



# The Grasshopper

An occasional paper for odd occasions

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## *Salvete et Valete*

We are delighted to introduce Wendy Piatt as the College's new CEO. She has been at University College London since 2017. She was inaugural Director-General and CEO of the Russell Group of Universities and has served in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and the Department for Education and Skills. We hope to have an interview with her in a forthcoming edition of *The Grasshopper*.

We also welcome the appointment of our new Visiting Professor in Law & Politics: Thomas Grant QC is from Maitland Chambers and plans to consider the role of the lawyer, the jury and the judge as engines of political and societal change, and what impact government interference in judicial appointments might have on decision-making and the rule of law.

Martin Daunton is the new Visiting Professor in Economic History. He is a former President of the Royal Historical Society and formerly Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Martin will be looking at inter-generational justice in the light of COVID19, and how different societies over time have grappled with such issues.

## *Editorial Correction*

We at *The Grasshopper* have the strongest regard for truth and are pleased to correct our recent report concerning Professor Robin Wilson's recent stage appearance in his role as a whisky-swillin', six-gun-totin', tarry-hootin' cowpoke. This was actually in the Gershwin's "Crazy for You", though we suspect that the whisky-swillin' (let along the tarry-hootin') actually took place at the cast party afterwards. And it took the Oxford Playhouse by storm in January.

Robin has auditioned for the Oxford Operatic Society's planned production of *My Fair Lady*. There is no truth in the rumour that he was offered the part of the race horse.

## *Treading the Boards*

And think, when we talk of horses (and doubtless pawing at the ground and champing at the bit post lockdown) Gyles Brandreth has had to postpone his

next planned tour to 2021, so it may be some time before he next plants his proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth of Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire.

## *Shrinking Sheriffs*

Our congratulations go to Sheriff Chris Hayward, who is now a shadow of his former self, having lost the 46 lbs that he promised in order to raise funds for the Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund at the Old Bailey. Nearly £20,000 has been raised to date.

## *Editorial*

Quality control is as much of a concern here at *The Grasshopper* as anywhere else and we are delighted that former Academic Registrar Barbara Anderson has been appointed as Revising Editor. We do fear of course that the first thing she will revise will be the no smoking policy in the editorial bureau...

## *Envoi*

Did you know that the grasshopper can only jump forwards? For this reason they are viewed in many parts of the world as harbingers of optimism and success though (come to think of it) both Aesop (the Ant and the Grasshopper) and Jean De La Fontaine (*la cigale ayant chanté*) give it a bad press.

Of course, strictly speaking, *la cigale* is a cicada. La Fontaine really should have known that it varies from the grasshopper in a number of ways. Grasshoppers (as Basil reminds me) belong to the Acridoidea family in the order Orthoptera, whereas cicadas belong to the Cicadidae family in the order Hemiptera. So now you know – these things sometimes matter.

Basil also tells me that boiled and fried grasshopper is all the rage in Bulawayo at this time of year. It is known locally as the *mhashu* or *hwiza* and goes down well with a glass of beer. The green grasshopper of course is the fat and juicy one and is known as the *mafutha*, whereas the brown one is dry and crisp and called the *bomba*. (Call Basil for the recipe.) These will doubtless be available soon in the UK, ready bagged and de-hopped, from all good health food shops.



## ***Plague Notes***

If we think that we are living through a pandemic and that the indignities of lockdown are something to be endured (or otherwise) then we are really so much better off than our forebears. The Great Plague of 1665/1666 has a certain resonance when we read that Parliament closed, theatres shut for eighteen months and that wealthier people fled to their country houses (think second homes in the country). Even that great Gresham member Samuel Pepys sent his wife and household out of London to the safety of the countryside – in Woolwich.

The definition of lockdown however was rather more drastic than we could perhaps imagine, with people shut up in their homes and a red cross painted on the door. The elementary doctors of the time fared perhaps worst of all, for those who did not flee to the country almost inevitably died from being in contact with infected patients. This included Pepys' own doctor, who died of the plague after carrying out a post mortem. And of course no-one knew quite what would happen next (least of all the Great Fire). At one point Pepys notes that his sponsor Lord Sandwich "was concerned for me during my silence awhile, lest I had been dead of the plague in this sickly time", perhaps in the same way that we have been ringing each other to see how things are.

There is perhaps some comfort in reviewing this whole historic episode, in that the plague finally came to an end, and has not been seen in Britain since.

## ***Peruvian Independence Day***

Just in case it has escaped your attention, today is Peruvian Independence Day, when El Libertador Simón Bolívar declared independence from Spain. (It is a little known fact that his full name was Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar y Palacios Ponte-Andrade y Blanco, though that's not what his friends called him.)

Anyway, if you come across the odd Peruvian today, please say Feliz Veintiocho, as that is only politeness.

And remember – stay sane and safe (as they say in France).

*Professor Tim Connell*  
*Fearless Editor-in-Chief*

*Basil Bezuidenhout*  
*Excellent in Excel*

## **STOP PRESS + STOP PRESS + STOP PRESS**

Please register online to watch or attend College events in 2020-21 via the web page of the lecture you want to attend. The College plans gradually to re-introduce the possibility of attending lectures in person as lockdown eases, and registering allows the College to keep you informed.

The Programme with the coming year's lectures will be up on-line from July 30th.

And why not sign up for the College's email [newsletter](#) too.

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And just to remind: the AGM and Dinner (Covid willing) will take place on **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021** 6pm at the National Liberal Club

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