ISSN 1360-9920

GREEN LEAVES

The Journal of the Barbara Pym Society Vol.10, No. 1, May 2004

THE NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE 2004

Perri Klass signing her book, *Quirky Kids*

The Sixth North American Conference of the Barbara Pym Society was held on 27-28 March 2004, at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A total of 82 people attended, representing 17 states, Austria, Germany, and the UK. Of these, 24 wore name tags with a little star, indicating that they were attending for the first time. Many of the newcomers had discovered the society through its Web site, which was clearly displayed in various advertisements last year for the book of essays on Pym, *All This Reading*.

On Friday evening before the official opening of Pym VI, out-of-town participants who were available met at a nearby Chinese restaurant for dinner, which has become a yearly ritual. The following morning (and during various breaks over the two days), we enjoyed tea, coffee, and delicious high-carb, high-calorie pastries and scones. Ellen Miller, in her speech welcoming us all, reported that a great wail had arisen over the previous year's healthier offerings, leading her to reinstate a menu more in keeping with Harriet Bede's tastes.

This year's conference began with loving tributes by Ellen Miller and Father Gabriel Myers to Hilary Pym Walton, which can be found later in this edition of *Green Leaves*. Hilary will certainly be missed by all the North American members of the Pym Society who had the privilege of meeting her. She seemed to have a particular fondness for Americans.

A genius for quotation

Our first speaker, Katherine Duncan-Jones, has been a Fellow of Somerville College Oxford, since 1966. She studied English Language and Literature at St Hilda's from 1959 through 1962. She told us she had been reading Pym since the age of 13 (surely this sets a record!), being fortunate enough to have a mother who bought each of the novels as they came out. As proof, she held up a first edition of *A Glass of Blessings*. She recalled how much time her family devoted to reading in her youth – her father did not even like the radio to interfere with this pastime.

Duncan-Jones focused on the ways in which literary quotations are used in Pym's work, taking her title from a letter that Robert Liddell wrote to Pym after he had read the typescript of *Some Tame Gazelle* in 1934: "I think you have a genius for quotation which has probably never been equalled."

Duncan-Jones gave us some useful information about an Oxford education. During Pym's years at St Hilda's, 1931-34 (as well as during Duncan-Jones's own time there, 1959-62), students in the Honour School of English Language and Literature studied works up until 1830 only, with half of the syllabus focusing on Old and Middle English texts. Criticism was given no emphasis and few genres considered other than poetry.

In spite of her full social life, Barbara received a Second-class Honours degree in 1934. Noting that it was quite usual for St Hilda's candidates to fall short of Class 2, Duncan-Jones believes Pym did much more studying than her diaries would lead us to believe. Along with her fellow students, Barbara had to write nine three-hour exam papers and then pass an oral exam (a "viva") before receiving her degree. Because the vivas were used to determine borderline students' final placement (fail/pass, fourth/third, etc.), their length varied. Consequently, students learned "as much literature as possible by heart, both as preparation for the gruelling written papers, and for use, if required, during the oral examination."

In addition to the poems she studied and memorized in preparing for her exams, Pym evidently continued to read and memorize poetry for pleasure after her university days, as her

Contents

The North American Conference 2004	1	Reviews	14
"Poor Mildred" by Barbara Pym	7	Notice Board	15
Pym gleanings	10	*Green Leaves* contents lists, Volumes 1-9, 1994-2003	16
Hilary Crampton Walton 1916-2004	11		

characters frequently quote poems written after 1830. Further evidence that Pym knew a great deal of poetry by heart are the small errors that occasionally creep into the poems she quotes — a sign that she was drawing on her memory rather than consulting a book.

With Pym's solid education and great love of literature, her characters naturally turn "to poetry, read or remembered, in the watches of the night, or times of anxiety." They also allow poetry to play a role in everyday life, as when Wilmet Forsyth carefully chooses the books to put beside the bed in the guest room before Mary Beamish arrives — "some anthologies of poetry and good novels by female authors."

two of Pym's most intense sources of pleasure: poetry and food. Recall Wilf Bason declaring "what poetry there is in cooking!"

Duncan-Jones believes *Some Tame Gazelle* is one of Pym's "most brilliant" novels when it comes to "witty and apt deployment of quotation." Also, it is unusual in that a male character, Archdeacon Hoccleve, indulges obsessively in literary quotations — from his reflections on parish visiting, reminding him of Gray's *Elegy* (and annoying Harriet, who is trying to go about her business), to his sudden remembrance of suitable lines from Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (beating to the draw his learned wife, Agatha, who was about to "riposte with a bit of Piers Plowman"). In contemplating other passages in STG, Duncan-Jones noted that in this early novel, Pym has already established the habit of "associating literary quotations not only with English language and literature graduates, but also with distinctly un-poetical, un-literary types" such as Mr Mold and Harriet ("who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?"). Of course, Bishop Grote, who certainly viewed himself as literary, deserves special mention for having insulted Belinda not only by implying that she is "not fair to outward view," but also misidentifying the poet who wrote those lines.

The rest of the talk focused on *Less Than Angels* and *A Glass of Blessings*, where Duncan-Jones believes quotations are used with "especial brilliance." In *LTA*, she concentrated on Catherine Oliphant, who quotes from and discusses poetry on almost every occasion, sometimes irritating those around her, especially Tom Mallow. For instance, she recites lines from Sonnet 19 ("Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws") when she sees a row of houses with stone lions decorating their gateposts. In the kitchen, she ponders whether she should avoid using a bay leaf from a tree growing in the garden of Thomas Hardy's birthplace in her *boeuf a la mode*, and instead press it between the pages of *Jude the Obscure*.

Duncan-Jones believes Tom's inability to take any interest in the freely-associated links Catherine makes between daily life and poetry, "makes the ultimate non-sustainability of their relationship painfully clear." Yet literature goes beyond these free associations and is a genuine comfort to Catherine in moments of loneliness and desolation, just as it was to Pym. At Tom's death, Catherine remembers lines from Vaughan ("but what fair Well, or Grove he sings in now, /That is to him unknown"), which Duncan-Jones finds to be an excellent choice. "For Catherine Oliphant, as for Barbara Pym herself, poetry works ... it has the power to mitigate disappointment and loss."

A Glass of Blessings is Pym's most perfect novel, in Duncan-Jones's opinion. She noted that many of the poems that Pym draws on for the book are modern ones, and "the quotations used are subtler, briefer, less florid but more telling than in the earlier novels." For example, Wilmet and Mary share close knowledge of a poem by Walter de la Mare, leading readers to suspect they have more in common than Wilmet thinks. As in *LTA*, we see connections between "two of Pym's most intense sources of pleasure: poetry and food." Recall Wilf Bason declaring "what poetry there is in cooking!" after Wilmet compares his handwritten list of suitable dishes to a poet's jottings.

The opening of Chapter 13 stands out as particularly subtle and witty when it comes to deploying literary allusions. Remarking on the winter weather, Wilmet reports that "February and March were cruel months." Then, in what Duncan-Jones describes as "the kind of abrupt shift of tonal register of which Eliot himself was a master", we watch as Pym "descends from this resonant religious imagery to mundane details about the unpoetic Rodney and burst water-pipes." Later in the novel, Pym again moves easily from the poetic to the domestic as Wilmet, in the greenish twilight, contemplates the compost heap made up of grass cuttings and garden rubbish at the foot of the garden of the Anglican retreat house where Mary Beamish is working. She recalls Marvell's lines about "my vegetable love," and imagines Keith, Pan-like, peering through the leaves.

Duncan-Jones ended by noting that in the late 1970s, Pym compared novel-writing to making chutney — "mixing all sorts of disparate ingredients together and simmering them until the magic moment when a new flavour emerges." Yet this same idea had taken root earlier in Pym's mind when she wrote the scene about the compost heap in *AGOB*. To Duncan-Jones, "Barbara Pym's devotion to English literature, fostered at Oxford, but developing in an essentially natural and spontaneous way, provided the rich green heap of fertile fragments from which her wonderful novels flowered." How grateful we are that Pym studied hard at Oxford and had such an intense love for poetry: her novels continue to enrich the lives of her readers, just as poetry enriched the lives of her characters.

The Victorian novel in modern dress

Exchanging reading lists is one of the most popular activities at the Pym conferences. Because of Janice Rossen's talk, our lists are now much longer. She focused on three groups of twentieth-century women writers from England, who, like Pym, carry on their storytelling in a manner rooted deeply in the Victorian period. Her talk was based on her book, *Women Writing Modern Fiction: A Passion for Ideas*, published by Palgrave/Macmillan (details are available at http://www.palgrave.com or www.amazon.com).

Pym and several other modern novelists tell their stories in a way that can best be described as "traditional": plots have a beginning, middle, and end; usually a dilemma is definitely solved; characters are more or less consistent, and they act in funny or peculiar ways to amuse us, or else they have poignant feelings, allowing us to sympathize with them and mourn over the generally wretched human condition; settings are English and the social structure is a source of irritation and comedy. These novels are quintessentially English, about how people feel (Austen's *Emma* being a perfect example). To use an old-fashioned term, they are "moral." Rossen believes these novels incorporate the difference between good and bad behaviour. Also, courtesy and consideration matter.

Rossen focused her talk on certain twentieth-century English women writers who, like Pym, wrote (or write, as some are happily still with us, though I will stick to the past tense!) in their individual, and even quirky, voices, but who used this traditional approach. She began by making two generalizations.

First, these writers remained feminine, though not feminist; and modern, but not modernists in the sense of Woolf and Joyce.

Though not especially "intellectual," their passion for ideas pointed them toward detective novels or university fiction, or anything showing "intelligent heroines hard at work *thinking*." As for literary style, they wrote from "the logical progression of Victorian realism," as carried into the twentieth century "beyond *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Middlemarch*." After all, as Rossen asked, How many of us first read Pym because she was described as being like Jane Austen?

Second, as the twentieth century progressed, writing in a more ironic and cynical style became popular. "Many writers are melancholy by temperament, and part of their job is to describe the horror and gloominess of life." Yet all Pym admirers would agree that "the more light, the more humour, and compassion, the more wit and love that you can smuggle into a novel, the more of a continual delight it is."

Rossen then gave us an overview of the three groups of twentieth-century women writers she views as "Pym's literary compatriots." The first consists of "the big, intellectual, fantastical, heavy-hitter lot: Elizabeth Bowen, A. S. Byatt, Iris Murdoch. The second (which can overlap the first) comprises the passionate, romantic, melodramatic writers: Baroness Orczy, Dorothy L. Sayers, Mary Stewart and Susan Howatch. The third group, which is where Pym fits, is the witty, light-hearted crowd (though verging on sentimental), such as Georgette Heyer, Stella Gibbons, and Hilary Mantel.

Regarding the first group, Rossen concentrated on Elizabeth Bowen, who wrote "exquisitely elegant romances gone awry." Prudence Bates would have read these novels, relishing their *unhappy* endings. Bowen's novels are gorgeously written, psychologically stunning, and "brilliant on fashion, styles, gloves and hats." Rossen read a passage from the 1933 novel, *To the North*, in which a young widow returning by train to England from Italy encounters a young man. In the scene, Bowen creates an "enormous sense of expectation." We can read the "gender differences, the fascination yet slight repulsion that each has for the other, the social class and ambitions of each." Rossen believes that Byatt, Murdoch, and Bowen are "conscious of their Victorian roots, and equally conscious of extending their literary styles to fit a contemporary modern world." Indeed, all of them are master craftswomen, have thought deeply about their art, have written extensively on the process of writing fiction, and are critics and intellectuals as well as novelists.

The second group are the passionate, melodramatic writers. Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is an excellent example, an adventure complete with clever disguises, incredible bravery, secret identities, and a highly romantic ending. Thrillers in a similar vein were written by Mary Stewart (popular in mid-century) and Dorothy L. Sayers, whose detective stories are "remarkable for their elegance of style and intense passion." For this second group, Rossen concentrated on a passage from one of Georgette Heyer's Regency Romance novels, *The Unknown Ajax*. Heyer writes "first class comedies of manners" with exacting historical details. The passage Rossen read deals with an aristocratic family that is in deep trouble because one of its younger members has been caught smuggling; but the family manages to fool two officers by having a dandified cousin pretend that *he* is the one who has been shot. This is pure theatre, and one can feel the class system vibrating. The ending is a happy one. Rossen notes that "It is goodness in a Victorian sense, where family honour is a prized value, mistakes are atoned for and recognized, and ... All will live happily ever after."

Another writer in this second group is Susan Howatch, whose books combine "theological, philosophical, and psychological issues in terrifically dramatic plots." She is also intent on social commentary, in keeping with the passionate Victorian pursuits of Dickens and Mrs Gaskell. However, Howatch's slant is distinctly twentieth-century and psychological. In her books, "the road to healing lies through self-knowledge and insight." Still, she uses the narrative style of the Victorians, including ghosts, mystical and exotic paraphernalia, and gothic horror clichés, all resulting in "a cracking good yarn."

The third category consists of the witty, sophisticated, comedy-of-manners novelists, who, like Pym, are sharp yet compassionate. Rossen's favourites in this group are Stella Gibbons, who wrote *Cold Comfort Farm*, and Hilary Mantel, the author of *Fludd*. In *Cold Comfort Farm*, the cheerful, practical heroine (very Pym-like) must deal with the fatalistic gloom of characters straight out of Thomas Hardy. By the end of the novel, she has the entire family hilariously reorganized. In *Fludd*, Mantel is clearly a keen social observer in the tradition of Pym, capturing details about women's clothing, including a description of raincoats that must be quoted: "[t]hey wore plastic raincoats of a thick, viscous green, impermeable, like alien skins. Should it chance not to rain, the women rolled these raincoats up and left them about the house, where they appeared like reptiles from the Amazon, momentarily coiled in slumber." Yet the core of this novel (which Rossen finds terrifically funny) centres on Mantel's dark and fantastical version of Catholicism.

Philip Larkin once complained, a writer was not taken seriously if he wrote something that was amusing. Rossen believes Larkin "couldn't help respecting, and indeed loving, Pym's novels, for the very reason that they were witty."

In putting together her talk, Rossen worked with several ideas. First she noted that when women's writings began to be taken seriously by universities, those most often discussed were feminist, experimental, and often political (Lessing, Drabble, Woolf). This led her to look at those writers who had been left out of "Serious Feminist Debate and accompanying Theory." Second, she observed that some of those writers were "disregarded in the feminist dialogue" because of their gift for comedy. As Philip Larkin once complained, a writer was not taken seriously if he wrote something that was amusing. Rossen believes that Larkin "couldn't help respecting, and indeed loving, Pym's novels, for the very reason that they *were* witty."

Rossen suggested that the enduring goodness and appeal of the novels on which she was focusing reflects the fact that they embrace the fundamental principle of all fiction: they start by plunging a character into trouble, things get worse and worse, and the struggle intensifies; then, with perseverance, heroism, or plain good luck, something is blessedly resolved at the end (or there is an "unhappy" ending, which can be satisfying because it is more "realistic"). As readers, we can participate in the struggle, and rejoice that good triumphs and justice is meted out — which, according to Oscar Wilde, is why it's called "fiction." Rossen noted, however, that as a sentimentalist, she wants to believe in it — or at the least enjoy seeing it described "so cunningly and cheerfully." Noting that the critic Daniel Mendelsohn recently observed that novel readers want to "get inside a character's head," Rossen believes this is at the heart of our fascination with the novel. "It gives us an unprecedented opportunity to see life from another angle."

Rossen concluded her talk by noting the Victorian qualities of *Excellent Women*. The Napiers move in downstairs, broadening Mildred's world and also breaking her heart. But she is a

good clergyman's daughter and wants to behave well, though this is difficult to do. Nonetheless, Mildred's "quiet heroism, courtesy towards others, yet firm self-protectiveness" will carry her through, winning her (for good or ill) the regard of Everard Bone. To Rossen, *EW* is "a Victorian story in modern dress." Pym is "more cynical than Jane Austen, whose heroines seem to end up with much nicer men, for a start."

Though twentieth-century irony is exquisitely pronounced in Elizabeth Bowen's novels, we also find old-fashioned values. Georgette Heyer too is determined to invoke such values. Throughout her work it is clear that those in a position of authority are expected to be merciful and compassionate. Though these novels are all romances, the romance between hero and heroine derives from drama that centres on the honour and comfort of a family. "They work *together* to end whatever curse has descended on the family — and *then* fall, delighted, into each others' arms. Goodness is the supreme value, in a Jane Austen sense: where goodness ought to extend to everybody, and not just a chosen few."

That is why we read fiction, or this sort of fiction, anyway. It reminds us of possibilities. It reminds us of the importance of choosing virtue.

In the novels of Howatch, Gibbons and Mantel, "the curses that afflict the characters — indeed, society as a whole — are much more sinister and palpable." These novelists work in different and original ways. *Cold Comfort Farm* and *Fludd* are fantasies: Characters are trapped in what appear to be hopeless situations, but are rescued, reminding us of Dickens and the irony of *Great Expectations*. Rossen believes that the writers or the characters, or maybe just the reader, come to *care* passionately about the fates of these "beleaguered" characters, which is the heart of this kind of fiction. These writers invite us to care for the characters (sometimes, even because they *are* scoundrels or cads) . . . "and they reveal intriguing and sometimes riveting insights about how the characters think." What we believe is going to affect what we see, and how we act. When this focus is combined with a Christian and Victorian set of values, it is clear that we are all "at the mercy of drives beyond our consciousness, terrors beyond what we feel we can endure — and it requires an effort to choose virtue."

Writers such as Pym, Heyer, and Gibbons explore these issues with more cautious optimism and from a low-key perspective — "over the tea-table, if you like." Other, more melodramatic writers, follow in a gothic/Brontë tradition. But whatever the tone of these novels, they get inside the characters' heads. "That is, they effortlessly point out to us that the ways in which we think, see, believe, process information, and decide (or not) to accept healing and redemption — to be, in short, rescued from the curses which beset us — this choice is of paramount importance. That is why we read fiction, or this sort of fiction, anyway. It reminds us of possibilities. It reminds us of the importance of choosing virtue." Rossen ended by noting the central dilemma of Victorian spirituality: "the distaste, shock, and finally complete renunciation on the part of Anglican clergymen against the doctrine of hellfire and damnation." This issue engaged the clergy during the waning days of the Church of England, and these twentieth-century women writers continued to explore aspects of that question in the decades that followed. They have their characters show compassion to the afflicted in what we might view as profoundly moral tales, which we continue to explore today.

Once the stronger sex: good men in Pym novels and Tom Hanks films

Once again, Father **Gabriel Myers** made us aware of the infinite possibilities that Barbara Pym's novels offer when it comes to making unexpected, and often delightful, connections. Myers, a Benedictine monk of St Anselm's Abbey in Washington, DC, frequently speaks at Pym conferences. This year, he examined the work of the actor Tom Hanks filtered through the lens of Barbara Pym, and came up with many interesting, thought-provoking links between the way Hanks plays his various roles and the way Pym treats her male characters. Though readers often have a negative view of Pym's men, we find more and more of their nuances if we dig into the text carefully. Likewise, when Hanks portrays his not-so-excellent characters, his subtle acting foreshadows their eventual redemption. Myers' talk efficiently see-sawed between film clips of each of the scenes he discussed and readings from Pym.

We began by recollecting three of Pym's cads: Rocky Napier, Fabian Driver and Adam Marsh-Gibbon. Just as Pym was growing into her art when she created Marsh-Gibbon, who is proud of his velvet dinner jacket and resemblance to Shelley, Hanks was young in his craft when he made an imperfect attempt to take on the arrogant airs of Laurence J. Bourne III, a New-England aristocrat, wearing a tuxedo, in the movie *Volunteers*. Yet in the same way that Marsh-Gibbon undergoes a sort of conversion after Cassandra's apparent elopement to Budapest, Hanks succeeds in making Bourne a redeemable scoundrel, capable of contrition too. In the film clip, we watch the haughty Bourne, joking with, chatting up, and ultimately insulting Beth, the young woman who has been his seat-mate on a long airplane trip. Yet we sense that he really is interested in her. In a later scene, he tries to impress her again, and ends up infuriating her. Yet, we watch him finally grow hesitant and then human, when he offers her a Coke, pointing to the possibility that he has what it takes to become good.

Though Myers noted that Pym novels have heroines but no heroes, he did argue for the heroism of Rodney Forsyth.

Myers looked at the theme of men and their desire to be left to themselves — as in the case of Nicholas Cleveland with his soap animals, Dulcie's brother-in-law, who enjoys classifying Masai warrior-spears, and Tom Mallow, who lets Catherine make the decisions and mend the fuses. Myers believes that Hanks "makes a virtuosic variation on this theme" in the movie *Big*, where he plays Josh, an 11-year-old boy in a 30-year-old body. Hiding this transformation while waiting for a cure, the boy takes a job in a toy factory and brings home a female colleague one evening to his toy-strewn apartment in New York. In the film, he tells her not to touch his model of a ship, just as Nicholas might have warned Jane to be careful of his tobacco leaves or Tom resented Catherine tidying his papers. Though comic, the scene ends on a bittersweet note. Preparing to sleep in their separate bunks, Josh leans down to give the woman a glow-in-the-dark compass ring, "So you won't get lost." As in Pym's novels, here we have humour, but also a sense of what Philip Larkin described as "the underlying loneliness of life, the sense of *vulnerant omnes*, whatever one thinks of when turning out the light in bed."

Myers finds that every now and then a kind of "Cinderella-process" will transform a male Pym-character. One example is Rupert Stonebird, whom Myers views as a fuller, rounder, more complex male character, who develops over the course of *AUA*.

"Pym allows him the sort of uncertainty and interior dialogue usually reserved for female characters." Rupert is quiet, is not pushy, and wears glasses. "He is neither too smooth nor too inept in dealing with women, thanks to feminine (but not effeminate) self-awareness." But perhaps his most crucial characteristic is that "he is capable of self-doubt, which allows the possibility of change."

Recalling Catherine Oliphant's belief that the loneliness of men is worse than that of women, Myers noted that "solitude is the school of heroism." Though Pym captures this in some of her male characters, it is harder to capture on film. However, in *Joe versus the Volcano*, Hanks portrays a young man, the ultimate loser, who sets out on a voyage of discovery, but ends up stranded on a raft with an unconscious shipmate, Patricia. In this movie, "we exult in Hanks' treatment of solitude," and admire the gentleness with which Joe treats Patricia, including giving her careful sips of champagne.

Though Myers noted that Pym novels have heroines but no heroes, he did argue for the heroism of Rodney Forsyth. Rodney is concerned when Wilfred Bason loses his job, he doesn't ask for the name of the male who telephones Wilmet, he comes to the rescue of a neighbour with a plumbing disaster, and (as we discover in NFRL) he eventually agrees to go on a "couples-holiday" with Piers and Keith — "this is generosity of a heroic order!" Rodney and Wilmet's ability to laugh about things together (following the visit to Wilf Bason on Christmas and over Prudence's uncomfortable regency sofa) seems a good sign.

Digby Fox is possibly another "hero." He plays the role of comforter with Deirdre and is cited by Professor Mainwaring as having qualities that will make him an "excellent husband and father." Digby makes several curtain calls in later novels, including being the person chosen to eulogize Ester Clovis twice (in both AFGL and AQ), "gallantly omitting all mention of 'hair like a dog!'" Regarding Digby, Myers noted that "a good love story requires some resistance to be overcome." In LTA Digby, through patience and kindness, eventually wins Deirdre despite her strong attachment to Tom Mallow and his memory. The Hanks version of Digby is Joe Fox in *You've Got Mail*. Joe learns that the Internet romance he has been having is with the woman his family firm has just put out of business. In spite of this, he perseveres, carrying a bouquet of daisies to Kathleen, who has a bad cold (echoes of Ianthe and John Challow). The scene has many subtleties, highlighting the Pym-like attention to detail that Hanks brings to his roles.

Myers ended by noting that "there is an old-fashioned quality in these movie scenes, as perhaps there is in Pym novels." We enjoy following these "cads and child-men" around, whether on film or in the novels, and watching them occasionally become transformed into Cinderellas or even heroes. Is this because of a nostalgia we feel for good manners, truthful observation, and honourable behaviour? Myers isn't sure. However, he reminded us that Digby seems nostalgic himself when he says "One's apt to forget that women consider themselves our equals now... Just occasionally one remembers that men were once the stronger sex."

Working women in the Pym era

Dolly Smith Wilson wrote her PhD dissertation in Modern British History on "The True Sphere of Women: Gender, Work and Equal Pay in Britain, 1945-1975." She spoke to us about women and their work during this period: a topic of interest to Pym readers, as Pym herself worked full time from 1947 to 1974 at the International African Institute.

Wilson pointed out that Pym was the exception among women of her day. First, an Oxford education for a woman was rare (men outnumbered women ten to one at the university), and there was even some discussion of whether it was a "waste to educate women." Second, she had a serious career at the African Institute, and was paid a fairly high salary compared with other women (though much less than a man in the same job would have earned).

Though few women had worked outside the home before World War II, there was a labour shortage in the UK after the war, and more and more women then took jobs. However, women were often not eligible to participate in pension plans and had to deal with hostility in the workplace owing to the notion that they were "taking a job from a man."

Wilson's information Wilson gave Pym readers a clearer idea of the situation Pym faced during her years at the African Institute, as well as insight into the lives of her female characters working in offices (such as Prudence, Letty, Marcia, Ianthe, Mildred), at home (Dulcie and Catherine), or in other people's homes (the host of domestic servants who play such important roles as "go-betweens" in the novels).

After this presentation, we enjoyed viewing the two Pym films, *Tea with Miss Pym* and *Miss Pym's Day Out*. Then we met for dinner, which was delicious and gave us an opportunity to get to know each other better.

Knitting in the life and works of Barbara Pym

The last presentation of the conference was given by **Perri Klass**, a pediatrician, published author, assistant professor of pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine, and medical director and president of "Reach Out and Read," a national organization that provides books for young children through their pediatricians' offices. She also has a passion for knitting: while in medical school, she would knit during lectures. Klass and other members of the society have also done a great deal of knitting during Pym conferences over the years.

Whenever knitting is mentioned in the novels, we are clearly in the hands of an expert. As always when it comes to details, Pym gets it exactly right.

Klass's highly entertaining talk began with a look at the history of knitting in England, including war-time knitting for military personnel. She also touched on the knitting that was done in the United States for those suffering war privations in Europe (did you know that Macy's in New York City would help knitters pick out their wool and then ship the finished garment to the designated charity free of charge?). She showed some slides, some of which brought as much laughter as Bishop Grote generated at the parish hall. Patricia Cowan, who transformed herself into a one-woman research department for the Barbara Pym knitting project, gleaned many details from experts in England on the subject. Among them was Richard Rutt, author of *A History of Hand Knitting* and the former bishop of Leicester (at one time known as the "knitting Bish").

Klass focused on the role of knitting in the lives of Barbara Pym and her characters, pointing out that in *A Very Private Eye* knitting is mentioned in several places. In January 1935 Pym notes that she is "knitting a sock, dark blue — but ah for whom?" (hint: it is thick enough for a Finnish winter). In February 1941, during the Battle of Britain, she writes about the long nights at the First Aid Post, "smoking, knitting, talking, eating."

Though it does not appear that Barbara did much knitting after the war, she was clearly aware of the technical side of the craft. Whenever knitting is mentioned in the novels, we are clearly in the hands of an expert. As always when it comes to details, Pym gets it exactly right.

The question Klass raised is, why do her characters knit? The simplistic response is, these are people who *would* knit – but of course the answer is more complex than that. Characters knit to pass the time — Belinda, while chatting with Mr Donne, knits on a project that is beginning to look very much like an undergarment for herself. In *EW*, the wife of the president of the anthropological society knits, and subsequently dozes off, during Everard and Helena's lecture. In "Goodbye Balkan Capital", Laura sets off for the First Aid Post with her gas mask, her knitting, *Pride and Prejudice*, and a precious bar of milk chocolate. Here we realize that knitting can help people in times of fear. Klass mentioned that people have recalled how knitting in air raid shelters during the Blitz brought comfort both to the knitters and to those nearby.

Knitting is also associated with old age. In *AFGL*, Martin doesn't want his mother-in-law to knit, preferring her to spend her time more usefully in copying parish records. During the blackout, Miss Lee and Miss Grundy settle by the fire with their knitting, highlighting the fact that the old are often better able to cope with such situations than the young. In *QIA*, Letty has few possessions, but she takes her knitting in its flowered cretonne bag as she moves from one house to the next.

Knitting is associated with the vocabulary of yearning; it offers comfort but it also expresses devotion. It is a vehicle for emotions, but it is also practical.

Some Tame Gazelle opens with Belinda's contemplation of the curate's knitted combinations (perhaps made of "Meridian"? — we were shown a slide of what they might look like). Knitting plays a role in these character-pairs: Belinda and the Archdeacon; Belinda and Agatha; Mr Donne and Olivia; and Bishop Grote and Belinda. Many of the important dynamics that exist among these characters are well expressed through knitting. Mr Donne's announcement that he received a pair of hand-knitted socks causes Belinda to contemplate the possibility that he loves the knitter, Olivia Berridge. The story of the pullover that Belinda contemplates knitting for the archdeacon is a symbol of "what might have been." It points to the intensity of Belinda's love and her desire to commit an act of devotion — that is, knitting him a sweater. However, Belinda realizes that knitting can be too dangerous to be undertaken, with the possibility that Agatha will find out and examine the garment closely, or that it might not fit properly. Still, knitting also lays the groundwork for gentler feelings. At the end of *STG* we find Belinda believing that she could almost "love Agatha as a sister" when Bishop Grote confides that the sock Agatha has made him is not quite long enough in the foot.

In *AGOB*, Klass notes that Wilmet, a sophisticated and feminine character, states that she does not knit. In contrast, her somewhat unfeminine mother-in-law, Sybil, does, and makes a sweater for Professor Root that matches his eyes. Wilmet misses this clue to Sybil's devotion — a clue that Harriet would have picked up immediately. Toward the end of her talk on *AGOB*, Klass flashed a series of pictures from old knitting catalogues on the screen, and it was delightful to imagine which one would make a good "Keith".

Klass closed her talk by noting that Pym uses knitting in the same way that she uses poetry — thus coming back full circle to Katherine Duncan-Jones's lecture at the beginning of the conference. Knitting is associated with the vocabulary of yearning; it offers comfort but it also expresses devotion. It is a vehicle for emotions, but it is also practical. Keeping their hands busy at knitting is one of the "small blameless comforts" that many of Pym's heroines enjoy ... and at least a handful of Pym's fans as well.

Discussion of *The Sweet Dove Died* and Conclusion

Anthony Kaufman, who recently retired as a professor at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, led a discussion on *The Sweet Dove Died*. There was general agreement that this novel is perhaps not the best introduction to Pym. Leonora Eyre, who is a mixture of the tragic and the comic, has several characteristics that set her apart from many of the major protagonists in the other novels. She appears to have money, as she owns the building in which she lives and wanders about the auction rooms in search of lovely things. She does not take comfort from literature or engage in church work. She is a solitary figure, and even states at one point that James had robbed her of the joy of solitude. The novel also differs in being populated by fewer characters than Pym's other works. However, one of those characters makes a strong impression: an audience member described the American, Ned (maybe the only truly nasty character in Pym's work) as a ruthless version of Leonora herself, noting that Leonora senses in him a "fellow predator."

Among the many interesting points raised was one that some of us had missed: Leonora doesn't like cats – so perhaps we should abandon all hope that she will ever have a full life!

On this note, Pym VI ended. The audience thanked Ellen Miller for preparing such a wonderful program and making sure that every aspect of it ran smoothly. We left with new ideas about Barbara Pym's work and the assurance that many more areas remain unexplored. Among the conference evaluation forms that Ellen received were several from participants who were inspired to re-read (yet again) the novels, armed with fresh insights from the speakers. One captured the true spirit of the conference:

"The amazing thing about Pym is that she speaks to such a disparate group; and when we come together, we're not disparate at all. We're unified in our response to her genius."

Conference report by Beverly Bell

Woollen comfort

As a precursor to Perri Klass, eighteen years ago, at the first BPS conference, in 1986, Victoria Glendinning spoke of knitting in Pym in her paper on 'The Pym Man'. She demonstrated her Theory of Displacement, explaining that although Pym's books are permeated with the thought of sex, it is never directly referred to. Instead, woollen goods — scarves, combinations, gloves and especially socks — represent desire. She spoke of 'the sexual symbolism of the sock', seeing handknitted socks in Pym's novels as tokens of love, of sexual currency; holes in socks indicating lack of love. Bedsocks or even woollen combinations represent love, she told us; socks tucked into combinations, like those of the curate in the opening scene of *Some Tame Gazelle*, indicate a *lot* of love!

More recently, Klass's findings were confirmed at the British Psychological Society conference of April 2004, when a psychologist reported, 'Knitting is such a relief from life's great terrors' and can prove therapeutic (*The Times*, 16 April 2004).

Poor Mildred

Barbara Pym

Miss Helena Tillotson was regarded in Bassington Regis as a perfect example of a devoted sister. She had sacrificed her youth to making a home for her old father, and when he had died she had at once done the same for her brother, the Reverend Gabriel Tillotson, vicar of Bassington Regis. Miss Helena's admirers always implied that Gabriel had been utterly destitute before she came to live with him, but it was questionable whether he was as happy under her rule as he had been when he lived alone. He was a scholarly, good-looking man in the early forties, more interested in his books than in his parish, but of a kindly disposition, and a learned preacher. His sister, as befitted a homemaker, was some years older, a brisk, capable woman, with iron-grey hair and a generally sharp appearance. She was the acknowledged ruler of the village, and every new resident had to be approved by her before he or she was accepted and called upon by the best people. Her comment, if she disapproved, was always very much the same; the newcomer would be summed up as 'rather a common person' and dismissed from Miss Helena's mind.

New residents were a rare thing in Bassington Regis, and it was now some years since 'rather a common person' had come to the village. But at this time the house next door to the vlcarage was empty, and had been put up for sale. It was bought by a stranger, a Mrs Ireby. Nothing was known about her except that there did not seem to be any Mr Ireby. At least, she was not bringing a husband with her.

Mrs Ireby showed herself to the inhabitants of Bassington Harris for the first time at the Sunday morning service. She was easily distinguished, as she was dressed in a yellow costume, with a large hat of the same colour. This in itself was enough to make Miss Helena purse her lips, and say "Rather a common person, I think. One would have thought that out of respect for her husband's memory. . ." she did not finish her sentence, for it had just occurred to her that, what with her frivolous way of dressing, Mrs Ireby probably wasn't a widow at all. If she had been, she would surely have been dressed in the sober, dowdy clothes which were the invariable garb of widows in Bassington Regis, however long ago their husbands had died. Altogether, Mrs Ireby did not look the sort of person one would want to know, and as far as Miss Helena was concerned, the matter was at an end.

But it was not at an end. Indeed, it hardly began to be a matter at all, until lunchtime at the vicarage.

The Reverend Gabriel Tillotson, sitting patiently at his end of the table while his sister carved the duck with her usual vigorous movements, remarked casually, "Who was that pretty young person in church this morning?"

"Young person?" Miss Helena went on disjointing the duck without looking up. " I didn't notice any young person, unless you mean Connie Mallaby, but you could hardly call her pretty."

"Oh no, this was a stranger, a young woman in yellow," said Gabriel innocently, "a pretty young woman."

Miss Helena put down her carving implements. She had never, in all the years she had made a home for him, heard her brother talk like this. It was an unheard of thing that he should even notice who was in his congregation, let alone what colour anyone was wearing. Miss Helena exclaimed in amazement mingled with alarm "Do you mean Mrs Ireby who's come to live next door? We decided that she looked rather a common person."

"But, Helena," said Gabriel mildly, for after all she was his elder sister, "have you met her? How do you know that she is" – his lips curved faintly in a smile – "a common person?"

Miss Helena returned to her carving with renewed ferocity. She vented her anger on the duck by tearing it limb from limb. So that woman had been making eyes – Miss Helena s knowledge of technique was limited – at her brother during the service. "I am not usually wrong in my opinions of people," she said coldly. "A woman can always tell," she added, thus shutting her brother out from any further discussion of the matter, she hoped. As far as she was concerned it was at an end.

She handed Gabriel his plate, which he took absently, not noticing that out of revenge she had given him only a stringy-looking leg and none of the breast.

But the matter was still not at an end. In the days that followed there was naturally much talk about Mrs Ireby. She was a widow, her husband had left her, she was divorced and her lover had forsaken her, she had never been married at all ... these were some of the rumours that were circulated in the village. But there was certainly no doubt about one thing, Mrs Ireby was quite young and she was pretty. The vicar's judgement had not been at fault there. Also, she seemed friendly, and those who had spoken to her said that she was very nice. Some members of Miss Helena's circle began to unbend and admitted that, when all was said and done, they had not heard of 'anything definite against her '

This was Mrs Ireby's own opinion. She knew that she was quite respectable and had been a widow for three years. She also knew that she was as nice as most people are, and she was a little puzzled and hurt to find that she was not given a more cordial welcome in Bassington Regis. She had always understood that she would find many kindly people in a village, who would be glad to draw her into their circle to share their many activities, for somehow it was always assumed that people in villages had more activities than people in towns. She was beginning to come to the conclusion that Bassington Regis couldn't be that kind of a village. She had already discovered that Miss Helena Tillotson was the most important person in it, and as her garden adjoined that of the vicarage, she was able to see that the vicar, who looked a nice, friendly sort of man, was under his sister's thumb.

One hot afternoon she saw him coming out through the french windows on to the lawn. He was carrying a book and a blue cushion. Mrs Ireby saw him place it carefully on a rustic seat, that looked very damp and dirty. He had just got himself settled when Miss Helena appeared on the lawn, calling sharply, "No, Gabriel, *not* the blue cushion!" and Mrs Ireby had seen her march off with the cushion under her arm, presumably leaving her brother without a substitute, for she looked the kind of person who would not allow any cushion whatsoever to be used in the garden. Poor Vicar, thought Mrs Ireby, as she peeped over the wall and saw him hopelessly trying to make himself comfortable with an old sack.

Mrs Ireby was not usually a very bold woman, but she was kind-hearted, and on this occasion her kind-heartedness got the better of her sense of what was proper behaviour between a vicar and a respectable widow who are strangers to each other. Without thinking, she seized a cou-

ple of her own bright garden cushions, and with a careful aim, for it was not her intention to hit the vicar, she hurled them smartly over the wall. Thus Miss Helena, who had been looking out of the bathroom window, as she frequently did now that Mrs Ireby had come to live next door, saw the whole thing. She saw a red cushion come flying over the wall, followed by a green and white check one, she saw her brother look around in bewilderment, and then get up and go to the wall. She saw Mrs Ireby's head pop up, and then there they were shaking hands, and laughing in a most improper fashion. Miss Helena tried to protest, but she was rooted to the spot, although she managed to open the window very quietly to hear what was being said.

The conversation was a light, friendly one. Its unusual beginning made it almost frivolous.

"I know I shouldn't have done it", said Mrs Ireby.

"Why not? It was sensible and kind of you. That old seat is horribly damp and abounds in earwigs."

"I should have brought them round," said Mrs Ireby, "only I should have felt rather silly coming to pay a formal call with two cushions in my arms."

"Why, you've nothing but vegetables in your gardens" exclaimed Gabriel, who had been looking around him. "Did Miss Lorrimer think only of utility?"

"I'm afraid so," laughed Mrs Ireby. "There isn't a flower anywhere. I must do something about it."

"I could give you some plants and cuttings," said Gabriel, not seeing Miss Helena looking out of the window. "And. in the meantime you must have some flowers," he added, and before Mrs Ireby had time to reply, he had moved over to the round bed in the centre of the lawn and begun picking the treasured carnations. His sister watched him in horror-struck amazement, but she was too much afraid of missing anything to stop him. When he had finished there were perhaps a dozen carnations left, and these were too full blown or otherwise imperfect ones. All the rest were being handed over the wall to Mrs Ireby.

She blushed most charmingly as she thanked him.

It was perhaps fortunate that Miss Helena did not catch her brother's next remark. It was so unlike the Gabriel Tiliotson she knew. "You have cheered my dull afternoon with your charming company," he said, and turning round he saw that his sister was watching out of the bathroom window. The sight of her seemed to inspire him to be yet more unlike the Gabriel Tillotson she knew. "All my afternoons are dull," he said "but now that you've come to live here I hope we shall have many conversations over the wall."

"Even in the winter?" suggested Mrs Ireby.

"Well, of course," laughed Gabriel, "but if you're still as considerate then as you were this afternoon I think you will ask me to tea."

"I must go now," said Mrs Ireby, seeing that Miss Helena was approaching them. "Do you know what I shall do with these carnations?" she asked.

"You'll put them in water," said Gabriel intelligently.

"No," said Mrs Ireby, and then she raised her voice a little, "I shall send them to be put on my husband's grave. They were his favourite flowers." Now, she thought, I hope the sister heard that, and after thanking Gabriel once more she disappeared behind the wall just as Miss Helena arrived.

"Gabriel!" called Miss Helena loudly, "it's teatime."

Mrs Ireby looked at her watch. It was twenty minutes to three. She would have thought from the look of her that Miss Helena would have concocted a better excuse for calling her brother away than tea at such an unusual hour. Still, she supposed that there might be people who had tea at twenty minutes to three. One was always finding out things.

Gabriel and Miss Helena walked silently into the house. He was thinking that there had been something vaguely unsatisfactory about his meeting with Mrs Ireby. What was it that had not been quite right? It took him some time to realise that it was because of what Mrs Ireby had been going to do with the carnations. "I shall send them to be put on my husband's grave". . . It annoyed Gabriel to think that he was unwittingly providing a handsome floral tribute for the late Mr Ireby, however excellent a man he may have been. He had meant the carnations for his widow. And yet that hadn't really been his intention either. There had been no thought of husbands, deceased or otherwise, as he picked the flowers. He had intended them for a pretty woman who had been kind to him, and that was all there was to it. He looked out of the window, and noticed that the roses were at their best. He would take her some roses, but these should be for herself. Roses didn't travel as well as carnations; he could point that out to her.

II

The next day the vicar was seen walking up to Mrs Ireby's front door, carrying an extravagantly large bunch of roses. A watcher reported that he went into the house at teatime, and did not emerge until it was time for evensong at half past seven. As the days went on other watchers reported other happenings. The vicar and Mrs Ireby were seen walking over the moors together, not – unfortunately – hand in hand, but they had seemed 'very intimate'. They were heard in the library discussing books they had apparently lent each other. The peach trees in the vicarage conservatory were stripped of their fruit, the vicar himself was seen picking raspberries and uprooting plants, regardless of whether it was the right time of year or not to move them, and all for Mrs Ireby. Almost worse than this, if anything could be worse, was the change that Miss Helena noticed in her brother. He had become much more lively, and although he was still absent-minded his abstractions had a different quality about them, almost as if – Miss Helena hesitated before admitting it – he were *in love*. He had taken to smiling when there was no apparent joke, he hummed to himself at mealtimes, and his answers, when his sister attempted to remonstrate with him, were often pert and frivolous.

"Dear Gabriel," she said in an indulgent, sisterly tone, when they were at supper one evening, "I know so much more about the *world* than you do."

Gabriel looked up from his pork pie, a little surprised at his sister's curious remark, which had come after a harmless conversation about the choir boys' cassocks. "Why?" he asked.

Why? It had not occurred to Miss Helena that her superior knowledge of the world could be questioned. She was temporarily at a loss for an answer. "I am an old woman," she said finally, "and I have seen many things, more than you would think."

"Out of the bathroom window?" suggested Gabriel. Miss Helena went red with anger, and gave a little snort, while she framed a crushing reply.

"Only a very simple person would be taken in by a woman like Mrs Ireby. She could be very unscrupulous about getting what she wanted," said Miss Helena, in a tone full of dark meaning.

"What would she be likely to want?" asked Gabriel.

Miss Helena put down her knife and fork and rose from the table. "I had hoped I should not have to tell you," she declared, "but people are talking about you and Mrs Ireby Your names are being coupled together."

"Well, I am pleased to have my name coupled with hers," said Gabriel calmly. "Gabriel Tillotson and Felicity Ireby. Gabriel and Felicity Tillotson," he added slowly, and even repeated it, so that Miss Helena found herself being ignored,

while her brother sat with an abstracted smile on his face, looking not at all like a respectable middle-aged vicar whose sister has made a home for him.

III

The climax came a few days later, when Gabriel received a letter from the Bishop, announcing that he was to be made a Canon of Brandesbury Cathedral. It had come at last, this preferment that Miss Helena had always been hoping for. Now was the time to act.

The next day Gabriel went on a visit to the Bishop, who was a personal friend of his, and Miss Helena realised that her opportunity had come. As soon as her brother was in the train, she went to Mrs Ireby's house, and, quite pleasantly, told her the news.

Mrs Ireby, who was arranging flowers – flowers which had come from the vicarage garden, Miss Helena noticed with a wave of anger – did not seem as surprised as Miss Helena had expected.

"It was so kind of you to come across," she said, "Gabriel told me yesterday."

Miss Helena swallowed her annoyance, and said in a calm, reasonable voice, "Of course, it is what we have always wanted." She felt justified in giving a slight but unmistakeable stress to the 'we'. "Gabriel is a brilliant man, and he is wasted in this small parish," she continued, "I am sure you realise that."

Mrs Ireby did realise it.

"It would be unfortunate," went on Miss Helena, gaining courage, "if anything happened to prevent him from attaining to that high position which God has intended for him."

Mrs Ireby agreed that it certainly would be. "In Brandesbury we shall take our place in Cathedral society, among the very best people," Miss Helena paused, and an almost dreamy look came into her eyes. She was already pouring out tea for Bishops and Archdeacons. But she was soon rudely awakened.

For Mrs Ireby's reply, although it was pronounced in quiet, ladylike tones, without the least suggestion of impertinence, was that crushing Americanism "so what?"

Miss Helena started. She opened her handkerchief and twisted it fiercely. She blew her nose with a loud trumpeting sound. She settled her hard straw hat more firmly on her head, and finally she spoke. But her voice had suddenly become that of a broken old woman, and her words came slowly and with difficulty. "Your friendship with my brother must stop," she said. "There is something that has been kept from people here, something that has been kept from you, something that you ought to know."

Mrs Ireby looked rather startled and sat down on the sofa by Miss Helena, waiting for her to go on.

She did. "Gabriel is not a single man," she declared. "He has a wife still living."

Mrs Ireby went very white. "But I had no idea," she stammered, "I always thought he was a bachelor, he never *told* me. . ."

"No, my dear, we do not speak of it. Poor Mildred is in a mental home in the north of England. She has been there for ten years, and there is no reason why she should not live another thirty." Miss Helena's voice was much less broken as she uttered these last words, in fact, had Mrs Ireby been in a condition to notice, she might even have detected a faint satisfaction in her tone. But poor Mrs Ireby was incapable of noticing or saying anything.

"I am sorry for you both," continued Miss Helena, "but there is no way out. 'Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder!'" she added smugly.

But Mrs Ireby was not listening. "Oh Gabriel, my *dear*," she murmured, in a half-dazed voice.

"I had hoped to spare you this," said Miss Helena, putting on her gloves. "You must let me know if there is anything I can do for you."

"I shall go away today," said Mrs Ireby through her tears, "I can't bear to stay and see him again. And then when I feel I can, I'll write to him. . ."

"No, don't write," said Miss Helena hastily, "let him think of you as he last saw you. Let him remember a beautiful friendship unspoiled by this shadow. He would not want you to write." No, decidedly, she mustn't write.

"We were going to be so happy," said Mrs Ireby, "Oh, why do these things happen?"

Miss Helena patted her half-heartedly on the shoulder. "We are refined through suffering," she said rather impatiently, for comforting did not come naturally to her. "There is a wonderful strength to be found in prayer," she added.

But poor Mrs Ireby thought this a very cold and unfriendly substitute for a man's love. She said nothing, but went on sobbing, not even looking up as Miss Helena tiptoed from the room.

IV

That afternoon Mrs Ireby was seen going to the station with luggage. Miss Helena, from her post in the bathroom window, had the satisfaction of seeing the departure with her own eyes.

Gabriel Tillotson came home the next day and was told that Mrs Ireby had been called away suddenly, as a near relation was seriously ill. He accepted this story quite calmly, and. Miss Helena congratulated herself on having been just in time. It was unlikely that the woman would come back soon, for she could hardly disbelieve Miss Helena's story, and Gabriel would forget about her in his new life at Brandesbury.

But Gabriel did not forget. As the days went on and he heard nothing from Felicity, as he would persist in calling Mrs Ireby, he began to worry about her. "I think I shall write," he said. "The Post Office could surely forward the letter."

"Oh no, she went so suddenly that she hadn't time to leave an address," said Miss Helena. "I shouldn't write. She will be back quite soon, I'm sure. The relative will either get better or die," she added sensibly.

"Well, I hope so," said her brother vaguely, and then he went into his study, where he stayed for some time.

Three days passed and still there was no news of Mrs Ireby. Miss Helena began to congratulate herself that all danger was past, and threw herself energetically into the plans for their departure to Brandesbury.

Then one morning Gabriel had a letter, and when he had read it he smiled and went about the house whistling 'God moves in a mysterious way', rather an ominous sign, Miss Helena thought. He continued to worry about Mrs Ireby, but half-heartedly, as if he were only pretending.

Miss Helena was not kept in suspense much longer, for one morning another letter came, a letter which caused her brother to look very gloomy. He sighed and handed the letter to her, but she did not read it. Somehow she felt it was no use.

"Helena," said Gabriel in grave tones, "that letter contains some very serious news. It's about poor Mildred."

Miss Helena went very red. There was nothing she could say now.

"She passed away yesterday morning, very suddenly. Poor Mildred, it was a happy release. But every sorrow has its compensation. I am a widower now, and a free man."

"But Gabriel," stammered Miss Helena, "I had no idea ..."

"No, you had no idea how ill poor Mildred was. You mustn't reproach yourself, Helena. I feel we are both a little to blame. We have let Felicity take our burden upon her shoulders!"

Miss Helena knew now that her brother had outwitted her. "Listen,

Gabriel," she said. "I did it for your own good, you must understand that."

"Yes," said Gabriel indulgently, "you have been a good sister, and now you will be able to be a good sister-in-law as well," he added with a smile.

But on thinking it over Helena decided that she had not been sent to this earth to be a sister-in-law to "rather a common person". Somewhere there was other work waiting to done.

And as it happened she soon discovered where, for a few days later she saw in the same *Times* that contained the announcement of her brother's engagement to Mrs Ireby, the news that her elder brother's wife had died suddenly. Almost before the unfortunate widower had time to realise his loss, his sister Helena was on the doorstep with all her luggage. She had come to make a home for him.

Copied by permission of Hazel Holt, Barbara Pym's Literary Executor, from MS Pym 94, folios 59-75, in the Bodleian Library Pym Archive.

Pym gleanings

In books

** In the November 2000 edition of *Green Leaves* we rejoiced that Barbara Pym's entry in the new, revised, 2000 edition of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, edited by Margaret Drabble, had been expanded to twelve lines. Alas, in the second edition of the *Oxford Concise Companion to English Literature*, published in 2003, the entry remains at only seven lines:

> PYM, Barbara Mary Crampton (1913-80), novelist. Her novels include *Excellent Women* (1952), *Less Than Angels* (1955), *A Glass of Blessings* (1958), and *Quartet in Autumn* (1977). They are satirical tragi-comedies of middle-class life: many of the relationships described consist of a kind of celibate flirtation.

** Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (Flamingo Modern Classics ed., 1994) has an introduction by David Bradshaw, Worcester College, Oxford, dated 1993, in which he writes:

> It was the openness, wit, effortless learning and apparent insouciance of Huxley's early work which proved such an appetising concoction for novelists as diverse as Evelyn Waugh, William Faulkner, Anthony Powell and Barbara Pym.

** In *Pause Between Acts* by Mavis Cheek, the main character, looking for books to read to get her through a certain time in her life, turns down books by other authors, calling them unsatisfying "holiday" books; then says:

> "I had to look elsewhere and the best alternatives proved to be those books which created such a tight world of their own that yours as the reader simply could not penetrate. Jane Austen of course, Arnold Bennett naturally, E. M. Forster, Barbara Pym and now, currently, Laurence Sterne."

** In *The Afterlife*: *Penelope Fitzgerald Essays and Criticism*, edited by T. Dooley, C. Carduff and M. Kirkby (Counterpoint, New York, 2003), the essay, "Really, One Should Burn Everything" on the letters of Philip Larkin, includes:

> What schoolchildren learn and will continue to learn from his poems is that 'what will survive of us is love.' And there is some evidence of this too in the [volume of] *Selected Letters*—in his encouragement of Barbara Pym for example, when she was struggling with unresponsive publishers, a correspondence that became what their editor, Anthony Thwaite, calls 'a delightful and moving intimacy.'

Another essay in *The Afterlife*, "A Secret Richness", quotes a review of *A Few Green Leaves* from *The London Review of Books*, 1980.

In the press

** *The Open Book: Literary Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies*: includes in its April 2004 issue, Vol. 5 No. 1 pp 5-8, 'Indexing (and) Barbara Pym' by Hazel Bell (an expanded version of the article that appeared in *Green Leaves* Vol. 5 No. 5, Nov. 1999).

** From the *Guardian*'s obituary of Pamela Howe, a radio producer, on 18 March 2004:

> That sense of humour and her literary judgment were behind her efforts in the 1970s – with David Cecil and Philip Larkin – to resuscitate the reputation of Barbara Pym, through a radio documentary and readings of her novels.

** The *Bulletin of the Angela Thirkell Society of North America* Holiday 2003 edition, suggests other authors for Thirkell fans:

> If you like county and village life, you may enjoy Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, some of the Barbara Pym novels, or Miss Read.

** *The Guardian* on 6 Dec. 2003 included a survey, 'Books of the year', in which 'critics and guestwriters reveal their favourite books of 2003'. John Bayley wrote:

> Anita Brookner is on top form with *The Rules of Engagement* ... (after reading a Brookner I always want to re-read a Barbara Pym and I chose her last and in some ways best, *A Few Green Leaves*).

** From a review by Nicholas Lemann in *The New Yorker*, 9 April 2001, of *The New Nature of Maps* (Johns Hopkins, 2001):

> The soil in the British Empire was not in fact colored pink, except on maps, but the uniform color there helped fix the empire in people's minds as an organic whole. ("The way things were going nothing was pink on the map any more," a character in Barbara Pym's declinist novel *Quartet in Autumn* reflects.)

In academia

** Orna Raz wrote a paper in 2002, 'A thankless task: educated women in the novels of Barbara Pym 1949-1960', to qualify for admission to the Ph.D. programme of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The first chapter, 'Who are Pym's educated women?' explores the status of the educated women in her novels, the kind of education they have, their social class and cultural background. The second, 'What can educated women do?', deals with the expectations of these women: their opportunities and limitations – in particular, what they can or cannot do with their education. The third chapter, 'What do Pym's educated women do?', is devoted to the realization of those potentialities: the women's occupations and acts, what they actually do in the world of the novels.

Orna Raz is now writing her Ph.D. dissertation on 'The social dimension of the novels of Barbara Pym in the 1950s' from the point of view of religion, women and education.

Hilary Crampton Walton 3 January 1916 - 7 February 2004

Obituary

It is an extremely difficult thing to do, to write an obituary of a dear friend you have known for over fifty years. All those memories, jumbled up together – how impossible to put them into any sort of formal structure. How difficult, in fact to write anything as formal as an obituary for someone as informal as Hilary. A memoir, then, or just memories.

I first met Hilary when Barbara and I became friends as well as colleagues and I came to know her as part of that entity called Barbara-and-Hilary. They were then living in Barnes and had, indeed, lived together for most of their lives, first sharing that splendid childhood in Oswestry, then for a short time living with two other families in wartime Bristol. But it was after the war, putting behind them Hilary's brief marriage and Barbara's unhappy love affairs, that they set up the home together that Barbara had projected all those years ago, in 1934 when she first began writing "a story about Hilary and me as spinsters of fifty-ish." They remained together for the rest of their lives, in Pimlico, in Barnes, in Brooksville Avenue and finally, in Finstock.

Barbara worked as an Editor at the African Institute and Hilary for the BBC, first in the Gramophone Department and latterly as a producer of music programmes for radio. So they led separate lives, but sharing a house they also shared each other's lives to a greater extent than most sisters. I was always struck by the harmony of their joint existence – in fact the only time I ever heard of any disagreement between them was in the winter when Hilary, who didn't feel the cold, complained that Barbara, who did, had the electric fires on unnecessarily.

Sisters dwelling in amity indeed.

Their temperaments were completely different: Barbara was reserved, always preferring to be the observer, Hilary was extravert and outgoing, much more social, but the differences (differences that they each acknowledged and valued) only strengthened their affection and each, in her own special way, gave something valuable to the other. In the bad years, when no one wanted to publish the novels, Hilary was immensely supportive, and, when at last recognition and a sort of fame came to Barbara, Hilary supported her sister (whose instinct was to back away from such things) in another, equally valuable way. To the very end, when Hilary lovingly nursed her sister through her final illness, they shared a way of life specially their own – Buddy and Poopa, or, you might say, Jane and Cassandra.

Often, when a writer dies his books sink gradually into oblivion. Hilary and I were determined that shouldn't happen to Barbara, and we worked hard to keep interest in her books alive. We worked together on *A Very Private Eye*, Hilary doing much of the hard slog, typing out letters, writing a splendid preface and making an Index that is a model of what such things should be. The book attracted much attention on both sides of the Atlantic and we were asked, from then onward, to talk to people about Barbara. We travelled together to Greece, Italy, and, above all to America, where interest in Barbara was even greater than it was here. There were radio interviews, which Hilary loved, especially delighted to be back again in Broadcasting House. And we talked to people, mostly in universities, though also, on one nerve-wracking occasion, to The English Speaking Union in New York, and wherever we went people responded to Hilary. It was delightful to see, that instant warming towards her by people she had only just met, drawn by her personality and that rare and indefinable quality we call charm. So many of these people became friends, corresponding with her, calling in at Barn Cottage whenever they were in England. Hilary and I also drove together the length and breadth of the West Country looking for Pyms and Cramptons, and shared the triumph when we finally slotted the last piece into that particular jigsaw.

In Barbara's memory Hilary set up awards for young librarians in the Bodleian. The Pym Society at St Hilda's was founded with her enthusiastic help and remained always enormously important to her, not only for Barbara's sake, but for the many new friends she made through it. Friends, indeed, defined her life. She had always taken part in Finstock village life, serving on the Parochial Church Council, playing the organ at All Saints, singing with local choirs, and now she became even more involved and her later years were filled with dinner parties, bagatelle parties, singing madrigals with friends, Thursday nights at The Plough – her life was always full. She loved Barn Cottage, surrounded by books and music – and the cats, of course, Jasper and Janey; there had always been cats. She travelled, right up to the end, a weekend in Athens, a cruise to Scandinavia, with kind friends who cheerfully pushed her wheelchair (her rheumatism had become disabling), always interested, always full of fun.

As well as the rheumatism, she suffered badly from glaucoma, but typically was never daunted by it. She listened to music ("I've never been a great reader") and avidly watched television ("Isn't Sky marvellous!"), passionate about golf and about "Brookside". She was herself until the very end.

Hilary was never just Barbara's sister, she was a person in her own right, as unique as a person as Barbara was unique as a writer. Yet in some ways, Barbara captured her all those years ago. There was a lot of Harriet Bede in Hilary (she loved being Harriet) and one of the words that sums her up was the word (an old-fashioned word now) that Barbara used of Harriet – "jolly". Jolly as the dictionary has it: joyful, pleasant, delightful, good humoured. I will miss her very much (we all will), and I find it difficult to believe that I will never hear her voice on the telephone again – Barbara's voice, on the telephone they were identical. But I know that everyone who met her, however briefly, will have happy memories of her. And that's quite something.

I would like to think that among the many mansions in Heaven there is a small but comfortable cottage. In the kitchen Hilary, with a gin and tonic, is preparing something nice for supper, upstairs Barbara, with a cup of Earl Grey, is tapping away at her ancient typewriter and in the sitting room, on the sofa covered with that William Morris willow-leaf chintz, two cats are curled up lovingly together. For ever. And Ever.

Hazel Holt

The funeral

A large congregation of friends joined many villagers and neighbours, together with relatives and members of the Barbara Pym Society, for the funeral of Hilary Walton in her much-loved parish church, Holy Trinity Church, Finstock, on Saturday 14 February, 2004. There were two favourite Anglican hymns, "Lord of all Hopefulness" and "Jerusalem the Golden", with a reading of St Paul's letter to the Corinthians on Love. The vicar, the Reverend Jane Knowles, spoke of Hilary's own love for this country church and of her life involving many interests: village life, love of friends, music and travel, her sister's writing, and Hilary's own work as a radio producer. Jane had visited Hilary in hospital in Oxford in the days before she died. The choir sang a madrigal which Hilary had chosen for her own eightieth birthday celebration. After the blessing a tape was played of the French piano piece (from Fauré's "Dolly Suite") which Hilary recorded with Daphne Oxenford during the time that they worked together at the BBC on "Listen with Mother".

The committal followed in the churchyard, Hilary's grave being with that of her sister Barbara. Tributes of spring flowers were later piled on the grave, adding colour to the grass-enclosed resting place.

A short walk away over the fields in the Village Hall refreshments were provided to make a light lunch during which memories and anecdotes were exchanged. There was a feeling that Hilary's charm and courtesy seemed to pervade the whole day.

Deirdre Bryan-Brown

* * *

The Vicar's Address

Although today is a sad day, yet it is one of great celebration, for a long life well and truly lived. Hilary died as she had lived, full of enthusiasm, still looking forward and still maintaining her gentle wit. For all her 88 years she was young at heart, and on being asked her age recently by a serious young consultant, she replied, 'two fat ladies". The consultant looked puzzled, so Hilary asked, "don't you play bingo?", whereupon the consultant realised the analogy, laughed aloud, and then Hilary responded "neither do I!". I know that many of you have such wonderful tales as these and I'm sure you will be sharing them with each other after this service and for many weeks to come.

Hilary was born on St Hilary's day, January 1916 – hence her name — in Oswestry, Shropshire, into a happy family. Her parents had many interests, including golf and Gilbert and Sullivan, and her mother rode a motor bike, so I suppose the scene was set, and Hilary's love of music and cars began. On leaving school, after a short time she went to work at the BBC in the gramophone department. Those of us who can remember "Listen with Mother" will be pleased to know that it was Hilary's hands that played the opening music, together with those of Daphne Oxenford.

She was married in 1942, to Sandy Walton, who was in the RAF, and together they planned to live in Greece after the war. They corresponded in Greek, and were passionate about the place. Sadly, the marriage didn't work out, and they separated in 1944. Hilary worked at the BBC for many years, and after 25 years' service she was given three months time off, which she spent in Greece. She retired from the BBC in 1971, and it was then that she bought Barn Cottage. Her sister Barbara joined her in Finstock on her retirement. They both enjoyed village life and the life of the church; a well known local resident told me just last week that they were the first people he met in the village, when they were on their way to a PCC meeting. Hilary was always interested in and did much careful research on local history, and was a founder member of Finstock History Society, and she did much investigation in to her own family tree as well. She sang regularly for many years with a local group here in Finstock, which I believe was extremely sociable. Another of her hobbies was embroidery, particularly church embroidery, and together with friends she visited many churches to see and admire their altar cloths. She also could write, and had had a piece published in the Lady Margaret Hall centenary publication, of which she was very proud.

Hilary loved her friends, and she in her turn was loved and admired by so many. It is rare that one of so many years should so much enjoy the company of people half her age, but she did, and she was thought of as part of the family. One recent memory of Hilary is of her standing at the gate of Barn Cottage with her hat and coat on, door closed, at 10pm, waiting to be taken over to the Plough to be with her friends.

Some of us were privileged to be with her during her during her last days. When I first saw her in hospital just a few weeks ago, she seemed quite well, and was looking forward to coming home, but nevertheless she still wanted a prayer, which we duly shared. Then, as the days went on, her health deteriorated, so that the last time I saw her she was indeed near the end of her earthly life. We prayed together again, and then I told her all the news of Finstock, and how the plans for the upper room church were progressing, thanks so much to her tremendous generosity and foresight, and she clasped my hand in both hers and with a real light in her eye she said, "that's wonderful, I'm so glad"; then in her own inimitable way she said, "Barbara would have thought so too". So I promised that to the best of my ability I would see it through. Hilary believed in the future, and although steeped in the worship of the Book of Common Prayer, she believed in the young and she wanted the young people to have the necessary facilities here, so that this beloved church in Finstock may be used by all ages both now and in years to come.

How fitting it was that on her last day, when she was visited by Ruth and Peter [Bramley], she should try to sing the *Laudate Dominum* which we heard at the beginning of this service; *Laudate Dominum*: "let us praise the Lord"; and how fitting it was that she and Michael [Collard] should share communion just a few hours before she died. How lovely it is that there is so much music in this service today, and that John [Garrick] was back from his holiday in time to co-ordinate it, and how lovely it is that we are all able to be here to share in this occasion. Hilary is free from infirmity, and she is free from failing sight. A few days ago as I was travelling up to Scotland, through the border country, with snow on the mountain tops and a large and wild landscape, I had a wonderful sense of Hilary's freedom, flying like a bird away from the body which had finished its earthly usefulness.

Hilary Walton — a loving, kind, enthusiastic, self-effacing lady who made a difference; not just here in Finstock, but wherever she went. I'm sure that now in some way she has been reunited with Barbara, to whose memory she was so devoted, and so now together they can sing with the angels; and I am also sure that nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

The Revd. Jane Knowles

Words of appreciation

Hilary's association with our family went back nearly sixty years through Annesley, my wife, her mother Dorothy Brownrigg (who used to call Hilary 'Hilaire'), father Gerald and Annesley's brother, Peter Brownrigg, who has lived for many years in Florida and to whom she became Godmother.

Since Hilary came to Finstock after her retirement, and in particular since her sister Barbara died, she came to regard us in the New Forest as the family she never really had. In particular she saw Ben, our son, as her adopted Grandson. As a family we have all experienced her love, great kindness and good friendship.

We have so many happy memories of times together. I think of all her visits to us and the times when we took her out. A highlight in recent years was a visit to *La Traviata* at Covent Garden. Then there were all those pub lunches in The Plough inn down the road here in Finstock. She had a great rapport with 'Nige', whom we are glad to see here, and who called her 'Hills'!

She loved her cats, and all birthday cards had to contain cats.

However, above all she loved people – of all ages. Although she shunned being the centre of attention and fuss she loved conversation and parties. She was intensely interested in the modern world. She was never one to be nostalgic about the past. Her great love, of course, was in the Arts, her passion was for Greece, its classics, archaeology and architecture. *How* she loved her visits to Athens, one in recent years with Peter and Ruth Bramley, and also her cruise with them down the Volga to St Petersburg.

She loved music, especially opera and choral music. She herself had been a choral and madrigal singer in Finstock. She loved the radio and television. She enjoyed latterly watching golf, despite her failing eyesight.

While she had an intellectual mind, she disliked stuffiness and snobbishness. She was just as happy discussing the storyline in a recent TV soap opera as discussing Radio 3 opera. She was also an Archers fan.

My abiding picture of her will be Hilary sitting in The Plough with a glass of gin and tonic or sherry in her hand and holding forth on the latest wrong-doing of Classic FM. Hers was an articulate mind, free-thinking, independent and liberal in her philosophy.

Hilary devoted much of her life, in between her social life with her dear friends in the village, to promoting the literary work of her beloved sister, Barbara, through the Barbara Pym Society. She travelled widely in the States and elsewhere, staying with Peter Brownrigg and family on several occasions, and more latterly had produced a cookery book based upon the recipes, times and places that Barbara wrote about.

We never thought of Hilary as old. Even in her late 80s she belied her age through her smiling face and alert mind. It was only when she finally entered hospital recently, and after apparently recovering from a heart attack, that God reminded her that it was time for her to rest. Even in hospital, up to nearly her dying day, she still wanted to go home.

In her passing her wishes have been upheld, and now she will rest happily alongside her sister Barbara here in Finstock.

David Gardiner

* * *

Tributes from abroad

On behalf of the Barbara Pym Society in North America, I share with all of you our deep sense of sorrow that we have lost Hilary. She was always very pleased that Barbara's work had found so many admirers in the United States and Canada. I was fortunate to have hosted Hilary and Hazel Holt when they came to Boston in the 1980s on a book tour for *A Very Private Eye* after I had made a video with them in Finstock. Thereafter, every time I met Hilary in New York or London or Oxford was precious; she was enormous fun to be with.

We will all miss her warmth, her generosity, her curiosity, and that special sparkle, but her contributions to our enjoyment and appreciation of Barbara Pym will continue to enrich us.

Ellen Miller

It's hard to not be able to attend Hilary's funeral because of being on this side of the Atlantic. For me the next best thing was to have a service myself! As the main celebrant for that day's monastery mass, I took a wild leap from the Temple Dedication to talk about Hilary. The text follows:

Dancing David, who brought the ark into Jerusalem, needed his wise son, Solomon to build a house for it (1 *Kings* 8). Together, the two are more than a sum of the parts. This is the secret of community, which is not the automatic result of sharing the same address.

It must be striven for, but is ultimately a grace, gladdening us wherever it blooms.

For example, Barbara Pym found the conditions she needed to write her perfect novels by living with her sister Hilary, who provided solomonic stability for Barbara's davidic nature. But that's not right, for Hilary was anything but boring. An early great character is based on Hilary: she is extroverted, wears tight dresses, loves to eat and flirt.

When I met Hilary in 1998 I felt vertigo – the voice and laughter were like the character in the book, but there was so much more to the real person – I felt completely disoriented. Hilary was fiercer than (I imagine) Barbara: there were 'rather severe philippics' (in Robert Liddell's phrase) about Philip Larkin, and some music for the Royal Jubilee (music being her field of expertise). She was both light-hearted and tough: no one could pity her for losing eyesight or living alone. Yet how generously she treated the ordinary fan, which is all I was.

After several years of correspondence, when my monastic future seemed doubtful, she sent me Barbara's pocket *New Testament* 'as a good luck charm', but of course it was so much more.

She died after a short illness. The previous day she had prayed with Jane her vicar, and received the eucharist. She had chuckled (at one of Nigel's naughty jokes?), and sung snatches of Mozart. Without denying the pain there was a deliberate choosing of joy, which is Barbara's great legacy to readers. Even so, after such a 'community-connection', letting go is hard.

When Ricardo, in *Some Tame Gazelle*, asks Harriet to play something after dinner, Mr Mold annoys Belinda with his pompous compliment for her sister. 'Certainly she looked very splendid sitting at the piano; it was not surprising that he should admire her. The first chords of *The Harmonious Blacksmith* jangled forth.' Belinda 'began to be a little anxious about the later variations, which she knew were rather tricky. But Harriet avoided this difficulty by playing only the first two variations. "I don't want to bore you with the whole lot," she said, and broke into a gay Chopin mazurka. There was now an atmosphere of peace and contentment in the room.'

Father Gabriel Myers

Reviews

No Soft Incense: Barbara Pym and the Church, edited by Hazel K. Bell. Barbara Pym Society/ Anna Brown Associates, 2004. 115 pp; 21 cm. Index. ISBN 0-9543316-6-4. £7.50, P&P add 56p (UK), £2.50 (US/Canada airmail) from: the Barbara Pym Society, St Hilda's College, Oxford OX4 1DY, England.

Simply put, *No Soft Incense: Barbara Pym and the Church* is a book even Alaric Lydgate (of *Less Than Angels*) would enjoy reviewing and favorably review! All lovers of the novels of Barbara Pym will want it on their bookshelf. The book is a collection of papers that have been presented at the various Barbara Pym Society conferences on both sides of the Atlantic. In the eloquent Foreword written by writer and film-maker James Runcie, well-known to Pym lovers for his film, *Miss Pym's Day Out*, he states "the pages that follow celebrate the churches, clergymen, and congregations that populate her novels."

This reviewer found the book helpful and enlightening because it brought together information about various aspects of the Church of England, Barbara Pym's attitudes towards them, and how they are reflected in her novels.

The collection starts with a thought-provoking and comprehensive essay on what relevance the church of Barbara Pym's novels has to the world and church of today, written by the Revd. David Cockerell, a parish priest in the Ely Diocese.

In her essay "A mini-history of Anglo-Catholicism," Kate Charles, currently the Chairman of the Barbara Pym Society and an author of page-turning mysteries, many of which have church themes, clarifies for the uninitiated or just plain confused what exactly Anglo-Catholicism is as Barbara Pym knew and experienced it.

Eleonore Biber expands on this topic in her paper titled "A strong smell of incense: aspects of Anglo-Catholicism in Pym's novels". Dr Biber recently completed her PhD thesis on aspects of Anglo-Catholicism in the novels of both Barbara Pym and A.N. Wilson. Joy Grant, on the other hand, humorously describes the reactions of various Pym characters to Roman Catholicism in her contribution titled "Birds, wormwood and Jesuits: Roman Catholicism in Barbara Pym's novels."

Although Pym characters may be curious about Roman Catholicism, the majority most emphatically shudder at the thought of "going over" to Rome and have decidedly mixed emotions about those who do. However, readers of Pym's novels have no quarrel, at least none that this reviewer has ever noticed, with a Lutheran pastor and Pym lover who did go over to Rome and became Father Gabriel Myers, a Benedictine monk of St Anselm's Abbey in Washington, D.C.

Readers of *No Soft Incense* have been blessed with three, yes three, contributions by Father Gabriel. In one essay he reflects on his decision to convert to Roman Catholicism and on his life and associates at the Abbey in terms of characters and excerpts from Pym novels. In another, as might be expected from one who serves as organist-choirmaster at the Abbey School, Father Gabriel talks about "Miss Pym and the Victorian hymn." (Those of us lucky enough to be present when Father Gabriel delivered this paper at Harvard and in London remember there was singing also!) The third contribution is Father Gabriel's "Seeking Barbara Pym: a pilgrimage," one which all Pym lovers may hope to take some day using the illustrated guide, *Following Barbara's Footsteps*, prepared by Ellen Miller, who was inspired no doubt by Father Gabriel's "pioneering" efforts, available on the Barbara Pym Website (*see following page*).

Useful also to all Pym pilgrims, either in an armchair or on site, will be Robert Smith's "Exploring London churches with Barbara Pym." This close friend of Barbara Pym and fellow "church-crawler" describes key churches he and Barbara liked to visit in London and mentions those which inspired the churches featured in her novels.

Given the importance of the clergy in Pym's novels, *No Soft Incense* has memorable essays about clergymen and their wives, although, as Pym readers know, to wife or not to wife is always a question! Kate Charles' "At ease with ladies: Barbara Pym and the clergy" is a delight to read, as is "Social class and the clergy" by Tim Burnett, associated for many years with the British Museum. Tim's contributions, both formal and informal at the Harvard BPS conferences attended by this reviewer, have always been greatly appreciated by those present.

Father Gerard Irvine, who had a distinguished career in parish ministry in London, has compiled an extremely welcome and useful Clerical Directory from the novels of Barbara Pym. All the clergymen readers have come to know (and love?) are listed in alphabetical order and the novel(s) in which they appear are given. Triona Adams, who like Barbara Pym read English at St Hilda's College, Oxford, offers an awesome overview (in keeping with her subjects!) of "Clergy wives: Roman matrons and Christian martyrs."

Since one cannot read a Pym novel without encountering numerous references to tea drinking and the comfort it brings as well as to the use of wine both in sacred and secular contexts, readers will appreciate the scholarly yet amusing essay by Judy B. McInnis, Professor at the University of Delaware, titled "Communal rites: tea, wine, and Milton in Barbara Pym's novels."

No Soft Incense concludes with a listing of the works of Barbara Pym cited in the text, with editions and abbreviations used for the titles; information about the Contributors; and an Index (of course!).

Readers should note, however, that in four of these essays, when an excerpt or quotation from one of the novels is used, the book title (in abbreviated form) followed by the page number is given, but the specific edition of the novel from which it comes is not stated. If the author does not indicate in a bibliography which edition of a novel is being used, the page numbers may not match those in the version on the reader's shelf.

In conclusion, after reading *No Soft Incense*, this reviewer has the perfect answer to Miss Lord's famous question to Dulcie Mainwaring (*NFRL*) about what does reading lead to: to enjoyment and enlightenment, blessings of which one can never get enough!

Frances McMeen, New York City

* * *

The Index to the writings of Barbara Pym reviewed in our last issue, which includes a table of the first pages of chapters in the editions used for the index, to enable references to be traced in different editions, is now available – 36 pages with card cover – in the US and Canada, for $4.50 (includes postage and handling). Please send checks, payable to the Barbara Pym Society, to Ellen Miller, 145 Indian Hill Road, Carlisle, MA 01741, USA.

NOTICE BOARD

Finstock day of celebration

All is now arranged for the events of Sunday 13 June 2004 at Finstock, the Cotswold village 14 miles north-west of Oxford where Hilary Walton and Barbara Pym lived in Barn Cottage since 1972. The day is intended as a celebration of the 25 years since the death of Barbara Pym.

A coach will leave St Hilda's College, Oxford, for – lunch at Finstock Village Hall; a special Evensong with the Bishop of Oxford and the vicar of Finstock at Finstock Church; and tea in the Village Hall. Throughout the day there will be tours of the Village and Barn Cottage. Then a coach back to St Hilda's.

(There is a charge for the coach and for lunch, both of which must be prebooked.)

The Finstock Festival

Soon after the Pym sisters, Barbara and Hilary, came to live in Finstock many villagers came together to produce a Finstock Festival, a week of varied events which brought the community together and celebrated and encouraged talents within the village. Unfortunately Barbara could not be much involved as she was unwell, but Hilary was enthusiastic and involved and became one of the founders of the Local History Society, which flourishes still and to which she contributed considerable research.

Now, thirty years later, it has been decided to have another Festival; Hilary was a keen supporter, went to planning meetings at the Plough Inn and had hoped to see madrigals sung from the garage roof reached by the door from Barbara's room. When she knew she would not be around to take part she gave it her blessing, as she did for the B.P. Day on 13 June; she was most anxious that the two events should go well.

The Festival will be held from Sunday 4th to Saturday 10th July 2004. On the Wednesday evening, 7 July, there is to be a focus on 'Finstock Writers Past and Present'. That will include a performance of a short musical by John Owen Edwards, Finstock's resident composer and conductor, based on Barbara's play, *The Magic Diamond* (written when she was nine years old!).

Information about the week will be posted on the village website:

www.finstock.org.uk

Michael Collard.

Annual Meeting 2004

The annual Oxford conference of the BPS will be held this year on Saturday-Sunday 4-5 September, at St Hilda's, with the theme, 'Mothers and Other Relatives'.

Following Barbara's Footsteps

> *A Few Green Leaves* is set in Oxfordshire; that is almost all we are told. Barbara Pym's style . . . has never included much by way of physical setting. And if at times this seems a shortcoming, it is because we have come to expect a lot: the author has given us a particular and a total world and we want to relate it to the familiar and the general one. We want to specify the London landscapes obliquely hinted at, to set down Leonora and the characters of *Quartet in Autumn* in familiar streets and houses.

So wrote Penelope Lively in Dale Salwak's book, *The Life and Work of Barbara Pym*. Now Pym readers can pinpoint specific locations in the novels and visit the places where Barbara lived, worked, worshipped and set her novels. A walking tour written by Ellen Miller is now available as a free download from the Barbara Pym Web site (www.barbara-pym.org).

Following Barbara's Footsteps is a 25-page visit to such special Pym places as her London flats, The Coppice in Bristol, and St Gabriel's Church. Colour photographs of Morda Lodge (with Hilary), the Suspension Bridge in Clifton, the flat in Barnes at 40 Nassau Road, and the Finstock cottage and church are among the several photos in the tour.

The purpose of *Following Barbara's Footsteps* is to enable readers to print out the tour and make their own "Pym Pilgrimage" much in the spirit of Barbara and her "Denton Pilgrimages." Those unable to travel to the UK will enjoy reading about these special Pym places and relating them to quotes from the novels and diaries.

Ellen is enormously grateful to her colleagues in the Barbara Pym Society – Father Gabriel Myers, Hazel Bell, Marianna Stewart, Norma Munson, Christine Shuttleworth and Maureen Woolley – for sharing their information, photos and memorabilia and providing editing and proofreading skills. Marcia Cohen assisted with layout and Sherrie Saint John prepared the pages for the Web.

If you do not have access to a computer and wish to order a copy of the walking tour, please send $15 to Ellen Miller, 145 Indian Hill Road, Carlisle, MA 01741, USA.

Moyer Bell

Britt Bell of Moyer Bell Books has a special offer on Pym titles. You can purchase them for $10 plus $4 handling through Ellen Miller. Please send a check for $14, payable to Moyer Bell, to Ellen Miller at the address above.

The list of Moyer Bell books is at www.moyerbellbooks.com.

A Very Private Eye, A Glass of Blessings, and *An Unsuitable Attachment* will appear this year.

The Barbara Pym Society 2003-4

Chairman Kate Charles
Membership Secretary Eileen Roberts
Secretary Chris Ward
Editor Hazel K. Bell

Committee

Phil Bacon; Bridget Guymer; Gabrielle Page; Maggie Parsons; Maureen Woolley
co-opted: Deirdre Bryan-Brown; Yvonne Cocking
US Organizer Ellen Miller
email: ellen@ellenmiller.net

Society correspondence and queries to:

The Barbara Pym Society
The Development & Alumnae Office
St Hilda's College, Oxford OX4 1DY
tel. 01865 276867; fax 01865 276820
email: eileen.roberts@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk

Editorial correspondence to:

Hazel K. Bell, 139 The Ryde
Hatfield, Herts AL9 5DP
tel. 01707 265201
fax 01710 273601
email hkbell@dsl.pipex.com

Pym website address:

www.barbara-pym.org

Honorary life members:

Mrs Hazel Holt; Professor John Bayley; The Revd Prebendary Gerard Irvine; Baroness James of Holland Park, OBE (P. D. James); Professor Peter Lloyd; Miss Muriel Maby; James Runcie; Professor Robert Smith

Contents lists, Volumes 1-9, 1994-2003

Vol. 9 No. 2 November 2003

Barbara Pym Society Conference 2003 1
Notice board 2
Annual General Meeting 2003 3
"Less Than Angels: the background 4
"Unsuitable for attachment": men in Barbara Pym's life" – Nancy Talburt 7
Publications 10
Obituaries: Maeve Brennan; James Hale 13
Anthropological poems by Barbara Pym 13
Pym gleanings 14

Vol. 9 No. 1 May 2003

North American Conference 2003 1
"In the Garden of Pym": Judy P. Smith 5
Imaginary conversation no. III 5
Marriage and spinsterhood in *Some Tame Gazelle* – Robin Joyce 6
Beneath the civility of Pym's world and our world – Anne Marie Owens 8
"The quintessential English gentleman": Siegfried Sassoo –: Deborah Fisher 10
Reviews 11
Pym gleanings 13
Index to *Green Leaves* volumes 1-8 14

Vol. 8 No. 2 November 2002

Barbara Pym Society Conference 2002 1
Notice board 2
Annual General Meeting 2002 3
"The Pilgrimage" – Barbara Pym 4
Unexcellent men in Barbara Pym's fiction – Patricia Shaw 8
"Someone from *The Guardian* is coming on Sept. 1st" – Lesley Grant-Adamson 10
Miss Pym and the Victorian hymn – Gabriel Myers 12
Flashback: the making of a Pym video – Ellen Miller 14
Pym gleanings 15
Letters to the Editor 16

Vol. 8 No. 1 May 2002

North American Conference 2002 1
Sonnet by Barbara Pym 7
Oxford in the 1930s and early 1950s – Eileen Roberts 8
Some Tame Gazelle: a brief history – Yvonne Cocking 10
A Barbara Pym Day at Lincoln Cathedral's Library 13
Pym gleanings 14
Notice board 15
Obituary: Charles Burkhardt 16
Imaginary conversations II 16

Vol. 7 No. 2 November 2001

Barbara Pym Society Conference 2001 1
Minutes of the A. G. M., 2002 3
"The German Baron" – Barbara Pym 4
Some Tame Gazelle: views and reviews – Yvonne Cocking 7
Moyer Bell: the newest Pym publisher 9
The secret life of Archdeacon Hoccleve – Nicholas Bennett 10
Prowling for Pyms – Norma Munson 13
The caterpillar in the cauliflower – Frauke Lenckos 14
Imaginary conversations I 17
Lorenzo and the Graveyard Poets – Hazel Bell 18
Book reviews 19
Pym gleanings 19
"Miss Barbara Pym" – Judy P. Smith 20

Vol. 7 No. 1 May 2001

North American Conference 2001 1
"An afternoon visit": Barbara Pym 5
Outings and events 7
Coming home – James Runcie 8
Pym gleanings 11

Vol. 6 No. 2 November 2000

Barbara Pym Society Conference 2000 1
Minutes of A. G. M., 2000 3
Barbara Pym and the Library of the IAI – Yvonne Cocking 4
"Barbara" – Elspeth Smith 5
A College Librarian's perspective on Barbara Pym – Barbara Levick 6
Pym online 7
On compiling a bibliography to Barbara Pym – Dale Salwak 8
Marcia Ivory in *Quartet in Autumn* 9
Pym in the *Church Times* 9
Obituaries: Lotus Snow; Patricia Shaw 11
Crossword 12

Vol. 6 No. 1 May 2000

North American Conference 2001 1
"The passionate language of geography" journeys in Pym – Frauke Lenckos 3
Hymn trivia in Miss Pym 7
Obituary: Peggy Hawthorne 7
Putting Pym on the Net 8
"An unsuitable attachment": love, marriage and alienation 9
NFRL on the air 9
Barbara Pym and ordinary Oxford – Alison Shell 10
Index to *Green Leaves* volumes 1-5 12

Vol. 5 No. 2 November 1999

Barbara Pym Society Conference 1999 1
Minutes of the A. G. M., 1999 2
My memories of Barbara Pym – Honor Wyatt 3
No thankless task: Barbara Pym as indexer – Hazel Holt 7
Bringing Barbara to Cowbridge 8
Indexing (and) Pym – Hazel Bell 9
Barbara in the German classroom – Michael Macke 11
Review: *Translating style* 12

Vol. 5 No. 1 July 1999

The 1999 BPS Spring meeting 1
In the footsteps of Barbara Pym – Gabriel Myers 2
Memories of my mother [Honor Wyatt] – Prue Anderton 3
Pym in America 5
Pymming Pym 6
Crossword 6

Vol. 4 No. 2 November 1998

The 1998 Conference an American view – Ellen Miller 1
An interview with Susan Jones – Triona Adams 3
Minutes of the 5th A. G. M., Sept. 1998 4
Catherine Heath: another novelist from St Hilda's – Hazel Bell 5
Crossword 6

Vol. 4 No. 1 March 1998

The 1997 Conference: a personal view – Deborah Fisher 1
Minutes of the 4th A. G. M., Jan. 1998 2
Food and the novel – Amy Myers 3
Dramatised Pym – Hazel Bell 7
Crossword 8

Vol. 3 No. 1 March 1997

The 1996 Spring Meeting 1
Minutes of the 3rd A. G. M., 1996 2
Birds, woodworm and Jesuits: Roman Catholicism in Pym – Joy Grant 3
Two English lady novelists: the ATS and the BPS – Hazel Bell 5

Vol. 2 No. 2 February 1996

A parade of fashions – Jean Harker 1
Minutes of the A. G. M., 1995 2
Maschler puddin –: John Bayley 3
Obituary: Henry Harvey 5
A plateful of blessings – Nigella Lawson 6
1995 Annual Meeting Sunday sessions 6

Vol. 2 No. 1 March 1995

Minutes of the A. G. M., 1994 1
Barbara Pym as I knew her – Muriel Maby 1
1994 A. G. M. and dinner – Eileen Roberts 2
Society news: A Pym thesis 2
The prehistory connection 3
Obituary: Gareth Griffiths 3
Pym Society members 4
Barbara Pym: the beginning – Peggy Hawthorne 4

Vol. 1 No. 1 July 1994

The Inaugural dinner 1
The Clerical Directory from the novels of Barbara Pym – Gerard Irvine 2
Collecting Barbara Pym – Louise Ross 3
Barbara Pym on audio-cassette 4
The Pym Society Founder Members 4