Green Leaves

The Journal of the Barbara Pym Society **Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Spring 2012**

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

The Fourteenth Annual North American Conference of the Barbara Pym Society
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 16–18 March 2012

by Dan and Ann DiPietro

In early February when we began receiving emails from Tom Sopko urging us to get our conference registrations in because the 100 available spots were filling up fast, we knew that this was going to be an extraordinary event with record attendance – and we were right! From the Friday night gala at the Church of the Advent in Boston's Beacon Hill to the theatrical spectacle of 'Men Only Want One Thing' this was indeed an unforgettable weekend.

The opening event was Friday's buffet dinner at the Church of the Advent. The meal was delicious, but even more delicious was Tom's parody 'Unsuitable Things' set to the tune of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'My Favorite Things'. The lucky diners enjoyed a rousing refrain of:

When the sponge falls,
When the tea's weak,
When you're feeling sad,
Just reach for a novel by Barbara Pym,
And then you won't feel so bad!

(See page 14 for full text of song.)

On Saturday morning at 9 am we gathered at the lovely Barker Center, part of Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. After a quick coffee and plate of fruit and pastries, we were off to warm welcomes from our fearless leaders: North American Organizer Tom Sopko, and Clemence Schultze, Chair of the Barbara Pym Society. Clemence and her husband Martin Rush came from the UK to join in the festivities.

Yvonne Cocking, the Society's esteemed and beloved archivist, also visiting from the UK, presented the opening paper – '*Jane and Prudence*: A Novel of Contrasts'. Yvonne had researched the diaries and notebooks of Pym to trace the evolution of the novel. As Yvonne has done in the past, she had readers present excerpts so we had in effect a spirited dramatization. Everyone particularly enjoyed the correspondence from Marks and Spencer's attorneys complaining about the references in *Jane and Prudence* to the department store's less than flattering reputation for unfashionable clothing. At one point, someone asked if there were an intellectual properties attorney in the audience to give a professional view but, alas, no one stepped forward.

The next paper of the morning was Charlotte Silver's 'Barbara Pym and the Comedy of Manners'. Charlotte pointed out the stock characters that Pym took and made her own. A lively discussion centered on who was the favorite, most likeable character: Jane seemed to win on all counts, although Charlotte presented a strong case for Prudence. Jessie Morrow and Fabian Driver each had a handful of fans.

After a tasty box lunch (wonderful variety: our favorite was the mozzarella, pesto and sundried tomato sandwich with those lemon poppy seed cookies – delicious!) we watched a very moving video produced by Ellen Miller, the beloved founder of the North American Chapter of the Society and greatly missed by all of us. It included interviews with Hazel Holt and Hilary Pym Walton plus Barbara Pym herself from a 1977 BBC production of 'Tea with Miss Pym'. This was a great lead-in to Linda McDougall's film and presentation 'Jane and Prudence and Barbara and Hazel: The Women Friends of Barbara Pym and how they Influenced her Work'. Linda had recently interviewed Holt, who in addition to being a longstanding friend and confidante of Pym's is also her literary executor. The interview was a touching tribute to their friendship and also offered many insights into Pym and her writings.

Following the film, longtime Society member and *New York Times* columnist Perri Klass treated us to an unusual paper that included a collection of slides of period ads for alcoholic drinks mentioned in Pym's novels. Titled, ' "You Never Know When You May Need Whisky": Barbara Pym on Drinks and Drinking', this paper was the perfect introduction to the next event of the afternoon – the Drinks Party! A coterie of bar men and maids were at hand to serve

Contents

2012 North American Conference Report	**1**
Summaries of Conference Papers	
***Jane and Prudence*: A Novel of Contrasts**	**2**
Barbara Pym and the Comedy of Manners	**3**
Jane and Prudence and Barbara and Hazel	**4**
'You Never Know When You May Need Whisky'	**5**
Not Quite a Trollope Wife	**7**
Birthplace Plaque Unveiled	**8**
Alliance of Literary Societies	**9**
Death Notices	**10-11**
Queen's Park Literary Festival	**11**
Photo Appeal Results	**12**
Diary of a Provincial Pymmite	**12**
Pym Gleanings	**13**
'Unsuitable Things'	**14**

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

such Pym related drinks as orange and gin (nice and mild), pink gin (basically a glass of straight gin with a touch of Angostura bitters to give a pink glow – very, very strong), warmish beers, and a nice medium-dry sherry. Platters of cheese, crackers and fruit were just the right accompaniment and a good – a very good time – was had by all. Two hours later it was off to dinner where we spent a noisy, companionable few hours at a nearby pub – John Harvard's Brew House, in Harvard Square.

Tom Sopko

Sunday morning opened with Isabel Stanley's witty and engaging paper 'Not Quite a Trollope Wife: Jane Cleveland's Literary Expectations of Herself as a Clergy Wife'. With many wonderful references to Pym's favorites, Charlotte M. Yonge and Anthony Trollope, Isabel showed us a side of Jane we might have overlooked.

And now we come to the last event of the 2012 conference: the dramatization entitled 'Men Only Want One Thing'. Adapted by Tom Sopko, this was a wonderfully clever culmination – Tom cast ten Pymmians in this dramatic summary of *Jane and Prudence;* it is always amazing how well Pym plays out on stage. The audience reacted with great enthusiasm to the performance, and the conference ended with a standing ovation from the audience.

Clemence Schultze

The full text of many of the Conference Papers summarized in this edition of Green Leaves can be found on the Barbara Pym Society website (www.barbara-pym.org). Click the Pym Conference Monographs link at the left of the Welcome page.

Jane and Prudence: A Novel of Contrasts

by Yvonne Cocking

Two drafts of *Jane and Prudence* are included in the Bodleian Archive of Barbara Pym's work, but her literary notebooks contain some indication of her thoughts in planning this novel. She summarised it thus: 'Jane and Prudence, friends from Oxford days, may be said to represent the married and the unmarried, the country and the town. Two contrasting environments are shown – the country village where Jane's husband is vicar, and that part of London where Prudence works at her rather indefinite job.' Village and office provide a variety of characters.

According to Hazel Holt, 'Jane Cleveland is a loving celebration of Irena Pym (with academic overtones)', and 'Prudence with her predilection for unsatisfactory love affairs is only a slightly distorted mirror image of Barbara herself'.

Her first notebook entry reads: 'Next Novel – a small country town – perhaps the chief character a nice vicar's wife. Is literary, but no time for that now'. Of the villagers, Fabian Driver is a 'Gordonish character'. Gordon [Glover] was Barbara's real-life lover in Bristol in the early 1940s, an extremely charming but fickle man who caused Barbara much heartache. 'Fabian's wife, to whom he had been consistently unfaithful, died. Now that he has lost her there seems to be no point in being unfaithful.'

The minor characters, Mr Mortlake, piano tuner, and Mr Whiting, members of the PCC, and Mrs Glaze, who 'does' for the Clevelands, are introduced. Far more important are Miss Doggett and Miss Morrow, who are among the main characters in *Crampton Hodnet,* written in 1938–9, but which Barbara decided after the war was dated and unpublishable. Rather than waste her work, she considered that these two ladies would fit well into the country aspect of *J&P*. They appear to be about the same age in both novels, and Miss Doggett is still dressed in purple with gold neck chains, but it is interesting to see the changes made to their personalities. In *CH* Miss Doggett is more dictatorial, and

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

very dismissive of her companion's appearance and opinions. In *J&P* she seems to have mellowed a little and to be less inclined to browbeat Jessie. Miss Morrow has developed from the put-upon employee of *CH,* grateful for a comfortable home in exchange for a menial job, to a more scheming and self seeking woman, rather more inclined to speak her mind.

Another important character from *CH* also appears in a minor role in *J&P* – Barbara Bird. Barbara has aged more quickly than Misses Doggett and Morrow. In *CH* she was a dewy-eyed undergraduate romantically in love with her tutor; ten or so years on, her abortive elopement with Francis Cleveland appears to have driven romance, and the metaphysical poets, from her life, to be replaced by heavy smoking, and seventeen published novels.

Of the London characters: 'The clergyman's wife has an old college friend, Prudence, who works in London. She is in love with her boss [Dr. Grampian]'. In the office there is one other man, and two female clerks.

On 18 February 1953 Barbara wrote to Daniel George, at publisher Jonathan Cape: 'Tomorrow I shall be posting the manuscript of my novel *Jane and Prudence* to you … it has not turned out quite as I had hoped. I had wanted the contrasting lives of Jane and Prudence, in town and country, to stand out more …'

Shortly after publication in September, Barbara received a letter from retail chain Marks and Spencer, who took exception to a passage in chapter 13, which they thought derogatory of the quality of their merchandise, and asked Cape to ensure that this reference was cut out. Cape agreed to alter the passage in future printings.

Barbara's friends congratulated her. One thought it was her best book so far, another that it was better than *Excellent Women*, and a third wrote: 'through your novels I have experienced a joy only comparable with that which came to me at the age of 14 or so when I first "discovered" Jane Austen'. Robert Liddell found it 'so witty, kind and sharp', but Barbara felt 'bruised' that the Americans and Continentals did not like it. Newspaper reviews were mixed, but Lord David Cecil told her: 'You have so much sense of reality and … comedy, and the people in your books are living, credible and likeable'.

Several times in her notes and diary, Barbara expressed dissatisfaction with this novel. She felt she had not emphasised the contrasts as clearly as she wished. She thought it was 'ill-fated, what with the M & S business, and it wasn't really very good anyway'.

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.*

Thank you to Sherrie Saint John for all conference photos.

Barbara Pym and the Comedy of Manners

by Charlotte Silver

This paper examines, from a writerly point of view, how Barbara Pym writes about various social occasions – her deft handling of group set-pieces: failed dinner parties and trying parish teas, dreary lunch dates, and so on.

Starting with a close reading of a barbed scene between Leonora and Liz in *The Sweet Dove Died,* one can see the key elements of the Pym style: the quiet confidence of the narration, the ease and elegance of the prose, the eye for the tiniest and most telling of details, and delicate strokes of graveyard humor. It's possible to think of Prudence and Jane as the forerunners of Leonora and Liz. Might not Prudence with her Regency furniture and her scandalous habit of entertaining gentlemen after hours in her red velvet dressing-gown have turned, someday, into Leonora, with her love of Victorian objects and sentimental habit of recalling past admirers? And might not Jane, reeling from a messy 1970s-style divorce from Nicholas, have turned into a version of poor, disheveled Liz?

But *Jane and Prudence* is, on the whole, a more warm-hearted book than *The Sweet Dove Died*, and its two heroines have genuine affection for one another. Still, Pym uses what we have come to think of as her 'anthropological technique' to devastating comic effect. It helps that *Jane and Prudence* is narrated in the third person. The whole book has this generous, ensemble quality: everybody is observing everybody else, and that's what makes it particularly hilarious.

Consider such scenes as the one in which Marilyn and Gloria wonder if 'Miss Bates has any love life', coming to the conclusion that 'any feeling one might have for [Dr. Grampian] – and in the office too – could hardly be counted as love life'. Or when Flora despairs of the state of her mother's housekeeping. (Young women in Pym are so pompous. One cannot wait to see them grown up and have a few hard knocks themselves.) And when Jane despairs of Flora's unprepossessing beau, Paul. Not to mention the deliciously cynical love scenes between Prudence and Fabian Driver.

Fabian Driver is one of Pym's most splendid comic creations. Writing about him in the third person helps. How

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

swiftly Pym topples him off his mighty throne! Prudence's latest conquest in her long line of 'unsatisfactory love affairs' that she 'had got into the way of preferring … to any others' is no romantic hero, no Mr Darcy or Captain Wentworth. For a contrasting 'romance', think of Wilmet Forsyth, recounting her crush on Piers Longridge in the first person. The reader is allowed to see Piers through Wilmet's more romantic gaze and feel much more gently toward him than the callous Fabian, dismissed by Flora, in a memorable phrase, as being 'used up, Byronic'.

Additionally, Pym's pitch-perfect ear for adverbs enhances much of the comedy. Her adverbs are stylish and inevitably somehow right, especially when remarking on the style of a character's tone of voice. Think of the line from *No Fond Return of Love*: ' "Is he married?" asked Dulcie stoutly.' You'd have to be tone-deaf to make the case that that line would be as funny without the word 'stoutly'.

For other comic scenes of social life, one can look to Leonora's dismal country weekend in *The Sweet Dove Died*, in which the bed is unmade and she comes down with a migraine; Penelope Grandison's split silver lamé cocktail dress at Rupert Stonebird's dinner party in *An Unsuitable Attachment*; as well as one of the most technically accomplished social set-pieces Pym ever wrote, Dulcie's not entirely successful dinner party in *No Fond Return of Love*. It is so nimble, the way she shifts point of view, from Dulcie to Viola to Aylwin to Maurice to Laurel to Miss Lord, the cook. Marvelous stuff; everybody ought to read it. This scene, like so many others, shows off Barbara Pym at her absolute best: dark, knowing, bitter yet generous in her feel for humanity.

Charlotte Silver *is the author of* Charlotte au Chocolat: Memories of a Restaurant Girlhood*, just out from Riverhead. Her second book, a young adult novel called* The Chaperone*, will be published by Roaring Brook Press. She attended Bennington College and studied writing at The Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and has been published in The New York Times. She is working on her third book, a black comedy currently entitled* Bennington Girls Are Easy*, on which the voice of Barbara Pym is, she hopes, a distinct influence. She lives in New York City.*

Jane and Prudence and Barbara and Hazel: The Women Friends of Barbara Pym and How they Influenced her Work

by Linda McDougall

Most women who live without men in 2012 do so by choice. Barbara Pym's generation was strongly affected by two world wars and a shortage of men. When I was a child, women of Barbara's generation who lived alone or with other women were assumed to have lost the great loves of their lives in a war, or to be lesbians. We didn't use that word of course, and we didn't say 'gay' either. Today millions of women live alone or with other women, without anyone blinking an eye. When Barbara was writing her novels the world really was a very different place.

Barbara herself was clearly heterosexual. Her father was a key part of her happy family in her childhood. No lover of hers, or potential husband, was killed in a war. Barbara certainly lost lovers, but there had been definite possibilities of marriage. Yet she remained single all her life. Did she make the mistake all smart girls feared in their youth, and put men off because of her scholarship? Or was it her oddly over-enthusiastic behaviour which turned men away?

In Barbara's diary of 25 January 1933 we read: *This diary seems to be turning into the Saga of Lorenzo. In P. Simpson he sat next but one to me – so that I was able to observe him. He has beautiful hands – rather too beautiful but eminently the right thing for him. He has twinkling (but not pleasantly twinkling) hazel brown eyes, like a duck's I think. And what a mouth. He is able to curl it in the most fascinatingly repulsive sneering smile.*

Then, on 11 February: *Lorenzo was at the Christchurch play. So was I.*

And two days later: *I love Lorenzo. I mean love in my peculiar way. And I had thought I was getting over it.*

Lorenzo was of course Henry Harvey. Barbara followed him and watched him all over Oxford. He gave in, becoming an on-and-off lover and friend for the rest of their lives.

Barbara enjoyed following people and finding out about them. (Some of Barbara's obsessive tracking of men she fancied would probably be called stalking today.) Characters in her books did this too. Wilmet Forsyth thought nothing of spending an evening travelling across London to see where someone lived.

Pym was writing at a time when securing a relationship with a man was most heterosexual women's top priority. Women soon learned which parts of their single sisterhood needed to be packed away if they were going to get a man. Close women friends often found themselves abandoned when prospective husbands appeared. In our youth, and when Barbara Pym was writing, getting a man and then caring for his needs dominated most women's lives.

Why was Barbara the way she was with men? Could Henry Harvey really have been such a catch? Did she have no womanly wiles at all? Here was a woman who had set out wanting a life full of sex and romance. Reality never matched up to what was going on inside her head – so she completed her affairs and buffed up her relationships on her typewriter. They then became the novels we love so much.

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

But what of the love life of the real Barbara Pym? Did it really begin and end with Henry? I put this question to Hazel Holt when I interviewed her:

Hazel Holt: There's an entry in one of her notebooks and I think it was 'Jock came home unexpectedly and found Henry and me with nothing on reading Shakespeare' or something like that.

Linda McDougall: Was he really so attractive?

Hazel: Well, he was just absolutely fascinating. Very attractive. Very intelligent. Everybody's ideal really, I suppose. To the end of his days people fell for Henry Harvey, including me, I think, probably in a way. I could certainly see the attraction. He was small and dark and had regular features and a very good voice, which is always very important, but it was his mind and intellect and wit.

Linda: How did he treat women?

Hazel: Oh, not very well. He was very self-centred, he accepted homage as his right. She never forgot him. She used him frequently in her books, as we know.

Linda: Do you think because she didn't marry him she didn't want to marry anybody else, or do you think there weren't any other possibilities later on?

Hazel: Well there were other people, certainly, but they usually married other people

Linda: Why do you think that was?

Hazel: I don't know really. I really don't know that. I think perhaps they were just not interested enough … in Barbara as she was in them.

Hazel Holt and Flip

I think Barbara Pym was disadvantaged by living at a time when 'getting a man' regulated most women's lives. Barbara wanted so much more than any ordinary man seemed able to give her. To me as a modern woman Henry Harvey sounds just ghastly. Opinionated, self-centred. I have known too many men like that in my working life. Barbara Pym gave us such a precious gift when her real-life romances failed her and she crafted them into her novels.

I wish I had known Miss Pym. Her early death meant that she missed out on great changes in society which would have fascinated her and provided us with more of her delightful observations of English life.

Linda McDougall *is a British television producer and writer. She worked as a producer/director for both Granada Television's World in Action and Thames Television's* This Week and TV Eye *for two decades, twice winning the Royal Television Society Award for best documentary. Since 1990 she has been managing director of McDougall Craig North, making documentaries and current affairs programmes for BBC, ITV, and Channel 4. In the mid–1980s Linda and her family moved their London home to 19 Brooksville Avenue, NW6. Just across the road on No. 40 was a plaque, 'Barbara Pym, novelist, lived here'. Linda shares Barbara's vigorous curiosity, so she did some research, bought* Jane and Prudence*, and was delighted. For the last year she has been travelling to Somerset to visit Hazel Holt and her cat Flip, and to talk with Hazel about her memories of Barbara.*

'You Never Know When You May Need Whisky': Barbara Pym on Drinks and Drinking

by Perri Klass

Drink one needs, but luckily I don't like whisky and am just a small steady drinker of wine and sherry with the occasional gin', wrote Barbara Pym to Philip Larkin in 1978. The specificity with which she defined her own preferences speaks to the attention she paid to her characters; as a writer who chose every word, she served out her fictional alcoholic beverages with great care and attention to details of class, gender, sophistication, social situation, and above all, personality, all enacted through electing, or offering, or accepting – or declining – a drink.

Sherry: This is the gateway tipple in these novels, the alcoholic beverage provided and poured by those who do not usually indulge. Jane calls to Prudence to help open a bottle of sherry. 'Prudence ran downstairs with a lighter heart. It was good sherry, too, the kind one would hardly have expected Jane to buy.' Sherry is a highly social accessory, offered or not offered according to protocol, drunk on occasions with well-defined rules and practices.

Ladies together may drink sherry, as Allegra and Mildred do before their lunch together in *Excellent Women.* A gentlewoman may offer sherry: it's what Ianthe gives Mervyn, John, Rupert, and Penelope when she invites them to see her house, and she apologizes, 'I'm afraid sherry is all I have'. But Esther Clovis, never very ladylike, doesn't like

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

sherry and instead drinks gin with Professor Fairfax before luncheon.

Wine: The drinking and choosing of wine often raises issues of male pretension and foolishness. Aylwin lists his recreations in *Who's Who* as 'conversation and wine', and Dulcie, reading this, experiences 'a slight feeling of distaste … what an affectation!' When fussy, pigeon-loving William Caldicote pours the wine at luncheon and apologizes for its lack of pretension, Mildred compares it to herself. She is swept up by the romance of the name Nuits St Georges, but William then refills his glass but not hers. At another dinner, she has to watch Rocky and Everard arguing over the wine list: 'They were nearly as fussy as William, though in a different way, and I began to think that it would really be much easier if we just had water, though I lacked the courage to suggest it.'

Cocktails: At Rupert Stonebird's dinner party, cocktails are offered as an alternative to sherry: ' "Ah, Penelope … I expect you're ready for a drink. Will you risk my dry Martini or would you rather stick to sherry?" The idea of sticking to sherry sounded so very safe and dull that Penelope naturally chose the Martini.' In doing so, she is declaring herself; the adventurousness that takes her to the Martini is connected to her eagerness to change her life and venture forth into romantic love.

Cocktails tend to represent individual choice, self-indulgence, pleasure, and a certain sophistication. Prudence, when alone, does not drink sherry like Ianthe, but instead pours herself a gin and French before supper, and when she is abandoned by Fabian she feels she needs a good solitary lunch, complete with cocktail: 'A dry Martini and then a little smoked salmon; she felt she could manage that.'

Gin: In the novels, gin is generally bought by and served to men. Aylwin Forbes hides a bottle of gin in his cupboard at the conference center, and when Dulcie gives her dinner party, she provides gin for the gentlemen, and greets Maurice with, ' "Ah, Maurice, have some gin!" ' Maurice then helps himself 'rather generously', and Aylwin, coming into the room, thinks, 'He likes his gin' and then, 'feeling all eyes upon him', pours himself 'a rather smaller gin than Maurice had given himself'.

But then there is the great exception, when Viola persuades Dulcie to buy a half-bottle of gin to drink in their bedroom at the hotel with the 'bright Christian atmosphere'. In the liquor store, Dulcie humiliates Viola by asking for a corkscrew. But they do successfully buy the gin – and thus Dulcie steps perhaps a little further over the line toward Aylwin, who was introduced drinking gin alone in his room.

Whisky: Many of the gentlewomen in Barbara Pym's novels are either afraid of whisky or treat it only as a pharmaceutical. When Harriet and Belinda give their dinner party in *Some Tame Gazelle*, Harriet worried that Mr Mold would be used to living in style, and would surely expect whisky or gin. ' "But we have a very good sherry," said Belinda. "I am sure that is quite correct, and there will be the hock and afterwards port." ' To Belinda whisky was something one took for a cold with hot milk or lemon. It was not at all suitable for a Sunday evening supper party at which there were to be clergymen and ladies present.

Interestingly, when Jessie Morrow makes her move on Fabian, he asks her, ' "What would you like now, a cup of tea or a hot drink of some kind?" Jessie said nothing, but her eyes were fixed on the amber-coloured liquid on the little table. "Would you like whisky?" Fabian's eyes lighted up and he fetched another glass.' Here the whisky signifies Jessie staking her claim to be a person, a romantic and sexual being, a figure in Fabian's life, a person with likes and dislikes – and a contract is made and sealed as they drink whisky together.

Drinks and drinking have varied social and emotional uses in the novels, as they did in fact in Barbara Pym's own life. In her notebooks and letters, she wrote of the pleasures of cocktails: 'Went out to dinner at the George with Harry, and had the loveliest cocktail I've ever had – a sidecar, very iced. Also hock and good food.' (25 November 1933). And she worried over what her characters would drink: 'How would [Dulcie] eat when alone? Half a lobster and a glass of Chablis at Scott's – or baked beans on toast and Coca Cola in the Kenbar at Barkers?' (8 April 1958). In a letter she encouraged Philip Larkin to have 'a *good lunchtime drink.* We are about to have one – poor Hilary has a bad cold so hers will be whisky – mine sherry.' (21 February 1977). And finally, when she came out of the wilderness, she knew how to celebrate, and she wrote, again to Larkin, 'Dear Philip, Thank you so much for your champagne-jumble letter. Isn't it splendid the way good news, when you're older, sends one to the drink of some kind – even if not M. et Ch. at least a glass of something extra!' (4 March 1977).

Perri Klass MD *is a professor of journalism and pediatrics at New York University, where she is also director of the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute. She has served as chair of the executive board of PEN New England. She is currently national medical director of Reach Out and Read, a national program that promotes childhood literacy. She has published six books of non-fiction (most recently* Treatment Kind and Fair: Letters to a Young Doctor*), four novels (most recently* The Mercy Rule*), and two collections of short stories. She writes the monthly '18 and Under' column in the New York Times Science Section, and a regular column for Knitter's Magazine. She first discovered Barbara Pym thanks to the Lion Bookshop in Rome, not at all far from Babington's Tea Room.*

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Not Quite a Trollope Wife: Jane Cleveland's Literary Expectations of Herself as a Clergy Wife

by Isabel B. Stanley

Jane Cleveland's vision of her future as a clergyman's wife when she was a starry-eyed, newly-engaged young woman owed more to the novels of Anthony Trollope, Charlotte M Yonge, and Jane Austen, as well as the many English poets who wrote of love and romance, than to a realistic view of the likely role of a modern clergy spouse. Jane is not modern, but is she really like her would-be models?

Anthony Trollope's Barsetshire characters such as Eleanor Harding Bold Arabin bear slight resemblances to Jane, but Jane does not possess the long-suffering qualities of Mrs Josiah Crawley or Mrs Quiverful, impecunious mother of twelve. Equally, she lacks the determination of the bishop's wife Mrs Proudie, and the flair and doubtful morals of Signora Madeline Vesey-Neroni, *nata* Stanhope. Jane is a would-be matchmaker on behalf of her friend Prudence, just as the Signora matchmakes on behalf of Eleanor, but Jane is notably less successful in her efforts.

Turning to Charlotte M Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, one again finds no direct parallels, although Barbara Pym herself read the book and other works by Yonge with pleasure throughout her life. Certainly Jane Cleveland is not forced to make the sacrifices that the women in *The Daisy Chain* must enact on behalf of family members, especially the males.

Jane Cleveland's matchmaking efforts can also be compared to those of Jane Austen's Emma in her novel of the same name. Jane even compares herself to Emma, but she is not much like the Austen heroine in temperament and circumstance, although both of them lack insight and are unsuccessful in their matchmaking.

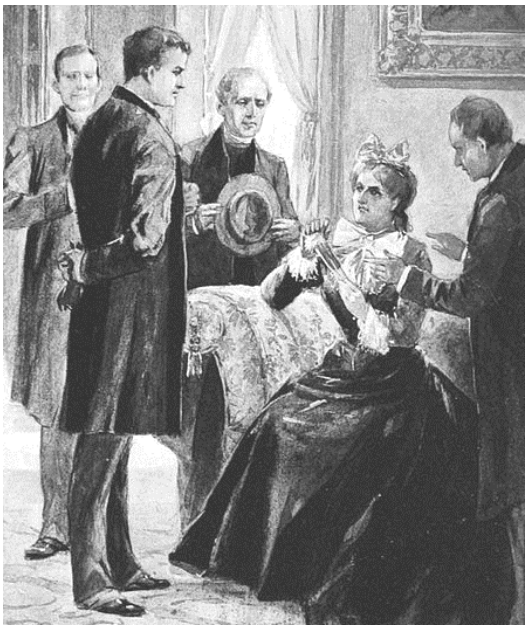
Although Jane often identifies with fictional characters, her real literary love is poetry, especially seventeenth-century poetry – and most especially the work of obscure poets. Under her special care is the poet John Cleveland, a remote ancestor of her husband Nicholas. Barbara Pym makes good use of some recondite lines from Cleveland to comic effect, as well as bits and chunks from better-known poets. In the course of the novel Jane alludes to John Donne and Andrew Marvell four times each, John Milton and John Keats twice each, as well as William Wordsworth, George Herbert, Oscar Wilde, Matthew Arnold and John Betjeman. However, more obscure poets are very prominent as well. Barbara Pym was clearly conversant with many poets unlikely to have been taught at St Hilda's, her Oxford college.

When Jane is not reciting poetry and bits from Victorian novels in her head, she is recalling hymns and popular songs. Daughter Flora, who appears on the surface more practical than Jane, seems, like her mother, to dwell in poetic realms some of the time. Prudence, Jane's friend, is steeped in the Victorian poet Coventry Patmore – surely not the choice of a mature critical mind.

Yes, Jane's daughter and friend are afflicted with the poetry disease common, as Jane notes, to all students of English literature, but she herself has a particularly acute case of the malady. Her mind is almost never on things at hand but is constantly fixed on quotations from poems; some of these quotations are apt to the situation, but many are not, as she herself has the presence to observe.

No, Jane's life as a clergy wife cannot be found in novels, for her mind is always trailing clouds of poetry, as she 'blunder[s] along in that state of life unto which it [has pleased] God to call [her]'. She regrets not having been a heroic figure from the pages of a novel, but is realistic enough to see herself as a well-intentioned woman muddling along with a jumble sale's worth of poetry tumbling around in her head. Happily, Barbara Pym's many readers love Jane Cleveland just as she is.

Isabel B. Stanley *is Professor Emerita in the Department of English at East Tennessee State University. Her dissertation topic was 'The Anglican Clergy in the Novels of Barbara Pym' and her knowledge of Pym and her works is broad. She has spoken at many previous Pym conferences in the US and the UK and has published widely on diverse subjects including fantasy literature, the short story, Jane Austen, and Barbara Pym. She first discovered Barbara Pym while browsing in her local library in the late 1970s*



'Do you reside in Barchester, Dr Grantley?' Mrs Proudie speaking to Archdeacon Grantley at their first meeting. Engraving by John Steeple Davis, published by Gebbie & Co., Philadelphia, 1900 (detail).

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Birthplace Plaque Unveiled
Oswestry, 14 March 2012

by Chris Rutherford

It was a rather ordinary day in March – a cold wind from a grey sky – when a loose knot of people gathered on the corner of Willow Street in Oswestry, at the site of the birthplace of Barbara Pym. This is now a block of flats, but there are enough older buildings nearby to give a good idea of how it might have been, how convenient it was for town, and for Mr Pym's office just across the road.

Councillor Rainey

Caro Lyle Skyrme

The Rev. Lawrence Garner was looking worried, the local journalist was scribbling down all sorts of details and the rest of us were chatting and wondering if it would rain. Caro, in a magnificent hat, put the rest of us dowdy, practical people to shame. On the dot of 12.30, we began. Councillor Saffron Rainey, Chairman of Oswestry Civic Society, introduced Lawrence, and Lawrence introduced first Barbara Pym and then Kate Charles. Kate spoke about Barbara before she unveiled the plaque, and we all applauded. The journalist took more pictures, as did some of the rest of us, before we walked down to the Willow Gallery and Café for some food – which was excellent, especially as they had had no idea how many might be coming to eat. The staff rose to the occasion, as Barbara might have said. After lunch and a tour of the gallery where an artist was explaining his more obscure works, we went into the annexe to listen to Kate's talk on Barbara Pym and the Clergy, based on her paper in *No Soft Incense.* We'd had to move into a bigger room than the one booked, such was the interest, although most of us kept our coats on as it hadn't warmed up properly. I was traitorously reminded of the last heating issue when we visited Oswestry, but the warm reception Kate had in both the response during her speech and afterwards made it seem irrelevant.

Kate admiring the plaque.

It all went splendidly, although Lawrence looked in dire need of a cup of tea at the end. 'I was a bit worried,' he admitted, 'I thought perhaps nobody would come.' 'But they did!' I pointed out cheerily. 'And it was a great success!' 'Yes,' he nodded thoughtfully. Then he smiled.

When we left to go home the sun was shining. We walked past the plaque, now without the wooden bars which held the little silk curtain. 'It's still there, then,' said Lawrence. 'I thought somebody might have stolen it for the metal.'

Not yet. I hope its security bolts keep it in place for many, many years to come.

From the Archives

by Yvonne Cocking

The problem of permanent storage of the Pym Society's collection of memorabilia etcetera has frequently been discussed in Committee, and a progress report has been given at AGMs.

We have always felt that the Bodleian Library would be the best repository for these items, and I am happy to say that a number of them have now been accepted there.

Last December I handed them over to Dr Judith Priestman, Curator, Modern Literary Manuscripts Collections. Among them were the following items:

- Copies of all dramatisations of novels, short stories and a play, which have been adapted mainly by myself and Tom Sopko for dramatic readings at conferences
- Barbara's address book, her hand-compiled German vocabulary, and her signed copy of the *British Red Cross Society Nursing Manual*
- Page proofs of *A Glass of Blessings*
- Barbara's signed copy of ***Universitas Oxoniensis***. *Excerpta e statutis,* 1931
- The score (2004), by John Owen Edwards, of Barbara's very early 'opera' *The Magic Diamond*

I have written about some of these items in this column in the past.

Dr Priestman has also agreed to accept some files of correspondence between Hazel Holt, Hilary Walton and the publishers of books which came out after Barbara's death.

Thanks to an initiative by Linda McDougall, we have now started to scan photographs from Barbara's albums for digital preservation. When complete, I hope to pass the originals to the Library.

Breakfast fruit platter at the Barker Center

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Alliance of Literary Societies: Lichfield, Larkin and Dickens

by Deb Fisher

Many of you reading this will know by now that the Barbara Pym Society has been selected to host the annual conference of the Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS) in 2013, the year of Barbara's centenary. The conference will take place at St Hilda's College, Oxford on 1 June 2013, and all members of the BPS are very welcome to attend. Hosting this meeting will really help to put the BPS – and Barbara – 'on the map' in literary circles, for the ALS is an umbrella organisation for some 125 literary societies. It provides support on a variety of literary subjects and encourages cooperation between member societies. Its meetings not only give delegates the opportunity to seek advice and swap experiences but also offer an unrivalled chance of promoting one's author to like-minded people.

When I go to ALS meetings, I am often asked questions like 'Who is Barbara Pym? What kind of books did she write?' This will be a great opportunity for us to spread the word, as well as a wonderful way of celebrating the centenary. Some of the delegates I met at the 2011 ALS AGM assured me that they will be looking for Pym novels so that they can become acquainted with them in advance, and one gentleman told me an entertaining story about a meeting hosted by the Friends of the Dymock Poets some years ago, at which he met Muriel Maby and escorted her home!

Every year the annual ALS meeting is hosted by a different member society. Many are of these are small or local, established to celebrate the life and work of relatively obscure authors. Perhaps I had better not mention any names, since I can well remember, as an undergraduate at St Hilda's, hearing Wilfred Owen's name bandied about during dinner and innocently asking 'Who?' – only to find that everyone else at the table considered him quite famous.

On the other hand, many large and thriving societies are represented within the ALS, some with several branches around the country. And new societies are constantly being founded. The host organisation for 2011 was the Samuel Johnson Society, which has been going since 1910. Their regular representatives, notably Marty Ross, worked extremely hard to give us all a day to remember at Lichfield, where Johnson was born. We were welcomed at the Guildhall, a building whose unassuming exterior disguises a beautiful and elaborately decorated meeting space of great historic interest. Following the business of the AGM, we enjoyed talks about both Johnson and Lichfield, and a lavish buffet lunch. Any member of any member society – and that includes *you* – is welcome to attend the ALS annual meeting. Unfortunately, many 'ordinary' members do not realise this, and thus miss out on the entertainment and fellowship that the meetings offer.

Some societies had success stories to tell. Others had less pleasant news. During 2010's ALS weekend, the Gaskell Society had proudly shown us round Mrs Gaskell's former home at Plymouth Grove, Manchester, which was undergoing extensive refurbishment. Sadly, thieves stole lead from the roof in May 2011, doing some £250,000 worth of damage in the process. Replacing the roof will not be easy as the Gaskell Society had found it impossible to obtain insurance on a lead roof – a roof installed on the orders of English Heritage (the Society themselves would have preferred a stainless steel substitute). The Gaskell Society will be pleased to accept donations from anyone who is interested in the preservation of historic houses, and there cannot be a more significant literary home anywhere in the UK than this one, which welcomed both Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë as guests on more than one occasion.

After lunch, there was an opportunity either to explore Lichfield independently or to take a guided walk led by Don Lee. The city has much to offer, including Erasmus Darwin's house, the Heritage Centre, and of course the great medieval cathedral, standing on its hill above the beautiful Minster Pool. I opted for the walk, the subject of which was 'Philip Larkin's Lichfield'. Not many people are aware of the connections between Larkin and Lichfield. Although our hero spent very little time there himself, it was his ancestral home, and the Larkin family goes back many generations. Their graves can still be found, cut out of the undergrowth and now kept under control by local members of the Larkin Society. These include the grave of an earlier Philip Larkin – the sight of which, according to his letters, made the poet want to 'vomit into a homburg hat'. You can also see the house to which young Philip and his family were evacuated in 1940, and from which they rapidly returned to blitz-scarred Coventry (Philip's father Sidney did not get on with his brother, their host at number 33 Cherry Orchard).

Later in the day, we enjoyed a convivial dinner at a local restaurant, preceded by a reception at the Johnson Birthplace Museum, where we were greeted by the Doctor in person! After dinner, the new ALS President Jenny Uglow gave a short address, and this was followed by the traditional ALS after-dinner entertainment of readings from just a few of the authors represented. In 2010 my impersonation of Mrs Morris (Mildred Lathbury's Welsh cleaning lady) seemed to go down very well, but in 2011 I read from my 'other' author, Siegfried Sassoon. The highlight of the evening, however, is almost always a dramatic Dickens reading by Anita Fernandez-Young, Secretary of the ALS. On this occasion, once again, Anita did not disappoint, offering up a lively monologue by Mrs Lirriper, the landlady in one of Dickens's short stories.

By the time you read this, the 2012 ALS meeting will have taken place, hosted by the Dickens Society at the Mechanics' Institute in Nottingham. (Look for a report of this in the Autumn 2012 edition of *Green Leaves*.) Between us, Clemence Schultze and I will be representing three societies (Sassoon, Yonge, and Pym). We shall do our best to raise Pym's profile there, and start planning for an effective and stimulating occasion in 2013.

For more on the ALS, please see their website: www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Rita Brewer (1926-2011)

Many members will remember Rita Brewer, a founder member and stalwart of the Society. Sadly, we heard the news of Rita's death at the end of December 2011. She leaves a son, Stephen, and her cat, Figaro.

Rita, together with her friend Maureen Lenk, was a familiar figure at meetings (she rarely missed one), where her quiet, self-effacing manner masked a sharp perception, and she frequently made insightful contributions to the topic under discussion. She appeared with Maureen in the first non-professional dramatised reading, *The Pilgrimage*, an experience which she much enjoyed. Her devotion to Barbara's books was enormous and, like many of us, she turned to them continually for comfort and companionship.

Rita was born in London on 15 October 1926 and spent the first 13 years of her life there. When the Second World War came, Rita and her younger sister were evacuated to Northampton. Later, their mother moved to Devon, and they remained there until the end of the war. Rita was a bright schoolgirl but, as for so many others at that time, there was no chance of going to University, so she left school at 14. She did office work, then for a short time she worked in a holiday camp, where she met her husband Leo, a musician. After they married she went back to office work. However, she was still determined to pursue her education, and so joined evening classes, passing 'O' and 'A' levels over the years. Finally, at the age of 60, she was able to gain a place at University, successfully completing a BA in Humanities, to which she later added a Masters degree. Her educational success meant a great deal to Rita. Her great loves apart from her husband and son Stephen were music, education, reading and animals – she always had a dog and cat in the household, and in her later years fostered several rescue cats.

Rita's courage, humour and determination were obvious to everyone who knew her. While her early life cannot have been particularly easy, it certainly was not devoid of pleasure or incident – one startling fact that we learnt was that Rita for a short time walked out with the actor Claude Rains. It seems that, like Letty, life for Rita was full of infinite possibilities.

This appreciation of Rita has been put together by Lorraine Mepham, with additions by Yvonne Cocking, and with biographical details kindly provided by Rita's half-sister, Jose Pethybridge.

Rita Brewer (centre) with Lorraine Mepham and Ros Cleal at St Hilda's

Kay Phelps

by Clemence Schultze

Dorothy Kathleen Garton, who died at the age of 90 years on 13 February 2011, was known professionally in her career as writer and broadcaster as Kay Batchelor. Pym Society members will recognize her as Kay Phelps, the neighbour of Barbara Pym and Hilary Walton in Finstock.

Kay married the novelist, broadcaster and critic Gilbert Phelps in 1972, and they settled down (as Gilbert's obituarist Robert Waller put it) 'into a loving and creative partnership albeit at times occasionally subject to exhilarating discords which dissolved into laughter. They knew they were meant for each other.' Kay was a woman of 'great exuberance and intuitive insights', a forceful personality who made things happen.

Barbara and Hilary encountered the Phelpses soon after their own arrival in Finstock that same year. With literary and church interests in common, the four became good friends, and Barbara's diaries record various convivial meetings with Gilbert and Kay. Gilbert was Churchwarden, and Kay (like Hilary) sang in the church choir; she was also involved in forming a local choir known as the Wychwood Singers. It is thanks to Kay – who took a vigorous lead in getting the back pews removed – that Finstock Church now has a meeting space for refreshments after services.

Gilbert Phelps died in 1993, aged 78. Kay later married Geoffrey Garton, and moved to the nearby village of Ramsden. Those who were at the 2007 BPS conference dinner in Oxford will recall how she and Judith Baron (the Pyms' next-door neighbour at Well Cottage) reminisced entertainingly about life in Finstock during the 1970s. On that occasion, Kay very kindly presented the Society with an inlaid walnut box which Barbara had given her. In this box – mentioned in the diary for 3 April 1940 – Barbara housed keepsakes of Julian Amery (see *Green Leaves*, Spring 2010, p.14). This is one of the Society's most significant material mementoes of Barbara, and we recall Kay's generosity with warm gratitude.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

I should like to correct a small error in the Conference report in *Green Leaves*, Autumn 2011, p.2, column 2. 'On your next visit to Marks and Spencer, remember it was the Phoenix cinema where BP had two male arms around her.'

The Phoenix cinema was, since 1913, and still is, in Walton Street, Oxford. It was the Electra Palace cinema which was on the site in Queen Street where M & S now stands. Barbara always refers to it in her diaries as 'The Queener'.

The Electra Palace opened in 1911 and survived until 1958, when the site was taken over by the Co-op. Marks and Spencer, then in Cornmarket, swapped sites a few years later with the Co-op, and is still there.

Yvonne Cocking

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Remembering Jeannette Molzer

by Louise Smith

My friendship with Jeannette Molzer dates from the first time I attended the Conference of the Barbara Pym Society in North America in 2004. I was at the reception desk of the Irving House B&B in Cambridge, Massachusetts and a tall, attractive lady with curly white hair was standing beside me. On a whim, I asked, "Are you here for the Barbara Pym Conference?" "Yes," she replied, and so our friendship began.

We were soon walking briskly to conference events together, and getting aquainted along the way. It seems easy to become acquainted with someone who likes one's favorite authors, and so it was with Jeannette. We sat together at the presentations and knitted (as so many of us do), and Jeannette had a little notebook in which she took notes.

Over the next several years, Jeannette and I enjoyed our annual Pym get-togethers, and then, in 2007, Jeannette proposed going to England for the Barbara Pym Conference in Oxford. I thought this an inspired idea and, together with Susan Bramson, we traveled to St Hilda's College.

In the course of the conference, Dr Eleonore Biber had graciously offered to take us on a literary tour of Oxford, which culminated in a view of a house which she suggests is like that of Miss Doggett, complete with a monkey puzzle tree.

In the summer of 2008, Jeannette visited me at our family farmhouse in Arlington, Vermont. Fiona, our Westy, bonded with her at once, and proceeded to follow her everywhere. I enjoyed sharing with her Arlington tales of the painter, Norman Rockwell, and she showed me her mother's former summer home in nearby Manchester.

Although Jeannette was living in New Jersey, and I live in Maryland, we were often in touch, discussing Barbara Pym characters, Masterpiece Theater dramas, and life in general. In the spring of 2011, I was sorry when Jeannette told me that she was ill and could not come to the Pym Conference, and I was shocked and saddened by her sudden death in October. She was a wonderful friend, and Pym members both in the USA and UK will miss her very much.

Loitering within Tent
Queen's Park Literary Festival, London, 19-20 May 2012

by Christine Shuttleworth

'What's wrong with being obsessed with trivia?' mused Barbara Pym in a diary entry of 9 November 1970, and quoted by Sioned Wiliam in her lively and perceptive account of Pym's life and work. Her talk, with readings by Elizabeth Proud and Jamie Newall, was given at the Queen's Park Literary Festival on 20 May 2012, in a large tent eye-catchingly labelled 'BARBARA PYM' in huge letters on the outside.

Sioned celebrated the 'small, perfectly formed world' and 'delicate and wry' writing of Pym to an appreciative audience, recalling that nearby Brooksville Avenue was where Barbara and Hilary had spent some years before moving to Finstock in Oxfordshire.

It was a delightfully trivial, not to say bizarre, incident that brought them to Queen's Park. At the time living in Barnes, they had been observing (or stalking, as we might call it today) two young men who were neighbours and whom they nicknamed Bear and Squirrel. They noted with curiosity that on most Sundays, Bear, wearing a cassock, would drive off in his car. One day, having hired a car, they decided to follow him, and tracked him down to St Lawrence's church in Queen's Park, where he turned out to be the organist. They decided to stay for the service, took tea in the church hall, and ended up buying a house around the corner. Their life in Queen's Park, Sioned told us, much resembled that led by their fictional counterparts, Harriet and Belinda, in Barbara's first novel, *Some Tame Gazelle.* It is the 'heartbreaking silliness of everyday life' (in the words of the American novelist Anne Tyler) that informs her work and still makes it so appealing and accessible to us today.

Later in the afternoon, two small groups of BPS members were privileged to visit the house in Brooksville Avenue and inspect a rich display of book illustrations and cartoons, together with a fascinating collection of ceramics and household objects. The house was taken over from Barbara and Hilary in 1972 by its present occupants, Luke and Francis, who kindly showed us round and supplied tea and smoked salmon sandwiches – very welcome after the somewhat chilly sojourn in the park. We are grateful to them, and to Linda McDougall, who 30 years ago moved to a house opposite and discovered Barbara's works as a result of seeing the plaque on the front wall reading 'Barbara Pym, novelist, lived here'.

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Photo appeals results to April 2012

In the previous issue of Green Leaves we told you that the Society had acquired the rights to all the photos of Barbara taken by Mayotte Magnus, and to one Mark Gerson photo of Barbara at her typewriter. Having these quality photographs available for publicity and merchandise will be invaluable to the Society, though the total cost, split between the UK and North American branches, is high – £1295 ($2095).

Thank you all for your contributions so far. You have been very generous – donations to date have reached over £600 ($970), almost half the £1295 we require. But you can see that more is still needed.

All donations are welcome, and those who donate more than $25 will receive a matted 5x7 print of the photo of Barbara holding her cat. Checks may be sent to Barbara Pym Society, c/o Judy Horn, 4 Summit Dr # 005, Reading, MA 01867-4050. Checks should be payable to The Barbara Pym Society and envelopes marked 'Photo appeal'.

We are grateful to the following contributors:

North America	UK
Kathy Ackley	Devon Allison
Joy Douglass	Iona Bennion Roberts
Charles Gilbert	Yvonne Cocking
Sandra Goldstein	Stephen Derry
Renee Halterlein	Linda Fowler
Scott Herrick	Pamela Gibbs
Mary Hughes Knox	Diana Gulland
Rita Fuhr Marowitz	Lady Hopkins
Ann Mason	Paul Jackson
Ellen Nunnelee	Christine and Philip Josling
Donna Safreed	David F Smith
Isabel B. Stanley	Stanton Stephens
Dorene Swanson	Ruth Taylor
Dana G. White	Michael Wilson

Diary of a Provincial Pymmite

by Clemence Schultze

Packing for Cambridge and the BP North American conference. Despite making a Packing List, never seem to achieve the capsule wardrobe ideal. Base colour this year is navy, plus cream and touches of scarlet, but somehow cannot exclude a couple of floral Liberty blouses (for possible hot days) and a wine-coloured tunic. Am irresistibly reminded of Charlotte Mitchell's poem 'Just in Case', and decide first for, then against, dressing-gown. Do Rational Packing, with all the garments neatly folded into large case, and the awkwardly shaped items (shoes, accessories, books, e-reader, laptop and its bits and pieces) into small cabin bag. Husband is anxiously reading the weather forecasts for Boston: Shall he or Shall he Not take overcoat – that is, as well as a mac, two jackets and a fleece? He decides in favour of overcoat, which he will have to wear; feel rather smug that I am relying solely on quilted jacket and mac. But later, during freezing journey to airport, he is both snug and smug.

Arrive at airport to find that Airline-Which-Shall-Be-Nameless imposes a six-kilo limit on cabin baggage and mine weighs nine. Operative waits unsmilingly while I transfer various items from cabin bag to main case, necessitating several re-weighings until lower allowance is achieved. Cabin bag now almost empty and rationally packed large case a total mess. Am not pleased, and feel hot and bothered. Once in flight, request fizzy water to drink, and am told that This is Not Available in Economy Class. Cannot imagine that this could make the slightest difference to their costs, and drink dull flat water with Deepest Suspicion: has it come out of a tank rather than a bottle? Food is indifferent, as are the staff, and we vow never to desert dear British Airways again.

Unlike chilly London, Boston greets us with blazing sunshine and a temperature approaching 25ºC. Husband dourly dons his overcoat for the journey to hotel. As soon as we arrive, he goes out and buys a couple of short-sleeved shirts. Weather for the rest of our fortnight's stay varies wildly – but at least we have clothes for every eventuality.

Pym conference is, as always, superb: everything runs with the smoothness that betokens months of prior organisation. We are treated to excellent papers, convivial company and delicious meals. Alas, it ends far too soon; but we all have the Centenary to look forward to next year. Treats in store – in addition to the two conferences – include a UK spring meeting combined with the ALS AGM, emphasising Pym's Oxford context and connections. Other plans include a Short Story Competition, open to all (except to BPS Committee members!) The launch is to be at the 2012 AGM, with plenty of publicity so as to attract a good field of aspiring writers. But alas, the idea of a fancy-dress evening in August has bitten the dust, for the committee (envisaging droopy cardigans) said 'What Could People Come As?', and then gave their verdict 'Too Frivolous'.

In New York, catch up with some Pym friends who were unable to attend conference. We enjoy an afternoon's enthusiastic chat on her books and others at a party which starts with tea and nibbles, and ends with sherry: it couldn't be more appropriate!

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Autumn Tea at the Church of the Advent, Boston Massachusetts

Photos by Judy Horn

A very special visitor

Tom Sopko leading a Pym quiz

Gleanings

TLS, 9 September 2011.
In a review of Lucy Worsley's *If Walls Could Talk: an intimate history of the home*, by Gillian Tindall:

To go in two sentences from 18th century views on make-up to Barbara Pym in 1953, and then back again, trivializes the topic to the point of incoherence.

The Lady, 25 September 2011.
Two Excellent Women. Linda McDougall on the life of Barbara Pym and her friendship with her literary executor Hazel Holt.

The Guardian, 3 December 2011. Letter from Janet Fraser, Twickenham
No list of fictional libraries would be complete without the 'library of political and sociological books' in Barbara Pym's An Unsuitable Attachment. *Ianthe Broome's reactions to the competing affections of colleagues John and Mervyn, and the unsuitable choice of husband she eventually makes, are testament to Pym's minutely observed style.*

Daily Telegraph, 31 March 2012.
Columnist Damian Thompson, describing how buses are a prime location for eavesdropping, wrote: 'my favourite overheard comment ever was addressed by a pleasant-looking elderly lady to her friend. Both of them were clutching their bus passes and could have stepped out of a Barbara Pym novel. "If Eileen knew how much I hated her", said the old dear, "she'd never leave the house."'

The Spectator, 14 April 2012. Serpents in Suburbia: introduction to *An Academic Question (Virago)**
Barbara Pym was never just a cosy writer. She could be barbed and sour – and seriously funny. Kate Saunders, in her introduction to Pym's last novel, explains how.
*To be reviewed by Margaret Drabble in *The Spectator* in May 2012

New York Review of Books, 10 May 2012. Review of Anita Desai's *The Artist of Disappearance* by Claire Messud.
In these relentlessly noisy times, to deem a writer 'quiet' seems tantamount to an insult. Surely 'quiet' is synonymous with 'dull'? 'Discreet' is no better, implying, as it does, prudery of some sort. But any of us must recall the moment when we realized that the smartest girl in school - who was, indeed, both quiet and discreet - was also piercingly observant, frank, and, in some instances, wickedly funny: 'quiet' must by no means be mistaken for 'dull'. In the past half-century, there have been a number of fierce women writers upon whom that muffling word has been bestowed, among them Jean Rhys, Barbara Pym, Muriel Spark (who, although superficially demure, had, eponymously, an arsonist's glee), and Anita Desai.

Thanks to Christine Shuttleworth, Sheila Kane, Michael Wilson, Linda McDougall and Scott Herrick for these contributions.

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Unsuitable Things

Lipstick the colour of Hawaiian Fire,
Field notes and kinship charts thrown on a pyre,
Being in church when a telephone rings –
These are a few most unsuitable things!

Ministry windows with different pigeons,
'Swimming the Tiber' and changing religions,
Respect and esteem without throbbing heartstrings –
These are a few most unsuitable things!

Judgment Day sermons with obscure quotations,
Curates exposing their long combinations
Or having fiancées off in the wings,
These are a few most unsuitable things!

When the sponge falls, when the tea's weak,
When you're feeling sad,
Just reach for a novel by Barbara Pym,
And then you won't feel so bad!

Jesuits, woodworm, and bird domination,
Garden fêtes spoilt by precipitation,
Husbands debating adulterous flings –
These are a few most unsuitable things!

Fabergé eggs pinched by clergy housekeepers,
Cauliflow'r cheese hiding little green creepers,
Leaving the house without hat or stockings –
These are a few most unsuitable things!

Spinsters with crushes on celibate vicars,
Expecting warmth when one wears cotton knickers,
Women aged thirty without wedding rings –
These are a few most unsuitable things!

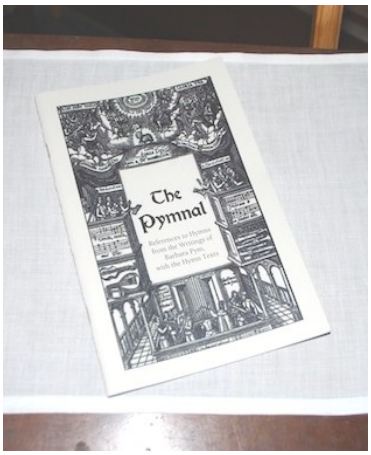
When the sponge falls, when the tea's weak,
When you're feeling sad,
Just reach for a novel by Barbara Pym,
And then you won't feel so bad!

Music by Richard Rodgers
Original lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II
Parody by Tom Sopko, 2012

Rita Phillips

Friday night at the Church of the Advent

Tom Sopko leading the hymn sing



The Pymnal

Dr Ross Wood, Associate Organist and Choirmaster at the Church of the Advent

Hope Blosser with Church cat

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society

Coming Events

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

Garden Fête in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Sunday 24 June 2012, 2:30–5:00 pm. Details will be posted on www.barbara-pym.org.

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' and the programme includes opportunities to visit Pymmian gardens in Oxford. The keynote speaker will be Elizabeth Buchan, a keen reader of Barbara Pym and the author of numerous novels: the latest, *Daughters*, has just been published by Penguin. And our very own Tom Sopko will share 'Some Secrets of a Flower Arranger'.

Afternoon Tea in Boston, Massachusetts

Saturday 3 November 2012.

2013 North American Conference

The fifteenth annual North American conference will be held on 15–17 March 2013 at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
The theme is '100 Years of Pym'.

Call for Papers: The North American organizing committee is soliciting proposals for talks at the conference. Please send a 100-150 word proposal by 19 November to barbarapymsociety@gmail.com, and include the words 'NA conference proposal' in the subject line. Conference registration and meals costs will be waived for speakers, who will also receive an honorarium.

Alliance of Literary Societies on Barbara's Birthday

On 1–2 June 2013, the Barbara Pym Society will host the AGM of the ALS (an umbrella organisation for literary societies) in the Jacqueline Du Pré Building at St Hilda's. The main speaker will be the renowned Larkin scholar, Professor James Booth. All BPS members are very welcome to attend the meeting, the dinner, and the related activities.

2013 Annual General Meeting

The AGM and Centenary Conference will be held at St Hilda's College, Oxford, on 30 August–1 September 2013. The theme is 'Remembering Barbara'.

Manchester Literature Festival

There will be a Barbara Pym event (probably a talk with readings) during the MLF: this is a large-scale celebration of literature, the date of which is normally the middle two weeks of October.

The Barbara Pym Society 2012-2013

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

Find us on Facebook: log in to Facebook and search for "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 Yvonne Cocking, 14 Southfield Drive, Sutton Courtenay, Oxon OX14 4AY.

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 cheque/check payable to The Barbara Pym Society.

Also available on Amazon.com

Ellen Pawlik, Donna Safreed

Margo Miller, Claudia Deane

Tim Burnett, Ann Mason

Lisa Goldstein, Clemence Schultze

Isabel Stanley, Kathy Ackley

Estelle Bond Guralnick, Laura Shapiro, Hazel Bell

Bring & Buy, Drinks

Eleonore Biber

Tim Burnett, Yvonne Cocking

Judy & Joel Horn, Charlotte Silver

Dennis Marois-Wolf & Richard Wolf

Friday dinner buffet

Enjoying the Drinks Party

Tom Sopko, Barbara Boles, Cindy Lacey

Deirdre Bryan-Brown

©2012 The Barbara Pym Society