



The Grasshopper

An occasional paper for odd occasions

Issue No. 1

28th April 2020

Welcome to the first revived edition of The Grasshopper with miscellaneous items of news, and hopefully some light but informed reading at the present time.

New appointments

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Sarah Hart as the new Professor of Geometry. She is of course a Society member, and congratulations also go to committee member Martin Perkins as her proud father (but not of course a proud father. That really would be a special announcement...)

At the time of going to press, we are awaiting confirmation of the appointment of the new Provost.

Here comes the sheriff

Our congratulations go to Society members Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli and Chris Hayward, whose terms of office as sheriff have been extended by a year as a result of the lockdown.

A sponsored shrivel slim (or was that “shrivel”?)

Members might wish to support Chris in his current lockdown activity, which is to lose 46 lbs in weight. This slightly arcane figure is because the sum raised will be in favour of the [Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund](#). The fund was set up in 1808 and gives small grants to ex-prisoners and their families in London to help them to stop offending and start a new life. When a prisoner is discharged the Government gives them a resettlement grant of just £46, hence the figure of 46lbs – and a slightly reduced Chris informs me that he has already gone down by 31.5 lbs already. (This is of course a clear example of more becoming less – or quite possibly less becoming more...)

If you wish to contribute, go to the Just Giving page: [Christopher Hayward is fundraising for Sheriffs and Recorders Fund](#) and to make whatever contribution you see fit, please.

Congratulations also to Professor John Barrow who, apart from being only the second professor in four hundred years to hold two Gresham chairs (or perhaps because of it!) has been appointed to the Papal Academy of Science, one of only eighty

members. Of course, he might well bump into Michael Mainelli on the steps of the Vatican as Michael is a Consigliere (but not a Condottiere you will note) of the Pontificia Accademia Tiburina in Rome.

John has also received the Occhialini Medal, which is awarded jointly by the Italian Physical Society and the Institute of Physics UK. We can only assume that John has purchased a copy of *Teach Yourself Italian* to while away the hours during lockdown.

Keith Kendrick (Emeritus Professor of Physic 2002-2006) is well established at the University of Electronic Science and Technology in Chengdu (Panda city) China, where he is developing a therapy for autism. He has been awarded China's highest honour for a foreigner, the National Friendship Award.

And in my accustomed role as Davy Gam Esquire, I have been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Chartered Institute of Linguists as I have stepped down as Vice-President after seventeen years.

Gresham in the lockdown

A mention in despatches must surely go to the staff at the College, who have continued with the lecture programme through thin and thin, by virtue of uploading the lectures while working from home, though some lectures have had to be held over to next year. The programme for 2020 – 2021 is coming on apace and should be available before the start of the next academic year.

Gresham Society activities

Despite our longstanding record of meeting even in thunder, lightning or in rain, we are having to wait until a semblance of normality returns before we can continue with our own programme of events. I do hope that we can manage the visit to the Lindley Library at the Royal Horticultural Society (which we had planned for June) when our very own Sir Roderick Floud will be giving us some background (and quite possibly spilling a few beans) when writing his most recent work on the economic history of gardens. (He may well be able to add a few



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notes on the role of garden centres in helping the populace return to sanity once things go back to normal.) The idea of an informal talk from a recent author in an appropriate location worked very well with John Guy at the Gresham Exhibition last June and we plan to develop this format in due course. (The Exhibition, by the way, closed in November, with a total footfall of 5106 people. I visited it of course at least 5105 times...)

If we are able to convene in the Autumn, committee member Robert Woodthorpe Browne has suggested a rather intriguing evening visit to Westminster Abbey to be serenaded by the choristers in different parts of the building. More anon (I hope).

And of course the AGM and Dinner have already been booked for Monday 15 February at the National Liberal Club, though virtual dining might have become part of the new reality by then.

Gresham authors

As Don Armado says in *Love's Labour's Lost*: "Rust Rapier! Be Still Drum! Devise wit! Write pen! For I am for whole volumes in folio." (He certainly did – I played Don Armado in the 1965 School production. A piece of typecasting if ever there was...)

Our professors are clearly making the most of the current peace and quiet by turning to print. Professors Robin Wilson and Raymond Flood have produced a slim tome on Isaac Newton (published by Pitkin and available at all good bookshops. Be sure to get one before they are remaindered...)

Professor Alex Edmans' "Grow the Pie: how great companies deliver both purpose and profit" has now been launched in the USA. It is also the Financial Times' Book of the Month for March 2020. (See [Grow The Pie by Alex Edmans](#))

And talking of rusty rapiers and silent drums, the Nailor Lecture will be held on Wednesday November 11th (appropriately enough) and our speaker will be Dr Sophy Antrobus, Research Fellow at Exeter University and former Wing Commander. The title will be "A Bird's Eye View from Point Blank Range"

and will consider the challenges of unmanned aerial warfare.

Envoi

If you want to keep up with events at the College, then sign up for the newsletter by going on to the [Gresham College website](#) and scroll down to the bottom of the page for the [Newsletter](#).

There are times when one can only say that some things are sent to try us, but the current situation is certainly no worse than other bad times in London, and Gresham has seen plague, pestilence, burning and blitz in its many years of existence. Of course, Samuel Pepys has something to say about it:

January 22nd 1666

Thence by water in the darke down to Deptford, and there find my Lord Bruncker come and gone, having staid long for me. I back presently to the Crowne taverne behind the Exchange by appointment, and there met the first meeting of Gresham College since the plague. Dr. Goddard did fill us with talke, in defence of his and his fellow physicians going out of towne in the plague-time; saying that their particular patients were most gone out of towne, and they left at liberty; and a great deal more, &c. But what, among other fine discourse pleased me most, was Sir G. Ent about Respiration; that it is not to this day known, or concluded on among physicians, nor to be done either, how the action is managed by nature, or for what use it is.

Stay safe! (Or, as my spellchecker sometimes tells me, stay sage! Which is what all good professors should do...)

Professor Tim Connell



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STOP PRESS

The Government's chief scientific adviser Chris Whitty, who is also the current Gresham Professor of Physic, will be giving an on-line Gresham lecture on Covid-19 [this Thursday 30th April at 6pm](#). Just log in [here](#) to view the lecture.

Do you have any news items for the Grasshopper?
Do let [Tim](#) or [Basil](#) know.