



The Grasshopper

The Organ Of The Gresham Society

Never knowingly understated (*John Lewis Weekend Magazine*)

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College News

Professors Sarah Hart and Leslie Thomas have had their tenure extended for a 4th year as professors. And Carolyn Roberts has been extended as a fellow.

We welcome Paul Penny as the College's new Broadcast and Video Production Manager; Hannah Howard and Kevin Thompson as Junior Video Editors and Live Stream Assistants; Leo Taylor as Comms Intern and Sophie Caranta as the new Academic Programmes Officer. Mariam Ismail becomes Academic Programmes Manager.

It's farewell to CEO Wendy Piatt. Successes in her time include increasing lecture attendance 10-fold, plus several developments in income generation, and attracting the new schools' oratory prize and partnerships with for example the Royal Historical Society and the Independent Social Research Foundation. And welcome to Lucy Petrie as the Acting CEO.

Ave Atque Vale

We welcome former Gresham speaker Pauline Chakmakjian, and mathematicians Dorothy Leddy and Ken Lord as new members.

It is with enormous regret that we report the death of Committee member Robert Woodthorpe Browne. A man of many parts, he had an eminent career in the world of re-insurance. When working in Mauritius he founded the African Insurance Conference. This international focus led to him visiting 150 countries, which doubtless contributed to his work as Treasurer of the International Liberals and his membership not only of the Royal Geographical Society but also as a committee member of Chatham House and the British-German Association. Robert was a fluent linguist speaking French, Spanish and

German. He was eminent in the City as a Master of the World Traders and he was a strong supporter of Gresham and a long-term member of the Gresham Society. He was appointed MBE in 2013. He leaves his wife Barbara and son Robert, to whom we offer our profound condolences. The Society was represented at his funeral by Messrs Ayliffe, Connell, Mainelli and Marcel and Cathy Steward.

Members' Corner

A good time was had by all at our regular Soirée. Entertainment was provided by David Jones (celebrated for his rendition of the Elements Song) and Sofia Kirwan Baez whose début with us was a tour de force. Part 2 (provided by the membership) will be remembered (if not seared in their memories) for a very long time. Many thanks as ever to all those involved (who are of course too modest to be mentioned and might well prefer anonymity...)

Roger Cline reports that the Elizabethan entrepreneur William Harpur (see G13) is well known to Gresham members who visit Theobalds Road Reference Library on research projects. The rents from Barristers' chambers and other offices in nearby Harpur Street and Bedford Row continue to fund Harpur's endowment of Bedford Academy.

Wing Commander Mike Dudgeon has queried the story in G13 that Napoleon imported more than 1,000 litres of Constantia into Saint Helena every year from South Africa until 1821, when he died. Mike points that this would constitute 3.65 bottles (i.e. 22 glasses) per day. As he explains, either Old Boney was very thirsty, or the social life on St Helena was better than first thought. However, these were



heavy drinking times, with people regularly sinking several bottles even of port a day. It does put me in mind of a time when I was in Uruguay with a local colleague. The waiter asked how many bottles of wine we wanted; I replied “One”, whereupon we got one bottle each. (*Editor’s Note: Yes indeed, I have been to Uruguay several times. I have even been to Paraguay – but it was shut the day I was there...*)

The Society of Industrial Chemistry

Members of a scientific frame of mind may well be interested in the lectures organised by the London Regional Group of the [Society of Industrial Chemistry](#). The SCI itself was formed in 1881 and has rather natty premises at 14/15 Belgrave Square (often the location for events organised *inter alia* by Canning House). For further information, contact Society member Julian Perfect at julianperfect@hotmail.com.

And congratulations go to Joanna Bourke on the publication of *Birkbeck: 200 Years of Radical Learning for Working People* (OUP). This will be compulsory reading for Barbara Anderson, Sir Roderick Floud, Sarah Hart and Sir Tim O’Shea among others.

Updates

Here’s a health

The Grasshopper Himself has been humming *Here’s a Health unto His Majesty*, which we used for our masthead back in September. Members may recall it from school days. It actually dates from the time of the Restoration and was written by one Jeremy Savile, a teacher of “the voice and viol” and published in 1667. Today it is the regimental march of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Going back to the longest word in German in G13, can it be true that German legal documents have to be printed in landscape format rather than portrait in order to fit in all the long words? Surely not.

However, proofreading is more important than ever. With regard to

Donaudampfschiffahrtgesellschaftkapitänswitwenundwaisenversicherungsgesellschaft (*Danube Shipping Company Captains’ Widows’ and Orphans’ Insurance Company*) (see G13), our Berlin Correspondent reminds me that “If you are merely talking about insurance for widows and orphans of captains of the Danube steam shipping company, then the last “gesellschaft” (and the connecting “s”) is superfluous. If you are talking about an insurance COMPANY, which provides insurance for widows and orphans of captains of the Danube steam shipping company, then your version would be correct. Either is purely hypothetical though, since no such company or specific insurance exists...” But then German doesn’t have to contend with apostrophes, which is the grammatical equivalent of the offside rule.

Reflections

Snakes alive

Did you realise that Britain now has a third resident species of snake? Yes indeed, some well-meaning person at the Welsh Mountain Zoo imported a few examples of the Aesculapian Rat Snake fifty years ago, only for some of the little critters to escape and establish themselves as a colony in Colwyn Bay (see G12 and G13...) The only problem is that they can grow to a length of six feet and they rather like environments close to humans as they live on rats which are of course to be found in urban locations. The good news is that they are fairly docile, very slow moving and are non-venomous.

And before anyone starts thinking that Colwyn Bay is fairly remote, a small colony has also been identified along the Regent’s Canal, which of course is fairly close to London Zoo, which is not too encouraging because if they could escape from the reptile house, so could other less unobtrusive varieties of creepy crawlies.

However, all is not lost. It appears that the ancestors of the Aesculapian Rat Snake existed in the British Isles in the Ice Age and so strictly speaking they are a returning species. (So watch this space for news of the Elk, Woolly Mammoth and Sabre Tooth Tiger...) (*Editor’s note: the herd of bison recently introduced into Blean Woods near Canterbury have just had a 25% increase in*



membership as one of the females was actually pregnant on arrival. You might say that a third woozle has joined the other two... Bison of course were also a native species – 6000 years ago.)

One for the medics

I am sure that our medical confrères have come across some characters in their time, but possibly not one who was once obliged to stand in the pillory. This was the eponymous Dr Ward (he of Ward's Pills and Ward's Drops – a horrific mixture of antimony and balsam with a dash of wine added to make the Drops). In 1717 he was elected MP for Marlborough, until it was observed that no-one had actually voted for him and that the mayor's signature had been forged. For this he was sent to the pillory, after which he went to France for sixteen years. He appears to have returned with the recipe for his celebrated pills and drops. Ward gained fame for re-setting George III's dislocated thumb. Fame and notoriety seemed to go hand-in-hand, something he did nothing to discourage. The pills are actually mentioned in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. (They also make an appearance twice in the Lucky Jack Aubrey novels, once in *Master and Commander* and once in *HMS Surprise*.)

I notice that not everyone in the 18th Century was persuaded by the fame surrounding Ward's Drops and Pills. The Bodleian Library (inevitably) contains an interesting treatise of 1735: *The drop and pill of Mr Ward, consider'd: as well as in respect to their composition, as their operation and effects* by one Daniel Turner. In it he rubbishes Ward's claims for his celebrated remedies, and not only goes into enormous detail of cases that have clearly gone wrong, but also provides an insight into some of the medical remedies of the period. Most of these seem to be almost as frightening as the Drops and Pills themselves:

“The true *Sulphur*, according to our last recited Author, is prepared from *Cinnabar*, finely powder'd, and boil'd in a Solution of *Salt of Tartar*, *Nitre*, and *Calx Viva*. After decanting the *Liquor* from the *Quicksilver* at the Bottom, filter and incline the *Vessel*, that the *red Sulphur* may settle, which you must sweeten with hot *Water*, and dry gently; so have you the true *Sulphur Antimonti*, which opens all *Obstructions* of the *Liver*, *Spleen*, *Mesentery*, and *Hypochonders*; expelling all

Humours whatever, or wherever heaped up in the *Body*, both upwards and downwards.” (Upwards and Downwards? At the same time?? All I can say is Thank God for the NHS...)

Editorial

I was interested to see that Sky Arts did a nice programme last month (3.11.22) on Impressionist painters in London. I am proud to say however that Gresham got there first with our Mondays at One series “London through the eyes of foreign artists” which Frank Cox and I ran in October 2010. That actually followed on from “Visual Impressions of London” in October 2007 as we always found that London-based series had a strong following. (These of course are still available to view on the Gresham website.)

Envoi

Finally, in this Christmas season, for those of you with the pleasant duty of keeping the grandchildren occupied till tea time, here's a little item (courtesy of Dr Seuss) that might keep everyone amused:

If a packet hits a pocket on a socket on a port,
and the bus is interrupted at a very last resort,
and the access of the memory makes your floppy disk abort,
then the socket packet pocket has an error to report.

If your cursor finds a menu item followed by a dash
and the double-clicking icon puts your window in the trash;
and your data is corrupted 'cause the index doesn't hash,
then your situation's hopeless and your system's gonna crash!

If the label on the cable on the table at your house
says the network is connected to the button on your mouse,
but your packets want to tunnel to another protocol,
that's repeatedly rejected by the printer down the hall,
and your screen is all distorted by the side effects of gauss,



til your icons in the window are as wavy as a
 souse;
 then you may as well reboot and go out with a
 big bang,
 'cuz sure as I'm a poet, the thing is gonna
 hang!

When the copy of your floppy's getting sloppy
 in the disk
 and the macrocode instructions cause
 unnecessary risk,
 then you'll have to flash the memory and you'll
 want to RAM your ROM,
 quickly turn off the computer and be sure to
 tell your Mom!

Scam warnings [please read this!]

I have had a couple of scam messages recently.
 I do get these, but the last two seem to be new,
 and are more convincing than they once were:

One was from a friend's actual email address
 telling me that he was abroad and could I get a
 £200 voucher for his god-daughter's birthday
 as he had forgotten to himself (!). The sum of
 money and the fact that the voucher was to
 come from Tesco did look decidedly odd...

The other was a text message (I have not seen
 this one before) purporting to be from my Son
 Tom, to tell me that he had damaged his
 phone and could I save a temporary number
 onto my mobile (which I assume would have
 got the scammer into my system). Again, it
 looked normal at first sight, but there were a
 couple of clues to suggest that things were not
 quite right.

In both cases I followed up with the
 individuals to check – and of course it was all
 bogus.

You may wish to report any such goings-on to
[The National Cyber Security Centre](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk) (NCSC) by
 email at report@phishing.gov.uk. More
 reporting options may be found on their
 website at [Phishing: Spot and report scam
 emails, texts, websites and calls](#).

If you are the victim of fraud go to
www.actionfraud.police.uk or call
 0300 123 2040.

So always remember to think twice if
 something is out of the ordinary – and do not
 hit the button too quickly!

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

CHANGE OF DATE FOR THE AGM

We look forward to returning to the National
 Liberal Club for the AGM and Dinner, but the
 date will have to be changed (yet again) this
 time because their kitchens are being
 renovated from January to March. We'll let
 you know when we plan to re-convene with
 the celebrated seven-minute meeting to kick
 off the proceedings.

The Lord Mayor's Gresham Lecture has had to
 be moved on to the date as advertised
 previously, so do still keep Monday 13th
 February free for that if you can.

EVITA AT THE OXFORD PLAYHOUSE

The Oxford Operatic Society will be presenting
 "Evita" at the Oxford Playhouse between 23rd
 and 28th January. Our very own Robin Wilson
 will again be treading the boards.

**LECTURE AT THE ROYAL PHILATELIC
 SOCIETY LONDON 8TH FEBRUARY 2023**

Professor Robin Wilson will be giving a lecture
 on Mathematics and Philately at the RPSL on
 Wednesday 8th February at 2.30, followed by
 tea. Watch out for the flyer in mid-January
 (and come along to see the Gresham
 connection).

If you have any news items for *The
 Grasshopper* do let Tim
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greshamsociety@gmail.com know.

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