceptable in the Paris monde of Picasso and Cocteau, a convenient bisexuality being no handicap in that particular sphere.'

DJ Taylor name checks AP in his review of Barbara Skelton's books in *The Guardian* "Rereading" feature

Barbara Skelton's trail runs through a certain type of 20th century literary life like a vein of quartz. Here is Evelyn Waugh, writing to Nancy Mitford early in 1950 with a bumper selection of the latest Grub Street scuttlebutt: "G Orwell is dead, and Mrs Orwell presumably a rich widow. Will Cyril [Connolly] marry her? He is said to

be consorting with Miss Skelton." Nearly four decades later their mutual friend Anthony Powell was still filling his diaries with news of the journalists who had telephoned to inquire if Barbara was the model for *A Dance to the Music of Time's* farouche, man-eating Pamela Flitton ("I replied with guarded affirmation").

The FT shows that anyone can get their Anthonys mixed up in their colour supplement on Manchester

Tony Wilson, whose Factory records rekindled the city's music scene in the late 1970s, joked that he didn't consider Manchester to be Britain's second city; London and Birmingham could fight between themselves. The writer Anthony Powell, a more highbrow Mancunian, said he felt a journey to London was an exercise in condescension.

They should of course have referred to Anthony Burgess, who did list *Dance* in his 1984 book *Ninety-Nine Novels: The Best in English since 1939 – A Personal Choice*.

ON CONDESCENSION

A N Wilson in his *Sunday Times* review of DJ Taylor's book *The New Book of Snobs: A Definitive Guide to Modern Snobbery* said

✂ CUTTINGS ... CUTTINGS ... ✂

Taylor rightly sees that the essence of snobbery is in its willingness to live in a fantasy world. Uncertain where he is in the pecking order, the snob beadily watches for social indicators, scorning those he considers commoner than himself, and worshipping duchesses and the like.

Taylor has fun with the diaries of two crashing 20th-century snobs, James Lees-Milne and Anthony Powell. "I consider Debo the most remarkable woman I know", is one of Lees-Milne's more arcane sentences. Powell, meanwhile, went to great length, after meeting his heroine Margaret Thatcher, to wonder if she would be even more impressive if a member of the aristocracy. He thought not. But, adds Taylor: "The middle-class reader will be tempted to wonder why exactly a duchess is the benchmark against which the UK's first woman prime minister should be rated."

DJ Taylor himself says in his book

The critic P.N.Furbank once described as style of Anthony Powell's literary journalism, which much is hinted but little explicitly resolved and direct statements are scrupulously avoided, as an exercise in "refrigeration", or keeping your readers at one remove, the author, in effect saying to his audience, "You would have to know me a great deal more than is at all likely before

I would be prepared to tell you what I really thought about the subject under discussion." My own view is that Powell is not, by and large, a snob – reproached once for his fixation on books of genealogy he insisted that he would buy *The Debrett's Guide to Bank Clerks* if such a volume existed. But the snob makes a virtue of refrigeration.

AND ON HIGH-BROWS AND LOW FUN

Lisa Doty An American Member emails

I am very unhappy that Stephen Walker thinks Anthony Powell would have been a blogger and a tweeter. What a horrible thought. If he had blogged and tweeted his way through the 20th Century would we have had the "*Dance*"?

And I have to thank Mr. Bynoe for his kind words in the Chairman's Foreword in the Annual Report, which, as you say in England, "made me fall about laughing" as well as echoing Powell's sentiments about American academics: "...there were pub lunches, outings, and in America the rather more high-minded versions of those activities thought appropriate there."

Oh, to be in England where I could have some low fun!

Best to you, Lisa

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LONDON GROUP

AP Birthday Lunch

Saturday 3 December 2016

1200 for 1215 hrs

Malabar Junction, 107 Great Russell Street, London WC1

This year, something different: we are returning to the venue of our 2014 commemoration lunch for the centenary of WWI and the flashback in *The Kindly Ones*, the Malabar Junction South Indian restaurant – just 200m from the British Museum and almost opposite the TUC.

This is a pay on the day event, but please book so we ensure we have reserved a large enough table!

To book, or for further details, please contact the Hon. Secretary, secretary@anthonypowell.org.

Non-members welcome.

NY & NE USA GROUP

AP Birthday Lunch

Friday 16 December 2016, 1200 hrs

Grolier Club, New York

The NY & NE USA Group's annual celebration of Powell's birthday.

Booking/invitation essential; please contact Arete Warren, ulubrae.aw1@verizon.net.

HON. SECRETARY'S NEW YEAR BRUNCH

This year we're going to try somewhere new ...

Saturday 21 January 2017

1000 to 1200 hrs

Maxwell's Bar & Grill, 8 James Street,

London WC2

(it's in Covent Garden at the back of the Royal Opera House and almost outside Covent Garden Underground)

Do you find the dull days of January depressing or just boring? Whichever it is come along to our now traditional brunch and liven up your winter – you can even work in the sales or the nearby London Transport Museum afterwards.

We've chosen the venue in recognition that many of us have increasing mobility problems and Maxwell's have toilet facilities on the level rather than down a set of vertiginous stairs.

This is a pay on the day event, but please book so we can ensure we have reserved a large enough table!

Non-members always welcome.

To book, or for further details, please contact the Hon. Secretary, secretary@anthonypowell.org.

LONDON GROUP PUB MEETS

Saturday 4 February 2017

Saturday 6 May 2017

Saturday 5 August 2017

Saturday 4 November 2017

The Audley, Mount Street, London

W1, 1230 to 1530 hrs

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

Non-members always welcome.

No need to book but further details from the Hon. Secretary, secretary@anthonypowell.org.

SOCIETY NEWS & NOTICES

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

New Members:

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

William Anderson, Edinburgh
June Laurenson, Peebles
Linda Nelson, Davis, USA

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are due annually on 1 April (for rates see back page). Reminders will be sent out (by email where possible) during March each year to those whose membership is about to expire.

Why not save time and money with our 5 years for the price of 4 membership offer?

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

Anyone whose membership 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.

Please help us to keep costs down by renewing promptly.

LOCAL GROUP CONTACTS

London Group

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

New York & NE USA Group

Area: New York & NE USA
Contact: Nick Birns
Email: nicholas.birns@gmail.com

Great Lakes Group

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

Nordic Group

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

Toronto Group

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

German Group

Area: Germany
Contact: Theo Langheid
Email: theo@langheid.de

Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you wish to make contact with a group and don't have email.

If you wish to start a local group the Hon. Secretary can advise on the number of members in your area.

SOCIETY NEWS & NOTICES

NEWSLETTER COPY DEADLINES

Newsletter #66, Spring 2017

Copy Deadline: 10 February 2017

Publication Date: 3 March 2017

Newsletter #67, Summer 2017

Copy Deadline: 12 May 2017

Publication Date: 2 June 2017

Newsletter #68, Autumn 2017

Copy Deadline: 11 August 2017

Publication Date: 1 September 2017

Newsletter #69, Winter 2017

Copy deadline: 10 November 2017

Publication Date: 1 December 2017

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER AND JOURNAL

These are always welcome and should be sent to:

S.M. Walker

Newsletter and Journal Editor

Anthony Powell Society

25 Townshend Road

Richmond

Surrey

TW9 1XH

editor@anthonypowell.org

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

Do You Care About the English Language?

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For full details, see our website

www.queens-english-society.org



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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please tick below the membership required:

	UK	OVERSEAS
INDIVIDUAL	<input type="checkbox"/> £ 2 2	<input type="checkbox"/> £ 2 8
JOINT*	<input type="checkbox"/> £ 3 3	<input type="checkbox"/> £ 3 9
STUDENT**	<input type="checkbox"/> £ 1 3	<input type="checkbox"/> £ 1 9

* 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:

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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:

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[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.

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Memberships, 76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK

PHONE: +44 (0) 20 8864 4095

EMAIL: membership@anthonypowell.org

SOCIETY MERCHANDISE

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

London 2011 Conference Proceedings

UK: £8; OVERSEAS: £14.50

Centenary 2005 Conference Proceedings

UK: £11; OVERSEAS: £17

Oxford 2003 Conference Proceedings

UK: £7; OVERSEAS: £13.50

Eton 2001 Conference Proceedings

UK: £6.50; OVERSEAS: £10.50

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: £10.50

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: £6.50

The Master and The Congressman

40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell.

UK: £4; OVERSEAS: £6.50

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Violet Powell; *A Stone in the Shade*

Fourth & final volume of Lady Violet's autobiography covering mostly the 1960s. Includes many of Lady Violet's coloured travel sketches. Hardback.

UK: £24.50; OVERSEAS: £29

Anthony Powell, *Caledonia, A Fragment*

The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof.

UK: £8; OVERSEAS: £10.50

John Gould; *Dance Class*

American High School student essays from John's two teachings of *Dance* at Philips Academy.

UK: £12; OVERSEAS: £17.50

The Acceptance of Absurdity: Anthony Powell – Robert Vanderbilt Letters 1952–1963

Edited by John Saumarez Smith & Jonathan Koopstein; 2011. Fascinating letters between Powell and his friend and first American publisher Robert Vanderbilt.

PAPERBACK: UK £8.50; OVERSEAS £12.50

HARDBACK: UK £18; OVERSEAS £24.50

SHOPPING BAG

Society Shopping/Tote Bag

Sturdy 100z cotton bag approx. 38cm square with

10cm gusset. Each bag has *A Buyer's Market* and Ada Leintwardine book cover designs.

UK: £6; OVERSEAS £9

(If you want multiples please email us for a postage quote)

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society

Back numbers of issues 1, 2, 3 & the new 6/7 are available.

UK: £5; 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: £10 (£5 + £5 donation)

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: £2.50; OVERSEAS: £4

Society Postcard

B&W postcard of Powell with his cat Trelawney. Pack of 5.

UK: £2.50; OVERSEAS: £4

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: £4.50

ORDERING

The prices shown are the members' prices as of October 2016 and are inclusive of postage and packing, hence the different UK and overseas prices. Non-members will be charged the 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.

DANCING BAGS!

After much discussion on the APLIST about future Society merchandise

Reusable cotton tote bags are here!

They're shopping bags, so the design has a *Dance* and a shopping theme. Side one has a schematic cover design for *A Buyer's Market* in red; side two has an outline design for the cover of Ada Leintwardine's first novel *I Stopped at a Chemist's* in blue. The design concept was suggested by Society member Prue Raper – many thanks, Prue! We hope the design may pique the curiosity of those who spot us with the bags and prompt them to investigate! They can be seen in full colour on the Society's website.

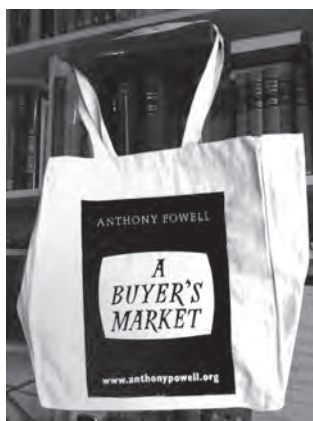
The bags are made of stout 100z cotton, are approximately 39cm square with a 10cm gusset and long handles. The gusset makes them much more able to accommodate our favourite objects: books!

The bags are available now at £6 to UK members and £9 to overseas members; prices include postage. If collected at a London event they're just £4.50.

Should you wish to buy more than one bag we suggest you email either merchandise@anthonypowell.org or secretary@anthonypowell.org, tell us how many bags you want and ask us for a postage quote as this may well work out cheaper.

The snapshots below show the bag suspended from the bookshelf over the Hon. Secretary's desk.

The bags will make great Christmas stocking fillers for friends and family. They were selling like hot cakes at the AGM.





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