

Crampton Hodnet: Too Outdated for Publication

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It is generally agreed by Pym researchers that this early novel was begun in 1939. I don't dispute that, but I like to confirm such details. In previous papers given the same treatment, I have usually found the answer in her literary notebooks, but she did not begin these until 1948. We know that *Crampton Hodnet* was written, or at least started, before WWII. I hoped that her diaries might yield some information. Indeed, looking at Barbara's earliest diaries (begun in 1932), I found the first mention of her literary life when she wrote on Tuesday 19 Nov 1935, 'Yesterday I started another novel ... it promises to be quite fun.' And in July 1936, 'I am now on the sixth chapter of my second novel.' Her second novel. Not *Crampton Hodnet* then, but probably *Adam and Cassandra* (later published as *Civil to Strangers*), and this was confirmed in a later entry.

I found nothing more about her work in Oxford her 1937 and 1938 diaries, but on 22nd December 1939, only weeks after the outbreak of war, she wrote: 'In my bath determined to finish my Oxford novel and send it on the rounds'. Oxford! Since *Crampton Hodnet* is her only novel set in Oxford, this had to be it. From the evidence of her diaries, the novel could have been started any time between 1937 and 1939. The character of Simon Beddoes was surely based on Julian Amery, with whom Barbara had a brief affair between December 1937 and January 1938, so that probably eliminates 1937. 1938 was a busy year for Barbara. In May she went to Dresden where an earlier lover, Friedbert Gluck, was stationed, and stayed there until early June. But this is another story, which I have told elsewhere.

In late August she left for Poland to teach English to the daughter of one Dr Alberg, though owing to the worsening political situation, she returned to England in mid-September, so it is most likely that she did start *Crampton Hodnet* early in 1939.

On the blank page after 31 December in her 1939 diary Barbara wrote, as she did with later novels, some of her thoughts on her work so far. These notes were obviously intended only for her own use, so do not always make sense to subsequent readers.

1. A scene in which Mr Latimer says he doesn't care what the father is or did. [*This must refer to some plot line later discarded*]
2. Make Barbara Bird more strikingly beautiful so that Francis Cleveland expects more of her than she is able to give. [*don't quite know what she means by that*]
3. Make Mr Latimer less feeble.
4. Bring in Barbara Bird sooner. Make Mr Cleveland naughtier – mildly sexual!
5. Cut out a lot of Simon Beddoes and Anthea.
6. Bring Lucy and Mr Latimer in earlier to give Miss Doggett something else to bring against Mr. Cleveland. [*I can only assume that Lucy, her name changed to Pamela, was the girl Latimer met in France and became engaged to; or perhaps she meant Barbara Bird; either way, I don't see the point*]
7. Michael and Gabriel see Birdy and Mr Cleveland crawling behind a bush on Shotover [*this scene remained but was moved to the Botanical Gardens*].

In January 1940, Barbara wrote, 'Worked hard all day on my North Oxford novel and knitting a balaclava helmet.' Her time spent in writing had to be curtailed by the exigencies of war!

That's all I could conveniently get from the wartime diaries, which though very small are filled with densely crowded script, much in pencil and almost illegible. To plough through them would have taken more time than I could spare, and I felt that if there were any further references to the novel they would not add much to its history.

The only entry for 'Crampton Hodnet' in the index to the catalogue of the Pym collection is MSPym10, which is a bound typed draft of the novel. I suspect that the binding may have been done by the Bodleian archivists, as it is the same colour and type as the binding of the 1936 version of *Some Tame Gazelle*. I then set about comparing this draft with the

published version, and I was surprised how similar are the two. Hazel Holt's changes consist almost exclusively in deletions from the draft, most of which, in my opinion, seem fully justified. I could not detect any significant additions, nor any deviation from Barbara's plot. The important deletions follow. Please note that all the italicised passages that follow occur in the draft, but were omitted from the book published 45 years later. This unused Pym material is revealed here for the first time.

In the draft of Chapter 2, the following appeared at the end of the chapter:

Miss Morrow suddenly upset the glass dish of beetroot all over the vicar. Everyone at once crowded round him, patting him with table napkins and offering helpful advice. Miss Morrow stood with a stream of apologies pouring from her lips, while Miss Doggett kept up a lament like a Greek chorus.

'Now it's all over the cloth. It's spreading. It will mark the table underneath. And now it's dripping down to the carpet. It will make such a stain. And Mr Wardell's suit, oh dear, I'm afraid it's quite ruined.'

'Nonsense,' said Mrs Wardell. 'Ben always spills things on himself, any way, don't you dear?'

'Yes, dear.' he said meekly, as Miss Doggett dabbed at him with her table napkin.

'I'm so sorry,' said Miss Morrow faintly. 'I'm so sorry.'

'Why, look at the stain on the cloth,' said Mrs Wardell. 'It's just the shape of Italy. How funny!'

'Agnes finds interest in everything,' said the vicar proudly.

'It's great gift,' said Miss Doggett. 'I have it too. I believe Mr Latimer will be very happy at Leamington Lodge. I shall do my best to make a home for him'.

Miss Morrow would have liked to subscribe to these sentiments, but, having just ruined the vicar's suit, she did not feel justified in regarding herself as a fit person to assist in making a home for a clergyman. So she went on with her apologies.

'I'm so sorry,' she murmured, 'so very sorry'.

It is easy to understand why Hazel omitted this very funny section. Compare it in part with the tea party scene in Fabian Driver's garden in *Jane and Prudence*.

Suddenly there was a diversion. Jessie Morrow, getting up to pass a plate of cakes to Mrs Lyall, knocked against the little table on which Prudence had put her cup of tea, so that the cup upset all over the skirt of her lilac cotton dress.

'Oh, Jessie, how could you be so clumsy!' stormed Miss Doggett. 'You have ruined Miss Bates's dress – that tea will stain it... if you don't put it to soak in cold water at once that tea will stain. I'm very much afraid it will leave a mark.'

'It seems to be leaving a mark already,' said Jessie in an unsuitably detached tone for one who had been responsible for the disaster; 'rather the shape of Italy.'

Had the excised paragraphs remained, Miss Morrow's recurring clumsiness might have passed unnoticed, but NOT the shape of the stain!

There are several small amendments in Chapter 5, none very important. However, in the section where Anthea, wanting Simon to believe that she is more than just a pretty face, resolves '*...we won't spend all our time lying on the sofa making love. I'll show him I'm intelligent.*' By the time *Crampton Hodnet* was published, the meaning of 'making love' had achieved a more literal implication than was ascribed to it from Victorian times onward, when it implied merely flirtation, verbal sparring, or at the very worst 'heavy petting', so Hazel was wise to omit the phrase.

Continuing Anthea's visit to Simon's rooms:

Anthea knocked, went in, and the next thing she knew she was in his arms, forgetting all her good resolutions. It is not possible to speak or even think of such things when one was being kissed. Anthea sighed happily.

'Simon,' she said, with her mouth against his. 'I was going to have a lovely political discussion with you.'

'But Simon is so stupid, he doesn't know about things like that,' said Simon complacently, snuggling down among the elegant covered cushions.

'Darling, stupid Simon,' she murmured dreamily.'

And so ended Anthea's efforts to show Simon that she was intelligent.

Such conversation as they made was not brilliant, and soon ceased to be conversation at all, but became murmured endearments, sighs, and other lover-like sounds.

As I said earlier, Barbara had suggested in her diary cutting out some of the Anthea/Simon stuff; if the foregoing schmaltz was the sort of thing she had in mind Hazel would surely have been carrying out Barbara's wishes.

In Chapter 6, it is Barbara Bird's turn to sigh romantically about her love for Francis Cleveland:

But, oh, she thought, sinking down among those gaudy cushions, how lucky I am, the luckiest girl in Oxford! She longed to shout it out to the whole college, but she had an inner reserve, which always held her back from those intimate confidences in which so many of those women she knew indulged. She always kept a great deal to herself.

Hazel omitted this, no doubt for the same reason.

Next Margaret Cleveland has her say. After recalling Francis reading *To His Coy Mistress* to her over tea in Boffins when they were courting, the draft added the following:

She, who was now the middle-aged wife of a middle-aged don, had other more suitable things to do than remember. She ought to be thinking of the future, not of the past. Francis's shirts, the turkey for Christmas, food, food, food, meals ... four meals every day for the rest of her life. Yes, [sighs] there was plenty to do without wasting time remembering the days when one hadn't thought about things like that.

In Chapter 7, the snobbish Miss Doggett speaks condescendingly about the vicar, Mr Wardell, who is coming to dinner that night, saying, 'I never feel that he is quite at his ease among people like us,' to which Miss Morrow replies

'Well, we must do our best to make him feel at ease to-night'.

'I think you can hardly talk about putting people at their ease when you are continually upsetting dishes over them, Miss Morrow,' said Miss Doggett. Mr Latimer's mouth twitched at the corners.

'Well, at least it makes something to talk about', he said, 'and it breaks whatever tension there may be. And I suppose it breaks the dishes too,' he added, raising his voice to give emphasis to his little joke.

Miss Doggett chortled with laughter. The gold chain with the turquoise pendant, and the other which held her pince-nez, shook and jingled.

'That is good,' she said, 'don't you think so Miss Morrow?

Miss Morrow laughed dutifully, and said that she did think so.

Because of the reference to the beetroot incident again, this piece had to go.

In Chapter 8, 'Spring, the Sweet Spring', walking with Barbara in the Botanical Gardens, Francis reflects that Spring sometimes makes people behave differently from other times of the year. Here the draft adds

He wondered now why he hadn't made more use of his opportunities at tutorials. They had often been alone together then. But it was somehow different in one's own house, with the family in the next room. Somebody might come in. Although there was nothing wrong in a little harmless fun, he told himself stoutly, nothing wrong at all.

But this was also left out, possibly because of the morally reprehensible sentiment it expressed.

Later in the chapter, Margaret is also thinking about Spring and its effect on her husband.

Francis would be so surprised if she suddenly began talking about the Spring, and how it was making her feel, unless, of course, she said that it had brought on a twinge of rheumatism or a touch of 'flu. That was all he would expect of her. And after all, she thought, there isn't much for us to do at our age, except take celery seeds for our rheumatism, and generally keep ourselves out of the grave.

But her husband's thoughts were very far from rheumatism and graves.

In Chapter 9, ‘Ballet in the Parks’, Michael and Gabriel are telling Miss Doggett about seeing Francis and Barbara in the Botanical Gardens, and how they were hiding as if they didn’t want to be seen:

‘I don’t like Birdikin,’ said Michael sulkily. ‘She won’t lend me that pretty green costume. I wanted to wear it at the OUDS Smoker’.

‘Oh, yes, Michael would look exactly like a daffodil with his yellow hair,’ said Gabriel.

‘Why should he want to look like a daffodil?’ asked Miss Morrow

‘Well you see, we’ve written a play,’ explained Michael with a girlish laugh.

I suppose Hazel felt that this was a bit too camp.

From here on there is a good deal about Barbara Bird’s infatuation with Francis Cleveland that was omitted from the published version. In Chapter 11, after their visit to the British Museum, Barbara is alarmed at the way her affair with Francis is progressing, and by the time she returns to college is openly weeping. In the published version little comment is made about this, but the following long passage appeared in the draft

Barbara flung herself down on her bed and abandoned herself to her misery. She had been lying like this for about ten minutes when there was a knock at the door, which she did not hear, and her friend Sarah Penrose came into the room. She wanted to know if she could borrow Barbara’s notes on the Middle English set books.

‘Why, Birdy, Birdy darling,’ she exclaimed when she saw her. ‘Whatever is it?’

She knelt down by the bed and put her arms around her. Her gown and books slid down on to the floor. Barbara went on sobbing, glad of Sarah’s comforting presence.

‘It’s nothing,’ she said at last, ‘really nothing’. ‘I’m just tired, that’s all. I think I’ve been working too hard.’

It was not difficult to put Sarah off the scent. There was nothing in her own life but work, and she imagined that it must be the most important thing in everybody else’s, because though Birdy was so pretty it wasn’t as if she was always going out with young men.

‘I know, I know,’ said Sarah soothingly, ‘but there’s no need to worry. There’s a whole month before Schools yet. Do you feel like coming in to dinner? It would do you good you know’.

Barbara sat up and started to dry her eyes. ‘Yes, I’ll come,’ she said. ‘I’m awfully sorry to be so silly, and I’m glad you came in. You’re such a comfort.’

Sarah flushed with pleasure. It was the first time Birdy had ever really shown she liked her. ‘Let me pour out some water for you,’ she said eagerly. ‘Then you can bathe your eyes and nobody will ever know you’ve been having a little weep.’

Barbara splashed some water on her face and then put on powder and lipstick. She looked very bright-eyed, but otherwise normal.

‘There’s the bell,’ said Sarah. ‘Onward, Christian soldiers!’

Barbara smiled and allowed herself to be led into dinner. As she ate her tepid gravy soup, roast mutton, and bread-and-butter pudding, she began to feel better. The familiar college food, the shrill chatter of women’s voices, and the solid majesty of the principal presiding over the High Table in wine-coloured chiffon, seemed to bring everything back to normal once more. It couldn’t really have happened – those words spoken over Milton’s commonplace book and the experience in the railway carriage. Everything would be all right in the morning.

‘Do you think we could go through the notes together after dinner?’ she said to Sarah. ‘I’m sure it would be a help to both of us.’

‘Oh, Birdy, would you? You angel! We’ll work till ten, and then I’ll make some coffee. I’ve got a lovely new cake too,’ said Sarah enthusiastically.

‘That’s fine,’ said Barbara. When all was said and done, there was really nothing so comforting as the friendship of a woman. Even if you couldn’t confide your troubles to her, she could help so much by making you go on with your normal life. There would not be much opportunity to think of Francis while she was translating Middle English texts with Sarah. Thank goodness for work, she thought.

In Chapter 14 Sarah is encouraging a reluctant Barbara to go to Francis's last lecture of the term. 'I don't think I can spare the time,' said Barbara evasively.

'*You must come, Birdy. You can't be doing revision all the time. You've lost all the beautiful roses out of your cheeks,*' she added fondly. '*Perhaps I will then,*' said Barbara absently. She put her hand up to her cheek, as if she could feel its pallor by touching it. It secretly pleased her to know that she was looking pale and interesting. But it wasn't because of Schools. She felt a sudden desire to shout out before the group of pudding-faced women so complacently eating fish and corn flakes and custardy scrambled eggs: '*Francis Cleveland and I are in love with each other.*' She wondered what they would say, whether they would even be surprised.

They would probably be far less interested than if she were to reveal that she knew what the set pieces of translation from Beowulf or the Shakespeare gobbets would be.

Schools, getting a comfortable/respectable second class, and then a good teaching job, were all they had to worry about, she thought, contemptuously, despising lives that could hold so little. She was a superior being, apart from the others, with a secret life of her own. This high and lifted-up feeling had been a great comfort to her during the days that had followed that unexpected and rather upsetting declaration of love in the British Museum, and the first kiss in the railway carriage.

'Darling Francis, My Francis, she thought. She forgot all about his comfortable wife and grown up daughter in North Oxford. One didn't remember things like that when one was in love – Mrs Cleveland sitting by the fire mending socks, or coming out of Sainsburys with a laden shopping basket, or of Anthea and her Simon Beddoes kissing in a punt under a May bush. They struck an incongruous note.

Having tried once unsuccessfully to speak alone with Barbara, Francis comes up to her in the lecture room with a query about *Mac Flecknoe*, a mock-heroic satire by Dryden, and they go off together.

'He does take a lot of notice of Birdy, doesn't he?' giggled Sarah fondly. 'He thinks she's awfully bright and of course she is.'

'Do you think he is perhaps more than a tutor to her?' asked Fraser in a hushed, eager voice.

'Of course not,' said Sarah indignantly. 'Don't be so ridiculous. Birdy always tells me everything,' she said proudly.

As Francis and Barbara walk away, she asks him if he remembers the first time they ever walked over Magdalen Bridge.

He racked his brains desperately. One ought to remember things like that.

'How could I forget?', he said, diplomatically.

'It was a cold dark evening,' said Barbara softly. '*And I felt so happy, and yet so frightened that I couldn't think of anything to say.*'

'Poor little Barbara! Is she frightened now?' he asked with an expression of fond sentimentality on his face.

'Of course not,' she said. '*Silly Francis thinking Barbara could ever be frightened of him now.*'

They meet again that afternoon, and in a secluded spot Francis takes her in his arms and kisses her.

Just sitting on the grass with Barbara, there was nothing wrong in that, thought Francis defiantly. One kiss. There was nothing wrong in that either. Then why worry? said an annoying, nagging voice somewhere inside him. *I'm not worrying,* he said hotly. *Oh yes you are* said the voice, sounding pleased. *You feel that you're doing something naughty and it isn't a very comfortable feeling because it doesn't come naturally to a stodgy middle-aged don to be naughty. But it isn't as if anyone knew about it,* said Francis, *there's no reason why I shouldn't have a flirtation with Barbara as long as I don't hurt Margaret. What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve for* Ah yes, said the voice, but how do you know that the eye doesn't see? You wife might get to hear of it. You can never be certain.

Once again, deletion of Francis's attempt to justify his erring conscience.

Still in this chapter, we see Anthea fretting because Simon has asked another girl to lunch, and Anthea wonders if the lunch party has taken its usual course and ended up on the sofa. As she passes his college, she tries to look up into Simon's room

But she could not see inside to where Simon, who was certainly lying full length on the sofa, was however doing nothing more exciting than explaining to his long-suffering and admiring friend Christopher some of the finer points of a speech he was going to make at the Union next Thursday. She might have been reassured if she could have seen this proof of how truly Man's love is of Man's life a thing apart.

But, being in love, she was destined to go home and suffer tortures of uncertainty, until Simon, whose protestations of love were every bit as fluent as his denunciations of the Foreign Policy of His Majesty's Government, should once again repeat to her those few simple sentences that every woman in love needs to hear occasionally.

In Chapter 16, 'Mr Latimer's Holiday', Miss Doggett asks Latimer to speak to Francis about his relationship with Barbara, a suggestion at which Latimer baulks. She is also horrified to learn that Mr. Latimer is not as devoted to celibacy as she had thought, and appears to have lost all his principles. She concludes, however, that after a good night's sleep he would be his old self again

If what he had been saying were true, was it right that he should go to Paris, that proverbially gay and wicked city? But he would be all right in the morning. They would all come back, those principles, she thought, and when he woke up he would believe in the celibacy of the clergy again.

'I will speak to Mr Cleveland myself,' she said soothingly. 'In any case, you would hardly have time today.'

Miss Morrow feels that there is something final about Mr. Latimer's departure for Paris.

Somebody would have to tell Miss Doggett that she was soon going to lose her tame curate and would have to find another, or a suitable substitute, if there could be such a thing as substitute for a curate. Perhaps I shall have to tell her, thought Miss Morrow, although the breaking of unpleasant news is hardly among the regular duties of a companion. And yet Miss Morrow could quite well believe that it might be her duty, but not now.

She accompanies Miss Doggett on her mission to have the Francis/Barbara affair out with his wife, and after the failure of that endeavour, and Margaret's retreat to her bedroom in distress, stays on to finish topping and tailing the gooseberries with which Margaret had been occupied when they had arrived. Anthea returns.

'Why, Miss Morrow, what are you doing snooping about in our kitchen?' said Anthea. 'I've just been to the flicks.'

'I've been helping with the gooseberries,' explained Miss Morrow. 'What did you see?'

'Marlene Dietrich in Angel', said Anthea. 'I thought it was wonderful, but then I have such low tastes. And, of course, I'm terribly romantic and sentimental,' she added, flopping down on the sofa. 'Where's mother?' she asked.

'She's got a headache,' said Miss Morrow quickly, 'so she went to bed early.'

'Oh, poor mother,' said Anthea lazily. 'Is there anything we can get for her?'

'Oh, no, she'll probably be sleeping now,' said Miss Morrow. 'She didn't want to be disturbed.'

'I'm terribly thirsty,' said Anthea. 'Let's have some lime juice. You'll have some too, won't you, Miss Morrow?'

Miss Morrow hesitated. She felt that in the circumstances it was rather unsuitable to be thinking of refreshments. But she was thirsty too, and after all there was surely nothing riotous or unseemly in drinking lime juice. It wasn't as if it was intoxicating. That, she felt, would be a different matter altogether.

In Chapter 18, Anthea is concerned because she hasn't had a letter from Simon since the end of term. While she is in London shopping with her mother, she decides to go to Simon's house, 175 Chester Square, to see if he is there, his mother having gone abroad.

Number 180. It wouldn't be long now. 179, 178 – that was the house with the parrot in the window. It was there today. A happy omen, she thought, with a sudden surge of excitement. Dear, dear, bird. 177. Oh, but he would be there. She was sure of it now. She would go up to the door and ring the bell and admire the brass mermaid door knocker, and then Wilkins, very slow and melancholy, would let her in. And Simon would be upstairs in his room looking over the treetops. 176...

In the chapter, An Unexpected Outcome, the saga of Francis and Barbara draws to a close. Barbara is suddenly frightened at the thought of sharing a bedroom with Francis as they await the morning ferry to France, and recalls that her friend Sarah lives nearby.

A longing for Sarah's comforting, homely presence and the happy carefree past when there had been no greater worries than Essays and Middle English Papers came over her. Was one ever content? she wondered. And yet she knew, even as she asked herself, that she had often been content with Francis, having tutorials, walking and talking with him. But not this, not going away to Paris with him. It was wrong, it was wicked, it was mad. She was frightened, she didn't want to go, she couldn't. She knew now that she wasn't like that at all and that she never would be. My love, our beautiful friendship, come to this, she thought. She must tell him she couldn't go on with it, she must escape...

While Francis is booking a room, she hastily leaves him a note and goes to Sarah's house.

Sarah herself opened the door. There was something so comforting about the sight of her in the same old mud-coloured skirt and blue jumper, that Barbara embraced her with more warmth than usual and even kissed her cheek.

'Oh, Birdy,' was all that Sarah could say. 'Oh, Birdy...'

But when they had recovered from their surprise at seeing each other, Sarah began to ask for explanations, and Barbara, smiling mysteriously said, 'I was going to Paris, but I'm not now.'

'To Paris? Oh, Birdy, let me take you upstairs and unpack for you and then you can tell me all about it.'

Barbara followed Sarah upstairs. Under the warming influence of her admiration she was rapidly getting back her self-confidence. It was just like being at Oxford again to see Sarah's stockings hanging on the towel rail to dry, the tin of biscuits, the little saucepan and the cocoa.

'Oh, Birdy, what a pretty nightie! You always have such lovely things.'

'I got it specially for Paris' she said.

'Specially?'

'Yes, I've got a secret to tell you,' said Barbara. I wasn't going alone.'

'Oh, Birdy, you don't mean...' Sarah's hands gesticulated wildly.

'Yes, I was going with a man,' said Barbara with impressive simplicity.

'Oh, Birdy...' Sarah stared at her friend with an expression of mingled amazement and admiration on her face. 'Do tell me,' she began. 'Or perhaps you'd rather not?' she added unselfishly.

'Well, of course it does hurt rather to talk about something that's over, because it brings it all back, if you see what I mean,' said Barbara.

'Oh, yes, I do see,' said Sarah solemnly with her eyes fixed on Barbara's face. She had never experienced anything remotely approaching a love affair, but she had lived in a women's college at Oxford for 3 years and was well read in English literature.

And so Barbara began to tell the history of her love for Francis Cleveland. It was inevitable that it should gain a little in the telling and Barbara would hardly have been human if she had not found herself secretly rather enjoying it all... For when all is said and done, there are few more pleasant occupations than describing a love affair to a sympathetic friend, who is not likely to interrupt with similar experiences of her own. Sarah was the ideal listener, pouring out more cocoa, handing biscuits, making appropriate but short comments, and approving all that Barbara had done.

'I felt I couldn't go on with it,' said Barbara, when she had got them as far as Dover. 'I knew then that I had to choose between my own happiness and his.'

'Ah, yes,' murmured Sarah, as if this aspect of the problem had just occurred to her.

'I simply didn't know what to do,' said Barbara truthfully enough. 'You see, men only think of the present and what it can give them,' she added with hidden meaning in her tone. 'I had to think of the future. And then I'd considered what it might mean to him. I knew I had to give him up. Standing in that room in the Druid Hotel, I knew ...'

'Oh, poor Birdy.' The Druid Hotel, thought Sarah. Once old Mrs Pauncefoot had hired a room there and given a children's party. There had been a great stag's head on the wall. Poor Birdy, darling Birdy, standing looking at the stag's head, wondering what she ought to do.

'Of course, women in love are more spiritual' said Barbara. 'It isn't a very good word to describe it, but you know what I mean. Not that love's all spiritual. Of course, one doesn't want it to be. One naturally welcomes any experience that makes one a more complete person'.

'Yes, of course,' said Sarah humbly. Her plain face shone with honest admiration of her friend and the effort to understand something she felt she might probably never experience herself.

'Birdy,' she said at last, in a hushed eager tone. 'Perhaps I ought not to ask you this, but did you go the whole hog?'

Barbara smiled at Sarah's crudely childish way of putting it. 'Well, of course, we did mean a lot to each other,' she said.

'Oh, Birdy, you've been so unselfish,' Sarah burst out. 'I do think you've been marvellous.'

Barbara sighed and then smiled reminiscently.

'Poor Francis,' she said softly. 'I wonder what he's doing now?'

In Chapter 21, The Road Home, Francis's car breaks down, and he is rescued by Mr. Latimer, also returning from his holiday. He tells Francis of his romance with Pamela, but suggests that Francis would not understand young people in love. 'Books are more in your line', he says, 'the Bodleian and all that.'

Francis suddenly felt that he must be at least 80. If anybody said 'this time yesterday you were setting out for an illicit weekend with a young woman,' he would have had great difficulty in believing them. Yes, Mr Latimer had put him in his place. The Bodleian and all that. Love seemed to have rejuvenated Mr Latimer into a bubbling schoolboy, but it had only shown Francis that he belonged to The Bodleian and all that."

The chapter ends with

The garage men, armed with ropes and tools and everything that a breakdown could possibly need, went quickly to the spot where Francis had abandoned his car. It was still there, a dark blue four-seater wet with rain, but it was not long before it too was hurrying along the road back to Oxford.

'No petrol,' said the mechanic, smoothing his beautifully oiled black hair. 'That's all it was. He didn't have no gas' he repeated, assuming a strong American accent.

'Money for jam, repeated his mate, tapping his forehead significantly. 'They're all a bit touched, these old so and sos.'

The penultimate chapter is devoted to Mr Latimer and his engagement. Snobbish Miss Doggett tells Mrs Wardell that she is delighted that his betrothed is 'one of Lord Pimlico's girls'.

'Well, I congratulate you, though I don't know Lord Pimlico from Adam,' said Mrs Wardell bluntly. 'It sounds a funny sort of name to me. I suppose it's genuine.'

Miss Doggett drew herself up indignantly as if she were about to produce a copy of Debrett from her bosom. 'It's a very ancient title,' she said. 'I think Lady Pimlico is a sister of the Earl of Rollingstone.'

'So we may presume that she gathers no moss,' said Mr Wardell. He chortled with laughter and then suddenly realised that he was standing in a corner with Mr Cleveland. He was so startled that he drew back sharply and spilled his tea down his black clerical front.

'Oh, Ben, you ought to wear a bib,' said his wife, coming over and dabbing him with a handkerchief. 'All down your new front'.

In the final chapter, ‘Old Friends and New’, all the romantic complications have been resolved. Anthea is happy to have found a new boy-friend, and her father is talking about the eight young women he has promised to tutor next term. Mrs Cleveland is glad the new term has begun, as she thinks that the long vac. seemed so very long, and wonders

...what the next Academic year will be like. She could not help hoping that it would be a nice dull, uneventful year as they usually were, indeed as they had always been until this one. A great deal seemed to have happened since last October, she thought, as she poured out another cup of tea for her husband. Even Francis had a love affair. At least, a love affair of sorts, she emended, for she could not help smiling even now when she remembered the story of ‘the weekend in Paris’. Poor Francis, it really had been quite hard not to laugh when he was telling her. He looked so pathetic lying in bed with an unromantic cold and making such a point of having got only as far as Dover. She had, of course, listened sympathetically as she imagined a wife should on such occasions. What can I say when it’s over? she had thought. What does one say? But happily she had been spared the necessity of saying anything by the sudden appearance of a man on a ladder poking his head in through the open window. Something like this always happened when one was a married woman with a house to see to, and she had told the window-cleaners so many times not to come in the afternoon. Perhaps it was a good thing really, she thought guiltily. One naturally wanted to do what was right, but it was really so much easier to go on as if nothing had happened. Talking very seldom did any good. If people went on behaving normally one could generally assume that everything was all right.

After that Francis had fitted into the usual holiday routine once more and they had not spoken of Barbara again.

When the war ended, Barbara took stock of her writing to see what might be publishable, and decided that Crampton Hodnet was not, because it seemed so outdated, reflecting a world that had been swept away by the war. But when Hazel Holt looked at it 40 years later, the world was a different place again. Nostalgia was back in fashion, and the reasons for withholding publication had now become reasons for seeking it. *Kirkus Reviews*, on 1st May 1985 concurred:

It is the book’s very datedness ... that provides much of the charm. A funny and fast-moving book, *Crampton Hodnet* will delight Pym lovers as well as provide an enlightening introduction for those unfamiliar with an author who has been compared by many with Jane Austen.

Back home, *The Daily Telegraph*’s Selena Hastings agreed with this:

Barbara Pym completed *Crampton Hodnet* in 1940, but after the war decided it was too dated to be offered for publication. Reading it now, 45 years later, it is difficult to consider this a condemnation. Part of its charm lies in the fact that it is very much of its period. It is a delightful novel, not quite as sharply funny, nor as pathetic, as the best, but immediately enjoyable with all the passions and frustrations of life, almost, but not quite, hidden in the unchanging routine of knitting cardigans, translating “bloody Beowulf” and meeting for tea at Elliston’s on a wet weekday afternoon.”

Charles Burkhardt’s review, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on 8th April, was the earliest I could find. As a Professor of English at Temple University, Philadelphia, he had met Hazel and Hilary when they visited the United States in 1984, and became a lifelong friend of both. His book about Barbara, *The Pleasure of Miss Pym*, appeared in 1987. His opinion of the novel was certain to be favourable.

Pymomania continues. It began in 1977. It grew through the success of *Quartet in Autumn*, and *The Sweet Dove Died*, and posthumously *A Few Green Leaves* and *An Unusual Attachment*. Her fans can’t get enough of her. To satisfy their demand, *Crampton Hodnet*, an early unpublished novel, has been rescued from the Pym collection in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, skilfully edited by her indefatigable friend and literary executor Hazel Holt. Pym’s first novel to be published was the brilliant *Some Tame Gazelle* in 1950, but *Crampton Hodnet* can hold its immature but secure place with the ten novels published 1950-1980.

It will not increase her fame, which does not need it. But it will not harm it either.

Pat Tomkins, wrote in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, on 29th April:

Discovering this Barbara Pym novel is like finding a forgotten bottle of some rather good sherry in the back of a cabinet. You open it, wondering if it will live up to memories of past encounters, or if its age will show badly. *Crampton Hodnet* has been ageing a long time, but its age denotes the youth of its author. In the opening chapter, doubts vanish. This is vintage Pym. Comedy in fiction – when the drôle inanities of life

revealed deftly make you laugh aloud – is all the more to be valued for being rare. *Crampton Hodnet* has survived the vicissitudes of nearly half a century. No doubt it was funny in 1940; it's funny today – good enough reason to have it uncorked at last.

The Boston Globe's Richard Dyer described the novel as “brimming over with *Pymlichkeit*,” and Dorothy Porter, in *The Glasgow Herald*, thought that

Despite the fact that *Crampton Hodnet* is a very early work, already Barbara Pym's taste, her control of idiom and tone, is impeccable. No one is better at that decorum producing a social comedy which can make one laugh aloud without that comedy ever breaking the bounds of decorum and without that decorum involving the slightest falsification of the bed rock of human nature. Miss Morrow sums up the whole ethos of Barbara Pym's fiction when she reflects ‘she liked exciting scenes in films and novels but found them embarrassing and distressing in real life. She knew that when all is said and done, fiction is really stranger than truth and was glad that it would be so.’

The only dissonant note I came across was struck by James Fenton in *The Times* of 20th June.

Since the current editions of her novels carry a comparison with Jane Austen, it might be worth pointing out some of the differences between the minor and major talent. However little you share them, Jane Austen has values, and by values I mean something more than a sense of the status a particular income can support. With Pym there seem to be no values at all, only projected fears and eagerly awaited disappointments. She is obsessed with surfaces, with fabrics and foibles. It's not a happy talent. I notice that in writing about her North Oxford novel, she says of her characters ‘I'm sure all these might be of comfort to somebody.’ It may well be, as Hazel Holt says, that everyone who has read the manuscript has laughed out loud. But I doubt that the novel will give that much comfort. It is too unsatisfactory.

Gillian Wilce, in *The New Statesman*, had only slight reservations.

Barbara Pym, having spent the middle years of her life unpublished, might have managed a wry smile had she known that after her death even her abandoned novel would make it into print. And a wry smile is probably the appropriate response to this lively but slight pre-war Oxford novel. The novel is sprightly in much the same fashion as the persona of Barbara Pym's younger diaries, and deftly organised. But its early indications of a talent to amuse are primarily for faithful readers of the novels.

But the consensus was approval. Finally, Pym's great admirer, the novelist A.N. Wilson, wrote in *The Literary Review* for June 1985:

There are many rich period details in the book which the reader will savour. Bedside lamps are thought a luxury. Spaghetti comes out of a tin. Gooseberries are carried in enamel bowls. The *Daily Mirror* is read by Dons' wives. Young dandies wear ‘suede shoes, pin-striped flannels, teddy bear coats and check caps,’ and every motor journey starts with oil on the fingers before pressing the self-starter. There are old men alive who were up at Oxford in the 1880s. A female undergraduate's room contains a folding washstand, and there are stockings drying over the back of a chair. Sir Oswald Mosley is spoken of in the same breath as Napoleon, while in the corner of Lyons Corner House the orchestra is playing a rumba.

Even if *Crampton Hodnet* is not the best novel she ever wrote, we will doubtless all buy two copies – one for our friends and one to keep.”

Yvonne Cocking is a founding member of the Barbara Pym Society, was formerly its secretary, and now serves as its archivist and historian. A retired librarian, she worked for more than two years in the early 1960s at the International African Institute in London, where she made the acquaintance of Barbara Pym and Hazel Holt. She lives in Oxfordshire and has spent countless hours sifting through the richness of the Pym archives at the Bodleian library. She has spoken at numerous Barbara Pym Society conferences in the US and UK and is the author of *Barbara in the Bodleian: Revelations from the Pym Archives* (2013).