



The Grasshopper

The Organ Of The Gresham Society

Why all this stuff about grasshoppers just isn't cricket (*Poppleton Parish Magazine*)

Issue No. 16

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College Notes

We welcome three new members of Council: Wendy Mead OBE, Alderman (and past Lord Mayor) Vincent Keaveny and Deputy Nighth Qureishi.

Plus Richard Smith will be joining as the new Executive Director from November, having worked previously for P&O and Bovington Tank Museum.

Ave Atque Vale

Welcome to Neville Leslie who finally joins us, having been our Auditor for many years. (It is so important to make our accounts seem plausible.)

Members' Corner

A good time was had by all at the Society's AGM and Dinner at the National Liberal Club on April 24th. The date was not entirely convenient, but we were bumped off our original date because of a clash with the Mansion House diary and then the NLC closed its kitchens for refurbishment. This was clearly effective however, as we dined sumptuously on Kedgeree Arancini, Shoulder of Lamb and Lemon Posset with summer berries. The tables were furnished with a display of lily of the valley, courtesy of Barbara Woodthorpe Browne, and diners took them home in return for a donation to the Tuberous Sclerosis Society, which was Robert's favourite charity. The sum of £150 was raised. Splendid.

It is true that the AGM over-ran, missing the seven-minute target by at least four minutes, but there were some items of business, not least there being a vacancy or two on the Committee. If anyone would like to put their name forward, please let [Tim](#) or [Basil](#) know.

And our thanks to Martin Perkins, who has stood down after a lengthy period of service which has been both appreciable and appreciated.

Oyez Oyez Oyez

Our very own Michael Mainelli is standing for Lord Mayor of the City of London!

You good members of the Livery of the several companies of this City summoned to appear for the election of a fit and able person to be the Lord Mayor of this City for the year ensuing should draw near and give your attendance at the Guildhall on Friday 29th September. So many of you as will have Michael for Mayor should sign up pronto with your company clerk in order to vote as we want to have a good turnout on the day. And be sure to wear your Grasshopper with pride so that we all stand out in the crowd.

Do bear in mind that Michael's extensive association with the College goes back to his appointment as Mercers' Professor of Commerce in 2005, followed by his time as a trustee plus many years on Council and his appointment as a Life Fellow (and much else). And (if elected of course...) he will become President of the College.

A key aspect of the Mayor's Year in 2023-2024 will be the Knowledge Mile and it is planned to run a regular series of webinars designed to illustrate the forward-looking nature of the work of the Square Mile (plus a few interesting aspects of its history). Livery Companies and learned societies will be encouraged to contribute and the lectures will go out on the Gresham Society website as our contribution to Michael's Mayoral year. "Knowledge Miles: The Mansion House Lectures" will be coordinated by Yours Truly and staff from the Z/Yen Group. In due course I hope to draw on the expertise of the 60 emeritus professors and 19 professors of other institutions who are members of the Society in support of this worthy project.

There is a special event to mark Professor Joanna Burke's retirement from both Gresham and Birkbeck on Monday 10th July at 6pm.



Professor Martin Daunton's new book is just out: *The Economic Government of the World 1933-2023* – a timely piece published by Allen Lane.

Our mathematicians seem to be going at full pelt: congratulations go to Professor Sarah Hart for *Once Upon A Prime: The Wondrous Connections Between Mathematics And Literature* (HarperCollins), while Professor Chris Budd has come up with *Climate, Covid and Chaos: How Mathematical Models Describe The Universe* (World Scientific) out in June 2023, This of course has made me wonder what the collective noun is for mathematicians. I see that they could be a sum, a ring, or even a matrix, and there are of course subsets depending on which branch of maths you have in mind, such as a *clique* of mathematicians, which seems quite harmless – until you remember that a clique can be taken to mean a subset of vertices of an undirected graph such that every two distinct vertices in the clique are adjacent. So now you know.

And hearty congratulations go to Robin Wilson on the award of an honorary doctorate from the University of Colorado in recognition of a forty-two year association, covering Maths, History and Music.

Reflections

More on Mussolini

Reflecting on the little Benito's bedtime reading in G15, I rather feel that Mr and Mrs Mussolini should have been a bit more careful when choosing baby names - Benito Amilcare Andrea indeed. Amilcare was Hamilcar Barca, the father of Carthaginian general Hannibal (who also marched on Rome of course). And foreigners might imagine that poor little Musso had somehow got saddled with a girl's name like Andrea, which might be viewed as something of a disadvantage when setting up a fascist dictatorship. But Andrea is indeed the correct masculine form of the name in Italy. There is Andreina for girls, but that is rarely used, and a court in Florence in 2012 actually ruled that Andrea could in fact be used for girls as well as boys. However, by 2015 there were only 212 little Andreas running around in dresses, while Andrea for boys currently stands at number 16 in terms of popularity. (Mind you it was number one till less than twenty years ago.) Curiously enough, only Albania has followed the Italian example of having male Andreas, though I believe that it is also the

masculine form in Romansh. (Romansh? Don't get me started...)

So what about Benito? That is quite common in both Spain and Italy and was chosen by Mussolini's dad in deference to the great liberal reformer Benito Juárez (President 1858-1872) who was Mexico's first full-blooded Indian to hold the post. Readers will recall that he was the man who expelled the French, executed the Emperor Maximilian, and drew up the great liberal constitution of 1857. Young Benito M would have done well to read that as an adult, though it was his father who held fiercely liberal views.

Hurrah for the Red, White and Blue

This piece by Robert Burns was adapted for use by the former Thirteen Colonies in 1834 by one James E Murdoch. The original piano score describes it as “An Old Friend in a New Dress”. It was possibly countered in 1861 by “Hurrah for the Bonny Blue Flag”, a Confederate marching song which referred to the early Confederate flag of a single star on a blue background, rather than the Stars and Bars, which are better known today.

However, this note in anticipation of the 4th July actually deals with eminent Americans who have their place in London, beginning with none other than Benedict Arnold, the Loyalist general who went over to the British in 1780. I suspect that American visitors are rarely taken to see St Mary's Church Battersea, which is where Arnold is actually buried, along with his wife Peggy Shippen, also a noteworthy figure in the days of the War of Independence. He even has his own stained glass window, complete with a Union Jack plus the Stars and Stripes (old and new).

Major John André was complicit with both the Arnolds and was in fact captured as he was carrying the plans of West Point that Arnold had given him back to the British lines. He was hanged as a spy, but after the War was re-interred in Westminster Abbey, where he lies not far from the only American to be commemorated there: in 1884 the bust of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was installed with the inscription, “This bust was placed amongst the memorials of the poets of England by the English admirers of an American poet.” They were presumably more impressed with “Hiawatha” than they were by “Paul Revere's Ride”...



Envoi

I am grateful to those readers who offered to put me in touch with a UK publisher for the work (as reported) on the Aztecs and divination by grasshopper. I regret to remind them of the date of publication (1.4.23).

There were some clues in the texts that indicated that face value was illusory:

Fray Pieza de Bacalao = (Fry) Piece of Cod

João Pessoa Ninguém: the first name is Portuguese, which indicates Portuguese, thus *Pessoa Ninguém* = Nobody.

The ex-Convent of Aquino Chico > Aquí No, Chico = Not here, mate. Though many former convents are used as public buildings.

Aguas Cálidas (Hot Springs) does not exist, though Aguascalientes is a state in central Mexico. It does have a university, and I did set up an exchange scheme there in 1978. (I actually set up five exchange deals in Mexico, some of which are still going strong, but that's another story.)

However, all myths and legends contain a grain of truth. The monastic orders (the Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians in particular) were very active in many ways after the Conquest of Mexico, and some were dedicated early anthropologists, producing whole volumes on topics ranging from religious beliefs to aspects of daily life, men like Motolinía, Diego Durán and Bernadino de Sahagún.

Oddly enough, there really was a walled-up library in the former convent, which is part of the University of Aguascalientes, and it did contain some literary treasures from colonial times.

The Grasshopper Himself, of course, is not so pleased. In his own view, if people would only listen more to grasshoppers the world would be a better place. And who am I to disagree?

Editorial

Further to the piece on the original Pinocchio in G15, HarperCollins have this edition in their catalogue. Available from Postscript for £3.99.

I do find Postscript a useful little monthly publication that often comes round monthly with the Sunday press. Although the books are being remaindered, they are pretty up-to-date

and give an idea of what is being published at the moment. The prices are very reasonable, though I now have a one-book-in-one-book-out policy as my bookshelves are pretty much stacked (despite a rolling programme of donations to libraries such as Queen's Oxford, King's London and the British Library). So I see something of interest and then check on Surrey County Libraries to see if they have it – and often they do. So I can order a copy and see if I really need it (or want it, which is much the same thing...)

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

On Monday July 3rd Professor Sarah Hart will be discussing her new book *Once Upon a Prime* with Professor John Mullan at Waterstones in Gower Street. It is a fascinating title which draws on the multiple links between Literature and Mathematics. Book tickets here:

[Gower St Presents: Sarah Hart in Conversation with John Mullan](#)

I am very disappointed to say that the visit to Titsey Place on Saturday 24th June has had to be cancelled, as bookings did not even reach double figures.

So why not put Thursday 14th September in your diary for the visit to Hampton Court Palace where Ian Harris (not always noted for his athletic prowess) will be showing off his paces on the Real Tennis Court, which has been there since Tudor times. Threats of a musical accompaniment should not be underestimated.

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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