



The Grasshopper

The Organ of The Gresham Society

Spring is here the grass is riz...

Issue No. 19

1st April 2024

College Notes

Executive Director Richard Smith reports:

In 2020 the College embarked on a new five-year strategy, energised by an increase in support from our two historic sponsors, the City of London Corporation and the Mercers Company. The strategy sought to grow and broaden the College's audiences as well as equipping it to generate more of its own income for the first time.

Over the first four years of the strategy, the College has been able to deliver on much of what had been promised, in particular doubling the audience online and generating some half a million pounds of external support for our work.

Over 2024, we will be working closely with the Sponsors to look at the plan for the next five years, which will take us up to 2030. The backbone of the strategy will be to build on the successes of the last five years, further expanding our reach to audiences around the work through digital channels as well as growing our work with young people which has begun so well over the last two years.

Underpinning the strategy will be an ongoing commitment to upholding the traditions and standards of the College which we all value so much – free access to the work of leading academics in a long format style that has been delivered to a live audience of the intellectually curious will continue to be the bedrock on which we build! *Editor's Note: We hope to run an interview with Richard in G20 and will ask about future plans for the Gresham Society.*

Congratulations go to Professor Ronald Hutton on the award of the CBE.

Ave Atque Vale

We welcome new member Jani Levanen, a future candidate for the Court of Common Council for Farringdon Within, along with Rosanna Celocia, and Bobby Scully (both long-time supporters) and Jeremy Hudson, the College's former finance manager.

We also note with great regret the passing of Jeff Hayward, a long-standing and loyal member of the Society.

Members' Corner

The Gresham Society AGM

The Society's AGM and Dinner on 11th March proved to be even more of a resounding success than usual, with a full house at the Guildhall Club Dining Room. After a sumptuous menu and some fine wines, we were regaled by Ian Harris who recounted his early career recollections of working with Michael Mainelli, and then proceeded to tell us more about Michael's activities to date during his mayoral year. (A fuller report will appear in *The Grasshopper* in due course.)

At the AGM Professors Sarah Hart, Richard Harvey and Jeremy Summerly were elected to the Committee unanimously.

Barbara Woodthorpe Browne supplied a wonderful display of spring flowers, and the sum of £100 was raised in favour of the Tuberos Sclerosis Society (which was Robert's favourite charity).

Michael for Mayor

In a message to the Society, Michael expressed his appreciation for all the support he has received from across the City: "None of this would be possible without the tremendous support the mayoralty has received from our entire City, the livery, ward clubs, faith



community, businesses, universities, Common Council, the Court of Aldermen, and the City of London Corporation team.”

He then went on to add, “A shining star has been the Gresham Society and its support for the Knowledge Miles lecture series. I couldn’t be prouder to be a member. I hope to be sitting amongst you this time next year.”

The Lord Mayor’s Knowledge Miles Lectures

It has to be said in all modesty that the Lord Mayor’s Lectures have been running extremely well. With support from Z/Yen staff a regular series of webinars have been going out at the rate of one or two a week since November. They have drawn in an increasing number of livery companies, with the aim of highlighting the forward-looking and innovative elements to be found amongst these historic bodies, plus major institutions ranging from the Royal Society of Arts to the Francis Crick Institute. Speakers to date include Sir Jonathon Porritt and Sir Martyn Lewis, not to mention Society member Bob McDowell who took the legal bull by the horns and explained that Judge Jefferys was not such a bad chap after all. Such a re-writing of history has attracted over 1000 hits to date.

My thanks go to all the support received from Society Members Victoria Baines, Alex Edmans, Bob McDowell, Avi and Raj Persaud, Carolyn Roberts, and in particular Richard Harvey who has convened a number of sessions during my enforced absence. There is still space in the programme from September if anyone else would care to contribute. Please see [The Gresham Society](#) website for more details.

Members in Print

Alex Edmans is back in print with “[May Contain Lies: How Stories, Statistics and Studies Exploit Our Biases - And What We Can Do About It?](#)”, Penguin Random House, out in April (and based on his Gresham lecture).

Margaret Willes has followed up on her magisterial work on St Paul’s with “Liberty Over London Bridge” (Yale University Press 2024) not (as you might imagine) about freemen and sheep, but all about Southwark– just over the river and away from the control of the City Fathers.

Reflections

Both sides of the question

Following on from men fighting on one side or the other (and sometimes both) in G18, in more recent times, few people can have been promoted by their own side for torpedoing a Royal Navy battleship, and subsequently been decorated by the British – in this case for his services in North Africa. Captain Pierre Lancelot was present at Dakar in 1940 when the British sent a naval force to negotiate unsuccessfully with the new Vichy authorities, and he did indeed put a torpedo into the battleship *Resolution* for which he was duly promoted (though his Légion d’Honneur was only awarded posthumously after the War). He had an active naval war, particularly in the Aegean, but he also did sterling work on behalf of the Allies in the occupation of Corsica and in the Salerno landings, hence the decoration.

But perhaps more valuable to the Allies were the antics of “Garbo”, one Juan Pujol García, who worked as a double agent, originally out of Lisbon. His false reports to the Germans led to the award of the Iron Cross, and his success in persuading them that the Allies would invade through the Pas de Calais and not Normandy led to an MBE.

In overtones of *Our Man in Havana* he invented twenty-six fictitious agents but covered them up scrupulously. When one “died” an obituary was placed in the *Liverpool Echo* and the Germans kindly paid a pension to his “widow”.

Then I think I read somewhere of a Polish soldier who marched into Paris in 1940 with the Germans – and back into Paris in 1944 with the US Army, only I can’t remember his name. But it does go to show that the fortunes of war can take some unusual twists and turns.

The Angel of Hadley

Then what about the case of Edward Whalley and William Goffe who were both Major Generals in the Royalist Army and therefore pursued relentlessly by Charles II following the Restoration. They both fled to America, where the puritan colonists might well have been sympathetic to the non-Royalist cause and were therefore hidden, though pursued for years by Charles’ agents on charges of regicide.



It is a historical fact that the Massachusetts town of Hadley was attacked by Indians in 1672 but legend tells us that it was repelled by an old man with long white hair, who suddenly appeared from nowhere, waving a rusty sword, and who organized the defence. 50 years later it was admitted who he really was – and the main roads today in Hadley are named after the two men.

More on Mussolini

Could Benito Mussolini really have been a member of the Order of the Bath? Yep, it was awarded to him by King George V on his visit to the Allied war cemeteries in Italy, which took place in 1923, a year after the infamous March on Rome.

More on patent remedies

Following on from Friar's Balsam (G17) and the Brandreth patent cure in G18, I note that Jane Austen has a quiet dig at Gowland's Lotion, a sure-fire fix for ladies' complexions. In *Persuasion* (1817) Sir Walter Elliot praises his daughter Elizabeth for her improved complexion, and asks whether she has used Gowland's, as this apparently removed Mrs Clay's freckles. This is hardly surprising as it included mercuric chloride in its ingredients, so would have taken the freckles off, plus much else. Lead of course was used in the Eighteenth Century as a whitener, which must have caused serious damage to the unfortunate user.

Editor's Note: Take a look at [Regency Skin Care Lotions \(hibiscus-sinensis.com\)](http://Regency Skin Care Lotions (hibiscus-sinensis.com)) for the full horrific story, not least because contemporary writers seemed to be fully aware of the dangers of white lead and the rest.

Curfews again

Further to the story in G18 about curfews and Bell Harry Tower at Canterbury Cathedral, it still has a curious item from past days. If you look at Breughel's *The Tower of Babel* of 1563 you can see two huge wheels used for lifting heavy weights by human effort. One of these survives inside the Tower, and was actually used up until the 1970s when health and safety probably looked on it with horror and it fell out of use.

More on Lawrence of Arabia

Following on from T E Lawrence and the plague of snakes, I suppose that it is possible that the month of May was the breeding season for snakes and that they were attracted to the oasis for the supply of water. As Lawrence says, "We could not lightly draw water after dark, for there were snakes swimming in the pools or clustering in knots around their brinks." That seems to clinch it as snakes do that when mating.

The bronze serpent obviously had an impact on the Children of Israel as it re-appears in the Book of Kings. Hezekiah orders it to be destroyed as it is being worshipped presumably because of its miraculous healing properties, though King Hezekiah saw it as an idol: "he brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it." (2 King's 18:4.) It was certainly a well-known story as it re-occurs in the New Testament, where Jesus declares, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." (John 3:14).

Curiously enough, archaeological evidence shows that snake cults in the Middle East go back to the Land of Canaan in the Bronze Age, where artefacts have been discovered in places like Megiddo and Hazor. They also occur in Sumeria and even in Crete there are statuettes of a priestess grasping a snake in either hand.

What's in a (Spanish) name

Following on from Picasso's elongated birth certificate, there is a squabble going on currently in Spain between none other than Fernando FitzJames-Stuart y De Solís (for it is he) and the local registry office regarding the naming of his new daughter. This is of course a prime and memorable moment for any father, but there was a general view that the little one might eventually be weighed down by being called Sofía Fernanda Dolores Cayetana Teresa Angela de la Cruz plus (wait for it) Micaela del Santísimo Sacramento del Perpetuo Socorro de la Santísima Trinidad y Todos Los Santos. But then the father is the 17th Duke of Huéscar and heir to the prestigious House of Alba – and there is presumably an ancestral link to the House of Stuart. Perhaps one of our members can enlighten us.



Envoi

The green mascot

Grasshoppers seem to be getting a good press these days, but it was ever thus. Thomas Hardy's first wife rode for miles (presumably around the Dorset countryside) on her bicycle, which was bright green – and called The Grasshopper.

And can it be true that the Norwegian Ladies' football team are called The Grasshoppers?

Editorial

As the linguist of the family, I always believe that we need to start with our own language – the usual conundrum of do you say what you mean, or do you mean what you say? Consider the following:

What is said = *What is mean:*

Perhaps the Chair could explain = *I hope the Chair understood that last bit 'cos I'm blowed if I did...*

To the best of my knowledge... = *Speaking off the cuff...*

I listened with interest, but... = *I have just woken up, so can you please repeat?*

We note with satisfaction... = *We agree with this idea, but don't intend to do anything whatsoever about it.*

You will surely agree... = *Don't you dare disagree!*

I shall be brief... = *I will waffle on for ten minutes...*

I shall be very brief... = *Time to slip out for a coffee.*

I do not wish to stand in the way, but... = *I damn well will!*

If I understand rightly... = *I am about to twist the idea round completely.*

I have studied this proposal carefully = *I read it on the way in on the train.*

I am sure that members can add examples of their own of things they have heard but never actually contemplated saying (perish the thought...).

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

I am relieved to report that I and my neck have now been signed off, having cracked a vertebra in January (my head was being held up by 2mm of bone...). I have been mainly out of circulation but am now pretty much back to normal, with care. And my thanks to all those who enquired or expressed concern. Henceforth I shall refrain from opening doors with my head.

If you have any news items for *The Grasshopper* do let Tim (t.j.connell@city.ac.uk) or Basil (greshamsociety@gmail.com) know. Anything on awards, recent publications or odd curiosities will doubtless suit.

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