Green Leaves

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"A few green leaves can make such a difference." — Miss Grundy, *A Few Green Leaves*

The Barbara Pym Society Annual Meeting and Conference
27-28 August 2011, St Hilda's College, Oxford

by Ruth Taylor

Kathy Ackley had selected for us 'bits of brilliance that sparkle with wit and humour'. From Mr Latimer's proposal, Kathy identified two key words, 'respect' and 'esteem' – a litmus test for Pym heroines, who, reluctant to settle for loveless marriage, reject respect and esteem. Comedy lurks in the farcical elopement scene. And who has not felt like Mr Latimer who stormed out into the night but, once reaction set in, 'no longer wanted to do wild things'? Jessie is the happiest character because she has self-knowledge and is at ease with herself, looking on life with detachment and cheerful irony (like her creator, according to Hazel Holt). Pym wrote that the novel 'might be a comfort to somebody'. For Kathy, this is the ease we feel in the company of an old friend. It also gives us a delicious phrase to use for certain situations: 'rather Crampton Hodnet,' says Jessie to herself.

Conference Attendees

Eleonore Biber spoke on Oxford as an actual city in the work of Pym and her circle. *Crampton Hodnet* evokes the atmosphere of North Oxford and presents a comic view of university life. Robert Liddell is more satirical, while Larkin's *Jill* reflects his mixed feelings towards Oxford. A N Wilson, who juxtaposes the city of spires with working-class Oxford, called Pym 'the chronicler of quiet lives' and told Eleonore 'I worship her'. For Pym, the Bodleian Library represents scholarly retreat from the world, but also a place of romantic potential. Her diaries record encounters (some chance, many planned!) with Henry Harvey; Barbara Bird is her alter ego. Sheila Mallory, the detective creation of Hazel Holt, is a Pym heroine for whom the Bodleian is a place to glimpse a young man. Her old love Rupert recalls Rupert Gleadow and we hear Pym's voice in 'after that I haunted the library'. Adam in *Civil To Strangers*, restlessly looking up dictionaries, corresponds directly to Pym's diary entries. Finally, Pym's somewhat disillusioned visits to Oxford in later life echoed Jane's comment to Prudence, 'They are not long, the days of wine and roses.'

After tea a lively discussion session was led by the panel of Kathy Ackley, Eleonore Biber, Dan and Ann DiPietro, and chaired by Michael Wilson. *Crampton Hodnet* presents a Pymmian juxtaposition of self-awareness and self-delusion – but is it mainly men who are self-delusional? Pym isolates characters who are particularly attractive – and who feel it – such as Mr Latimer. Do good looks lead to greater self-delusion? Is Jessie a less pleasant character when we meet her again in *Jane and Prudence*? Pym allows her to 'catch' Fabian; there is no-one worth having in *Crampton Hodnet*!

The theme of marriage sparked the most spirited debate. Does the Clevelands' relationship, where each takes the other so much for granted, reflect Pym's view

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of marriage? The most contented couples seem to be older, with common interests, such as Sybil and Professor Root … but what about the middle-aged couples? It was pointed out that the Clevelands have separate beds! Mrs Beddoes does not miss her husband, and Barbara Bird's sense of what constitutes a full relationship is strange also. She later becomes a successful novelist but does not marry. Will Anthea, with her procession of young men, turn into a Prudence? Tom Sopko evoked the biggest laugh of the day with his observation that: men want a mother; men are infantile; men want to play with soap animals! Of all the relationships in this novel, it was felt that the only true one is that of Michael and Gabriel, who can finish each other's sentences.

Eileen Roberts told us that Barbara and Hilary's experience was not the norm; the majority of 1930s Oxford women graduates married – many marrying clergymen! It is Eileen's belief that Barbara and Hilary (who was married, briefly) did not want, deep down, to be married; they enjoyed 'the chase', and romance played a big part in their lives.

Dank, Leamington Lodge weather meant that the drinks reception was held indoors before the annual dinner, which was eaten to the hum of conversation and laughter. This year's speaker, Tim Burnett, a retired manuscript librarian at the British Library, was introduced by Clemence as an authority on class issues and customs of the Pym era. In 'Monsters: Barbara Pym and Jane Austen compared' he drew similarities between the two satirists' creations, humorous excerpts from both novels illustrating his theory that Lady Catherine de Bourgh is the ancestress of Miss Doggett. Then, to Clemence's rallying cry of 'Let joy be unconfined!' we moved to the SCR.

On Sunday some attended a service in Milham Ford chapel while others explored Oxford. An illustrated talk, '*Crampton Hodnet's* Oxford', was given by Chris Rutherford and Yvonne Cocking, who were introduced, to applause and laughter, as 'two mainstays of the society' and 'a double act well known to you all'. They vividly brought to life not just the novel but many diary references. They identified many of Barbara's haunts to which I intend to go 'on pilgrimage': Boffins tea shop is now Santander bank; the Cadena café was at 45–46 Cornmarket; Fuller's, where Francis and Barbara sit by the window, and where BP had coffee with Henry, is now Burger King. Reminiscences about Lyons Corner Houses made me wish they still existed; five floors with different music, a food hall with twice-daily deliveries, a hairdressing salon and a theatre-booking service. But rather than Edward Killigrew's disgusting-sounding 'Beano' or Flora's dry cake, let's hope they sold Leonora's favourites, chestnut purée pastries.

Shopping for clothes features in both diaries and novels. Elliston's, where Barbara once tried to exchange knitting needles to raise some cash but was refused, is now Debenhams; Rupert bought her a blue and orange scarf there for her nineteenth birthday. No one was tempted by the 'serviceable styles' of shoes which looked suitable only for tramping over Shotover Hill. At last I can visualise 'marocain': 'finished with a grain surface like morocco leather'. On your next visit to Marks and Spencer, remember it was the Phoenix cinema where BP had two male arms around her!

Mrs Cleveland offers Barbara a Gold Flake cigarette; Yvonne described the air at the International African Institute as 'thick with smoke' as she, Barbara Pym and Hazel Holt all smoked – when Yvonne once dropped a not-completely-extinguished cigarette into a waste paper basket, she had to rush it to the ladies' cloakroom which also features in *Less Than Angels.*

Some members spent Sunday morning in search of Leamington Lodge, which *is* fictional, but which is definitely on the Banbury Road. Mr Latimer's church must be St Michael's, Summertown. The final photo of the Botanical Gardens, where Francis and Barbara crouch (a favourite Pym word) behind bushes, looked ahead to 2012, when we are promised more about gardens ...

During the weekend, Tim Burnett presided over an auction of audiotapes of Pym's novels and Deborah Fisher organized a silent auction of books.

This year, interludes between talks were delightfully marked by Miriam Margolyes's beautiful readings of poems by Barbara and her circle: they wrote elegies when crossed in love or to a dull tutor. Later, 'Matchless Minnie', addressed to the Minerva we know from the famous photograph of BP outside Barn Cottage, showed that Richard Roberts did not share her affection for cats. The most poignant was Barbara's 1937 sonnet in memory of her whirlwind romance with Julian Amery.

After Sunday lunch the dramatised reading was as always highly anticipated. Once again Yvonne Cocking was the skilful adapter and in a phrase BP might have put in her notebook, 'The passage of time will be indicated by a tinkle of my little bell!' Alex Ward as the narrator captured perfectly the Pym tone of calm, observational detachment. As Yvonne pointed out, 'You will notice our membership does not run to many willowy young men', so 'seasoned performers' Tim Burnett and Michael Macke had been cast as Michael and Gabriel; their pirouettes inspired a round of applause! Miriam Margolyes inhabited the character or, should I say, channelled the spirit of the redoubtable Miss Doggett. Her explosive delivery of the single word 'PARIS!' was reminiscent of Lady Bracknell and *that* handbag. The reading made one realize the preponderance of chills, colds, hot baths, hot drinks and hot-water bottles in this novel – if serialized on ITV, it would surely be sponsored by Lemsip. The strength and length of the applause testified to the pleasure given.

Tom Sopko proposed a vote of thanks to Eileen for 'everything she does over the weekend', summed up by Michael Macke as 'Good *Stimmung*!' Eileen pronounced it 'the perfect end to a perfect conference' where 'you all know each other and it's a big family', telling us that the college porters notice this too because 'when you arrive you all hug each other!' Here's to more hugs and more laughs in 2012.

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Barbara Pym Society Saturday 27 August 2011, 11.30am

by Lorraine Mepham

Committee members present: Clemence Schultze (Chair); Eileen Roberts (Membership Secretary); Lorraine Mepham (Secretary); Yvonne Cocking (Archivist); Tom Sopko (US Organizer); Kathy Ackley (US Representative); Ros Cleal; Deb Fisher; Jean Harker; Rose Little; Chris Rutherford; Christine Shuttleworth; Alex Ward.

1. Chairman's remarks

Clemence Schultze welcomed all to the eighteenth annual conference of the Barbara Pym Society, and in particular Elizabeth Proud, our distinguished first chairman, who has done so much to publicise Pym to a wider audience through her numerous BBC dramatisations of the novels.

Clemence first noted two sad losses from amongst those who knew BP in person – Kay Phelps (the broadcaster Kay Batchelor), a neighbour of Barbara and Hilary in Finstock, and the kind donor to the BPS of 'Barbara's box'; and Father Gerard Irvine, who knew Barbara well. Clemence then thanked Jean Harker, Martin Rush, Judy Horn and Christine Shuttleworth, the editorial team responsible for *Green Leaves*. The magazine forms a vital link with the Society for those members who seldom or never attend meetings.

Chronologically speaking, the first activities of the year were teas in New York and Boston; this kind of local gathering is a wonderful way of maintaining contact and welcoming new members. The North American Board, led by Tom Sopko as Organizer, with Kathy Ackley, Barbara Boles, Judy Horn, Denise Marois-Wolf, Norma Munson, Donna Safreed, Isabel Stanley and Diane C Thompson, were thanked, particularly for the organisation of the March conference (see Tom's report below, item 7), memorable for the presiding presence of the moulting stuffed eagle (acquired, of course, from the Eagle House Hotel, Taviscombe).

In the UK, the BPS held their spring meeting in Canterbury, jointly with the Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship, cementing links with a society devoted to an author much enjoyed by BP. The theme was 'Anglicans Abroad', and speakers included Canon Edgar Ruddock, Terry Barringer, and our own Colin Oxenforth and Triona Adams.

Clemence thanked the members of the Committee for all their efforts over the year; their work will become more intense as we approach the BP Centenary in 2013. Plans for the Centenary include hosting the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM at St Hilda's in May or June 2013, which will form an excellent opportunity to showcase BP to attendees from the other 125 literary societies that make up the ALS. There will also be the normal conferences in the USA and UK, and a memorial service at an appropriate venue. The year as a whole is a great chance to raise BP's profile in the press, broadcasting media, and online, and Clemence appealed to members to contribute, by suggesting speakers, by hosting a local meeting, or through their media contacts. In particular, the Society is looking for volunteers for a publicity working party (see below, under AOB). Thanks to Jeff Manley, an application is going forward for a Westminster City Council plaque at Barbara's house in 108 Cambridge Street SW1.

Before the Centenary, of course, there will be events in 2012: the North American conference on *Jane and Prudence*, a spring meeting at St Alban's, Holborn (13 May), and the UK conference and AGM, with the theme of 'Gardens', from 31 August to 2 September.

2. Apologies: Hazel Bell, Kate Charles, Charles Gilbert, Maureen Lenk, Libby Tempest.

3. Minutes of the Previous AGM: The Minutes were accepted without amendment.

4. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

5. Financial and Membership Report

Eileen Roberts reported that BPS UK membership stood at 264 members, 18 of which are overseas (but not US). Three of the overseas members and 18 from the UK are Life Members, and there are also 11 Honorary Members, none of whom pay annual subscriptions. The UK account stands at £7076 (up on £6498.70 at this time last year), although there are still some outstanding bills, for example for the Mayotte Magnus photo rights (see below). Our biggest annual expenditure is on *GL*, for which the UK postage is around £800. It was suggested that the BPS could use a savings account, in order to gain at least minimal interest.

Tom Sopko explained our recent expenditure on acquiring the legal rights to a photo of BP by the well-known photographer Mayotte Magnus. This has cost £1200, to be split between the UK and US. We can now use this photo for publicity purposes. Negotiations are also continuing with Mark Gerson over permission to use one or more of his photos of Barbara. To recoup some of these costs, BPS is launching an appeal to the membership for donations. Donations of £15/$25 or more will be rewarded with a mounted copy of the Magnus photo.

Tom also reported that Lloyd Miller, a professional US graphic designer, has produced some designs for us to use in publicity (particularly for the Centenary), and that these have been given free of charge to the BPS. Thanks were recorded to Mr Miller for his generous donation, and also to Tom for all his hard work in organising this, and particularly for negotiating over the photo rights.

Miriam Margolyes very generously offered to record all of BP's books, without fee, for the BPS to sell, an offer very gratefully received. We would need to check this with Hazel Holt, but it is considered unlikely that she would object.

6. *Green Leaves*

Two issues of *GL* appeared in 2011. The processes of commissioning and editing have now been streamlined,

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and printing takes place in both the UK and US (an improvement in efficiency). The deadline for the receipt of copy for the next issue of *GL* is the beginning of September 2011.

7. BPS in North America

Tom Sopko (US Organizer) presented a report on the activities of the North American Chapter of the BPS. The NAC has 218 members as of July 2011, of which 34 have dues outstanding for the last year. 34 new members have been acquired in the last year, but Tom noted that a high proportion of the membership comprises seniors.

The bank balance stands at $8650, an increase of roughly $1360 from one year ago; the March conference made a net profit of $400.

The 2011 North American Conference in Boston was a great success; 51 attended the Friday night dinner and hymn sing, using Tom's newly issued 'Pymnal', and 83 attended over the weekend, of whom 21 were at their first BP conference. Small scale social gatherings continue to provide opportunities for fellowship outside the annual conferences – in September 2010 a group of nearly 30 met for tea at the Church of the Incarnation in Manhattan; in November 2010, 16 members, friends and guests met for tea at the Church of the Advent in Boston, and in June 2011, 15 members met for a garden party at the home of board member Denise Marois-Wolf in Acton, Mass.

The 2012 North American conference will be held at Harvard on 16–18 March and will focus on *Jane and Prudence*. Proposals for papers are due by 20 November 2011.

Norma Munson continues to handle Pym book sales in the US, including mailing books sold through Amazon; 7 copies of *No Soft Incense* were sold this year, and 8 copies of *A La Pym* (all copies of *ALP* have now been sold, and there are no plans to reprint it).

The BPS website averages 220 visits and 900 page views per week; the website can process credit card transactions for NA memberships and conference registrations. Our Facebook page has 382 followers and averages around 100 active users per week, and the Pym discussion group on Yahoo Groups (Pym-B) has 132 members.

8. Archivist's Report

Yvonne Cocking reported that the Bodleian Library (Department of Western Manuscripts) has provisionally agreed to accept some of the BP archive that the Society holds. This material will be catalogued by the Bodleian separately from the main archive of Pym/Walton papers, and a list will be put on the BPS website. This leaves some books, and audio tapes of the novels (both to be sold to members during the conference); audio recordings of previous conferences (of poor quality), and some photo albums, much cut about. The Society also owns BP's table (now in St Hilda's College SCR), an embroidery thought to have been done by BP, a drawing of Finstock High Street showing Barn Cottage, and the box in which BP kept keepsakes of 'Jay' (Julian Amery); these were all on display during the conference.

9. Elections

Ros Cleal is retiring after serving one term as Ordinary Member, and Jean Harker is standing down as Commissioning Editor. The Committee recommended the election of Jean to fill Ros's position of Ordinary Member, and also proposed the creation of two *ex officio* positions – that of Conference Co-ordinator (Chris Rutherford) and Editor (Martin Rush). All three were elected *en bloc* with no objections. Judy Horn remains Technical Editor of *GL*.

10. AOB

Volunteers for sub-committee: Clemence asked for volunteers to form a publicity sub-committee, to forward our plans for the Centenary. Linda MacDougall reported that she is currently writing a review of *Civil to Strangers* for *The Lady*. Elizabeth Proud suggested that her local library in Kilburn might host an event or exhibition.

Student membership rate: Tom Sopko raised the possibility of instituting a Student rate at the same level as that for Seniors, to encourage new younger members. The meeting was in favour of this.

Life Membership: Elizabeth Proud spoke in support of Life Members, and Isabel Stanley suggested that offering Life Membership might actually raise money, particularly for the Centenary. Dan DiPietro then suggested that a category of 'Centenary Member', perhaps with a 5-year membership, might act as an incentive to new members.

E-books: Tom reported that the reason BP novels are not available as e-books in the US is because Virago (who are issuing e-books in the UK) do not own the US rights. Moyer Bell, who previously published all BP's novels in the US, are now defunct, and the paperback rights might well be taken up by Penguin. E-books may then be available in the US. Tom will continue to monitor the situation and report back.

Books from Blackwell's sale: Ros Cleal offered to continue to collate lists of BP's and HW's books bought at the Blackwell's sale, and to curate a small exhibition of these books at the centenary conference(s). Her email address is roz.cleal@googlemail.com.

BP's grave: It was noted that BP's grave at Finstock is looking neglected, and the stone is crooked. Yvonne reported that according to her local correspondent, the graveyard is tidied twice a year. It was pointed out that Hilary had always maintained that BP didn't want her grave to look 'manicured', but we shouldn't let it become too neglected (and the crooked stone should certainly be remedied, or it could become a Health and Safety issue).

Gerard Irvine: Eleonore Biber reported that there will be a memorial service for Father Gerard Irvine at St Matthew's in Westminster, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in October of this year.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm.

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'As Good As Anything I Ever Did': Bits of Brilliance in *Crampton Hodnet*

by Kathy Ackley

Barbara Pym wrote to Robert Liddell in 1940 that she thought the novel she had been working on, *Crampton Hodnet*, 'has some bits as good as anything I ever did. Mr Latimer's proposal to Miss Morrow, old Mrs Killigrew, Dr Fremantle, Master of Randolph College, Mr Cleveland's elopement and its unfortunate end … I'm sure these might be a comfort to somebody' (*A Very Private Eye*, 100). I would suggest that not only are those scenes and characters as good as any that she had done at that point but that they are bits of brilliance that sparkle with humour and wit and with the gentle irony and astute insight into human behaviour that we see in her best work.

The proposal scene is quite funny, with Latimer's bumbling efforts to propose to Jessie counteracted by her suggestions that he cannot be serious, that he's not quite himself, and finally that he may be overtired and in need of Ovaltine. The humour grows out of the juxtaposition of Jessie's no-nonsense, sensible replies to Stephen's increasingly frustrated attempts to be taken seriously.

Besides showing Pym at her comedic and creative best, the proposal chapter also shows her sensitive insight into people's desires and feelings, especially evident in her portrayal of both Jessie Morrow and Stephen Latimer. In Jessie, we see the same complexity that we see in other Pym heroines: her desire for someone to love, her unwillingness to settle for an unsuitable relationship, and the inner strength that keeps her from compromising herself. For Stephen, the rejection is of a piece with the feeling of being trapped and doomed that he has felt all day, and Pym makes him not just a comic figure but a rather lost human being questioning himself. He seems genuinely to feel despair, and Pym seems to imply that even the silliest individuals deserve at least a little understanding. Pym's ability to convey both humour and sympathy in the proposal chapter in this early work is as sharply realized as it is in the best of her later novels.

In her list of good 'bits', Pym next mentions old Mrs Killigrew and Dr Fremantle. Pym's handling of Mrs Killigrew shows how talented a writer she was: she builds readers' impression of her by degrees, having others speak of her several times before she appears onstage, as it were. When we finally meet her in person halfway through the novel in the chapter 'Edward and Mother Give a Tea Party', we are fully prepared for her smug eagerness to impart the shocking news of Barbara Bird's and Francis Cleveland's declaration of love in the British Museum. It is also in this chapter that we get a fuller impression of Dr Fremantle. Though we have met him earlier, it is the scene in which he and Mrs Killigrew appear together that gives us a glimpse into a character that might have been a mere stereotype. His cool reception of the news about Bird and Cleveland enhances our interest in him. Both stand out as well defined minor characters whom we remember long after we finish reading the novel.

The elopement of Francis Cleveland and its unfortunate end is the final 'bit' that Pym felt she had done well. Narrated with a bemused tone, the elopement turns into a misadventure overlaid with an element of farce. Pym brilliantly portrays the uneasiness and apprehension of both parties on the day of the planned event: Francis in a panic over it, but determined to carry through after reading Barbara's note saying how wonderful it will be; and Barbara, trying to convince herself that their sojourn in Paris will be the ultimate romantic expression of their love. Both wish desperately to back out, but each carries on nobly – Barbara, to show Francis that she's not a 'cold fish', and Francis to show that he is 'something more than a doddering old man whose head had been turned by the admiration of a pretty young woman' (187). But, when they miss the boat from Dover and are suddenly faced with a night in a hotel together, it proves too much for Barbara and she flees to her friend's home with a feeling of enormous relief. Francis, too, is relieved, as we see him sitting at ease in the lounge with the older folks and anticipating his return home the next day.

The scenes and characters that Pym felt good about are brilliant bits of writing as well done as anything that she was to write later; they are written with the same confidence in her abilities that we see in her mature works. Her distinctive style and voice are well established in *Crampton Hodnet*, and the novel as a whole is uniquely Barbara Pym.

Kathy Ackley *is Professor Emerita of English at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, where she taught for 24 years. She is the author of* The Novels of Barbara Pym *(1989) and has given papers at several BPS meetings. She organises an annual summer trip to England for a British Mystery and Crime Writers program (www.britishmysterytrips.com).*

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City of Dreaming Spires: Barbara Pym and the Oxford Novel

by Eleonore Biber

Matthew Arnold coined the famous epithet 'city of dreaming spires'. His long poems 'Thyrsis' and 'The Scholar Gipsy' have been called the two great Oxford poems. His celebrated prose piece in *Essays in Criticism* is considered the city's finest tribute. His vision of Oxford, 'spreading her gardens to the moonlight and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age', has inspired succeeding writers.

The literature devoted to Oxford and its colleges is probably greater than that relating to any other university in the world. Oxford has been the setting for over 500 novels ranging from romance to mystery, from the biographical to the fantastic. Barbara Pym and authors of the 'Pym circle' – Robert Liddell, Philip Larkin, Hazel Holt – as well as A N Wilson, a great admirer of Pym, have all contributed to the tradition of the Oxford novel. My paper does not discuss the Oxford novel as *Bildungsroman,* but focuses on the Oxford novel in the geographical sense.

Pym's Oxford friends and her studies at Oxford provided an inspiration that lasted throughout her life. Pym deftly evokes the ambience of North Oxford with its Victorian-Gothic houses in *Crampton Hodnet.* Her short story 'So, Some Tempestuous Morn' is also set in North Oxford. Some of her other novels and short stories also show traces of Oxford.

Like Pym's short story, Robert Liddell's novel *The Last Enchantments* pays homage to Arnold in its title. It reflects aspects of Liddell's sharing a home with his brother Donald in North Oxford. The tone of this novel, however, is less light-hearted than that of *Crampton Hodnet.* The beauty of Oxford (called Christminster by Liddell) is threatened by the horrors of World War II. Also set in wartime Oxford is Philip Larkin's *Jill*, though its anti-romantic tone contrasts with Liddell's nostalgic portrayal of the city. A N Wilson's *The Healing Art*, set in Oxford in the late 1970s, juxtaposes the 'city of dreaming spires' with the Oxford of working-class people.

The Bodleian Library, one of the oldest and most important libraries in the world, features in the work of many of these authors. Larkin calls it 'Dull Bodley' in his 'Poem about Oxford', though Pym herself did not think of the Bodleian as a dull place. It was in this library that Pym's long attachment to Henry Harvey began. In *Crampton Hodnet* and in *Civil to Strangers* the Bodleian figures as a haven for scholars, a place of romance and of donnish eccentricity. Liddell focuses on some bizarre aspects of the library, and in *Some Tame Gazelle*, Dr Parnell, Bodley's librarian, raves about a Ladies' cloakroom in the main building. In Hazel Holt's *The Cruellest Month* her protagonist's memories of her undergraduate days spent in the Bodleian remind us of Pym's observing Harvey in the library and trying to get him to notice her.

There is a close connection between these writers' own experiences and their fiction. For Pym, it is not only her student days in St Hilda's but also her visits in later life, which inspired scenes in her novels. In *Jane and Prudence* the two protagonists recall 'those days of wine and roses' when walking in the college garden – recognisably St Hilda's garden. Wilson satirises life in Oxford and sets fire to a college, based on his own New College. This is probably an act of revenge on the Fellows for not extending his teaching contract. Larkin's 'Poem about Oxford' shows his mixed feelings of irritation and fascination regarding the place where he was a student at St John's College.

In *The Last Enchantments* the protagonist's bidding farewell to Oxford reflects Liddell's own nostalgic feelings. 'Wherever my bones lie, I am *Collegii Verbi Dei apud Christimonasterienses olim scholaris (trans: formerly a scholar of the College of the Word of God, in Christminster [=Oxford])*: in the hour of death and in the day of judgement that may not matter very much, but nothing can take it away.'

Eleonore Biber, *a long-term member of BPS, also belongs to the Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship and to Sisters in Crime. She studied and English and German at the University of Vienna, where she gained her doctorate. Her chief areas of research lie in Victorian literature, the Church of England as reflected in modern English novels, and Anglo-American crime novels.*

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Sunny Spring Meeting in Canterbury on 'Anglicans Abroad'

by Rose Little

On a sunny day in May we met at St Peter's Methodist Church Hall in Canterbury. As soon as I entered the hall I stepped gratefully back into the familiar Pym world. Nothing conjures it up so much as the plates of sandwiches (very welcome) and the tea urn: Miss Lathbury might have wondered if the tea was really necessary but we thought it definitely was, as we chatted and caught up with Pym members and started to meet the CMYF members too.

Clemence Schultze

Elizabeth Llewellyn-Smith and Clemence Schultze welcomed us to our joint meeting with the Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship, and Deb Fisher chaired the morning session. We were introduced first to the Revd Canon Edgar Ruddock (of USPG – the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel – and Anglicans in World Mission), tall, thin and robust, every inch one's picture of a man with missionary zeal. With great panache he carried out the difficult task of giving us a clear overview of missionary work as, aided by helpful slides (which recalled Bishop Grote), he told us about the society's role, past and present; the present day holistic integral mission compared with the past's 'white man's burden'. With all the wonderful work being done today, he did not neglect to tell us of a shameful episode in the past when the USPG owned a slave farm in Ghana. The slaves were incarcerated in a dungeon, their release leading only to 'The Gate to Nowhere', through which they passed, on to the slave ships. Later, the memory of this episode became part of USPG's campaign against slavery.

Terry Barringer gave us many examples from CMY's novels of soldiers and missionaries abroad, in the British Empire and beyond. She showed us how these characters formed the plots and also the back stories. Abroad is where Yonge's characters, men and women alike, go to seek their fortunes and prove themselves committed to an active Christian life.

The Revd Colin Oxenforth's humorous talk detailed examples from Pym novels of conversation about missionaries which showed the characters' willingness to help. He invited us to share Pym's sense of fun when he pointed out that Grote's book is on Belinda's knee but unread, and how missionaries give talks with tedious detail. In the real world, Colin remembered people going off to be missionaries and said that Grote's parish talk struck a chord with him. Drawing upon the many examples of missionaries mentioned in various Pym novels, he made an illuminating point with regard to Pym's authorial practice: that she asks questions but doesn't tell us what to think. An instance of this is when Edith Liversidge wonders if it's necessary for natives to change their clothes to suit western customs. He fully appreciated Pym's light touch.

The Revd Colin Oxenforth

Talking of light touches, we were richly entertained by Triona Adams's talk. A CMYF member confided to me that after hearing Triona's talk she was definitely going to read Barbara Pym! Triona pointed out how both CMY and Pym parade foreign glories before their readers and she gave us a titillating analysis of the word 'lure', as in 'the lure of abroad' (of her talk's title) with its seductive overtones. It is suitably in Rome that Ianthe realizes she's in love with John, unsuitable as he seems to others to be her husband. It is in Prague that Adam and Cassandra finally come together. Characters in Pym are also concerned with their fellows being 'seduced' by the Church of Rome, as when Jane is worried Prudence will be converted by a Jesuit.

Another CMYF member said that what she liked about the meetings was hearing favourite parts of the books she loved read out and described ('That's what you go for, really'), and she would not have been disappointed in hearing Triona's talk with its many hilarious quotes and allusions.

Hilary Clare read us Julia Courtney's paper on all three novelists. Apparently Barbara Pym had 27 of the 30 novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett (ICB) on her shelves! And I remember that BP said in her diary what a 'comfort' it was to read CMY. Pym obviously admired both the other novelists: she used some of the same names as in CMY novels (Flora and Wilmet) and the convention of bringing characters back from other novels, as did ICB and CMY. Pym was influenced by their shared focus on the enclosed lives of Victorian families. We were all impressed and instructed by this glittering talk of Julia's, delivered superbly by Hilary.

After this fourth talk we went straight to Choral Evensong at Canterbury Cathedral. We felt very privileged as we slipped past the paying visitors crowding in the entrance and were shown graciously to the Choir.

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The choristers and clergy soon came in and we were enchanted by some beautiful singing. It was interesting to observe the dress and formal running of the world-famous cathedral.

We had a pleasant stroll round the back of the cathedral, admiring the magnificent architecture and stonework, to the King's School (formerly St Augustine's Missionary College). Here the Events Manager, Alan Walton, kindly showed us round the buildings. The impressive medieval gateway had been incorporated into the Victorian structure by the architect William Butterfield when the College was founded in 1848. We enjoyed the beautiful rooms, as in an Oxford college, particularly the dining room, and we wandered in the pretty grounds, mystified by a small building that looked as though it had once housed a well.

The most affecting part was visiting the memorial basement chapel, where we saw the stone tablets commemorating past missionaries. Their lives were often short and fraught with danger, not only from disease but from travelling around on foot with no roads. There was Charles Marsden Betts, who was admitted in 1853 and drowned in the Woollondilly, Sydney, in 1857. There was Sydney Brooks, admitted 1894, who 'fell a martyr' in North China in 1899, and there were tablets paying tribute to missionaries all over the world from Honolulu (H F E Whalley, adm. 1878, died 1937) to Madagascar (William Hay, adm. 1860, died 1867). A fitting end to a weekend on missionaries in our two societies, but it wasn't quite over as we later enjoyed a dinner together at the famous Deeson's Restaurant, nestling in a twisting medieval street close to the cathedral.

We were told by Barbara's friend Frances Kendrick at our last Spring Meeting how Barbara would have laughed to know she had a society devoted to herself! However, I think she would have enjoyed this weekend, hearing about her marvellous characters and those of her favourite novelists, and padding about the ancient cathedral city.

Miriam Margolyes

For more information about Charlotte Mary Yonge and the CMYF, please see website www.cmyf.org.uk.

Missions Then and Now
A Summary of Edgar Ruddock's Talk

by Alison Millard

The evd Canon Edgar Ruddock, Director, Leadership Development at USPG (the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel: Anglicans in World Mission), spoke on the subject of *Missions Then and Now*, assisted by a helpful visual presentation.

The mission field, he told us, was one of the major career choices for ordinands in Charlotte Yonge's time and still very much an option in Barbara Pym's. We learned though that however much we associate it with Queen Victoria's reign, the SPG had actually been founded in 1701, not so much with the aim of evangelising the indigenous population in North America, the Caribbean, West and South Africa or Asia but rather to accompany and support the growing number of migrants from Britain setting off to seek their fortune beyond our shores. Nevertheless, by the middle of the 19th century when UMCA, the Universities Mission to Central Africa, was founded, David Livingstone was calling for young men to come forward to offer themselves for sacrificial service far from home. Indeed, some did lose their lives after only a matter of weeks, struck down by malaria or other fatal diseases. (Of course Charlotte Yonge knew the cost of vocation: her relative, Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, whose biographer she became, was murdered in Melanesia in 1871.)

Revd Canon Edgar Ruddock

There was acknowledged diversity in the understanding of the word *mission* at that time. The Societies' work was European-dominated; some people compared missionaries to the Romans of old, bringing civilisation and culture to benighted people within a comparable British Empire. There was some astonishing lack of awareness of the iniquity of the slave trade: at one stage missionaries actually owned a slave estate in Barbados, while others were involved with a holding centre in Cape Coast in Ghana where people were incarcerated before being shipped abroad. Ghana, like many other countries, still retains memories of its sombre history that must be worked through in order to grow away from colonialism.

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In the 19th century George Lefroy in India denounced 'the dead weight' of imperialism and Roland Allen in China called for missionaries to be more like St Paul, giving leadership and control to new believers from the outset, and relying on the Holy Spirit rather than external hierarchies. There were also common concerns: the key drivers of mission were the development of health and education. This is still the case today, creating an integrity of mission. Nowadays all USPG's activities are driven by the priorities of the community. Both parties learn together, with paternalism replaced by mutuality. The aim is to empower grassroots communities, not least by helping the development of leaders through scholarships and bursaries for higher education. The watchword is sustainability in all areas of life, and learning together. Christianity grows out of local experience and is not an import.

Canon Ruddock commended to us a book published this summer by SPCK, *Saving Power: The Anglican Communion and the Mission of God* by Michael Doe of USPG. A range of questions to the speaker followed. Someone wanted to know why there are still two missionary societies. The answer, tactfully phrased, was, in essence, different traditions: Tractarian (USPG) and Evangelical (CMS). An observation from the floor drew attention to the missionaries' role in first writing down local languages, recalling Pym's anthropological missionaries. All in all, a most interesting and informative talk.

Alison Millard *taught English for 30 years at William Perkins's School, Chertsey, and retired as head of her department. She is Editor of the Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship's twice-yearly* Review. *Alison is also a keen member of the Tennyson Society, and of the Anglo-Catholic History Society.*

Soldiers of Christ and Soldiers of the Queen: Charlotte M Yonge's Missionaries and Military Abroad

by Terry Barringer

Anglicans abroad feature in almost all of Charlotte Yonge's novels of her own times. Sometimes a significant part of the action takes place abroad, sometimes it is an important part of the back story, sometimes just a glancing reference to a brother or cousin in the colonies. Wilmet Underwood's wedding in *Pillars of the House* is a wonderfully Yongeian setpiece, a real gathering of Anglicans abroad. Lilias Merrifield travels all over the world as a soldier's wife and her many children have different and far-flung birthplaces.

Abroad is a place of romance. Charlotte Yonge makes the Mission field, in particular, a place of romance. This theme is illustrated by some brief biographical sketches drawn from Yonge's interlocking family sagas: colonial bishops Norman May and Robert Fulmort; Leonard Ward, missionary in the Pacific Islands and scourge of the 'blackbirders'; Angela Underwood working among the Australian aboriginals; and Agnes Morten, missionary, teacher, translator and quasi-martyr in Natal.

The Victorian army was once described as 'a social institution prepared for every emergency except war'. It is hard to envisage Arthur Martindale of *Heartsease*, Sir Adrian Vanderkist or any of the other fashionable Guards officers who flit through the novels being of any use on the battlefield, nor do they travel abroad in the course of duty. (The purchase of commissions was not abolished until 1871 and fashionable regiments were very fashionable – and expensive.) On the other hand Jasper Merrifield and Reggie Mohun, among others, are working soldiers, seasoned by many colonial stations and campaigns in Queen Victoria's innumerable small wars. They must have been acquainted with much more brutality and bloodshed than you would guess from the novels. The Crimean War plays an important part in *The Young Stepmother;* and the Indian Mutiny and the award there of a VC is part of the back story to *The Clever Woman of the Family*. It is interesting to compare how far these fictional heroes match the picture of Victorian officers given by writers on the Victorian army such as Ian F W Beckett and Byron Farwell. There was a strand of Christian militarism in the army, exemplified of course by General Gordon and Henry Havelock, a hero of the Indian Mutiny.

Charlotte Yonge, like many of her heroes and heroines, dwelt in a richly-imagined Christian, chivalric past which transferred its values alike to contemporary warfare, the mission field and to the moral battles and ethical dilemmas of everyday life. Neither Charlotte Yonge nor any of her characters ever question the rightness of fighting for Queen and country. Patriotism is a given, pacifism not an option – although the inter-

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woven values of service to God and Queen, Country and Empire are rarely made explicit.

By the end of Yonge's writing life, soldiering is about to lose its romanticism. She herself lost a nephew in the Boer War. Yonge fans cannot resist speculating on the lives and families of her characters beyond the confines of the novels but this can be a melancholy exercise. How many young Mays, Underwoods and Merrifields will die in the Boer War and World War I?

'Abroad' is a place of both career opportunity and romance. Abroad, especially but not exclusively India and the colonies, is for Charlotte Yonge a place where fortunes are made, characters formed and Christian manhood proved. Although this paper focuses on missionaries and military, there is ample material for studies on farmers and settlers, diplomats, engineers, doctors and other professionals, even journalists, abroad. Not to mention travellers in search of pleasure, health or material for a bestselling book.

Terry Barringer *is an independent scholar and former librarian, bibliographer and editor. She has published on the British Colonial Service and on the history and literature of Christian missions. She is compiler of the annual Africa Bibliography, published by (Barbara Pym's) International African Institute. Based in Cambridge, she is a Senior Member of Wolfson College and a Churchwarden.*

The Lure of Abroad in Yonge and Pym

by Triona Adams

Charlotte Mary Yonge and Barbara Pym are generally considered quintessentially English writers. Yet with surprising frequency their novels parade foreign glories before their readers. Topics range from pygmy tribes to Alpine heights, from African masks to anthropological garden parties. Black slaves and Anglican missionaries play heroic roles, while Rocky Napier, less heroically but more charmingly, exerts his powers over hapless Wrens. Abroad is glamorous, exciting, transformative, sexy – yet also unpredictable, dangerous, even fatal. It is also puzzling, grubby, unsettling and a relief to get home from. The word 'lure' embodies a dichotomy: on the one hand, 'something that attracts or appeals with the promise of reward'. But in contrast, to lure is 'to entice or inveigle, to attract by wiles or temptation, to lead into a foolish or a wrong course'. Whether the issue is anthropology, the missions, romance or the Grand Tour, for both Miss Yonge and Miss Pym the attractions of the foreign are outweighed by one danger in particular: godlessness, or, to put it another way, Roman Catholicism. For, whether overt or merely implicit, Popishness is always to be abhorred for its pernicious allure of incense, music, ritual, passion, and un-Englishness.

Even in *Some Tame Gazelle*, a sedate village feels the impact of threats from afar. Count Bianco's friend John Akenside 'had been killed in a riot in Prague, when he had been sitting at an open-air cafe taking a glass of wine ... doing no harm to anyone'. Not the kind of thing that would occur in Lyons Corner House. Agatha Hoccleve braves the dangers of travel fortified by the belief, expressed by Belinda, that even among foreigners 'an English gentlewoman can never come to any harm'. A visitor from more exotic climes is Bishop Theodore Grote, once a godlike curate but now returned to lecture upon 'his splendid work with the natives'. Perhaps fortunately, the village is spared an actual performance of African dances, 'for, from what one heard about these ... it did not seem as if they were the sort of thing that could properly be performed in a parish hall.' Quite so!

In *Jane and Prudence*, Nicholas's holiday replacement, Mr Boultbee of the Church Missionary Society, is similarly not a success. As Mrs Glaze sums up, 'It's tired of Africa we are. Six sermons ... I was really shocked at some of their customs.' Yet Jane herself, a fretful, unwilling anthropologist of the everyday, has already likened Prudence's eye makeup to 'the young African' painting himself. Not so much difference, perhaps. Romishness, however, is a different matter: Roman Catholic Spain represents a real danger to the impressionable Prudence, who has indeed imagined herself 'slipping into Mass with a black lace mantilla arranged becomingly over her hair'. Maybe the Jesuits will not fall for Prudence's charms, but Jane is surely right to fear 'the charms of Rome' on her friend's behalf.

Jane, like Prudence, has fantasies of herself in a different role – as the mother not just of one daughter but of 'a large Victorian family like those in the novels of Miss Charlotte M Yonge'. Less well-versed in those than Jane, I wondered where to start. Advised by Elizabeth Llewellyn-Smith, former Principal of St Hilda's and Chairman of the Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship, I went for *The Pillars of the House* as the epitome of the contemporary, family novel by CMY. This includes a railway explosion in Egypt, passages set in Paris and in the hills around Biarritz, and the death of the charming yet flawed Edgar in the Wild West. But the element of foreign allure makes its most striking, even melodra-

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matic, entrance into the lives of the Underwoods in the person of Fernando Travis, saved from a devastating hotel fire by a devoted ex-slave who sacrifices his own life for the boy. The son of a renegade Englishman who went to America to find his fortune and an heiress of mixed Spanish and Mexican-Indian blood, Fernando is a glamorous figure: 'He's a stunning good fellow, he has seen an alligator and ridden mustangs.' But he has spent a 'roving godless' life – and is not even baptised! 'He thinks churches only meant for women and psalm-singing niggers and Methodists, and has never been inside one in his life.' He is also addicted to gambling. Thus there is something of the first Mrs Rochester about Fernando – infected by both the immoral passions and the indolence of foreign climes and Spanish blood. That he does not end up in an attic is owing to the virtues of the Underwood household through which this godless foreigner is reclaimed for England and for God (or, for the Church of England).

The foreign and the lure of abroad are thus intertwined, in both authors, with a fear of paganism and Popishness. Yet the act of travel itself reminds us of the transience and fragility of a life where we are all 'strangers and pilgrims'. And if journeying, even a pilgrimage, is as much about the journey as the destination, it is also, surely, about the joys of homecoming, with a welcome return to familiar home comforts. To the list of these we must surely add the novels of Miss Yonge and Miss Pym.

Triona Adams *read English at St Hilda's, followed by an MA at RADA and Kings College, London. After a range of secular jobs, and a spell as an actors' agent, she entered an enclosed Benedictine convent to try her vocation – but left, a year later, a changed woman. She returned to a mix of agenting, lecturing (theatre history, Victorian Melodrama, Barbara Pym) and writing. She contributed to the* New National Dictionary of Biography, *and in 2008 her first play about her convent life,* The Lemon Squeezer, *was commissioned for BBC Radio 4. She continues to tour with her one-woman autobiographical play* Nun the Wiser. *Triona wrote about Pym as an undergraduate, joined the Society in its first full year, and has spoken on many Pym subjects.*

Two more Pym titles on Kindle e-books

In the Spring edition of Green Leaves ('Breaking news ...') we reported that Kindle e-book editions of *Some Tame Gazelle, A Glass of Blessings,* and *Less Than Angels* are available from Amazon.co.uk – though because of licensing restrictions these downloads are not yet available in the US or Canada.

Amazon.co.uk is now advertising two further Pym Kindle e-books: *Civil to Strangers* and *Excellent Women*. It is likely that the same download restrictions apply, though readers in North America might like to test this and let us know.

Mission, Missionaries, Barbara Pym and Us

by Colin Oxenforth

The most notable demonstration of missionary work in Pym's novels lies with Bishop Theodore Grote of Mbawawa, who has studied his flock like an anthropologist, and whose attitude to them is complex, because it is a mixture of genuine interest and affection and the colonist's white supremacy. He is jealous of more successful clergy and needs to assert himself. When he presents his talk on his diocese, it reminds me of my childhood at a parish church which provided many vocations to the religious life, the priesthood and mission field, as it was then known. We had regular visits from missionaries on furlough and raised money for them.

Bishop Grote's lecture tells of the climate, language, music, and clothes of the people of his flock in the diocese of Mbawawa. He is one of those speakers who insert tedious detail, and he even attempts singing and playing on a large sea shell, much to the amusement of the gathered audience, some of whom snigger.

Every bit of comic material is extracted from this furlough visitation, yet at the same time there is a sense that something good may be being done both to and for the natives. There is implied criticism of colonial attitude, but also a sense that people wanted to help.

Mission features in the lives of most of the churches throughout the Pym corpus, with Roman Catholic priests, monks and nuns always under suspicion of undermining the dear old C of E. This extends even to the world of anthropology with Fr Gemini getting the Foresight Grant in *Less than Angels*. Miss Clovis thinks the Jesuits might be behind this, even though Fr Gemini is not even in that order.

There is perhaps a resonance with all the adverts today from charities asking us for two pounds a month, in that sincere Scottish accent, to help provide clean water, farming equipment, seeds, livestock and so on. The poor are always with us, as Scripture says, and I suspect that the compassion fatigue often cited today is nothing new.

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The Church of South India, mentioned in *A Glass of Blessings*, was a coming together of Anglicans and some Nonconformist churches. Some Anglicans were concerned that as the Nonconformist ministers were not properly ordained, their sacraments would not be valid. It raises issues about Catholicity and the Validity of Orders in the Anglican Church that could and did create problems for some people, resulting in Fr Edwin Sainsbury 'going over' to the Church of Rome. Again, we can sense something of the same today with those leaving the Church of England over the issue of women Bishops to create the Ordinariate within the Roman Catholic Church. The issues of ecumenism and the World Church are seen in Barbara's own time, and in the past, through her eyes. Miss Fell, a missionary on furlough in *No Fond Return of Love*, is the headmistress of a school in Uganda: education formed an integral part of the plan of Mission. Many people wanted to liberate others – especially Africans – from ignorance and from the superstitions of pagan religion and native medicine.

The tables are reversed in *Quartet in Autumn* when we are faced with the vigorous portrait of Pastor Jacob Olatunde, a charismatic figure whose style of worship is at odds with the refined and traditional Anglican world. Mission is now working in the opposite direction, from Africa to the mother country.

An Academic Question shows some missionaries had obviously done a fair deal of research during their time abroad, watching societies shift and develop as western influence exerted its power in Africa. The issue of cultural change goes all the way back to *Some Tame Gazelle*, when Edith Liversidge questions whether it is good for the Africans to have to adopt clothing in line with western propriety and taste.

Some of these questions are still very relevant in the Church today, as well as to the world generally, as we experience multicultural life in cities and towns. Pym, like us, was aware of the contrast between life in the country and the metropolis, and puts her finger on the issue of change in the world, with all the to-ing and fro-ing of differing cultures and their effects on each other over the years.

The admixture of love and humour in her observations makes us both laugh and question what went on then and what is happening now. We would do well to include humour today rather than the puritanical approach taken by so many politicians, and look at our humanity and weaknesses with love and compassion.

The Revd Colin Oxenforth *retired in 2010 as Vicar of Pemberton St John to the Waterloo area of Liverpool where he grew up. His interest in Pym also started in Liverpool when, as Parish Priest at St Margaret's Toxteth, he was given copies of* Excellent Women *and* A Glass of Blessings*. Interest spread around his congregation and parish, then out across the city and even as far as the Holy Land. (For full details of this story, see* Green Leaves *May 2005, available on the BPS website.)*

Pym Gleanings

No. 68 of *The Independent's* 'Invisible Ink' series, by Christopher Fowler (13 March 2011), was about Barbara Pym:

> *Few careers are so easily destroyed by a fall from fashion. Some writers return to popularity, but none in such a spectacular manner as Barbara Pym, a quintessentially English novelist whose 12 miniaturist novels can now be described as both popular and timeless.*

The same newspaper has this interesting piece on 24 April 2011:

> *News that Karl Lagerfeld is to design a perfume that smells of books sends me to the website of the US company, Demeter Fragrance, which got there first with its scent, Paperback.*
>
> *Like Lagerfeld, folk there are obviously bibliophiles, as their note on the perfume reads 'A dusty old copy of a Barbara Pym novel did it for us. This Demeter scent is sweet and just a touch musty, a lot like Pym's world, come to think of it. Read her if you haven't. Her writing is wonderful, if slightly musty, English satire from the 60s and 70s.'*

Beverly Bell, a Pym Society member in New York, told us that 'Barbara made the Wall Street Journal in the "Dear Book Lover" column'. On 2 May 2011 a reader wrote:

> *I was on a business trip in Manhattan, eating alone at a bar and chatting with a nice man in the same boat ... we talked books all night, and he asked if I had ever read anything by Barbara Pym. I said I'd never heard of her. He recommended* Excellent Women*, which I read and was hooked. Can you recommend authors with a similar style?*

Cynthia Crossen replied:

> *When I purged my bookshelves a few years ago, I kept my six Barbara Pym novels... Pym is the kind of writer who, though popular and critically acclaimed in her time, never made it into the literary canon ... Pym's heroines are 'churchy spinsters', modest, unambitious, sensible women whose horizons end at the borders of their parish ... but [they] can be unsentimental – even uncharitable – observers of their patch of humanity, lobbing an occasional grenade of wicked wit. A British reviewer once compared Pym's work to wine, with 'more body than you might expect from its lightness'. Other writers like Pym and [Elizabeth] Taylor are Angela Carter, Molly Keane, Rumer Godden, Angela Thirkell and E M Delafield.*

Long-time Society member Peter Lloyd, an anthropologist friend of Barbara's from her days at the International African Institute, sent us an item from *The Guardian* on 16 July 2011. Susanna Rustin, in a piece entitled *Class is permanent*, said that author William Nicholson 'complains that middle-class, well-educated people living comfortable lives in the country were no longer legitimate subject matter for serious fiction'.

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'Just because a writer has a comfortable middle-class life, and writes stories set in big, posh houses, does not make them uncritical observers of English Society' she says. Barbara Pym's *A Glass of Blessings* is cited as an example of Middle Class fiction, alongside E M Forster's *Howard's End* and Margaret Drabble's *The Radiant Way.*

Thank you to all who have contributed to these gleanings, and do keep them coming! Send yours to: yvcocking@aol.com.

Yvonne Cocking *is a founding member of the Barbara Pym Society, was formerly its secretary and now serves as its archivist and historian. A retired librarian, she worked for more than two years in the early 1960s at the International African Institute in London, where she made the acquaintance of Barbara Pym and Hazel Holt. She lives in Oxfordshire and spends countless hours sifting through the richness of the Pym archives at the Bodleian library.*

The Barbara Pym Society 2011-2012

Chairman: Clemence Schultze

Membership Secretary: Eileen Roberts
The Barbara Pym Society
St Hilda's College
Oxford, OX4 1DY
Tel: 01865 373753
(Outside the UK) 44 1865 373753

Secretary: Lorraine Mepham

Committee: Kathy Ackley, Deborah Fisher, Jean Harker, Rose Little, Christine Shuttleworth, Tom Sopko, Libby Tempest, Alex Ward

Editor, *Green Leaves*: Martin Rush

Archivist: Yvonne Cocking

Conference Co-ordinator: Chris Rutherford

Society correspondence and queries to:
Yvonne Cocking
14 Southfield Drive
Sutton Courtenay
Oxon OX14 4AY
E-mail: yvcocking@aol.com

In North America

North American Organizer: Tom Sopko

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Judy Horn

Board: Kathy Ackley, Barbara Boles, Denise Marois-Wolf, Donna Safreed, Sarah Saville Shaffer, Isabel Stanley

Technical Editor, *Green Leaves*: Judy Horn

E-mail: barbarapymsociety@gmail.com

Pym Website: www.barbara-pym.org

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Diary of a Provincial Pymmite

by Clemence Schultze

Early August, city and university in their midsummer sleep: every day like an old-fashioned Sunday, with no-one around on the street. But I am organising an international conference on Carthage, surrounded by a mouse's nest of booking forms, expenses claims and handouts. Then a workman doing renovations cuts through a vital network cable. Suddenly half the university loses its life support system – no phone, internet or emails. Directives from the central admin (itself of course unaffected) inform us calmly that cable is in a Restricted Area, which sounds not too bad. This, however, turns out to mean Asbestos-Contaminated: repairs will take at least two weeks. Husband says Don't Panic, but am quite unable to obey, since one of the Carthage speakers will be skyping his contribution from Australia. Scamper around to find a different venue, and succeed. Then normal network function is restored after only a week: Relief battles it out with Annoyance at the Waste of Time.

All is very different at the Pym conference: if there have been any panics, they've all been sorted by Eileen and the St Hilda's team. Weather is summer-miserable (for it is August Bank Holiday weekend), but everything else is perfect. Stimulating papers are interspersed with enjoyable encounters with old friends and new; and the time passes, as usual, only too quickly.

The next interval can be briefly described as 'Jam Today'. Plum trees have borne heavily, and whole days are spent stoning, chopping, boiling and bottling. Tear myself away from contemplation of satisfactorily full store cupboard to go to Anthony Powell conference in London, where several Pym aficionados are also to be found. (BP herself was a keen Powell reader.) Decide that there is indeed something very restful about a conference where one has no responsibilities whatsoever, and briefly contemplate joining another society. Share this with Husband, who reminds me of Charlotte Yonge Fellowship, and says firmly that Three Societies are the Limit for Anyone. Must admit that he is right.

Taking a Break in Canterbury

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Dashiell Hammett and Barbara Pym

by Tom Sopko

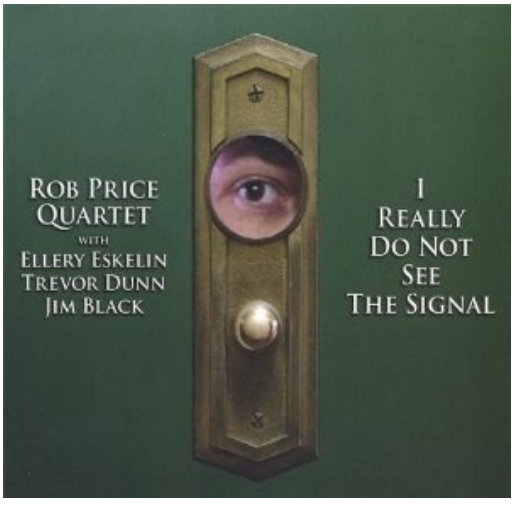
While looking for something else entirely on the web, I stumbled across the name of Barbara Pym in the title of a song – 'Dashiell Hammett and Barbara Pym'. A little more research turned up the source: a CD by the Rob Price Quartet, called *I Really Do Not See The Signal*. Intrigued, I downloaded and listened to the track, then contacted Robert Price himself. I wrote: 'I have been greatly intrigued and have been trying to think of what these two talented but extraordinarily dissimilar writers would make of one another. I even tried to imagine what form a Hammett–Pym collaboration might take. ('Samuel Spade's jaw was long and bony, his chin a jutting V under the more flexible V of his mouth, but what a pity it was that his combinations showed, tucked carelessly into his socks, when he sat down.')'

Here's how Robert Price replied:

'Barbara Pym and Dashiell Hammett are two of my favorite writers and ended up sharing a bookshelf in my apartment. They were the only two occupants of that shelf until we moved a couple of years ago and they ended up on a slightly bigger shelf. There was only room for one more book and I chose a Philip Larkin collection that I had bought because of my interest in Pym.

I think Hammett and Pym are both understated and underrated writers, both experts at creating subtleties and ironies. They both strike me as somewhat lonely people. The music I wrote was inspired by seeing their books on my shelf, Pym and Hammett next to each other. The tune is in 3/4, the meter for waltzes, but too slow for a waltz. I don't actually imagine them dancing together or even having much to say to each other, but I think they are sympathetic in some ways.

I think there are interesting similarities between Nick Charles of *The Thin Man* (the book not the movie) and Tom Mallow of *Less Than Angels*. They're both people who don't fit in the world they were born into or in the second world that they chose to enter, victims of something like an identity crisis. Had I but world enough and time (to quote the poem that Dulcie recognizes in *No Fond Return of Love*), I would try to say something more persuasive and intelligent about that, but I would have to reread both books first!'



The song 'Dashiell Hammett and Barbara Pym' is on a CD entitled *I Really Do Not See The Signal* by the Rob Price Quartet with Ellery Eskelin, Trevor Dunn & Jim Black. Available from Gutbrain records 2007. The song itself can be downloaded from various websites for 99 cents.

Coming Events

Please visit **www.barbara-pym.org** *for details.*

2012 North American Conference

The fourteenth annual North American conference will be held on 16-18 March 2012 at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The conference will focus on Jane and Prudence.

Call for Papers: *The North American organizing committee is soliciting proposals for talks at the conference. Preference will be given to papers dealing with aspects of* Jane and Prudence, *but any other Pym-related topics are also welcome.*

Please send a 100-150 word proposal by 20 November 2011 to: barbarapymsociety@gmail.com. (Please include the words 'NA conference proposal' in the subject line.)

Spring Meeting in London

Sunday 13 May 2012
St Alban's Centre, London

2012 Annual General Meeting

The AGM and Conference will be held at St Hilda's College, Oxford, on 31 August-2 September 2012. The theme is 'Barbara Pym and Gardens'. The keynote speaker will be Elizabeth Buchan, author of numerous novels. The most recent of these, Separate Beds, *was published in January 2011. She is a former Chairman of the Romantic Novelists' Association, and has served on the judging panel for the Betty Trask and Desmond Elliot literary prizes. She is also a keen reader of Barbara Pym's books.*

Planned activities include a visit to the University of Oxford Botanic Garden (site of Barbara Bird's tryst with Francis Cleveland), and a walk along the river though the lovely gardens of Magdalen College.

Call for Papers: *The Committee is soliciting proposals for talks related to the theme of 'Gardens'. Please send a 100-150 word proposal by 20 January 2012 to: barbarapymsociety@gmail.com. (Please include the words 'UK conference proposal' in the subject line.)*

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Photographs of Barbara Pym: an Appeal

by Tom Sopko

There are very few known photos of Barbara Pym as a mature woman, and those that have appeared in print or at the National Portrait Gallery are all under copyright. This means that until now the Society had no photos that we could legally use on our web site, in publicity materials, or on merchandise, nor did we have anything to offer in response to press inquiries.

Extensive research, which will be chronicled in a future issue of *Green Leaves*, led us to two eminent portrait photographers who photographed Barbara in the last years of her life. Mayotte Magnus took the well-known photo of Barbara holding her cat outside Barn Cottage which appears on the dust jacket of *A Very Private Eye,* and also numerous other shots in Finstock in 1976. Mark Gerson took three photos of Barbara in 1979 which are in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

The Society has now acquired the rights to all the photos taken by Mayotte Magnus, and to one Gerson photo of Barbara at her typewriter. Having several quality photographs available for publicity and merchandise will be enormously beneficial, though the total cost, split between the UK and North American branches, is high – £1295 (approximately $2000).

You can help us. All donations are welcome, and those who donate more than $25 will receive a matted 5 x 7 print of the famous photo of Barbara holding her cat. Checks may be sent to Barbara Pym Society, c/o Judy Horn, 4 Summit Drive #005, Reading, MA 01867-4050. Checks should be payable to *The Barbara Pym Society* and envelopes clearly marked 'Photo appeal'.

Photo by Mayotte Magnus
© The Barbara Pym Society

***No Soft Incense: Barbara Pym and the Church*,** Edited by Hazel K. Bell

Catholic Herald, 17 June 2005: "Not since Anthony Trollope's Barchester novels has the Church of England received such minute and detailed treatment in fiction."

In the UK: £6 (incl. p & p), from HKB Press, 139 The Ryde, Hatfield, Herts AL9 5DP**.**
Please make cheque payable to HKB Press.

In the US: $14 (incl. postage/handling, USPS First Class), from Norma Munson, The Barbara Pym Society, 5225 Ponderosa Drive, Rockford IL 61107.
Please make check payable to The Barbara Pym Society.

Also available on Amazon.com

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Punting on the Cherwell

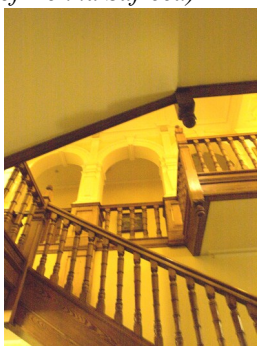
Eleonore Biber, Kathy Ackley, Michael Wilson, Ann DiPietro, Dan DiPietro

Members of the Society at the Conference Dinner
(Photo Courtesy of Donna Safreed)

Tom Sopko

Eileen Roberts

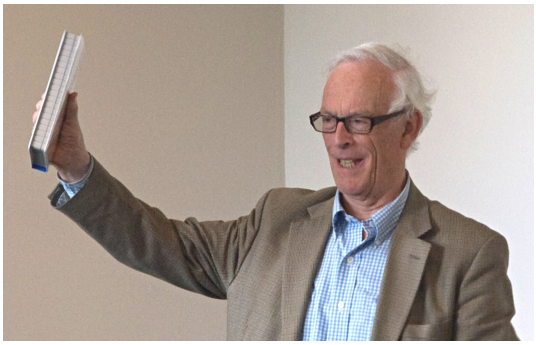
Lorraine Mepham



South Building Staircase

Elizabeth Proud

Yvonne Cocking



Tim Burnett, Auctioneer

Members of the Committee in discussion

Chris Rutherford

Magdalen tower from St Hilda's garden

Miriam Margolyes

Thank you to Marianna Stewart for photographs.

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