Green Leaves

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

2013 AGM and Oxford Conference Report

by Ann and Dan DiPietro

Were the spires of Oxford more beautiful, the riverbanks of the Cherwell more verdant, High Street more bustling, and was it all because of the Barbara Pym Society's 2013 Annual Conference and Centenary Celebration at St Hilda's? The Society had been planning for the centenary for many years, and with the arrival of 2013 the festivities truly began. After a rousing gala at the North American conference in March and numerous celebrations throughout England, the Society put its finest efforts into this three day, event-filled extravaganza. Beginning Friday afternoon 30 August there was to have been a memorable boat ride from Folly Bridge to the Trout Inn where Barbara and Henry Harvey had had their first date. Well, minor misfortune befell the merry band of fifty Pymmian sailors. With the ship 'Serafina' unable to dock at the Inn because of other vessels grounded on a sandbank, captain, crew, and sailors found another spot along the river for their picnic and what a delicious picnic it was: an array of tantalizing wraps, salads, drinks, and sweets! After getting back to St Hilda's that evening, the group once again feasted on food and drink, and tested their knowledge of all things Pym in the annual trivia contest led by Ros Cleal and Lorraine Mepham. Eileen Roberts was present to make things run smoothly and pleasantly as she did throughout the weekend.

The ammonite: St Hilda's symbol

Next morning, the group met at St Hilda's Lodge for an hour and a half guided tour around Oxford, visiting locations associated with Barbara, Philip Larkin, and their friends. Kathy Ackley, Deb Fisher, Rose Little, Clemence Schultze and Tom Sopko led the individual walks. By 11am everyone had gathered at the Jacqueline du Pré Building (known as the 'JdP') where the stage boasted a stunning flower decoration by Tom Sopko. Here a welcome was given by past Chairman Dee Bryan-Brown. The AGM followed, chaired by Clemence Schultze, who at the end of the meeting handed over her office to the BPS's first male Chairman, Michael Wilson. Next came a fascinating dual presentation on Pym and the Bodleian Library chaired by the Society's esteemed archivist Yvonne Cocking. Alison Felstead of the Bodleian took as her topic 'Unlocking Barbara Pym's Library Online' while her colleague Catriona Cannon spoke on 'BP and the Bodleian: A Display'.

Immediately afterwards, everyone headed outdoors to a magnificent white marquee for a delicious buffet lunch topped off by the cutting of the Centenary Cake by Prue Anderton, daughter of Pym's great friend Honor Wyatt. With these food moments in mind, the group returned to the JdP to hear Laura Shapiro present her paper 'Remembering the Food: Barbara and the English Kitchen' chaired by Kathy Ackley. The audience had a chance to share their food memories – good and bad – of postwar England. Clemence Schultze then introduced member and film maker Linda McDougall and her sound recordist son Jonathan Mitchell. This mother-son team explained how they came to film friends and contemporaries of Pym for their wonderful 'We Knew Barbara' documentary which they

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then shared with the group. What a moving experience for all – to see and hear from those who knew Pym. Moreover, the film was replete with new insights and some surprising revelations!

Prue Anderton cutting the centenary cake

After this came the Keynote Address 'Barbara Pym, Then and Now' by Paul Binding who was introduced by Libby Tempest, a friend of his and a long time Society member. Binding spoke affectionately of his first meeting with the Pym sisters and various interactions over the years. After this, the group had time to examine books originally owned by Pym and now the property of various individual members of the Society, in a display curated by Ros Cleal and Lorraine Mepham. With many members in Pym era costumes, a champagne reception on the sunlit lawn set the mood for the Annual Dinner held in the marquee. Toasts were made to the Society, St Hilda's, and Barbara herself. Later in the evening, the inimitable Miriam Margolyes of film and stage fame read a delightful short story written by Pym 'They Never Write'. The audience loved it, enthusiastically clapping hands and shouting their approval. They also had the pleasure of hearing Miriam read poems by Pym and her friends at intervals throughout the day.

Embarking on the 'Serafina'

The next morning the group was up early for its bus trip to Finstock, a small village about an hour's drive from Oxford to which the Pym sisters retired from their home in London. The Society members attended services at Holy Trinity Church where the Pyms had been parishioners. The Revd Colin Oxenforth, a member of the Society, gave a moving sermon on Pym and the Church, followed by a visit to the grave of Hilary and Barbara where Kate Charles and Michael Wilson placed flowers that had been prepared by Tom Sopko. A walk through the village included a stop outside Barn Cottage, home of the Pyms. Back on the bus, the group headed to St Hilda's for a buffet lunch in the Dining Hall.

With great anticipation, the group marched back to the JdP for the announcement of the winners of the Short Story Competition by Chair of the Judging Panel Kate Charles, a former Chairman of the BPS. The prizes were funded by a generous donation from Kelvin Carr in memory of his wife Jean who had been a member of the Society. There were close to eighty submissions of short stories, all to have been written in the style of Pym. The two top winners shared the honor of first prize: Nemone Thornes's 'Open to the Public' and Tanya Aydon's 'Unexpected Flowers'. Third place went to Fran Baxter's 'After the Fire' and there were three Honorable Mentions: Ros Cleal's 'Archaeology in the Afternoon', Sarah Evans's 'Knowing the Type', and Martha Taylor's 'Still Life with Nora'. Apart from Martha, all of the shortlist were present on the platform. The first prize winning stories were read by Triona Adams and Miriam Margolyes. As if this were not enough to bring total joy to every Pym lover, more was yet to come.

Cheers!

Yvonne Cocking, as she has done so beautifully in the past, arranged a dramatised reading of a Pym short story 'Mothers and Fathers' written as a parody of an Ivy Compton-Burnett work. The Mighty Pym Players included Miriam Margoyles, Triona Adams, Deirdre Bryan-Brown, Tim Burnett, Dan DiPietro, Charles Gilbert, Lorraine Mepham, Christopher Nankivell, Maggie Parsons, Martin Rush, Tom Sopko, Libby Tempest and Michael Wilson. The performance was a hilarious version of mad camp liaisons and revelations. What a delightful romp! The conference ended on a high musical note with a rendition of the Pym anthem 'Unsuitable Things' with lyrics written by Tom Sopko. Everyone agreed that this had been a truly remarkable weekend with everyone vowing to return for the post-centennial year.

Unlocking Barbara Pym's Library Online

by Alison Felstead

One of the items in the Barbara Pym archives in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, is a card catalogue of her library made after her death by her sister Hilary in 1981 (MS. Pym 175). I used this catalogue as the basis for Barbara Pym's 'Legacy Library' on the social cataloguing website LibraryThing (www.librarything.com/catalog/Barbara_Pym). Legacy Libraries are the libraries of dead people of note entered into LibraryThing by members using a variety of sources. There are now over 220 featured LLs including 104 belonging to authors.

Hilary's catalogue contains nearly 600 hand-written cards with brief but legible descriptions of Barbara's books. Once I had added records for each of the items into LibraryThing, I turned to Blackwell's Rare Books catalogues to discover more information about her books including copy-specific

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details such as signatures and inscriptions and to confirm the bibliographical information that Hilary had recorded. (Blackwell's had sold the libraries of Barbara and Hilary after the death of the latter in 2004, and the Rare Books department had prepared descriptions of those items that were deemed to be valuable. The remainder of their books were sold by Blackwell's second-hand department and unfortunately no complete list of these books exists.) I also went to the online aggregator of second-hand booksellers, AbeBooks, to check for books from Barbara's library and found 14 items offered for sale. The booksellers' descriptions were also used to enhance the basic records in LibraryThing.

The process of putting Barbara's library online involved searching for a record for each item in the large online library catalogues accessible from within LibraryThing and adding it to her library. If no record could be found, one was added manually using an online form. I assigned 'tags' to each record to describe the subject and genre (e.g. 'churches' or 'anthologies'), and I also added the copy-specific information that I had gleaned from booksellers' descriptions. All of the information is searchable and viewable in LibraryThing.

The tags assigned to each record can be used to generate a 'tag cloud' which gives an overview of Barbara's library and where its strengths lie. Unsurprisingly, her library is strong in literature and in particular anthologies. Autobiography, biography, correspondence and diaries are well-represented, and religion, churches and Christianity are also in evidence. The 'author cloud' is a similar feature that enables you to see at a glance the authors represented in Barbara's library. The larger and bolder an author's name, the more of their works were owned by her. Clicking an author takes you to the author's page in LibraryThing, where Barbara's holdings can be compared with those of other members and Legacy Libraries. I was interested to discover that she owned more works by Sir John Betjeman than any other LibraryThing member, living or dead. She also owned the second most works by Denton Welch, supporting her diary entry of 5 October 1954: 'Since reading *Maiden Voyage* ... and the *Journal* I have been besotted with Denton Welch – am collecting and reading everything by him.' Many of the inscriptions and notes in Barbara's books reinforce our knowledge of her epistolary and personal friendships with other authors such as Philip Larkin and Elizabeth Taylor. One of my favourites is the couplet on a slip inserted into Barbara's 'office copy' of Denton Welch's *A Voice through a Cloud*: 'A Denton Welch in every room kills Ethnographic Survey gloom ... '

At present the Legacy Library only contains books known to have been owned by Barbara. Because the sisters lived together for a number of years, it is likely that the distinction between their individual libraries became blurred, and indeed, one book I have seen is signed 'Barbara & Hilary Pym' and dated 'Finstock, 1973' in Hilary's hand. When Blackwell's sold Barbara's library in 2005, Hilary's books were certainly included in the collection, and clearly identified as such. One aim of the Legacy Library project is to make a record of the books that Barbara had access to, and including Hilary's books would give a truer picture of her bibliographical environment. LibraryThing includes a feature to differentiate between collections *within* a library, which would make it possible to indicate which of the items belonged to Hilary. Other additions to the Legacy Library, not yet identified, will be the books I assume Hilary left out of the card catalogue such as cookery books (since we know that Barbara enjoyed eating, cooking and writing about food) and other books of a less academic nature.

One of the pleasures of this project was discovering that a book mentioned by Barbara in her diaries or letters remained in her library right up to her death such as Rupert Gleadow's *Magic and Divination* (1941), inscribed by the author 'Barbara, from Rupert, who wrote it. July 1941.' She recorded its receipt in her diary on 24 July 1941: 'Had a lovely letter from Rupert Gleadow and a copy of his new book *Magic and Divination*. How lovely it is to be remembered by one's friends.' Another pleasure was discovering that Barbara still owned her childhood copies of those children's classics by Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did* and *What Katy Did Next*, signed in a very early hand. Their condition was described by Blackwell's as 'dreadful', and they were presumably well-read and well-loved. Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow* (1928 edition) was also in Barbara's library, perhaps unsurprisingly since she has spoken about it as the novel that determined her to become a novelist. It was in Hilary's card catalogue but was not listed in Blackwell's catalogues, which is slightly mysterious – but perhaps this is explained by the fact that it was not deemed particularly valuable by Blackwell's.

The majority of Barbara's books (591) have now been recorded in LibraryThing. I have almost decided to add Hilary's books to the Legacy Library, and I will also be adding Barbara's comments on her books, made in her letters and diaries. These 'reviews' will add extra value and interest to the Barbara Pym Legacy Library.

Postscript: Thanks to the exhibition, organized by Ros Cleal, of books from Barbara's library purchased from Blackwell's at the sale for BPS members in September 2005, I was able to examine a number of her books at the conference. I will be adding the copy-specific details to LibraryThing over the coming weeks. Many thanks to those of you that were so generous in sharing the details of your treasured items from Barbara's library. I would be delighted to hear from any other members that own books from her library, so contact me at alison.felstead@btinternet.com. (Happily, the mystery of *Crome Yellow* was solved at the

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conference by a member who told me that he owns Barbara's copy and bought it at the Blackwell's sale in 2005.)

Alison Felstead *is a qualified librarian who has worked in the Bodleian Libraries since January 1996. She has been Head of Resource Description (i.e. cataloguing) since November 2010 and is responsible for managing the cataloguing of printed and electronic resources. Alison graduated from Leicester University in 1984 and holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Librarianship and Information Studies. She collects books on cats and was pleased (though not surprised) to discover* A Clowder of Cats: An Anthology in Prose and Poetry for all Cat Lovers *by Walter Sidney Scott (1946) in Barbara's library.*

Barbara Pym and the Bodleian – a Display

by Catriona Cannon

To coincide with Barbara Pym's centenary, a display of Pym papers will be held in November 2013 in the Bodleian Library. The Bodleian runs a programme of large five-month exhibitions, held in the main exhibition room in the Old Schools Quadrangle, and one-month displays, held in the Proscholium area leading to the Bodleian. Once the New Bodleian reopens as the Weston Library in 2015, there will be two new exhibition areas, one for a permanent display and one for temporary exhibitions. The Pym display will be held in the Proscholium, opening on 8 November 2013 with reflections on Pym by P D James, and closing on 9 December.

Barbara Pym's first involvement with the Bodleian was as a student, studying English literature in what was then the English Reading Room. But it also became a focus for her social life, a place to meet new and old lovers – Rupert Gleadow and Henry Harvey most notably – and a place where friends worked. This in turn is reflected in the letters and early novels, which show an insider's knowledge of the Bodleian and its management.

Barbara Pym did not specify in her will what should happen to her papers, and it was Pym's sister Hilary Walton who donated them to the Bodleian. They include the manuscripts of published and unpublished novels and short stories, literary papers, notebooks, correspondence and diaries. The catalogue of the Pym papers is on the web:

www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/pym/pym.html

The Proscholium display case takes between 15 and 20 items, and the focus of the display – Barbara Pym and the Bodleian – has been chosen to bring out her involvement with the Bodleian and give a feel for the wealth of the papers it holds. The display aims to give a few samples of juvenilia, a few of a novel from notes to finished draft, some correspondence and a sample from the literary notebooks.

The juvenilia show how talented Pym was from an early age. The display will include the programme for *The Magic Diamond*, the opera by Pym written when she was nine years old, with some photos of her and her Selby cousins performing it. *Young Men in Fancy Dress* – Pym would have been 16 to 17 years old when she wrote that – with a published copy of Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* beside it because that novel was such a strong influence.

In the early days Pym's drafts were in handwriting but as time went by this changed – as she wrote to Philip Larkin, 'I have to force myself to type some of the earlier chapters because that's the only way I can tell what it's going to be like'. The Bodleian has three versions of *Excellent Women* – a notebook containing notes and drafts, a notebook containing the manuscript draft, and a typescript printer's copy. This novel is particularly suitable for the display as is the one many people start with and the one that many commentators see as Pym at her most typical.

A couple of letters from the well-known correspondence between Pym and Philip Larkin on the subject of what, if anything, Pym should do with her literary papers will be part of the display, as well as some other, more private, letters. Not all of these are among the published letters.

An apt exhibit to conclude with will be the final page of Pym's last literary notebook, where Pym quotes 'Difference of sex no more we knew, than our guardian angels do' from John Donne's poem 'The Relic' to describe Outpatients in the Churchill Hospital. This was the very last entry Pym made to the notebook before she died.

Thanks are due to Judith Priestman, Yvonne Cocking, Eileen Roberts, Linda McDougall and the Exhibitions team at the Bodleian, all of whom gave help and encouragement in this undertaking. More details of the event on:

www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/whats-on/upcoming-events/2013/nov/lecture-barbara-pym

Catríona Cannon *studied in Dublin, Oxford and London and worked in various university and specialist libraries before joining the Bodleian Libraries in 2010. Now, as Associate Director Collection Support, she is responsible for leadership, management, policy and planning responsibilities for the library-wide collection support functions and scholarly communications programme. Her range of duties include collection acquisition, licensing and description, and collections care, preservation, storage and logistics, as well as the operational management of exhibitions. She also leads the subject librarians in developing and managing the collections.*

Barbara Pym, Then and Now

by Paul Binding

In *Less Than Angels* anthropologist Tom Mallow feels obliged to explain to his ex-girlfriend Elaine why, when in Africa, he never replied to her birthday letter. He was busy with ' "the election of a new chief and trouble among the plantation workers, and we were cut off by the rains for six weeks – oh, and various other things." ' Elaine's reply is ' "You always have such grand excuses, much grander than anybody else's. You didn't really need the 'various other things', did you, Tom?" He marvelled, as he had done before, at the sharpness of even the nicest of women.'

An amused asperity, a concomitant of an incisive and ubiquitous morality, is a marked feature of Barbara's fiction, and this observation therefore might seem applicable to her work *in toto*, for all the gentleness of its protagonists and its dominant milieu. But I would like here to invert it – for Barbara as both a writer and a person: she shows how *nice* even the *sharpest* of women are!

In the same novel (for personal reasons, my own favourite

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in the 'canon') Catherine, Tom's partner at the beginning of the book, grieves for him after his death in a way that young Deirdre (for whom he has forsaken her) cannot do. Unable to sleep, she turns to a Vaughan poem dealing with the difficult subject of personal survival beyond the grave, for solace:

> He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest, may know
> At first sight if the bird be flown,
> But what fair Well, or Grove he sings in now,
> That is to him unknown.

Surely the spiritual faith of Vaughan and Traherne, and other quietist, meditative Anglican divines, pervades Barbara's entire oeuvre, and accounts to a good measure for its all-important and distinctive 'niceness', more important even than the genuine acerbity, the keen awareness of egotism and other ever-present human faults. We can see – and without sharing her faith let alone her particular allegiances within it – that Wilmet in *A Glass of Blessings*, inclined to self-centredness, wanting (if unassertively) everything to go her own way, is aided to a greater realization of her true self by her devotions, and it seems to me important that the move she and her husband make at the end of the book is to a place yet nearer the particular church that has been so important to her – and to us readers.

I think that this combination of the charitable and the numinous in novels with the lively observation (both of eye and ear) of the English middle-class social scene was what – *au fond* – endeared her work to me so hugely when in the early 1970s I read the six canonical novels, under the recommendation of Lord David Cecil, my graduate teacher at New College, Oxford, the father of my greatest Oxford friend and by then a friend of my own. I had come through extremely sad personal experiences in the previous years, and, for all the books' often hilarious comedy, I must, without quite consciously acknowledging this, have felt very grateful for their 'other', deeper aspects, not so far beneath their brilliant surface. But why had a writer, so subtle, so many-sided, so in command of her art, not written any novels since 1961? Who indeed was Barbara Pym?

I was working for Oxford University Press, London at this time and, mentioning my fondness for her books to my colleague Audrey Bailey, learned that she herself actually knew Barbara through the African Institute whose journal *Africa* – which Barbara edited – OUP published. Barbara had, she said, retired now, and gone to live with her sister, Hilary Walton in Finstock, a village in Oxfordshire. This interested me greatly as I myself was being relocated by the Press to Oxford and had decided not to live in the city itself but outside in the country – in another village not ten miles from Finstock, Wroxton near Banbury.

After my move I wrote to Barbara, Audrey having given me her address, and suggested that we met, supplying my telephone number. To my surprise she rang up and said she would like this, but would have to come over with her sister who unlike herself (and myself for that matter) was a driver. They both came for a supper which in retrospect I am amazed I ever invited two unknown people to, since I am not much of a host and even less of a cook! But the meeting was a success, and established regular meetings. Now when I look back on the friendship (always a social rather than a personal one), I have to tell myself that this woman whose quiet, humorous, gentle, benign manner matched in important and undisappointing respects the author of the six novels starting with *Some Tame Gazelle* and ending with *No Fond Return of Love* was, by this time the author also of that intransigently dissecting psychological study *The Sweet Dove Died*, of that courageous facing of life stripped of its habitual supports, *Quartet in Autumn*, as well as of *An Unsuitable Attachment* which jettisons all the unnecessary fictive business of most 'realistic' novels in its subtle concentration on the mutual relations of a group of outwardly unremarkable, inwardly inexhaustibly interesting people.

It was only bit by bit that I learned of the existence of these (and other) books by Barbara, and then incompletely. 'A novel about selfishness set in the antiques business' can only, I now see, have referred to *The Sweet Dove Died.* She also mentioned another which she referred to as *Under the Lemon Trees*. This surely was a version of *An Unsuitable Attachment*, with its vivid Italian scenes which include 'acres of lemon groves ... hundreds, perhaps thousands of lemons hanging there among the leaves'.

I began to appreciate, without ever hearing a single bitter sentence from her, that her inability to find a publisher for her later fiction – and the unavailability of those novels she had already had published – had saddened her deeply.

All this changed of course on 21 January 1977 when Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil both named her in the *Times Literary Supplement* as the most undervalued writer of the twentieth century. I saw the new issue of the periodical in OUP, Oxford, where I was now working, and it occurred to me that Barbara might well not have seen it herself. So when I got back home to Wroxton, I rang her up and found out that indeed she had not done so. She was flabbergasted. Later that evening Philip Larkin himself telephoned her – and by the next morning (Saturday) her life had changed. Everybody everywhere turned out to be an admirer wanting to republish – or even publish! Barbara was delighted by all this, but did, I think, at last permit herself a little externalization of the resentments she must have harboured. She probably knew that she would not live enough long to occupy the position of 'one of England's major novelists' that she so truly deserved – and indeed still deserves.

I read her books very frequently – with a special place for *Less Than Angels*, with its shrewdly drawn male characters

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and its closeness of subject-matter to my own London OUP life. And a rereading of her complete oeuvre this centenary year has confirmed my high evaluation of them. Now – in common, I believe, with many of her readers – I rate the novels I did *not* know about above those that I did, devoted reader of these though I am. *An Unsuitable Attachment*, *The Sweet Dove Died* and the wonderfully muted and bitter-sweet fictional account of an Oxfordshire village, *A Few Green Leaves*, represent for me now the apex of her achievement. They combine the grasp of motive, character interaction and societal behaviour that is so strong a feature of the English traditional novel with an apprehension of the isolated individual and a strict, beautiful, pared artistry that can (loosely and honorifically) be termed Modernist. How grateful I am to Fortune that I met her, that I had the boldness of impulse to contact her when I did. And how even more enthusiastic would my praises to her have been had I known the whole of her oeuvre instead of an (admittedly splendid) section only.

***Paul Binding**, novelist, critic, poet and cultural historian, studied English Literature at Oxford. He worked in publishing, journalism and as a lecturer in several universities, and is now a full time writer and frequent reviewer. A specialist on Scandinavian literature, he has published on Ibsen, and is currently engaged on a new biography of Hans Christian Andersen. Among his several novels, the most recent is* After Brock *(2012), which draws on his close knowledge of the Shropshire countryside that is now his home.*

Remembering the Food: Barbara and the English Kitchen

by Laura Shapiro

Food writer, culinary historian and BPS member Laura Shapiro first delivered this amusing and informative paper to the North American Conference of the Society in March 2013. Her talk was so well-received that we asked Laura to present it to the Oxford conference too.

If your preference is *à la carte*, you can find the complete and fully-footnoted text of Laura's talk on the BPS website under *Pym Conference Monographs*. For a brief *amuse-bouche*, see her summary in *Green Leaves*, Vol. XIX, Spring 2013.

'We Knew Barbara': A Documentary Film

by Linda McDougall and Jonathan Mitchell

Prue Anderton, Frances Atkin, Yvonne Cocking, Luke Gertler, Francis Guilfoyle, Hazel Holt, Adrian Nicholls and Richard Roberts all knew Barbara Pym. They lived with her, worked with her, and some of them loved her. They shared their memories of their friend in this film made by Linda McDougall. Those fortunate enough to see it at the Oxford conference were by turns delighted and astonished at the opinions and revelations of the participants.

Linda and Jonathan are currently seeking ways to develop their film further and bring it to a larger audience. We hope that this will happen and, if it does, there will be a full review of the film. Watch this space for news!

Pym Poems

by Yvonne Cocking

My study of Barbara Pym's papers in the Bodleian Library has been neither sequential nor complete. Both in Cambridge, MA, of recent years, and in Oxford, our conferences have always had a theme – either a subject or a single novel. So I have only delved into those parts of the archive pertaining to the relevant conference theme.

However, even while pursuing a given train of thought, certain serendipitous items intrude themselves on the attention and could not be ignored. Right from the start I was struck by the number of poems there are by Barbara and her friends, especially in the correspondence section of the archives. It would appear that the art of versifying was quite prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century. Students of various disciplines seem to have understood the rules of classical poetry and to have enjoyed imitating them.

So far I have found 33 poems, 17 by Barbara herself, 6 by Robert Liddell, 4 by Rupert Gleadow, and the rest by five or six others. Among the earliest are two inspired by Barbara's admiration for a bank clerk, perhaps her first crush, while she was only 17 and still at school. As we know, Barbara, always romantic in her youth, was disposed to fall in love with young men with whom she was sometimes unacquainted. This one she must have noticed often in the Oswestry branch of the Midland Bank (now HSBC). The theme is of a superior being trapped among lower forms of life, and heroically overcoming adversity.

At Oxford Barbara continued to laud her heroes in verse In December 1931 she was again 'in love', thus time with

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one of the Moderators who set and invigilated Pass Moderations, an examination which all students had to sit in their first term. She wrote two poems about him.

Barbara encountered others at Oxford who were as eager as she to express themselves in verse, often in a somewhat malicious way. Robert Liddell, who had an obvious talent for parody, as well as knowing the basic rules of classical poetry, sent her his first recorded piece along with the gift of a copy of Rochester's poems. This is also the only poem I know of that has appeared in print – in chapter one of Liddell's *A Mind at Ease.*

Mock elegies seem to have been a favourite topic. Robert sent Barbara a rather unkind elegy 'On the death of Burnett Hillman Streeter, Provost of The Queen's College, and of Irene his wife'. Burnett Hillman Streeter was a New Testament scholar, and a Canon of Hereford Cathedral as well as Provost of The Queen's College. He and his wife were, I'm afraid, killed in an air crash in Switzerland in September 1937. Robert Liddell to my mind wrote the most clever, amusing and polished verses of all Barbara's friends. I very much admired another elegy which, for lack of other evidence, I first thought fictional, on the suicide of one Roderick McKenzie. However, Tom and I did some research and found that Roderick McKenzie was, in fact, a Greek scholar at Oxford, editor of the edition of Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* which was eventually published in 1940. McKenzie did commit suicide in 1937 at the age of 50, though details are not known. These two 'elegies' have somewhat changed our attitude to Robert Liddell who we feel took 'poetic licence' much too far, and displayed a mean and heartless side to his character.

Another of Barbara's friends sent her a similarly scandalous elegy. In a letter to Barbara, dated 20 October 1934, Rupert Gleadow wrote '... it has occurred to me that you might like to read my epitaph on Professor Griffith. It is unkind but true. In general I don't write verse, and if I do it is not for publication – this isn't!' Professor F Llewellyn Griffith was an eminent Egyptologist, especially noted for his translations of hieroglyphics, but clearly Rupert though him a bore, and a poor teacher.

Much later on, Barbara's friend Richard Roberts was a frequent visitor to Brooksville Avenue in the 1960s. He did not share Barbara's love of cats. In particular he did not like Minerva, the reigning queen at the time, who, he thought, received more attention from Barbara (called Ianthe in his poem) than he did, and he expressed his anti-feline feelings in witty verse.

Barbara's brief romance with Julian Amery prompted her to verse, to write what she describes as 'Frivolous lines inspired by looking up at the Randolph Hotel, Oxford, with Julian Amery on a fine sunny afternoon, it being early closing day, 3 March 1938'. A few weeks later Barbara composed 'Lines written to a Dear Young Friend on his Nineteenth Birthday'. Barbara wrote one more poem for Julian Amery, 'Sonnet written to a Dear Friend on the Third Day of December 1938, it being the First Anniversary of our Meeting'. Thereafter she wrote little more in this form, but two lines from this final poem seem aptly to express her continuing love of the city which meant so much to her:

My Gothick Spirit obstinately lingers
In long-forgotten Places, Haunts of ours …

Charles Hansmann, Tim Burnett, Eileen Kennedy, Dan DiPietro

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the BPS Saturday 31 August 2013, 11.00am

Committee members present: Clemence Schultze (Chair), Eileen Roberts (Membership Secretary), Lorraine Mepham (Secretary), Yvonne Cocking (Archivist), Kathy Ackley (US Organizer), Deb Fisher, Jean Harker, Rose Little, Linda McDougall, Martin Rush (Editor, *GL*), Chris Rutherford, Christine Shuttleworth, Tom Sopko, Michael Wilson.

1. Chairman's remarks

Clemence welcomed all to the centenary conference of the Barbara Pym Society, and presented her last report before handing over to Michael Wilson, the Society's first male chair. She first noted some absences, of members who sadly died this year: Jeanette Haskell of Rockford, Illinois, and Fred Holman, both long-standing BPS members. Clemence thanked the previous chairman, Deidre Bryan-Brown, for her support, and remembered earlier chairs, Kate Charles and Elizabeth Proud.

This has been a remarkable centenary year. Many of Pym's books are available on both sides of the Atlantic as e-books, print, or print-on-demand. The BBC re-broadcast Barbara's 'Desert Island Discs' programme and also the *Jane and Prudence* dramatisation. Pym was mentioned on BBC radio, Canadian Public radio broadcast a feature, and Open Road (Pym's US publisher) has a publicity video online. The BPS Facebook page has disseminated these items and others to a wider audience, and the BPS website is also a valued resource, maintained by Tom Sopko. Clemence thanked Martin Rush, editor of *Green Leaves*, and all who help in its production.

March saw a record-breaking NA conference on the theme of '100 years of BP', with papers from Tim Burnett, Sandra Goldstein, Robin Joyce and Laura Shapiro, and some poems from the Pym circle unearthed by Yvonne Cocking. Linda McDougall presented a version of the film of BP's friends, which is to be shown at this conference. Clemence thanked Tom Sopko, then NA organiser, and the rest of the NA Board, especially Tom's successor, Kathy Ackley.

The NA conference also saw the launch of *Barbara in the Bodleian*, the fruit of Yvonne's long-term researches in the Pym archive in the Bodleian. Edited by Tom Sopko and beautifully designed by Lloyd Miller, it is available on both

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sides of the Atlantic, and was ready in time for the AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies, hosted by the BPS at St Hilda's in June. Professor James Booth, renowned Larkin scholar, and Clemence both gave papers. As the day was the eve of Barbara's birthday, we celebrated with a wonderful cake, thanks to Deb Fisher, who retires from the Committee this year after serving two successive terms. Clemence thanked Deb warmly for her tireless efforts on behalf of BPS.

Devon Allison's publicity efforts began well over a year back, and have resulted most successfully in articles and mentions all over the UK quality press, including an excellent notice of the centenary conference in the *Oxford Times*. This and others are due to Jean Harker, who nobly undertook the role of liaison with publishers as well as writing articles and doing much to promote Barbara in Oxford.

Clemence gave a paper in June to the Finstock Local History Society, who kindly donated £50 to BPS. The Short Story Competition closed shortly afterwards. Made possible by a generous donation from Kelvin Carr in memory of his late wife Jean, a long-standing BPS member, and administered by Rose Little with support from Deb Fisher, Eileen Roberts and Chris Rutherford, the competition attracted over 70 entries. Kate Charles chaired the judging panel (Rose, Kathy Ackley, Tim Burnett, Jean Harker and Clemence), and the result will be announced during the conference.

Further events are planned in Birmingham and Manchester, thanks to Maggie Parsons and Libby Tempest respectively. Libby has also been active in attempting to get a Pym book selected for World Book Night in 2014. Linda is also hoping to spread the word about Pym by wider dissemination of her film.

Clemence then thanked the Committee for all their efforts, and gratefully acknowledged the support of St Hilda's.

2. Apologies

Hazel Bell, Michael Collard, Hazel Holt, Sue Jones, Maureen Lenk, Alexander McCall Smith, Iona Roberts, Alex Ward.

3. Minutes of the Previous AGM

The minutes had been circulated, and were accepted without amendment.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Financial and Membership report

The UK account stands at £8716.64 (down on £9483.62 at this time last year), the drop largely due to the UK publication of *Barbara in the Bodleian* (£486.20). *Green Leaves* (printing and postage) continues to be a major cost. The UK spring meeting (ALS/BP) made a small loss of £46.60, but this was well spent as the event made excellent publicity for BPS.

UK membership stands at 199 members (162 ordinary, of which 33 are new members this year, plus 37 Life & Honorary members); 5 down on last year (167 ordinary plus 37 Life & Honorary). Membership fees total £1980.00, £238 less than last year's total of £2218. 71 members are in arrears, of up to three years.

6. *Green Leaves*

Two issues of *GL* appeared (Autumn 2012, Spring 2013). Martin Rush offered thanks to all contributors, to those who kindly provided photographs and illustrations, and to all those who helped in the production process: Christine Shuttleworth for copy-editing, Judy Horn for DTP, Eileen Roberts for doing the mailing, and the numerous others who answered queries or helped on particular points.

7. BPS in North America

Tom Sopko and Kathy Ackley reported on NA matters, with a financial report by Jordan Bach. Their report summarises membership (254 paid members, plus 54 who paid in 2012 but have not yet renewed, an increase of 55 over total membership one year ago); and finances ($16,373 cash in hand as of 31 July 2013, an increase of $1966 from last year). The 2013 NA conference ('100 Years of Pym') was a sell-out success, and other gatherings were held in Boston, New York and Washington DC. The first US printing of Yvonne's book 'Barbara in the Bodleian' sold out in 5 months and 30 more have been printed. The BPS website averages approximately 316 visits and 1205 page views per week, and the BPS Facebook page has 818 followers.

8. Archivist's Report

Yvonne Cocking reported that she and Linda McDougall have scanned a large number of photographs from the Pym albums. Some of these have been, or will be used in the Centenary year celebrations, mainly in Linda's film, and in the Bodleian exhibition planned by Catriona Cannon later in 2013. When the scanning is completed, it is hoped that the originals will be deposited in the Bodleian, to be added to the BP material given last year.

Yvonne also proposes to deposit material relating to the foundation of the BPS to Elizabeth Boardman, St Hilda's Archivist, who has expressed an interest.

9. Elections

The re-election of Jean Harker and Lorraine Mepham, which should have taken place at last year's AGM, required ratification. Deb Fisher is retiring after serving two terms as Ordinary Member. The Committee recommended the election of Sandra Margolies to fill Deb's position. These were taken together (proposed by Eileen Roberts and seconded by Moyra Forrest), and all three candidates were unanimously elected. The Committee also announced that they had selected Michael Wilson as successor to Clemence as Chairman.

10. AOB

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 11.30am.

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Fred Holman

Fred Holman, a long-standing member of the society, and, with his wife Anne, a regular attender at UK conferences, died this summer. On behalf of the BPS, we express our sympathy to Anne. An obituary of Fred will appear in the next issue.

Teen Haskell

by Norma Munson

Jeannette 'Teen' Haskell of Rockford, Illinois passed away at age 87 on 20 July 2013. She retired from teaching in the Rockford school system and continued as a volunteer tutor, was active in the Congregational church, enjoyed gardening, traveling, and most of all, reading. She was a loyal and avid Barbara Pym fan. She and I were drawn together almost 40 years ago over our love of books, especially those by English women authors. Shortly after we met she invited me to join her book group, which is still meeting and will greatly miss her refreshing perspectives during our discussions. She helped to introduce Barbara Pym to our book group, where her keen insight was always valuable and appreciated.

Hazel Bell, Jeannette 'Teen' Haskell, and Christine Shuttleworth at Barbara Pym conference, St. Hilda's College, 2000

Hazel Bell kindly drove Teen and me on a memorable literary pilgrimage around southern England in 1999. We visited various sites related to some of our favorite authors, including Pym's home in Barnes. Hazel's account is in *Green Leaves* 5/1 (1999), while *GL* 8/1 (2002) has another mention of our trip, including our visit to Finstock, after which we happened upon a wonderfully Pymmish coffee morning at a nearby tiny village church. It was during this trip that we met BPS committee member Christine Shuttleworth, who joined us for part of our tour. These warm transatlantic friendships were a continuing source of joy for Teen, thanks to our lively email exchanges and additional visits in the US and England.

Teen attended Pym conferences in England and most recently the 2012 Boston conference. She delighted in visiting some additional New England sites with Hazel Bell and Hazel's son Aidan. Teen was an appreciator – of family, friends, animal and plant life, music and literature. She will be much missed.

Jean Lilian Carr (1933–2008)

by Kelvin Carr

Jean Carr was a regular attendee at London meetings of the Barbara Pym Society, and on one occasion attended the Oxford conference.

Jean was educated at Edmonton County School and Brighton Teacher Training College. Her association with Galliard School, Edmonton lasted for almost 50 years as a teacher, deputy head of the infants school, and as a governor. Jean was 'green' long before the label came into common use – any child who passed through her hands were well-aware that food did not grow in tins, and how important it is to re-cycle. Appropriately, Galliard School now has a 'Secret Garden' in memory of Jean.

Jean's life was underpinned by the values she learned in the church and the Guide Movement. She always kept the Brownie promise to be helpful and cheerful. As well as running a Brownie pack for 40 years, Jean also served as a commissioner of her local Trefoil Guild.

Thanks to her long and varied experience of the Church of England, Jean had the good fortune to have met many Pym-like characters in the flesh. Among Jean's other interests were the Women's Institute, local history, walking, teaching, knitting and bee-keeping.

Over 200 people attended her funeral at St Peter's Church, Edmonton, to celebrate a well-lived life which touched, in a positive manner, many people.

Centenary Short Story Competition

The story competition was jointly funded by a very generous donation from Kelvin Carr, in memory of his late wife Jean, a long-term member of the Barbara Pym Society, and by the BPS. The brief was to write a story 'in the style and manner of ... Barbara Pym', and the word limit was 2,200 words.

Kelvin Carr, Ros Cleal, Sarah Evans, Fran Baxter, Nemone Thornes, Tanya Aydon, Rose Little

The competition attracted 72 entries which were assessed by a panel of six judges, chaired by author Kate Charles, a former Chairman of the BPS. Rose Little undertook the demanding role of administrator, and kept the judges to the tight timetable. The stories were of notably high quality, and the judges' role was a challenging one, especially once the process reached the long list and short list stage. In the end, the two front runners were deemed of such high quality that the BPS increased its contribution to the prize money so that two joint winners could be declared. Their stories are printed in this issue, and all six winning entries will shortly be published on the BPS website. The list is as follows:

Joint First Prizes (£150): Tanya Aydon 'Unexpected Flowers' and Nemone Thornes 'Open to the Public'

Third Prize (£100): Fran Baxter 'After the Fire'

Runners-up (£25 each): Ros Cleal 'Archaeology in the Afternoon'; Sarah Evans 'Knowing the Type'; Martha Taylor 'Still Life for Nora'.

Many thanks to Kelvin Carr, Kate Charles and Rose Little, and to all the judges (Kathy Ackley, Tim Burnett, Jean Harker, Clemence Schultze).

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Unexpected Flowers

by Tanya Aydon

Men were only after one thing. That was what you were always told, but sometimes Jane almost doubted it.

Looking round the large draughty hall that adjoined the church, she found herself wondering if any of the men setting up the folding tea tables were capable of being after anything – except perhaps one of the chairs with padded arms rather than those made of hard grey plastic.

'I think we're about finished,' Jane could hear the churchwarden Brian Goodacre saying, as he sank into one of the more welcoming chairs. 'I suggest we leave the tea arrangements to the ladies, now that the heavy work's done for them.'

'Done for us, is it? I'd like to know where you men would be without us to run round after you – you'd be the first to complain if you didn't get your tea,' retorted his fellow churchwarden Mary Silcox, one of those noble workers without whom the Church of England would collapse.

Across the hall faded buckets crammed with flowers and foliage lay amongst assorted bowls, vases and blocks of green foam being distributed by a cheerful woman with liver-spotted arms. Small children were sitting round a table colouring in a large poster announcing *St Michael and All Angels Summer Flower and Arts Festival* in uneven, straggly letters. From the kitchen that led off the far end of the hall Jane could hear the chink of china and the authoritarian tones of her mother.

'I think the small plates would be more suitable for the fairy cakes, and we must cover these sandwiches or they will curl up.'

'Yes indeed,' came a placatory bleat. 'That would never do. But I did wonder, Dorothy, if we might – '

'When people are being charged £5 for entry and tea, they expect to get high quality,' declared Jane's mother, who had never in her life allowed anyone to give her anything less. She appeared in the kitchen doorway carrying an iced chocolate cake: a woman with vigorous purple-grey hair and invincible proportions.

'Ah Jane, so you're here at last. Now, where would you be most useful? There are all the tablecloths to be put out or you could help Grace and Mary with the tea things.'

Jane hesitated. She did not belong to the inner circle of church flowers and catering, and had only come along now at her mother's urging, feeling obscurely that it was easier to perform duties such as these than others which might be demanded of her. Daughters should produce admirers, then husbands and grandchildren, but Jane had done none of these things, being unattached at thirty-six and without even the successful career which might have made up for such shortcomings.

'Surely you should have learnt to manage men by now,' said Dorothy, when Jane came back home empty-handed after more than ten years away in London teaching music to wayward teenagers. 'It's knuckling down to it, that's what's needed.'

'You make it sound like cleaning the bath,' protested Jane, thinking that perhaps it was.

She'd had opportunities enough, so there was only herself to blame. She'd been brought up in Wharton, a once-quiet market town now hurtling towards prosperous desirability, and within walking distance of the famous public school which contained four hundred adolescent boys and a Common Room full of mostly male teachers. From childhood she was familiar with seeing schoolmasters on old black bicycles weaving through the streets, sixth-formers disappearing discreetly into newsagents and pubs.

But something had escaped her grasp. She remembered Adrian's complacency when he'd told her about his engagement. You brought this on yourself, it had implied. Men must be allowed to be men.

'Lucy and I are getting married – you had to be the first to know! London wedding planned for April. Of course you'll come.'

His voice had smiled at her down the telephone, smoothing over her silence.

'Isn't it miraculous? Everyone thinking I was a lost cause. But Lucy's a wonderful girl. You'll be great friends.'

Did men honestly believe rejected girlfriends could become friends with their wives, and was repeating the platitude yet another way of making themselves more comfortable?

Returning to live with her widowed mother was neither an ideal nor original way of recovering from rejection and heartache. But it was a change of scene and occupation. Agony aunties would approve of this at least. If she couldn't manage men, there might be other, easier things. There was enough work both in schools and among private pupils in Wharton, and now she must carve out a new life for herself, whatever that might mean.

'Perhaps you could do one of the flower arrangements,' offered the liver-spotted woman. 'We need a nice welcoming display of lilies over there by the doorway into the church.'

'Something a bit less noticeable might suit me better,' apologised Jane, giving up the attempt to look the splendid and efficient person she knew she was not. 'I'm afraid I've never really mastered the art of flower-arranging.'

'Ah well, we can't all have the same talents.' Liver Spots handed Jane some secateurs. 'How about helping Hilda to put some roses and pretty leaves on the windowsills? I always say roses arrange themselves.'

'Yes, I sometimes think they're the only flowers which improve with being brought indoors,' replied Jane, realising too late this was scarcely a suitable remark to make at a church flower festival. 'It all looks *lovely*, and so different from usual,' she floundered, hardly improving matters.

'One of us can always tweak it after she's finished,' she heard Liver Spots say in undertones as she turned away with her scratchy bundle. 'We must encourage new blood.'

'The old must give way to the new, as the Good Book says,' said Terry Pumfret in a cosy tone as he handed Hilda a tray of small vases and twisted handfuls of wire netting.

'He always was the retiring sort,' said Hilda, relegating her spouse to obscurity. 'Did you want any more of these leaves, dear, or shall I offer them to the other ladies?'

'I'm afraid flowers seem to develop a malicious life of their own when I try to arrange them,' said Jane, as she struggled with some branches of photinia. 'It's as if they know I'll give in to them.'

'You could say the same about husbands – they'd try anything if you let them. You aren't married yet, so you

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wouldn't know.'

'I suppose not,' said Jane, bowing her head as if acknowledging her inferior status.

'Well, time enough, though you don't want to leave it too late, or there'll be nothing but other people's leavings to choose from, and you don't want any of that, do you dear? All this nasty divorce because people won't take the trouble to make a proper go of things.'

'Trying doesn't always solve everything,' said Jane reasonably. Hadn't she tried her very hardest with Adrian? But even that hadn't been enough.

'A nice widower, that's what wanted, and just the thing for you. If a man can be made to marry once, he'll fall more easily like.'

'You mean he can be coaxed into it?' said Jane, enjoying the picture of herself operating a complicated trap with ropes and a pit for unsuspecting men.

'Better to marry than to burn, as St Paul said, but people don't wait for that these days, do they?' Hilda wiped her hands on her stretchy trousers as if dismissing St Paul and leant over confidentially towards Jane. 'Always down on the women he was. Where would the church be today without us? That's what I'd like to know.'

'One does feel he has a good deal to answer for,' Jane agreed, as the rose stems pricked her fingers. She found herself thinking that it was difficult to imagine how men could burn for any of the women who filled the hall, though they had at least married some of them.

'There,' said Hilda, glancing at Jane's arrangement, and avoiding her eye. 'I shouldn't do any more to that, dear.'

St Paul might have written that the church is all one body and each part is valued, but had he really understood? Jane brooded silently and then saw that across the hall her mother was bearing down on an unfamiliar woman and a girl of around eleven or twelve and waving a well-fleshed arm for Jane to join her.

'We couldn't resist seeing what was going on,' the woman's eager voice was saying as she nearly fell into a trailing fountain of buddleia. 'This is my granddaughter Edith, and I'm Molly Carberry. We've just moved to Wharton, living together as my son lost his wife some years ago.'

'You must meet my daughter Jane,' purred Dorothy, her ears pricking up at the mention of the widowed son. 'She's a very accomplished piano player and teacher.'

Jane hung her head. Eligible men did not often stray into churches in the twentieth century, but Dorothy never gave up.

'I'm afraid Austin – that's my son – isn't the sociable type,' explained Molly. 'He's the new head of classics at Wharton School and we've left him poring over the *Odyssey* – so tiring to think of all those endless adventures, and in August too, which I always think is a very worn out month.'

'Is he a church goer?' asked Dorothy, cutting short these revelations and making sure she was on firm ground.

'Only to an early morning Prayer Book service, I'm afraid. Austin prefers a quiet approach to religion.'

'I suppose one shouldn't really go to a church service to meet people,' Jane suggested doubtfully, for it had to be admitted that of course one often did.

'Or to *not* meet people,' said Molly. 'Though it can be a relief to go to a service where nothing is demanded of you, and nobody speaks to you.'

'You can just concentrate on God as it were,' said Jane vaguely, who felt she wanted to want this more than she actually did. She carefully avoided her mother's eye. In another minute Dorothy would be pressing her to go to early Communion herself.

'One's presumably meant to do that every service,' said Molly. 'But I wonder if anyone does? It's impossible not to get distracted in a large crowd, noticing somebody's new coat or wondering what to cook for lunch. A different thing altogether to *kindling a flame of sacred love*.'

One might well be attempting to kindle quite different sorts of love, thought Jane. It hadn't worked with Adrian. The familiar sense of being somehow lacking once more crept over her.

'Flowers are supposed to help people draw near to God,' said Molly. 'People often say they feel closer to heaven in a garden than in a church, so it's a fine thing to bring the two together. Have you done one of these flower displays? We shall want to look out for that.'

'It's most likely about to be dismantled,' said Jane, beginning to laugh, 'and that will be a lesson in humility. You tell yourself it's ridiculous and petty to mind about such things, but how often you do!'

'T S Eliot – or was it somebody else? – said that to survive humiliation is an experience of incalculable value,' said Molly thoughtfully, 'but I wonder if he knew what he was talking about? Or perhaps he was meaning rather more noble or greater experiences than the humiliations and pinpricks of daily life. Men don't always grasp these details, or notice the small sadnesses attached to them.'

'But it's the little experiences that make up life,' pronounced Dorothy, throwing Jane a warning look.

'Are you really a piano teacher? You're not at all like one,' said Edith, looking at Jane in surprise.

'Music, the greatest good that mortals know and all of heaven we have below,' intoned Molly, who appeared never to be at a loss for a quotation and to expect her audience to enter into this style of conversation. 'Though I *can't* say I agree with Joseph Addison, because we have so *many* other riches of heaven here below.'

Dorothy was silent, and Jane could see she was wondering what these were, apart from good food and well-cut clothes from her favourite department store.

'And beautiful paintings and nature are among them.' Molly turned to admire a massive display – or perhaps installation – of dahlias, glass and silver paper, bearing the legend *Revelation: The Vision of St John.* 'You must both of you come and have tea with us. Does next Sunday sound a good time?'

'We shall look forward to it very much,' approved Dorothy. 'Tea on a Sunday afternoon is a very pleasant occasion, and one which is unfortunately going out of fashion, like so many excellent things.'

She smiled graciously at Molly, showing her appreciation of new neighbours who understood the importance of maintaining little courtesies and civilised traditions. And after all there was this widowed son … you never knew.

Jane sighed. She watched her mother peering dubiously at

a giant thistle arrangement mystifyingly entitled *Doubt and Faith*. Soon she would remind Jane that it was high time the unbecoming cardigan she was wearing was sent to the charity shop.

Triona Adams and Kate Charles

Open to the Public

by Nemone Thornes

At the end of an over-long day of vigilance and worry – sometimes the visitors' idea of sneaking a cutting amounted to making off with half the plant – Helena and Anastasia walked through the herb garden on their way to the house, with revivifying tea and merciful sanctuary uppermost in their minds. The excellent weather had brought an unusually large number of people, which in turn had made Helena fret about the damage done by so very many pairs of unwelcome feet. Anastasia herself was now more than merely tired of responding pleasantly to the countless strangers who would insist on stating the crushingly obvious. 'Absolutely glorious!' they cried, or, even worse, 'Lovely day for it!'

It *was* glorious, though. The late-afternoon sky remained a deep, cloudless blue, and Helena's house – Georgian, sandstone, twelve bedrooms – looked as proud and regal as an enormous golden lion basking in the sunshine. The open gardens raised huge sums for local worthy causes, and as Helena's garden was, by far, the largest in the village, to refuse to participate would deprive the event of its main attraction. Anastasia – known to intimates as Taisie – visited Helena for at least a few days of every open gardens week, as Helena found it a monumental strain and deeply valued Taisie's moral and practical support. Tall, slim, beautiful Helena had always been grateful for the help of sensible, efficient and assiduous Taisie. Taisie was aware that the balance of their relationship was unequal; that, to put it crudely, she gave more than she received. She had accepted this inequality long ago, in their distant schooldays. Her reward was to be the beneficiary of Helena's tremendous charm.

As they left the herb garden, Taisie saw there was a problem. She hoped it was not one which would involve them, for her need for tea was great. Over by the orangery a young man with a skin-tight T-shirt and brutally short hair was haranguing a young woman, and when words of the vulgar and rebarbative kind seldom if ever heard in Helena's garden reached them, Helena paused. Taisie had a powerful sense of her friend's desire to turn around and walk away, but Helena then walked on, driven no doubt by her commendable sense of responsibility. The young man shouted furiously and the girl cowered away from him; then his arm shot out and his hand appeared to connect with her shoulder. She fell against the glass wall and he turned, ran, and vanished around the corner of the house. The girl slid down the wall and came to rest in a sitting position on the ground.

Helena covered the last few yards at a trot. Taisie followed more slowly, full of queasiness at what she might find; but the original Victorian glass of the orangery was undamaged, and there was no apparent blood.

Helena crouched down. 'You poor, *poor* thing,' she said.

The girl had bleached blonde hair caught up at the sides with rhinestone clips, but the front section was dyed candyfloss pink. She was conscious, but dopey – in shock, perhaps, or slightly stunned. There followed several minutes of checking for injuries and asking if anything hurt. Eventually, Taisie and Helena helped her to her feet and together they moved slowly towards the marquee that served as a tea-room during the week of invasion. At least, thought Taisie, she isn't screaming or weeping. She led the way through the passage between the back of the marquee and the kitchen wall, and into the large, cool kitchen. This was occupied by the housekeeper, Mrs Archer, and a great number of caterers.

'Tea, in the yellow room, now,' ordered Helena. She was rarely so brusque. The situation had obviously rattled her.

As they ascended the steps out of the kitchen the girl began to cry with truly astonishing vigour and passion. Taisie glanced over her shoulder and saw that her mouth was wide open, making her face look like Melpomene's tragic mask.

'Oh, *please* don't cry. You're safe now. Everything will be all right.' Helena's sympathetic tone was faultless. She supported and guided her to the morning room and the Hepplewhite sofa (its gold damask sadly worn and due for replacement). The girl collapsed onto it, and Helena had little choice but to sit down beside her.

Taisie found a packet of paper handkerchiefs in her bag and proffered several, before sitting down on the day-bed (citrine raw silk; immaculate) which faced the sofa across a tapestry duet stool. The girl buried her nose in the tissues, but still managed to wail. Helena's hand gently patted the girl's shoulder. Her eyes met Taisie's. They mugged identical faces which conveyed the same diverse thoughts: one being that this would take some time.

Outside, the visitors came and went across Helena's smooth green sea of lawn. The weeping gradually quietened and was finally ended by the arrival of Mrs Archer with a tea-tray, which she set down on the long stool. Mrs Archer had worked for Helena for many years, was nobody's fool, and had read the needs of the situation perfectly. She had chosen only the everyday Wedgwood, but in addition to the usual biscuits and scones there were several of the most brightly coloured and heavily decorated buns available in the temporary tea-room.

The girl looked up, her face streaked with eye make-up. Considering the amount that had washed onto her cheeks, it was remarkable that so much remained in place around her eyes.

'Oooh – doesn't it look nice?' she said. 'Like something

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in a café.'

'Well, we *are* actually running a café this week,' said Helena.

'Yeah, me and Callum were going to go in your tent, before … ' Her words tailed away and her mouth twisted.

'Do have a bun,' Taisie said, quickly, hoping to forestall any further tears.

'Thanks. It's really, really kind of you. I'm sorry to be a nuisance.'

'Nonsense,' said Helena. 'Of course you're not a nuisance.' One of the things Taisie most admired about her friend was her ability to make such statements sound so warm, natural and sincere.

Surely, the yellow room had never seen *anything* like this girl. She wore immodest denim shorts, and the utterly hideous objects on her feet were a bright, fluorescent pink, with ludicrously high wedge heels – it was surprising that health and safety rules allowed such things. Taisie's eyes rested on the large butterfly tattoo that covered much of the girl's left foot – a foot which was further decorated with a glittery ankle bracelet, also pink; although a different and non-matching pink. Her cream peasant blouse had slipped off one shoulder, exposing a bra-strap of a much darker colour and a big tattooed rose. Her bag (pink) was hung with chains and charms, and made from what is euphemistically called faux leather. This now began to play a tune, to which she responded instantly.

'Go to Hell, Callum. I'm not speaking to you at the minute. Yer a waste of space.' She snapped the phone closed. There were no prizes on offer for guessing its colour. 'He always does this. Picks a fight and then he's like, "Oh I'm so sorry, oh I really love you, oh I'll never get like that again." '

Helena's face, just for a moment, showed pure despair. Then, without any prompting or encouragement, the girl began to talk. She gave them the whole story, in rich and vivid detail and with nothing – however small – omitted. The narrative was interrupted by three more calls from Callum, to whom she had to keep on speaking in order to tell him that they were not yet on speaking terms. Two cups of tea and (in her case) two iced buns later, and with another diversion when she told them that her name was Jolene (which necessitated introductions all round), they knew that the relationship with Callum had begun well, but started to go downhill as soon as she moved into his flat in Weston-super-Mare; that this was the second time he had hit her, and in consequence, she was no longer sure they had a future together. Furthermore, she now thought that the best thing to do might be to end the affair and move back in with her mother, who lived in Bristol. It was actually a very simple story, and could have been told in far fewer words, but by the time it was over there were no visitors on the lawn, and the sound of their cars leaving had long since stopped.

Doing so much talking appeared to have restored her spirits. She pulled a sudden horrified face and said, 'I must look like I've been dragged through a hedge.' Then she began rooting in her bag again.

'There's a bathroom along the corridor,' Taisie suggested.

'Nah – I'm fine here, thanks. Oh my God,' – peering into a plastic powder compact – 'what an abortion!' And then, scrubbing at the tear-stains and looking from the compact to Helena and back again, she said, 'So is this your house, then?'

'Well, my husband's and mine, yes.'

'What – all of it, or just a bit of it?'

'All. We know we're very lucky.'

'Yeah. It's beautiful. I love beautiful things, too. That's why I wanted to see your garden. Callum didn't want to come, to be honest. Do you think I'd be best off calling time on 'im? What would *you* do?'

'Oh, I couldn't possibly say. That's a decision only you can make.'

'No, seriously,' – she began, with great energy and enthusiasm, to apply mascara – 'I bet you wouldn't put up with 'im, would you?'

'Well … to be totally honest, no, I wouldn't.'

'You think I should move back in with Mum, don't you? Oh, come on, Helena – tell me what to do. You're such a sorted person; I *know* you are. You wouldn't end up in a mess like this. I bet you're really good at handling men.' Helena's eyebrows, which would have been perfectly entitled to rise at this familiarity, didn't even twitch.

It had not escaped Taisie's notice that all of Jolene's attention was on Helena. Some things never changed, regardless of the company involved.

'You would be much safer with your mother, I think.'

'Yeah. You're right. I don't deserve no one treating me like that. Callum Jones – he's toast. History.' She began re-arranging the pink section of her hair. 'I'll ring Mum and tell her I'm coming.'

'Well, if you're feeling better now, may I give you a lift to the station? The trains to Bristol are quite frequent, I believe.' Helena rose from the sofa, hoping to head off any more of the pink phone, Taisie guessed.

'I can take Jolene to her train.'

'Oh, that would be the *greatest* help. I actually do have a couple of fairly urgent calls to make.'

Jolene tidied away her make-up collection and also rose, but on the way to the door she stopped several times to admire things and ask questions about them. 'You have such a lovely home,' she said. Taisie felt like a farm dog who was troubled by a particularly tricky sheep. At last, after Jolene had said, bizarrely, 'We've got so much in common' they achieved the corridor, whereupon the vinyl bag began playing its tune again.

'Don't answer it,' commanded Helena. 'He's 'history' – remember?'

'Yeah – totally.' The leave-taking stalled for a few moments, until the noise stopped. When the bag had gone to voicemail Jolene said, 'You've been so kind. Thank you.'

'Think nothing of it. My pleasure.'

'Maybe it was a good thing that Callum lost the plot – if he hadn't, we'd never have met.' And then, to Helena's evident astonishment, Jolene threw both arms around her and kissed her on the cheek.

Jolene managed to pack a lot more words into the short car journey, most of them about Helena.

'I've never met anyone like her before. She's *so* nice. Are you her best friend?'

'Well, yes; I suppose you could say that.'

'You're so lucky to have a friend like Helena.' Then she added a tactful afterthought: 'Well, she's lucky to have you,

too.' And then she said that she had always supposed that what she called 'posh people' wouldn't be very nice, but that was because she had never met any, and now she thought Helena and Taisie were the nicest people in the world.

They arrived at the little country station.

'Well, thanks again, a million. Tell Helena I'll come and see her soon.'

Taisie, reeling from this intelligence, hardly registered Jolene's enthusiastic goodbye kiss. Then Jolene was out of the car and – for no reason that Taisie knew of – running. She looked most unstable on the ridiculous towering shoes.

When Taisie returned she found Helena in the main drawing-room, entertaining a glass of white wine. Her shoes were off and she lay full-length on one of the sofas.

'Taisie, you're an absolute *life-saver*. I couldn't have borne another moment.'

'You may not yet be entirely free. Jolene said – '

'Please, *no*. Whatever it was, I don't want to hear it. Let's talk about *anything* but that *awful* creature. I simply refuse to hear *one more word* about her.'

An American First Timer at the ALS AGM (1–2 June 2013)

by Cynthia Lacey

After a glorious three weeks in London, I made my way to Oxford for my first time at the Annual General Meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies, hosted in 2013 by the Barbara Pym Society at St Hilda's College, Oxford on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Barbara's birth. The ALS is an umbrella organization which facilitates discussion and exchange of information between its member societies, whose individual activities celebrate well over a hundred authors.

We began with a pre-meeting dinner at La Cucina on St Clements. Societies represented included Charles Dickens, Siegfried Sassoon, Samuel Johnson and Charlotte Yonge, plus Professor James Booth, representing the Philip Larkin Society, who was to be the main speaker next day. After a convivial evening, Chris Rutherford kindly gave me a lift to my home for the weekend, Brown's Guest House on the Iffley Road.

The morning of Saturday 1 June found us in the lobby of the Jacqueline du Pré building, where two rows of long tables were set up for the many societies to lay out their pamphlets and other materials to entice attendees to join. Many friends were greeting each other and I was pleased to see quite a few fellow Pymmians. After coffee and pastries, the official events began.

Elizabeth Llewellyn-Smith, the former Principal of St Hilda's, welcomed those attending (while also remarking offhand that she 'could have been at Epsom at the Derby'). In her day St Hilda's was a women's college but is now fully co-educational. She noted that several works of fiction, including Dorothy L Sayers' *Gaudy Night* and Pym's *Jane and Prudence* were set at Oxford women's colleges similar to St Hilda's. She remarked that among the societies present were many celebrating authors whom she counted as her favorites: she was a founder member of the Trollope Society, a past Chair of the Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship, and was a great admirer of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell. 'I have a lot of books by authors celebrated by societies attending today: Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Arnold Bennett, Beatrix Potter (read to us when small), Richard Jefferies (*Wood Magic*), Angela Thirkell, E M Delafield (*Diary of a Provincial Lady*), and Virginia Woolf.' She liked to think of English Literature as a sea without a shore, always new islands to explore, and preferred to do so by means of a physical book, for that had a presence not substituted by an e-book. There had been an explosion of literature over the last 100 years, and readers were now interested in exploring more about authors and their place: it was a pleasure to see so many societies promoting such a range of writers.

A warm round of applause greeted her conclusion, and Jenny Uglow, the President of the ALS, opened the formal business; the AGM was conducted in a lively and friendly manner.

When the formal business was concluded, Eileen Roberts explained how the Barbara Pym Society grew out the centenary celebrations for St Hilda's College in 1993, when a group of fans decided to set up a society for Barbara Pym, who had been an undergraduate at the college between 1930 and 1934. She then introduced Clemence Schultze to talk on 'Barbara Pym, an Unashamed Reader'.

She talked about the literary habits which Pym attributes to her characters: these often reach for books for consolation, and turn especially to poetry (especially metaphysical and nineteenth-century poets) to express an emotion or reflect upon a situation. Pym's own reading experience was very wide, and in her teenage years her sincere admiration for Aldous Huxley resulted in *Young Men in Fancy Dress*, an impressive achievement for someone under the age of 17. Studying English at Oxford (where the syllabus ended in 1830) deepened her knowledge – even though for her the Bodleian was also a good place to track young men! Even in the first six 'canonical' novels, however, reading is problematized when other characters question its value. This tendency is more marked in the novels published once the 'wilderness years' were over: fiction and poetry have largely lost their charm, and even such characters as are readers recognize the vast gap between life and the expectations raised by literature. Accordingly, looking to the texts rather than to the biography in order to assess the value which Pym put upon reading, Schultze argued that its value diminishes in the later novels.

The Oxonian note was maintained by some readings from *Crampton Hodnet*, Pym's only Oxford-set novel, dramatized by Yvonne Cocking. After a sandwich lunch in the college's dining hall, we returned to hear James Booth, Emeritus Professor at Hull, and a leading Larkin scholar, deliver the keynote address on 'Larkin and Pym: an Elective Affinity'. The connection between Larkin and Pym began with a fan letter, dated 16 January 1961, in which Larkin proposed writing a review of her latest novel. Unfortunately he had waited too long, so offered to do so for the next one. Sixteen years later …!

Asking why Larkin enjoyed her novels, Booth identified an affinity of imagination, formed at Oxford. He noted that Pym's world excludes the reality of history while Larkin's two novels ignore the war raging around them: both writers

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shared a predilection for escaping into enclosed worlds. Pym preferred anticipation to reality, questioning whether one would rather be in love or have one's novel accepted. A key element of their later acquaintance was that Larkin offered a good deal of constructive criticism, as well as attempting to recommend her work to his own publisher – although his endorsement was couched in negatives rather than positives. Then came the great day in January 1977 when Larkin and Lord David Cecil both named Pym as the twentieth century's most underrated author. The resulting resurgence of interest in Barbara Pym and her novels meant that for her last few years she enjoyed the recognition that her talent deserved.

After a reception on the lawns, formal proceedings concluded with dinner, followed by the customary after-dinner readings offered by members of the various societies. And on Sunday morning, themed walks around a gloriously sunlit Oxford made a memorable close to the weekend.

Barbara Pym Reading Week (1–8 June 2013)

by Thomas Otto

For several years now I have maintained a blog that deals mainly with books and bookish things. Over the years I have come to discover hundreds of other book blogs and have found many wonderful like-minded readers around the world. Occasionally a book blogger will dedicate a day, a week, a month, or in some cases even a year, to a particular author or publisher. I created International Anita Brookner Day back in 2011 to celebrate her 30 years of publishing novels. On another occasion some bloggers devoted a week to the works of Muriel Spark. Another good blogger friend of mine hosted a month-long look at Daphne du Maurier called 'Discovering Daphne'. Some have hosted year-long read-alongs of door stops like *War and Peace*. One group hosted a year-long event where they read Willa Cather's twelve novels in chronological order over the course of twelve months. So when Amanda and I decided to host Pym Reading Week the first week of June, we were in good company.

Perhaps the best thing about hosting an event like this is knowing that even the least successful event introduces new readers to authors they may never have heard of or gotten around to reading. And so it was with Pym Reading Week, which ran in the anniversary week of Barbara's birthday. Book fans on Facebook and Twitter and bloggers all over the world discovered Barbara Pym for the first time. Some readers had always meant to give her a go but others had never even heard of Barbara.

Each day during Pym week I posted something about the world of Barbara Pym. The first day I wrote about how I met Miss Pym (Nancy Pearl's wonderful *Book Lust: Recommended Reading for Every Mood, Moment, and Reason*); another day I wrote about my experience baking from *The Pym Cookboo*k (I made a Victoria Sandwich and a Parkin – both recipes needed some tweaking to say the least). Another day I asked my readers what other authors have Pymmish qualities. And one day I turned over my blog to Linda McDougall who wrote about her frustrating and funny experience trying to bring Barbara to the small screen.

My favorite post during the week was one about the artist who designed the wonderful original US covers published by Dutton & Co. I looked high and low for information on Jacqueline Schuman the artist who designed all of Pym's covers for Dutton. After calls to various publishers, the Library of Congress, and the design library at the Rhode Island School of Design I finally found a lead in the *New York Times* online archives. That lead led me to Ms Schuman's daughter who shared all kinds of wonderful information with me about her mother. Schuman died in 2001 before the Internet became the information juggernaut that it is today so she left behind very little in the way of a digital footprint. Just as Barbara Pym's work went ignored for decades, Schuman's work was destined to be little more than a credit on a book jacket. Now, thanks to Pym Reading Week there is at least one source online which describes Schuman's life and work.

But I wasn't the only blogger posting items about Pym and her work during the week. There were at least 60 other Pym posts that popped up during the week. To see my posts and links to all the other Pym posts just go to: www.myporchblog.blogspot.com

Once you are there, go to the 'blog archive' on the left side of the screen and look at the month of June 2013.

Among the many superb materials generated by Thomas' blog and accessible via the archive, do make sure to look at Simon's 'Stuck-in-a-Book' designs for a Pym cover: http://stuck-in-a-book.blogspot.nl/2013/06/some-tame-gazelle-postscript.html

Finstock Local History Society (21 June 2013)

Finstock's Village Hall was crowded on a pleasant June evening – the date chosen to be as close as possible to Barbara's birthday. Mike Woodfield, Secretary of the Finstock Local History Society, welcomed Clemence Schultze to speak on 'Green Leaves and Golden Pavements: Town and Country in the Novels of Barbara Pym', with Yvonne Cocking and Martin Rush reading passages from the novels.

Clemence described the classical genre of pastoral as poetry written not by real shepherds and shepherdesses – rather, by those to whom an outdoor life means one led in idleness under sunny skies and the dappled shade of leafy trees, and whose nearest encounter with a lamb is likely to be a nicely done chop on their dinner plates. In pastoral every aspect of life is viewed through rose-tinted glasses, and nothing changes. Placing Barbara's first published novel, *Some Tame Gazelle*, within this genre, she noted how the disruptive elements that enter the village and threaten

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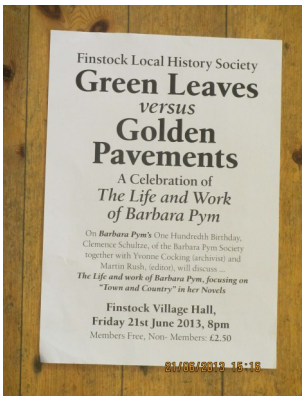
change are all seen off, so that the lives and mild loves of the chief characters remain eternally in play. She described the novel as a forward projection into middle age of Barbara and her Oxford friends – a remarkable notion for an author in her mid-twenties.



Barbara herself moved from small town to metropolis to village, and it is striking in her earlier work how even those novels that have an urban setting evoke a 'villagey' feel: Mildred, for example, lives virtually in a village until the arrival of the Napiers thrusts her into a slightly wider milieu. Town is viewed as the locus of romance by girls like Laurel, longing for adult life and experiences. In the later novels, such as *The Sweet Dove Died* and above all *Quartet in Autumn*, the bleakness and isolation of London life come to the fore. The characters in the latter lead fragmented lives, in which neither work nor social engagement gives them identity or self-esteem, and they scarcely interact with neighbours, friends or engage in any form of communal activity. But this breakdown of community is not confined to town-dwellers: the 'imaginary village' (*not*, of course, Finstock!) of *A Few Green Leaves* has none of the characteristics of the pastoral idyll. Work is no longer in the village; group social activities are few; and the church has been displaced by the doctors' surgery. All in all, the notion that there exists an ideal (or idealised) location, where life is perfect and no change is to be desired, has quite gone. But Pym offers some hope to a few of the characters. Not everything tends to the worse: solace is to be found in remaining open to change while accepting with grace the place where one is.

There followed a break with delicious home-made cakes; and the evening concluded with questions, discussion, and some reminiscences of Barbara and Hilary in Finstock.

Pym Conference, University of Central Lancashire (12 July 2013)

by Libby Tempest

A new and delightful experience for Pym fans, particularly us Northern types – an academic conference on our favourite author on our home turf. Organised by Dr Nick Turner, Lecturer at UCLAN and devoted Pymmite, the line-up for the day at Preston was impressively broad, ranging from curried whale to Queer theory!

The day got off to the best possible start with Paul Binding giving an enthralling and enjoyable talk on 'Knowing Barbara Pym'. Having been introduced to Barbara's work through his friendship with the Cecil family, Paul was delighted to be given the opportunity to meet her through his job with Oxford University Press. The letter he wrote, inviting Barbara and Hilary to have a meal with him (they all lived near each other in Oxfordshire) led to the now legendary occasion where (in a scene straight from one of Barbara's novels) Barbara and Hilary turned up at Paul's cottage in full evening dress for shepherd's pie. Paul posed the question – 'Did he ever really know Barbara Pym?' and had to conclude that he did not. They had many deep, witty, entertaining conversations, but they never discussed anything personal or emotional – a very British reticence. However she left him in no doubt how *very* much she minded the constant rejections from publishers. Paul spoke of his wonder and astonishment when he read *Quartet in Autumn* and *The Sweet Dove Died* – he came to think of her later novels as her greatest achievement.

The conference then divided into panels: Introducing Barbara Pym; Feminism and Sexuality; Literary Theories and Movements; and Pym's 'Late' Fiction and Literary Influences. It is not possible in the space available to do justice to the eleven papers that were given under these headings and I hope the authors and Nick will forgive me for selecting some personal highlights. Our own Chris Rutherford in collaboration with the Revd Colin Oxenforth gave a clever and humorous paper on 'Missions and Missionaries in the World of Barbara Pym' in which they debated the reservations people were beginning to have about the contradictions inherent in missionaries (and anthropologists) studying, explaining, converting, educating, changing 'the peoples of the Empire'. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the subject, Chris and Colin managed to convey, as Barbara herself did, the humour: for example, Bishop Theodore Grote singing 'a gay marriage song' to his slightly bewildered parish hall audience at his slide lecture on his work with the Mbawawa tribe. Bishop Grote had introduced a form of European dress to the Mbawawa, 'far more in keeping with Christian ideas of morality', but Belinda wonders whether they might not have been happier 'in their leaves and flowers?' Chris and Colin highlighted this desire to convert and change against respect for local customs and beliefs, and placed their argument effectively against the backdrop of the ongoing debate with the Roman Catholic Church – and the ever-present 'dread of some good man Going Over to Rome'.

Dr Joanna Dixon's paper examined the role of unmarried women in *Excellent Women*, which novel Dr Dixon describes as 'a sensitive portrayal of a single woman negotiating the social and cultural conventions which would seek to constrain and define her'. Mildred has to live with the expectations and limitations of spinsterhood, braving the views of other people who see the spinster as a gossip, as nosey and inquisitive, or simply invisible. How to live a fulfilling life against such negative preconceptions? After the Second World War, women were expected to return (uncomplaining) to marriage, motherhood and domesticity but single independent (sometimes working) women did not adhere to this post-war ideal – they made society feel uneasy and so society branded them 'failures'. *Excellent Women* was published in 1952, very much pre-Women's Liberation Movement, but Dr Dixon argued that heroines like Mildred personified the subtle beginnings of the massive changes

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about to happen. Barbara Pym putting 'unimportant' women like Mildred at the centre of her novels was an act of quiet revolution.

The novels of Charlotte M Yonge, Ivy Compton-Burnett and Barbara Pym and the similarities between them, were the subject matter of Julia Courtney's interesting and entertaining paper, 'Uneventful Lives?' Compton-Burnett and Pym read and admired each other's work and they were both familiar with Yonge's novels: borrowing Henry James' phrase, Julia felt that all three novelists and their characters inhabit the same 'house of fiction'. Barbara's great friend Robert ('Jock') Liddell considered Ivy Compton-Burnett a genius and they would often write or speak to each other in the style of ICB: Jock wrote to Barbara that ICB had been greatly entertained by *Some Tame Gazelle*. Julia noted that, as Anglicans, Pym and Yonge shared a moral code and an appreciation of parish life, which ICB 'subversively reworked': ultimately, all three share 'qualities of endurance and continuity' which ensures their novels are still loved by contemporary audiences.

Two aspects of the day I really enjoyed and appreciated – the range of papers given, from the highly academic and theoretical to the downright enjoyable and accessible *and* the number of young people who had put together quite outstanding presentations. It's a wonderful thing to witness such a resurgence of interest at every level in an author who is still too often sadly undervalued and overlooked.

Scandinavian visitors Ulf and Christina Gars with Charles Gilbert

Washington DC Area Garden Party (21 July 2013)

by Denise Marois-Wolf

On Sunday 21 July, Washington DC area members of the Barbara Pym Society gathered for the first DC area BPS summer garden party and tea. About seventeen people came, some from far southern regions of Virginia, others from north of Baltimore, to share their love of all things Pym. BPS member Thomas Otto agreed to host, and he generously opened his beautiful home and gardens, which turned out to be the perfect setting. If this year's turnout is any indication, it looks to become an annual event.

Of course, the party involved a great deal of food. Thomas treated us to some delicious and unique fare. He baked parkin, a kind of gingerbread typical to Yorkshire cooking, and a Gertrude cake, both recipes taken from *The Barbara Pym Cookbook* by Hilary Pym and Honor Wyatt (E P Dutton, 1988), adapted from Barbara's mother's recipe. There were plenty of scones with jam and lemon curd and finger sandwiches as well. And, of course, pots and pots of tea, some of which were brewed with leaves that came fresh from an outdoor market in the UK. Fortunately, there were no mishaps with tea spilled in laps, though one member brought a cauliflower cheese mold with a large gummy caterpillar crawling from the center.

Members read two essays from Dale Salwak's *The Life and Work of Barbara Pym* (1987): Joyce Carol Oates' 'Barbara Pym's Novelistic Genius', celebrating Barbara's 'gentle, satirical humor'; and Shirley Hazzard's 'Excellent Women', which pays tribute to her compassion, evident in the intimate and revealing detail. Both pieces are part of a collection that was read at a celebration of Pym at Gramercy Park Hotel in New York City in October 1984.

Some of us drifted outside to the garden, where, sitting amidst the lush greenery and blooms, we sipped wine, chatted about our travels and favorite books, and enjoyed

Dana White

the calm of a warm DC afternoon.

As the day wound down and a soft rain began to fall, the conversation turned to future events in the DC area. Not all members are able to make it to the annual conferences in Boston or Oxford, so opportunities to gather with like-minded Pymmites are rare and welcome events. We are discussing the possibility of a fall tea, and when plans are firm we'll send out a notice to local members.

Meanwhile, if you plan to attend the conference in Boston in March of 2014, I urge members to register as soon as the notice goes out. The conference is becoming extremely popular, and registration fills up fast.

Pym at St Hilda's Gaudy (21 September 2013)

by Clemence Schultze

Impossible not to recall the start of *Jane and Prudence* as I strolled into the college: Oxford is very lovely in September too, and Martin's eyes were once – and indeed still are – just the shade of delphiniums. The college library with its golden oak fittings was set out for an audience, and all eyes looked towards the door from which we expected the speakers to emerge. But no! A voice sounded from the gallery above, and there, leaning out like the blessed Damozel from the gold bar of heaven, was Eileen Roberts. After a brief account of Pym and the inception of the BPS, she introduced Miriam Margolyes who had kindly agreed to read. Miriam expressed her own enthusiasm for Pym's work, and gave us several Oxford-related passages whose humour was as fresh as ever. She concluded with the unpublished short story 'A Sister's Love', brilliantly depicting the managing mother, the passive daughter and all the other fully-realised characters. The audience responded with warm applause, and there were many appreciative comments.

Next there was the opportunity to see the display of documents, books and memorabilia, organised by St Hilda's archivist Judith Priestman, librarian Maria Croghan, and our own Yvonne Cocking and Eileen Roberts. This evoked a great deal of interest, since BPS members or indeed readers

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were very much in a minority among the audience: there were quite a few requests for more information about Pym herself and the Society. Tea in the dining hall drew upon recipes from the Pym cookbook: the cucumber sandwiches could not have been thinner, and the scones and sponge cakes were perfectly delicious.

Over in the Jacqueline du Pré building, there was a buzz of anticipation as we waited for Triona Adams (English, 1993–6). I was particularly keen to see her acclaimed one-woman show 'Nun the Wiser' as I had never managed to catch it either at the Edinburgh Festival or on tour – and I was not disappointed. Brilliantly written and performed, her characterisations of the various nuns and of her own younger self were not only hilarious but also insightful. One empathised both with the older nuns, habituated to set patterns and making no concessions to changing attitudes, and with the postulant herself – the sole postulant – who was treated and taught exactly as a whole group would have been in the order's more flourishing days. With minimal props and costume, Triona had us fully believing in the cold, the cooking, and the clothes. The entire performance was a *tour de force*, and put the seal on an enjoyable afternoon.

Pym at the Manchester Literature Festival (7 October 2013)

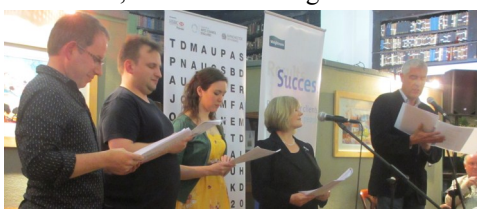
by Clemence Schultze

Under its vast and airy glass dome, Manchester's Portico Library (not a public but a subscription library) is a booklover's dream. In wall spaces beneath the cupola, Shakespeare confronts Milton and an imposing clock faces a wind-vane. Dark leather bindings gleam on the walls, and the comfortable armchairs beckon one to a spell of leisurely browsing. But on this particular evening the large space was set up for an audience of 100 – all waiting for 'An Excellent Woman: A Celebration of Barbara Pym' while posters outside announced 'Sold Out' to disappointed visitors. It was the first day of the two-week-long Manchester Literature Festival, and it is the BPS's own Libby Tempest that we have to thank for the initial idea and for undertaking all the liaison and organisation. Introducing the event, Libby told us that the night represented for her a dream come true – and no better setting than this library could have been found in which to celebrate Pym's life and work. She sketched Barbara's life, and brought out the significance of 'the wilderness years'.

Libby Tempest, Paul Binding, Donna Coonan, Yvonne Cocking, Louis de Bernières

The first speaker was Paul Binding, who told the tale of his initial encounter with Barbara and Hilary: they ventured down a muddy lane in evening dress to be regaled with shepherd's pie, whiskey junket and Riesling. But their friendship prospered, and he knew her well though not intimately; for example, they did not discuss why she was for so long unpublished. Then in January 1977 Fate assigned to him the role of breaking the news to Barbara of the *TLS* article: 'She was flabbergasted,' he said. Her new-found fame did not change her at all, but the few years of recognition that she lived to enjoy made him realise how she was every inch a novelist and how hurtful the years of rejection had been.

Donna Coonan, Commissioning Editor for Virago



Arthur Bostrom (R) with Manchester actors

Modern Classics, spoke next. Writers in that list range from Edith Wharton via Daphne du Maurier to Jacqueline Susann – and Donna admitted that when Pym's works were brought to her attention she had initial doubts, but the notability of Pym's fans made her think again. She stressed how important it was to find high-profile champions for these reprints: such backers as Jilly Cooper and Alexander McCall Smith – as well, of course, as the two writers currently present – had contributed greatly to maintaining interest in Pym's work and getting new readers for it. So far 110,000 copies of the novels had been sold in the new edition. She herself now greatly admired Pym's work, and found it astute, funny and often quite sad: all these qualities attested its truth to life. And fan letters often came to her from readers – she loved to get these.

Louis de Bernières, novelist and poet, said that Pym's books were recommended to him by three writers whom he much respected: William Cooper (*Scenes of Provincial Life*), Elizabeth Jane Howard, and A S Byatt. He confessed to not having read all her novels yet – at which a sigh went up, in which slight reproach was mingled with envy for all the pleasure that awaited him. Of those he had so far read, he considered *Quartet in Autumn* the greatest. Her characters possess a reality closely linked to life: he had often encountered Pymmish people or circumstances. The women are excellent, the men in her novels are generally vain or weak, or at best eccentric, and few of the men are glamorous (Rocky Napier being a notable exception). Admittedly her range of life situations is narrow – few children or animals are portrayed – but her chosen material she depicts with insight and humour. He asked himself whether Pym's work had influenced his own, and thought, on the whole, it had not; he did however think that she would recognise the characters in his village collection *Notwithstanding* (2009). Though Pym is sometimes described as a miniaturist, the cumulative effect of reading all her novels is like reading one vast panoramic novel: he wanted to coin a new term for this phenomenon. Borrowing from Duhamel's notion of the *roman fleuve*, he suggested that Pym's novels formed a *roman lac*, where one is looking at the same water, each time seen from a different point of view.

After this came a break for Pimms and nibbles, and the opportunity to publicise BPS membership and merchandise at a stall manned by Simon Rennie. Then the audience heard

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Yvonne Cocking introduce 'A Sister's Love'. The original story was probably written in 1938 and draws upon themes that concerned Barbara in the 1930s: she represented herself as a sister to Henry Harvey's wife Elsie. Its plot is slight, but there is great humour in the characters' relationships. The present dramatisation by Yvonne was performed by members of the Stockport Garrick Theatre. This is the oldest Little Theatre in the country and has staged plays continuously since its formation in 1901. Four Garrick cast members were joined by Arthur Bostrom. Best known as Officer Crabtree from the long running sitcom *'Allo, 'Allo*, he has just finished playing Monsieur Bérard in the national tour of *Birdsong*. His wry delivery as narrator set off the performances from Rebecca Derrick as the ingenue, Mary Pritchard as her mother, Mick Cooper.as the man who weds another woman, and Jon Atkin as an attractive Italian count. The ensemble gave a splendid performance, much enjoyed by the entire audience.

Libby concluded with thanks to all concerned: the three speakers, Cathy Bolton and the MLF team, the staff of the Portico Library, Arthur Bostrom and the Garrick actors, and Weightmans LLP who had most kindly sponsored the proceedings. The audience greatly appreciated the whole event, and went away fully agreeing with Louise Field Cooper's assessment, quoted by Libby: 'Barbara Pym knows everything there is to know about the quiet, very funny small eventful, poignant lives of the people in her books, and when we have finished reading them so do we and are all the happier for it.'

Writers Writing: Centennial Round Table on BP at NYU (10 October 2013)

by Virginia Guilford

The conference, billed as 'Writers and scholars discuss the legacy of Barbara Pym', was sponsored by the Humanities Initiative at NYU – and was a thoroughly rewarding experience. Speakers Laura Miller, Patrick Deer, Perri Klass, Cathleen Schine, and Laura Shapiro each spoke briefly about Pym, and then there was a general discussion, followed by a wine and cheese get-together afterward. There were about 30 attendees, both men and women, of all ages. (At least two attendees came with their mothers – I am not sure of the significance of that, but I note it here!)

Laura Miller, a journalist and co-founder of the website, Slate, spoke first. She talked about her efforts to encourage publishers to reprint Pym, and her efforts to encourage new readers. Her own admiration of Pym was based on the fact that although Pym could be described as similar to writers of 'cosies', her delightfully unsentimental view of life and her acerbic wit make her more interesting. However, according to Miller, this unsentimental view of life that we love about Pym also makes her a writer who does not fit the romantic expectations of many of today's readers.

The next speaker was Patrick Deer, Associate Professor of English at NYU, specializing in twentieth-century British culture. He had some very interesting observations about Pym, seeing her in the context of and in contrast to, other trends in England during the 1950s, such as the 'angry young men' literary movement. He sees Pym as being more experimental and unconventional than we realize because of her attention to detail and her interest in characters who were not usually found in other novels of the time.

We then heard from Laura Shapiro, a journalist who writes about food. She claimed that Barbara Pym was actually one of the earliest mid-century English writers to make reference to a more sophisticated way of eating. Pym's characters were eating their 'lettuce dressed with salt and a bit of hoarded olive oil' at the same time, or perhaps even before, the famous Elizabeth David was introducing Italian and French cooking to post-war Britain .

Perri Klass, well-known professor of journalism and pediatrics at NYU, gave a charming talk about Pym's observations about 'drink', including a slide show of advertising images of popular alcoholic beverages. She pointed out that not only did Pym describe what her characters drank, she also described how they felt about their choices – that Pym's characters know they are revealing themselves through their choice of drink or food or clothing and they are concerned about making the right choices. And she noted that this concern is an important characteristic of Pym's work over all.

The final speaker was Catherine Schine, author of several delightful novels, including *The New Yorkers*, and *The Three Weissmans of Westport*. She spoke about her personal attachment to Pym's work, how she derived such comfort from it that she was reluctant to analyze its appeal too much, for fear of losing the simple pleasure of just reading Pym.

There was general discussion after the panelists spoke. We discussed whether we really even need to have Pym be approved of or understood by the academics and publishers in order to enjoy her work ourselves – some people agreed that we could enjoy Pym on our own, but others felt that Pym deserved to have new readers that would only come from official acceptance and promotion. Also, a younger member of the audience, in her 20s, described how she and her friends are both attracted to, and yet frightened by, the idea of Pym's unsuccessful lives – the limited careers, the disappointments in love, the 'little' lives. And other people said that they found that aspect of Pym's work appealing – that such lives could be worth writing about, worth reading about, despite our current notion that success and achievement are so important. There was some discussion about *Quartet in Autumn* – why is it such a difficult work to enjoy? Some members of the panel said that they rarely re-read this book, but others said that one could see this novel as being similar to the other Pym books, but about a later phase in life, and that it could be appreciated more in later life.

It was a wonderful conference and I was so pleased that I was able to hear what all these distinguished people had to say about Pym, whose work is so important to those of us who are her fans.

Sunday dinner at Fisher's

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P D James opens the 'Barbara Pym and the Bodleian' exhibition (8 November 2013)

by Clemence Schultze

Convocation House in the Bodleian Library (scene in March this year of the atmospheric reading of the Pym-Larkin letters by Triona Adams and Oliver Ford Davies) was once again a venue for a Barbara Pym Centenary event. Baroness James of Holland Park (P D James to her many fans) launched an exhibition on Barbara Pym and the Bodleian with an introductory talk. Curator Catriona Cannon (whose conference talk is reported on p. 4 of this issue) noted PDJ's special qualifications for this role, since, in addition to her many other achievements and honours, she is an Honorary Fellow of St Hilda's and holder of the Bodley Medal for her outstanding contribution to the worlds of communications and literature (awarded in 2002, when the honour was revived). The current occasion attracted much interest; all tickets were taken, and a good sprinkling of BPS members were in the audience.

P D James with Catriona Cannon at the Bodleian

PDJ expressed her enjoyment of the exhibition which, she said, would bring Pym alive for us again. She outlined Pym's career, starting with her secure and happy home life, and remarking wryly that neither family nor school experiences offered the material of early misery and suffering so often regarded as essential to the formation of a writer. At Oxford Pym was 'a chaser of men but with an essential innocence', and probably did not realise the reputation she was acquiring. Henry Harvey was the love of her life, and although (as he claimed in his PEN club talk of 1985, quoted in *ALTA*, pp. 49–50) there was an element of 'pretend play' in her behaviour, PDJ did not doubt that she was very seriously in love. The return to Oswestry befitted the conventional side of her character: she was not an iconoclast, and, like Jane Austen, was perfectly satisfied with the world into which she was born (though PDJ considered her also in many ways unlike Austen). War work in Bristol led to the unhappy affair with C Gordon Glover; the realisation that this was of far more significance to her than it had been to him took her into the WRNS. By then, she knew that she was a writer, and this was her priority: hence the choice of a job that, while interesting enough, was not one that demanded total commitment.

It was 'a rather ordinary feminine life', judged PDJ. And from its experiences, nothing was wasted: the observations in Pym's notebooks went into her writings. Even her illness supplied content for *Quartet in Autumn*, and she was still making notes in her final days in the hospice. PDJ could see no reason why this should stop, imagining her finding ample material in a High Anglican heaven. And she speculated that if Pym had enjoyed a happy marriage, we should probably not have possessed the books – wherein her real life is to be found. Above all, she attained the immortality so desired by writers: that 'their work would be immediately recognisable as having been written by them and by nobody else'. 'A lot to ask', as she herself said (*ALTA* p.280), but she achieved it.

After the talk, there were drinks and delicious hot nibbles in the Divinity School, and the opportunity to view the exhibition in the Proscholium. It covered the earliest to the latest writings, right from 'The Magic Diamond' down to the last entry in the final notebook. Among the riches presented were letters exchanged between Pym and all her Oxford lovers (Rupert Gleadow, Henry Harvey and Julian Amery), manuscripts and typescripts of the novels, as well as other memorabilia, including the BPS's famous box. A picture of the Reading Room showed its appearance around the time when 'Sandra' stalked 'Lorenzo', and there was even her original Bodleian admission form. Of the photos, what chiefly stood out was a remarkable polyfoto of Barbara as a young woman: multiple images showed her shy, smiling, serious and even skittish. It was a wonderful and appropriate tribute to Barbara from the university – and the very building – which helped form her as a woman and as a writer. Catriona Cannon, whose drive and enthusiasm created the exhibition, is owed the warmest thanks from all Pymmites.

The exhibition is on view in the Proscholium until 8 December 2013, and an online version will remain permanently available:
http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/whats-on/online/barbara-pym-and-the-bodleian

P D James's talk will be available as an audio BODcast:
http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/whats-on/bodcasts

Gleanings

by Yvonne Cocking

Evergreen, which describes itself as 'Britain's Lovely Little Green Quarterly', ran a feature last autumn entitled 'A Journey to Pymland'. Its author, Anton Joseph, says:

It is a pity that her books have not been adapted for television. I believe her finely delineated characters, subtle plots and witty dialogue would make great viewing.

Kate Charles, celebrated author of a number of crime novels set against the background of the Church of England, founder member and former Chairman of the Barbara Pym Society, contributed to the *Church Times* (24 May 2013) a feature 'Ascent of the Ridiculous', charting in her centenary year Barbara Pym's 'ups and downs'. She particularly stresses the humour in the novels' which she considers

dry, wry and sly ... [her books] are funny, although it is difficult to convey that through quotations. In isolation, lines from her books can seem banal, or, worse yet, silly. But, in context, they are achingly, sometimes screamingly, funny.

Philip Henscher's 'Small Worlds Writ Large' a perceptive overview of Barbara's work, appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*'s Review pages on 1 June, the eve of the 100th anniversary of her birth. He describes her literary world as

... small ... but acutely observed. Its opportunities are circumscribed, but genuine; and the reader puts her books

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down smiling, wondering in what ways he has allowed his life to be circumscribed, without meaning it ... To those, like Jonathan Cape in the early sixties, who demand a po-faced engagement with the vital issues of the day, she has nothing to say. She has her revenge: on her 100th birthday, all her books are in print, and every one is loved. We Pymmians toast her ...

In the latest *Journal of the Angela Thirkell Society* there is a report about the 2013 Alliance of Literary Societies AGM at St Hilda's with several mentions of Barbara Pym.

September brought forth a flurry of comment, mainly from minor, but appreciative, publications. Drew Patrick Shannon's 'How One Should Read a Marriage', was reviewed by Ruth Webb in *Virginia Woolf Society of GB Bulletin,* no 44.

Initially [says Webb] *I was rather put off by his assertion, that 'one passes judgment, deems one marriage good and another bad' in one's everyday life. The Lady Bracknell or Maude Doggett (from Barbara Pym's work) in me wanted to tell the writer not to be so impertinent ... Lady Bracknell, Maude Doggett and I are, unlike DPS, not 'engaged, possibly almost daily, in a constant process of reading the marriages of our friends and relations and acquaintances'.*

In *This Week* on 14 September, Lucy Worsley [royal historian, much in evidence on BBC Channel 4 just now] was interviewed for the 'Best Books' slot. One of her choices was Hazel Holt's *A Lot To Ask*.

I would go as far as to say that if I discover that someone likes Barbara Pym's novels, I know that we can be friends. Pym's acutely observed comedies of English life – mostly written in the 1950s and 1960s – are very funny and completely endearing. This biography has so much Pym in it that it's almost as good as discovering a new novel.

'My Oxford' by Gail Simmons appeared in the Travel Section of the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 September. In a paragraph headed 'A book for inspiration?' she says:

Barbara Pym's delightful novel Crampton Hodnet *pokes gentle fun at academic life in the Victorian suburb of North Oxford in the Thirties. An exquisite period piece.*

South Warwickshire's parish magazine, *The Link*, carried an article by John Melvin.

The novel I had chosen to take with me on my holiday was Barbara Pym's A Glass Full [sic] of Blessings*, and I found her world ... deeply moving. The world of Barbara Pym is minutely observed and so vividly described that it assumes the veracity of Art. Her world is the world of the ordinary; the rituals and foibles of everyday life. These poignancies I find immensely consoling, as they are the patterns of life that I find and love in SW7. It just needs a great novelist to help us recognise them.*

Thanks to Iona Roberts, Deirdre Bryan-Brown, Michael Wilson, Norma Munson and Stéphanie Kay, for these contributions.

On the boat trip

A Pym Online Bibliography

Linda Winkler, Special Collections Librarian and Liaison Librarian at the University of Regina, has recently completed an online bibliography for the study of Barbara Pym. Entitled 'Barbara Pym: A Bibliography of Materials 1991–2013', it covers materials published in English between those dates. Thus it supplements Dale Salwak's work *Barbara Pym: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G K Hall, 1991) which dealt with works published up to 1990.

It is extremely comprehensive, covering books, journal articles, conference papers, dissertations and web sites – and it is far more than a simple list of titles and publication data. Linda Winkler has provided abstracts to virtually all the entries: these will be of enormous help to all Pym researchers, and make fascinating browsing for the reader generally interested in Barbara Pym and her works.

Find it at: http://barbara-pym.com/home/

An Unsuitable Attachment at the Library of Birmingham (9 November 2013)

by Clemence Schultze

'Working among books was ... a ladylike occupation [thought Ianthe's mother, who] had never seen Ianthe handing out books to the ill-mannered grubby students and cranks of all ages who frequented the library of political and sociological books where she worked.' If that library (was the LSE the model for it?) was far from the Platonic notion of oaken bookcases, gilded bindings and hushed voices that subsisted in Mrs Broome's mind, still less would she even have recognised the new Library of Birmingham as a library at all. It is more like some major transport hub (airport or international rail station) but without the signage and the shops. Enormous, multi-layered, glossy, glassy, full of people hurrying, strolling, sight-seeing ... or attempting to find the ominously named Room 101. Or perhaps we were in a role-playing game, for we caught sight of it at the end of a glass corridor from which we were barred – so had to retrace our steps till we found an Agent empowered to admit us along the Path.

Dramatisation at Birmingham

Once attained, Room 101 proved to be an extremely pleasant seminar room, with round tables and comfortable chairs for about 50 people, all eager for the afternoon's entertainment. The credit for the event belongs to Maggie Parsons: she conceived the idea, liaised with the library to include it in their programme of opening events long before there was any library to open, and found an accomplished cast to put on the performance. In her introduction, she said

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that only this book, with librarians as its chief characters, would have suited the occasion, and she thanked Yvonne Cocking most warmly for her dramatisation of the novel and Hazel Holt for permission to present it. Brought up in Birmingham, Hazel could recall working in (as it were) the grandmother of this Library, the city's first public one: the Central Library that was built in 1882 and demolished in 1974.

The actors were present and past students and professional actors from the Drama Department of Newman University Birmingham. Drama can be studied as a full three-year degree programme at Newman, and students gain considerable experience in participating in community drama projects. The cast's training served them well in an excellent rendering of the work. Terina Talbot, a professional director and actor, gave unity to the performance by her narration. Chris Maurice (John Challow) was extremely convincing in his half presumptuous, half tender wooing of Ianthe (played by Jessica Woollard-Hughes). Christopher Middleton as Mervyn Cantrell got most of the laughs, run a close second by Nick Doran playing Rupert Stonebird. Rose Crosland-Jones as Sophia suggested that character's slightly wistful discontent with life, matched by Josh Roberts as Mark, and counterpointed by Charlotte Davies as sister Penelope. Sammy Joe and Lloyd Pugh as the Pettigrews supported ably, and Maggie Parsons herself played Sister Dew. There was warm applause and many appreciative remarks from the audience. Several people enquired about membership, and Yvonne was in demand to autograph copies of *Barbara in the Bodleian.*

Afternoon tea followed: scones with jam and clotted cream, cake, and teacakes. 'The whole place suggested tea, and a good cup at that. ... Oh, the benison of it.' Thus entertained and fortified, we dispersed, having spent a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Along the river

Saturday dinner in the marquee

Rita Phillips at the chocolate fountain

The Three Graces

Clemence Schultze, Linda McDougall

Miriam Margolyes

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Coming Events

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

2014 North American Conference

22–23 March 2014

The topic of the sixteenth annual North American conference, to be held at the Barker Center, Harvard University, is *Excellent Women*. Booking will open in the New Year, and notification will go out by email. Early registration is recommended as the event is very popular.

Spring Meeting in London

18 May 2014, St Alban's Centre, Holborn
'All those loose ends': Austen, Love and Pain in the Writings of Barbara Pym
Speaker: Dr Kerry Sinanan,
University of the West of England.

2014 Annual General Meeting & Conference

29–31 August 2014, at St Hilda's College, Oxford
The theme is *A Glass of Blessings.*
Call for Papers: The committee is seeking speakers for the conference. Preference will be given to proposals relating to *A Glass of Blessings*, but any relevant topic will be considered.
Please send an abstract of 150–250 words, accompanied by brief biographical details, to:
barbarapymsociety@gmail.com,
by 13 January 2014, with the subject heading '2014 Oxford Conference Proposal'.

Jutta Schiller, Chris Rutherford

Louis de Bernières and Paul Binding

The Barbara Pym Society 2013-2014

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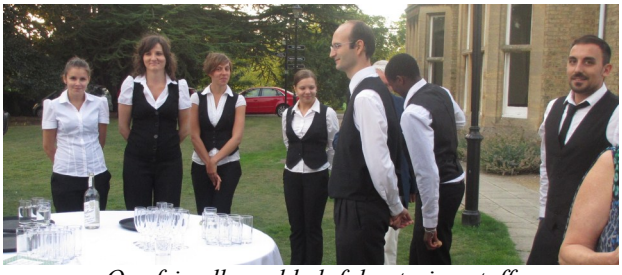

Our friendly and helpful catering staff

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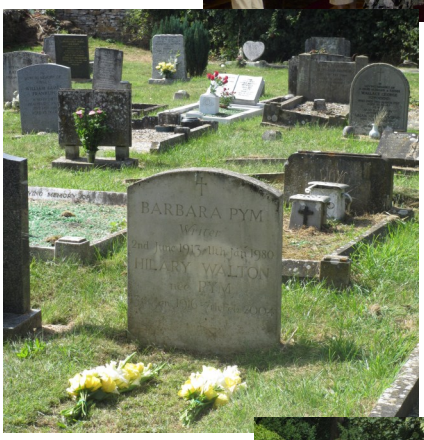

Lines Written by a Chairman on the Occasion of her Laying down Office

Six long years since, rang out a stirring note:
'Clemence, stand forth; 'tis time now to promote
The cause of *PYM*; centennial day draws near
When manifest must *BARB'RA'S* fame appear.'

Fainting I said: 'The spirit wills indeed
But flesh is weak; such task doth sorely need
Abundant aid; alone I could not dare;
But only with the help of those who'll share
The labour and the burden of the day.'
Such help I found; 'tis time now to repay
With heartfelt thanks the effort of them all –
None tardy in response to urgent call,
Nor grudging effort, time, cost, life or limb
T'advance through all the world the cause of *PYM*.

Too numerous to list are those who spoke,
Beguiling hearers with wit, word and joke.
Numberless too are those who played their part:
'Mighty' they're dubbed, for through unceasing art
To life they bring the den'zens of the page
– In faith, they really should be on the stage!
I add all those who took up pen and ink
For *Green Leaves'* sake, to make the readers think
Afresh of *PYM*; and ever newly prove
That study aye reveals 'something to love'.

On Am'ric's shore there serves a stalwart band,
Once led by Ellen, now in other hands.
This side of Ocean, no less stout of heart
A sturdy team plays willingly its part.
'Excellent' all, both male and female kind,
Ready of counsel, sharp and clear of mind,
All prompt to help, encourage and sustain,
Speakers to find, new adherents to gain,
The word to spread: 'So come, take up and read!'
This is the task, and they have worked indeed,
Deserving well the grateful thanks this hymn
Here pays to those who cherish *BARB'RA PYM*.

So now in hundredth year we justly claim
Resounding glory for dear *BARB'RA'S* name.

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