



# The Grasshopper

## The Organ Of The Gresham Society

*When the light at the end of the lockdown tunnel is an oncoming train*

Issue No. 8

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### College Notes

Welcome to Gresham's new Head of Income Generation, Jess Goulson. Jess was previously Head of Major Gifts at Birkbeck College and will be leading Gresham's new fundraising and income generation programme. Over the summer, Jess would be keen to meet some of Gresham's closest supporters and advocates to learn more about the institution. Please do get in touch with her on [j.goulson@gresham.ac.uk](mailto:j.goulson@gresham.ac.uk).

Welcome also to incoming members of Council Deputy Keith Bottomley (on the City side and a stalwart of the Joint Grand Gresham Committee) and Mr Dowshan Humzah, who is a board director and strategic advisor with brand, business growth and digital transformation experience.

### Ave Atque Vale

And another warm welcome to Ian Mansfield, whose regular [ianVisits](#) newsletter provides endless fascinating insights into London and things to do – even in lockdown. One item he is sure to include is the Thomas Becket Exhibition which has opened belatedly at the British Museum. (We had been hoping to do a Society visit to Canterbury Cathedral as one of our outings, but of course that went the way of Covid.)

### Vita Vitarum

Congratulations go to Sir Tim O'Shea, former Provost of Gresham and much else on his appointment as an academic adviser to digital platform Kortext, which supports a wide range of publishers including Pearson, McGraw Hill and Wiley.

Our congratulations also go to Emeritus Professor Jagjit Chadha, Gresham Memorial Professor of Commerce 2014-2018 on his appointment as OBE.

### New Publications

Professor Sarah Hart takes on the Americans with her recent interview in the *New York Times*, which is suitably respectful of both the College and her recent lecture on [Mathematical Journeys into Fictional Worlds](#) (spurred on no doubt by the reference to *Moby Dick*, which will surely please the members of our American Chapter. And more on the Mathematics of Moby Dick in a later number.)

Professor Robin Wilson is steaming away with more books in the pipeline than most of us have read during lockdown. The latest offering is *Topics in Algorithmic Graph Theory* (ed. with L.W. Beineke & M.C. Golumbic), just published by CUP.

I have to recount with some *chagrin* that my latest book proposal has been rejected. It was to have been about the young Toulouse Lautrec and his early life in the *ateliers* of Montmartre. I cannot speak for historical accuracy, though I suppose it is quite feasible that the young T-L had a drink problem and so got into trouble for bad timekeeping. The working title for this manuscript was (as you might imagine) *Absinthe Without Leave*.

### Members' Corner

Following on from the discussion of paintings on the wall after the webinar on February 18<sup>th</sup> Ian Harris tells a curious tale of a picture that fell off the wall at home recently while being cleaned. Tucked in to the back of the frame, he came across a previously unknown drawing by his Old Dad which was quite possibly better than the one that had previously been on display. (There are overtones here of *The Oval Portrait* by Edgar Allen Poe, not to mention *Dorian Gray*. Ian has been looking a bit peaky of late...)

Gyles Brandreth has begun criss-crossing the land once more with his one-man show *Break a Leg*: details of the when and where are to be found at [GylesBrandreth.net](#). I assume that this refers to the ancient theatrical wish before going on stage rather



than any incident involving bicycles, for it is a curious fact that bicycles and authors do not always mix. (Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy and George Bernard Shaw all took tumbles in their time.)

We may find out more by reading Gyles' childhood memoir: *Odd Boy Out* which Penguin Michael Joseph are publishing in September.

### *A good season for Copperheads*

And a word of warning to members of our American Chapter as it appears that this is a good year for copperhead snakes. I have seen a note from a hardware store in Raleigh NC, warning folks to clear vegetation from around (and under) the house and not to store things that could provide a space either for the copperheads or their prey (mainly small rodents). Fortunately, various forms of snake repellent are available from the store. Log in to [Innovative Pest Solutions](#) if you are feeling cautious – and while stocks last. You have been warned!

## **Reflections**

### *The invasion of the cicadas*

The world of the genus *orthoptera* never ceases to amaze. Word has come from the Eastern seaboard of the USA that billions of cicadas have burst forth recently from their underground burrows where they have been living for the past seventeen years. This phenomenon may be seen in no fewer than fourteen states. There could be as many as 1.5 million of these critters per acre, but (as the Grasshopper Himself smugly points out) all they do is mate and die, and the eggs fall into the ground for another seventeen year cycle. Of course, enormous numbers are eaten by predators and in the meantime the cicadas make their presence felt as the mating call of the male cicada can reach 100 decibels. Members of our American Chapter should take note, though the Alabama branch is unlikely to be affected. (And no worries as the next generation will not emerge till 2024.) Incidentally, I am assured that they are quite tasty, so need not go to waste.

### *From hoppers to hops*

To add to the list of Sir Thomas Gresham's more furtive activities we might have to add bootlegging. The eagle-eyed Basil has spotted the fact that Titsey Place (home to a branch of the Gresham clan) has now introduced its very own beers (which is a further reason for adding this to our planned range of visits once things open up again). Most of the hops today come from Kent (ye Garden of Englande of course). Hops were not used in ale and so

hopped beer became all the rage to the Elizabethans (who were a thirsty old lot at the best of times). Before hop poles became a standard feature of the Kent countryside (my old school was surrounded by them before they were covered over by an estate of 2000 homes) hops were imported from the Lowlands at a time when Sir T was working as a merchant in Antwerp. It would be nice to include introducing hops to England amongst his more positive accolades.

### *Gresham's Barn*

I believe that some folk in the lockdown have been putting one of those flatpack Swiss chalets in the back garden, either for their adult children who have been shielding at home, or as a place to get away from them. But a rare opportunity has come up to acquire a 15<sup>th</sup> Century barn which formerly belonged to the Knights of St John but which came into the possession of Sir Thomas Gresham when he purchased the estate at Battisford, which is near Stowminster in Suffolk. It has apparently been dismantled so could be a good bargain.



Credit: Tom Ames Photography

### *Pas ce soir Joséphine*

Joséphine (see G7) is reasonably commemorated in Paris. Members might wish to note that the Musée Marmottan-Monet in Paris has a room containing Napoleonic memorabilia, including a striking portrait of Joséphine herself. Of course, as the name would suggest, it also contains a remarkable collection of paintings by Impressionists other than Monet. It's in the rue Louis Boilly in 16<sup>ième</sup> and worth a visit if you ever happen to be going that way. (The nearest metro station is La Muette on Line 9.)

### *Unfortunate Announcements (series of 1000)*

Tom Bradbury came up with an interesting image on the ITV news when announcing the death of the Duke of Edinburgh: he said, "There will be 41-gun salutes across the country and on ships at sea. These will take place behind closed doors",



meaning of course that the public would not be in attendance. (In the case of HMS *Montrose* that is not surprising as she is currently on patrol off Oman...)

### **Plague Notes**

Hopefully we can now start to run down this particular section, but for some extra reading, see Paul Slack (1985) “The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England”, published by OUP, though not a good idea to read it late at night...

And to see how the plague ravaged Southern Europe in particular, look at Guido Alfani’s “Plague in Seventeenth Century Europe and the Decline of Italy” in the *European Review of Economic History* 17/4 November 2013 pp 408 - 430.

#### *And more on Sant Roc*

Further to the item in G7 about Sant Roc in all his forms, Joy Crispin-Wilson writes in to say:

“Re Saint Roche/Sant Roc, San Roque, Rock in Cornwall (yes!): I did the Camino de Santiago architecturally by coach many years ago and there are lots of little statuettes to San Roque, always with a dog licking his plague sores (hence being the patron saint of dogs I assume). Also, when I was in San Sernin de Toulouse about twenty years ago, I always remember a wonderful pillar-statue of Sant Roc with an adorable puppy, probably a spaniel, who was looking up sweetly at him but with a lot of blood-stained slobber around his mouth!”

So the question must arise in due course as to who will become the patron saint of Covid, but perhaps in less graphic style...

#### *The Shorter Pepys – and the Grasshopper’s tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh*

Several members have commented that they are great fans of Samuel Pepys and have read the Plague Notes with interest. But this will hopefully become *démodé* if not *dépassé* now, though we will keep Sam in view from time to time as a former member of the College. Dr Howard Worth tells me that he was introduced to Pepys through *The Shorter Pepys*, edited by Robert Latham. This is an abridged version of the original diary about a third in length, but retains Pepys’ style and is a highly readable narrative covering the important events of the period and some colourful details of private and domestic life.

Robert Latham was Reader in the History Department at Royal Holloway College, University of London from 1947 until 1968 and latterly, Fellow of Magdalene College Cambridge where he was the Pepys Librarian. Howard met him when he was a postgraduate student at Royal Holloway and Latham had been appointed Dean of Men (*autres temps, autres moeurs!*) Howard has happy memories of Robert Latham, who enjoyed telling about the time when he lived in a College house on the edge of Windsor Great Park and he realised that the Royal party was about to pass him in open carriages, on their way to Ascot. Robert was quite unsure about the etiquette when coming face to face suddenly with one’s Monarch. As he said, “I did the only thing I could think of, I stood to attention and saluted. And do you know, the Duke just pointed at me and guffawed!” (*Editor’s Note: The Shorter Pepys* (Thrift Books 1985) may still be found on Amazon and may also be found in Penguin, 1993.)

### **Editorial**

#### *Fake News*

The Editorial Board strongly disapproves of any attempt to subvert the news (but will never let the truth get in the way of a good story...) However, this is fair warning that there will be a truce on April 1<sup>st</sup> every year. The Grasshopper Himself is still chuckling over some of the items in G7, not least because one reader has texted in to say that he had no idea that our Editor-in-Chief had such diverse ancestors. True though that might be, our E-in-C never imagined that people would fall for any of it... Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Ashkelon. (That’s 2 Samuel 1 v 20 by the way.)

However, worse was to come. Early Spring is clearly a hazardous time for the unwary, some of whom may have spotted the press release from Z/Yen (cunningly dated 31.3.21). It announced the launch of a “non-fungible token” called the Turbot, purportedly within the Company’s own ledger, with full blockchain details and its very own time stamp – until closer reading threw up (I use the term advisedly) a whole range of fishy puns that went from worse to even worse (“somebody haddock do it”/ “as the global economy flounders”/ “we perch on the brink of economic collapse”)... Our readers have been warned.



## Envoi

### The Spoilers

I am of course quite unrepentant about the report in G7 (dated 1.4.2021) concerning the colony of New Australia as there were actually various clues in the text to indicate that all might not be entirely correct. I hardly imagined it would be necessary to point out to our readers that G7 was published on April 1<sup>st</sup>, and so the item on Colonel Connell should have been read with close attention. Here are the clues (how many did you spot?):

- 1) The Buenos Aires Herald closed down in 2017.
- 2) The First Fleet with 1000 convicts on board set off in 1787 not 1788.
- 3) Goolagong Springs is of course a figment of my imagination (my apologies to the ladies, but anyone who understood the joke just ain't no lady...)
- 4) The Chaco War went on between 1932 and 1935 and was fought between Bolivia and Paraguay over supposed oil deposits. After 100,000 deaths, Paraguay held on to most of the land and Bolivia gained access rights to the Paraguay River.

The Chaco War, however, is not to be confused with The War of the Triple Alliance (1864-70) when Paraguay took on Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay all at once. It was fought over disputed territory. In the event Paraguay lost a great deal of land and possibly 90% of the male population in the process, which is why they tried to attract settlers from Europe and further afield – from places like Australia.

- 5) Colonel Percy Fawcett was born in 1867 and lost in c.1925 in the region of the Upper Xingú in the Amazon, so the dates don't match. It is however true that he conducted seven expeditions in the region, and that did include the Matto Grosso.
- 6) Punting Up The Paraná? (Really...) Most of the River Paraná is actually navigable and is the second largest river in South America. Despite this, the river was actually diverted in order to build the Itaipú Dam in 1984. It is the largest hydro-electric plant in the world.
- 7) The teredo (*teredo navalis*) is not a bookworm nor even a beetle. It is actually a saltwater clam and bi-valve mollusc which can grow to a length of eighteen inches and can chomp its way happily through wood. The traditional protection for ships (going back to Noah's Ark – see Genesis 6:14 if I remember rightly) was pitch. In historic times, sheets of copper were first used in 1761 on HMS *Alarm*, as members

will recall. And of course the teredo had probably tunnelled its way through the hull of the *Royal George* when she sank at her moorings in Spithead on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1782.

- 8) Professor Malcolm Gillies (a distinguished member of our Australian Chapter) reminds me that the National Library of Oz is in Canberra of course and not Sydney.
- 9) And to the many generous readers who offered to help with the crowdfunding, I'm sure another opportunity will arise soon – almost certainly by April 1<sup>st</sup> next year...

Incidentally New Australia really did exist. My Old Dad had a colleague who was an Anglo-Argentinian and his ancestors truly did leave Australia in protest at the imposition of income tax, and set up a colony in Paraguay called New Australia. They had to move when the colony failed, though in the event they settled downriver in Buenos Aires.

See [New Australia](#)

I also slipped that bit in about Francesco Parmigianino inventing Parmesan cheese. Ridiculous! Readers will surely know that Parmigianino's dates are 1503 to 1540, whereas Parmesan receives its first mention in the year 1240 as *caseus parmensis* in a notary deed. Its origin seems to be rooted in that most gourmet of religious orders, the Benedictines. And of course the better read members of the Society will have noted that Parmesan cheese appears in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where there is a reference to *parmigiano grattugiato* being put on both macaroni and ravioli. And who can forget Dr Livesey in *Treasure Island*, who carries a piece of Parmesan cheese in his snuff box? Anyway, the correct title for Parmesan is Parmigiano Reggiano as it comes from the city of Reggio Emilia in the beautiful Northern Italian province of Emilia Romagna – and it has had *denominazione di origine controllata* protection since the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1612, decreed by the Duke of Parma himself (and who are we to disagree?).

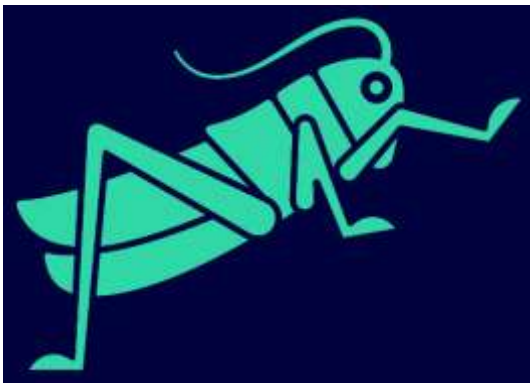
And then there was that item about the Mephistopheles mosquito. Anyone who has ever sat next to Professor Frank Cox at dinner will know his propensity to wax lyrical on the subject of malaria, so he would have been the first to point out that the malarial mosquito is of course (à la Rudyard Kipling) deadlier than the male and (strictly speaking) is the female *Anopheles* mosquito of the genus *Culiseta Longiareolata*, though most people (apart from Frank of course) don't know how to pronounce it. And don't even get him started on tropical ulcers...



## STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

### GRASSHOPPER CRISIS AT GRESHAM COLLEGE "IT'S NOT CRICKET" SAYS PROVOST (BUT IT REALLY IS)

News comes from our former Academic Registrar (and leading light of the Society, Dr Valerie Shrimplin) that the Grasshopper on the new College logo is actually a fraud! His antennae are on back-to-front and he is therefore a cricket and not a grasshopper. The Grasshopper Himself was too indignant to be interviewed and the Natural History Museum has refused to comment. However, the evidence is clear for all to see on the College's own website as the celebrated entomologist George McGavin actually gave a lecture at Gresham on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016. What would Sir Thomas have said?



*Editor's Note: the grasshopper/cricket conundrum extends beyond the College. Here is the famous one at 68 Lombard Street, the site of Sir Thomas Gresham's house in London.*

Just in case the question comes up while playing *Trivial Pursuits*, the distinctions between grasshoppers and crickets are generally given as:

- Crickets tend to have long antennae, grasshoppers have short ones.
- Crickets stridulate ("sing") by rubbing their wings together, while grasshoppers stridulate by rubbing their long hind legs against their wings.
- Grasshoppers detect sound by means of little 'ears' at the base of their abdomen; in crickets these are on the front legs.
- Most crickets are crepuscular (which means they come out at dusk) whereas grasshoppers tend to be out and about during the day.
- Grasshoppers mostly eat grass, but crickets are partial to animal matter as well.

### ***So now you know!***

And as ever, if you have any news items for *The Grasshopper* do let [Tim](#) or [Basil](#) know.

#### Editorial Team

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