



# The Grasshopper

## The Organ Of The Gresham Society

*The Grasshopper Himself leads in a chorus of "Here's a Health Unto His Majesty"*

Issue No. 13

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022

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### College Notes

#### *New Programme Out!*

The College's 2022-3 Programme is out online, and you can read about all the new series here at [Lecture Series 2022-23](#).

The paper programme is available from the Gresham offices and will be posted out to those who have requested one. You can order from here: [New Programme Out Now!](#) or alternatively you may wish to [Sign up for the Newsletter](#) which is sent out monthly.

There was a full house on June 15<sup>th</sup> for the Sir Thomas Gresham-themed tour of the City with expert guide Christine Jarvis who led us down some highways and byways that few of us knew existed. (It is not known whether Sir Thomas himself ever engaged in pub crawls but the route would have suited him down to the ground.) On one of the hottest days of the year we had a welcome cup of tea at Mercers' Hall before being shown round by Past Master Mike Dudgeon and *inter alia* looked on with respect at the portrait of the celebrated Mrs Horsley Palmer (born in 1783 who is said to be the ancestor of eight masters and thirty-one other members, as well as being Mike's x3 great grandmother!)

A cheque for £250 was presented to Christine to pass on to the British Red Cross Appeal for Ukraine as she had kindly waived her fee. £250 was presented to Mike for the Charter 600 Appeal, and this in turn triggered a £250 gift from the Company itself to Cure Parkinson's, which is marvellous.

Talking of cheques, this puts me in mind of an event that happened in the Sudetenland in 1938 when the Germans marched in. A gang of Nazi thugs were pursuing a little man when he took refuge in what was then the Prague branch of the Bank of England. "Can you cache a small Czech?" he enquired. (Oh dear, they get worse...)

Corrigendum: Having reported in G12 that the College has the benefit of a whole swathe of new professors and fellows, I am reminded that the appointments *sensu strictu* are divided between the City Side (Astronomy, Divinity, Geometry and Music) and the Mercers' Side (Business, Law, Physic and Rhetoric) not to mention those sponsored by the Frank Jackson Foundation (Environment) and the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists (Information Technology). These professors are appointed by Council.

Plus, the Grasshopper Himself is pleased to see that Sir Chris Whitty, Richard Harvey and Alec Ryrie have been named as Fellows having completed their professorial terms of office. Alec will also be going on to Academic Board.

And congratulations to Sir Geoffrey Nice, who has been appointed an Honorary Fellow in recognition of his work on humanitarian issues.

It is interesting to note that there seems to be a nautical link between the City side chairs, which reminds me of the legendary occasion in World War II when a British destroyer sighted an American destroyer during foggy weather. The American was flying two flags which read, I am having a religious service on board and a Query. The British asked for clarification, whereupon the American signalled back, "Dear God, where are we?"

### ***Ave Atque Vale***

Every sympathy to Debby Ounsted, whose husband Richard Arnott Walker, passed away in the summer.

Guy Neely, Mercer and Treasurer to the Gresham Society for nearly twenty years has also passed away. He was of course one of our original members.

And a warm welcome to new members Ms Georgina Bisono and Professor Lawrence Warner.



Simon Thurley left Gresham College at the end of August. We are very grateful for his leadership of the Academic Board and his contribution to the recruitment of five brand-new Professors. Although Simon is also standing down as Visiting Professor of the Built Environment, he will return as guest speaker to present two lectures in next year's programme. We thank him for his work at Gresham and wish him well in his future endeavours.

The Gresham Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Martin Elliott as the Acting Provost. He is well known to us, having been Professor of Physics from 2014 to 2018. He is an eminent medic with longstanding connections to Great Ormond Street and much else. See his website on [Martin Elliott](#) for more information.

We also say goodbye to our Academic Registrar Clare Loughlin Chow who left Gresham College at the end of July, after four years as Academic Registrar. She joined the College in 2018 and was very much involved in the development of the new 5-year plan and financial settlement for the College, plus seeing the College through the difficult times of the pandemic, during which time the College grew its online views, mailing lists and profile. She leaves to take up the position of CEO at [The Society for Research into Higher Education](#).

And it's goodbye to James Bull as well, the Head of Communications Technology, who has been with Gresham since 2017 and left in August. He introduced live-streaming across the lectures and pioneered many improvements in the College's IT infrastructure, its video production, and the College's new website and has been the driving force behind the production of the programme. He leaves to freelance, for now.

### ***New Publications***

Gyles Brandreth is as productive as ever, with his forthcoming *History of Britain in Just a Minute*, which I suspect means that it will be linked in to the eponymous radio programme.

Robin Wilson continues to plough his mathematical furrow with his latest offering of at least 700 pages with *The History of Mathematics: A Source-Based Approach*, in conjunction with June Barrow-Green and Jeremy Gray. This is volume 2, produced by the

American Mathematical Society (so presumably more to come!).

### ***Vita Vitarum***

And may I report with modest pride that Yours Truly has been appointed an Associate Fellow of Canning House (aka the Luso-Hispanic-Brazilian Council) in recognition of forty years' service. (The promotion of international understanding has always been one of my key themes and I have had some jolly times in parts of Latin America that are hard to find on a map.) The Grasshopper Himself served tacos for breakfast this morning by way of celebration, though frankly I prefer enchiladas suizas.

### ***Members' Corner***

It was clearly a serious error of judgement to challenge the respective Gresham chair holders (both past and present) to come up with something amusing about their august subjects. Robin Wilson (known only too well for his rapid fire puns) has offered a joke about the number 288, which I have refused to publish as it is just too gross. (Groan...)

### ***More on Riveters Weekly***

Following on from the Masthead slogan regarding Riveters Weekly in G12, it is worth looking at [Rosie the Riveter Song](#) for images of women riveters, with a sound track from the Vagabonds (1943). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

And, regarding heavy industrial machinery, it is possible that members may not actually feel the need to purchase a non-ferrous material extrusion press but just in case, go to [Fielding & Platt History](#) where you can also find out all about riveting machines. Click on "Machinery" for all sorts of wonderful Victorian machines. The 4500 ton heavy flaying and dishing press is particularly impressive.

### ***As they say in Germany***

Moving on from G12, Our Berlin Correspondent has become positively eloquent about the longest word in German, which is famous for generating long words and has therefore been the terror of GCSE students for decades. But it is (as you may imagine for the Germans) perfectly logical even though an occasional hit



on the space bar would help everybody else. So once a year people have to come up against:

**Kaftfahrzeug-Haftpflichtversicherung** (*motor vehicle liability insurance*). Occasionally of course you trip across something that really cannot be explained any other way such as: **Gleichgewichtsdichtegradientenzentrifugation** (*Equilibrium density gradient centrifugation*). Personally I have no objection to a perfectly logical sequence such as:

**Frauenfussballeuropameisterschaftsschiedsrichterin** (*European women's football championship referee*). But pity the poor EU fonctionnaire who has to wrestle with something like:

**Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz** (*the Act delegating the supervision of beef labelling and the delegation of supervision law*). This had its day but has since been cancelled, unsurprisingly... But what do we do about: **Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitänswitwenundwaisenversicherungsgesellschaft** (*Danube Shipping Company Captains' Widows' and Orphans' Insurance Company*)? Can you imagine that on a brass plate? Perhaps they put it vertically down the front of the building. One wonders whether there really is a space bar on German typewriters.

## Reflections

### *Ilha da Queimada Grande*

Having given you thanatophidiaphobes a rest for an edition or two, I thought you might like to add Ilha da Queimada Grande (Big Fire Island) to your bucket list. It is the only home (thank goodness) to the golden lancehead pit viper (*bothrops insularis*, as you might imagine). Some brave soul has actually counted them and reckons there is at least one serpent per square metre on an island that only covers 43 hectares – that's just 106 acres. (And who am I to disagree?) Said beasts have been there apparently since sea levels rose in ancient times and (thankfully) cut them off from mainland Brazil, as São Paulo is a mere 21 miles away. They live by eating birds - a local variety of wren and a flycatcher (and quite possibly each other). There is a lighthouse (long since automated, as you might imagine) on the island. Requests to visit the island have to go via the Brazilian Navy, though I hear that there are no plans to go back in the near future.

The Ilha da Queimada Grande should not be confused with the film *Queimada*, made in 1969

by Gillo Pontecorvo with Marlon Brando in the lead. Celebrated at the time (not least because of the film score) it was about a fictional West Indian Island in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which goes through independence and then revolution. It was filmed in Colombia, but the "i" was added to the title in order to make it sound more Portuguese and so like it was set in Brazil, as they did not want to upset the locals during filming.

### *Evolution is a funny thing*

The Grasshopper's ears have twitched at the recent announcement that he (and he is a He – please note for choice of pronoun) has cousins in Australia that are female only. Before he had time to hop on a plane he was disappointed to learn that they reproduce by cloning rather than by any other traditional method. Yes indeed, the Australian *Warramaba Virgo* grasshopper is female only and has dispensed with males entirely. The Grasshopper Himself tells me that he doesn't have plans to visit Australia any time soon as he has rather traditional views in that respect. (*Editor's Note: Yep, grasshoppers really do have ears, though these are located on the abdomen, in the form of two vibrating membranes.*)

### *A toast for Old Boney (or not)*

Although he quite liked Champagne (opened by a sabreur, *ça va sans dire*), Napoleon was not a great connoisseur of wine. He drank a lot of Chambertin (a Burgundy), diluted 50-50 with water, and took it with him on all his campaigns. Perhaps the worst humiliation of the Russia campaign was the unfortunate fact that during the Retreat from Moscow the Cossacks caught up with the baggage train and doubtless sank the lot in double quick time.

Joséphine, on the other hand, served wines from as far away as Hungary and South Africa, and on her death in 1814 had over 13,000 bottles in stock. Half of this was Bordeaux – with little Burgundy in evidence. It is notable that Chambertin does not figure at all in the inventory of Joséphine's wine cellar when she died – so she clearly didn't expect him to drop in for a quick late night snifter.

Poor old Boney himself eventually had to acquire a taste for South African wines once he had settled down on Saint Helena. (A final humiliation for any wine-quaffing



Frenchman...) Even worse, as his health declined he could only tolerate Constantia, a golden dessert wine from South Africa, which is not too far of course from St. Helena. The former Emperor was able to tolerate this wine and records from Groot Constantia indicate that more than 1,000 litres of Constantia were shipped to Longwood House on Saint Helena every year until 1821, the year of Napoleon Bonaparte's death.

**Editorial**

While lamenting the death of the Queen, the Grasshopper himself (on behalf of all loyal insects) extends a warm welcome to King Charles III in the light of his concerns for the environment.

*Great Orme's Head*

The key feature of Colwyn Bay (see G12) has got to be Great Orme's Head, which I well remember from my climbing days in Snowdonia, when a trip into town gave us a chance to relax in a local pub, though I can't remember whether Denbighshire was still a dry county in those far-off days. (A law passed in 1881 to control Sunday drinking in Wales was only rescinded formally in 2003.)

The Great Orme can be visited by tramcar (est. 1902) or by cable car (c.1969). Attractions include the Bronze Age copper mines (complete with the rare horseshoe bat) plus a herd of Kashmir goats. These were a present from the Shah of Persia to Queen Victoria and one is selected nowadays from the herd to be the mascot of the Royal Welsh. Views from the top of the Great Orme are stunning: apart from Snowdonia, the Isle of Man and the Lake District can be seen on a clear day.

*Hogging, Sagging and Typhoons*

Further to the note in G12 concerning ship design, it is instructive that an Industrial Support Ship broke in half on 2 July off Hong Kong, though admittedly that was in a typhoon.

**Envoi**

*Not always a winner*

We are always so accustomed to reading about the successes in life of Sir Thomas Gresham that it is salutary to learn that he failed to become an

alderman. It would appear that Sir T stood for election in 1556 in the Ward of Dowgate – and lost out to one William Harpur. (*Ed: William Harpur who he?*) Ah well, he was a merchant from Bedford who amassed a fortune in those rip-roaring days and even bought land in Holborn. He did indeed win in a four-way race that included Sir T, and (as a Merchant Taylor) went on to become Lord Mayor in 1561 and to be knighted by Good Queen Bess. His legacy is quite extensive today, including support for four schools in Bedford of course, and some almshouses. (And thanks to PM Chris Vermont for spotting this one.)

**STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS**

*Keep the Date*

Do please note the dates for the Soirée and AGM: Monday 12 December and Monday 13 February.

Members might note in their diary the forthcoming [Peter Nailor Memorial Lecture](#) on Tuesday 18 October at 6 pm at Mercers' Hall. Lord Peter Ricketts will speak on the topic of *Britain's Foreign Policy in a Fast-Changing World*. The Nailor has a close historic link with the Society so do please check the details on-line and sign up.

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](mailto:t.j.connell@city.ac.uk)) or Basil ([greshamsociety@gmail.com](mailto:greshamsociety@gmail.com)) know.

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