



The Grasshopper

The Organ Of The Gresham Society

More Riveting than Riveters' Weekly

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College Notes

New Professors

2021-22 has been an exceptional year for professorial recruitment, with five new names: [Professor Ronald Hutton](#) from Bristol University, has been appointed Professor of Divinity. [Professor Myles Allen](#), Professor of Geosystem Science at Oxford, is the new Frank Jackson Professorship of the Environment. The Mercers' School Memorial Professor of Business has gone to [Professor Raghavendra Rau](#) from the Judge Business School in Cambridge. The IT Livery Company Professorship will be taken up by [Dr Victoria Baines](#) who is a visiting Fellow at Bournemouth University. The College has also been pleased to appoint [Professor Robin May](#) from the University of Birmingham as our new Professor of Physic.

And we welcome **Dr Ian Mudway** from Imperial as a Visiting Fellow who will lecture on the Environment.

Ave Atque Vale

Welcome to Dr George West (a mechanical engineer with an interest in industrial archaeology); Tim McNally (recently elected to the Court of Common Council for Aldgate and Chairman of the National Liberal Club); Jon Watts (Educator and specialist in international education); and John Mullan, Visiting Professor of English Literature at Gresham.

New Publications

Congratulations go to Dowshan Humzah for the publication of what must be the longest book title of the year: "Uncertainty Deconstructed: A Guidebook for Decision Support Practitioners (Science, Technology and Innovation Studies)", published by Springer. (*Editor's Note: Springer is a German Company. I dread to think what will happen when this comes out in the German edition. Our Berlin correspondent has suggested a title of Ungewissheitsdekonstruktion: Ein Handbuch für Entscheidungsunterstützungsfachleute. And that's before you get to the main verb...*)

My thanks go to the various members who answered my request for a publishing outlet for my as yet unpublished work on Toulouse Lautrec. Unfortunately they did not notice the date of G11 (1.4.22). Vincent van Gogh must be grinning from ear to ear. Mind you, given so much interest perhaps I should sit down and get writing...

Following on from Professor Leslie Thomas' autobiography *Do Right and Fear No-One* in G11 I am reminded of an 18th Century memorial in the church of St Mary's Twickenham, to a distinguished lawyer:

"He Gave More Honour to his Profession
Than he Deriv'd from it.
Many he Assisted in the Law
Many he preserv'd from it."

It was composed by Alexander Pope, as you might imagine.

And my sincere apologies to my bewigged colleagues, but somehow I seem to find more pleasantries about this particular part of the Gresham curriculum than any of the others. But I am happy to publish any jolly anecdotes related to any other of the Gresham chairs. (Now there's a challenge...)

Members' corner

Grizelda Vermont sends her best wishes to all. (For newer members, David Vermont was a towering figure in the City of London in every respect and a driving force behind the re-launch of the College, besides much else. He was also my City Godfather, and his son Chris is currently Master Mercer, as indeed was David in his time.) Grizelda is enquiring about a portrait painted by her great grandmother Rachel Benington (born 1831) and which has been in the family since the 19th Century. She thinks that it may be of a prime minister who is known to have visited Colwyn Bay, where the family was then residing, some time in or after the 1870s.

Our excellent Editor-at-Work Basil has risen to the challenge and delved into the farther reaches of cyberspace and come up with the following suggestion that it could be John Bright



(16 November 1811 – 27 March 1889), British Radical and Liberal statesman, a Quaker, one of the greatest orators of his generation and a promoter of free trade policies, most famous for battling the Corn Laws.



Portrait by Rachel Benington



John Bright
Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Grizelda's great grandmama married James Wood of Lancaster at the Friends' Meeting House in Wakefield and thus like John Bright was a Quaker, hence probably the connection.



Rachel Benington's rather curious signature appears on the back of the canvas.

Following up on Strange Coincidences in G11, Professor John Mullan's intriguing lecture on Coincidences in the Novel provides us with a wealth of examples, some of which would seem to stretch even the most elastic bounds of fiction. Examples are drawn from authors ranging from Henry Fielding to Sebastian Barry by way of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Evelyn Waugh. (See his [lecture](#) of 2nd March 2022.)

Reflections

The grasshopper's song

Having raised in G10 the question as to whether our little green mascot is male or female, I have to say that a magic part of being on holiday somewhere hot is sitting out on the balcony of an evening listening to the sound of the grasshoppers (or quite possibly cicadas). I have found an interesting explanation as to quite how this sound is produced in Henry Bates' "The Naturalist on the River Amazons" (*sic*) of 1863, which reported on his remarkable eleven-year sojourn up the Amazon. (Having followed his path myself a few years ago I found a month or two quite enough.) During this time Bates collected no fewer than 14,712 specimens, of which about 8,000 were previously unknown to Science. (I rather hope that Jair Bolsonaro is reading this...) In his introduction to this book, no less a personage than Charles Darwin points out that 14,000 of these specimens are insects, so grasshoppers must have been fully represented. Indeed, in Chapter VI Bates explains

how the grasshopper (only the male you will note) makes such a remarkable noise:

In the Grasshoppers (Acridiidae) the wing-cases meet in a straight suture and the friction of portions of their edges is no longer possible. But Nature exhibits the same fertility of resource here as elsewhere; and contriving other methods for supplying the males with an instrument for the production of call-notes indicates the great importance which she attaches to this function. The music in the males of the Acridiidae is produced by the scraping of the long hind thighs against the horny nervures of the outer edge of the wing cases; a drum-shaped organ placed in a cavity near the insertion of the thighs being adapted to give resonance to the tones.

Bates clearly had a lot of time on his hands in the evenings for him to write at such length. Most of us would just say that the grasshoppers rub their hind legs together...

Grasshopper symbols

Following on from the multiple sightings of grasshoppers across the City, the golden one in Lombard Street actually goes back to the goldsmith's business set up in the 17th Century by Sir Charles Duncombe, someone who was reckoned after the Restoration to be the wealthiest commoner in England. There also appears to be a connection in the dim and distant past with Martin's Bank. And it is not commonly known that up until 1914 there was actually a Grasshopper Society, presumably for staff members. (The archive is now held by Barclays Bank.)

And going back to G10 regarding Martin's links with Liverpool, John Crawford tells me that the former Martins Bank Building is being transformed into a luxury hotel. It has quite a history – in 1940 280 tons of gold reserves were stored in the basement in case they had to be moved to Canada in the event of a German invasion. The entrance has a remarkable ceiling which includes a shield of the liver bird and a grasshopper, supported by two quite voluptuous mermaids.



Martins Bank Ceiling Shield showing Grasshopper
Credit: YouTube [Martins Bank Building](#)



Tapping on rubber again

Further to the note about rubber-tree seeds in G11, it is a curious fact that Rómulo Gallegos was president of Venezuela in 1948, and is notable as the country's first freely elected president (which is why he may not have lasted that long). He was in fact a reputable novelist and his *Canaima* of 1935 provides graphic information about the lives of the rubber tappers and other adventurers in the Amazon jungle. (The English translation is available from Amazon and also on Kindle).

Bonaparte rides again

Plus, on from G11, an auction of Napoleoniana is coming up: everything from a diamond encrusted timepiece to Napoleon's nightshirt (plus one or two frankly quite gory items...) Bids please to [Osenat - Ventes aux enchères en ligne](#) in Fontainebleau.

And (going back to G9 for one moment) Napoleon clearly had a thing about Chicken Marengo as he even named his horse after it (though he may have had the battle of the same name in mind, which took place in Northern Italy). Poor old Marengo not only served Napoleon faithfully through many a battle, but had the ignominy of being captured after Waterloo. Eventually he was boiled down and his bones were put on display at the National Army Museum, where they remain to this day (though they have been renovated recently as bits had started to fall off). Wellington's famous steed Copenhagen fared better, with only one hoof kept by a servant. Eventually he was turned into an inkstand.

Unfortunate Announcements (series of 1000...)

In those far-off pre-microphone days at Barnard's Inn Hall, we can't quite recall which Gresham Professor cheerfully said, "Can you all hear me at the back?" Whereupon someone gleefully answered, "Well, I can hear, but I am happy to change places with someone who can't."

This rather reminds me of an episode involving Evelyn Waugh and Malcolm Muggeridge. In 1957 Muggeridge was speaking at a Foyles literary luncheon actually in honour of Waugh, who had brought an enormous ear trumpet along with him. Famous for his rudeness, Waugh ostentatiously removed the ear trumpet when Muggeridge stood up to speak.

Editorial

Rosie the Riveter

The famous propaganda poster of Rosie was not actually used much during the War, but it did inspire the Rockwell poster of 1943, though the better



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known image (which actually appeared in 1942) was commissioned by Westinghouse from artist J Howard Miller. Rosie herself in the original was revived as a feminist icon in 1982. (The model died aged 95, though there is more than one claim to be the original.) Rockwell's original model was actually a telephonist, not a riveter, and not quite as hefty as she appears in the picture (he actually rang her to apologise for that small point of detail). Be that as it may, it became a key image in the American war effort, and appeared as part of the drive to issue war bonds. (*Editor's Note: it's a fascinating story, though sources do not quite coincide. See either [Rosie the Riveter - Real Person, Facts & Norman Rockwell - HISTORY](#) or the Wikipedia article [Rosie the Riveter](#).*)

NB *Riveters' Weekly* (which is a figment of the Grasshopper's fertile imagination) is not to be confused with *The Riveter*, a feminist magazine that ran for five years, and which published stories on a feminist theme from previously unpublished women writers. The name was doubtless inspired by the Rosie poster. See [The Riveter](#).

And following on from the Richard Montgomery

The Liberty ships like the *Richard Montgomery* were a critical factor in World War Two. Built at very high speed (one was launched as a propaganda exercise in less than five days) they did contain some design faults, one of which was a weakness amidships. This is a common factor in ship design: if a ship is caught between two large waves then she hogs – the middle of the vessel cracking; if she is caught on a single wave (or a sandbank like the *Richard Montgomery*) then she sags and breaks open.

Ship enthusiasts might wish to note that there are boat tours from the nearby port of Queenborough to view the wreck and they may also go on to see the wartime Maunsell forts further out in the Thames Estuary. (The area is also noted for its seal colony.)

And regarding the cargo of high explosives, we took advice from the College's own expert in sudden loud bangs – none other than our very own Professor Frank Cox. Without wishing to reveal Frank's age, it is an undeniable fact that he served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps for his National Service (sometime between the Boer War and Korea). And his view is that so long as the bombs have not been



fused (which would be unlikely in transit) and have been immersed in water, then there is little chance of them going off at all. And as the iron rusts presumably the explosive within will have become diluted. We can only hope so... (*Editor's Note: The Navy has been called in recently to remove the masts of the Richard Montgomery in case they fall down onto the cargo. It is feared that any ensuing explosion could throw debris three kilometres into the air and create a tidal wave five metres high, hence the concern. Just think what that lot would have done to the Germans in 1944.*)

Envoi

In the current context, the words of Oliver Cromwell spring to mind when he dissolved the Long Parliament in April 1653: "It is high time for me to put an end to your sitting in this place, which you have dishonoured by your contempt of all virtue and defiled by your practice of every vice; ye are a factious crew and enemies of all good government." (And that's only the start of it.)

What would he go on to say today? (Members may care to go to [Oliver Cromwell Speech - Dissolution of The Long Parliament 1653 - Britpolitics](#)) for the rest.

Francesco Salviati again

Following on from the Francesco Salviati story in G11, members may wish to see a remarkably lifelike portrait of him in the Sixteenth Century gallery in the Wallace Collection. It is in 3D, being made of wax, and is in full colour. The cabinets containing these unusual items are covered with leather flaps to protect them from the sun (being wax) but you can press a button to light them up for a moment or two. Most illuminating...

Dry Regattas

Members of our Australian Chapter will doubtless be setting off in droves soon to Alice Springs, as this is the time of year Down Under for the Henley on Todd Regatta (actually the third Saturday in August if anyone else happens to be passing that way). This is a display of the true Australian pioneering spirit. The local inhabitants once wanted to hold a boat race, only to find that the Todd River was almost always dried up. Nothing daunted, they cut leg holes in the boats, added shoulder straps and set off at a firm trot to loud acclaim from the other settlers.

Today it is all much more formal (in an Aussie sort of way...). Senior members may wish to retire to the grog shop before the Grand Finale – the Battle of the Gun Boats, whereby three purpose-made vessels

soak themselves and everyone else in range with coloured water, water cannon and water bombs. But then the climate does lend itself to that sort of thing... [Henley on Todd Regatta – Most Fun You Can Have Without Water.](#)

Members should be aware of the fact that the Todd is a cunning old river, mostly dry but prone to flash floods. Members are therefore advised not to camp in the dry river bed.

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

All members are reminded that September 19th is International Talk Like A Pirate Day. For ideas on how to celebrate this, go to [17 Fun Talk Like A Pirate Day Ideas for Work in 2022 \(teambuilding.com\)](#).

And as always, we welcome comments, contributions and compliments – but never (we trust) complaints.

If you have any news items for *The Grasshopper* do let Tim (t.j.connell@city.ac.uk) or Basil (greshamsociety@gmail.com) know.

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